

# GUARDIAN

**Big demand for bicycles but few are available**

The demand for push bicycles has increased following the oil price hike last week. Many do not have the two wheelers to meet the Assembly components m...

by Premil Ratnayake

**Taxi drivers are badly hit**

Taxi drivers claim the recent oil fuel price increase has pushed taxis off the roads. Since fuel shot up from Rs 20 to its top and taxi fares were "overly ad... it is now no longer possible for them to drive...

**Sheikh or gas-guzzler?**

**Buddhist radicals and Labour**

Kumari Jayawardena

**US and non-alignment**

A. W. Singham

**Tamil identity**

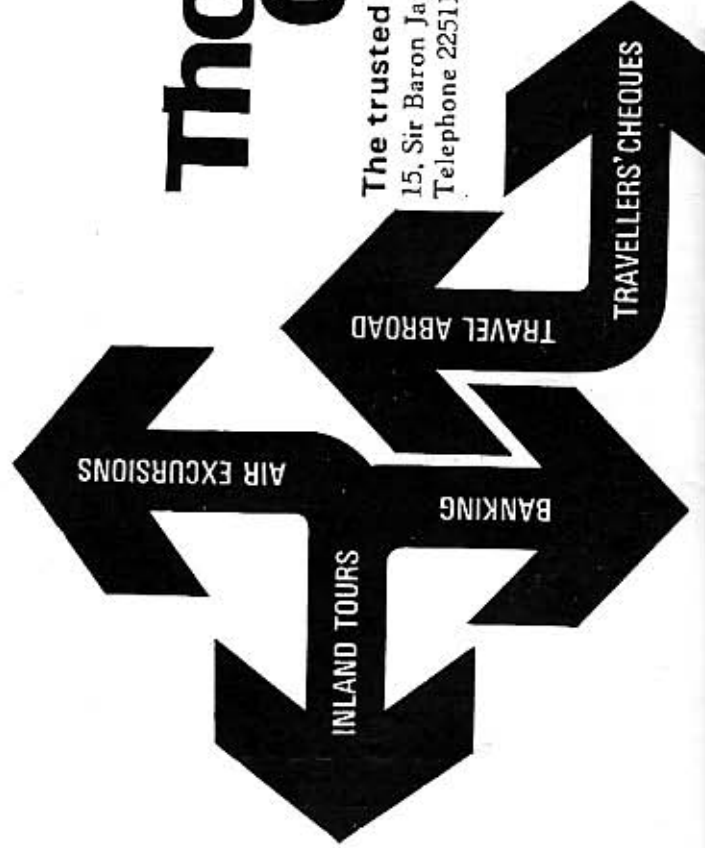
Dr. R. W. Crossette Tambiah

**Chekhov and madness**

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**Mrs. B. looks to the Left?**

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## Foreign Service

The piece on Foreign Service (Lanka Guardian 15th May) is quite interesting but Dr. Wiswa Warnapala misses the important point—Is a Foreign Office really necessary? The practice of diplomacy has undergone an enormous change since Sir Henry Wotton, 17th century diplomat autographed in a friend's album: "An Ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." Nowadays he spends less time lying abroad in a physical sense because of innumerable hours taken up in receiving cabinet ministers at the airport and chaperoning them to meet their counterparts or attend international conferences or seminars. If he lies by distorting the truth, his own assistants in the mission will either leak it to the Press or write anonymously to the Foreign Office and it will all come out in the wash sooner or later.

Diplomacy as once known is at an end—but the last to know it are the career diplomats and their foreign ministries. The swelling of their ranks and consequent deterioration of their capacities is all too often glaring. In diplomatic as in monetary affairs is a kind of freshman's law which sees bad money driving out the good. It is common knowledge that apart from one foreign minister, the Finance Minister and the Trade Minister carry much of the diplomatic burden taking wings frequently to attend a variety of conferences assisted by a team of officials drawn from their own ministries. It is time the Government thought of pruning down the budgetary allocation of Rs.68.8 million and lowering bureaucratic Towers of Babel by setting up an all purpose working group of experts to handle specific problems as they arise.

The Foreign Ministry was established as a separate entity under the new constitution without any dramatic ostentation or fanfare. If its image is to be improved, it should be uprooted from its present ambience and transplanted in a less

constricted atmosphere to disabuse the public of the impression that it is an appendage of the President's office.

While on this subject, could Dr. Wiswa Warnapala enlighten us as to why the founding father Sir Kandiah Vaithianathan did not aim at professional excellence by opting for civil service rejects to form the nucleus of the service. Whereas Vajpai chose the cream of the Indian Civil Service as the original Foreign Service Cadre—KPS Menon, C.S. Jha, Gundevia to mention a few.

Mickey Jayasundera

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## C'est si bon

It is good that a Sri Lankan has replaced the German director of the organisation which styles itself the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute. It was the L. G. columnist Aryadeva who first pointed out this anomaly. Though he did raise the question of academic qualifications (most educated Germans are "Dr" of course, but some of these Herr Directors have returned to Germany and junior school teaching) the basic issue was the choice of seminars, the nature of the discussions and the participants, and the Institute's insistence that highly qualified local academics should have their subjects vetted and approved.

The questions were relevant in the light of the Latin American experience. There some of these Institutes have produced "Bonn's Blueprints for Repression" as one Latin American newspaper put it. Ideas discussed there had a direct connection with official thinking which soon became government policy. Here we have the examples of the "one union" theory, the new Labour Laws etc. And public servants were disturbed by a report that their "political activities" would be covered by new regulations framed on the lines of Bonn's neo-McCarthyite 'security' law.

Though British agency houses and Indian traders used to know how to "ceylonise" their firms with a token Ceylonese, it is good that the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute has been formally "nativised", to use a word that Tissa Wijeyeratne added to the English language in the days when he used to champion the cause of 'vedas' (not 'veddahs') as ambassadors. Mrs. Bandaranaike had the last word on that. "But my ambassador in Paris (Tissa W.) turned out to a real veda ....!"

## Front runner

Trade Minister Lalith Athulathmudali is clearly the front-runner

in the UNP popularity stakes. Of all the President's men, it is the Trade Minister who is often asked by the P.M. to speak on behalf of the government in the NSA. "It is not for his Oxford Union debating skill that he has been picked by Premier Prema" said a keen parliamentary observer. "He has not only all the correct qualifications, if you know what I mean, but the serious manner which impresses talent—spotters, and the PM who can claim most of the credit for the UNP's spectacular show at the local polls is building up a team for the future" he added.

Lalith had one 'disqualification' in UNP eyes. Perhaps because of his father's close connections with SWRD and his own Oxford links, he never attacked the Bandaranaiques. But at the city campaign he really let go.

#### Wahabused

Lake House's "cover up" job on behalf of Egyptian Ambassador Wahab got the prize for the biggest flopnik of the month.

The Sun's snoopers who are always far ahead in the news—behind—the—news business, were able to give their readers blow—by—blow account of what happened that famous night at the BMICH. A remark that was not reported was the reply of one of J.R.'s top aides. "Not even the Queen of England or President Sadat can see our President just like that....." For their clumsy attempt to deny that Ambassador Wahab got ticked off like any uppity undergraduate the Lake House bosses are now treated to cold glances by the big men in the foreign ministry.

#### Agit-prop

That Boston Resolution has raised more than a storm in a tea-cup. In true Madison Avenue fashion, Minister Anandatissa de Alwis, Mr. Mass Media, may hire a foreign PR firm to launch a counter-offensive against TULF propaganda abroad.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office will also be more careful in hand-

ling visiting correspondents. One of them, Trumbull of the N.Y. Times, has caused much embarrassment. Apparently unnoticed by the local press but quite a talking point in the DPL colony is Trumbull's bull. He has put into the mouth of JRJ, President of Sri Lanka and Chairman of the non-aligned conference the most extraordinary statement ever attributed to a non-aligned leader. JR is reported as saying that only the US and USSR were non-aligned!

The FO says that the President did not grant any interviews to foreign pressmen during the one-week bureau meeting or just before it. If the interview was held last year or months ago, why did Trumbull wait so long to discover that JR's "remark" was "news fit to print". Incidentally Trumbull has published some interviews with Afghan refugees in Pakistani camps. A leading Pakistani paper has had great fun with these 'interviews' in America's most prestigious journal.

#### Seven Sisters

The United States Congress refused to accept Jimmy Carter's energy package and to ration petrol largely because its members suspect that the present oil shortage is an artificial one, created to jack up prices by the "Seven Sisters"—the big big oil companies. Congress is not alone in its dark suspicions. With the Tokyo summit coming up and with the World Energy Conference due next year, the present shortage will have maximum effect?

—Derek Davies

Ed. Far Eastern Economic Review.

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## Mrs B looks to the Left?

Both the programme and tactics of the SLFP have become matters of intense debate by the party leadership in recent weeks. Under the 'transitional' arrangements, a policy committee of which all MP's are ex-officio members, has been drafting a new constitution. Its preamble will be the basis of the party's next manifesto. The preamble is now before the party's politburo.

The discussion has acquired a new urgency because of the party's poor performance at the recent polls. Whatever its public postures, the leadership knows that the results have left the rank-and-file dispirited. More importantly, the SLFP looks forward to the village councils elections with nothing like the self-confidence that should normally accompany a party which has rightly boasted that its true electoral strength is in the countryside.

After a partial recovery from the demoralising July 1977 drubbing, the SLFP's immediate aim was to reorganize and revitalise the party and freshen up its image. But the transitional arrangement did not meet this need. On the contrary, it only exacerbated latent inner-party tensions. Besides, its most hopeful electoral calculation also proved a grave misjudgment. The SLFP had hoped that after 22 months of the UNP's 'new economic policies', it would be the automatic beneficiary of popular protest at the first available opportunity. The rout of its erstwhile allies, the ULF, in the city (but not, significantly, in certain provincial bases) gave the SLFP a satisfaction which was at best vicarious.

### Satan's return

Though increasingly acrimonious since the start of this year, the internal squabbles were nonetheless confined to the leadership and the centre in Colombo.



Mrs. Bandaranaike

The vast majority of the SLFP's near-two million supporters were by and large untouched by these feuds. But the preparation for the May polls forced these into the open and carried the bickering to the provincial periphery. The selection of district organisers, the drawing up of party lists, and the campaign itself saw SLFP veterans fighting among themselves, and against new-comers.

The village elections could make matters worse by taking the in-fighting at the top to the grass roots.

While this in-fighting rages on (one of the most furious sessions of the PB took place in early June when the usually mild-mannered Deputy Leader aimed a fiery attack at those who had criticised him in his absence) the special dilemma which faces Mrs. Bandaranaike was evident in a series of minor events. As part of the 'reorganisation' exercise it was felt that some "unpopular" or "discredited" seniors should be discreetly dumped or allowed to hibernate. Furthermore, there was the need to answer the charge that there was a conscious effort to protect the 'Bandaranaike clan'.

While little is heard of Badiuddin, TB Tennekoon, APJ etc, two persons who figured in these episodes are members of the Bandaranaike clan, both ex-Ministers. The third was also an SLFP Minister and one-time party secretary.

Over a hundred hard-core SLFP supporters were summoned to a meeting at Dompe but a conspicuous absentee was the man who had held the seat since 1960, the one-man think-tank of the party, Felix Bandaranaike or Satan himself. Where's Felix? asked the gathering before it dispersed, to reconvene again ... this time with an invitation to the ex-Minister.

