

GUARDIAN



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SLFP trying to
push Maitripala
out—Gamini
Patrick Green reporting from Anuradhapura
Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Land, Labour
and Mahaweli Development told a public meeting in
yesterday that the violence at the Jayawardanapura
(Anuradhapura) was caused by anti-govern-
ment forces like the
Maitripala

National Govt. or SLFP splitting?

The 'punishment' of Vietnam

Where are the radical Buddhists?

Reggie Siriwardena

Profiles of Sri Lankan poverty

Cultural colonialism

● Newspaperman extraordinary

● Sinhala films

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Trends

Abortion debate

The law it has been said is open to all, like the Ritz Hotel. Now Professor D. C. de Silva argues that legalised abortion is also open to all, like the Walter Reed hospital, or Maxim's.

Some years ago Simone de Beauvoir and a hundred celebrities shocked French society by cheerfully admitting that all of them had abortions. Some several.

Is abortion the last bastion of privilege and the exclusive right of the rich? Mr. Bala Tampoe made this political point with customary eloquence at a seminar in Colombo sometime ago. The issue keeps surfacing, despite the efforts of 'moralists' of all schools to sweep the question under the carpet.

As the debate advances, a little known secret is certain to come out. It bears the name MR. No. not the Monthly Review as some of our readers may guess but Menstrual Regulation. It is used as a polite 'cover' for legalised abortion by medical practitioners in the UK, Singapore etc. And it is done here. According to medical circles, among

the practitioners are government doctors. Recently, one of the MR men was quietly transferred out of a suburban station. Of course it can always be done in a private clinic, now that PP (private practice) is back.

The Camera Eye

The camera never lies. Of course it does. But a 'Sun' photograph last week raised a question which has bothered many a professor and junior don. Is Mr. (Dr) Nissanka Wijeyeratne actually the Minister of Higher Education, meaning the universities?

Remember it was the Minister of Industries who created that furore about Tamil examiners and 'A' level marking. He even followed up his parliamentary philippics with an open press conference. The Minister of Higher Education had little to say—even to a direct opposition request for an impartial public inquiry.

The 'Sun' published a picture of a top-level discussion after the Jayawardene-pura campus incident. We saw the youthful Minister of Youth Affairs, the Vice Chancellor Dr. Kalpage, the Registrar, the MP of the area, and a burly policy officer at the phone, but not Dr. Wijeyeratne.

Modest proposal

The government which is widely criticised for being far too slow in producing results can hardly be accused of any lack of speed in changing the constitution. Amendments are introduced and always 'debated to a finish' with wild fury of a speed maniac. So here's a modest proposal.

Why not have a "permanent acting deputy minister"? Each week we read that Mr. Tyrone Fernando has taken his oaths as "acting deputy minister of...". You name it, he gets it. By the time the picture or para has appeared the permanent minister or deputy minister has returned from Maputo or Manila, and Mr. Fernando is acting deputy minister of something else. The only job he doesn't seem to get is the one that was announced in the official Press—Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Letters

The Old School Tie

Several years ago one of the accused in the 1962 coup case, acquitted and released before the conclusion of the trial, having already spent a long time in incarceration, said on being interviewed by the Press: 'I am particularly glad to be out today because it's the day of the Royal-Thomian match.' I thought then that for that remark he should have been promptly put back behind bars. Mr. Elmer de Haan's piece on the Battle of the Blues (Lanka Guardian, March 1) shows that the Old School Tie can survive not only years of incarceration in jail but even the ravages of cancer. Alas, however, for Royalist snobbery of a certain vintage: the whirligig of time brings in his revenges, and it is now Thomians who sneer snootily at the 'Madhya Maha Vidyalaya' in Kurunduwatte.

Colombo 5. Reggie Siriwardena

Strange ally

So, Mr. Gunadasa Amarasekera the scourge of 'new Marxist' critics and populist ('pappadam') playwrights, has actually twitted Lester James in a recent *Silumina* article on 'Ahasin Polowata', thus implicitly allying himself with his favourite whipping boys—the young critics. If anyone of the latter tribe is speculating as to whether Gunadasa has been radicalized and whether a "rapprochement" is now possible, may I take the liberty to remind them of this saying of Frederick II, a saying of which Che Guevara was quite fond:—"God save me from my friends, I can take care of my enemies myself." I think that Minerva of the CDN, Gamini Dissanayake, H. A. Seneviratne etc can all handle outright opponents like Lester James well enough without assistance, however oblique from those of Gunadasa Amarasekera's ilk. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

Colombo. A. D. Senanayake

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CONTENTS

- 2, 23 Letters
- 3 - 6 News background
- 7 - 11 International news
- 12 Cultural colonialism
- 13 - 16 Poverty
- 17 Religion
- 18 - 19 Sinhala films
- 20 Viewpoint
- 21 D. B. Dhanapala
- 22 Turnabout

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Letters . . .

(*'Lanka's Unpleasing Prospects'* by Christopher Hitchens which originally appeared in the *'New Statesman'* was published in the L. G. Feb. 15th. It brought an instant reply from Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in London, Mr. Noel Wimalasena, Mr. Wimalasena's letter was published in full in the *'Ceylon Daily News'*. We publish another letter from a British reader).

Ceylon's raw capitalism

Christopher Hitchens (NS 19 January) is right about some effects of the cheap-labour Free Trade Zone. But he's wrong—so far—about accompanying repressive labour legislation. The government hastily backed off from its anti-working class White Paper proposals: in the face of trade union opposition it first declared that it was not committed to enacting the draft legislation as it stood, and then that in any case the proposals would only apply to workers in public corporations—i.e. not to Zone companies. In this context it's curious that a socialist paper should say that one of the main problems of the FTZ is that it 'distorts the labour market': so do trade unions, of course. And what is it that an 'undistorted' labour market would do for Sri Lanka's development? It's also a pretty right-wing view of unemployment to argue implicitly that, because cheap female industrial workers were formerly household workers at even more miserable remuneration, they were not part of the labour force nor of the unemployment problem.

The most unfortunate aspect of the article, however, is that Hitchens's criticisms, many of them true and important, manage nevertheless to miss two essential points.

Firstly, Sri Lanka *isn't* the Third World in miniature in crucial respects. It has achieved standards of literacy, nutrition, health and longevity far higher than some nations many times as rich, at a GNP per capita of

around \$200 (i.e. among the poorest nations on earth). And it has maintained a sufficiently constitutional political system for Left movements still to operate—though as Hitchens implies their position is increasingly fragile, in part because the Left's treatment of the Tamil national question has repeatedly trimmed to the Sinhalese chauvinist wind, and allowed many Tamils to drift towards a sterile secessionism.

Secondly, the article underestimates the importance of the change of regime in 1977. The new UNP government represents a major shift away from the petty bourgeois nationalist coalition of Mrs. Bandaranaike, with its *etatiste* and nominally welfarist politics. What the new regime is attempting is full-scale capitalist growth through large inflows of foreign public and private capital and the disciplining of the agrarian economy to fuel industrialisation and the rapid development of the forces of production. To do this it is dismantling many of the social benefits (such as food rations) which the Ceylonese people had fought for, and which represented real gains for the masses, no matter how partial or flawed. It is the enterprise of raw capitalist accumulation which is Sri Lanka's current challenge to socialist movements and to Left orthodoxy about the trap of underdevelopment—and the real basis for comparability with other parts of the Third World where similar things are under way. That challenge needs careful research and sensitive political-economic analysis. I don't think Hitchens provided either.

19, Basset Street, **Geoff Lamb**
London NW 5.

Critic, correct thyself

The critical letter writer who hides behind the pseudonym 'H. W. Fowler' has succeeded in displaying what he never intended to—his incompetence.

Says he in the Lanka Guardian of 1st March: 'it was not polysyllables that I took objection to . . .'. The meaning he wanted to convey is clear, but what he

ought to have said instead is this: 'it was not polysyllables that I took exception to' or 'it was not polysyllables that I objected to'.

If he wants us to cite authority in support of this, we would refer him to the Pocket Oxford Dictionary originally compiled by F. G. and H. W. Fowler and now in its 5th edition. Our bogus H. W. Fowler will find there in (on p. 283) that the phrase 'take exception to' means 'object to'. He will also find (on p. 867) that the phrase 'take exception' means 'raise objection'. Let him remember that whenever he wants to **raise** objection he should't say he **takes** it. We take exception to his phrasing.

Fowler—the foul fellow we mean—preaches: 'If Mr. Fernando looks up St. Luke 4.23 he will learn that the correct text is 'physician heal thyself''. Now the worthy Amaradasa Fernando, in his letter which appeared in the Lanka Guardian of 15th February, simply said this: 'I should like to say, Doctor heal thyself'. He did not say 'I should like to quote the Biblical text, Doctor heal thyself'.

What makes Fowler think that 'physician heal thyself' is the correct text of the 23rd verse of the 4th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke? Apparently because it is the text found in the Authorised Version of the English Bible. Now the only correct Gospel text is that which appears in the original Greek in the New Testament. All other renderings (called 'version' or 'turnings') are translations, each of which is acceptable to some people but not to others. For instance, the New Testament in Basic English has this paraphrase: 'Let the medical man make himself well'.

It is noteworthy that the Bible in Today's English Version has 'Doctor, heal yourself', the Moffatt Translation of the Bible has 'Doctor, cure yourself' and the New Testament in Modern English—J. B. Philipps version—has 'Cure yourself, doctor!'.

(Continued on page 23)

1983/84 and all that...

Already locked in other legal battles, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, 2nd MP for Nuwara Eliya took time off from Royal-Thomian festivities to talk to his lawyers. To sue or not to sue? The 'Daily News', in a front page report had attributed to Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, Irrigation Minister and 1st MP for Nuwara Eliya a remark which prompted the legal pow-wow. The Minister was reported as saying that "Anura Bandaranaike's thugs" were responsible for disturbing a meeting at Madawacchiya presided over by Mr. Maitripala Senanayake, the SLFP's deputy leader.

Speaking to the L. G., Mr. Bandaranaike flatly denied that any marauding muscle-men on his orders had invaded the Dry Zone.

The incident however focusses attention on an issue which suddenly surfaces in the press or enters tangentially any well-informed discussion of today's national politics. In fact, it was the theme of a long discussion among several highly-placed SLFP intellectuals, including some P. B. Members, last week.

These are some of the pieces in the jig-saw:

- * Premier Premadasa asked Mrs. Bandaranaike across the floor whether she would ever hand over the party leadership to her deputy.

- * The PM and Anura have a slanging match in the House and ordinary parliamentary patter quickly degenerates into questions of paternity.

- * President JR, commenting on the incident publicly, says that Maitripala is a 'democrat', a 'good friend' and a man who never uses bad language. (A remark about not consuming liquor was

later amended by the offending newspaper!)

- * The 'Dinakara', the SLFP Sinhala daily, leads off with a story about a new move to form a 'national government', with a break away SLFP faction a la C. P. de Silva's SLFSP of 1964. The name of Mr. Esmond Wickremasinghe, who played a key role in 1964, is splashed boldly on the front page. His name had already been mentioned in political and parliamentary despatches after Mrs. Bandaranaike's disclosure that she was offered the portfolio of Foreign Affairs in July 1977. (SLFP insiders know that more about this is known to Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Anura, and to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, no less!)

- * Talking about elections in 1983, JR says that PR will ensure that no party will get a 2/3rds majority to amend the constitution. In any case, he will decide who'll be PM. Furthermore, he'll be president until 1984 and he can choose anybody.... even dissolve parliament.

- * Mrs. B says that even if she loses civic rights, she'll not quit politics.

- * JR says that nobody can topple this government.

- * Mrs. B. says, in effect, remember the Shah!

- * JR asks why Mrs. B is still keen on 'family bandyism' and wants to hand over the party to Anura without giving it to Maitripala or even to Stanley Tillekeratne.

- * An international aspect and big power politics is suddenly glimpsed by a puzzled public when Maitripala is named as one of the speakers at a pro-Vietnam rally but keeps away.

