

**LANKA**

OCTOBER 15 1979

# **GUARDIAN**

## **WIJEWEERA HERO OR VILLAIN**

**J. Uyangoda.**

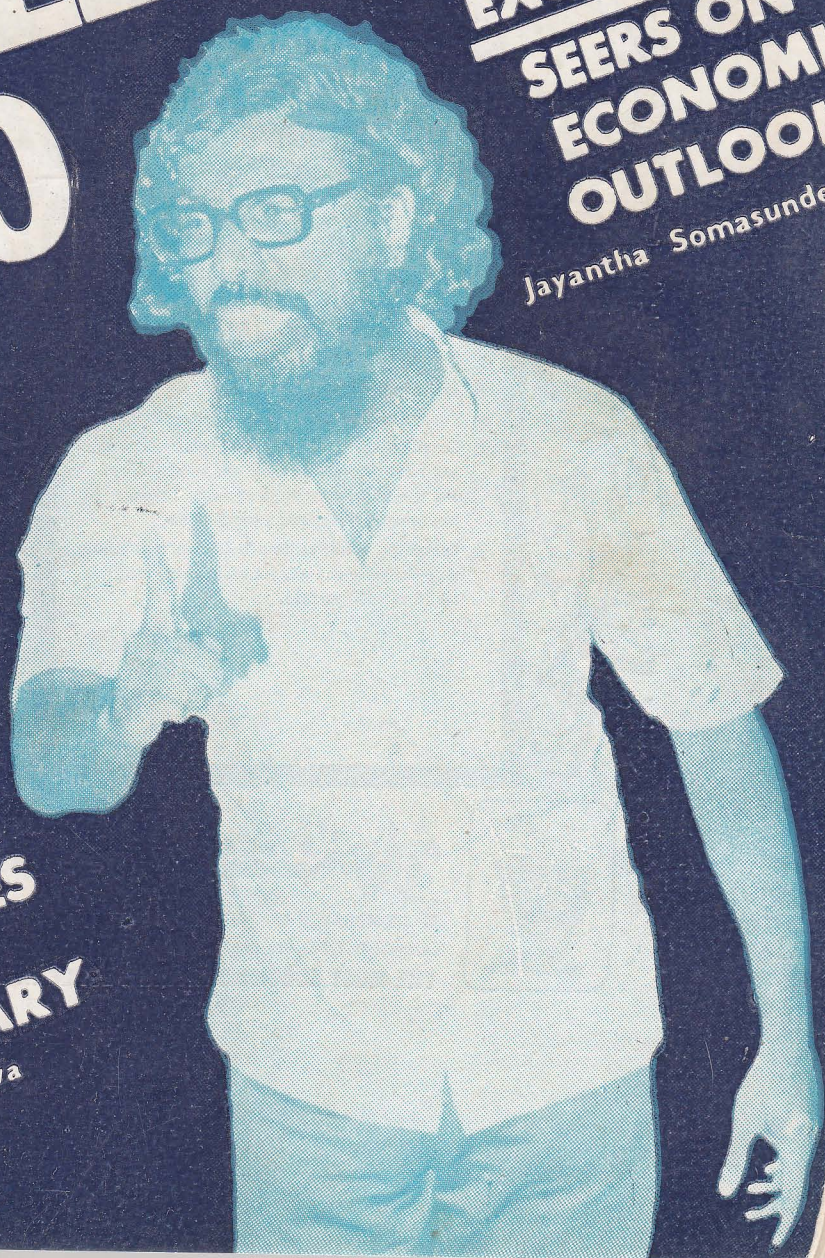
**INSURRECTION**

**TWO NEW STUDIES**

**Charles Abeyasekera**

**HAVANA DIARY**

**Mervyn de Silva**



**EXCLUSIVE**  
**SEERS ON**  
**ECONOMIC**  
**OUTLOOK**  
Jayantha Somasundera



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## Feminist Front

The Foreign Office, a strong bastion of male chauvinism, faces an invasion from a new quarter. Traditionally its main enemy was the political appointee.

When the world's first woman premeir presided over its destinies, the F.O. feared a feminist foray. But the perceived danger passed. In the past year however, the threat has re-appeared in a deadlier guise. 3 women have been appointed to London, Washington and Canberra and all three are "outsiders".

## DPL News

The DPL set is still discussing the poor DPL representation at the

Bandaranaike Day ceremonies at Horogolla. When Mrs. Bandaranaike was prime minister, all the limousines turned up transporting the heavy morning-suited cargo. In opposition, the SLFP organisers saw numbers drop or rank lowered. The only ambassador spotted by the public this year was the man from Belgrade. Even Pol Pot's patrons were conspicuous absentees. Was it because no formal invitations had been sent out?

And why was there no ranking minister present when the Korea-gaters and the Seoul Brothers in Colombo celebrated South Korea's Foundation Day.

## Super-Star

Rohana Wijeweera's sense of theatre would be envied by any super-star but it is not winning him friends among his new "allies" of the older Left. At Hyde Park he upstaged the rest with the help of the JVP's massive poster display, his late arrival in the middle of Pieter Keuneman's speech which was interrupted by the the thunderous applause of strategically placed JVP cheer-gangs and by the casual conceit with which he chose to read a book until his turn to speak came along. An irascible LSSP'er said the book was Lenin's "What is to be done?" — a question that is now being asked about this brash young man.

## Too Many Contradictions?

Is Maoism on its way out in the land of Mao? The name of the man who was once deified by millions was hardly heard during the October 1st anniversary celebrations.

While the Muscovites and the Trotskyist, lapsed, late developing and unrepentant, have started to sink their long-standing differences, the local Maoists are still struggling to come under a single banner. And recently they lost another "veteran" Maoist to the opposition when Nanda Ellawela teamed up with an organisation dominated by Ratnapura "revisionists".

## Missions abroad

Ratnasiri Wijesinghe, pinpoints, the pathetic state of affairs, in which, our missions abroad are, in a letter to the Lanka Guardian, of August 1st. As one who had first hand experience, of the activities and antics, of those attached, to our missions abroad, especially in Europe, I can fully endorse, Mr. Wijesinghe's criticisms.

I need only, state that even relatively junior staffers, of these missions, behave as if they are fully fledged diplomats and make it a point generally, to treat Sri Lankans, visiting the countries, to which they are attached, with condescension disdain and even contempt, especially, if they are in some sort of distress.

It is indeed, most disappointing, that the present U. N. P. regime, despite its general election pledge, on this matter has as a whole failed to improve the calibre of the personnel of Sri Lankan missions abroad.

Kandy. **F. Bertil Ranasinghe**

## Pharmaceuticals (etc.)

Mr. M. M. S. Fuard in his letter of Sept. 15th implies that free market forces are our good friends, and that the real villain of the piece is devaluation and the continuing depreciation of the Ceylon rupee. At the same time he reminds us himself that devaluation of the rupee preceded liberalization in that fateful November of 1977.

Yes, it was devaluation that blasted the gap in our economic defences. Now the free market forces have swarmed in. It is these free market forces that are continuing to beat up the rupee and, with the finesse of Somoza's late National Guard, beat up the masses of Sri Lanka in the process. The beating up, Mr. Fuard will see, will commence in earnest, somewhat later.

# LANKA GUARDIAN

Vol. 2 No. 12 October 15, 1979 Price 2/50

Published fortnightly by Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd., First Floor, 88, N. H. M. Abdul Cader Road, (Reclamation Road) Colombo 11.

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Printed by Ananda Press  
82/5, Wolfendhal Street,  
Colombo 13.

Telephone: 35975

In the meantime, import prices, contrary to what Mr. Fuard says, keep floating up at a rate much steeper than the floating down of the rupee, showing that devaluation and depreciation are not the only weapons of extortion.

The channelled recycling of credit from developing countries back to the developed will ensure a double return to international usury. After all, the same banking circuits service investment in developed countries. They collect their profits at both ends. It is to ensure this that we must pay the prices that Mr. Fuard is shy to talk about. It is to ensure this too that computer flashes in New York and Brussels electronically spell out the changes in our tariff structure, and direct certain consumer items like pharmaceuticals into our country free of duty.

After all, sad to say, their computers are programmed on their GNP targets and not on ours.

Colombo 15. U. Karunatileka.

### N. M. — the Working Class leader

All assessments of N. M.'s life and work have been favourable and in the general set-up of political life in Sri Lanka today he stands up well. He has been compared favourably with DS, SWRD, Sir DB, and even Anagarika Dharmapala. I agree. But these men served their class well and the success of that class in contemporary Sri Lanka reflects their success.

NM was a working class leader and his life and work must be judged on the state of the working class movement in Sri Lanka today. More than 40 years after the founding, in which N. M. took a leading part, of the LSSP, whose aim was mainly to serve the working class people of Sri Lanka, the Left movement is in considerable disarray. The Trade Union movement, the chief if not the only working class activity of the LSSP, has not succeeded in

instilling the first benefit of successful working class action — unity — and every capitalist Government in power is easily able to encourage workers to desert Left Unions and join Government-sponsored unions.

It is not pleasant to be critical of a man after his death. This is specially as in Sri Lanka where a people, starved of community activity, seize every opportunity for joint action. But a person who dons the mantle of political leadership exposes himself or herself to a critical analysis of his or her policies at all times.

In my considered view the reason for NM's lack of success as a working class leader, in spite of continuous and I am willing to grant many services over a generation, is due to his adherence to the Parliamentary system of Government, which as practised in capitalist countries, is carefully designed to prevent radical change. I am calling it Parliamentary system of Government and not Parliamentary democracy, because elections to parliaments in the capitalist set up, whatever their name or form may be, carry no guarantee of free and fair elections. Indeed, the reverse is more often true — vested interests and special interests of all sorts pressurise voters to serve their selfish interests.

R. C. T.

### Desha Vimukthi

We write to point out two errors concerning reference made to 'Desha Vimukthi' in the article 'Left Unity: problems and prospects' in the 1st October issue. 1. You say we disclosed that LSSP veterans Chandra Goonesekera and Ananda Premasinghe were leading a group of members who urge close affiliation with the S.L.F.P. We presume you were referring to an article which

appeared in page 4 of our July-August issue. What we said in it was that a group of leading LSSPers led by Ananda Premasinghe and Sarath Wijesinghe had **already left** the party and were likely to join the S.L.F.P. (No mention was made by us of Chandra Goonesekera). We are however not disputing here the correction of your analysis of trends within the L.S.S.P.

2. Your reference to "the 'Desha Vimukthi' group of the P.D.P." is also extremely misleading. We believe you had in mind here certain leading members of the PDP, associated with 'Desha Vimukthi', who recently severed connections with it to form, together with many others the New Democratic Party with A. M. Jinadasa as its General Secretary. It must be emphasised however that 'Desha Vimukthi' is not the Journal of this Organisation either. It is in fact edited by a number of political organisations (including the N.D.P.) committed to Marxism-Leninism.

R. Wickramasinghe.  
Editorial Committee  
— 'Desha Vimukthi'

### Lenin's last gasp

Chintaka in the October 1 LG (p. 26) refers to 'the crippled and debilitated Lenin' in March 1923 who made the dreadful blunder of distrusting Stalin the immaculate and infallible. Strangely, this crippled and debilitated individual, according to p. 8 of the same issue, was capable, also in 1923, of making a statement about the future of socialist revolution which 'not merely displays remarkable prescience, but marks a definite rupture with the Eurocentric view of world revolution then dominant within the International Marxist movement.' What makes this unsigned comment all the more interesting, in the light of Chintaka's picture of Lenin at his last gasp, is that it comes from a fellow-thinker of his, since it is followed by a characteristically ritual quotation from Comrade Stalin.

Colombo 5. Reggie Siriwardena

# Budget and Cabinet re-shuffle

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

**W**hile the government's economic experts now putting the finishing touches to the UNP's third budget and waiting expectantly for the Finance Minister's return and any good news he may bring back, have been studying the latest figures and current trends with increasing dismay.

One stark figure stands out: the huge trade deficit of four thousand million rupees in the first half of this year. This must be considered along with the total import bill for the same period of over 10 billion rupees.