In Mirigama, the SLFP is apparently in the throes of re-organisation but without Mrs. Siva Obeyesekera, the former Health Minister. But things are more than confusing to party men because Mrs. Obeyesekera is very active in the area, with her own strong supporters flying the blue banner.

After the elections, ex-Minister Suriyaratchi virtually went 'underground'. No sooner posters were put up for an SLFP rally recently with him as a speaker, the Sinhala newspapers (state-owned) published extensive extracts from a Commission report in what was clearly an orchestrated propaganda move.

### Leftward look

With an unusual convergence of views between the Old Guard (Maitripala, TBI etc) and the youth wing (key figure, Anura) there was general agreement that the party's program must be radical and attractive, especially to the new generation. The majority view, supported by Mrs. Bandaranaike, was that there could be an understanding, if not alliance, with the Left, both the Old and the New. But Mrs. Bandaranaike made it clear that it will have

to be without the 'old' leaders of the Old Left! An informal contact was in fact made by a brother of an SLFP PB member with a CC member of the LSSP, a former frontbencher. LSSP sources confirmed this fact but added "it was just a casual meeting."

There was an interesting item in the **Lankadipa** which said that Maitripala Senanayake had crossed swords with Stanley Tillekeratne on the issue of Left Unity and 'Go it alone'. In a categorical contradiction the next day Mr. Senanayake said that no such discussion had taken place in the SLFP PB.

#### China line

The signatures of ex-Minister Kulatileke, trade union leaders, Alavi Moulana and Samarasena, and two family members, Dr. M Ratwatte and Mrs. Iranganie Ratwatte on a petition to the President urging the recognition of the Hem Samrin government proved once more that foreign policy is another major cause of internal division. At a press conference, Mrs. Bandaranaike went further than the official SLFP statement on the Indo-China issue, and came out unequivocally supporting POL POT.

Answering questions on this, an SLFP'er who had for many years played a key role in party affairs, especially foreign policy-making, told the LG: "

"Outsiders see this as a debate between a pro-China group and anti-China elements. This is a distortion, and in my view, it could even be a deliberate one to divide the party. There is no question of being anti-China. Sri Lanka cannot be anti-China and the SLFP never. The trouble is that China has changed its foreign policy. Any fool can see that. It is China's sovereign right of course. And who knows, from their point of view, they may be absolutely correct. But China has swung so far pro-West that the SLFP has to take account of the consequences of following a pro-China policy to the point of antagonising others; that is, to say, alienating ourselves from the non-aligned and from progressive forces here."

**Q. Does this mean that such a policy would be an obstacle to any understanding with the Left, Old and New?**

**A:** "Personally, I don't know whether such an alliance is worthwhile but if it is, then the answer is 'yes'. But I am more worried about the serious consequences to the party. After all, the SLFP had a very strong position on foreign policy. So did Mrs. Bandaranaike because of the even-handed manner in which she conducted her non-aligned policy in the past. Today who talks to the press about condemning Russia on Czechoslovakia etc which is a fact but that was ten years ago. When she omits to mention the Chinese invasion of Vietnam while supporting Pol Pot then her credibility and international prestige is ruined. And when I find her saying that she decided to support Pol Pot after reading Malcolm Caldwell, a London University lecturer, then I feel that that those who are advising her are exposing her to ridicule."

**Q. But what of the local Left?**

**A.** "The Old Left has taken a firm stand against the new China policies. Of the so-called 'new' left, Wijeweera, Vasudeva and the other fellows who seem to have some kind of following are also pro-Vietnam, pro-Cuba etc. The other chaps don't amount to anything. Just individuals or name-boards. The SLFP can do without them though a few of them may need the SLFP for nomination. What bothers me even more is that the Chinese seem to be getting fond of the UNP. Look at the trips of Hameed and then Premadasa, I fear that the SLFP is foolishly losing a great asset, its correct foreign policy which was so essential a part of its image as a democratic-socialist, progressive, genuinely non-aligned party."

Whatever the legal implications, the transitional arrangement meant in effect "All power to the party President". The question is: Will a party congress, if and when it is held, resolve all these disputes over leadership, program, tactics, foreign policy etc?

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Behind the price hike...

# Sheikh or US gas guzzler ?

Cartoonists often play up to popular prejudice. The able Opatha of the **Ceylon Daily Mirror** is no exception. The oil-sheik is squeezing the life out of the poor Third World, you and me. Soon, our newspapers will be crowded with letters, commentaries even editorials which make the same simple point :- The oil-producer or OPEC, the Poor World's Public Enemy No. 1.

How far is this a true reflection of the facts? Is it not yet another of those cunningly constructed "images" (Prefabricated opinions) projected on the screen of our collective mind by the controllers of the global communications system, the western world of which the oil industry is a powerful arm?

In 1973 when the first 'oil crisis' took place, the giant oil combines spent a colossal sum in a massive worldwide media blitzkrieg. Out of this came a single, striking image :- the greasy, money-grabbing, high-spending oil sheik. Evidently, the image persists everywhere in the world. Across the US, the "greediest oil consumer" as Jurek Martin, US editor of the **Financial Times** wrote recently, the word "Arab" has been scrawled under the word "STOP" in almost every "GO, STOP" sign. Doesn't this image cloud our thinking on a matter of international economics which affects our daily life, public and private transport, industry, consumer prices, and our household budgets?

True, many a sheik has a fleet of Rolls Royces and a harem, invests in property in Miami or London's Belgravia, gambles in Monte Carlo or the Playboy Club, puts his millions in Swiss and US banks. His ostentatious extravagance is largely sustained by the 'new' wealth produced by the post-1973 surge in oil prices. Oil is the primary produce of this country and the wealth belongs to the people of that

country. Ultimately, he will be answerable to them — like the Shah of Iran, now minus his Throne, a place to rest his regal head and (it is said) his Queen.

True also, the Third World was severely hit by the oil price hike. Sri Lanka is an MSA, a most seriously affected country. — Its impact on our balance of payments, our national budget, and our cost of living is a part of everyday economics.

But is this the whole truth or just a part of it presented in such a manner that it completely distorts our perception of what has happened and is happening?

(1) Oil is the primary produce of a certain group of countries. What is more it is a non-renewable resource and the projections of how long it will last in the case of some countries began to cause anxiety.

(2) Like many other commodities, oil was under-priced, i. e. while the manufactured goods of the industrialised nations (our imports) raced ahead, the prices of primary produce (our exports) lagged behind. This 'gap' not only explains a major feature of the world economic order (the division between rich and poor) but it is one of the injustices against which the demand for a New International Economic Order is directed.

(3) Cheaply priced energy not only helped the economic growth of the industrialised countries and the affluent living of the people but their pattern of life (several cars, half-empty planes, TV and entertainment, the whole 'bright lights' society).

(4) Just like the other producers, there was not much the oil-producers could do to change this situation because they were not the true sovereign masters of their own natural resources, or if they were, prices were determined

by a world trading system (the market) which was controlled and managed by the rich.

(5) By the present decade however, the producers were gradually taking command of their resources (mainly, after socio-political changes) and able to get 'better deals'.

But 1973 was the historic turning point. The oil producers were able to do what the big consumers in most fields had been doing — to act as a cartel. **It is this decisive, united action by OPEC which struck fear in the minds of the rich nations.** Firstly it was a direct attack on their economies, living standards and pattern of life. Secondly, it was a dangerous example to other producers i. e. the developing countries.

In the face of this critical challenge to a once 'stable' economic order and monetary system, the rich nations took several counter-measures such as the recycling exercise, the western banks using the money to give massive loans to the poor, arms sales, inflating the price of their manufactured goods, machinery and technology.

**What was most important however from a political perspective was the tactic of dividing the Third World between non-oil and oil producing nations.**

As Gamani Corea observed in his Manila report (L. G. June 15) not one single group of producers has succeeded since Nairobi 1976 in negotiating a commodity agreement. Only rubber, out of 12 items, has even advanced to the stage of a negotiating conference. While stubbornly resisting any concessions, the West and Japan continue their protracted war against the oil-producer for 'energy' is their preoccupation. An important part of these battle-tactics is to split the

(Continued on page 6)

## New 'crisis'

The turmoil in Iran, the world's oil exporter, led to the present crisis, when supply fell short of demand. But according to the **Petroleum Intelligence Weekly (US)**, the shortfall is only about 4% or less than 2 million barrels a day. But this fact alone does NOT explain the surge in prices with exporters engaged in what is called "a leap-frogging exercise".

For many reasons, chiefly their close political-economic links with the US, Saudi Arabia and the Shah were "moderating forces" in OPEC, helping to hold down prices. With an extra production capacity of about 1.5 million b/d the Saudis could easily improve the supply situation. But they will not do so. The Saudis feel 'betrayed' by a US that sponsored the separate peace between Egypt

### Sheikh or ...

*(Continued from page 5)*

Third World. Though it takes different forms, this was the tactic pursued at UNCTAD V, and in the non-aligned movement from Colombo 78 to Belgrade, Colombo and on the way to Havana.

**This is not to say that the poorer countries have no special case to urge before OPEC. They have.** Though some oil producers have sold petrol to some 'poor' buyers at concessional rates and accommodated them in difficult circumstances (Sri Lanka has been a beneficiary both under the previous government and this) the problem of cushioning the blow to those who can least afford to pay these prices remains. An Iraqi proposal at UNCTAD for a special Fund was one remedial effort.

Yet, the hardpressed Sri Lankan bus traveller, clerk and taxidriver must not identify himself (even if our own mass media injects this prejudiced notion) with the hysterical California gas-guzzling automobile maniac who assaults the filling-station attendant mistaking him for Sheikh Yamani. ●

and Israel. Kevin Done, Energy correspondent of the F. T. noted that the Saudi attitude has changed after their "entry into the ranks of the militant Arabs that are rejecting a peace treaty engineered by the US"

"Why then, they ask" writes Joseph C. Harsch, chief commentator of the **Christian Science Monitor**, "should they go on protecting the Americans in their oil gluttony?"

This "gluttony" explains why if supply cannot be increased, demand cannot be curtailed a bit. Though the 1973 "panic" created a mood for oil conservation, this mood soon vanished, and US oil consumption now exceeds the 1973 figure. What is more the US, a big oil producer, imports nearly half its annual requirements of 6 billion barrels. This represents 38% of total (non communist) world production.

The US consumer pays a dollar-a-gallon whereas consumers in other countries pay two or three times as much. (In Sri Lanka, it is nearly 2 dollars).

While Western Europe and Japan, after 1973, pegged down consumption, the US did not. US per capita consumption is double Britain's, and 85% higher than West Germany's or Japan's. Transportation (50% of total consumption in the US, but 30% in Western Europe) is a major factor.

In an article entitled "**Where the gas goes**", Robert Ball (NS) writes:

"To explain this we need look no further than the prolific use of the gas-guzzling American car which, in some cases, is incapable of even ten miles to the gallon. This situation has been exacerbated by much less energy-intensive surface public transport and near-empty planes crossing the skies of the continent in the name of free competition.