- * The LSSP-CP papers keep referring to Stanley as Mrs. B's current favourite as 'interim leader' in case "something" happens.

So on, and so forth. Whether this is shadow boxing or phoney war, the whole exchange leaves even the sharpest reader in a state of slightly enlightened mystification.

The informal discussion of the SLFP 'think-tank' took this form:

(a) Why should a 20-month-old government with a 5/6ths majority start to speculate about 1983/4? Because, they agreed, the UNP knows the mass mood, is aware of the disillusionment in its own ranks, and has panicked after getting reports of huge SLFP rallies. "Is the UNP panicking?" is the title of an editorial in the SLFP's 'NATION'. Therefore, it wants to split the SLFP or at least create a diversion.

(b) In the face of mounting difficulties, the UNP wants to project an image of 'national consensus'. It has co-opted the CWC, and some TULF members, and so all it needs is a few SLFP'ers, to call itself a truly 'national government'.

(c) JR wants to do a de Gaulle, a national leader above party politics, when the inevitable swing of the pendulum moves SLFP-wards. In effect, the grand strategist who moved from an offer of 'cooperation' (1971-2) to divisive tactics (1974-5) and successfully broke up the United Front when the balance of forces became favourable to the UNP, is already making his first moves for the great 1983 battle and after.

Return of bus mudalalis..?

Like the 'new class' of CRA mudalalis who were identified as the financiers of the SLFP and the standard-bearers of a 'creeping CRAPitalism', the bus magnate was very much a patron of the 'old' UNP. After 1956, he was regarded as a dying species. Are we witnessing the return of the bus mudalalis or a new group of entrepreneurs moving into the field of public transport?

This however is not the crucial issue for the government. It is a more basic question that confronts the UNP policy makers to create a kind of dilemma that is increasingly characteristic. Politics versus economic policy would be an over-simplification but it does suggest the nature of the problem.

The UNP is not only ideologically committed to private enterprise, its new economic thinking, more coherent and thorough-going than any in the past, is founded on such ideas as "economic efficiency", profitability, no subsidies, free market forces, etc. In any case, this is the broad policy framework approved by the IMF-IBRD, the financial backers of the new strategy. Their representatives, stationed in Colombo regularly 'monitor' the national economy while keeping a particularly watchful eye on the performance of state sector enterprises.

By these standards, the CTB is a 'lame' enterprise. It has been in the red most of the time. In 1977, it lost 42 million rupees. The CTB has continued to live on grants and loans. Of its total fleet of about 7000, nearly a third is non-operational. The ratio of employees to a bus is about 12 to 1.

The CTB "load" exceeds 4 million passengers making the organisation one of the biggest public transport services in the world. For obvious reasons, successive governments have been reluctant to jack-up fares too high.

On the other hand, the government faces political pressures—the unceasing demand for jobs

"Experts who have close links with both the SLFP and ULF are now making a study of what they regard as a deliberate policy of dismantling and down-grading nationalised ventures and establishing a parallel private sector ... The Opposition parties feel that the test case is the CTB ..." (L. G. December 1st)

from those who voted UNP and pressure from the trade unions, including the UNP's own J. S. S. (Incidentally why doesn't some Sri Kotha bright spark get these unfortunate initials changed?).

UNP'ers claim that the government has already given 14,000 new jobs in the CTB.

The mainstream media which likes to call the CTB "No. 1 Killer" has recently mounted a strident campaign against it. The campaign has coincided with the decision to de-nationalise the CTB or carve up public transport in order to give private enterprise a nice piece.

Whereas the bus mudalali was a hate-symbol, the CTB was the first nationalised venture of the MEP in 1956. It became the totem of "Sri Lankan socialism."

For the Opposition it was a ready-made issue. The SLFP and ULF forgot their political quarrels and got their unions to launch a propaganda campaign in the workshop and the depot.

The average corporation worker is often a member of several unions. He never forgets to join the "government union". It is a protection racket in reverse. As the opposition campaign gathered momentum, the J. S. S. found itself cornered. It took the matter up with the President himself.

Meanwhile 60 private operators are waiting eagerly for licences. Will the CTB be cannibalised or will a new "route system", which does not rob the CTB of what it has, open the way to a compromise?

Education

The heavenly gates

There will be two 'A' - Level examinations this year, the Education Ministry has announced. Instead of the usual 50,000 we shall see double this number have a 'shy' as they say to obtain a passport to the University. But there's a catch. The same announcement admits that only 5000-to-6000 will probably find places. Going by the percentages of previous years about 35-40,000 of the lakh of aspirants will qualify for university education. In short, they are pronounced academically fit. Yet only 5 to 6,000 will actually pass the heavenly gates of our universities. This is 5% of the number which sits the 'A' level and a bare 1% of those who aspire for higher education by sitting the 'O' level.

Meanwhile the quarrel over the new quota system continues. The TULF insists that the 30% on an all-island basis and raw marks, the 15% for 'backward areas' and the balance 55% on population ratios of the 24 administrative districts is blatantly discriminatory. It has proposed 25% for 'backward areas' and the rest on academic merit. The Education Ministry, convinced that both wisdom and justice are on its side, will not change its mind.

What does the new generation think about it? The cadres of the JVP which led the 1971 youth insurrection consisted mainly of school leavers, varsity drop-outs, frustrated graduates etc.

Mr. Lionel Bopage of the JVP issued the following statement on this question and on other issues in the increasing troubled sphere of education:

Education and racism

It has been decided that the criteria to be used in admitting students who have been successful at the GCE 'A' Level Examination to the Universities will be: (1) 30% from all over the island

on the basis of 'raw' marks—i.e. success at examination; (2) 15% from 'underprivileged' Districts; and (3) 55% on a 'District' basis—i.e. on the 'proportion' of population in 24 Administrative Districts. This is a question that arose last year as well. Even though the capitalist UNP government came to power pledging to do away with the standardisation of marks, when this problem re-surfaced last year, they resorted to 'standardisation' once again. Students in the Northern and Eastern areas of the country from the primary grades right up to the University launched a boycott of all classes as a mark of protest.

The socio-economic crisis that grips the capitalist social system at present does not permit the provision of equal educational opportunities to all students; nor does it permit the admission of all students who obtain the necessary qualifications into the Universities. This is why different capitalist governments adopt different tactics to cut down those educational facilities. One of the main tactics thus used is racism.

The recent campaign launched by certain racist groups among Sinhala-speaking students, against Tamil-speaking students, is one such incident. The diversion of rising student opposition to the capitalist state onto another path was the primary objective of this campaign. By acting in this manner, it becomes relatively easy for the capitalist state to evade demands such as that of admitting all students who have qualified for admission to the Universities or that of providing all students with equal educational opportunities. The limiting of admissions to the Universities on the basis of the medium of instruction is an injustice to the Tamil-speaking people. The doors to University education are shut to Tamil-speaking students, who have obtained the necessary qualifications, to enter them, purely because of the 'crime' committed by their parents in being Tamil speaking persons! This is a clear violation of a

basic human right of a student—that of receiving his or her education in the mother tongue.

While we condemn the dismissal of over 100 teachers on the charge of participating in the current school-boycott campaign and the arrest of several students and student leaders, we protest strongly against such action and demand that the teachers who have been dismissed be reinstated and the students released.

Teachers protest

All hitherto governments which came into power have implemented various forms of standardisation regarding the selection of students for universities. This had been the process for the last 10 years. The standardisation done on district and media wise has caused serious dissensions among the Tamil-speaking people of this country says the Ceylon Teachers Union.

Hereby we demand says the TU:

- * All successful candidates at the GCE(AL) should be admitted to the Universities.

- * the immediate withdrawal of the circular No. J/SA/H/7(6) dated 1979.2.01 issued by the Ministry of Education on punishing the teachers and students.

- * the immediate withdrawal of the vacation of post order issued by the Ministry of Education for 150 school teachers in Northern Province.

The Ceylon Teachers Union strongly protest against any type of victimisation incurred on students and teachers of Northern Province.

The only solution to this problem is to admit all successful GCE(AL) candidates to Universities. We call upon the working class and all other sections of masses in this country to campaign for above-mentioned demands. Racial unity can only be safeguarded by admitting all the qualified A/L candidates into the universities.

The 'torch' of learning

Leading UNP personalities are fond of saying "we do not want another Weerasuriya". Seeing that the UNP was smart enough to get much propaganda mileage from the incident both at the May Day celebrations and at the 1977 general election 2 months later, this is not only a laudable resolution but a sensible one.

But have they seriously studied how that killing took place, and drawn the correct lessons? The proceedings of the Wimalaratne commission and the report make certain things quite clear:

- (a) there was a slow build-up to that tragic happening.

- (b) there was a steady deterioration in the relations between the students, staff and employees on the one hand, and the top rungs of the administration.

- (c) all of them had accumulated grievances, which had little to do with politics.

- (d) the No. 1 would not have won any popularity contest.

- (e) After the shooting the police tried to do a 'cover up' by accusing students of setting fire to a police jeep.

- (f) That the Bandaranaike government got 'conned' by this, and by various 'versions' put out by the authorities, supported by the SLFP's Kandy caucus.

- (g) The press, with the exception of the 'Daily Mirror' fell for these 'versions' and in turn misled the public.

When the trouble spread, the government propaganda machine came out with a theory that placed the blame on "power-hungry politicians" (at that time, a code-word for the UNP), "disgruntled elements" (LSSP), "ultra leftists" (JVP sympathisers?) and "outsiders"!

It is indeed ironic that the same phrases are now being used to describe the cause of any campus incident, however trivial. Of course, the "power-hungry politicians" are now SLFP and the 'outsiders' and 'agitators' are still there!

The duty of the Opposition is to oppose. That, according to Sir Ivor Jennings himself, is the name of the game. No opposition party is so righteous that it resists the temptation not to embarrass a government whenever some incident occurs.

But a government can easily fall victim to a facile conspiracy theory if in every single incident it sees the sinister hand of its rivals. The conspiracy theory leads inevitably to 'crack down' as the only response to what is seen as strong, insidious challenge.

No university in the world has seen such thinking in harsh practice as the Teheran campus. Yet two months ago it became the bastion of the anti-Shah movement.

Are the President, the Prime Minister and Education Minister really aware of the actual conditions in the new campuses? Why don't they send a team of investigators and get a dispassionate account of the conditions that prevail in these places?

Several weeks ago we wrote about the problems of accommodation in the Dumbara campus, about the deplorable medical and library facilities. A protest over these conditions led to the first batch of suspensions. Then a demonstration was held but no newspaper has yet reported how 4 female students were beaten up by "unidentified outsiders"

and had to be warded in the Kandy hospital. The total number of suspensions now approach 50.

Last week, 135 students were suspended at the Jayawardenepura campus. Nobody will condone the senseless destruction of public property or the defacing of walls with obscene slogans.

Has the government found out how it all began? The Vice Chancellor took two "disciplinary measures":

(a) that female students could not leave the halls after 6 pm. ('Sun') "I am no puritan but I will not tolerate sexual licence" he told the 'Sunday Observer' (The Paris revolt of '68 started over women's dormitories at Nanterre University!)

(b) that monks cannot see movies.

The papers have said that the Vice Chancellor is a follower of Krishnamurti. Perhaps he should inquire and meditate upon a story current among Colombo dons that "outsiders" indeed tried to gain admission to a show of 'Siripala and Ranmenika'. Some of them were monks. But the undergraduates who had invited the monks saw other 'outsiders' cheerfully seated in the hall. Were they friends and relations in true Sri Lankan style or university employees, including security staff. According to this same report when a monk, denied entry, had protested he was told he would be crowned with a torch! If this report is correct (and the authorities must surely inquire into it) the trouble later is out of all proportion to the immediate cause.

The ministry should go further. A recent issue of a new Sinhala weekly (**Seven Days**) had a detailed report on the quality of food, the availability of water, sanitation, the condition of the roofing etc at Vidyodaya. This is where the trouble lies. Over-reacting to situations, and allowing campus officials, teachers and students to use some incident to to pay off private or political grudges does not do anybody any good.

