



special  
Gail Omvedt on India

LANKA

# GUARDIAN

December 1, 1979



*S. Sivasubramanian*

## SAVE INDIA ! CALL INDIRA !

Pesticide plot : Ranil Senanayake  
Cannibalism : V. P. Vittachi  
Eelam+Marxism : Debate ends  
Campus polls : TVP's bat trick



## Trouble with Harry

Who's the most quick-witted young MP in the NSA? Only the 'Daily News' knows. The 'Sun' quite rightly, led off with Minister Harry Jayawardena's blast on the budget for it is not everyday that a senior minister attacks his own colleague, the Finance Minister, on so important a matter as the budget. The CDN reported parts of M. D. H. Jayawardena's speech but beautifully balanced it off with a quip from an unidentified parliamentary wit.

The Plantations Minister who embarrassed the government was compared to one of those doddering old fools in the House of Lords who make speeches in their sleep.

Yet there were some backbenchers who were secretly happy at some of the things he said — such as, soaring prices. They might not have known Shakespeare but a few of them seem to silently cry "God for Harry! England and St. George".

## Re - shuffle

The re - shuffle rumour refuses to be swept under the carpet. Now there is at least one vacancy — the Plantations Ministry, both the President and Minister having done the right thing in keeping with the principle of Cabinet responsibility. In a previous issue, the LG reported a

persistent rumour that M.D.H. was Malasia — bound as High Commissioner.

Kamburupitiya gave the government another chance to bring in 'new blood'. But Albert Silva had to be accommodated. There was some talk that a dynamic young businessman from the South may be given the seat, as a prelude to a portfolio circa February/March. If there is such a move to introduce new faces, an ex - CCS now in a key post and another UNP'er holding a top party post look like good bets.

## JVP vs The Rest

The JVP not only boasts that it is the biggest Left party and the third strongest in the island but behaves as if it actually believes so. A new JVP paper "Sarasavi Puvath" (Campus News) speaks of the LSSP and CPSL as in a state of "senile decay". Its other "comrade" in the 5-party "agitational front", the NLSSP (Vasudeva) is described as "opportunistic, pseudo - left". However JVP or pro-JVP papers like "Rathu Lanka" (Red Lanka) and "Guru Handa" (Teachers' Voice) are far less hostile to the other Left parties.

Yet one message is clear — no 'united frontism'.

## Opec and Oil

I refer to your item 'SLFP and OPEC'. It is good that the SLFP did not fall for the 'petition to OPEC' stunt. Blame the oil prices for everything, blackguard the Arabs! That's the western propaganda line with a lot of Zionist fuel. Why should we, a Third world developing country, follow that line? What is the price of a gallon of petrol in the US? Is it not one dollar or about 15 rupees. I have just read in today's 'Daily News' that the oil companies are selling a barrel for 40 dollars in Rotterdam when the average OPEC price is 23 dollars approx. Why not send a petition to the oil firms?

M. A. Hassan

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# Waiting for Mrs. G

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

The news that Mrs. Bandaranaike would call on Mrs. Gandhi during a pilgrimage this month to India was followed by another report, from usually reliable sources but as yet unconfirmed, which set DPL tongues wagging. A top UNP emissary, a 'Sri Kotha' Kissinger of sorts, is reported to have met Mrs. Gandhi in Delhi.

The old Nehru-Bandaranaike connection was greatly strengthened by the even closer Mrs. G-Mrs. B 'special relationship'. The political parallel was extended to the second generation when Indira-Sanjay saw an obvious analogy in Sirima-Anura. The UNP propagandists pounced on this relationship, reinforced by the fact of long emergency rule, when Mrs. Gandhi lost the election in early 1977. 'Today Indira, tomorrow Sirima' was too tempting an election slogan for the UNP not to exploit to the full.

But UNP thinking was not entirely propagandist and negative. There was a parallel in reverse. Positive affinities fortified the JR-Morarji connection in the mass mind. Besides the crucial fact that friendship with India has been the cornerstone in 'J.R. Thought' (the idea can be traced from the earliest years of J.R.'s political career), both men are pre-independence veterans. In the declared philosophy and public behaviour of both there is a strong moralistic (dharmista) strain. The Election platform of both gave prominence to the restoration of democracy, human rights, an end to emergency rule, matriarchal power and family bandyism. Both are conservative rightwingers, and their 'nonalignment' has a clearer pro-western element than the policy and rhetoric of Mrs. G. and Mrs. B.

It was J. R.'s Indo-centrism that made him choose India for his first official visit. Again, significantly, it was part politics, part pilgrimage. This same long and firmly held belief in the priority of India in

Sri Lanka's foreign policy acted as a countervailing factor in the first year of the UNP when there was a strong pull towards ASEAN, a tendency supported by a group of Sri Kotha-F.O. 'bright sparks', ignoring the massive difference in scale and quality between an untidily virile country-in-depth (Sri Lanka) and a clinically managed soulless city-state, this ASEAN-minded lobby subscribes to the vision of an economic nirvana in which Colombo is some extended emporium, a glorified "Change Alley."



Mrs. B

Career diplomats who interpret non-alignment differently see 'anti-Leftism' rather economic models as the real ideological source of the pro-ASEAN group. Others disagree. "If that were true" remarked a mid-career man "we should try to be a neo-colony of the US not a neo-colony of Singapore or South Korea."