"Suppose the US were able, 'at a stroke', to reduce its oil consumption to the level of West Germany. This would result in a saving of around 8 m.

barrels per day and enable the US to become nearly self-sufficient in oil production again. The effect on the world oil market would be immense since this saving would be equivalent to the entire oil production of Saudi Arabia. Since the oil market is a cartel, whether prices would fall would depend on whether the oil-producing nations could agree among themselves to share the necessary production cuts. The world would, at least, be sure of stable prices and secure supplies in the short-to-medium-term."

Since the world supply / demand gap is small, the surge in prices has been encouraged by another factor. The US majors have been playing the 'spot market' (the non-contract, cash market). Though the spot market accounts for only a small part of world crude trade, it only needs, writes Kevin Done "a small change from surplus to shortage to send spot prices shooting ahead." US Energy Secretary Schlesinger has accused "profit-hungry" US oil firms of playing this market and sending contract oil to Rotterdam, a major centre of cash-on-the-spot oil brokers.

Whereas other western countries and Japan have taken some corrective measures at home, the US has failed to do so because "politics has interfered" notes Joseph C. Harsch, adding "government in Washington is blocked at every turn by public opinion. Congress, from fear of reprisals at the polls, has refused to permit price rationing or coupon rationing."

Mr. Carter's "de-control" measure would mean windfall profits for the oil giants but he wants to place a special tax on them. As Carter's chances of re-election get bleaker each month according to the opinion polls, his chief critics (Connally, Kennedy etc) attack him from all sides. The oil lobby and the Jewish lobby, for different reasons, keep anti-Arab feeling high. According to a Gallup poll, 77% of the US public do not know the ABC of the "energy crisis"!



## Models and new laws

**W**ill politics and foreign policy follow economics? Singapore continues to inspire us and influence official thinking. Though a move to join ASEAN was dropped (JR's India-centred thinking has been a major aspect of his basic intellectual outlook throughout his political career). It is possible that Sri Lanka's foreign policy may be 'Aseanized' after the September summit re-lieves Sri Lanka of the responsibilities and constraints of non-aligned chairmanship.

The 'Sun' now reports that a tough new law on terrorism and separatism has been influenced by legislation in Ireland and Singapore. (A curious combination, to say the least). The new law, says the same report, will replace that which proscribed the so-called Tiger movement. Meanwhile the CRM has drawn attention to the following:

(a) that the present law can be used to ban any organisation.

(b) there is no provision for any organisation to be given a hearing before it is banned.

(c) it would be illegal for such a body to protest against or ask for a hearing.

(d) the law is applicable to any other organisation 'substantially similar' to proscribed organisation even if the former is not formally banned.

(e) there is **NO** protection in the law for persons detained for up to one year.

Meanwhile the Sinhala Mahajana Peramuna has called for a ban on the TULF, the main parliamentary opposition party.

## LANKA GUARDIAN

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## Salt 2

As an oft-quoted Chinese saying has it, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. No enchanted admirer of socialism or Soviet power, Senator Moynihan, former Harvard professor and ambassador, expressed much the same idea when he responded to SALT 2. It was "a process" he said and therefore "imported". This is probably the best commonsense approach to the Treaty signed on June 18 by Mr. Carter and Mr. Brezhnev.

If SALT 1 was the first cautious step, SALT 2 is a much larger stride. The avowed goal of this superpower expedition in detente is an end to the awesome arms race as the necessary foundation for disarmament and world peace. In that extended and circuitous journey Salt 3, 4, and so on will doubtless stand as landmarks on the way.

Third World observers who do not exclude themselves from the discussion in the instant or hurried belief that the issue itself is far too removed from their own concerns may be 'put off' also by the arcana of strategic arms, the technological complexity of the ongoing debate and the intricacies of idiom. The essential achievement of this Treaty which places both quantitative and qualitative limits on superpower arsenals and the future production of offensive weapons was neatly summed up by the U. S. Arms Control Association (ACA). It said that the Vienna Treaty was "of historic importance because it is the first in the nuclear age to require the dismantling, without replacement, of deployed, offensive nuclear weapons".

Naturally there was some doubt and apprehension on both sides. Echoes of this may yet be heard in the US Senate soon. On the US side it was largely a question of verification, a fear aggra-

vated by the recent loss of US monitoring stations in Iran (L. G. Vol. 2, No 1. May 1). The USSR feared that the US may slip through the provisions of the Treaty by arming its allies. But it is safe to assume that a tough and tortuous exercise that took nearly seven years, with both participants marshalling their finest expertise, has resolved all the major issues involved. In any case, any residual doubts were cleared in a give-and-take just before Vienna, notably on the US Cruise missiles and the Soviet 'Backfire Bomber'.

Detente is the political underpinning of this Treaty which has been tirelessly sought by three US administrations (Nixon, Ford and Carter) and has attracted the dedicated labours of Mr. Brezhnev. In the realms of realpolitik in particular, nothing cements such agreements more firmly than mutual interest. Both have an interest in reducing the risks of what Mr. Brezhnev called 'the ultimate catastrophe', the terror under which the whole world lives. Secondly, both can save national resources now devoured by a monstrous and sometimes lunatic arms race—resources that can be used for the benefit of their own peoples, and hopefully for the benefit of others.

Of course, mutual interest is reinforced by mutual respect and, in a world divided by ideological and other conflicts, this often means a shared perception of equal strength. The Treaty puts the seal on strategic parity or what Dr. Kissinger was fond of calling 'essential equivalence'.

Engaged in the gigantic and arduous task of nation-building and development, the poor countries have a profound stake in a tension-free environment. If the extension and consolidation of detente ensures the lessening of tensions it would help these countries to attend to their own endeavours in less uncongenial conditions.

## US displeasure Grenada

Of the four countries which sought nonaligned membership, Grenada has a new government installed after a popular revolt ended the regime of Eric Gairy, a comic-opera dictator now reportedly mobilising mercenaries in the US for a 'counter-coup'.

"We may be a little country but we are in nobody's backyard" said Ambassador Kendrick Radix who was here for the N-A coordinating bureau meeting. The Ambassador was in fact quoting a favourite phrase of his leader, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.

Asked about the situation in Grenada, Ambassador Radix drew attention to a public statement made by Mr. Bishop on an open American threat of 'economic destabilisation' if Grenada follows a policy of friendship with Cuba. It is the most blatant attempt at interference in internal affairs he said.

The US Ambassador made a simple point. Grenada's import bill is 32 million dollars while its export income last year was only about 13 million. Much of the balance, he had added, was made up by tourism-US tourists. Later Ambassador Ortiz made the same point to Prime Minister Bishop and then he handed the Premier a typed statement of his observations. The Prime Minister quoted what he called the "relevant section" at the rally. It went:

"Although my government recognises your concern over allegations of a possible counter-coup, it also believes that it would not be in the best interests of Grenada to seek assistance from a country such as Cuba to forestall such an attack. We would view with displeasure any tendency on the part of Grenada to develop closer ties with Cuba".

# US and non - alignment

by A. W. Singham

There have been many explanations of the United States' foreign policy towards the nations of the Third World. One of the most neglected aspects has been the religious basis of American foreign policy, especially that of protestant Christianity. The most recent example of the influence of religion on U.S. foreign policy is to be found in President Carter's reaction to the non-aligned movement and especially to the presence of Cuba in such a movement. It is not accidental that every American administration since World War II has always sought a higher moral law to justify its attitude towards communism and non-alignment. Thus, Christian morality has become an integral part of the political rhetoric of the nation and hence must be taken seriously in any understanding of American foreign policy.

The most dominant religious tradition within the United States is that of protestant Christianity. Within this tradition there are at least three tendencies that have been influential in determining American foreign policy, the first being that of fundamentalism, the second that of neo-orthodoxy, and the third that of the tradition of the social gospel. The fundamentalist view of the world has been quite important throughout American political history as the fundamentalists are responsible for the belief that the primary task of the American government is to bring Christ to the nations. It was assumed that once the heathen was exposed to the Word of the Lord he would be converted and he could then become a social and moral equal and enter the Kingdom of God.

However, if the heathen was exposed to the Word and then proceeded to reject it, he faced permanent damnation and hell. This partially explains John Foster Dulles' view of the non-aligned or neutral nations. He could not understand how those who had

been exposed to Western civilization, especially at Oxford University, and those who had accepted aid from the West, could proceed to claim that they were above or outside of the conflict between the free world and communism. For him and many American foreign policy makers, one was either for us or against us; you were either a cowboy or an Indian.

Protestant fundamentalism, incidentally, has been the basis of the strange alliance between the Democratic South and the Republican Mid-West. The fundamentalists found it difficult, and continue to find it difficult, to accept the notion that the global community is a constantly evolving community where there are changes and transformations which are far beyond the simple dichotomy between the good guys and the bad guys.

There is another tradition which has also influenced American foreign policy and that is normally associated with the Democratic administrations, namely, that of protestant neo-orthodoxy. Unlike the fundamentalists, they were willing to allow for some kind of a plural world society as long as it remained within the framework of Western European civilization. They saw the nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as being essentially economically backward nations which had to be transformed to become modern or Western with considerable foreign investment and the introduction of Western institutions. They also provided the moral foundation for the attitudes of the nation towards the communist world. For them, communism, and particularly Stalin, was the Anti-Christ himself.

The real danger of the Soviet Union for many was not that it was an Eastern oligarchic power, but rather that it was an aberration of Western civilization. Hence, they viewed the non-aligned world as being comprised essentially of

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naive nations because they viewed socialism and communism as possible alternatives for their internal economic structures. The neo-orthodox tradition insisted that in the twentieth century there was a need for a grand moral crusade against the evil forces of communism manifesting itself in the form of the Soviet Union and later China, although China seems to be increasingly acceptable to this tradition. This tradition in American foreign policy is represented by individuals like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., McGeorge Bundy, Henry Kissinger, and more recently by Brezinski and Samuel Huntington.

There is a third tradition in the United States that fell into great disrepute during the period of the Cold War namely that of the social gospel. The social gossellers had no real influence on U. S. foreign policy and their greatest influence was in domestic policy. This tradition influenced much of the humane labour legislation during the New Deal period. Unlike fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy, the social gossellers were not pathologically afraid of socialism or communism but were quite willing to engage in a dialogue with socialists or communists. They found themselves gradually losing their base in the white churches but there was a great revival of the social gospel tradition in Black churches during the 1960's.

Therefore, it was not accidental that the late Rev. Martin Luther King began, during the later part

(Continued on page 21)

Bhikkhus in revolt (3)

## Buddhist radicals and the Labour movement

by Kumari Jayawardena

Sections of Buddhist monks have always responded to mass movements in the country and to nationalist and liberation struggles abroad. From the 1830's — when the French-speaking, **Ihagama Ratnapala Unanse** allegedly tried to interest the French in supporting a movement to drive out the British — to a period one hundred years later when bhikkhus were influenced by nationalism, socialism and working-class struggles, Buddhist monks have participated in social and political movements, often in the face of opposition from conservative elements of the Sangha and laity.