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What were the real motives for China's invasion?

The 'punishment' of Vietnam

by Anthony Barnett

WHEN Zbigniew Brzezinski visited Peking last May and set in train the normalisation of Sino-American relations (which for the Chinese means a virtual alliance with the United States) Deng Xiaoping told him that he saw Vietnam as 'the Asian Cuba'. As an analogy drawn by the leader of a socialist country, it ought to have been quite a compliment. But what happened to Cuba when its revolution displeased its immense northern neighbour? If Vietnam is the 'Asian Cuba', does China wish to become the Asian United States?

There is little doubt that China regards Southeast Asia as its own sphere of influence. Were it in a position to do so, it would declare a 'Monroe Doctrine' for the lands to its south. Vietnam's position astride the land bridge to Southeast Asia proper has precipitated what must be the most fantastic and may be the most irreconcilable territorial dispute on the globe today. The map shows China's claims on the sea area to its south, regarded as its 'territory' because of occasional reefs breaking through the waters right down to Indonesia. At present both China and Vietnam lay claim to the two major groups of islands, the Paracels and the Spratlys. Peking occupies the first and Vietnam most of the second. But the dispute is not simply over islands. China's claims to the seabed extend over a vast area south of the Spratlys, where oil deposits hold out the prospect of economic independence for Vietnam.

Relations between the two countries began to deteriorate as long ago as 1954, at the Geneva Conference. It was there that Vietnam was divided and Chou-En lai, as we have since learnt from



The area inside the shaded line of dashes is claimed by China as its 'sacred territory'. China occupies the Paracel Islands and Vietnam occupies most of the Central Spratly Islands.

the *Pentagon Papers*, played a decisive role with the carving knife.

Chou (and Mao) sought three main objectives at Geneva. First, they wanted to neutralise Indo-China and rid it of the threat of American troops. Second, they hoped this would enable them to break the military encirclement of China by means of an international treaty, which in turn would also allow them to break out of their diplomatic isolation and forced dependence on the Russians. Finally, if they could achieve this by acting as the guarantor of neutral states such as Sihanouk's Cambodia, while dividing Vietnam, their suzerainty would be complete. Chou secretly informed the French that he recognised the reality of the South Vietnamese government they were attempting to construct. His plans misfired—with the ironic result that his country's diplomatic isolation was only ended when the war that followed between Viet-

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nam and the United States looked like being won by a Vietnamese party no longer beholden to Peking.

Major breaking point

Nixon's visit to Peking in 1972 can be taken as the major breaking point. He sought then to return to the Geneva agreement as the Chinese had conceived it and found a willing response. Almost certainly, both Nixon and Mao wanted the Paris Peace Accords to last, and therefore Vietnam to remain divided. The Vietnamese victory in 1975 was thus a defeat for Chinese foreign policy, as well as for Nixon's. And as the final liberation of South Vietnam took place, Mao Tse Tung sourly informed his entourage: 'The Soviet Union has wild ambitions. It wants to lay hands on the whole of Europe, Asia and Africa'.

A year earlier, Mao had ordered that the Paracel Islands be seized from a small garrison of Thieu's South Vietnamese troops. It was a highly significant move: for the first time, the Chinese escalated their disagreements with Hanoi to the level of force. The two countries shared a common position on Cambodia, albeit for different reasons—so there was no 'provocation' on Vietnam's part, no 'regional hegemonism', no 'expansionism' which needed to be 'punished' (these being the expressions used by China in the current conflict). The islands guard the sea route to Hanoi: it was at once a brutal humiliation and an ominous warning. If China was willing to exploit Vietnam's weakness, when it was still divided and in struggle against the Thieu

regime, then China was capable of anything.

After the liberation of Saigon, Le Duan, the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party visited Peking before going on to Moscow. Disagreement was so complete that no return banquet was held nor any communique issued. Obviously, the role of the Soviet Union was one matter that divided Le Duan and Mao: it must have seemed ludicrous to the Vietnamese that the USSR should be regarded as the main enemy, when it had been their major source of support. But there was another crucial issue at stake. As Hanoi's representative left China, Peking republished in the most emphatic terms its claims on the South China Sea.

The following year, just a few months after Mao died, his successors dealt a heavy blow to Vietnam's Communist pride by boycotting the Fourth Party Congress in Hanoi. This was the Congress of victory, of unification and the Vietnamese hoped above all, of peace. Hindsight gives two other aspects of that Congress a special significance. First, the Cambodians also boycotted it, in what was evidently a co-ordinated action with Peking's. Second, the Soviet Union put overt pressure on the Vietnamese to join COMECON, and was rebuffed. Hanoi was still determined to pursue its policy of maximising independence by conducting an even-handed approach to all socialist countries and calling for them to work together. For Peking, this was simply anathema. Not only did it mean a flat rejection of its cherished anti-Sovietism, but it also challenged Peking's own vanity as a world influence, for Vietnam's was a policy far more attractive to developing nations.

Just over two years later, China caused Vietnam to abandon its policy of multiplerelations. As Vietnam's Foreign Minister put it when he visited Tokyo last December, we are sacrificing our independent policy somewhat, because of the 'about face' of the country's northern neighbour. Having

forced Vietnam into a binding treaty with Moscow, China then invaded it.

Immediate *casus belli*

Cambodia was, of course, the immediate *casus belli*. Here another analogy has been drawn, even less apposite than the Cuban one: the Vietnamese action in Cambodia has been compared to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Almost all observers agree that there had been low level friction between Vietnam and Cambodia after their mutual revolutions in 1975, but that in March and April of 1977 the fighting escalated, with serious attacks by the Khmer Rouge on Vietnamese border villages, killing some hundreds of their inhabitants. Did the Czechs ever attack the Soviet Union?

In February last year, after its own counter-assault, Hanoi issued a three-point peace proposal. It suggested that all troops be withdrawn five miles from the frontier; that Vietnam and Cambodia discuss and resolve their differences (including a disagreement over the border); and that there be international inspection of the cease-fire. If one can imagine Brezhnev making such an offer to the Czechs, one can be sure Dubcek would have accepted. Pol Pot declined to do so.

The conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia was never a proxy war' between the USSR and China as Brzezinski has claimed. On the contrary, the determining conflict was between Vietnam and China, with all other conflicts organised around that focal point. Neither Peking nor Hanoi ever wanted open antagonism: both feared it would have incalculable consequences (as indeed they are now beginning to discover). It was against their better judgement that developments in Cambodia, which were of secondary importance to each of them, detonated a major confrontation between the two countries.

If we are to understand how this extraordinary set of conflicts came about, it is necessary to put them into an order of causa-

lity. When Pol Pot consolidated his position in Democratic Kampuchea by placing Sihanouk under 'Palace arrest' at the beginning of April 1976, his action followed upon the death of Chou-En-lai, who had been Sihanouk's patron, and coincided with the (second) downfall of Deng Xiaoping—an event which Cambodia was almost alone in welcoming.

The purge of the 'Gang of Four' in October that year must have come as something of a shock, to Pol Pot, and the rise of Deng to his third life as an even more threatening development. The initial decision to reinstate Deng came in March 1977 (according to his semi-official biography). This coincided with a major purge in the Phnom Penh government, in which prominent leaders disappeared, presumed shot, including Hu Nim, who was the first to greet Sihanouk when the Prince set foot on liberated soil in 1973. Could Hu Nim and the others have favoured a domestic line closer to Deng's 'four modernizations'? If Pol Pot purged his colleagues to protect his own policies, he certainly consolidated a social regime that ran completely counter to the new Chinese approach. To compensate, Pol Pot seems to have escalated the conflict with Vietnam, in order to retain the vital aid of Cambodia's only ally. As Hu Nim disappeared Vietnam was denounced as an enemy and attacked. The Peking leadership was thereby trapped into supporting a government in Phnom Penh that became increasingly intolerable to Hanoi. Later China's Ambassador to Laos predicted with approval a 'long, long war' between Vietnam and Cambodia.

If the Peking leadership had been more secure they would surely have done more to avoid such a risky course. But in early 1977 the Chinese Politbureau was deeply divided. Deng was only in the first stage of a comeback that threatened more than one member of the ruling 'group' and none was willing to risk his position by contradicting Maoist policy on an issue such as this. Thus

the two weak and divided governments of Phnom Penh and Peking became locked into their disastrous course.

On military footing

As the Cambodian leadership placed itself on a military footing in June 1977, General Giap went to China, for a tour of two or three weeks. A month later he gave the keynote speech to a Vietnamese Army conference on economic construction. His theme was the need for rapid industrialisation, but his ending had a more ominous note: 'Some comrades believe that because we defeated the Americans no other enemy would dare touch us'. Such thinking was erroneous, he went on, and they should remain on their guard: 'If an aggressive war occurs in the future, our enemy will very possibly have a larger number of troops and more modern weapons than before'. This can hardly have been a reference to Democratic Kampuchea.

In September 1977, the forthcoming visit of Pol Pot to Peking was announced and it was made public for the first time that Cambodia was run by a Communist Party, with Pol Pot as its General Secretary. To celebrate the occasion another attack was apparently made against Vietnam. The Cambodia leader's lengthy visit to China was followed by a briefer one from Le Duan, ending on 25 November 1977. The next day the Hanoi government announced, with reference to Sino-Vietnamese relations: 'We will do our best to make this great friendship last forever'. In response, although without actually mentioning Vietnam by name, Peking defended its seizure of the Paracels, insisted that the Spratly islands belonged to China (and were therefore the object of Vietnamese aggression) and concluded, after having so defined itself as being attacked, with the threat: 'China will never attack first, but when it is attacked it will certainly counter-attack..

By the end of December Vietnam had itself counter-attacked Cambodia. Receiving stiff resistance from the Khmer forces,

which evidently surprised and impressed them, the Vietnamese made their peace offer of February 1978. When that failed so the did the 'moderate' policy Hanoi had pursued since 1975. Within weeks the vital rice trade of the South was nationalised, to prevent further speculation under conditions of war and terrible harvests (which were primarily a result of natural catastrophes). This move mainly affected the Chinese bourgeoisie of Cholon, who controlled the merchant networks of the South. Today, they are the 'boat people'.

The nationalisation measures signalled to Peking Vietnam's determination not to submit. Relations

between the two countries degenerated rapidly. As Hanoi's dispensations for its full scale move into Cambodia became evident China very nearly went to war, in the summer, to pre-empt the attack and thus preserve its uncomfortable ally. A decision was taken instead not to intervene directly, but to try to bog down the Vietnamese forces in a 'people's war' inside Cambodia.

Why Deng, having written off Democratic Kampuchea, should have decided upon the Vietnamese adventure is still somewhat mysterious. National pride is hardly the best reason for assaulting

(Continued on page 16)

Another attack launched on Vietnam

Claudia Wright writes from Washington: China is not the only great power resolved to 'punish' the invaders of Cambodia. Before his troops made an invasion of their own, Deng Xiaoping had so impressed the Carter administration with his sabre-rattling talk against the Soviet bear that the United States quietly put into effect a plan to impoverish the Vietnamese.

What the press here have notably failed to report is that the Vietnamese not only defeated the Khmer Rouge regime, but in doing it cut through the large army of Chinese military advisers—at least 10,000 strong—who were sent in during 1978. The Chinese had not experienced such a military hiding at the hands of a foreign adversary for more than thirty years. The Americans reacted with vindictive fury. Immediately after Phnom-Penh fell, the State Department issued priority instructions to its embassies, and late in the week before Deng arrived in Washington, the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, announced that his government was cutting off all aid to Vietnam. The announcement came so suddenly that it caught unawares the Australian foreign minister in Geneva. The aid, about \$5 million in all, was mostly in the form of technical advice and agricultural projects.