Though criticised for his travels Foreign Minister Hameed has a far better grasp of the realities of world politics and diplomacy and a more genuine commitment to non-alignment. He has resisted the ASEAN 'pull' by advocating a wider regional cooperation, an idea also cherished by President Jayewardene.

Anyway, Desai warmly reciprocated J.R.'s sentiments and gestures. He was the chief guest at the February 4 celebration, not only praising JR as an outstanding statesman but helping the government over its most sensitive international issue, the Tamil problem, by taking a public stand against separatism and the TULF. Taking the cue from Desai, the Indian High Commissioner went along to Jaffna itself to reiterate the Indian position.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Gandhi was writing from her Delhi home to the Tamil Coordinating Committee in London, the propaganda centre of pro-TULF Tamil expatriates. She told them that she was "horrified" to read the material the committee had sent her. It was no point she said to ask Mr. Desai and the Janata Party to do anything about it because the Delhi government had a special affection for the regime in Colombo.

And now the spectre of Indira is haunting India. For obvious reasons, it is also haunting Sri Lankan politics (The CDN recently published a series of articles by a 'special correspondent' on JR's early political career, stressing his long connections with the Indian Congress and Mr. Nehru personally).

It is this context which makes the recent visits to Sri Lanka of BD President General Ziaur Rahman and Indonesian President General Suharto specially interesting to the student of foreign affairs. After Colombo Suharto visited Bangladesh. Old regional relationships are being revived as new relationships emerge. All this at a time when Pakistan's political future is clothed in uncertainty, when Iran's uninterrupted revolution takes bewildering turns, and the Kabul regime is in the grip of turmoil.

(Continued on Page 5)

# Campuses — JVP takes all

by A staff writer

**T**his view of Regis Debray may well be an exaggeration but it does contain more than a germ of truth. If the current round of university student council elections are anything to go by, then, Rohana Wijeweera's claim that his party is the biggest within the Left movement and the third biggest in the country seems to be well founded. The recent campus polls saw the JVP's student arm—the **Socialist Students Society**—emerge as the dominant political grouping in the student councils at **Vidyalankara** (Kelaniya), **Colombo** and **Peradeniya**. The upcoming polls at **Vidyodaya** are also expected to see a JVP victory. I have talked to students and teachers at all campuses and this report is pieced together from these conversations.

Pro-Government dons and students had expected the UNP affiliated '**Samawadi Students Union**' to emerge victorious through a judicious use of carrot and stick. The carrot comprised an extension of the new consumerism into the campuses as well as the promise of employment even in the junior ranks of the academic staff. This, however, appeared less than credible to the general student body owing to the spectacle of hard-core UNP Student unionists of yesteryear loitering about jobless or employed in capacities well below their qualifications and expectations.

Meanwhile, the stick was being wielded too vigorously. February 1978 saw the expulsion of 8 students from **Peradeniya** following a one day token boycott of lectures in protest at the seizure of half the populations rice ration books. March 16th witnessed the armed onslaught on the left-wing students of the **Vidyalankara** campus following the latter's narrow victory at the university polls. The government's interpretation that this was a clash bet-

ween the students and the 'village youth' was rendered highly suspect when VIP's attended the funeral of a well-known 'tough' of the area who was killed in the fracas. Radical students at **Colombo campus** and **Heywood Institute of Fine Arts** became the next victims. Several students from these campuses were even hijacked from CTB buses and reportedly "interrogated" at party headquarters. **Vidyodaya University** at Gangodawilla, Nugegoda was the scene of a massive raid involving several hundred policemen. 120 students were subsequently suspended from **Vidyodaya**. **Moratuwa (Katubedda) University** whose left-wing activists were 'roughed up' by unidentified thugs last year, saw its student council president and twelve others suspended some weeks ago. All this, taken together with the non-fulfilment of promises to reduce hall fees, improve the quality of meals and residential facilities, seriously reduced all chances of UNP victory.

The **SLFP** was a non-starter. Even with SLFP governments in office, the party has never had a significant base in the country's campuses since the more educated youth have always regarded its "pragmatic politics" with disdain. Now, in opposition, the party's leading youth figure Anura Bandaranaike is under severe criticism even within party ranks, and some pro-SLFP students have been purged. SLFP fortunes on the campuses are at their lowest ebb.

The old **LSSP's** strength is if anything lower than that of the SLFP since its student wing the **Lanka Students Federation** deserted en bloc to Vasudeva's **NLSSP**, which significantly contains the highest number of university academics in its leadership than any other Left party. "Carlo Fonseka is the LSSP's only recent recruit under 45 while Podi Athula is its sole sympathizer under 30" cracked an **NLSSP** don.

"A university election (where fraud cannot intervene), which is essentially political, is an advanced report not only on which political tendencies predominate within the Revolution, but also on the inner evolution of the political life of the country itself. The university Campuses are key points for registering the latent political temperature of the country — not its present average temperature, certainly, but that of the crisis to come."

— DEBRAY

**Maoism**, which swept the campuses in the 1960's has suffered enormous reversals due to internal friction and division and international disgrace. **Vidyalankara University**, the last surviving Maoist stronghold of recent years crumbled with the graduation of its charismatic student leaders **Indrawansa de Silva** and '**Podi**' **Cooray**. **Peradeniya** retains a Maoist residue in the form of a group of ex-JVPers presently owing allegiance to the **Janatha Sangamaya**. The Maoist five party **New Peoples' Front**, recently formed, could make headway in the campuses once again as a militant alternative to the JVP and the old Left.