Being the religion of the majority, in a situation of colonial domination, Buddhism has been closely interwoven with dissident movements and with the struggles of the working people of the country. During upsurge of urban working-class activity, bhikkhus and Buddhist activists have been drawn into these movements; this was in contrast to the Christian churches in colonial Sri Lanka, which not only generally supported foreign rule, but also sided with the employers during periods of working-class unrest. The 'outside' support and leadership of the early strikes in Sri Lanka came from some of the leaders of the Buddhist educational and temperance movements whose progressive outlook enabled them to ally themselves with the struggles of the Colombo working-class. For example, the first trade union formed in 1893 during the strike of printers, had the Buddhist 'agitator', **A. E. Buuitjens** (Principal of Ananda College) as its Secretary, and many active Buddhists like **C.**



*Bhikkhu Udakandawela Saranakara with Selina Perera, Vernon Gunasekara, Dr. N. M. Perera & M. A. L. Bracegirdle (a planter whom the colonial Government tried to deport for his Left-wing agitational activities in 1937)*

**Don Bastian** (a journalist) and **Martinus C. Perera** (a lay preacher) spoke at meetings of the strikers.

Again, the railway workers who went on strike in 1912 were helped financially and otherwise by **Anagarika Dharmapala** and **Walisinha Harischandra**, who organised a mass meeting of the strikers in the grounds of Mahabodhi College in Maradana. Dharmapala congratulated the workers for their militancy and said that the railway strike had afforded 'unmistakeable proof of the national spirit among the Sinhalese'. To the Buddhist radicals, working-class agitation was clearly a facet of the anti-colonial struggle, and it therefore received the support of this section of the Buddhist movement.

The trade union leader of the twenties, **A. E. Goonesinha** who led the country's great upsurge

of unionism, including the general strike (1923), the harbour strike (1927) and the tramway strike (1929), as well as the demand for swaraj and universal suffrage, was also a product of the Buddhist movement; he had been educated at Dharmaraja College and had come under the influence not only of Anagarika Dharmapala, but also of several foreign theosophists and radicals. In the strikes and other trade union struggles which united Sinhala, Tamil and Malayali workers, Goonesinha had the support of some bhikkhus who even spoke at strike meetings; moreover bhikkhus like **Boose Dhammarakhita** and **Udakandawela Siri Saranakara** used to contribute articles to the 'Swaraj', a political journal edited by Goonesinha and P. Givendrasinghe. Inspired no doubt, by his temperance background, Goonesinha also used to make the strikers take a pledge of abstinence from alcohol.

He was moreover, one of the campaigners for the restoration of Buddha Gaya to Buddhist control and in this connection, visited India several times.

Like many in the Buddhist movement, Goonesinha had links with foreign progressive movements including the British Labour Party and Trades Union Congress; he wrote frequently on the Indian, Irish, Egyptian and Chinese struggles and welcomed the end of Czarism in Russia in 1917. However it is significant to note that for a period Goonesinha was internationalist in outlook and in a speech to Australian seamen (who had joined the Colombo harbour strike) he stated that the working-class recognised no racial, religious, linguistic or caste differences. But Goonesinha drastically changed his policies during the economic depression of the early thirties, succumbing to the incubus of communalism. What had started as a democratic, progressive movement became stuck in the mire of communal politics and Sinhala chauvinism, involving the workers of Colombo in retrograde actions against Tamil and Malayali sections of the working-class.

### **Bhikkhus and the Left Movement**

The Left movement which developed in Sri Lanka in the 1930's, was not devoid of Buddhist influences. Many of the early leaders of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party like Dr. N.M. Perera, Philip Gunawardena and Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe were from Buddhist families and had studied at schools run by the Buddhist Theosophical Society. In these schools, (in contrast to missionary schools), patriotism and nationalist attitudes were actively fostered and the students were made aware of anti-imperialist struggles abroad—especially the Indian national movement.

In the years after the formation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party in 1935, several bhikkhus saw nothing incompatible between Buddhism and socialism, and spoke in favour of the new party. These included Balangoda Anan-

da Maitreiya, who approved both of the anti-imperialist stand of the party and its attack on class privilege, Naravila Dhammaratana who expressed radical ideas in articles regularly written for the 'Silumina', and Dumbara Palitha, an LSSP member who worked among the peasantry. However, the most outstanding political monk of the period was Udakandawela Siri Saranankara. Born in 1902, Saranankara went to India as an acolyte of Anagarika Dharmapala in 1921 and joined Santiniketan, where he came into contact with Tagore and the Bengali renaissance movement; he was also associated with the Indian national movement which was particularly militant in Bengal and with Bengali communists. While in India he contributed articles on the Indian struggles to the Sinhala journal 'Swaraj'. Saranankara was one of the first bhikkhus to clash with prominent Sri Lanka politicians, in 1922, when the unofficials in the Legislative Council had walked out as a protest against government policies, Saranankara sent a strong letter to T. B. Panabokke, the Kandyan member, saying that his refusal to join the walk-out was a disgrace to those Kandyans who had risen in revolt against the British. Panabokke replied sharply that he was loyal to the King Emperor and that Saranankara—a wolf in sheep's clothing—was no credit to either the Buddha or Tagore.

In 1931, Saranankara joined the Calcutta City College and became its student union leader. He was closely watched by the police because of his anti-British activities and was arrested and jailed in Calcutta; while in prison he met Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian National Congress leader, as well as members of the Communist movement. On his release he was banned from Bengal and lived in Benares up to 1936, when he returned to Sri Lanka and joined the newly-formed LSSP. He was soon active in many battles against conservative politicians, using the temple sermon as a method of propagating socialist ideas. He

wrote a book entitled "Why Sri Lanka needs Sama Samajism", which occasioned a reply (in 1938) from Piyadasa Sirisena entitled 'Communist Falsehoods'.

When the LSSP split in 1940, Saranankara joined the Communist group—and presided over the first meeting of the Communist-led Ceylon Trade Union Federation in 1940. He was in jail for the second time from 1942 to 1944, being sentenced to two years imprisonment for a seditious speech made at Tiranagama. In later years Saranankara became the Vice-President of the Communist Party, was active in the post-war peace movement and received the prestigious Lenin peace prize.

The impact of Indian nationalism and socialism was also very evident among other militant young monks. Several of them had studied in India, including Naravila Dhammaratana, Kotahena Pannakitti and Bambarande Siri Sivali who were at Benares and Walpola Rahula who was at Calcutta. These bhikkhus were active in Indian politics; for example, Saranankara mentions a hartal and large anti-imperialist procession in Benares during the early thirties, in which bhikkhus Naravila Dhammaratana and Mapitigama Sangharakkita participated. Some of the younger monks in Sri Lanka were also influenced by radical Indian bhikkhus, the best known being Ananda Kausalyana and Rahul Sanskritiyana (later a member of the Indian Communist Party) who were at the Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kelaniya in the 1940's. This pirivena became the centre of the most sensational upsurge of left-wing political activity which took place in the immediate post-war years among a section of the young bhikkhus.

**NEXT: The Vidyalankara Revolt**

# Career conflicts

by A. Wiswa Warnapala

Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike stated that "it will be a primary obligation of the diplomatic missions to pursue the possibilities of trade promotion to their utmost with a view to maximising our earnings of foreign exchange and reducing our trade deficits with various countries. In addition to trade promotion, it will be essential that our economic ventures, such as joint participation local investment, should be explored to the hilt.

"Similarly, new sources of economic assistance or continuation of existing lines of assistance should be pursued. These would include forms of credit, grants of equipment, technical exchanges and avenues for specialised training abroad". The recognition of the importance of trade promotion, in fact, gave birth to the view that certain Missions need to be converted into trade posts.

The appointment of officers representing interests of different Ministries and Departments such as Information, Planning, Trade and Commerce, Education and Tourism interfered with the functional comprehensiveness and the careerism of the Overseas Service, and this, in varied form, resulted in certain dysfunctional consequences. The conflicts between the Overseas Service Officers and the Commercial Officers have arisen as a result of the development of a compartmentalisation of functions. The trade promotion work expected of the career officers in the Overseas Service has not been defined although they were required to undertake those duties in Missions to which Commercial Secretaries have not been posted.

The suggestion, therefore, has been made that the courses available in Geneva for the

officers of the Department of Commerce should be made available to the career officers as well. Another suggestion is to include a paper in International Economics for both First and Second Departmental Examinations. Though the amalgamation of the Overseas and the Commercial Service has been proposed, this is resented by the Overseas Service because such a scheme was sure to interfere with postings and promotion within the career service.

Several criticisms can be made involving the functioning of this cadre of officers. Though they enjoy diplomatic privileges and a rank in the Mission, they cannot be entrusted with certain categories of diplomatic functions such as political matters and other questions treated as secret. Above all, the Commercial Secretaries, irrespective of their diplomatic rank, will not be called upon to function in the capacity of a Charge de affairs ad interim. This, therefore, meant that Commercial officers enjoy a 'secondary diplomatic status,' which, in many a Mission, resulted in conflicts between the two types of officers. The reason was that they were not treated as member of the Overseas Service, and in 1974, several of the memoranda sent to the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs at the request of Tissa Wijeyeratne, the Additional Secretary of the Ministry, advocated the extension of this recognition.

The charge has been made that Overseas Officers adopt hostile attitudes to the Commercial Secretaries who have been seconded from the Department of Commerce. Some of the members of the Overseas Service take the view that the appointment of Commercial Secretaries to Missions need to be abandoned, and their criticism is that this work

*The scramble for 'good' foreign posts, political patronage, clannishness, and snobbishness, servility to the West and alienation from their own ethos, bedevil the Foreign Service says Dr. A. Wiswa Warnapala, Head of the Department of Political Science, Peradeniya. In the final part of this paper, Dr. Warnapala will comment on the problems of reform and reorganisation.*

could be handled by the members of the Overseas Service. They state that in the case of certain stations the work is confined to an inquiry, complaint or a letter. Monthly trade report, they alleged, is prepared on the basis of newspapers and trade bulletins. Another argument is that negotiations are done by businessmen themselves, and the officials of Departments and corporations.

In regard to the socialist countries, the criticism is made that trade on the basis of bilateral arrangements does not demand appointment of Commercial Secretaries because no trade promotion is required in such countries. This view has been contested on the ground that negotiations and the administration of matters relating to bilateral agreements too need constant attention. Such criticisms of the Commercial Secretaries have been highlighted with a view to maintain the exclusiveness of the Overseas Service which sees no wisdom elsewhere except in their own ranks.

Another complaint of the Trade Officers was the unavailability of funds for travelling and this was particularly true in the case of Missions with accreditation to number of countries. The need to convert the Trade Missions - Prague, Bombay, Sydney and Karachi - to the status of Consulates General cum Trade Commissioner has been emphasised in the last few years and such a move, it

was thought, would facilitate the discharge of certain consular functions. The Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs, because of its view that consular functions constitute an integral aspect of the domain of the career diplomat, refused to sanction this change in the case of the four trade Missions.

Two alternatives could be suggested to improve the position. The absorption of the trade service into the ranks of the diplomatic service could minimise the friction between the two types of officers. Another form of improving the effectiveness of trade promotion is to choose, at the point of recruitment, a set of officers who could be trained in specialist work of this nature. The attempt to enlist the services of experts from outside the career service, men and women highly skilled, trained and experienced in the world of trade, was met with hostility from the cadre of the Commercial Secretaries. The realisation of the need to establish trade missions instead of embassies demands a change in the nature and functioning of the cadre of Commercial Secretaries.