Thanks to tea prices, 1977 gave Sri Lanka that rarest of rewards, a favourable balance. What with import liberalisation as a key element in the new government's economic and budgetary package, 1978 produced a less pleasing picture. However the government and its advisers, both local and foreign, were not unduly perturbed. Recurrent balance of payments problems had put such a squeeze on imports, including essential items like machinery, raw materials, commercial vehicles and spares that liberalisation did produce some benefits. But what of the impact on national industry, especially nascent or fledgling enterprises? Did the tradé benefit at the expense of industry, such as it was? And what of the splurge? Officials keep saying that luxuries and semi-luxuries (the Singaporean spirit of consumerism) account for a negligible fraction of the exchange spent in 1978-79. If this is really true, why is there talk now of "bans" and "cuts" on luxury imports? As for the long-term effects on our society that of course is a larger moral - political question.

But importers are already panicky. They have ordered goods on money borrowed from banks at high interest rates and already some expensive items are not, as dejected businessmen keep grumbling, moving.

## Oil, Inflation

The government's nightmare of course is oil prices, and inflation.

All efforts to maintain the oil import bill at 1979 levels may prove futile and the anti-OPEC line emerging strongly in the speeches of top spokesmen and in the mainstream media is a clear indication of growing helplessness. Propagandist diversions however skilful cannot erase from the average consumer's mind the impressions of day-to-day living in inflationary conditions. The world bank places inflation in 1979 at 14% and trusts that it won't exceed 20% next year.

Oil and tea? A one-two blow? the reported Pakistani decree on tea purchases (all tea imports from Bangladesh) caused confusion and panic in the trade and in official circles. Since 1971 (the BD war) Pakistan has gradually become our No. 1 tea buyer dislodging Britain from its traditional position. It is now said that Pakistan has decided as a matter of policy to buy 15% of its tea from B. D. The tea trade breathes more freely but it is still not certain whether this is only the first step in a Pakistani move to favour BD ultimately at our expense,

## Cabinet Re-shuffle

The 'scoop' in the opposition press about a cabinet re-shuffle - circa the budget has set off speculation in DPL circles because both the progress of the Mahaveli project and our foreign policy post-Havana figure prominently in high level political discussion. There's also the unconfirmed report that Foreign Minister Hameed may get a top international job.

Diplomats who had expected S. L. to 'abstain' on the Kampuchean issue at the UN found S. L. joining the pro-Pol Pot majority. The SLBC, as the LG noted in its last issue, announced that "ASEAN joined SL" in this vote. Will changes, if any indicate de facto 'Aseanization'? So far there has been more of Cabinet expansion than re-arrangement. Will there be a real re-shuffle this time.

There is also speculation in lobby circles about a Diplomatic appointment in South East Asia for a senior minister.

## WHICH PAGE OF THE 'DAILY NEWS' DO YOU READ ?

### 2 nabbed, posters seized

TWO persons were yesterday arrested by the Vavuniya police in connection with the poster campaign against the Essential Public Services bill. Police also recovered 16 posters.

In Kurunegala, about 25 persons who displayed posters against this bill were dispersed by the police opposite the post office.

In Ambalangoda town about 50 persons going in procession with posters and shouting slogans against this bill were also dispersed by police.

Reports reaching police headquarters yesterday from the out stations revealed that there were no incidents and police were on the lookout for trouble makers.

"Daily News" Sept. 21, page 1

\* \* \*

LIBERTY on our soil today is again a human right: not a

meagre concession allowed to humanity through the patronage or condescension of some powerful politician.

Men are free today to protest against State decisions, to challenge them in Court without fear of administratively devised reprisals. Men and women were once driven to the wall, virtually forced to dig their own graves in the name of Exchange Controls. What good did that policy of ruthlessness, that harshness do for the nation's economy? All that resulted was a masterly imitation of a Police State if we did not altogether erect its prototype in our midst. Refined tortures were the order of the day.

The flower of our youth was crushed underfoot in the same period. The dark shadows of despotism hung over the country everywhere.

"Daily News" Sept 21, page 8 (editorial)

# EPSB DEBATE : Democracy and/or Development

Major Jayawickrema : *Socialist countries too treated all services as essential and nobody had heard of a strike in those countries.*

Mr. Anura Bandaranaike : *Those are workers' governments.*

Major Jayawickrema : *We too are workers' government. All of us Ministers are workers on behalf of the people.*

Prime Minister : *Yes today we are working overtime on behalf of the people*

— (CDN report)

While it's no secret that the Prime Minister is a hard worker and probably the most hard-working man in the Cabinet, one cannot be certain how many of his colleagues will be able to claim overtime if such a practice prevailed. The more interesting point in this semi-serious exchange confirms an oft-quoted French adage. The more things change, the more they are the same.

Even a hurried reading of the parliamentary reportage will reveal the familiar "THEN-AND-NOW" pattern of discussion. This is what you said THEN...and this is what you are doing NOW (Opposition). And the government's main line of argument is "This is what you are saying NOW....but look at what you said and did, THEN".

It is not just the argumentative style which is so recognisably outworn but the actual phrasing and the formulation. The workers in the public service represent only 2% of the population..... they cannot be allowed to hold the country to ransom....strikes are legitimate but must not be politically motivated (that simply means the leaders must not be your opponents)...genuine trade union is okay but wreckers and saboteurs must be punished etc.

There has never been a government in this country which did not use terms as part of its propagandist armoury just as there has not been a major political party in opposition which has not ridiculed these arguments with a noisy show of self-righteous scorn.

Again, it was the government's top sharp-shooter, the prime minister, who got ex-premier Mrs. Bandaranaike in his sights by

suggesting that an excerpt from one of her broadcasts would have made a perfect preamble to the EPS Bill. But then, the opposition was never short of ammunition when its speakers also drew freely from UNP speeches in opposition. And why not? All of them have been workers' champions on both sides of the House, from the days of "efficient socialism" to "apey aanduwa" "People's government" "national government" and whatever.

Behind these tedious ceremonies of debate, there was a fundamental question which unfortunately was not presented with either the seriousness or the charity of expression it deserved. Though in the flickering and faltering light of this discussion, this issue could only be vaguely glimpsed, the question continues to absorb and perplex all thoughtful students of Third World discontents, often leaving many of them trapped by a predicament from which they see no intellectual escape, the tragedy it seems of equally objectionable or unpalatable options. It is the issue of Democracy and Development. Indeed, the more favoured formulation assumes antithetical terms—Democracy vs. Development or, making the possibility of choice easier, democracy or development. Either way, we are back with another familiar friend of the past, satanic devil which apparently defies the exorcists of all our political parties, "a little bit of totalitarianism".

As the economic situation worsens (and this is the main imperative) and parties find it more and more difficult to match per-

formance and promise, they fulfil the compelling need to explain matters to the people by magnifying the malefic powers of a foreign devil. However plausible, the voter seems reluctant to accept the alibi. It used to be 'the world market'. Now OPEC is the inhospitable demon haunting our households.

The word 'stability' the customary companion of 'development' did not make as frequent an appearance in the debate as one might have anticipated. Development requires stability and if the constitutional and legal structures are evident obstacles then these must be changed—parliament's term, system of government, the centralisation of authority, the elevation of the executive and so on. As the LG noted in its comment on the new constitution early last year, the 'stability equation' is now a standard phrase in the parlance of the Third World debate.

Since parliament represents the sovereign will of the people, parliamentary approval justifies what are admitted to be unpleasant but necessary restraints and restrictions. Parliament justifies, a two-third majority sanctifies. It was left to the Opposition leader to question this argument. "It was not merely parliament which safeguarded democracy", said Mr. Amirthalingam..... "there were other institutions too...when trade unions were muzzled, democracy died quickly".

While "development", "democracy" and "stability" frame the debate, what is significant is the increasing frequency and sharpness with which the debate itself is fought out. What it suggests is that systems and structures are more crucial than parties or their prescriptions, and that economics supercedes politics. Seen in that way, other questions, deeper if more open-ended, emerge: Stability for whom and for what purpose? What sort of development? And, in whose, temporary or lasting, interests?

# JR at the Summit

HAVANA  
DIARY



President Jayewardene

**S**TYLE is the man. JR's aplomb or, as the Anglo-Saxons would have it, unflappability, is now parliamentary legend. Any seasoned lobbyist will recall that in recent times he lost his cool only once. That was when he snapped at Finance Minister FDB and asked him to shut up.

But even a veteran parliamentarian would have been overawed by an assorted assembly of world figures that ranged from monarchs and sheikhs, to generals and guerrillas. And this was JR's debut on the NAM's stage.

To the dozen or so Sri Lankans who watched the inaugural ceremonies at Havana, el presidente's performance was a characteristic tour de force: Junius Rex at his regal best. He might have been presiding at a UNP group meeting! Such was his poise, and the wit and skill with which he negotiated a tricky moment that nobody could have anticipated. As he dealt sweetly but surely with a persistent Butros Ghali, Kurt Waldheim on JR's left could scarcely suppress an appreciative smile while Commandante Castro, on his right flank, was hugely delighted. Spontaneous cheers burst forth in the wall of the chamber as Chairman

JR's ruling not only put the cross-grained Ghali in his place but allowed the hungry delegates to get back to their villas and hotels for a late lunch.

The noisy TV crews and pressmen were asked to leave, young diplomats, armed with attache cases, sauntering about and chit-chatting lazily (just as in the UN DPL lounge, this is also a club where everybody knows everybody) were firmly reminded that the ceremony was already behind schedule, the gavel was banged once and the House was forced to get down to business briskly.

## Tricky moment

THE TRICKY moment came after Castro's speech and the formal votes of thanks. Castro had been merciless in his attack on Egypt.

When Chairman JR was about to close the morning session, the sounds of delegates gathering up their papers and getting up to leave could not quite drown the susurrus at the far end of the third row. The Egyptians were trying to catch the Chairman's eye. Detecting finally the source of the minor disturbance, JR's seemingly puzzled inquiry was a study in controlled composure. "Yes...what is it you want?". (He might have been addressing the acting deputy district minister for the free distribution of Food Stamps in Lower Harispattu).

It was President Sadat's spokesman, Butros Ghali, and his wants were quite simple—the immediate right to reply Fidel. "I am sure you will get such an opportunity", assures the Chairman but Mr. Ghali returns to the attack with another point. "My country was criticised in public... I want to answer him in an open session."

"I have no doubt that such an opportunity will be given to you".

"Yes, but I want you to give me a guarantee."

"In a short while my duties will be over and I shall be joining all of you down there....", says the outgoing Chairman. Laughter, loud



SUMMIT

applause and the Inauguration is over with what might have been a rancorous rumpus deftly averted. Warm handshakes all round, and a bear hug (oops sorry!)... comradely embrace for JR from Fidel.

In the afternoon Castro, the new Chairman starts the session by inviting his critic to reply. The unsuspecting Butros Ghali walks straight into an ambush he ought to have anticipated. There are at least half a dozen guns trained on the poor man—the PLO's Yasser Arafat, Syria's Assad, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Iran's Ibrahim Yazdi, etc. Ghali's speech was not only interrupted by sardonic and snide remarks but was quickly torn to shreds by the anti-Cairo group.

## Angolan affair

3000 SOVIET 'combat troops' in Cuba threatening the security of the US? In the last Issue, I wrote about how the Cubans handled that propaganda move. The Cubans had a readymade reply to a much older charge. The Cubans could not be regarded as truly non-aligned because they were "interfering" in African affairs. We heard it here in Colombo from Congressman Wolff. Only he put it more racily, so to say. The Cubans were "killing black boys" (LG Sept. 1). Support for liberation movements was a basic tenet of NAM and the Cubans were prepared to respond to any appeal for help at the risk of Cuban lives.

But who 'interfered' first and on whose side?