The Japanese government, acting in concert according to State Department officials, was a little more cautious. Its promised 1979 aid, approximately \$20 million in grants, will continue, but next year's promised allocation of \$50

million in soft loans is to be reconsidered. The US campaign also stretched to Europe, where Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands have all rallied to sever aid at Carter's request. France has refused, while the UK is still reviewing its options.

The day after Deng arrived, ambassadors from non-aligned countries were briefed at the State Department by Richard Holbrooke, the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, who told one diplomat pointblank that a visit planned by his foreign minister to Hanoi in mid-February was ill advised. A Vietnam desk officer at the State Department described the policy as a concerted effort to sever aid programmes to Vietnam: 'The Vietnamese government has been using aid for aggression to carry out war against their neighbours. We can see the need for humanitarian aid to Vietnam for the starving and needy, but this aid allows them to develop resources for military adventures.'

World Bank officials reject the suggestion that the aid which the Vietnamese are receiving could be diverted to military purposes. The bank itself voted a 50 year credit of \$60 million over the opposition of American representatives late last year. All of the bilateral aid, they say, is earmarked for particular projects: they don't get a blank check.

This orchestrated embargo is strongly reminiscent of the cutoff of world investment in Chile in 1970. As on that occasion, the decision was taken directly by the US President.

Hanoi's role

by Amara Senanayake

While popular discontent grew at the disruption caused by the Kampuchean leadership's primitivist egalitarianism, this discontent was reflected in and indeed reinforced the two-line struggle raging within the political leadership. True to their orientation, the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary group retaliated with repression. Bloody purges were conducted inside the party while massive violence was unleashed and even harsher regimentation imposed upon the people. All this has been amply documented by sources ranging across the ideological spectrum and therefore does not necessitate further exposition. Apart from this large scale coercion, the Kampuchean leadership employed a potent device in order to **displace** the accumulating contradictions. This was none other than the building up and unleashing of nationalistic sentiment. In all fairness it must be mentioned that this perhaps was no coldly calculated and deliberately executed move. After all, an intense peasant nationalism was — (as stressed earlier in this article) — a dominant component of the hegemonic ideology within the Kampuchean revolutionary movement, and therefore was an option the exercise of which would doubtless have seemed most natural to the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary-Khieu Samphan leadership. In short, whipping up nationalism to divert mass discontent was no Machiavellian ploy, but rather a politico-ideological reflex action as far as the erstwhile Kampuchean leaders were concerned. This nationalism was utilized by Pol Pot and Co. not only to displace popular anger, but also in the inner-party struggle. The opponents of the leadership were branded as agents of the Vietnamese and persecuted or physically liquidated.

In a certain respect, this charge wasn't entirely unfounded. Of

course the anti-Pol Pot elements weren't "Vietnamese agents" by any means, but they did have a very strong ideological affinity with the Vietnamese Communists. Some of them had received their political and even military training in North Vietnam, while many had fought literally shoulder-to-shoulder with Vietnamese officers and troops in the liberation war against U.S. Imperialism and its puppet Lon Nol. These "oppositional" elements articulated, as stated earlier, the proletarian socialist line within the Kampuchean revolutionary movement. The most natural corollary of this line was that these sections possessed an internationalist perspective as opposed to the xenophobia of the Pol Pot faction. The main content of their internationalism resided in the high premium they placed on the long standing ties of fraternal solidarity with Vietnam. They stood for the continuity of the tradition of revolutionary comradeship manifested in the days of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party and the Comintern. When these militants went underground once again, this time to escape the purges launched by Pol Pot and Co; they sought refuge in their old 'hunting grounds', i.e. the areas bordering Vietnam where they were most familiar with both the terrain and the people, having engaged in political organization and military actions in these areas during the time of the anti-imperialist liberation struggle. These were the areas of the country where Vietnamese troops had been present in large contingents for years, utilizing and protecting the legendary 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' as well as the C. O. S. V. N. which was the clandestine NLF headquarters co-ordinating military actions in South Vietnam. It was in these border regions that the bonds of militant fraternity between the Vietna-

mese and Kampuchean peoples were sealed with blood in the common struggle against the U. S. aggressors. It was the inhabitants of these regions who solidarized most deeply with the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Thus, it was inevitable that Heng Samrin, Ros Samay, So Phim and other militants should organise popular resistance to the Pol Pot regime in these regions and that these should eventually become liberated zones and base areas of the genuine Kampuchean revolutionaries.

The anti-Vietnamese sentiment demagogically whipped up by the Pol Pot regime saw an escalation in the form of incessant border raids which soon developed into frequent and large scale clashes. These took a heavy toll of Vietnamese civilians. The atrocities perpetrated by the Pol Pot forces against unarmed and defenseless Vietnamese villagers are fresh in the minds of the world's people and needs no retelling here. These bloody incursions meant that the Vietnamese had to divert military personnel and precious material resources to guard these border villages, combat the armed aggressors and restore a semblance of normal socio-economic life.

While the exacerbation of chauvinism and the intense friction with Vietnam served the short term interests of the Pol Pot group by temporarily displacing the conflicts accumulating within Kampuchean society, this state of affairs also coincided with China's interests in the region. Despite certain differences that existed between the Hua Quo-Feng-Deng Xiao Peng line and the ultra Maoist/Lin Piao-Gang of Four type line pursued by the Pol Pot faction, China backed the Kampuchean regime fully, hoping to hinder Vietnam's economic development and socialist reconstruction. Adopting a miniature version of the Dullesian policy of 'containment', China hoped that the instability on the Kampuchean border and the drain of men and resources would cause sufficient dislocation to weaken Vietnam. In a previous issue of this journal there was an account of the earlier stages of the current

Sino-Vietnamese dispute and China's effort to contain Vietnam (see L. G. Sept. 15th 1978 'Understanding Vietnam')

In a sense, the Chinese were correct. The low intensity war on the Kampuchean border as well as the growing tension on the Chinese border not to mention the sudden exodus of the Hwa people, posed a grave threat and presented a problem of the utmost seriousness to Vietnam.

No one in Washington or Pnomh Peng however correctly assessed one crucial factor, namely the quality of the Vietnamese leadership and the indomitable steel-like will of the Vietnamese people. Vietnam would not be pushed or pressurized, bribed or brow-beaten, bullied, besieged or boxed in. "Communists, Leninists, are men of a special cut" said Stalin in his speech made in 1924 on the occasion of Lenin's death. **The Vietnamese Communists are men of a very special cut indeed.** The leadership of the V. C. P, trained by the Comintern, is perhaps the most experienced Marxist-Leninist leadership in the world today, having been tempered in decades of protracted struggle against three of the most aggressive imperialist powers the world has ever seen. It is surely evidence of the superb quality of the present set of Vietnamese leaders that even after the death of Uncle Ho they succeeded in brilliantly waging the struggle on the political, military, diplomatic and psychological fronts right up to the final victory over the contemporary world's greatest predator, the U. S. No one who has read the writing and speeches of Le Duan could fail to be struck by the relentlessly Leninist-Stalinist thrust of his reasoning. The profound subtlety of the military thought of Generals Giap and Van Tien Dung equals and even surpasses that of Mao Ze Dong, in view of its modernity. Man-for-man, the Vietnamese military machine has been described by some Western experts as being the finest fighting force the world has seen in the 20th century. It is this tenacity

determination, discipline, combativeness and brilliance of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Vietnamese people, that the present Chinese leadership has miscalculated in its current aggression against Vietnam.

The ability of the Vietnamese leadership to deal swift and decisive politico-military blows to the enemy when and where the latter least expects it was demonstrated in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, in 1968 during the Tet Offensive and in 1975 during the great Spring Offensive. Once more the Vietnamese acted in characteristic fashion in the Christmas New Year week '78-79'. **Having made repeated and unsuccessful efforts at reaching a negotiated settlement with the Pol Pot leadership—a fact which independent observers attest to—**they intensified their military activity in the border regions, launching determined counter attacks and strengthening the positions of the 'oppositional' Kampuchean revolutionaries in these sectors. Then on December 25th came the full-scale lightning offensive, which, as one Western military specialist told **TIME** magazine, "might well become a classic textbook study".

When the Vietnamese forces, spearheaded by armoured columns and ably supported by round-the-clock airstrikes, punched through the border at six points on X'mas day, linked up with the KNUFNS fighters of Heng Samrin, and using the 'blooming lotus' tactic which B. H. Liddel-Hart would have envied crushed the Pol Pot forces, they were achieving two aims. Firstly to smash through the strategy of encirclement adopted by the Washington-Peking-Phomh Penh bloc and thereby relieve the pressure on Vietnam. Secondly they were fulfilling their internationalist duty by their Kampuchean comrades-in-arms and the fraternal Kampuchean people, by liberating them from the barbarous yoke of the Pol Pot regime. Of course these twin aims were inextricably linked, since a strong, reunified Socialist Vietnam is a powerful rear-guard and source of inspiration for the revolutionaries in Kampuchea and South East Asia as a whole. Likewise a Kampuchea which is proceeding along correct lines under a genuinely revolutionary leadership, is of tremendous assistance to Vietnam in its tasks of Socialist reconstruction.

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Cultural colonialism

by 'Aryadeva'

This journal in the last few months has published articles on a new and insidious form of colonialism namely academic colonialism. In the context of developing countries who have to buy technology and other knowledge systems developed elsewhere, correct and equal relationships are essential for a bargaining posture to get the best. This is true of China which is now attempting a massive buying of Western know-how and it was true of the Soviet Union in the 1930's (and also now). The necessity to strike a good bargain is more important in Third World countries which do not have some of the advantages in negotiations which size and power (potential or implied) brings in the cases of the Soviet Union and China.

It is in this context, I wish to highlight the news report expressing concern by local scientists about the increased inflow of foreign "experts". A large number of foreign experts, discussions indicated, do not possess the required expertise. There are of course many isolated exceptions to this rule. Dedicated experts do exist.

Apart from the influx of those designated as experts there seem to be a growing increase in the influence in technical matters of heads of various foreign agencies who do not possess any special expertise. An illustration of this is a workshop to discuss problems of rural settlement and industries in the Mahaweli, sponsored by the Ministry of Irrigation and Lands. In this workshop, three of the important sessions have as active speakers and panel members the three local heads of the West German Foundations operating in Sri Lanka and which are appendages of the three

leading political parties of West Germany. Another important participant is the US AID representative.

This workshop hopes to discuss very vital matters that effect the future of the country and we may add by implication even the success of the present ruling party. Therefore the correctness or otherwise of its decisions are of vital importance. The inclusion of foreign "experts" who are in reality representatives of foreign political parties would appear to be a mockery of any serious discussion let alone of sovereignty. It is of course, worth noting that no "experts" of local parties, even that of the ruling UNP, are participants in this workshop!

Cultural dependence has been the subject of research over the last five years or so all over the Third World and in fact a few years ago these were highlighted also in the Sri Lanka press. The most blatant of these organisations seem to be the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung which operates in effect through the Sri Lanka Foundation. Though governed by a body of local personnel the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung is its predominant financier. The hand of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung is thus very strong. A Friedrich Ebert Stiftung nominee (and of course member of the SDP) has been the director of the SLFI for a long time and is still the co-director making most of the day-to-day decisions. Academics and others who have attempted to use the "free" facilities which the Sri Lanka Foundation is supposed to provide have always come across a serious obstacle that the use of the facilities means co-sponsorship of the respective event by the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute and the delivery of an opening address by the foreign director.

Leading Sri Lankan academics and professionals have had to swallow their pride and have had to accept the indignity of being lectured to by the German director on a variety of specialities ranging from health care to plant systems and women's affairs. The added indignity is that these foreign directors hold in their own lands positions very much lower than their positions here. (For example an ex-director of one of these institutes who used to be photographed with Ministers and Prime Ministers has gone back to Germany and is now a teacher in a junior school.)

My criticism would not be construed as politically partisan. In fact these slavish habits flourished most under the regime of the 'progressive' 'non-aligned' SLFP, when certain SLFP VIP's had strong personal ties with West German personnel. Once the same Institute sponsored a seminar on "Crime" which brought all the top brass from our police force. And one of the papers read was on "security" by the head of Sri Lanka's Special Branch or intelligence division. The 3-day discussion took place under the avuncular eye of the West German director. I wonder whether such things happen even in the most educationally backward Third World country. It happened here a few months before we hosted the 5th non-aligned summit!