A transfer from one Mission to another, without a period of service in Sri Lanka before the next posting is undertaken, has been criticised because the immobility of the kind gave the Overseas Officers the opportunity to serve overseas during their entire tenure of office. This, apart from the frustration which it created in the minds of the officers who were expected to return to Sri Lanka after the completion of their tour of duty, encouraged the inculcation of attitudes and ethos alien to the masses of the people, resulting in their failure to appreciate the aspirations of the people. Another issue related to this was the manner in which a certain group of officers—those officers who were acceptable to the regime in power—successfully retained the better stations among themselves for long periods of time. The less favoured officers in the Overseas bureaucracy had to be satisfied with stations of no significance.

The availability of English schools for children, the presence of relatives employed in the country of assignment, the climate of the country, the availability of freer shopping facilities, the social and recreational facilities, the arrival of more VIPs to the particular city and a host of similar considerations motivated most of the Overseas bureaucrats to remain in the English speaking countries and in some Asian capitals. The socialist countries, the Middle East and the African states were considered difficult stations because most of these places did not offer the same opportunities.

The non-diplomatic officers, who serve as a vital segment of the apparatus of the Overseas Missions, needs to be discussed because certain characteristics of this class of officers helped in the analysis of the roles of the career officers of the Overseas Service. According to the Overseas Service Minute, these officers, both clerical cum executive officers and the minor employees, came within the categories Class B and C.

These officers, who are selected on the basis of an interview by the Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs, are posted to a Mission to serve a period of four years. The training, which they receive at the Ministry, is confined to two or three weeks, the lack of a good training has been compensated by the recruitment of clerical officers working in the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs. Such officers who fall within the category of Grade V of the Overseas Service, have been designated as Chief Clerk, Clerk Grade I and II and this form of characterisation, it has been pointed out, is not followed in other countries. Such designations have been used in order to equate his position in the Mission with that of his in the public service. Since such designations do not fit into the diplomatic nomenclature, the suggestion has been made that these officers should be given the designation of Attaches. Any such change in the designation involves a revision of the benefits and privileges,

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## Nationhood (4)

**Myths and realities**

by Chintaka

**Myth 19. The struggle for a separate nation-state on the part of the Tamils is detrimental to the class struggle of the Lankan proletariat and therefore should be opposed.**

Objectively the Tamil people's struggle is directed against the ruling class and its state apparatus, which is the main foe of the country's working masses. Lenin and the Bolsheviks utilized national liberation struggle of the oppressed nations within the old Russian Empire to disintegrate the Tzarist autocracy. Lenin was thus able to merge these democratic currents with the general question of social transformation and the struggle against the existing state power. Thus, the national liberation struggle of the Tamils should be viewed not as running counter to, but rather as an integral part of the Lankan socialist revolution and the Tamil people must be considered a vital ally of the Sinhala working class, which should reach out not only to 'its own' peasantry but also to the oppressed Tamil nation.

Especially pertinent here are the views of Marx on the Irish Question. He held that only the national liberation of the oppressed nation enables national divisions and antagonisms to be overcome and permits the working class of both nations to fight against their common enemy, capitalism. On the other hand the oppression of another nation helps to reinforce the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the workers in the oppressing nation. **"Any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains."** The emancipation of the oppressed nation however, weakens the economic, political, military and ideological bases of the dominating class in the oppressor nation. Thus Marx

saw the liberation of Ireland as a precondition for working class emancipation in England. In Sri Lanka today, where the working class is a numerical minority, this is even truer.

**20. The main danger today is Fascism and the task of progressives is to unite all forces including the Tamils in a broad front against its threat. Therefore any emphasis on the 'national question' would be misplaced and divisive.**

True, the threat is there and it is very real indeed, but history (especially that of Nazi Germany) proves that racism is the forerunner, the first manifestation of fascism. As the crisis of capitalism deepens the bourgeoisie resorts increasingly to racism in order to dilute and divert class consciousness. Chauvinism suffuses the petty bourgeoisie which the ruling class deploys as its chief instrument in the counter-revolutionary offensive. Lenin pointed out that "the socio economic conditions engendering the petty proprietor impart special stability to one of the most deeprooted of petty bourgeois prejudices, namely prejudices of national egoism, of national narrow mindedness." (Collected Works Vol 31). Even the working class, and specially its backward segments, are not immune from the contagion. "Implanted among the workers, it poisons the atmosphere and spreads noxious ideas of mutual mistrust and aloofness among workers of different nationalities" warns Stalin. Therefore it is imperative to struggle against majority (i. e. Sinhala) chauvinism and champion internationalist solidarity with the Tamil people, if one is to struggle successfully against fascism, not least since the North could well function as a 'rearguard' and 'liberated zone'

in the context of such a struggle.

**21. The Tamil Leftists should oppose the struggle for separation.**

On the contrary the task of the Tamil Marxists is to gradually wrest the hegemony of the national movement from the hands of the present vacillating leadership and bring about leftwing hegemony instead, while utilizing the national struggle to activate and radicalize the otherwise dormant Tamil peasantry. Combating the parliamentarist myths still prevalent, the Tamil Marxists should adopt the United Front tactic of unity and struggle (contention and collusion) with the TULF leadership. They should struggle for the establishment of an independent socialist state. On no account should they stand apart from the ongoing struggle because this would ensure their political isolation and guarantee bourgeois hegemony of the national movement. In the case of Bangladesh, it is precisely this that occurred.

**22. Championing the right of self-determination of the Tamils will isolate the Left from the Sinhala masses. Therefore, it is impracticable and impolitic to do so.**

From its very inception the Bolshevik party was the staunchest advocate of the right of secession of the oppressed nations within the Tzarist empire. This was in a context where the non-Russian population outnumbered the Russian population by 57% to 43%! It is blindingly obvious however that the Bolsheviks were not as a consequence isolated from the Russian working class and poor peasantry. On the other hand, it was the Liberal Democratic Cadet party which opposed the "division of the country" and the Mensheviks who were also against secession. Outflanked, and outmanoeuvred by the Bolsheviks they found themselves isolated from the Russian proletariat. Likewise,

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# Which way for the left?

## (10) Democratic National Front

Mr. G. I. D. Dharmasekara began his political career as a student at Vidyalankara campus in the early '60s. As a member of the C. P. (Moscow) he was a key figure in the Lanka National Students' Union, and was President of the Students' Council. He broke away from the C.P., unsuccessfully attempted to form his own political organization, and joined Wijeweera in 1968. Due to political differences he parted company with the JVP in 1969 and formed the Motherland Protection Organization. In 1974, after several years on the "run" he was taken into custody in connection with the attack on the U.S. Embassy in March 1971. With the lifting of the Emergency, he was released in December 1976 and contested Beruwala at the 1977 polls. At present he leads the Democratic National Front (Prajanatrawadi Jatika Peramuna) formed after his release. The interview is by **Gamini Dissanaiké.**

*Q: At the '77 General Elections you contested the Beruwala seat on the ULF ticket. What led to your subsequent split with the ULF?*

A: The ULF comprised the LSSP, CP and PDP. With that Front we only entered into a no-contest pact for the polls, and did not approve of its programme which included its political philosophy. Its political foundation was aimed at a united struggle to safeguard the democratic rights of the masses who opposed the comprador UNP and the right-wing of the SLFP which was in a dominant position then.

*Q: One of the criticisms you consistently level against the "Old Left" is that of cultural alienation of its Westernized leadership. Would it be correct to state that a distinctive feature of your politics is the attempt to integrate organically with the masses by trying to link "tradition" and "revolution"?*

A: Because the 'Old Left' movement was rooted in politics that was divorced from the cultural heritage it failed to win mass

support. The task today is to awaken a broad force of the masses that is closely linked with historically creative national cultural heritage and experience in the anti-Imperialist struggle and to work towards building a revolutionary mass movement led by the proletariat that has the ability to change history.

*Q: While deriving sustenance from history and traditional culture how do you offset the danger of lapsing into national narrow mindedness and majority (Sinhala) chauvinism? In other words, how do you resolve the contradiction between populist nationalism and proletarian internationalism?*

A: Based on Marxist - Leninist - Mao thought, and in working towards building a revolutionary mass movement led by the proletariat that derives its sustenance from the broad people's historical, creative and cultural heritage, our objective contains a clear path that would prevent us from falling into pitfalls of national

narrow mindedness and opportunist majority Sinhala chauvinism. "The fine creative national heritage of the people" refers not only to the local nationalities such as Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim etc but also includes Sri Lanka's creative legacies that are relevant to all nations of the world.

*Q: Last year, you shared a public platform with Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike at a well attended Hyde Park rally to denounce the new Constitution. While you have also received a fair degree of publicity on occasion in the SLFP's 'Dinakara'. This has led to some to criticize you as leaning in the direction of the SLFP. What is your attitude to the SLFP? Doesn't it have any progressive potential?*

A: We participated in that rally to protest against the Fascist trend that manifested itself in the new constitution. Mrs. Bandaranaike was among the Heads of Political organisations that shared the platform. If for that reason anyone criticizes us of leaning towards the SLEP, it is baseless. Our attitude to the SLFP is that party has contradictions with imperialism in the spheres of politics, economics and culture and those contradictions could and should be exploited to advantage in the anti-Imperialist struggle. We also believe that the SLFP's position of anti-hegemony in the present context of the two super powers' struggle has to be considered.

*Q: How do you characterize the present situation in the country and what do you think are the prospects in the foreseeable future? Also, what are the main tasks facing the Left movement in this context?*

A: Today, a striking feature is the attempt of both Imperialists

and pro-Imperialists at the increased exploitation of the rural masses.

In this context it falls on the Left movement the task of reviving and directing according to the Marxist-Leninist-Mao thought, the anti-Imperialist fighting spirit impressed by history on the peasant consciousness aimed at crushing those reactionary forces through a programme of awakening the villages:

*Q: At the inaugural sessions of V. Ponnambalam's Red Tamil Movement you had made a speech in Jaffna recognising the Tamil people's right of self-determination, while in the South you have strongly denounced the secessionist slogan as being inspired by 'Soviet Social Imperialism'. What, in reality is your position on the National Question?*

A: What we clearly stated at the inaugural meeting of the Red Tamil Movement was that we denounced the tendency of soliciting the help of the Social Imperialists to divide the country by pro-Imperialist, feudalistic big bourgeoisie Tamil reactionary forces on the pretext of opposing the so-called Sinhala Imperialism. We also stated that, in the event of such attempt to divide the country with the help of forcing Imperialist forces, we were prepared to join in the fight to safeguard the National unity against such forces.

Further if the proletarian revolutionary forces of the North fight against both the pro-imperialist feudalistic, Sinhala big-bourgeoisie and its Northern counterpart, breakaway from the pro-neo-colonialist, feudalistic big-bourgeoisie and form peoples democratic revolutionary forces in the North, East or any other part of the country we were prepared to identify them as Sri Lanka's future socialist bases and that we should support them readily. We state this point clearly not only in the North but in any other place as well. Our position is that there cannot be any relationship between the Tamil people's right of self-

determination and the Eelam movement aimed at dividing the country and that we oppose any attempt by the Tamil reactionaries to dividing the country as well as the indirect support towards that end by the extremist actions of the majority Sinhala chauvinists.