On proud display in Havana's book-stalls was John Stockwell's "In Search of Enemies". Stockwell,

the chief of the CIA Angola Task Force, lays bare the whole sordid story, including the great deception practised on the US Congress, of US and NATO arms to Portugal to crush the independence struggle in Angola and the liberation movements, of secret US funds for the FNLA's Holden Roberto (brother-in law of Zaire's Mobutu), of Chinese arms deliveries and of Chinese advisers for FNLA and UNITA, of the arrival of a Chinese general and 112 advisers with Mobutu's blessings, of the gradual collusion of the US, Zaire, China, South Africa in trying to install an FNLA "independent government" in Angola after the Portuguese leave.

All this in 1973-74. The first Soviet and Cuban advisers arrived in March 1975, after the FNLA, prodded by its assorted patrons, "destroyed the prospects for peaceful solution by attacking (the rival) MPLA forces in Luanda and Northern Angola". Cuban troops arrived in Angola in October 1975 on the invitation of Augustinho Neto, MPLA chairman and later Angola's first president.

Just before that a US Assistant Secretary of State had resigned his job in protest against the US paramilitary operation in Angola, financed by a 14 million dollar grant approved secretly by Kissinger's 40 Committee.

Stockwell's book, by the way, throws new light on the murder of Patrice Lumumba.

### Chamber of horrors

THE GRUESOME horrors of Pol Pot's Kampuchea didn't make the tastiest topic of conversation at breakfast. Finding myself at Wilfred Burchett's table I simply could not let the chance slip by. Asia has been Burchett's 'beat' from the days of the Korean war. In a way, the mantle of Edgar Snow has fallen on this veteran Australian journalist whose despatches on the war angered Canberra so much that he had his passport confiscated by the Australian consul in Canton to become a non-citizen until Prince Sihanouk made him a honorary Cambodian! He has lived in Phom Penh for many years, covered the Vietnam war and was one of the

first foreign correspondents to join the final 'push' to Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh city.

Burchett visited Kampuchea a few weeks after Pol Pot was ousted. "Believe me, friend" said the old man, his voice, quivering "there was no need for facts and figures, documents or interviews....the stench was enough...there was not a river, stream, canal or field or well...everywhere rotting corpses....the legacy of Pol Pot....".

Surely there was some rationale, some logic however twisted, to explain how a group of educated men who had fought for their country's liberation could then systematically butcher their own people?

Yes, I have been intrigued by that question too, and haven't found an answer yet, Burchett replied. A part of the answer he suggested could be traced to the mental make-up of the leadership and the source of their ideas, he suggested. It was a weird concoction.... a witches' brew, he added as the pain of fresh memories seemed to send a chill through his body. It was really macabre.... Pol Pot was an out-and-out psychopath... a fascist. Some of them had got their ideas of re-moulding Kampuchean society and finding instant answers to economics, social relations, population ect. from the French revolution, from anarchism, Trotskyism and what they understood to be Maoism. Kill all the aristos, was the first order down the line.. then murder all the intellectuals.. Like the Nazis, everything was put down on paper.. name, age, place, the order to be killed, manner of death etc. Minor functionaries were told how to spot an intellectual.. most of them wear spectacles and read books, especially foreign books.. kill them at once. The Phom Penh authorities have mountains of such files, and I have checked hundreds and hope to write a book on this chamber of horrors, if I ever have the peace and the stomach to meditate on the grotesque. Members of Sihanouk's family were also victims of this genocide..

Burchett has found himself a sanctuary of sorts (a small town

off Paris) but whether he will write that book only time will tell.

### Disheartening

WE WERE all staring dutifully at the TV set—a journalist from Miami, an Iranian TV producer whose brother had been tortured and killed by SAVAK, a Moroccan just out of journalism school, the ubiquitous Yugoslavs and I.

Well, there he goes again. Beard, battle-dress, cap, pistol and all. Walking tall and erect, perfectly at ease, welcoming yet another head of state at Jose Marti airport. Unmistakably the Commandante himself.

The man from Miami exploded. The night before he had a hot tip-off from his head-office that Fidel had a heart attack.

"If that sonovabitch is a cardiac case, man, I'm a Vietnamese refugee!"

— M. de S.

*"You move us to keep struggling, to keep fighting to keep practicing solidarity, to keep practicing internationalism! Because everything that is done for others, everything that is done for other peoples, everything that is done for humanity is what gives meaning to a revolutionary's life. It is the only thing that can make us feel members of the human family.*

*"This Conference has given our country great prestige. has given us great authority. But that prestige and that authority will never be used to benefit Cuba. We will use all of it to struggle and work for others, Cuba will not benefit itself in the least from chairing the Movement over the next few years."*

— Fidel Castro  
(Closing speech)



# ORTEGA SPEAKS

by Mervyn de Silva

FOREIGN  
NEWS

Not much was known by the world outside about the Sandinista leaders although their movement, named after the Nicaraguan patriot General Sandino, had waged a long, bitter and bloody struggle against Somoza's dynastic dictatorship for over a decade. It was only after the cold-blooded murder early last year of Joaquin Chamorro, the editor of Managua's only progressive paper, (a killing which almost every Nicaraguan believed was planned by a 'death squad' of Somoza's notorious National Guard) that the people, regardless of their own beliefs and alliances, threw themselves selflessly and wholeheartedly into the revolutionary struggle. As the Nicaraguan upheaval thrust itself onto the front pages of the world press and the accelerating crisis moved rapidly to its climax (L.G. Aug. 15, Sept. 15) some of the now familiar figures came out of the shadows.

One of them, was the 35-year old Daniel Ortega. Like his younger brother Humberto, he had been a key figure in the FSLN's High Command. Incidentally, this personal fact, inviting as it does as obvious comparison with Fidel and Raul Castro, does tend to strengthen the case of those who see a Cuban parallel.

Students of Sandinista strategy in this critical phase (L. G. Sept. 1) have correctly identified Commander Ortega with a "certain tendency" (a question of military tactics) which finally gained acceptance within the FSLN and proved itself in the total success achieved in July this year. Although leaders like Thomas Borge are equally wellknown, it was no surprise that Daniel Ortega, the only Sandinista commander in the ruling 5-member junta, was chosen to speak for the new Nicaraguan government at the 6th summit. (A fortnight after the Havana conference, Ortega led a Nicaraguan delegation to Washington, and had talks

with President Carter and other U S leaders.

In their olive green uniform, with red-and-black FSLN arm bands, the young leaders of the new Nicaragua were undoubtedly the most colourful presence at Havana's Palace of Conventions. There was hardly a single speaker at the summit who did not hail the victory of these courageous young men and welcome Nicaragua to the NAM. Ortega's address was greeted with a thunderous ovation.

In his speech, Daniel Ortega, made an explicit reference, to the threat of subversion and intervention.

Did he mean military intervention by or from a neighbouring country or US interference, I asked him.

A: Our intelligence has detected the massing of Somoza soldiers on the borders....some remnants



Daniel Ortega

of the National Guard....We have contacted the Honduras government and made it clear that we want peace with our neighbours, peace on our borders. It is their responsibility to take all measures to see that no such interventionist efforts are permitted by their people...."

*Q: Can Somoza mount a campaign from outside?*

A: Somoza himself has no support anywhere in Central America.

*Q: How about US intervention now or later?*

A: In our history we have seen three US military interventions. We are a people who have sacrificed thousands of lives in fighting the aggressors. When we militarily defeated the barbarous National Guard we were also expelling the last US marine from the soil of Nicaragua.

*Q: What of internal threats? Especially in the final stages, your revolution had the broadest popular support, gathering in also various social groups, different organisations, and discounted sections. All these may have been united in their hatred of Somoza but will they all support the policies of your government and always agree with the course you take?*

A: Ours has been a humane revolution.... considering the cruelty with which Somoza, his National Guard and its foreign masters forced upon the people, the FSLN has been generous in military victory.... the world knows that....even the western press which has distorted our views and maligned us cannot deny this....but let me make it very clear, just as we have been generous, we can also be very firm.. we will be inflexible in the defence of the revolution....its enemies will feel the fist of the revolution...."

As a symbol, Perhaps, of the collective nature of the new leaderships, Ortega was flanked by two other spokesmen of the Junta when he answered questions from foreign journalists. With him were Sergio Ramirez, Information Minister, and Fr. Miguel D. Escoto, the Catholic priest who has been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.

*Q: What have you identified as your main tasks?*

**A:** Our first task is of course national reconstruction.... that is the name our government bears .... rehabilitation, is the most urgent.. ten percent of the dwellings in Managua, were destroyed... about 50,000 lost their lives, mainly children and youths.... factories have been bombed.... we needed 300,000 tons of food.. medicine.. we never had decent medical facilities.. as a result, you might be surprised to learn that when we had an anti-polio campaign for half a million kids, it made history in our part of the world.. international aid was slow in coming but it is better now.. the harvest was also interrupted and we have put through an agrarian reform program..first we called on the peasants to sow the grains..we had enough beans for 8 days and corn for 2 weeks.. we took over the lands owned by Somoza and his family and there again you may be shocked by the fact that 60% of the cultivable land in Nicaragua was owned by one family. Much of it was NOT cultivated..Peasants to the fore, that's our slogan, but it's not just propaganda..we are creating peasants' organisations, genuine grass-roots structures for active popular participation..of course these are not merely "work-units" but to strengthen the base of the revolution, to consolidate it..

*Q: Could you amplify that ..?*

**A:** In the factories, in every workplace, industry, and utility.. women and young people..we are creating democratic mass organisations..trade unions and defence committees..we are organising and mobilising the people for national reconstruction....

*Q: And the army...?*

**A:** Yes.. that's a critical task.. to transform a guerrilla force into a regular army..we are doing this .. both at the command level, at the centre, directly linked to regional units.. a Sandinista General Staff, with local commanders.. and then institutionalising and modernising the armed forces.. an air force, armoured divisions.. artillery units etc, while totally re-vamping the police force.. we have the problem of weapons of course: at the last stages, Somoza got weapons from Israel.. but most of the weapons are US and we need spares..

*Q: On the economic front .. are you not facing very serious problems.*

**A:** Our difficulties are enormous.. firstly illiquidity.. Somoza left us debts, over 1.6 billion dollars.. mainly to US, West Germany and Japanese.. we have said that we will honour these debts but they must not put us to the wall because some of these banks gave Somoza's shaky dictatorship short term loans, sometimes six months, at 14%. As for the Israeli arms sales a few months before the collapse of Somoza we say openly we will NOT pay.. we need money desperately..to cover essential imports.. that's our major concern..

*Q: You have joined the non-aligned movement.. what is your foreign policy.. what is your attitude in particular to the U.S.?*

**A:** Our struggle succeeded because of the will of our people. However we cannot forget those who helped.. International solidarity was a weapon in our hands.. We cannot forget those who helped us when Somoza's National Guard was butchering innocent people.. but we have triumphed.. we want to be an independent, truly sovereign country which has the right to build our society as we wish.. if the US respects that, then we can be friends.. we are ready to start anew on the basis of equality and mutual respect but not as a neo-colony or as a puppet....

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# Insurgency'71 - 2 new studies

RESEARCH

by Charles Abeysekera

**The J. V. P. and the 1971 uprising—  
C. B. Keerawella**

**Material causes which gave birth to  
the J. V. P.—V. D. G. Samaranyake**

The insurrection of 1971 has already given rise to a large body of literature; most of it is polemical, but there have been a number of studies that have attempted to understand the phenomenon of the J. V. P.—its genesis, its social and political background, its ideology and the insurrection itself. Some of these writings have been admirably collected and annotated in H.A.I. Goonetilleke's bibliography—"The April 1971 Insurrection in Ceylon—A Bibliographical Commentary".

The bulk of this literature has been published abroad, including many of the more serious and academic studies by both local and foreign scholars.\*

None of these studies, even by those scholars working in Sri Lanka,

has been published here. Even Paul Caspersz's study—"Towards a Sociological Analysis of the Youth Struggle in Sri Lanka 1971"—remains yet unpublished. It is almost as if an unspoken taboo existed which prevented serious study and comment on the insurgency.