One of the major reasons for Iran's bursting into flames recently was the antagonism against foreigners (sometimes adept ones) controlling key decisions in the country. Sri Lanka is a much more politically sophisticated and an aware country than Iran and it is hardly necessary to draw attention to the obvious implications of a repressive cultural colonialism.

Profiles of Sri Lankan poverty

(The Marga Institute has published a 90-page study of poverty in this country. This analytical description includes six micro-studies, five based on information gathered from concrete situations in the rural sector, one from the estate sector. In trying to draw a 'poverty line' the investigators used the data given in the Consumer Finance Survey which based itself on prices prevailing in 1973. The following excerpts are taken from the final chapter of the Marga Study.)

In our analysis of poverty based on the data of the Consumer Finance Survey, we tentatively arrived at a poverty line defined by the per capita income of households which is in the region of Rs. 37 per month at 1973 prices. The study also indicated that the incidence of poverty was high in Zone IV and from the data available, this poverty seemed to be concentrated in the rural sector of the Kandyan area. The profiles of poverty which have been presented in the micro-studies do not attempt to provide very accurate measurements of poverty which can be used for comparative analysis of the incidence of poverty in all these situations that have been studied. What they attempt to do is to provide insights of a qualitative kind which enable one to define some of the essential characteristics of poverty as they are manifested in typical situations in the rural sector and the plantation sector. Within these limits the profiles of poverty support some of the broad conclusions in the macro-analysis in Part I of the study. Walgampaya which is in the central region in Zone IV appears to have the largest proportion of households which are close to or below the absolute poverty line. The village study estimates that approximately 30% of the households in the community in Walgampaya fall into the category which could be described as being desperately poor. The estimate of the poorest households in Henegama which have per capita incomes around the absolute poverty line, is estimated at around 20% of the

total community. When we come to the communities closer to the urban belt—Mirissa and Horape—the comparable figures are 5.3% for Horape and 9.3% for Mirissa. For Paranagama the estimate would be approximately 20% and in the plantation community it would be about 11%.

If we measure poverty in terms of income, the micro-studies reveal a somewhat varying pattern. The relative poverty level appears to be different in different situations. In Horape for example, among the households selected as the worst affected in the community, only two households have per capita incomes below Rs. 40. The per capita incomes in the other households range between Rs. 50 and Rs. 70 and are well above what would be regarded as the absolute poverty line. In the estate sector, 11 households out of the 18 selected fall below the Rs. 40 per capita level. In Mirissa the comparable figure is 12 out of approximately 500 households. In Henegama, out of the 15 that have been selected only 2 households have per capita incomes slightly above Rs. 40 per month and in Walgampaya out of the 20 that have been selected, 15 fall below Rs. 40, the other 5 ranging between Rs. 40 and Rs. 50. The presence of a large mass of undifferentiated poverty is evident in rural situations such as Walgampaya and Henegama. A more differentiated picture comes out of the profiles of Horape, Mirissa and the plantation community. These communities fall into the segment of the economy which have either

more regular or more diversified income-earning opportunities. We saw this situation in our analysis of the income data in the Consumer Finance Survey where both Zone I and the estate sector are least affected by absolute poverty.

The impressions that have been gathered regarding the food habits of the poorest households in these communities that have been studied confirm that the conditions are least satisfactory in rural situations that are represented by Walgampaya and Henegama. It is the Walgampaya village which probably would have the highest protein and nutritional deficiencies. This is probably related to the income situation as well as the food economy of the village itself. Walgampaya has comparatively little land devoted to the cultivation of the staple food, rice. This combined with an overall resource situation which is very poor would inevitably work against the poorest households who would have to buy the major share of their food requirement while at the same time being unable to earn sufficient cash income. We saw that the poorest households in Walgampaya very rarely had any animal protein in their diet whereas all the other communities which have been studied do have either meat or fish for a few meals during the week. The studies however do not reveal any acute insufficiency of food among the poorest households that have been investigated in the various poverty situations. In certain situations such as Henegama and Paranagama, the morning meal does not appear to be substantial. In Walgampaya the households have only one rice meal a day with yams, roti or bread for the other meals. The instances where households were reported to be doing without a main meal owing to

absolute poverty were very rare. This is mentioned in the Mirissa study and the Walgampaya study.

The information gathered in the micro-studies however can only provide a general impression regarding the availability of food for the poorest households. Normally an innate sense of pride prevents most households from revealing to an outsider that they are unable to provide themselves with the minimum food. In these studies however the information has been collected by participant-observers who have identified the living conditions in the village over a long period. The observations that have been recorded although they may not be exact when they deal with quantitative estimates, are fairly reliable when they present the general level of living in the household. It is evident from the data that in villages such as Walgampaya and Henegama, the poorest households who constitute as much as 20-30% of the rural community suffer from an insufficiency of food. This comes out from the revealing details regarding the pattern of the daily food intake. In certain situations the households are compelled to give preference to the food requirements of children particularly in regard to the morning meal. In several situations of absolute poverty observed in these six studies, the adult members of the households managed with little for the morning meal. Altogether the condition of these households is a precarious one. With no assured supply of food and dependence on casual income, illness or any personal disability of the income-earners could easily push them into a condition of semi-starvation. The situation is slightly different in the estate sector where the wage-earners obtain credit for their food requirements from the estate management, and for this reason are able to enjoy better conditions of food security than the poorest households in the other sectors of the economy.

While insufficiency of food would obviously be the hard core of poverty; it would be necessary

to see this manifestation of absolute poverty in association with its other characteristics. Hard core poverty is manifested in the poor conditions of shelter and inadequacy of living space; in the lack of access to satisfactory health facilities; in poor environmental sanitation reflected in unsatisfactory sources of drinking water, inadequate toilet facilities and so on, and in the lack of skills in literacy and numeracy for conducting the minimum relationships with the outside world. The poverty in housing was most pronounced in the estate sector. There was both poor environmental sanitation and severe overcrowding. The housing conditions in the estate sector have been discussed in some detail in Part I of the study. The problems which were set out there have been clearly illustrated in the micro-study of the plantation community. In the other micro-studies we observe a somewhat unusual feature in regard to housing. There appears to be considerable variation in the levels of housing among the poorest households that have been surveyed. An appreciable number of these households seem to enjoy housing conditions which at the level of absolute poverty in which they live are fairly satisfactory in terms of the materials used for the structure and the living space available per person. In Mirissa, for example, a number of houses in this poverty group were constructed with bricks and tiles and had cemented floors. In many cases living space exceeded 50 square feet per head. The situation is similar in Horape and Paranagama. The exceptions appear to be Henegama and Walgampaya. While these villages too had a number of houses built of bricks with tiled roofs, they generally seemed to suffer from inadequacy of space. Most of the houses are either two-roomed or one-roomed.

The quality of housing becomes a critical indicator when examining the quality of life at different income levels and determining the point at which households raise themselves above the con-

dition of absolute poverty and begin to possess the capacity to satisfy basic needs and bring about a qualitative change in their living. Households in absolute poverty lived in housing conditions in which the specialised use of living space is not possible. They often lived in one large room or at best two in which all activities have to be undertaken—sleeping, eating, storage of goods, entertainment of relatives and friends, study and so on. Housing facilities in which there is some capacity for specialised use of living space and interior arrangement of activities denotes a certain quality of life which is above stark poverty. It is true to say that in a large number of households which have been selected from the poverty group in the micro-studies, the level of deprivation in regard to housing was not absolute. In many instances the per capita space was adequate. There was some specialisation in the use of space. Household assets however in the nature of furniture and other equipment were very few. But even households in this poorest segment have a use of living space which could generate a demand for consumer durables of various kinds. In this sense households are likely to have a higher level of expectations and respond with a corresponding sense of deprivation to their present conditions.

Next: The Pattern of Poverty

Absolute poverty

Most countries have not yet completed the transition to modern economies and societies, and their growth is hindered by a variety of domestic and international factors. Moreover, about 800 million people still live in absolute poverty. These are people living at the very margin of existence—with inadequate food, shelter, education, and health care. For many of them, there has been little improvement in the standard of living, and for some there may have been a deterioration. Added to the sense of frustration at the size of the task ahead is an increasing awareness of how difficult it is to alter traditions and social rigidities, which often impede efforts to accelerate growth and to raise the living standards of the poor.

— World Bank report — August 1978.

The tragedy of the World's poor

by Jayantha Somasunderam

Most of us are relatively poor. The competitive ethic of our society will always keep us conscious of the living standards that we can aspire to. Development should be able to provide such improving living standards. But what does it mean to be absolutely poor?

Absolute poverty is the lot of 800,000 million people. It characterises those who are on the very margin of existence, without adequate food, shelter, education and health care. They are victims of malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, a high infant mortality and a low life expectancy. On an average they will die in their thirties because of this situation.

Absolute poverty is our neighbour. South Asia is desperately poor. And South East Asia is only marginally better. Gunnar Myrdal has described these countries as being 'soft'. They are soft in enforcing public discipline. They are soft towards inertia, inefficiency, maladministration and corruption. They are soft in tolerating nepotism, obscurantist, irredentist and anachronistic ideas and concepts.

Illusion

The poor are invariably the rural citizens. Most of them have very small plots of land to cultivate or are landless altogether. Seventy per cent of the farmers in Bangladesh are landless or have less than one hectare per household. Further land is poorly utilised. A World Bank report points out that in India and Pakistan only 10 to 15 percent of the land is used in multiple cropping, while in China 90 percent of the land is subject to multiple cropping.

Is progress then only an illusion? To 40 percent of the World's population, that is 1,500 million people, who have no effective medical services, it must seem

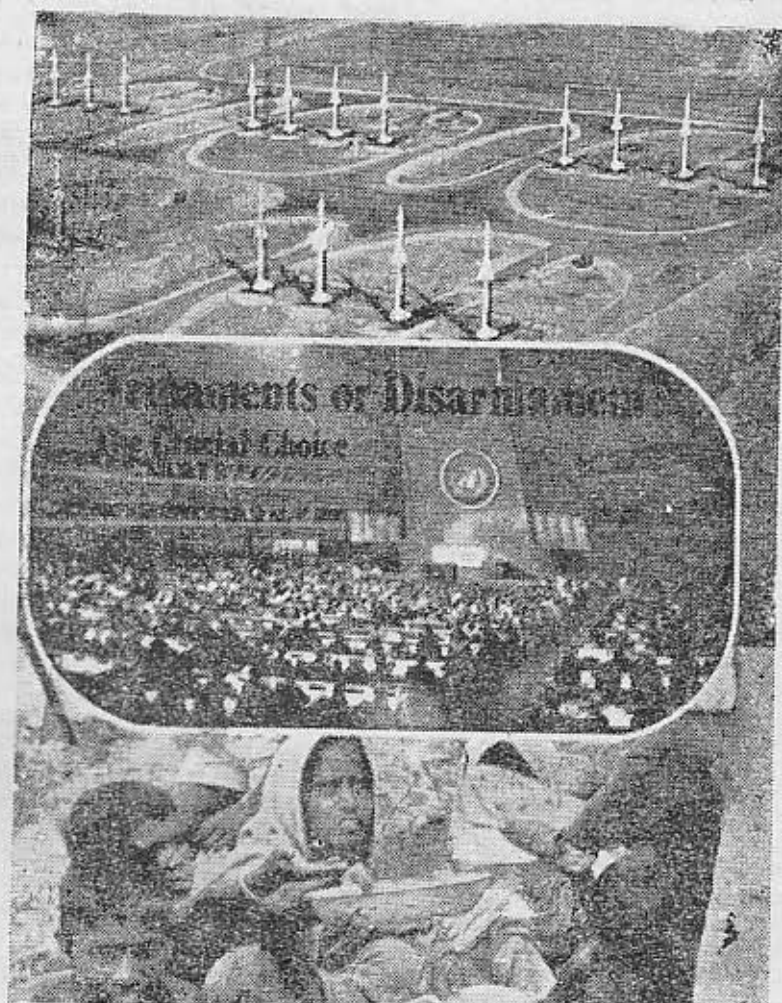
so. Did you know that 3,000 million people lack access to safe water and 750,000 of them die each month due to waterborne diseases? What kind of progress can one talk about to the 800 million illiterates in this world and their 250 million pre-teen children who do not have a school to attend?