*Q: The JVP says that in leaking a story to the 'Aththa' and more importantly, in attacking the U. S. Embassy, you acted as an agent-provocateur and brought about the repression of the JVP in 1971. What is your reply to this allegation?*

A: This allegation is a major part of many baseless allegations levelled at us by the JVP and its leadership. But the reality is that it was the leader of the JVP himself who acted in such a way to expose the activities of the JVP both to the 'Aththa' newspaper and before the State apparatus. And that it was the leaders of the JVP who by their armed conspiratorial wrong actions and their actions based on a spurious secrecy—invited the repression of the JVP.

*Q: It has been said that you concentrate your polemical fire on the JVP, the pro-Moscow C. P. and the LSSP, while you seem less antagonistic towards the SLFP. What is your response?*

A: While we consider the JVP and the pro-Moscow CP are acting as agents of the Imperialists we haven't arrived at such a decision regarding the LSSP. However, we are of the opinion that some sections of the LSSP are liable to join with imperialism. While the same goes for the SLFP's right wing we consider the left wing of the SLFP could be used to advantage in the anti-imperialist struggle. Apart from that, the question of increasing and decreasing contradiction with the SLFP does not arise for us.

*Q: As a Maoist, what is your opinion about the present trends and events in China such as a partial return to policies condemned by Chairman Mao especially in the course of the Cultural Revolution, the rehabilita-*

*tion of leading cadres previously denounced as rightists, the opening towards the West in the realm of economics etc. etc?*

A: In applying the Leninist principle on the Economic and state relationships with countries of different social system, Chairman Mao had not rejected having relations with the Western countries. Similarly, Mao's teaching does not reject the rehabilitation of the cadres on the basis of self-criticism and rectification of one's errors. As a party that accepts Marxist-Leninist—Mao thought we do not believe that China has arrived at a wrong programme of action.

*Q: For sometime now there has been felt a need to unify the Maoist movement in Sri Lanka and efforts have been made in that direction. However, we understand that the discussions have not proved successful due to the Sino-Albanian and Sino-Vietnamese disputes, not to mention the characterization of the SLFP. Is this correct? What are the prospects for unification?*

A: While it is true that a certain effort was made towards unifying the section who purported to follow the Marxist-Leninist—Mao thought, the failure was not certainly due to the reasons given by you but because it was proved that those groups were not following the Mao Tsetung thought. In future the prospects for unification depends on the praxis of Marxist-Leninist-Mao thought towards building such unity.

*Q: Isn't your identification of the USSR as the principal enemy on a global scale in contradiction with your identification of the UNP as the main enemy at the national level? Surely the UNP is basically pro-Western while conversely it*

is the West rather than the USSR which is backing the UNP both economically and politically.....

A: Basically, our position is that out of the two main enemies of the peoples of the world it is the Soviet Social Imperialism that is more dangerous. It is because the latter is on the offensive and is advancing while the former is on the defensive and is on the retreat. While this is the general condition that applies to all countries of the world the consideration of special conditions in the regions we accept that it is the UNP who represents the American Imperialism, the main enemy of the people of Sri Lanka. However, it is important not to confuse these distinctions.

*Q: What in brief, is your characterization of the JVP?*

A: The JVP who served the interests of the Imperialists and pro-Imperialist forces by bringing about the repression on all revolutionary and democratic forces by rallying youth and student sections at a totally wrong moment and betraying them before the state apparatus on the pretext of rejecting the Parliamentary system and by following military conspiratorial action,

The JVP is a counter revolutionary organization which in the next round will serve the interests of the pro-imperialist forces in a right wing opportunist manner by upholding the parliamentary system.

*Q: Do you still accept armed struggle as the path to socialism?*

A: In the task of building socialism, taking the road of armed struggle is inevitable as the ruling classes do not give way to a peaceful transformation,

## Viewpoint

# Tamils — a challenge to the Lankan Left

by Victor Ivan

The oppressed Tamil people of the North are presently engaged in a legitimate though bitter struggle. Lankan Marxists who make it a habit to vociferously champion the causes of oppressed nations beyond the borders of this country, are maintaining a studied silence concerning this particular national struggle being waged on their own doorstep. These Marxists who engage in massive poster campaigns, solidarity demonstrations and rallied in support of the liberation struggles of oppressed nations in other countries, remain mute in the face of the militant struggle waged by the Tamils. Why this deafening silence? Is it that they have to defend their "Sinhalaism" along with their Marxism? Or else is it that they simply do not have the guts to challenge the communal prejudices prevailing among the Sinhala masses as well as the successive bourgeoisie regimes.

There is a veritable plethora of arguments deployed by these "Marxists" to justify their stand of remaining aloof from the just struggle of the oppressed Tamil people. They say that they are equally opposed to both Sinhala racialism and Tamil racialism. They go on to say that the TULF is a capitalist movement and that any effort to divide the country is a reactionary one. Therefore, they vehemently oppose the demand for a separate state.

It is indeed a mockery of Marxism to equate each and every manifestation of nationalism by utilizing the simplistic rule of thumb that Marxism is opposed to racialism. For instance, is it possible to equate white racialism with "Black consciousness" in the U. S. A.? To put it more starkly, how can one equate the Ku Klux

*The author better known as 'Podi Athula' was a prominent member of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and was sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment for his part in the events leading upto the '71 uprising. He served six years of this sentence. A Marxist, he is not a member of any party.*

Klan with the Black Panthers? Likewise, it is impossible to equate the anti-Sinhala sentiments, however misplaced of the oppressed Tamil people with the anti-Tamil sentiments of the Sinhala people since the nationalism of an oppressed nation has a progressive content in contradistinction to the nationalism of an oppressor nation which has a reactionary content.

I, for my part, do not wish to claim that the TULF is not a bourgeois party. **Not only the TULF, but any national movement has a general bourgeois-democratic content. This inherent character of national movements does not constitute an obstacle to contending our support to the independence struggle of oppressed nations.** The bourgeois content of nationalist movements did not prevent our Marxists from extending that support to these struggles — so long as they took place beyond the shores of Sri Lanka. The National Awami League which led the independence struggle of Bangladesh was not a Marxist movement by any stretch of the imagination. Irrespective of this however, our Marxists correctly supported the Bangladeshi struggle. The criterion they used in this instance was whether or not the Bangladeshi people were an oppressed nation. Why then this reluctance to use the same

yardstick in the case of the Tamil people in the North? Why, in this case alone, has the social character of the political organisation most prominent within the nationalist movement, become so crucial an issue? It is correct that the class character of the political organization in the forefront of a national movement imposes constraints on the nature and course of the struggle. However it does not behove Marxists to maintain a dignified aloofness until the oppressed people become disillusioned with their bourgeois leadership and ceremonially extend an invitation to the former. Instead, what Marxists should do is to actively integrate themselves in the struggle of the oppressed people and gradually displace the bourgeois leadership which attempts to confine the independence struggle within the limits of bourgeois democracy.

Do Lankan 'Marxists' oppose the demand for a separate state after assessing the issue from the standpoint of the interests of the socialist revolution, as many of them claim? Or rather is it that without voicing opposition to this just demand they would be unable to maintain their present disgraceful and immoral alliance with Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism? Our 'Marxists' who vociferate against a separate state should not forget that the oppressed Tamil nation has previously made ceaseless efforts to reach a just solution to their problems within the framework of a unitary state and that the demand for a separate state has been presented following the failure of these efforts. The selfsame 'Marxists' who were hostile or inactive during these earlier attempts, now raise a hue and cry against the demand for separation. Is this not hypocrisy of the basest sort? Marxists do have a right and duty to proffer advice to the oppressed Tamil nation who are engaged in struggle, but their advice will be given consideration (let alone followed) only if these Marxists identify themselves fully with

(Continued on Page 21)

## Tamil politics

# Separate identity, one nation

by Dr. R. R. Crossette Tambiah

I read with interest the two views you presented in L. G. of May 1.

To take Jayantha Somasundaram's view first. He asks "how come the Tamil speaking people discovered their unique identity only in 1972?" The separate identity of the Tamil speaking people has existed as long as the separate identities of different races have existed in the world, like the differences, say, of Tamils and Punjabis in India. Like them the Sinhalese and Tamils living in Sri Lanka have a different language, separate religion and a separate culture — the hall-marks of separate identity. This national identity is not "one that was maintained by despotic monarchs centuries gone by" as asserted by Jayantha Somasundaram. Nor is he correct when he asserts, "We are heirs to a communication revolution that is hurtling us towards one language, one culture, one identity. An identity that will enable us to call ourselves human which is the only distinction that matters after all." It is not clear whether he is referring to Sri Lanka or the whole world when he refers to "Us" in the above somewhat startling proposition. Whichever it is, the concept is not valid. His conclusion is that "a modern nation cannot be built on the basis of an identity that is dated by four hundred years." The separate identity of the Sinhalese and Tamils is not dated four hundred years; it is dated from the beginning of these races and will continue as long as races remain.

This does not mean that the solution suggested by S. Kathiravelupillai, M. P. Kopay is the only alternative. It is possible to preserve our separate identity and still remain one nation. Whether the Tamils are a national minority or a separate nation is being debated. It is an academic exercise which does not appear

to be necessary to resolve our present problems. Fortunately the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka have continued to live in separate areas for centuries. In any area where the predominantly majority of people belong to a separate race, culture, religion and language, their desire to manage their internal affairs need not mean forming a separate State. Indeed, the Bandaranaike - Chelvanayagam Pact, which envisaged Regional Councils contained the germs of this concept and if it had been implemented Sri Lanka would not today be facing its most serious impediment to development.

Such autonomous areas exist in many places and have nowhere resulted in any harm to the country as a whole. On the contrary, it has resulted in the progress of the entire country.

The USSR and China are outstanding examples of where ethnic minorities have their own autonomous areas, which the dominant race, Russian and Han respectively, have helped to create and foster to their mutual advantage. The move for devolution of POWER to the Scots and Welsh, with the same religion, language and culture as the English, should be eye-opener to the Sinhalese.

There remains the question of the Tamils brought from India as indentured labour to work the British owned upcountry estates. Their separate identity is certainly dated, something over a hundred years when they were brought here and also by the way they have been segregated within estates under semi-serf conditions. This the British did; but the way we have treated them after independence should remain a blot on the conscience of every citizen of Sri Lanka. It is high time we stopped calling them Indian Tamils. They are Tamils who were born and bred here,

know no other home and remain under trying climatic conditions the backbone of our permanent and most reliable earner of foreign exchange, for which we are willing to sell our soul! Their correct designation is upcountry Tamils and all those who elect to stay here must enjoy the rights and privileges of every other citizen in Sri Lanka. With regard to preserving their separate identity, the same yardstick for an autonomous area should apply. Where they constitute the vast majority of the people in a sufficiently large area to make it viable I can see no objection in principle to their having their own autonomous areas.

Though in theory an autonomous state, if it satisfies the prescribed conditions; may be envisaged because of the separate identity of the upcountry Tamils, in practice there is increasing intermingling of the population in the surrounding Sinhalese villages and estate labour, in many ways a healthy development, if the Sinhala Only policy is not imposed on the upcountry Tamils. Every facility should be provided for fostering their language, religion and culture. The idea that it is necessary for all to become Sinhalese Buddhists for unity is imbecilic.