It is therefore a happy sign that younger scholars in Sri Lanka are now undertaking such studies and presenting them to the public. In this article, I want to refer to two such studies: "Material causes which gave birth to the J. V. P. in Sri Lanka" by V.D.G. Samaranyake, an assistant lecturer in the Department of Economics of the Peradeniya University and "The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the 1971 Uprising" by G.B. Keerawella, an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of History also at Peradeniya. It is interesting to note that both of these young academics served jail terms for their active participation in the events of 1971 as members of the J. V. P. This article will summarise the tenor of their arguments and attempt to offer a few brief comments.

Samaranyake's study is rather brief; its intention is "to throw some light on the economic and social conditions that led to the rise of the J. V. P." In pursuing this intention, Samaranyake begins with a study of the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms of 1832 which "were designed to prepare a suitable background for the process of primary capital accumulation"; the abolition of *rajakariya* and the loosening of the feudal bonds set the stage for the emergence of a free labour class who were prepared to sell their labour-power for wages. He then analyses the impact of the Waste-Lands Ordinance of 1840. Although peasants were evicted from the lands which they had been cultivating for generations, they still retained some land or were still able to obtain land for cultivation, either from feudal

owners or by encroaching on the uncleared jungle areas; they therefore did not find it necessary to work for wages.

Subsequently however, land became scarce and with increasing population the numbers of those who owned sufficient land to earn a livelihood from cultivation declined drastically. This motivated the children of peasants to go in for education, because it provided the only avenue for employment, a better livelihood and social mobility. Accordingly, Samaranyake sees the decline of the rural agricultural economy, its inability to absorb the increasing number of the peasantry, the increasing levels of unemployment among educated rural youth as the "objective causes that contributed to the rise of the J. V. P."

Samaranyake sees some parallels between what happened in Sri Lanka after 1832 and the developments in Russia after the reforms of 1861. Actually the major points he makes—landlessness, unemployment and education—have been analysed in greater depth by earlier writers. True that all these factors contributed to the great feeling of discontent and frustration that gripped and continues to grip large segments of our youth population; but he does not answer the question why these factors led to the organisation of the J. V. P. and did not express themselves through the channels of the traditional Marxist and other opposition parties in Sri Lanka. Of course one notes that this paper is only one part of what will be a much longer study.

These precisely are the questions which Keerawella seeks to answer in his much more substantial study. As he says; "The basic objective of this paper is to answer the following questions:

(1) why such a movement (the J. V. P.) emerged within a liberal democratic system which was supposed to have taken even a

\* Among these may be mentioned: S. Arasaratnam's "the Ceylon Insurrection of 1971" published in "Pacific Affairs"; Rene Dumont's "Revolt of the Youth without hope" in his book dealing with the peasantry in Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Senegal; Kathleen Gough's "The South Asian revolutionary potential" in the *Bulletin of Concerned America Scholars*; Fred Halliday's "The Ceylon Insurrection" in the *New Left Review*; Francois Houtart's chapter in his "Religion and Ideology in Sri Lanka"; Robert Kearney's chapter in "Radical Politics in South Asia" and his articles in *Asian Survey*; Gananath Obeyesekere's "Some comments on the social backgrounds of the April 1971 insurgency in Sri Lanka" in the *Journal of Asian Studies*; Wisva Warnapala's articles in *Asian Survey*; A.J. Wilson's article in the *Pacific Community*; "The Ceylon Insurrection of 1971" by Kearney and Jiggins published in the *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*; "Youth Protest in Sri Lanka" by Howard Wriggins and C.H.S. Jayawardena in "Population, Politics and the future of South Asia".

populist trend after 1956, and why it adopted the strategy of a violent capture of power in rejecting ballot-box politics?

(2) why traditional Left parties with a history of 35 years failed to absorb the forces which were utilised by the clandestine revolutionary movement in their activities?"

In seeking answers to these questions, Keerawella too begins with an analysis of economic conditions.

Keerawella, rightly, does not accept the theory of a dual economy. The economy had indeed two sectors—a modern plantation agriculture, manufacturing and commercial sector directly export-oriented and the other, the traditional sector of subsistence agriculture, handicrafts and small scale commodity production for the domestic market. But he sees these two sectors as "organically linked, for the development of the former implies the increasing under development of the other".

Keerawella next traces the impact of economic development on the social structure. "As a consequence of the penetration of capitalist production relations and the flow

of surplus production out of the village in the form of commodities, the traditional socio-economic balance was disrupted. The self-sufficiency of the village community, as far as the major requirements were concerned, was disrupted and the new consumption pattern came to be subjected to variations in the international trading pattern. At the same time the introduction of capitalist production relations had a decisive influence on the existing pattern of land-ownership in the village. As land became a commodity, land alienation and its concentration in the hands of a few became perhaps the most serious socio-economic problem of the village community in the 19th century. It was aggravated by the grain tax...As a consequence of these structural changes, wage labour emerged as an important production relation".

Using village studies by Nur Yalman, Newton Gunasinghe, S. S. Tambiah, N. K. Sarkar and Obeysekera, Keerawella shows how the changing economic circumstances brought into being a broad social segment which he identifies as the rural petty bourgeoisie. The chief groups which formed this segment comprised of

(1) Shop-keepers who benefit from the new commercial opportunities

(2) Land-owners

(3) Those who benefited from new employment opportunities.

This class had its economic base in the ownership of small-scale means of production or exchange, sometimes supplemented by income from employment.

This new class, because of its position, also found it possible to make use of new educational and employment opportunities. Their aspirations continued to grow as their world-view expanded. They took over the leadership of rural organisations and of state institutions at the village level. And with adult franchise, this class became the most important political elements in the rural sector.

The characteristics of this class are described by Newton Gunasinghe, as quoted by Keerawella: "The petty bourgeoisie is essentially a class that controls petty production and exchange. On the one hand they are suppressed by the semi-feudals. On the other hand they are exploited by the middle bourgeoisie. They are also confront-

*Mother  
of an  
insurgent*



ted by the poor peasant and rural workers. It is a vacillating class. In the realm of agrarian relations they supported the land reform laws but opposed the paddy lands act. Their ambition is to rise to the middle bourgeoisie, but the hard facts of economic reality thwart these attempts."

Politically this class was opposed to the policies and cultural values of the U.N.P. which was representative of the western-oriented elites, but it was also afraid of the radical changes contemplated by the Marxist Left. It was their politics that were reflected in S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and the M.E.P. In 1956 However, the changes, expected by the rural petty bourgeoisie did not take place; many reforms were introduced but these were largely superficial and did not lead to a radical re-structuring of the economic or social systems.

According to Keerawella, the political processes since 1956 had left the educated youth of the rural petty bourgeoisie dissatisfied and alienated. The economic crisis was growing apace, unemployment was rife and they had before them the international experiences of Cuba, China, Vietnam and the student movements of the West. Keerawella identifies three inter linked factors as basic to the shaping of their political thinking:

(1) A realisation that neither the U.N.P. nor the S.L.F.P. were interested in changing the socio-economic structure.

(2) Disillusionment about the ability of parliamentary democracy as a means of bringing about change.

(3) Dissatisfaction with the leadership of the existing Left parties and a feeling that the working class was incapable at present of fulfilling its revolutionary role.

According to Keerawella, these attitudes created "a tendency... where the youths began to search for a violent revolutionary solution to their problems. These youths believed that the revolution was imminent and that an organisation had to be formed and strengthened within the shortest possible time. They began to prepare themselves

for the imminent 'big struggle' instead of engaging in long-term revolutionary struggles among the workers and peasants".

Like other scholars before him, notably Robert Kearney, Keerawella too studies the connection between the education these youths received and their revolutionary aspirations. But it is to his credit that he attempts to go further—to look at the "close relationship between petty bourgeois aspirations and the type of educational expansion that took place in the country". He looks at the uneven expansion of educational facilities, at the type and content of the education that was made available and the continuing inability of the economy to absorb the manpower thus produced. He quotes a J.V.P. publication tellingly: "We studied hard, keeping up the rights till our eyes ached. We sat for examinations. We passed examinations. We obtained degrees. But without trying to overthrow this corrupt neo-colonial system and build up a society, we built great hopes on that system itself. Finally as a punishment we were forced to loiter in the streets and face the insults and laughter of the capitalists".

It is Keerawella's conclusion that "the breakdown of the aspirations of these educated youths was one of the factors that were responsible for the emergence of the J.V.P." While this situation is broadly true, I wish that a more serious attempt had been made to correlate the type and content of the education and the world-view with which students left the educational system. It might have been useful if the education available had also been analysed in terms of its ideology and its relationship with the processes of social change. Another factor that should repay analysis is the impact of the education system on the 40% of all school-entrants who drop out of the system after a few years; the effects that Keerawella describes might apply only to the 20% who remain in the educational system up to at least the 'O' level or to the even smaller percentage who proceed to higher academic education.

(To be continued)

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# Personal factor overstressed

by J. Uyangoda

*Insurgency of April 1971—(Sinhala)  
—by Victor Ivan (Podi Athula)  
Published by Lake House Invest-  
ments Limited, Colombo—April 1979  
Price Rs. 30/-.*

The decade of 1970's is now at its tail-end. After the next couple of months, we will be saying "adios" to this decade that witnessed more than one turbulent development, as far as the social and political history of this country is concerned. One may single out the year 1971 as the stormiest of this period. The insurgency of April 1971 is still fresh in the memory. The effects and impact of the insurgency on almost every aspect of the social and political life of this country is so vast and decisive that it will remain the most controversial political event of post-war Lanka for many years to come, unless a decisive change takes place in the direction of either counter-revolution or revolution.

But those who are genuinely interested in knowing the origins and development of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, the exact situation and circumstances that prevailed within the movement that led to the armed encounter with the state, still find it extremely difficult to get the necessary factual information. This is due mainly to two factors. The first emanates from the clandestine nature of the JVP at least in its formative stages. Unlike other socialist or communist parties in this country, the JVP in its pre-1971 phase, never had any documentary records or reports pertaining to its history. This has led, even today, to the somewhat grotesque situation where even the leading cadres, let alone ordinary party members and sympathisers, know very little about the real history of their own movement. Thus, the researcher finds himself at the mercy of various contradictory explanations of interested individuals. Secondly, even the available

literature on the JVP, so far published, are nothing more than different kinds of "analysis". Added to these difficulties is the indifference of the JVP, even after its re-organisation, to its own past. It is in this context that one would have expected Podi Athula to give an account of the 'inside story', in his work.

Having read the very first paragraph of the introduction to the book, the reader would settle down comfortably to get a serious account of the JVP, of which the author himself was a leading member for quite some time. But, unfortunately, the reader, without going too far, begins to feel that something has gone wrong. Is it the inaccuracy of facts? No. Then suppression or invention of events? Nothing of that sort. If so then what? Here, the whole thing has gone awry not because Podi Athula's recording of history is not correct, but because he seems to have allowed himself to be driven by his personal attitudes—which are not exactly unhostile in nature—towards Wijeweera, the leader of the movement. Podi Athula himself makes the allegation against the pro-Wijeweera folk that they are thinking in terms of their blind and faithful allegiance to the leader in their evaluation of political matters concerning the movement. If this extreme is not correct, what could one say regarding the other extreme? Once closely associated with the movement, Podi Athula parted company with Wijeweera during the turbulent and traumatic aftermath of the insurgency, mainly due to political reasons. He now looks back, not excluding his role within the movement too, with an uncompromisingly critical attitude. Fine. Critical re-evaluation of past events, especially when it comes to revolutionary politics, is very important as it provides valuable opportunities for self-understanding and self-revelation. It is essential, therefore, to take precautions not to allow one's

Podi Athula (Victor Ivan) a prominent JVP member was sentenced to 7 years rigorous imprisonment by the Criminal Justice Commission. His book is reviewed by J. Uyangoda, a JVP politburo member, who served six years in jail and is now a final year student at the University. Both writers were published for the first time in English by the Lanka Guardian.

prudence to be overwhelmed by various kinds of prejudices.