Shocking as these figures are the extent of the tragedy comes into focus when one learns that the global military expenditure is now running into Rs. 6,000,000 millions. This is equivalent to the combined GDP of the USSR and Japan or forty percent of the Third World. The amount spent on arms by the Third World is itself increasing. It has gone up from 6 to 15 percent

of the World expenditure, in the last decade. The Middle East region in particular has invested heavily in arms during the seventies.

A neglected aspect of the debate on the link between disarmament and development, is the economic and social impact of the military in the under developed countries themselves.

Heavy expenditure on arms, reduces the amount of trade and gives rise to inflation. It is a major factor contributing to the massive recession that is going to hit the market economies in the next decade. More unfortunate than the financial wastage is the waste of human talent, since half of the world's scientists are at work on military projects.



கொழும்புத் தமிழ்ச் சங்கம்

Superpowers

In the past the balance of terror was maintained between the superpowers, neither of whom could initiate a nuclear war without being ravaged in a retaliatory attack. But the sophistication of nuclear weapon guidance systems has led to a new era when the possibility of successfully destroying ones enemy in a first strike becomes feasible.

The new land-based mobile US missile, the MX, has awesome accuracy and firepower. Its circular-error-probability is down to a few tens of yards and it can deliver ten 200 kilo ton manoeuvrable re-entry vehicles, that is a set of weapons with their own navigation and control system capable of adjusting trajectory during re-entry into the atmosphere. The Soviet-Union has for its part developed the SS-X-16.

In addition, the introduction of enhanced radiation and reduced blast nuclear weapons—the neutron bomb as it is popularly called and its use in tank battles of tomorrow, helps erase the gap between nuclear and conventional warfare. Another deadly conventional weapon is the fuel air explosive. The FAE is equivalent weight for weight, to the explosive effect of several times as much TNT.

Impudently violated

In some of the latest weapons it would appear that the Soviet Union has the numerical edge. But the US continues to develop new systems.

Although they have only 496 sea launched ballistic missiles to the USSR's 849, they are about to put into operation the third generations of nuclear submarines known as the Trident. Each Trident can carry 24 SLBMs.

In the midst of all of this investment in weapons, the quest for disarmament continues. The last two decades have seen the proliferation of arms control agreements. The best known treaty of our generation is the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty, which

banned nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. The treaty is impudently violated of course.

In 1968 appeared the Non-Proliferation Treaty which prohibits the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-possessors. The 1972 SALT ABM Treaty imposes limitations on US and Soviet anti-ballistic missile systems. It is the development of sophisticated ABMs that increase the likelihood of a nuclear war launched by a power

that has a comprehensive ABM system.

The 1972 SALT Interim Agreement has frozen the missile launchers of the two superpowers. But it is powerless in curbing the qualitative improvement of such offensive weapons.

The present round of limitation talks, the SALT II, is concerned mainly with quantitatively equal US-Soviet limitations of nuclear delivery vehicles.

The punishment . . .

(Continued from page 9)

other countries and it could well be that internal politics were also a contributing factor. Wang Tung-hsing, Deng's major opponent in Peking was the last and most senior Chinese leader to visit Cambodia. He came under fire in the wall-poster campaign Deng organised to strengthen his supremacy last November. But he was not purged, and Deng may have feared that the humiliation suffered by China in Cambodia would be used against him in the future. Further speculation is out of place.

Recently, *Peking Review* accused Vietnam of 'bullying' China. Vietnam has enumerated 2,158 cases of Chinese harassment since 1974 of which 1,355 were by armed patrols (and we know from the Vietnam war that Hanoi's claims, when enumerated, are relatively accurate). Since Hanoi wanted its Chinese aid, it seems no more likely that it was 'bullying' its neighbour than that it was 'bullying' the United States in 1965. On the contrary, Vietnam feels itself besieged by the Chinese regime. It went across the Cambodian border not in order to impose an Indo-Chinese Federation but rather to defend its flank. Obviously, Vietnamese troops should withdraw from Khmer territory when the attacks mounted from

Thailand cease. But those who, like the US President, wish to demand such a retreat now should look also to the South China Sea. This is the site of China's real war claims.

Peking continues to insist that it will 'brook no incursion on China's sacred territory'—which implies all too clearly that it may seize the Spratly islands and destroy any oil rigs sunk by the Vietnamese. The Harrier jump jets, which our own Industry Minister is busy selling in Peking this week, are ideally suited to island warfare and will no doubt be 'defending' China's claims in the near future. While China maintains this position, it is obvious that Vietnam will never allow hostile MiGs to be based in Cambodia.

Who can look at the map of Chinese claims and regard Vietnam as the 'expansionist' power of Southeast Asia, and China's invasion as a response to this? Apparently the United States and British governments are able to do so. The verbal attack on Vietnam as an 'Asian Cuba' was launched with the acquiescence of Brzezinski. Now, an invasion has been mounted after Deng's return from the USA. According to the *Washington Post*, he was reassured: any 'punishment' he inflicted upon Vietnam would not disrupt the new alliance. China is not responding to events in Cambodia nor to Vietnamese 'bullying'. In effect, China is punishing Vietnam for its victory over the United States in 1975.

Where are the radical Buddhists?

by Reggie Siriwardena

Mr. Jayantha Somasunderam's article on the Asian Theological Conference (*Lanka Guardian*, March 1) and his comments on contemporary Christian movements of a socially radical character prompt me to raise in print a question I have often pondered: Why is there no parallel manifestation in Sri Lankan Buddhism? Before I attempt to provide my own suggestions for an answer, I should, I suppose, make it clear that while I have been a non-believer in religion for at least forty years, my background of family and childhood upbringing was Buddhist.

The fact I am pointing to—the absence of a radical Buddhist movement—will not, I hope, be questioned by anybody. In the last decade it is from within sections of the Christian Churches in Sri Lanka—once the centres of entrenched privilege—that voices have been raised in the name of religion against oppression, exploitation or injustice.

Anybody who has been active during this period on issues affecting civil rights and human rights will be aware that it has been easy enough to enlist the support of some Bishops and other highly placed members of the Christian Churches. Even during and immediately after the 1971 insurrection, although the great majority of the victims of the repression came from Buddhist families and included some Buddhist monks, the initiative in the attempts at interceding with the State on humane grounds came from certain Christian dignitaries. No such response on this and similar questions has been forthcoming from comparable sections of the Buddhist hierarchy; nor is there any organised group, whether of monks or of laymen, that has tried to evolve a Buddhist philosophy of radical social action, although several such groups exist

within the Christian communities in Sri Lanka.

The most obvious explanation for this phenomenon is that since 1956 institutionalised Buddhism has been virtually an Established Church—as the Anglican Church was in the colonial era. The dependence of the official institutions of Buddhism on State patronage goes a long way towards explaining the reluctance of their members to come into conflict with the State on issues other than those affecting their sectarian interests. But this does not seem to me an adequate explanation for the absence of a radical movement—intellectual or popular—based on Buddhism. In the history of Christianity, too, the organised Churches were always predominantly on the side of the status quo; yet Christianity the world over has repeatedly produced dissident, unorthodox and heretical movements of a socially critical, sometimes even revolutionary, character. Why hasn't this happened with Buddhism?

I am deeply conscious of my lack of scholarship in this field to produce closely-researched and well-substantiated answers, but since this is a question which has been ignored by those who have the necessary equipment, I may as well rush in. Any errors I make may at least have the merit of evoking discussion among the better qualified.

Of Marx's best-known pronouncement on religion, most people remember only that he described religion as 'the opium of the people', forgetting the total context which gives its precise meaning to this phrase: 'Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.' It is clear that Marx recognised

both the consolatory aspects of religion, inducing submission to the social order, as well as its elements of protest which can make religion, in certain historical situations, a force for active social change. In the history of Christianity these dual aspects of religion are well exemplified.

Christianity was a religion originally preached by a carpenter's son to the poor among an oppressed nation in the Roman Empire. Within a few centuries it was taken up by the ruling classes and has been utilised by them ever since as a buttress of the established order, and in the spread of Western imperialism it played a powerful role as an ideological weapon of colonialism. Nevertheless, the original radical content of the Gospels and of the central symbols of the founder's life—the birth in the manger and the death on the cross between two thieves—remains.

It has been possible, therefore, for Christian rebels in every age—from John Ball who led the English peasants' revolt inspired by a millennial dream of equality, John of Leyden who set up the Anabaptist commune in Munster, Gerrard Winstanley, who reinterpreted the Christian doctrine of the Fall so as to relate it to the institution of private property, down to Camilo Torres, the Catholic priest in Latin America who died fighting with the guerrillas—to rediscover the original social content of Christ's message and to reinterpret it in terms that had meaning for their own time. It is significant also that the three great European revolutions—the English, the French and the Russian—each gave birth to a literary masterpiece in which the radical Christian tradition found enduring expression—Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Blake's *Songs of Experience*, and Aleksandr Blok's *The Twelve*.

(Continued on page 19)

Sinhala films (2)

Cinematic images of women

by Ananda Jayaweera

Sinhala films have never dealt with the working women of this country in a realistic fashion with the problems they face as workers and housewives, with the inferior status traditionally accorded to them. With the pressures that society exerts on them to preserve the stereotypes of woman merely as mother/wife or beautiful plaything. Even in **Duhulu Malak**, which attempted to give a sympathetic portrayal of a middle-class housewife, there is no criticism or analysis of the boredom of her existence and her main complaint was that her husband did not have time to take her to Galle Face.

What is more, Sinhala films have become a dangerous propagator of false values in women. Vulgarly and ostentation in dress, middle-class attitudes on status and class, cruelty and rude behaviour to servants and poor people but yet an unequal relationship with regard to husbands are commonly portrayed by women characters in the Sinhala cinema. While the commercial Sinhala pot-boilers carry on in this fashion, what is regrettable is that films with cultural and artistic pretensions also keep on echoing the same attitudes.

For example, **Gehenu Lamai** (an anti-women film to beat them all) glorifies the traditional, supposedly Sinhala Buddhist virtues of obedience and docility to parental authority and feudal values. In spite of her education, freedom of choice in marriage is not for this heroine who is lauded for her renunciation and subservience to the dictates of traditional society. Again, in **Veera Puran Appu**, the hero's wife looks passive and winsome, sings a lullaby, is seen doing her religious duties and goes through the compulsory crying

Scene from *Gehenu Lamai*

scene for women in the Sinhala cinema, but never once utters a line that would indicate any support for the political activity of Puran Appu, one of the leaders of the people's resistance of 1848. In **Bambaru Avith**, the fisherman's daughter is passive and stony-faced, not even showing a glimmering of anger or resentment at being seduced and finally abandoned by the city slicker. The most recent offender is of course **Ahasin Polovata**, a sensitively produced essay in crass sentimentality in which the director—instead of exposing the ideology of bourgeois life—expects the audience to sympathise with the heroine's so-called problems.

Many of the better directors have tended to concentrate on the sexual and reproductive aspects of a woman's life which are no doubt of box office interest—namely coming of age and rape (**Eya dan Loku Lamayek**), miscarriage (**Ahasin Polovata**), and abortion (**Paradige**, which has not yet been released). They have however failed to create a single female character with a consciousness of her personal oppression and with an understanding of the social forces and

political structures that perpetuate this oppression.