For this multitude of reasons the main contest at the current series of university elections was between the **CPSL-affiliated Ceylon National Students Union** and the JVP's **Socialist Students Society**, which emphatically rejected the former's repeated appeals for a 'united fighting front.' The JVP's unequivocal refusal has a significance beyond the ambit of campus elections.

It reveals that the newly formed '5 party bloc' has not extended beyond leadership level. It has not yet fulfilled the hope expressed by **Bala Tampoe** at the **Bogambara** rally in October and shared by the **CPSL** and **NLSSP** viz, the creation of militant solidarity between these Left forces

at the base level. Grass roots unity of even these 5 left parties (i.e. in work place, campus and farm) remains an unrealized goal.

Is this goal not merely unrealized, but also a receding one? The JVP's propaganda during the campus polls was as anti-left (and anti-CPSL) as before the formation of the '5 party bloc.' The inaugural issue of the JVP student union's official organ 'Ginisilu' ('Flame') carried a message by party Gen. Sec. Daya Wanniarachchi which characterized the current period as one in which "the LSSP and CPSL, which are parties of the upper petty bourgeoisie are going from crisis to crisis." In another article the paper said that the main question today for all workers, poor peasants, youths, and progressive intellectuals was whether or not they would be deceived as they had been for the past 30 years by "upper petty bourgeois opportunists in Left garb". The paper which carried the stamp of Vas Tillekeratne, head of the party's youth and student sections, attacked the LSSP, CPSL, Vasu's NLSSP, PDP, and Dharamasekera's DNF as "traitors to the working class", who participated in the 1971 repression proletariat. For this it is imperative to rally round the JVP.

Why then did the CPSL, which despite set backs and vicissitudes, continue to maintain a substantial presence on the campuses, lose to the JVP? Though it has made a genuine and deep going self-criticism this still remains internal and is largely unknown to the public, unlike say, the Janatha Sangamaya's, self-criticism. Nor is the public fully aware as yet of the CPSL's new, militant anti-capitalist line. So, the old mud of coalition politics still sticks on. Even the CPSL's student wing is still staffed by those intimately associated with the 'great betrayal' following the Weerasooriya shooting when the CP, then in Government, tried desperately to put a brake on the ensuing student-worker struggles. Finally, years of coalition politics have 'rusted' the CPSL's organisational apparatus while also effec-

## Noteworthy funeral

November 12th, was the third anniversary of the death of the student W. M. Weerasooriya, shot dead on the Peradeniya campus by the police. The student demos, the railway strike and the mounting labour unrest announced the dying gasps of the UF regime. The Opposition parties, notably an increasingly confident UNP, made much of the Weerasooriya incident both in the 1977 May Day parade and the election campaign soon after.

On November 12th this year, Kandy's street walls were plastered with protest posters. The poster campaign had nothing to do with the Weerasooriya anniversary. But it did concern another killing, which had dangerous racial overtones. The mainstream media which have devoted columns to the deaths of UN expert Chandrasekera Dias and Russel Ingram spared not a word for the young Tamil estate worker, Palanivel, who died of a shot-gun blast by a security guard. In the hours between the shooting and his admission to hospital, he had bled profusely. Eleven days and several operations later, he died.

Palanivel was a worker on Rajawella estate, Pallekelle, managed by NADSA, the National Agricultural Diversification and Settlement authority.

Trade Union sources say that there is a parallel between the Peradeniya and Pallekelle incidents — the authorities in both instances did not read the clear danger signals. Evidently, there had been at least two previous occasions where security guards, mostly Sinhala, had fired on estate workers. Nobody, it is true, was injured.

But friction between plantation workers and security guards can cause incidents which may explode

ting adversely the sense of initiative, polemical ability, theoretical capacity and overall style of work of the CPSL's young militants.●

in ways that can endanger lives, communal peace and normal work in a vital sector of the economy.

If Weerasooriya's death saw an unprecedented demonstration of student solidarity, Palanivel's funeral on November 14th saw a display of working class sentiment strong enough to transcend racial prejudice.

Representatives from 12 trade unions, members of the Joint Committee of TU's, spoke at the funeral. Among them were the CFL (LSSP affiliated), United Front of Labour (NLSSP), the Ceylon Bank Employees Union, the Lanka General Services Union, the Malyaga Mackal Iyakkam and the Coordinating Secretariat for the Plantation Areas. The unions which spearheaded the protest has called on the government to hold an immediate inquiry.

## Waiting for . . .

(Continued from Page 3)

Oil, US and western interests, the Sino-Soviet conflict and the Indo-China situation makes the entire area a challenge to the most resourceful policy planners in the world's capitals. India is too big a factor to be ignored in a power-equation that will be written out in the 1980's—India and Indira.