It seems that the author has given major consideration to the impact of the personality of Wijeweera and the nature and the characteristics of the movement as a whole. I would not dispute this thesis. But I believe the serious reader would be somewhat reluctant to accept the contention that Wijeweera's influence on the JVP has been exclusively negative. Dialectics teaches us that any phenomenon in the universe is many sided and contradictory. The suggestion that Wijeweera had only ulterior motives throughout his entire political career is not only easily questionable, but also falls short of objectivity. One of the major mistakes, I dare say, commonly committed by most non-or anti-JVP commentators is that they give too much weight to the so-called 'bad' qualities of the leading personality of the movement, in their critical evaluations. In all fairness to both Wijeweera and Podi Athula, I must say that Rohana Wijeweera was and is, the best personification of some of the major, inescapable contradictions of the contemporary leftist and revolutionary movement in our country, dominated as it is by the petty bourgeoisie. The negative qualities which are said to have been inherent in the characters of individuals—dishonesty, ruthlessness, jesuitical pragmatism, ego-centrism etc, should not be given over-emphasis when one looks at the past for the sake of the future. This is all

the more so because such a practice would easily lead us to self-deception and misleading conclusions.

The writing of contemporary history is not an easy task. Writing political history, (especially when the writer himself had been involved in some events and incidents, the totality of which constitutes at least a part of the whole phenomenon) demands greater care and precaution. Podi Athula seems to have realized this and this may be the reason why he describes his own role in the third person. History writing again demands a sense of fair judgement, when one has to sort out what is essential and

important out of a myriad facts and events. Here also Podi Athula is not invulnerable. For instance, what is the meaning of devoting dozens of pages to describe, in detail, such petty squabbles as those arising out of a love affair or of a light readers counsel sullied by the wife of a leading party member? The only point the author would have made, in exposing such scandals at enormous length, is that Wijeweera is not an infallible genius as many of his followers prefer to believe.

What are the real theoretical and political differences the author has had with Wijeweera? This question naturally comes to the mind of the reader, but,

alas, he is again at a loss. I do not say that Podi Athula should have given a detailed account of these matters in the present work. Nevertheless, his treatment of the whole subject should have been such that it could have provided some insights as to the nature of the real issues under dispute.

The ideological evolution of the JVP provides a very interesting field of study for the researcher. One of the criticisms against the movement is that it lacked a well-defined and coherent political ideology of its own, firmly based as Marxism-Leninism. In the pre-1971 phase, the JVP ideology had been a vague confluence of ideas coming from various ideological streams of the world communist movement. Viewed *ex-post-facto* it may be observed that the movement never had trained and disciplined Marxist theoreticians in the ranks of its leadership. But, to dismiss the JVP's political philosophy—presented in the famous five lectures—as a mere hodgepodge is as unbalanced as its unquestioning acceptance. Amidst all the glaring shortcomings—incoherence, oversimplification and sheer vulgarization of Marxism—the JVP ideology still had some positive and welcome features too. Firstly its total rejection of some of the hackneyed theories of the Old Left. Secondly it had the courage to maintain a kind of ideological non-alignment within the contending faction of the world communist movement. While quoting Mao, the JVP remained uncommitted to 'Maosism' and while rejecting Khrushchevite revisionism the JVP never rejected the legitimacy of the socialist system of the Soviet Union.

These and other positive aspects of the JVP ideology, though they do deserve consideration, are not subject to any kind of investigation. This is another reason why the present work can be considered less than rigorously analytical.

*Incident in an attack on an insurgent leader's home.*



# Seers on prospects of employment

ECONOMICS

by Jayantha Somasunderam

During 1970 an ILO team of experts headed by Prof. Dudley Seers, Director of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, carried out an investigation into un-employment in Sri Lanka. Their report **Matching employment opportunities and expectations** has been acclaimed as the first exhaustive study of the problem.

Eight years later, in 1978, Prof. Dudley Seers and a team from the Institute of Development studies returned to Sri Lanka, to reassess the employment situation. This review has been conducted in the light of Sri Lanka's experience in the intervening eight years. It was made in the aftermath of an election in which a large number of young people placed in power a government that had promised to solve their economic problems.

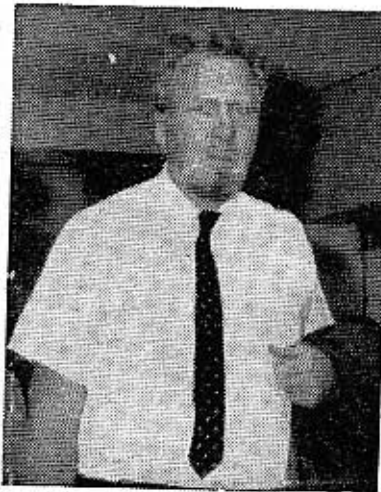
The Seers team estimated that around 1,200,000 were unemployed when the new government came to power in 1977. They project a net addition of 600,000 to the labour force in the current five year period ending 1982.

The Mahaweli Development Scheme has been accredited by the Government with the capacity to absorb a million people, around 600,000 in construction and the balance as settlers. The New Seers Report, recently released, draws attention to the shortfall between expectations and achievements in the other colonisation schemes. Uda Walawe which was expected to provide irrigation for 81,000 acres to be cultivated. **When it comes to flowing down the channels, water somehow never seems to go as far as it does on Paper.** The estimates of availability for the Kalawewa area of the Mahaweli is an average of 7.5 feet of water, whilst at Uda Walawe, actual usage is three times this figure.

Permanent employment, a benefit that will be available only to the settlers, not the construction workers, depends on how realistic the government's assumptions have been.

## Unending Recession

The investment promotion zones are also regarded by the government as prime sources of employment, Prof. Seers voices the fear



Prof. Dudley Seers

that IPZ industries might result in the strangulation of industries outside the GCEC zone, and this may throw people out of their jobs. In any case, there is doubt as to the amount of capital inflow that the IPZ at Katunayake can attract. The zones in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan etc. "Were set up in the booming conditions of the sixties, not during a world recession on which there is no end in sight" Cheap labour becomes a poor inducement in a age of increasing automation, especially when compared to political security and access to markets.

Prof. Seers is skeptical about the official estimates which reckon

that by 1982 25,000 will be employed in the Katunayake IPZ he points out that many long-established zones employ less than 10,000. What is relevant he concludes "is that the scheme could hardly make a significant addition to employment by 1982."

After assessing the Colombo Urban Development project, which he commends in other respects Prof. Seers says that the implementation of the projects "does not necessarily imply a big dent in the unemployment figure."

The investment demanded by the above three projects is considerable, estimated to run into Rs. 5,000 million a year. The effect that this could have on inflation is sobering to contemplate.

## School Leavers

Prof. Dudley Seers cautions that in return for what might well be a very high level of inflation, the above three projects, the Government's principal employment generators, may only provide 285,000 jobs - 200,000 in Mahaweli 5,000 in the IPZ and 80,000 in the Colombo Urban Development. In any case, only the IPZ jobs are those that will meet the aspirations of the present generation of school leavers.

The prudence of diverting towards, and concentrating in, three projects, a significant part of available resources, is also questioned by Prof. Dudley Seers.

Another area of Government policy that he criticises is the indiscriminate import of subsidiary foodcrops that have been successfully grown in recent years. This includes chillies, onions and dhal. Losses in income and employment opportunities are the result.

Prof. Seers draws attention to halving of the Decentralised Bud-

(Continued on Page 19)



# Marxism and self-determination

DEBATE

Since the Tamil problem has developed into a very serious political issue, overshadowing many other important political problems of our country, Chintaka's series on national question naturally attracted critical analysis. My polemic on Chintaka's article was mainly directed against his dogmatic approach in the application of Marxism to the concrete internal national question and the wrong conclusions he drew from the teachings of Lenin and Stalin which led him to support the demand for separation as the correct Marxist solution to the national question. This polemic had provoked two replies—one from Chintaka and the other from Brother Kumar David. I am inclined to make separate comments on these replies as they differ so much in their nature and content, hoping that the 'Lanka Guardian' would provide space as this subject generated interest among the people.

While Chintaka's article has direct reference to the current national problem, Brother Kumar David has exercised his energy in vain to vilify Stalin, the great Marxist-Leninist by diverting the whole issue and indulging in the favourite pastime of the Trotskyites who live in haunted conclave blinded by the Trotsky-Stalin controversy, being unable to understand the issue directly and objectively outside this ambit.

Though the question before the people is whether the demand for separation in the name of self-determination to Tamils is the correct solution to the problem, it will be difficult for a layman to decipher from the article of Kumar David whether he is for or against separation since he manoeuvres to turn the polemic into an anti-Stalin tirade by distorting historical facts, hardly hiding his elation in finding what

he calls the confrontation of a Stalinist by his fellow Stalinist. Kumar David finds fault with Chintaka for having quoted from Stalin on national question. Stalin's work on national question is considered a Marxist Classic and none other than Kumar David's Guru Trotsky himself had said that; "Stalin is entitled to recognition as an outstanding Marxist theoretician, on his theoretical work Marxism and the National Question".

So it will be convenient to deal first with Kumar David's distortion of Bolshevik history and then his outlook on the Tamil problem.

Kumar David states that consistent Leninism saw to the separation of Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as if Stalin was opposed to the line of Lenin on the national question. What were the facts? Finland enjoyed relative autonomy even before the soviet power and it was Stalin who after the October Revolution visited Finland on 27th of November 1917 and proclaimed the degree of soviet power on the independent status of Finland which was later confirmed by Treaty in 1918. As far as the other border states were concerned after brief soviet rule, they were outside the USSR due to the influence of the Entente Powers, but returned to the fold of USSR in 1940.

Kumar David by distorting the notes of Lenin tried to portray as if Lenin was opposed to the sovietation of Georgia or against Stalin on the solution of Georgian national question. Nothing is further from the truth. The decision for the Union of Georgia with the Soviet Union was taken long before 1922 with the approval of the Party and the Soviets. In fact at the 12th Congress of the Party Stalin's Report on the national question and Georgia was

*Laxhman Jothikumar  
replies to Kumar David  
and Chintaka*

approved and not even Trotsky opposed. Lenin commented well on Stalin on 28/3/1922 for having united the Republics. Lenin in his notes dated 31.12.1922 categorically stated, "...firstly we must maintain and strengthen the union of soviet republics... The critical notes of Lenin referred to by Kumar David only deals with the manner the dissidents and Mensheviks were handled by Stalin when they attempted to subvert soviet power, opposed the Union of Georgia and suppressed the minorities in Georgia even by going to the extent of decreeing to deprive Georgian citizenship to anyone who married a non-Georgian. These facts clearly expose the half truths of Kumar David on Bolshevik history.

The Bolsheviks who stood for unconditional self-determination of nations of Czarist Empire had to revise their programme after the October Revolution. In 1918, at the All Russia Conference of Soviets, it was sought to revise the principle of self-determination and secession considering the new historical situation and the principle of union and federation was adopted. This shows that the Bolsheviks worked out their own strategy and tactics to implement their principles and policies on national question and history demands us not to copy Bolshevik experience mechanically to seek solution to our country's national question.

Kumar David again distorts my article by stating that Jothikumar denies the right of self-determi-

nation to the Tamils. On the basis of Marxist analysis I had come to the conclusion that the demand for separate Eelam is not the correct solution to the national question. Kumar David while evading to state clearly whether he stands for the demand of separation or not unconsciously displayed his opportunism by stating.... "to the extent that this is an alternative programme to the Eelam programme, it may be said to be opposed to Eelam and I will not at this stage explain the programme to be placed before the Tamils..", which means he has two programmes—one for the Tamils and another for the Sinhala people. This is clearly seen from the authorised statement of Brother Vasudeva Nanayakara dated 23rd July 1979 (CDN) in which he states that while respecting the right of Tamil people for self-determination....."it is our responsibility (Vasu's Party's) to show the Tamil people that the Eelam struggle will not lead to a solution of their problem". Unfortunately some of the Left Parties practice the art of deception on the Tamil people on this question of self determination which is well illustrated by these examples. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna stated in a statement issued by Brother Bopage on 12/7/79 in 'Virakesari' that... "not only we (JVP) recognise the right of self determination for the Tamil people, we will also grant all their rights." Similar statements were issued and speeches made during the Local Government Elections. But within two weeks of the previous statement, on 25/7/79 Brother Bopage again issued a statement in 'Virakesari' in which he stated that... "the JVP totally opposes the Eelam demand put forward by the TULF or any other organisation (meaning even a Marxist Party)". This shows the double standard and the game of deception played by some of these parties among the Tamil people by stating that the Tamils have the right of self determination while stressing (for consumption among Sinhalese) that the demand for separation is not the solu-

tion. This deception is again perpetuated and played back by the Eelam enthusiasts by prominently publishing in their Tamil papers the statements of Sinhala politicians who claim to support self-determination in order to dupe the Tamil masses as if sections of the Sinhalese support the demand for separation.