It is interesting to speculate why such stereotypes are embedded not only in films, but also in other cultural forms and why such images and concepts are accepted by the very groups that are maligned. The key to understanding this situation possibly lies in the concept of ideological hegemony. Antonio Gramsci, who elaborated this concept, claimed that a dominant group exercises its control over society in two ways: "First, the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group and second, the apparatus of state coercive powers which legally enforces discipline".

Hegemony is thus the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality etc, which is supportive of the established order. It is the world-view that is propagated by all the agencies of ideological control—religions, culture, mass-media etc.—into every area of social life. To the extent that this value system

is internalised in the minds of the broad masses, and accepted by them, it becomes part of what can be called "conventional wisdom", a part of the natural order or things and therefore unchallengeable.

In Sri Lanka today, ideological domination is exercised through religion and culture, which is one of the primary instruments of bourgeois rule. And films, being one of the most potent instruments of mass persuasion, play an important role in this process of ideological domination. This fact will become clear when we look at the audience for Sinhala films in Sri Lanka which is composed of urban and rural workers and the petty-bourgeoisie. This audience swallows the lies and the half-truths that the films propagate about themselves; this is because through a long process of indoctrination and brain-washing they have come to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant bourgeoisie. If the audience were class-conscious, aware of its own position in the production process and conscious of the reality of the oppression it is subjected to, films conveying basically false ideas and values would not be the box-office winners they are. If, for example women were conscious of the role that is played by a film like **Gehenu Lamai** in perpetuating their oppression and their feudal semi-slavery, then they would not be streaming into the cinemas and leaving with tear-stained eyes: they would laugh out of existence the notion that the film maker tries to convey that the girl who blights her own life though a blind obedience to a set of archaic social values is the ideal of womanhood.

This examination of some aspects of the value-system inherent in Sinhala films is offered in the hope that it will encourage further examination of the hegemonic role of culture in Sri Lanka. For while veiling power relations, issues and events, it breeds and encourages not only a sense of fatalism, but also passivity towards political action. It induces the oppressed classes, in

a multiplicity of ways, to accept or 'consent' to their own exploitation and misery.

It is in this context that progressive film-makers, critics and reviewers as well as films-goers

have an important task to perform. They must always be conscious of the ideological constructs that films seek to impress on the minds of the masses and the means used to make them subscribe to their own degradation.

Where are the . . .

(Continued from page 17)

I find no evidence of a comparable tradition in Buddhism. Although Buddhism challenged the supremacy of the Brahmins, this opposition seems to have reflected a conflict between two different sections of the privileged classes, since from its inception the religion received the patronage of kings and merchants. Even in Sri Lanka, it was introduced with the direct support and encouragement of the monarchy. In modern times in this country, it became the ideological expression of aspiring layers of the middle classes, but this revival never went beyond the framework of bourgeois nationalism. Let alone criticising the fundamentals of the social order, the revival did not even challenge frontally the caste system, in spite of the often-quoted pronouncements of the Buddha on this subject.

It seems to me that the divergent social origins of the two religions have left their imprint also on two other contrasting aspects of them. In spite of the existence within Christianity of puritanical sects (a development which accompanied the rise of capitalism), the mainstream of its tradition has always been life-affirming, and therefore the radical Christian could find within his faith a justification for his quest to redeem life here on earth. The transcendental and other-worldly character

of Buddhism, turning away from this life as **maya**, provides no comparable equivalent.

I offer these suggestions—of whose limitations I am only too conscious—as a basis for discussion. My excuse for their lack of depth, apart from my own inadequacies in knowledge, is that I have found no help in the published literature in Sri Lanka—not even in the one quarter where intellectual guidance might have been looked for—that is, the body of Marxist writing in this country. In spite of the immense political and social role of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, no informed discussion has taken place on this subject in forty years of supposed Marxist thinking. In fact, the topic has been shied away from as dangerous and embarrassing—another manifestation, I suppose, of the myth of 'Sri Lankan exceptionalism': people everywhere else can take critical discussion of religion, but not in Sri Lanka.

This timorousness is in marked contrast with the boldness and incisiveness of Marxist scholars like D. D. Kosambi and Dabiprasad Chattopadhyaya in examining the religious traditions and institutions of neighbouring India, where the weight of orthodoxy might have been supposed to be even stronger. Chattopadhyaya's chapter on Buddhism in his book **Lokayata** is indeed the best analysis of the social origins of Buddhism that I have come across anywhere. Somebody might make a start here at least by translating it into Sinhala.

Are Tamils a minority?

by J. Uyangoda

Mr. A. Jayaweera, in his polemic against Drs. S. C. Fernando and Carlo Fonseka states, in parenthesis, that the Tamil people in Sri Lanka are not an oppressed national minority, but an oppressed nation. (Lanka Guardian-January 15th) I entirely agree with him on this point. It is a matter of regret that almost all the leftist political parties and groups in this country have been committing the fundamental error of considering the Tamil people in Sri Lanka only as a national minority. This failure betrays not only their residual traces of social chauvinism, as Mr. Jayaweera says, but also their inability to grasp the Marxist-Leninist fundamentals on the national question.

On what grounds can one describe the Tamil people in Sri Lanka a national minority? In this country the term "minority" had been used in relation to the Tamil people first by the British rulers and then by so-called patriots in the time of colonial rule. Since then the word came to the official jargon to be used as an adjective to the word "Tamils". Even our leftists began to use the term 'Tamil minority' indiscriminately without giving thought to its dangerous implications. Dangerous because when one regards an oppressed nation merely as a national minority, then one easily tends to misunderstand, minimize and underestimate the oppressed status of that particular people. This ultimately serves to justify and even to defend the nationalist prejudices of the oppressor nation.

It is true that in terms of numerical strength Tamils are secondary to the Sinhalese. But this population criteria must not be applied to determine the superiority or otherwise of a particular nation. Moreover Marxists never subscribe to the medieval

notion of 'superiority' or 'inferiority' of any nation.. Any nation which, in actual fact is in a lesser position in terms of population must not be deprived of its legitimate place and rights. Thus, the Tamils though they are not the major ethnic group in Sri Lanka, are essentially not a national minority. They possess a fairly contiguous traditional territory, a common language and culture of their own, and a common economic life though the latter, to a certain extent, has been intermingled with and interrelated to that of the Sinhalese due to specific historical conditions. Hence a Nation. They were/are being deprived of the fundamental democratic rights of a nation, first of which is the right of political independence, that is of a separate political existence. Hence an oppressed nation.

Only if and when we identify and locate the main problem in this way that we are able to perceive the essential historical meaning of the demand of the Tamil people for a separate state. They strive for separation not because they are instigated by some foreign power, but because they need for themselves the right to determine their own destiny. The demand for separation is only the concrete manifestation of the historical necessity, political democracy for an oppressed nation.

Most of the leftist political groups, let alone the right wing parties, seem to think that the fundamental characteristic of the "Tamil Question" is that the Tamils are discriminated against by the Sinhala dominated capitalist ruling class. This is both a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation of the problem of national oppression. If we present the problem of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, concretely and historically, as Lenin put it, we may come to the inevitable conclu-

sion that the national question is one of the unresolved tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. In the classical bourgeois revolutions or during the process of those revolutions in Western Europe the oppressed nations formed their own national states. The slogan of the right of nations to self-determination came into being in the 17th and 18th centuries only as a petty-bourgeois slogan with the characteristic of a democratic demand of the rising bourgeoisie against feudalism and feudal state structure. The *raison d'être* of the demand to self-determination in the context of the present day historical situation in this country is that the local bourgeoisie, unlike most of the classical European counterparts, is incapable of carrying out the tasks of the bourgeois revolution through to the end. This of course is true of all the neo-colonial bourgeoisies. The present agitation and struggle of the Tamil people in the North is nothing but a nationalist movement of an oppressed nation for political democracy. Those who consider the Tamil people merely as a national minority inevitably fail to understand this essential democratic context of the demand for political independence. It is this very failure which has led most of our leftist groups to be content with merely believing that the "Tamil problem" can be solved by ending "all sorts of discrimination" in a future socialist society.

It is not disputed that only in a socialist society that all sorts of discrimination, racial or otherwise, can be brought to an end effectively and forever. But "The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts ie. on all questions of

(Continued on page 22)

Newspaperman extraordinary

A man carrying a bundle of copy paper was walking towards me in the corridor of our newsroom in Colombo peering anxiously into one cubicle and then another. He was looking for a desk and chair at which to work. This man was the editor of the *Silumina*, the Sunday newspaper with the largest circulation (146,000) in Southeast Asia in 1948. He had no room to work in, nor had he any staff. His was a one-man newspaper. He translated the news from the Reuters ticker or from the English-language *Ceylon Daily News* or *Observer*, wrote half the feature articles and got his friends outside to do the rest at rates which wouldn't buy a meal. He was not only a provocative writer but an influential editor as well since his readers were the ayurvedic physicians who dispensed traditional herbal medicines used by most of the rural people, the village school teachers who helped shape the minds of 70 percent of the school-going population, the Buddhist monks who had spiritual influence over 80 percent of the people of Ceylon and the Sinhalese-speaking rural middle class. But his social standing was low and, professionally, he didn't rate even a desk and chair of his own, far less his own cubicle.

"In those days, these were the status symbols, the prerogatives of the English-language journalists. They were gentlemen—and he was just a man. His salary was one-fifth that of his colleague, the editor of the English-language *Daily News*. That was the time—just 20 years ago when the vernacular was just the language of people without literary attainments, social cachet or economic power."—Tarzie Vittachi—January 1969 issue of *Horizon*.

This was how a veteran Ceylonese journalist who had worked in a English language newspaper saw his counterpart in the Sinhalese newspaper thirty

years ago. This in fact was the true picture of both the Sinhalese journalist and the Sinhalese newspaper at the time. The Sinhalese newspaper was more or less a translation of the previous day's English daily. There were no Sinhalese journalists to speak of. Sinhalese newspapers were produced not by journalists but by translators.

The honour of changing this situation goes to one journalist who himself started his career in a English newspaper. Whilst you are reading if you come across the words **DIYOGU BADATURGE DAVID** you may just skip them. But if you were to read D. B. Dhanapala you are sure to pause a while because that you know is the name of one of Asia's best known journalists and the senior most editor in Sri Lanka at the time of his death, just 8 years ago. The modern Sinhalese newspaper and the present Sinhalese language journalist owe a great deal to this genius of a journalist for the prestigious position that they today enjoy in society.

Dhanapala was born on 5.1.1905 in Tissamaharama and received his primary education in the local village school. Later he became a bright student of Mahinda College, Galle. This budding journalist saw his maiden writing in print in the magazine "*Buddhist Chronicle*" edited by Dr. Gunapala Malalasekara and Dr. P. de. S. Kularatna, while he was a student.

D. B. Dhanapala who was undoubtedly the most loved pupil of Mr. F. G. Pears, Principal of Mahinda College, had the privilege of accompanying him to India when the latter left for India. Dhanapala obtained both his B. A. and M. A. degrees from the Allahabad University under the tutelage of Mr. Pears.

Dhanapala's maiden attempt as a journalist was the English

magazine "*Thought*" that he edited while in India. He also became a regular contributor to the "*Leader*", a leading newspaper of India at that time.

Writing was not the only thing that Dhanapala was interested in, in the field of newspaper production. He chose to become a proof-reader of an Indian newspaper called "*The Statesman*". It is at this time that he began to write to the Ceylon Daily News. Dhanapala began writing to the *Daily News* under the pen-name "**JANUS**" which soon became a household word among the English newspaper reading public of this country. Mr. H. A. J. Hulugalla a distinguished Journalist himself and one-time diplomat had the following to say of D. B. Dhanapala, "He was a master of the art of writing biographical sketches and was very knowledgeable on all matters relating to Eastern art and culture. He was also a first-rate journalist."

One of the greatest contributions of Dhanapala to contemporary society was the cause that he championed through his Sinhala daily "*Lankadipa*" founded in 1947. He, with a band of dedicated Sinhala journalists were in fact responsible for the cultural renaissance that followed.