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India

# DESH BACHAO... INDIRA BOLAVO!

— Save India, call Indira

by Gail Omvedt

FOREIGN  
NEWS

(Gail Omvedt is a  
sociate professor of Sociology at the University of California and the author of several books.  
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This article was specially written for the *Lancet* Guardian)

A peasant woman enters a cloth shop in this medium sized village in western India. "I want a dress for my daughter". The merchant shows an eight-rupee dress. "No, a nicer one." A twelve rupee dress. She rejects it and settles for an even grander one. "Twenty-two rupees", says the merchant. But the woman pulls out a fifteen rupee note. "Look," he protests, "I can't even afford to sell it to you for that. I'd be losing money!" But instead of entering into one of the normal, extended bargaining processes so familiar in village life, the woman pockets her money, throws down the dress in a huff and walks out. "You people think you can get away with anything! Under Indira's rule this could never happen!"

## Indira's rule

In Bombay, among militant workers and cynical slum dwellers, the mood is slightly different. "They're all crooks, all alike, Indrabai brought in the Emergency, threw people in jail, brought in wage cuts. Under her rule there was police firing, inflation, repression. But under Janatha there has been the same thing—police firing, wage cuts, repression Hindu-Muslim riots, inflation. The only difference is that these people can't even run the country. At least Indira could do that. And you need some kind of government."

Such sentiments are widely shared among the poor and labouring classes in villages and towns throughout India: a certain nostalgia for the Emergency; a feeling that she has done or is trying to do something for them; a conviction that even if she is not, all the other politicians are even worse; and—in the absence of an alternative—an overwhel-

ming feeling that there has to be some kind of stable government and only she can provide it. It is on the basis of such feelings that Indira Gandhi is almost certain to win, a majority if not an absolute majority, in the Indian parliamentary elections in January. And so the woman who brought Emergency rule, dictatorship, repression of the working classes and forced sterilization will once again return to power in India, with a massive popular mandate on one hand and with her unrepentant scandal-surrounded son Sanjay Gandhi and his Youth Congress goon squads on the other.

But when this happens it will be not simply because of the people's fondness for Indira but because of their near-total disgust with the politicians who have been ruling the country after her. In March 1977 the Indian people voted down the Emergency, booing Indira herself off election platforms and giving their support to the Janatha Party, which described this as India's "second liberation" from dictatorial rule. Less than twenty-eight months later the same Janatha regime fell apart for the final time in July, 1979. By then one of India's opinion polls showed that 66% of over 1200 people interviewed in four cities thought "politicians were corrupt", 62% thought they did not "play a useful role" and 64% thought "things were better under the Emergency" (equivalent rural figures were 56%, 45% and 54%).

The Indira economy has been going downhill recently, with massive inflation, drought and harvest failures, and a near-total slowdown in production. But even before this, the Janatha's twenty eight months have been marked by a rising strike wave, demonstrations, brutal police killings of

the poor, ugly Hindu-Muslim riots, even nastier killings of ex-untouchable agricultural labourers in villages throughout the country and above all political factionalism and instability. It is the latter, political infighting, resignations, charges and countercharges, the continuing air of corruption around all the top leaders and the seeming inability of the government to formulate any clear policies that may be remembered most about this regime. It is this that convinced people on a massive scale that what has been going on "at the top" is simply the antics of a bunch of clowns incapable of ruling the country and aiming only "for the chitir", i.e. the prime ministership and personal power.

Why could't the Janatha Party, which was elected with such high hopes, put it all together? How is it that the forces which came together for the restoration of democracy have failed so thoroughly that now Indira Gandhi can take up the slogan **desh bachao, Indira bolavo** ("save the country, call Indira") as her theme?

Was it because of their disparateness? This is the argument of Indira herself. She has said from the beginning that her opposition was nothing but a **kitcheri**, a "stew" of elements so varied that they could not possibly develop a common program. And it is true that the the Janatha Party was formed from an opposition including the Congress of Democracy, Bharatiya Lok Dal, Jan Sangh and the Socia-

lists who had ideologies running from parliamentary socialism to free enterprise and social bases among all sections from Hindu fanatics to Muslim minorities and merchants to peasants.

Yet the previous Congress party, which ruled India for twenty eight years compared to the twenty eight months of Janata, was almost as disparate and just as notorious for its factionalism. In fact, almost every warring personality and faction within the Janata was at one time a warring faction within the Congress. The basic question is why their attempt to live together inside Janata within a democratic framework broke down so fast, why they managed to only reflect the antagonisms of society rather than integrate them. And this is the question of the development of social and economic conflicts within India in the last three years. Let us then, lay bare the disintegration of the Janata party.....but first a quick look at its warring leaders who in the end pulled the government down with their quarrels.

### The Janata Warriors

Ex-Prime minister Morarji Desai has become world-famous for his brahmanic moralism, which includes vegetarianism, sexual abstinence and the famous urine cure, but which has apparently not prevented his open sheltering of the shady business deals of his son Kanti. To many Indians, however, he is better known as a political conservative, anti-working class and a relative of some of the bigger capitalists of western India. When the Emergency was proclaimed, in fact, the Communist Party of India (CPI) which was then supporting it, threw a great deal of confusion into the Bombay working class by the simple technique of reading out the names of some people arrested, including Morarji along with wellknown smugglers. Later the same workers voted massively for Morarji's party, but it was out of their rejection of the Emergency, not for any positive reason. Morarji himself has been a stubborn moralist but never really popular, and his elevation to the leadership of the

party in fact symbolized the shadows lurking in the mandate the people gave it.