The statement of Kumar David that the Tamils have the right to self-determination and that his programme may be said to be opposed to Eelam demand is yet another fine example of the craft of deception practiced among the unsuspecting Tamil masses. When I read this type of statement I am reminded of Lenin's statement. Lenin said, "An opportunist by his very nature will always evade formulating an issue clearly and unequivocally, he will seek a middle course, he will wriggle like a snake between two mutually exclusive points of view and try to agree with both..". Thus Kumar & Co play the conjuring trick of supporting the right of self determination (among the Tamils) and at the same time stating that Eelam demand is not the solution (opposing Eelam demand among Sinhalese). whereas Lenin's line on self determination was unequivocal and clear. Any degree of opposition against communalism and support to Tamil people's just struggle by any politician hailing from the majority community is considered progressive, but the gimmick played by some opportunists should be resolutely exposed.

Finally Brother Kumar David finds fault with the line which seeks possible solution of the national question within the bourgeoisie state as crass opportunism, forgetting Lenin's teaching on this question. The Left Movement is in disarray, the objective and subjective condition for socialist revolution is not ripe, and the controversy whether the stage of revolution is democratic or socialist is still raging in the remaining Left Movement. In these conditions, in the absence of immediate socialist revolutionary perspective, the Left Movement

should welcome the search for solution to the Tamil problem to whatever degree possible within the existing frame-work of society as it would ultimately help the people and the Left Movement. Lenin stated that "In consistent democracy solutions to the problem of national question could be found to degrees possible....". The living example to this teaching of Lenin could be found in several capitalist countries and developing countries where the national question had been settled to degrees possible and at this stage we should link the struggle on national question with the struggle for consistent democracy. Postponing solution of national question to socialist revolution or putting forward the provocative demand of separate Eelam will help only the reaction and not the people, though final and complete solution to national question had to be sought in genuine socialism. The development of practical movement will expose the opportunists who practice the craft of deception among the Tamil as well as Sinhala people on the national question. **What the Tamils need is practical and just solution to their problems and not emotional fodder.**

## LANKA GUARDIAN

Revised subscription rates.  
With effect from 1st January 1979.

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# Marxism and national question

What amazing comparisons Chintaka could make! Soviet Union to Sri Lanka via Solomon Islands? North Kalimantan to Northern Sri Lanka? East Timor to Eastern Sri Lanka? SWAPO to TULF? Karan Tribalists to Lankan Tamils? Chintaka jumps from Georgia to Grenada and Siberia to Solomon Islands searching evidence in support of his theory of self determination, forgetting that there is nothing or little in common between their conditions, problems and ours.

What more, Chintaka with his amazing analogy hits the pinnacle of Marxist distortion marvelling all his previous records by butchering another piece of Lenin's writings, removing the heart of Lenin's quotation, swallowing the vital words in the middle of a sentence and presenting the edited quotation as the crowning jewel at the end of his reply, which shines as a symbol, rather a sample of distortion of Lenin, provoking this reply. After all could we blame Chintaka when it is claimed that we are supposed to be passing the dark age of devils quoting scripture to the enlightened age of Brahmin Priests and the clan of Rasputins quoting Marxism to send the toiling masses to the heavenly kingdom of Lord Indra or Saint Peter to seek salvation. In the 22 myths series mixture and his reply Chintaka travels far and wide on our globe bypassing Sri Lanka and its living realities, the very target of his dose of prescription.

Chintaka at the end of his reply quotes Lenin, "Nobody is to be blamed being born a slave; but a slave who not only eschews striving for freedom and justifies and eulogizes his slavery,...." and omits the words,.... for example calls the throttling of Poland, Ukraine etc-"defence of fatherland," of the Great Russians.. which was in the original writing of Lenin in between

the words, "his slavery and such a slave". Chintaka had given different meaning to the writing of Lenin by coining a new sentence after omitting a few words. Lenin's contempt and wrath against those Russians who went to war to expand the Czarist empire, whom he branded as the slaves of Nicholas Romanov, had been twisted as an inducement against slaves. By calling the Tamils slaves, Chintaka demands what he calls the 'Tamil' Marxists to support the cry for separation, thus indirectly inviting the Marxists of the Sinhala Nation to fall prey to Sinhala chauvinism. Marxists are expected to view problems from Class and not on chauvinistic or emotional point of view.

The line of certain Communist Parties of India, Burma, Philippines etc had been mentioned by Chintaka, demanding the Communists in Sri Lanka to seek inspiration from the line of these Parties on the national question. The line pursued by these Parties had not been proved victorious. The conditions in which these Parties operate are completely different from ours. After all whether these parties succeed or fail in their task, we cannot mechanically copy their line. Chintaka feels ticklish that China and India had been listed together and Vietnam had been dragged to the scene. The Chinese Communist Party did not follow the Soviet example mechanically on national question and put forward the demand for self-determination of nations, during their pre-or-post-revolutionary period. (Though the overthrown Lords of Lhasa and the Bourgeoisie of Taiwan demand separation from China). Hitler sent millions to the gas chamber and the Vietnamese authorities sent a million to the ocean chamber though about half a million survived as refugees. Hitler's Germany and Vietnam tried to solve the nationality problem in a bar-

baric manner. When our bearded brothers swear to follow the Vietnamese road and shout from the top of platforms that they have a socialist solution to the Tamil problem, shouldn't we sound the alarm and warn the Tamils to use their wisdom.

Lenin said that according to Marx, "all classes and all countries are regarded not statically but dynamically, i.e., not in a state of immobility but in motion." Further Lenin said, "It is essential to realise the incontestable truth that a Marxist must take cognisance of real life, of concrete realities and must not continue to a theory of yesterday". Stalin said that "the national question in the period of second International and the national question in the period of Leninism are far from being the same thing." Lenin and Stalin repeatedly taught us not to use the Russian example mechanically. Chintaka pleads guilty to the charge of dogmatic approach and calls revisionism when we advocate dialectic approach. Marxism-Leninism is a science which develops and it has not ceased development since the October Revolution on the question of revolution or the national question. A Marxist approach to the national question in Sri Lanka requires study of its living realities and not the dogmatic approach of fitting our conditions to the Russian experience. While appreciating the golden heart of Chintaka for his sympathy with the Tamil people in their struggle for justice and equality, we cannot refrain from sounding the warning that the surgery of separation is no solution to the agony of Tamils and the national problem in our country.

# Why vested interests fight NWIO

INFORMATION

Part 4

by Chakravarti Raghavan

The attempt of the MacBride Commission at Stockholm to set up a dialogue between the transnational news agencies and the various national news agencies and the non-aligned pool was a failure. The TNS approached the whole problem with an air of self-satisfaction, patted themselves on the back for the great work they were doing, and saw the inability of the third world to make their voices felt in their technological deficiency and lack of professional training of their media men. Above all, as the TNs saw it, the major problem was the tendency of the third world governments to choke off the 'right of access' of western newsmen to the sources of news in their countries—government leaders and officials and the opposition elements.

The attack on the declaration and the third world movement for NWIO was master-minded and coordinated by the IPI whose Paris lobbyist drew up a memorandum on the purported contents of the declaration and its effect. Columnists and editorial writers in the West and their agents in the third world, went to town on this basis denouncing the UNESCO and the declaration. While the Chief Editor of the *Observer* in London was advising the public against reading all the material put out by UNESCO, an Indian columnist was denouncing in the same language and terms the UNESCO for the draft declaration, with the added proviso that the text was not available to the press.

The demand for a two-way flow of news, an end to the present vertical transnational controlled news flows and its substitution by horizontal flows that will democratise the international debates, all epitomised in the

demand for 'balanced flow of information' was dubbed a threat to freedom, a violation of universal human rights and an attempt at state censorship. The UNESCO and its officials were also subjected to an often scurrilous campaign, though the cat was let out of the bag when many of the critics brought up the UNESCO's 'sin' in the past of having equated Zionism with Racism or Racial doctrines like Apartheid.

- sanction of State control of all media and other information that comes into or leaves any nation;

- elimination of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty along with a drastic reduction of the broadcasting ability of the Voice of America;

- a dramatic loss in the amount of information about the world available to governments and all Americans;

- rigid cutbacks in the rapidly growing information sectors of the US economy including computer manufacturing firms and data processors;

- loss of parts of the electronic spectrum used by the space satellites and the resultant reduction in vital intelligence, as well as loss of frequencies used by our radar and electronic-based weaponry;

- higher phone bills for calls across the oceans;

- overseas operations of US headquarters transnational firms becoming uneconomic.

\* \* \*

ITEMS four, six and seven in the above were seen as arising directly out of West European moves to safeguard the privacy of its

citizens, by restricting the transmission of unprocessed data to data banks across international frontiers, and levy of international telecommunication charges on the basis of the quantum and speed of information that can be transmitted through new technologies (rather than the simple time cost basis as now).

The Kroloff-Cohen report (and other studies) asked the US government to get involved in the NWIO movement, shape it to US ends, win over third world governments by providing technological and financial aid to them, get Soviet help and use it to preserve the super-power status and interest in the satellite and radar and electronic-based weapon system frequencies and communication channels. The US in effect was advised 'coopt and absorb' the third world, movement, and play the third world, West Europe and the Soviets against each other and preserve US (and US-Soviet) interest in the 1979 World Conference to allocate Radio Frequencies, the 1978 UNESCO conference, and the 1980 UN special session on development strategies.

\* \* \*

THE western media and governments directed their attacks on mass media by concentrating on Article 2 and Article 11 of the draft, apart from a general unspecific attack that the entire concept was based on State control of media and balanced flow of information amounted to State Censorship.

Article 2 was attacked on the ground that it required media and media-men to obey local laws and sovereignty of States (and thus subject themselves to censorship). Article 1 was attacked on the ground that States were

obliged to control the mass media and make them comply with the provisions of the declaration.

\* \* \*

THOUGH the third world's attempt to win recognition for NWIO was foiled and the issue may appear to be in limbo, the various decisions and resolutions have created an agenda for actions that could be used to propel the world in the direction of NWIO.

There has been repeated acknowledgement that the existing structures of information and communication are unjust and ineffective. Efforts to work for the establishment of 'a new, just, and balanced world information and communication order' were endorsed.

The current imbalances and inequalities in the production, dissemination and exchange of information, both within countries and between countries and regions was acknowledged and the Director-General was asked to continue work in the formulation of communication policies to remedy this.

High priority was accorded to measures likely to reduce inequalities and imbalances in communication, both within countries and between different groups of countries and in particular between developed and developing countries, especially by helping the latter to organise exchanges of information, under satisfactory conditions, between themselves and the developed countries, and thereby promote a free flow and a wider and better balanced exchange of information between the different regions of the world.

An inter-governmental planning meeting is to develop proposals for institutional arrangements to systematise collaborative consultation on communications development activities, needs and plans. (This was a response to the US offer to provide technological assistance for communications development, and wanted this to be done in collaboration with UNDP and the World Bank—where the West and USA have a controlling voice. The ultimate decision of the conference was an attempt to keep communication development aid within UNESCO's parameters

and thus subject to overall communication policies).

The UNESCO was also asked to encourage in-depth study and discussions on the concept of the right to communicate.