When Dhanapala left "*Lankadipa*" in 1960 every one thought that all acrobatics in the field of Sinhalese journalism was over. But in 1961 Dhanapala gave birth to another group of newspapers through the Independent Newspapers Ltd. which today has proved to be the most fearless press in this country. Dhanapala's "*Davasa*" became a household word in every town and hamlet throughout the length and breadth of this country. Dhanapala's demise came in 1971, ten years after he founded the "*Davasa*" group of newspapers, which gave birth to many journalistic innovations in this country.

— V. K. W.

Taking my brother to the hairdresser

by Sparine

In one sense of course, I'd done it before. I mean I had taken my sister to the hairdresser. But this was the first time I was called upon to take my brother to the hairdresser. Until then I was burdened by the old-fashioned view that all a man needs by way of hairdressing is a good ten minutes with scissors and comb. Up to now the only improvement I had seen, was on the streets of Karachi, where the barber sits under a tree and you sit cross legged opposite him and he goes to work on your hair and beard. But times are changing.

The saloon is in the midst of a posh hotel's shopping centre. Not the kind of locality where the *hoi polloi* will drop in for a cup of plain tea. It's equipped with impressive gadgetry. You know the kind of elaborate helmet that astronauts would wear on their way to Mars.

I began having misgivings even before I entered the place. You see I had just seen a young chap with an earring. Now I won't swear to this but I think only one ear was adorned, despite the fact that he had two normal healthy earlobes. I had grown accustomed to seeing males with long hair, handbags, chains, frilly shirts, but an ear-ring—really!

Poor, innocent, me. I assumed the ear-rings that boys wear would be the clip-on variety. Wrong again. A friend wised me up later that her boy-cousin was in-

involved in a severe hassle at home—he wanted to get his ear bored.

What next! Perhaps toe rings or nose rings.

What was most confusing was the recollection of a running battle I have been having with a friend—a girl—in order to make her wear ear-rings. She claims that she is allergic to them. Poor ultra sensitive errogenous earlobes.

Back to the male saloon. The operation begins with a head rinse. The victim's head is poked into a wash basin and soundly scrubbed. I know what torture this can be. I've had it done to me. After a play, in which I played somebody's grandfather, an obliging friend held me under the tap and amidst sobs and

gasps she soaped out the white-ning from it.

The washing and scrubbing over the frying begins. A hair-dryer gun is held to the head; and hair, scalp and brains are deliberately roasted. Once the steam has stopped rising from the head, the cutting begins. Really its just timid snipping away at the edges of the hair. Some of the clientele are already balding and I guess it wouldn't do to cut and chop in the hearty way they used to in the good old days.

Finally the hair gets set; unfortunately little imagination seems to be forthcoming. There is a sameness that makes one bored. All of them look like eastern versions of the Crazy Boys. Having had my education and knowledge enhanced I stepped out of the saloon.

Are Tamils...

(Continued from page 20)

economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a radical mistake to think that the struggle for democracy was capable of proletarianism from the socialist revolution, or of hiding, overshadowing it, etc. On the contrary, in the same way as there can be no victorious Socialism that does not practice full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.' (Lenin the Socialist Revolution and The Right of Nations to self-determination-Theses—)

Lenin's words are categorical and unambiguous. The proleta-

riat, in its series of struggles for socialism, must fight for democracy too. The proletariat fights for democracy not to confine itself within the limits of a capitalist system, but with the sole purpose of transcending those limits with the view of extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic right up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie.

The time has come for most of our leftist political groups who claim to be Marxist-Leninists to re-consider their attitudes and strategies towards the struggle of the oppressed Tamil people. The failure to adopt a correct revolutionary strategy on this key political issue would definitely have its gravest implications.

Letters

(Continued from page 2)

Critic...

In the face of all this evidence which **Fowler** is probably seeing for the first time, would he persist in preaching that the correct text in Luke 4.23 is 'Physician heal thyself'? But whether Mr. Fernando was correctly citing scripture or not is beside the point. What really matters is that he was conveying his meaning in unobjectionable English. The same cannot be said of his Ocarping critic, our preacher needs to be reminded of the text in Matthew 7.3: 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, with never a thought for the great plank in your own?' In case he 'takes objection' on the ground that it is not the text 'correct' he should be told that this is what is found in the New English Bible.

This fellow, who has the effrontery to call himself H. W. Fowler, has pounced upon what is obviously a trivial printing error. Near the end of the print of Mr. Haan's classic letter which reappeared in the Lanka Guardian of 15th January, the Latin word 'patientia' (which means 'patience') was printed as 'patential'. The compositor and proof-reader can both be forgiven for not being familiar with a dead language, but **Fowler** chooses to imply that the error was Haan's. Any discriminating reader of Mr. Haan's famous letter would never think of accusing the worthy writer of ignorance of the Latin spelling. The style bespeaks the man.

From the contrasting prose styles of Mr. Haan and the foul one, readers can judge for themselves who has made a fool of himself. A fool is bad enough, but an odious fool is worse. Why doesn't the pseudonymous scribe take off his mask? We can hardly wait to see his face. It will be sufficient if he makes himself seen and not heard.

Colombo 4.

Dr. Wallbeoff Janz

Fowler fouls up

Our local Fowler is outraged and descends to crude vituperation. There are two points in his letter which call for a reply:—

1. In the quotation Quousque Tandem Abutere Patientia Nostra (How long will you abuse our patience) The first "i" in "Patientia" has been dropped through a or printing error. This should be apparent to the veriest ninny, but our local Fowler has not the intelligence to grasp this point.

2. The cream of the joke lies in the second quotation—**Ne Sutor Ultra Crepidam** (Let not the cobbler go beyond his last) does not apply to the District Engineer, in whose instance it is irrelevant, but to Haan himself. This subtle example of Haan's caustic wit and mordant humour has been completely missed by the illiterate Fowler and it has baffled him, just as it did baffle his colonial masters, the British War-Civil Servants, nearly fifty years ago. The rest of Fowler's letter is too contemptible to merit serious consideration.

Colombo 5.

Amaradasa Fernando

Sensitivity

Mr. Reggie Siriwardena is not willing to allow Dr. Carlo Fonseka a measure of sensitivity. The market in sensitivity has been cornered by Mr. S. these last so many years, in the way John D. Rockefeller cornered American oil, and nobody else has a look in. R.'s sensitivity is apparent in the following: "Dr. Fonseka's apologia for the horrors of 1971... reminds me of those critics who used to say, in answer to protests against American atrocities in Vietnam, 'But the Vietcong also committed atrocities'."

"One doesn't (at least not if one has any pretensions to being called a socialist) equate violence of the oppressors with the violence of the oppressed etc." This sensitive bit of prestidigitation is

so smoothly done that the human eye cannot follow it. While the audience is spellbound by the conjuror's patter 'atrocities' has changed into 'violence'.

To the insensitive it would seem that the atrocities the Americans committed against the Vietnamese, the atrocities that Thieu and his gang committed against the Vietnamese and the atrocities the Vietcong committed against the Vietnamese were all **atrocities** and that from the point of view of the victim of atrocity the information that his **bourreau** was himself an oppressed party would have been insufficient to persuade him that the atrocity inflicted on him was merely justifiable violence.

It takes sensitivity (and not being oneself at the receiving end of atrocities) to be able to make these distinctions.

Colombo 3.

Costain de Vos

The mirage of tourism

The high patronage the tourist industry of this country received from successive governments, from both the public and private sectors and from the media during the past 12 years speaks eloquently for its stupendous success. The statistics relating to this success story have often been reproduced in the press.

Apparently enamoured by this success the new Minister in charge of Tourism, Mr. Anandatissa de Alwis, has made up his mind to work for a target of approximately 500,000 tourist arrivals by 1984. He disclosed this at a seminar on tourism held recently at the BMICH. The number of tourist arrivals for 1977 has been only 153,665 and the increase envisaged is more than threefold. It would also be relevant to note here that a sum of Rs. 34.25 million has been allocated to the Tourist Board for the next financial year, whereas what has been allocated this year is only Rs. 20.2 million. The increased allocation is an indication of the future plans.

(Continued on page 24)

Personally as one who has been greatly interested in the academic aspects of the tourist industry for nearly 20 years, I am committed to the belief that international tourism is a great fillip towards the development of our economy. It would only be a prophet of gloom who would denounce the advantages of tourism to a developing country like ours.

Nevertheless, looking at the ambitious projections for 1984 one could only be contended if the planners are mindful of the various destructive aspects of tourism. In this short sketch I am only trying to pinpoint one such aspect.

Countries like Sri Lanka that have won their independence after centuries of servitude to imperialist powers need to inculcate in their peoples a spirit of independence, a feeling of equality in relation to other peoples.

Successful tourism demands a service mentality in the vast array of bell boys, waiters, guides and chauffeurs that are required to keep the industry going. Is this not bound to create a servile class?

There are many hotels, shops and other institutions in this country that have openly begun to discriminate against the local clients of such institutions. There are instances when the queue that operates for both you and me say at the Post Office, Bus Stand or Railway Station does not operate for the tourist. Does not the tourist exercise have the effect of quietly reducing the Sri Lankan to the position of a second-class citizen in his own native land? Are these not issues that should engage the attention of a nation that needs to have a national identity of its own?

Let me wind up this sketch with a few words that have been

said by Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, the President, when he was the Minister in charge of Tourism in this country.

"..... I am not one who thinks that we should have 10 million tourists, or only 5 million tourists, or even one million tourists. I do not want Ceylon to be a second Greece, or Italy, or Spain. I think we must limit the number of tourists. Otherwise they will spoil our culture and our civilization, and we will just become hangers on tourists. I am not in favour of tourism to that extent. Tourism can be made a money-spinner to some extent. I would set a limit on the number of tourists. I do not want to go beyond that. Another Government might do so. Personally I would freeze the number of tourists who come to this country to 150,000 or 200,000. Anyway that is a long way ahead....." (Column 501 of Hansard of 2.9.1965)

Panadura

V. K. Wijeratna

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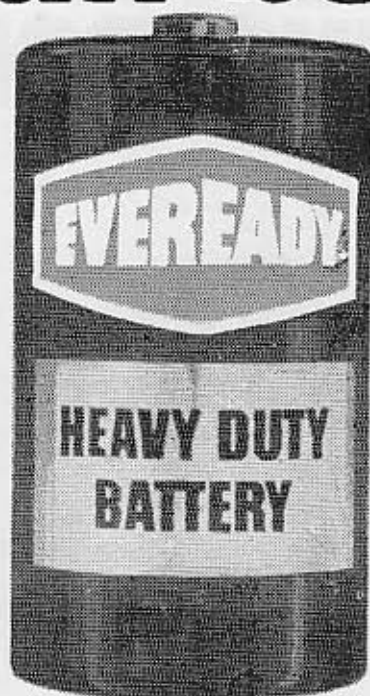
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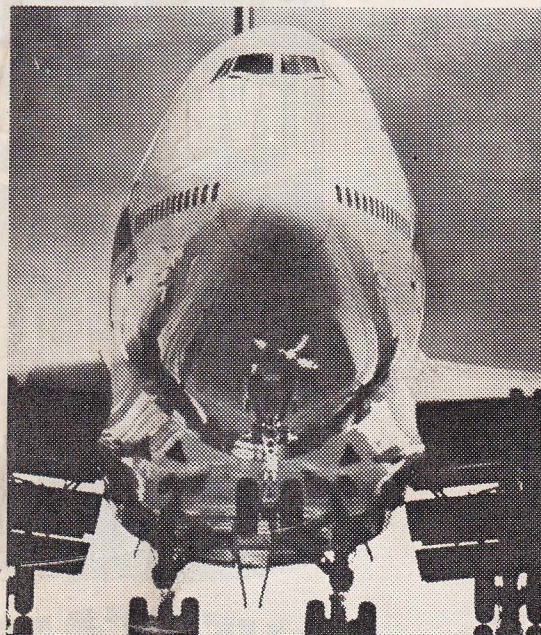
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