Charan Singh, who is now temporary Prime Minister, was the leader of the Bharahya Lok Dal BLD faction which originated in 1967-69 from defections from the Congress party of most of the rich peasant groups in north India. He calls himself a representative of Indian "peasants" and is called by everyone else a "kulak leader". It is said that with him this class is making its bid for political power. Most of this is true. The sections behind Charan Singh are the north Indian rural middle castes (Jats, Ahirs, Kurmis, etc) who truly have a peasant tradition and fought previously against merchants and higher landlords as well as against the British. Now, though, they have given birth to a vigorous section of capitalist farmers—it is no accident that the word "kulak" is becoming widespread in India—who continue to use caste ties and peasant traditions to rally poorer peasants behind them. What was to be added is that the "Chaubhury Saheb" as he is called, represents a fairly new and relatively crude political thrust of this class; similar sections in south India have held local power for a long time and are more sophisticated in their ability to make political adjustments.

Jagjivan Ram of the Congress for Democracy is usually called the political leader of India's untouchables. But this is a half truth. He has been, historically, the "Congress Party's Untouchable." His organisation of low castes under the Congress banner in the mid-1930s was an attempt to counter the militant untouchable movement then going on under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a movement which hated the Congress party itself as a party dominated by "brahmins and capitalists" and called for rejection of Hinduism altogether. His forming of a few agricultural labourer unions at the same time was in opposition to the peasant leagues led by socialists and communists which were then posing a strong challenge to Congress

hegemony. From that time on "Jagjivan babu" has been a man who has served willingly under conservative Hindu and capitalist leadership, and his reward has been the longest unbroken hold of ministerial posts in independent India.

He went with Indira in the Congress party split in 1969, and his support was significant; and he broke away from Congress after the Emergency in January 1977 to join Janata, and his act was a decisive one in helping that party win. He is India's greatest political survivor....and when Indira wins he may end up with her again.

The most controversial political component of the Janata has been the Jan Sangh, which produced on the one hand the most seemingly suave and modernistic of Janata's politicians, the capable foreign minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, and on the other hand has at its core the darkest of all India's political forces. This is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, "National volunteer Organization"), the "volunteer" organization now grown into over a million drilling, khaki-clad stick-wielding activists dedicated to "making Hinduism strong". In its 54-year history it has been responsible for many crimes, including the murder of Mahatma Gandhi (largely for being "soft" on Muslims) and numerous Hindu-Muslim riots. Its natural social base has been merchant, petty bourgeois and high caste elements mainly in the north India heartland, but it has impressive organizing powers and has been spreading itself recently. Looked at in one way, the Jan Sangh was a "political front" of the R. S. S., which also has its student front, trade union front (now the third largest in the nation), women's front and numerous cultural organizations with vast membership and funds. Many have charged that it was the R. S. S.'s effort to turn the entire Janata Party into a front which was a primary cause of the recent crack-up.

Finally, the Socialists, dominant among the RSS's enemies, their own disorganization contrasting with the mechanistic perfection of RSS

(Continued on Page 8)

# East Timor's toll

(On November 23, the U.N. reaffirmed the right of self-determination of the people of East Timor by an 82 to 31 vote)

**T**he skeleton in the Indonesian cupboard keeps rattling. Though little of what's going on in East Timor gets into the world press, the issue of East Timor's liberation struggle is by no means dead.

Dead, however, are some 60,000 people, according to Dr. Mochtar Kasumaatmadja, the Indonesian foreign minister, who accompanied President Suharto to London, Colombo and Dacca. In 1975, three years after Portugal withdrew from East Timor (as it did from its African colonies) the Indonesian army launched a military action to crush FRETILIN, the East Timor liberation movement. Under Indonesian patronage, a new administration was established but the resistance goes on. Since the invasion, some 60,000 people have died as a result of starvation or war. Unofficial estimates, the Financial Times reported last week, place the figure at 100,000. The total population is about 6 lakhs.

The FT also reported that during Suharto's visit to the UK the Indonesian delegation was "pursued" by demonstrators, including supporters of FRETILIN.

Fretilin spokesmen claim that the vast majority of the people support their resistance fight against the Indonesian invaders.

One of the slogans shouted by the Indonesian demonstrators

("Butcher of Djakarta") will remind readers of Sri Lankan editor Tarzie Vitachchi's vivid reconstruction of the murderous coup and subsequent massacre presided over by the present Djakarta junta in September-October 1965. 'OPERATION STORMKING' was the macabre code-name of this brilliantly managed massacre where thousands of innocent Indonesians were garroted in paddy fields by the light of a petromax lamp, brand-named 'Stormking'. Better researched studies after Vitachchi's book placed the death toll at 400,000 to 500,000, more dead than the Vietnam war.

Thousands of political prisoners, held without trial for more than a decade, have been kept in the most inhuman conditions in deserted islands, according to Amnesty International. These include lawyers, teachers, writers, politicians and trade unionists. The gruesome story was published in the **SUNDAY TIMES**, London. The most prominent of them was Dr. Subandrio, President Soekarno's foreign minister who attended the INDIA-CHINA Colombo conference sponsored by Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1962.