The US and some of the western countries are seeking to convert the NWIO into mere issues of technique and technological equipment and training. Some of the third world countries are anxious to utilise the international climate to obtain easy assistance from the West in such matters. This way could only lead to further technological dependence, integration of selected parts of the periphery into the Centre, and the rest continuing to be dominated by the Centre.

\* \* \*

THE centre-periphery relationship is characteristic of technology. Technology is more than technique or equipment and know-how as Johan Galtung points out. A specific social structure operating internationally, nationally and locally, and a cognitive structure of deep-lying assumptions about the organisation of space and time and knowledge of human relations and relations with nature go with the techniques. Without them the techniques would not work.

If third world countries first concentrate on proper exploration and definition of the right to communicate, and evolve communication policies, national and global to serve this right to communicate, and then decide upon the appropriate technology to serve these rights, then they would have become the masters of the technology rather than the other way around and would be on the way to NWIO.

\* \* \*

THE Stockholm meeting of experts on the right to communicate has already created a tentative outline.

The right to communicate, conceived as a broad human right, includes the right to participate, the right to inform, the right to receive information, and the right of access to the resources required for communication. The right to communicate has various dimensions—the right of an individual at the village or community level to the societal and international levels.

The right to communicate is undoubtedly linked to the specific social economic and cultural milieu. The level of national development and advancement of a country's resources, and its level of economic social and cultural achievements are closely related to the formulation and implementation of the right to communicate within the national context. The right to communicate does not automatically get established within each level of socio-economic development.

\* \* \*

THE right to communicate is also a comprehensive concept, involving the rights of individuals, groups, communities and States in their international relations.

Third world countries must hence set out first to define and provide a set of inter-connecting principles and rules and concepts of the comprehensive right to communicate. Then they must decide on the set of technologies, appropriate to each country and inter-country relationships, and then look for policies or methods of acquiring them.

(Concluded)

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## Seers on . . .

(Continued from Page 14)

get between 1976 and 1978 and the resultant neglect of minor irrigation works. These could be an important source of employment. Yet when compared with the major irrigation works their cost is only one eighth per unit acre.

Likewise, Prof. Seers encourages the development of less glamorous schemes, industry outside the IPZ and housing. He visualises greater employment potential, particularly in proportion to investment, in that kind of development.

The composition of the labour force, its expectations and solutions to unemployment, are a function of the educational system. Commending the attempts in the early seventies to prepare secondary school leavers for a vocation, Prof. Seers expresses regret that this has now been reversed. Emphasis is being given to opening universities and this can lead to graduate unemployment.

# WILD LIFE — A CLOSER LOOK

by Ranil Senanayake

ECOLOGY

*The following article was submitted to the editor of the journal of the Wild Life Protection Society, "The Loris" but was unpublished. It is disturbing when national, public societies begin to exclude important concepts of functional perspectives in their information disseminating process; especially if that infor-*

*mation is pertinent to the objectives of the society.*

*I give below the unpublished article in full, in the hope that the information presented may provide some use to those of us who are genuinely concerned about wild life conservation.*

— Ranil Senanayake

*(Department of Wild Life and Fisheries Biology, University of California.)*

*'ware the mesmerizer, he gives you  
flowers with his right hand  
and  
steals your gold with his left.*

I remember my first experience with a weedicide. I was a planter then working on a Rubber plantation. I had a problem with weeds, the cost of manually maintaining the old fields were too high. So the new cheap, effective method was used. Good old Sodium Arsenite. The first things to react were the frogs. The small pool by the stream that flowed through the old field was alive with squirming, kicking bodies. I detachedly observed that they were Indian water skippers. I even remember the fishes that followed the course of the frogs, the gyrating loaches who I knew even then, were *Noemachelius notostigma*; more than that is a little vague except I used to miss the little ferns and the blue and yellow flowers that I know now as *Chirita*. They used to festoon the boulder over which the stream flowed. My morning round was a little duller but the field was clean.

It has been a long time since then..... I have experienced

the agrochemicals as a user, thankfully blessing them when the population of Scales Insects in my greenhouse were brought under control; to the inescapable meloncholia that strikes one watching the last of the Brown Pelicans winging over the Pacific. I have also studied the Pathways that energy and materials are shunted through this biosphere. It seems that here at a time of National crisis (from the perspective of a conservationist) we have been looking at the future, with Nelsonic aplomb but with the looking glass over the blind eye!

One of the greatest dangers to the wild life of a country is undoubtedly, the indiscriminate use of insecticides and weedicides. Unlike the more blatant dangers like illicit felling and poaching, where one can see the damage done readily, the effects of insecticides are insidious. The general public may not notice any apparent negative reactions readily. All the more reason as to why it becomes one of the most important functions of the society to act as a keen watchdog on this front.

My opening paragraph gave a dramatic example of the action of a commonly used agrochemical. Other examples are not so instantaneously dramatic but the accumulated effects, cry out for attention. My work on some ecosystems of Sri Lanka, and data gathering for the last ten years demonstrate that (1) over the last five years the increasing use of pesticides have contributed to a steady decline in the marginal populations of the ende-



*Flamingoes wading in a stream*

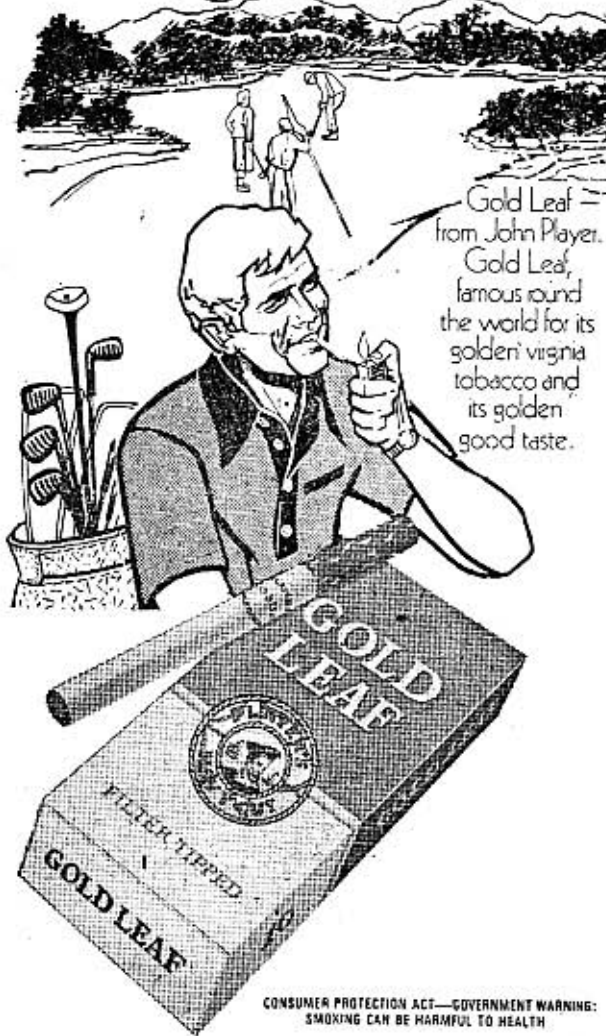
mic lizard *Ceratophora tennenti*, till today less than 10% of the Pre-Insecticide population remain.

(2) Known populations of the endemic fishes *Rasbora Vaterrifloris* and *Barbus titteya* were completely exterminated by the use of insecticides on the catchment areas of their streams one mile upstream. Similar evidence exists for at least four other species. This brings me to the point raised in my second paragraph. Are we, as a society, looking at the future with a blind eye? We are a group of Sri Lankans concerned about the maintenance and protection of our natural resources. Our primary concern of course, is wild life and nature. Why then, have we ignored the burning question of indiscriminate pesticide use in our land? Our official journal, "The Loris" has for the past ten years carried only two articles on the subject. Is this merely due to non-contribution of articles by the members or due to apathy in raising these issues by the editorial committee?

If we have to question the philosophy and stance adopted by our committee, to bring about an increased awareness as to the very real problems that assail us; then we do have to raise the questions, irrespective of personal or other considerations.

We have passed through an incredible period of data interpretation from the urgent Silent Spring of Rachel Carson in 1961; to the quantitative Environment, Power & Society of H.T. Odum in 1972; The information generated between these points should have enabled us to design safeguards for our Biota; but we have done nothing. Even now, at this late stage it may be time for us to identify the enemies be it a particular compound or a particular method of application and take action.

## Player's Gold Leaf for good taste.



# Marxism, literature and time

by Reggie Siriwardena

**M**ost Marxist critics of literature have thought within the framework of the concepts of economic base and ideological superstructure, where literature is taken to be part of the superstructure. There are problems inherent in these concepts, as we shall see if we take a look at one of Marx's most famous sentences: It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.

What did Marx mean by 'determines'? If we give the word the kind of meaning it has in the physical sciences, we shall be in trouble. The pressure and temperature of a gas determine its volume, in the sense that given the first two, we can predict the third. But given a knowledge of the social relations of Elizabethan times, could we predict *King Lear*? Raymond Williams has suggested that what Marx meant by 'determines' was 'sets limits to', which makes for a more flexible relationship between existence and consciousness.

However, this isn't the problem I want to discuss here. What I want to ask is how far the body of Marxist critical writing that is concerned with explaining literature in terms of the base-superstructure relationship—whether this is done badly, as by Christopher Caudwell, or well, as by George Thomson—meets the central problems of literary criticism, and whether this is the only Marxist approach to literature that is possible.

In what has deservedly become a classic work of Marxist criticism, George Thomson says of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* that it is 'a stratified piece of social history embodying the accumulated deposits of the primitive tribe, the early monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Thomson's analysis of the plays in *Aeschylus and Athens* elabor-

ates this view with great depth and cogency. But it leaves certain fundamental problems unanswered.

The experience and the frame of mind of a reader or spectator approaching the *Oresteia* as a piece of social history of ancient Greece are very different from those of a reader or spectator responding to it, moved by it, involved with it as a living work of literature in the present. The readers or spectators I am talking about may often be the same person regarding the work in different ways, but the two experiences will still be divergent. In fact, as I shall show, they are really two different works—two different *Oresteia*—that are being read or seen in the two cases.

In fact, nothing in *Aeschylus and Athens* (and in other Marxist criticism of the same kind) answers the questions which seem to me central to literary criticism: What is our response to this work, written, maybe, centuries ago? What does it mean to us here and now? Why should we take the trouble to read it if we aren't social or literary historians?

There is, of course, one simple answer possible to these questions which has actually been given by some Marxists—and that is, that we shouldn't bother; instead, we should throw all the literature of the past into the dustbin as products of feudal or bourgeois culture. This was the position taken up by some of the more militant exponents of *proletkult* in the early years after the Russian Revolution, and again by similar groups during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (now, one understands, both Shakespeare and Li Po have been rehabilitated). It is amusing to read today, in a Soviet Communist Party debate in 1924 on party policy towards literature, that Sosnovsky, taking a liberal position on the question,

pleaded that Pushkin 'would undoubtedly last another fifty years have come and gone, and Pushkin seems as indestructible as ever—which wouldn't have surprised Lenin. Krupskaya describes how, on a visit to a Youth Commune, he asked the young people, 'What do you read? Do you read Pushkin?' 'Oh, no!' someone blurted out. He was a bourgeois. Mayakovsky for us,' Ilyich smiled. 'I think Pushkin is better.'

However, when it comes to explaining why Aeschylus or Shakespeare or Pushkin is still alive, there is little illumination to be found in Marxist literary criticism. In fact, it is striking how often Marxists, faced with this problem, have fallen back on something similar to the traditional bourgeois conception of an 'unchanging human nature' (which one would have thought was both unreal and un-Marxist). Thus, David Craig, in seeking to explain the persistence of certain themes and motifs in the literature of different societies, speaks of 'the comparative continuity of human nature', which is an adulterated version of the academic critic's concept of 'timeless human experience'. Again, in the same essay he says: 'What exists in society is an organism, an animal, a species, named *homo sapiens*, which over millennia has scarcely changed. So we can respond with delight to the bulls of Lascaux or of Picasso, the stories of Homer or Lawrence.' (*Towards Laws of Literary Development in Marxists on Literature*, ed. Craig.) If that is so, the whole Marxist analysis of literature and culture falls to the ground. In reality, however, I don't think the fact that the biological equipment of man as a species has scarcely changed in historical time does anything to explain our response to the literature of past ages, because literature is based not on man's biological drives but on our social



and cultural experience, which is constantly changing in time.