In my view the most urgent need to settle the communal problem in Sri Lanka today is to make the vast majority of the Sinhalese people who preponderate in the island, to understand that an autonomous area is not a separate State. Such a preponderating majority has a preponderating responsibility for communal harmony. They must be made to realise that an autonomous area is not even a separate enclave. It is only a part of the one country where a separate ethnic group constitutes the vast majority of the people living in that area and run only internal affairs, like local government, industry, agriculture, education and health. This is essential for the ethnic group to develop fully and it is their basic human right. It should not be difficult to make the Sinhalese people, who so cherish

their language and religion and culture to realise that other ethnic groups living together in large numbers and large areas, should want the same facilities to develop their own language, religion and culture. If this is done in Jaffna how will it hurt the Sinhalese in the South?

It is necessary to make crystal clear that in an autonomous area all races are free to come and go and, if they so wish, to live and join the mainstream of life there. It will be two-way and the ethnic minorities who chose to live in Sinhalese area must join the mainstream there. This again does not mean they will have to sacrifice their separate identity. It will be the privilege of the dominant race in that area to welcome them and provide them facilities for their special needs. For example where sufficient Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims live to warrant separate streams in schools there can be no harm in providing them. But the administration will be conducted in the language of the area. Indeed in Sri Lanka, unlike India, language need never have posed any problem. There are only two languages and if the policy of teaching both languages, now belatedly adopted, had been adopted at the dawn of independence all the blood shed in the recent past may not have been spilt.

Future blood spilling can be avoided if both the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders get together. The TULF says it is willing to negotiate. Eelam is the cry of desperately troubled people specially their youth who, even the President has admitted have been discriminated against. To educate youth and throw them into the dust bin is an explosive mix. The 1971 uprising of Sinhalese educated youth, where so many Sinhalese boys and girls lost their lives should be a sharp reminder to the Sinhalese people of the danger of the explosive mixture of education and unemployment. The more militant Tamil youth have proclaimed a Tiger movement. It is just foolish bravado of youths who

(Continued on Page 21)

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# Children - an endangered species

by Barbara Ward

**H**ow are we to understand the environment and the child? The inner environment of biological health and full creative mental development? Or the outer environment of stimulus, culture and beauty of shared affection and civic security? Of course, we mean both. We also know that today both are at risk for millions upon millions of the world's children.

It is truism—but still true—that famished children with insufficient protein, vitamins and minerals—as well as calories—in their diets in the critical first years of existence cannot by definition, ever reach full humanity. No amount of remedial feeding later on, even supposing it were available, will restore mental alertness, the capacity to learn, the creative spark to those who missed the irreplaceable growing point of adequate nutrition and the chance for proper development in early life.

In the documents prepared for the World Food Conference in Rome in 1974, the estimate was made that perhaps 230 million children are malnourished and thus risk the irreversible abridgement of their full humanity, of their inner environment of physical strength and mental capacity.

## A small sacrifice

The report also estimates that for \$20 a year for each child, the extra component of needed calories and protein could be made good. If we take the world's wealthy people—the old industrialized wealth of the west. Japan and Russia, the new oil wealth in oil-producing countries with relatively small populations and wealthy groups in developing lands of all kinds—the number of people is coming up to a billion.

The cost of a policy for a protein and calorie supplement for the the neediest children is again roughly, \$460 million. About 50 cents a year from each citizen in wealthy lands and groups would provide that supplement. It is hardly an overwhelming burden, least of all for countries where the expenditure on armaments can cost each citizen about \$100 a year.

The outer environment covers a much wider and much less calculable problem. The likelihood that the most important external need may be love, security and identity achieved within a happy family is borne out by the numberless children in every type of society who have survived unimaginable strain and hardship because of the primordial support of paternal and fraternal love.

We cannot legislate for this kind of security and affection, but a society which does not give all the needed kinds of external support may find that it has lost in violence, juvenile delinquency, mugging in the streets and crowded prisons most of the money it thinks it saves by failing to provide good housing, decent neighbourhoods, lively, well-taught schools and a general ethos which supports the child's need for family stability.

## Unhealthy slum environment

These needs become all the more urgent and tragic as the world floods on towards full-scale urbanization. Every year, in most developing countries, population grows by more than two per cent, cities by more than four per cent, the great urban conglomerations by twice as much again.

Calcutta, Jakarta, Manila, Caracas, Lagos—they drive on at uncontrollable speed towards and beyond the ten million mark. And

Barbara Ward wrote this article about three years ago. Hopefully, the International Year of the Child will help to create a situation in which positive answers can be given to the questions she poses in the last paragraph of this already classic piece of writing.

in such places, a third and more of the population are likely to be squatters, living in tar-paper shacks or jute made of discarded petrol tins and to be working, if they are lucky, perhaps a couple of days a month.

These are perhaps the worst external environments ever devised for children. They can be redeemed by family love and tenacity. But virtually everything that society provides is designed to stunt the child's development, check natural growth in awareness and intelligence and turn creativity into bitter and active resentment.

If it is true that human nature itself developed its imaginative powers under all the stimulus of the planet's infinite variety—forests, plants, birds, animals, scents, flowers, changing skies, in a word, the full environment of total creation—how can we expect the essential creativeness of man to be preserved when the only sights are miserable buildings, the chief sounds, the roar of traffic, the pervading smells, untreated sewage and industrial effluents?

Even in wealthy cities, the monotony and isolation of blighted communities or high rise living is producing a mixture of apathy and violence. What are we breeding in the future megalopolis where millions of children are to grow

up with bad shelter and uncertain employment in an environment compounded of all the worst in 19th century slums and pollutions.

Will sufficient recognition be given to the need of carrying out the practical and realistic measures which can help to create a better environment for the world's children? And will they be undertaken on a scale large enough to be of significant value to the underprivileged masses? Only time will tell whether or not this challenge will be taken up and dealt with successfully. ●

### US and . . .

*(Continued from Page 9)*

of his life, to embrace this tradition by calling not only for social justice at home but also abroad. It also explains why the Rev. Andrew Young, a disciple of Martin Luther King, finds himself in the middle of the conflict between the fundamentalist position represented possibly by the President and the neo-orthodox tradition represented by Brezinski.

With the Carter administration we find the evolution of a Christian foreign policy that has considerable bi-partisan appeal. This foreign policy combines the tradition of fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy. The theological premises of the new Cold War strategy is indeed different from those of the previous era in that during the present period the new Cold Warriors seem to be quite willing to work with one arm of the communist movement (China) to confront the other arm (the Soviet Union and the non-aligned world). Here a strange combination has developed between what we can identify as the fundamentalists of the West, i. e. the United States and West Germany, with that of the fundamentalists of the East, i.e. China.

One of the greatest dangers with this coalition of fundamentalists is that they tend to have an apocalyptic view of the world. Note the famous Chinese epithet that "there is great disorder under heaven and this is a good thing." In other words, fundamentalists tend to have a view of the world which is essentially evil and therefore its destruction can be-

come theologically and morally justifiable. Since fundamentalists seek salvation outside of history, they are quite willing to tamper with history and human Civilization in order to preserve it for an era beyond it. We are thus faced with one of the most dangerous combinations in world politics, namely that of those who are united in certain fundamentalist views of human civilization and hence willing to experiment with war. ●

**NEXT: US policy in practice.**

### Career . . .

*(Continued from Page 13)*

and this is certain to be opposed by the career officers of the Overseas Service.

The existence of anomalies has created discontent in one of the important segments of the Overseas bureaucracy. Tissa Wijeyeratne, highlighting this aspect of discrimination against this category of officers, stated that he was 'astonished to know of the rights enjoyed by the Diplomatic officers which are denied to clerical hands'. Any adjustment in these privileges is certain to invite further hostility.

**(To be continued)**

### Myths and . . .

*(Continued from Page 14)*

the internationalism displayed by the Cuban revolutionaries towards the black sugar-cane workers in no way prevented them from winning the overwhelming support of the 'fair-skinned' majority. On the contrary, in the case of Cuba the black plantation proletariat is one of the main support bases of the Revolution, while historians such as E. H. Carr acknowledge that the Bolsheviks could not have defeated the imperialist interventionist wars in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, if not for the decisive support rendered by the non-Russian peoples, who for their part trusted the Bolsheviks because of the latter's wellknown stance on the national question.

So it is clear that a principled internationalist position need not lead to the isolation of the Left from the working masses of the dominant nation, if the Left party in question has a correct political

line, adopts correct strategy and tactics, while incorporating its demands on the National Question in an overall programme which accurately reflects the aspirations of the popular masses. In fact, if the key problem of articulating the national liberation struggle of the oppressed nation with the struggle for social liberation of the working class is resolved, then a bid for hegemony by the Left would have an excellent chance for success. ●

### Tamils . . .

*(Continued from Page 18)*

the ongoing struggle for self determination.

Can Lankan Marxists (of both the reformist and 'radical' Left) make an honest and selfcritical assessment of their chauvinist past? Can the Marxist movement of this country sever its opportunist alliance with Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism and engage in a struggle against this trend which is directed against the oppressed Tamil nation? Is it only if our Marxists are capable of this task and indeed of integrating themselves with the liberation struggle of the Tamil people for national self-determination, would it be possible to restore the fractured Sinhala-Tamil unity while making this independence struggle a component part of the Lankan socialist revolution. ●

### Separate . . .

*(Continued from Page 19)*

are willing to die rather than be discriminated against in their own land.

Just as the present government understood the frustration of Sinhalese youth who rebelled in 1971 and let them off, they should understand the frustration of the Tamil youth and try to meet them half way by negotiation with the TULF, their chosen leaders.

If we believe in the democratic process, whether we like it or not the TULF is the only democratically elected party to represent the Ceylon Tamils, who have lived in this fair island for centuries and have no other home.

# Madness and society

by Reggie Siriwardena

In 1890 Anton Chekhov made a journey to the island of Sakhalin, lying off the coast of Siberia. Sakhalin was then the Russian 'Devil's Island,' a penal colony in which the tsarist regime confined about 14,000 prisoners and exiles. Chekhov returned from Sakhalin with his mind and heart filled with impressions of the brutality and human degradation that were the everyday routine of life in the colony. Ironically, however, the governor of the island was a humane but ineffectual idealist who frowned on corporal punishment, but in spite of his views, the prison officers regularly used the birch and the whip, extorting money from the richer convicts as the price of exempting them.

Chekhov's indignant observations on the penal colony went into a travel book, *Sakhalin Island*, but the creative expression of what he had experienced and observed on the island was his masterpiece, the novella *Ward No. 6*. It is a mark of Chekhov's social insight that the story is not about a prison but about a ward for the insane in the hospital of a small provincial Russian town. But the identification between prison and asylum is made in the very first paragraph of the story in an observation whose perceptiveness will strike anybody who knows our own mental institution at Angoda. Of the grey fence with its nails enclosing the annexe that constitutes Ward No. 6, Chekhov writes: 'These nails, with their sharp points sticking up, and the fence, and the annexe itself have that particular gloomy and accursed look that among us is to be found only in hospital and prison buildings.' And Ward No. 6, like Sakhalin (or like Angoda) is ruled by brutality, of which the mental patients are the daily victims. In the hall leading to the ward sits the warder Nikita a retired soldier, 'one of those simple-minded, posi-

*The 75th anniversary of the death of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, the Russian master of the short story, falls this month. This article deals with the enduring contemporary significance of his greatest work, the novella Ward No. 6, with its insights into the social relations of madness — a story that profoundly influenced the young Lenin.*

tive, dependable and stupid individuals who love order more than anything else in the world and are therefore convinced that it is necessary to beat them. He beats on the face, on the chest, on the back, or anywhere at all, and is certain that without it there would be no order in this place.'