## Desh Bachao . . .

(Continued from Page 7)

"discipline", have been probably the most well-meaning and frustrated men and women in Janata. With a noble attempt to combine Gandhism and socialism, with sometimes militant concern for the needs of minorities, their political strategy of treating the Congress as the main enemy has led them again and again into alliances with forces that should have been, in ideological terms, their worst enemy. Torn apart in the months by their distaste for the RSS and their desire to have a strong party to oppose Indira, they have been perhaps the most discredited group in the current manoeuvrings.

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# Cannibalism — White and Black

by V. P. Vittachi

**T**he WASP-Zionist press is at it again—this time trying to make out that the deposed "Emperor" Bokassa of the Central African Republic is a cannibal. There does not seem to be any reliable evidence for this charge beyond Bruce Loudon, the white reporter's *ipse dixit*. Loudon met the Honorary British Consul in Bangui, name of Copperman, who said he "believed" that human flesh had been found in a deep freezer in "one of Bokassa's residences". The last time they tried this was when Idi Amin was running Uganda. Here too the charge of cannibalism was based on the most tenuous kind of "evidence"—a political enemy had accused Amin of having eaten human flesh. The idea appears to be the well-tried principle of giving a dog a bad name.

Now, although neither Idi Amin nor Bokassa can be said to adorn the image of the African race, and no doubt between them killed off thousands of innocent human beings, they certainly did not achieve the levels of flagitiousness of a Hitler who counted his victims not in thousands but in millions. But Hitler was white. Despite well-documented evidence no one believes that a white can be a cannibal whereas in the case of a black all you have to do is show an unusual degree of wickedness in him for everybody to be ready to believe he is cannibalistic. However hated and reviled Hitler was in his day (except by the true-believers) no one ever thought of accusing them of cannibalism. Among other predatory whites who never faced the charge of cannibalism may be mentioned Adolf Eichmann, Martin Bormann, Lavrenti Beria, Menachem Begin, Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon. As for Idi Amin and Jean Bedel Bokassa their blackness renders the charge of cannibalism immediately credible.

If a black African reporter were to make up a story that L B

Johnson had a habit of keeping fricasseed Vietnamese babies in his deep freezer for his private consumption no one would believe the tale—not even black Africans who are, ironically, ready enough to believe such charges against Amin and Bokassa. The average human (and this includes the black African) has been conditioned not to doubt the portrait of the cannibal propagated by the white comic cartoonist the black-skinned thick-lipped heavy-paunched savage who has a bone through his nose and a marked preference for boiled clergyman. Throughout human history, however, wherever cannibalism has occurred it has mostly been among human beings, of whatever pigmentation, deprived of most other sources of food and not necessarily among "savages" (as the term is popularly understood) who don't know any better. Contrary to popular belief, many of the best authenticated instances of cannibalism have been among whites and **there have been cases of white cannibalism right up to the present decade.**

In "Mysteries of Police and Crime" (1899) Major Arthur Griffiths relates the history of one Jeffries who had been a hangman in Edinburgh and was later transported to Port Jackson in New South Wales as a convict. Jeffries escaped from the penal colony and became a "bushranger" and took to cannibalism. Colin Wilson in "A Casebook of Murder" (1969) tells of other bushranger cannibals. A convict named Alexander Pierce escaped from one of the convict prisons together with five other men. Hiding out in the bush they ran short of food and one of them remarked that he could eat a man. The idea took root and that night one of the men was killed. His heart was fried and eaten. A few days later, two more were killed, and their liver and hearts eaten. When one of the remaining three collapsed with exhaustion, he was killed with a blow

of a hatchet, and partly eaten. The men who did the killing strapped the hatchet to his body in case Pierce attacked him with it in the night. Pierce, however, managed to kill his companion and carried off an arm and a thigh. Recaptured, he escaped again with a man named Cox. Cox's dismembered body was found a few days later. When Pierce was captured, the meat and fish he had taken when he escaped were still untouched—he explained he preferred the taste of human flesh.

A man named Dignum, a bushranger in the Port Philip area around 1837, decided to murder his eight companions when food ran short. One of them a young man named Cornerford woke up as he was about to start and had to be taken into his confidence. The two of them killed and ate the other seven.

In Duke's "Celebrated Criminal Cases of America" there is an account (referred to in Dashiell Hammett's 1932 novel "The Thin Man") of the arrest and conviction of Alfred G Packer in 1874 for murdering five men and eating their flesh. This was Packer's own version: "When I and five others left Ouray's camp, we estimated that we had sufficient provisions for the long and arduous journey before us, but our food rapidly disappeared and we were soon on the verge of starvation. We dug roots from the ground upon which we subsisted for some days but as they were not nutritious and as the extreme cold had driven all animals and birds to shelter the situation became desperate. Strange looks came into the eyes of each of the party and they all became suspicious of each other.

"One day I went out to gather wood for the fire and when I returned I found that Mr Swan, the oldest man in the party, had been struck on the head and

(Continued on Page 10)

## EXHIBITION



*Jayalakshmi*

An exhibition of paintings in oil by Jayalakshmi Satyendra opened at the Lionel Wendt Gallery on November 27.

The exhibition is entitled 'MOMENTS OF AWARENESS.' It will be opened to the public from November 28 to December 5 — 9 am. to 3 pm. daily.