The other way in which Marxist critics have tried to meet the problem of the longevity of literature is by having recourse to aesthetic properties of literature, unrelated to their social analysis. Even Lenin, in his essays on Tolstoy, never resolves his paradox of the reactionary ideologue and 'the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pen pictures of Russian life, but has made first-class contributions to world literature' (and what is it that distinguishes a 'firstclass contribution to world literature', anyway?).

I must make it clear that I consider the mode of Marxist criticism represented by George Thomson on Greek drama or George Lukacs on the 19th-century realists as a valid and legitimate activity, and, within its limits, illuminating. But if we regard literature of the past solely in terms of its social genesis—that is, in terms of the mode of production and the social relations within which it arose, our approach to literature ends by becoming, strange as it may seem, anti-historical. For we are then conceiving of a work of literature as being static entity, having a fixed, immutable meaning given to it by the society within which it was created. The truth, however, is that a work of literature has existence only in a relationship between itself and its audience, and since the audience is constantly changing with time and history, its relationship to a particular literary work too changes, and with it, the meaning of the work itself.

Let me clarify this further by taking a particular example. What do we refer to when we talk about 'Shakespeare's *King Lear*'? We refer, of course, in the first instance to a literary text, contained, say, in certain pages of an edition of Shakespeare's Works, and realisable in performance. Even at this stage there is a problem: since we have no manuscript of the play in Shake-

spere's hand, and since the original printed texts are defective and vary one from the other, *King Lear*, as we know it today, is really a text evolved by successive generations of editors, and there are various versions of it. Significantly, some 18th and 19th-century readings differ from modern ones, so that already, even at the stage of establishing a text, we see that we are confronted by a literary object which changes in time. But our edited version, when we have chosen it, does not read itself: we have to face the task of interpreting it, of giving it meaning. What then do we refer to when we speak of the 'meaning' of *King Lear*? We may mean any one of three things:

(1) The meaning that Shakespeare intended to convey by the play.

(2) The meaning that the play had for the Elizabethan audience.

(3) The meaning that the play has for contemporary readers and audiences.

(1) is strictly unknowable, and even if somebody were to unearth a diary of Shakespeare revealing what he 'intended' to convey by *Lear*, that wouldn't solve the problem. Firstly, there can be a gap between intention and performance; secondly, we can't assume that what a writer consciously believes he is conveying by his work is equivalent to what is actually conveyed; and thirdly, once a work has been written, it has an objective existence independent of what its author intended.

(2) is also unknown, though we may try to approximate to it by delving into knowledge about Elizabethan social history, ideas and beliefs, the nature of the audience, etc. (With, say, a 19th-century novel, we would have fuller evidence from reviews and comments of the time.)

Only (3) is directly accessible to us. But not only are there different versions of (3), so that

(Continued on Page 24)

WITH  
THE  
COMPLIMENTS OF  
DISTRIBUTORS  
OF  
CITIZEN  
WRIST WATCHES  
& CLOCKS

# The greatest Sri Lankan

A couple of years ago, at a conference held here, a visiting British journalist posed during one of the tea-breaks a problem to a group of us Sri Lankans. Why, he asked, had Sri Lanka, with a population of 14 million, not produced a single figure with a general international reputation when several other smaller countries had done so? Presidents and Prime Ministers, he stipulated, were not eligible, since they would get news publicity anyway because of their position; he challenged us to mention a single person who was world-famous by virtue of his personal distinction.

My first suggestion was 'Ananda Coomaraswamy': this was rejected on the ground that he was born over a hundred years ago, and what was wanted was a more recent figure. I next came up with 'Cyril Ponnampereuma', to which the response was: "who's he?" Whereupon one of my friends suggested 'Emil Savundra' at which the discussion dissolved in laughter.

However, my friend may have been right, for Emil Savundra has just achieved the distinction of having a biography written about him and published in Britain. I haven't seen the book yet, but I learn from a review that the biographer claims that one of Savundra's first actions when he had entered the path of affluence was to endow a nunnery in Sri Lanka so that the sisters could pray for the success of his future business ventures. True or false?

## Problem Corner

One morning at 6 o'clock, a Buddhist monk started to climb



Emil Savundra

AS I  
LIKE IT

## Touchstone

a mountain. As he walked up the narrow winding path that led from the foot of the summit, he stopped occasionally to rest and to take refreshment: and the speed of his ascent varied from time to time depending on the degree of steepness of the path. Having reached the top, he spent the rest of the day and night there in meditation. The next morning, also exactly at 6 o'clock, he started to walk down the mountain along the same path, again stopping from time to time, but not necessarily in the same places where he had halted on the way up. Naturally, the average speed of his descent was greater than that of his ascent of the mountain.

Prove that there must be some spot on the path where the monk was at the same time of day on both the way up and the way down. (No calculus or other mathematics is needed, only intelligent reasoning.) Solution next time.

## Marxism . . .

(Continued from Page 23)

we can talk about Wilson Knight's *Lear*, Jan Kott's *Lear*, etc: it should also be evident that a contemporary reader or spectator of the play inevitably interprets it in the light of his understanding of the world, given him by his contemporary social experience, so that the *Lear* we read or see today is a work transformed by time and history.

In a later article I shall consider the practical implications of this situation for the Marxist literary critic.

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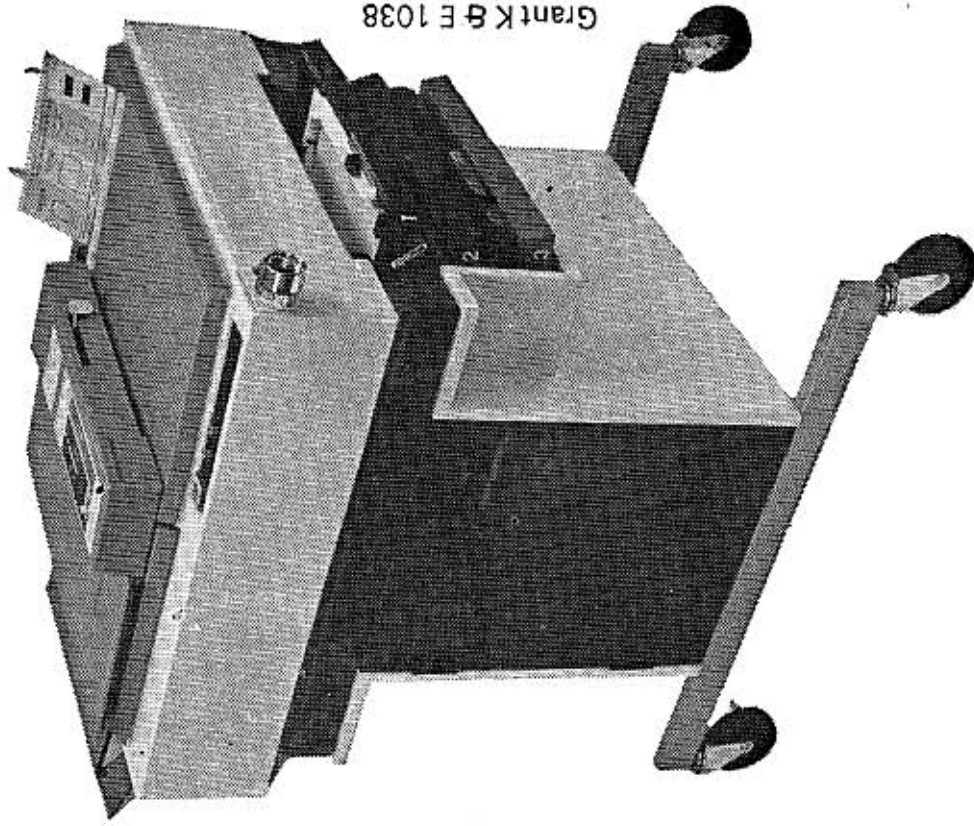
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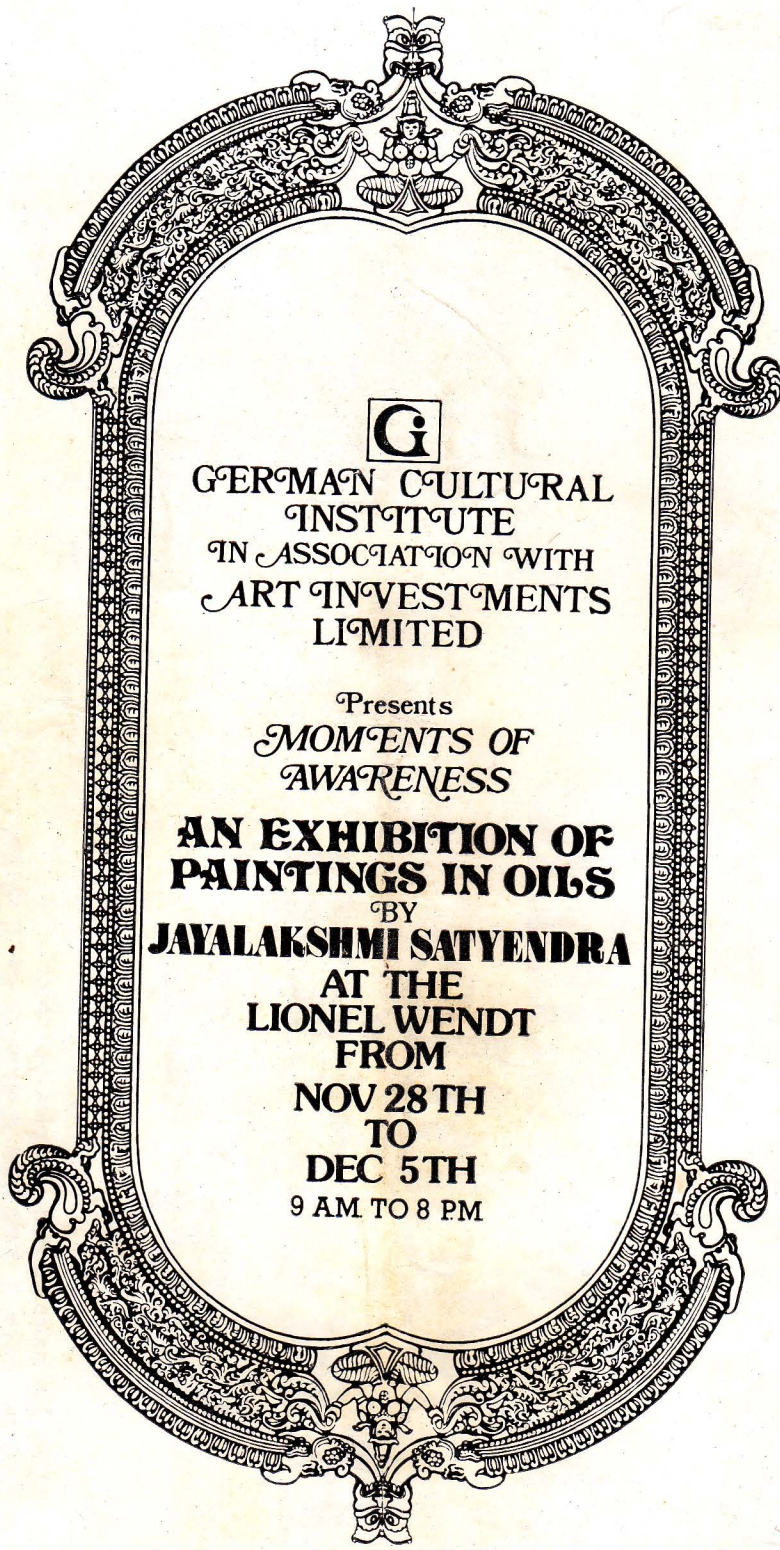
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