The head doctor in this hospital is Dr. Ragin — like the governor of Sakhalin, a sympathetic but ineffectual character, who is well aware that the mental ward is ruled by Nikita's brutal fists, but has reconciled himself to the corruption and suffering in the hospital by persuading himself that this is part of the general irrationality of things and an insignificant part of the sum of human suffering. Into the ward one day is brought a young man, Gromov, intelligent and educated but suffering from persecution mania. He denounces Ragin, when he visits the ward, as a quack and a hangman. Ragin engages him in conversation and tries to convince him that it is all a matter of chance whether one is a doctor or a mental patient; that in any case the wise man must, like the stoics, despise suffering and be happy and free in his mind. Gromov replies angrily that to despise suffering is to despise life, and that it is possible for the doctor to be so complacent because he has lived a comfortable life and never known what suffering was.

Ragin comes to discover that Gromov is the most interesting person he has met in that dreary provincial town, and tells him that the differences in their beliefs are unimportant compared with the

fact that they are the only two people in the town capable of intelligent and serious conversation. The doctor's careerist assistant takes advantage of Ragin's friendship with Gromov to create suspicions regarding the doctor's own sanity. Ultimately, by his assistant's intrigues, Ragin is himself locked up in Ward No. 6. Here he recognises his guilt for his former indifference when he learns at first hand what suffering is. He is beaten up by Nikita, has a stroke and dies.

It is part of the strength of classic Russian fiction that it treats the life of the intellect, of philosophical, religious and political belief, as equally valid and significant material for the imaginative artist as the life of the emotions. Where Dickens, for instance, never convincingly created a character who reflects the intellectual life, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Chekhov mirror in their work the turbulent conflict of ideas and ideologies in 19th-century Russia. What is at issue in the debate between Ragin and Gromov is the soundness and truth of the Tolstoyan gospel of quietism and non-resistance to evil. Yet Chekhov's story is not a disembodied argument of ideas; the debate is bound up with the experience of the characters and the way they live, and the final refutation of the Tolstoyan view comes from Ragin's tragic schooling by life itself. Incidentally, *Ward No. 6* is the best answer to those English critics who have tried to assimilate Chekhov's work to the contemporary Western European cult of the absurd. If anything, *Ward No. 6* brings home to us the fact that



philosophy of the absurd (of which Ragin professes a near-variant) is an evasion of human and social responsibility.

But where Chekhov's masterpiece seems most enduring in its meaning for us is in its remarkable understanding of the social relations of madness. Gromov had been a university student until his father was charged with forgery and embezzlement and died in prison; Gromov was forced to interrupt his education and make a living in ill-paid jobs. His paranoia was brought on by the sight one day of two prisoners in chains being led along the street by four soldiers armed with rifles. He develops then a morbid fear that he too might be arrested and thrown into prison for a crime he has not committed: after all, he thinks, nothing is more likely in the state of the law than a miscarriage of justice, and judges, policemen and doctors are so callous to human suffering that they are no different from the peasant slaughtering sheep and calves in his background.

It has taken nearly three-quarters of a century after Chekhov's story was written for psychiatry, in the persons of some of its more radical exponents, to catch up with Chekhov's insights, to recognise that madness is a reaction to authoritarian and repressive pressures of the family and of society, and that mental hospitals are among the institutions through which the social structure is reinforced and maintained. Chekhov's story confronts us with the disturbing question whose counterparts we should face in regarding the life around us: Who is mad — Gromov or the society that has put him in Ward No. 6?

Chekhov's story first appeared in a magazine in November 1892, and that same winter in Samara (just such a provincial town as the setting of the story) it was read by young man, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (later to be known as Lenin). On Lenin the story made a profound impression. As he told his sister, who has recorded his remarks, 'When I read that story last evening, I began to feel just terrified; I couldn't stay in my room, and I got up and went out. I felt a sensation as if I had been shut up in Ward No. 6.'

## Book review

### In defence of man

by Jayantha Somasundaram

*The People's Rights: Documents of the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka 1971 - 78.* 150 pp Rs. 25/-.

Civilization conjures up many images. We visualise architectural marvels, medical wonders, artistic accomplishments. But above all civilization is really about the dignity of man. In our day one wonders whether civilization is regressing when one sees concerted attacks being made on the rights of men and women in countries around the globe.

Has it perhaps something to do with the growing disparity between the rich and poor? And hasn't that got something to do with man's innate selfishness: One that results in a craving for material and political power, power that can only be maintained by stripping off the rights of the less fortunate and crushing their initiatives.

The state in modern society is a mirror of the balance of social classes. It takes on an authoritarian stance in the interests of the dominating class or group or race, and acts in a manner inimical to the depressed elements. The lengths to which the state will go to maintain or advance the *status quo* determines the extent of repression that one can find in that particular country.

Modern society with its technological sophistication needs skilled people, people who have benefited from the explosion in knowledge and learning. The communication revolution has universalised things and become the catalyst for rising expectations. But all of this is taking place in a world with accelerated differentials in living standards.

Nascent states are doing away with the Westminster-type of parliamentary democracy and

pluralism, which itself is two centuries out of date. In their place a new type of authoritarian regime has sprung up. One-party states with plastic leaders whose common characteristic is megalomania. The failure of such regimes to meet anything like popular needs is betrayed by the frequent upheavals and dethronings. In Sri Lanka and India at least the process is confined within the electoral system.

The Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka emerged in the aftermath of the 1971 Insurrection, by which time the mechanics of repression were developing into a fine art.

The authorities were having a field day. They had been given *carte blanche* to wipe out the opponents of the establishment. The Civil Rights Movement was the response of the liberal intelligentsia to this social and political crisis.

The CRM documents contained in *The People's Rights* is a testament in defense of the men and women in Sri Lanka who fell into the political or racial minorities.

The '71 Emergency and the Criminal Justice Commission are well exposed by the CRM documents. In fact, referring to the CJC, Fred Halliday of the *New Left Review* said that the Government may just as well have done away with courts altogether!

After 1977 and the new government there have been fresh attacks on our civil rights. The CRM has not failed to draw attention to this. The "Tiger" Act is one which not merely embodies the worst features of emergency rule, but in addition, has institutionalised it by incorporating it as a normal statute.

# The case of 'Sesame Street'

*Sunny day, keeping the clouds away  
On my way to where the air is sweet.  
Can you tell me how to get  
How to get to Sesame Street*

Perhaps several thousand children in this country have now seen **Sesame Street**, the world's best-known and most widely distributed TV programme for pre-school children. Originating in the U. S., the English-language version is shown in more than 50 countries, while related versions in four other languages are seen in about 70 other countries. 'It is the first time in the history of civilization that so many of the world's children will have been exposed simultaneously to the identical cultural materials—images, music, sounds, laughter, body movements, facial expressions—all feeding into a child's developing sense of self, all showing him particular ways of interacting in social relations.'

This comment comes from a study titled **Literacy without Books: The Case of "Sesame Street"** by Rose K. Goldsen, Associate Professor of Sociology at Cornell University. Basing her study mainly on the Spanish-language version, **Plaza Sesamo**, seen in 14 Latin American countries, Professor Goldsen examines the values disseminated by the content and technique of the programme among children of developing countries.

The claim most frequently made for **Sesame Street** by its admirers is that every year the programme teaches innumerable children to read, before the age of schooling, through the brilliant animated techniques by which letters and numbers are associated with words and images and stamped on the child's mind. 'Ah! But is it a world of reading the children are being ushered into?'

asks Professor Goldsen. 'Or do these charming programs usher them into a world of television watching? The children are entertained by animations; by commercials and billboards; by pratfalls, yuk-yuks and one-liners; by rock music and light shows; by guest stars and production numbers;—but never by anything that involves books!

'Now, at first glance, that **Sesame Street** and its overseas counterparts push literacy but not books may seem as contradictory as Coca-Cola pushing beverages but not Coke. And yet, is it really so paradoxical? . . . There is, after all, more than one kind of literacy. . . . A work force must read to be able to read instructions concerning the operation of equipment in a modern factory. Consumers must read to decipher the instructions on a package of cake mix. The citizenry must read to be able to fill out income-tax forms and use an automated post office. Automobile drivers must read to find the right exits off the through-way. Even a nation of television watchers must be able to look up listings in the local equivalent of **TV Guide** and to follow all the puffery about the stars. . . .

## The Good Life

'What is clear right now, however, is that the children are being taught to "read" not books but television. They learn to piece together the day's drama on the street or in the Plaza, unifying it into a continuous story in spite of all the interruptions. This skill will stand them in good stead, helping them to "read" the commercial television programs **Sesame Street** in all its versions imitates. In addition they teach the children to "read" the action—adventure and crime-show formulas that American businesses and their overseas imitators use as

electronic envelopes, tucking in the commercial "messages" designed to create public attitudes and consumer needs that can be linked to particular products. Indeed, the programs are themselves full-length commercials, hawking over and over again the kind of worldview that is compatible with postindustrial, privatized, consumer society, complete with the sort of pious slogans George Orwell dubbed "goodthink".

'And so is **Sesame Street**—domestic and international versions. Like other programs exported by American Television interests, no matter what the overt story may be, it's all show-and tell for the consumer society's version of the "good life"—the cars, the planes, the helicopters, the housing patterns, industrially produced foods and music, to say nothing of the electric refrigerators and blenders and mixers and household equipment, all taken for granted as standard props on **Sesame Street** as on any exported "situation comedy". These images of the "good life" are not innocuous. They pave the way for foreign subsidiaries, affiliates, clients, and imitators of American consumer-goods industries to leap into the breach, ready to provide whatever merchandise the natives may select from the offerings appearing in the glamorous showcase that now encircles the globe.'

## Editorial Prose

'Sri Lanka's career foreign service officials are often maligned, sometimes justifiably so.' ('Daily News' editorial, June 12.)

'Other Ministers, too, are literally working their fingers to the bone to help the UNP government to keep the promises it gave the people at election time.' ('Daily News' editorial, June 18.)



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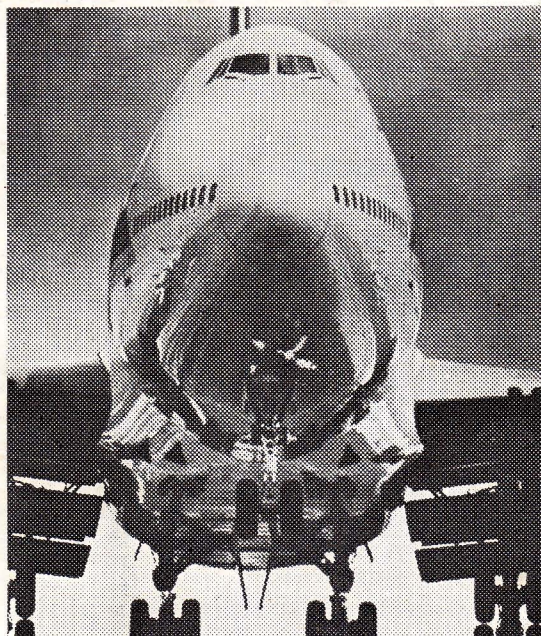
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