### Cannibalism . . .

*(Continued from Page 9)*

killed and the remainder of the party were in the act of cutting up the body preparatory to eating it. His money amounting to 2000 dollars was divided among the remainder of the party. This food lasted only a few days, and I suggested that Miller be the next victim because of the large amount of flesh he carried. His skull was split open with a hatchet as he was in the act of picking up a piece of wood. Humphrey and Noon were the next victims. Bell and I then entered into a solemn compact that as we were the only ones left we would stand by each other whatever befell, and rather than harm each other we would die of starvation. One day Bell said "I can't stand it any longer" and he rushed at me with his gun. I parried the blow and killed him with a hatchet. I then cut his flesh into strips which I carried with me as I pursued my journey. When I espied the Agency from the top of the hill I threw away the strips I had left, and I confess I

did so reluctantly as I had grown fond of human flesh, especially that portion around the breast".

The most recent authenticated case occurred only a few years ago. On October 13, 1972, a chartered airplane carrying 15 members of an Uruguayan rugby team, 25 of their friends and relatives and 5 crew crashed in the Andes on a vast sea of deep snow. The majority of those on board survived the crash. Eight days later official rescue efforts were abandoned by the outside world as hopeless. The survivors organised a band of "expeditionaries" to make an attempt to obtain help and while the rest of them waited for help the corpses of their friends became their principal source of food. Some were squeamish to begin with but inevitably most of them grew hardened and progressed to eating almost every part of the human body. It is on record that none of these well-educated upper middle-class whites had to undergo psychiatric treatment to overcome the trauma of having eaten human flesh.

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# The national bourgeoisie : Some problems of method

by A Special Correspondent

The presence of bourgeois fractions in the national-popular bloc that took shape in the last phases of the Nicaraguan revolution, poses a problem to the Marxist analyst and practitioner. It is of course possible to evade the issue by ignoring the fact of this bourgeois presence. After all, there are Marxists in this country and elsewhere who claim that the Cuban revolution was socialist from the outset—only that the Cuban leadership did not recognise it! Needless to add this interpretation is contrary to the views of precisely those people who are best equipped to understand the Cuban revolutionary process, namely the Cuban revolutionary leaders themselves. Che Guevara for instance tells us that the Cuban revolution is: "an agrarian, anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist revolution, transformed by its internal evolution and by external aggressions into a socialist revolution, and so it proclaims itself before the Americans—it is a socialist revolution. "Thus, did Che explain the character of the Cuban revolution in his famous speech 'On growth and Imperialism' at the "Alliance for Progress" meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay, August 8th 1961. Again in an article to Cuban socialista, No. 13, September 1962, on 'The Cadre, Backbone of the Revolution,' Guevara speaks of the "transition from a liberating national revolution to a socialist one" as a chief characteristic of the Cuban revolution.

For those immaculate internationalists of the local Left, who, despite their ostensible non-Trotskyism, adhere to a Mandelite misinterpretation of the Cuban

revolutionary process, the social configuration of the Nicaraguan revolutionary bloc, proves no problem at all. These sectarian Marxists who incidentally possess a better knowledge of the character of the Chinese revolution than Mao and the Chinese CP (China was a 'workers state' in 1941!) can simply close their eyes to the bourgeois presence in the Nicaraguan revolution and pretend it does not exist.

However, A theoretical problem exists and it must be confronted.

The serious and the creative Marxist-Leninist must demarcate his position not only from that of the schematic sectarian, but also, and equally clearly, from that of the Right opportunist. Right-wing revisionism globally and locally, will seek to utilize the presence of bourgeois factions in a Nicaraguan popular bloc, to reinforce and reiterate its ridiculous theories of "pushing the progressive national bourgeoisie along the non-capitalist path of development, via the State of National Democracy, towards, socialism". We shall see however that the Nicaraguan experience affords no solace to the Khrushchevite and pseudo-Maoist attitudes of 'tailism' vis-a-vis the national bourgeoisie, just as it provides no comfort to variously disguised adherents of the Permanent Revolution.

Our point of departure must be the recognition of the specificity of the Nicaraguan revolution. Althusser draws our attention to Lenin's and Mao's insistence of the universality of the law that 'absolutely everything develops unevenly' Althus-

ser's best pupil Regis Debray tells us that uneven development renders the conception of 'Latin American revolution' invalid in the strictest, most rigorous sense of the word, since the clock of History keeps different time in Montevideo, La Paz, and Sao Paulo. (One might go so far as to say something that Debray has not and most probably never will, namely that such an all-embracing continental perspective was one of Che's few errors.)

A firm grasp of the significance of uneven development is necessarily linked to the recognition of the relative autonomy of the nation-state and of the specificity of a socio-economic formation 'enclosed' within a given national state structure. From this understanding we proceed to recognise that the role and function of the 'national' bourgeoisie is altered by spatial and temporal dimensions. The role and function of the 'national' bourgeoisie varies from one national entity to another, contingent upon the position it occupies within the given 'national' social structure. To fail to understand this means (in Nicholas Krasso's phrase) to be guilty of a kind of sociological monism, which assumes a planetary social structure soaring overhead devoid of any articulation in a concrete national space. (This sociological monism and concomitant underestimation of the nation-state's relative autonomy was Trotsky's central error, says Krasso in his celebrated debate with Ernest Mandel in the pages of the New Left Review. Kostas Mavraklis links this in turn to Trotsky's inability to grasp the law of uneven development.)

This error of **sociological monism** has characterized the debate on 'the national bourgeoisie and the stage of the revolution' which has raged so fiercely in the Sri Lankan Left during the 1970's. The pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet modern revisionists held that the 'national' bourgeoisie played a progressive, patriotic role in all colonial, semi-colonial, and dependent countries throughout the epoch of Imperialism and this was necessarily true of the Sri Lankan case. The Trotskyists of course rejected 'stages theory' and the idea of a bloc with the national bourgeoisie, while Haunting the tattered banner of permanent revolution. In the late 1960's the JVP correctly identified the necessity of anti-capitalist struggle and socialist transformation in contemporary Sri Lanka, while recognising equally correctly the historical validity and applicability of the concept of revolution by stages (eg. in the case of China and Vietnam). This understanding though essentially correct was nebulous and empirical at the time. Instead of being deepened by analysis and rigorous conceptualization, it was tragically dissipated in the early 1970's to be replaced under unacknowledged Mandeliste influence by a veiled version of permanent revolution. Breakaway groupings from the CPSL and CP (ML) gathered up the broken conceptual thread 'circa 1973, but their effective existence proved ephemeral in a few short years. At present, sections of the CPSL seem to be arriving at a generally correct position on the 'national' bourgeoisie, but a tactical policy shift could well render this short lived, just as the correct line of the 1948 3rd congress in Atureliya was negated by the 1950 4th congress in Matara.

Facile and sweeping generalizations, mechanistic extrapolation from one historically concrete setting to another must be avoided in grappling with the question of the 'national bourgeoisie'. There are no universally valid formulae, abstract scheme or eternal recipes in Marxism. An evaluation of the role and function of this class must rest upon the concrete analysis of a specific socio-economic formation, the modes of production that co-

exist within it, the articulation of these modes, the degree and form of the internalization of the given socio-economic formation within the capitalist world system. This type of analysis involves among others the questions: What is the dominant mode and relations of production? What are the subordinate relations of production? How are they combined or more correctly, articulated? How and where is the given national economy situated within the world capitalist system and its regional sub-system? If the external linkages of the given economy are those of domination/dependence what are the modalities and mechanisms of this dependence? It is only this type of concrete analysis that enables us to formulate theses (necessarily provisional) about the role, function and behaviour of the 'national' bourgeoisie in any country. Indeed, it is only such an approach that will enable us to pose and answer the basic question of whether there is such an entity as the 'national' bourgeoisie in any given country!

Such a methodological approach has informed Cuban foreign policy and equipped it with a subtly differentiated perspective on Latin America in the present decade. Symptomatic of this was Fidel Castro's speech on January 1st this year in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Cuban revolution. In the closing passages of this speech Fidel Castro grouped the Latin American states broadly into three categories: The semi-feudal oligarchies (e.g. Nicaragua, Paraguay), the neo-colonial dependent capitalisms with pseudo-democratic 'liberal' regimes and thirdly those with similar economic structures but neo-fascist political structures (Chile, Argentina for instance). (Those self-proclaimed Sri Lankan heirs of the Cuban revolution who refuse to recognise the fascist nature of Pinochet's regime should take note of Fidel's views!)

Fidel Castro's categorization takes cognizance of uneven development which renders Nicaragua, with its ossified traditional socio-economic structures, different from the 'modernized' dependent

capitalism of Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay or Chile. His classification further differentiates this group of 'modern' capitalisms according to the type of state structure, i.e., the political form of bourgeois dominance: Some are 'liberal-reformist' pseudo-democracies while others are neo-fascist. The term neo-fascism implies a discernment of the specificity of dependent fascism as distinct from 'classic' metropolitan fascism.

The status and role of the 'national' bourgeoisie is different in each of these three broad groupings of countries. The political behaviour of this or that fraction of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie must therefore be seen against the backdrop of that country's 'semi-feudal oligarchy' (Fidel) its archaic ossified socio-economic structures and its 'quasi-monarchical' (Tricontinental) Editorial note Aug/Sept 1978) patterns of political power. This is what I meant when I said at the outset that we must recognise the **specificity** of the Nicaraguan experience. Mechanistic extrapolations to the Sri Lankan (or any other) context would be misleading in the extreme.

On the question of the national bourgeoisie, as on any other question of Marxist theory, it is necessary to counterpose a dialectical conception to a mechanistic one; a dynamic view to a static one. Althusser reminds us that the materialist dialectic is always concrete and we have stressed the need to locate the national bourgeoisie within a given socio-economic formation. History teaches us that the behaviour of the national bourgeoisie is determined not only by the dimension of space (its location within a given national entity) but also that of time. The varying positions taken up by the Chinese national bourgeoisie (and indeed the stratification within this class) during the protracted revolutionary process in that country best attests to this. Two important speeches made by Stalin in 1925 (important, but strangely neglected by Lankan Maoists) provide a fine model of how the national

bourgeoisie should be analysed, taking account of its changing (evolutionary) character and its internal stratification—all linked to the extremely uneven development of capitalism under imperialism. The speeches I refer to are Stalin's address to the XIVth Conference of the RCP (B) on the 'Immediate tasks of the Communist elements in the Colonial and Dependent countries' (May 9th 1925) and also his May 25th speech on 'The Tasks of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Relation to the Colonial and Dependent countries of the East.'

Our understanding of the Nicaraguan revolutionary process must rest on the dual recognition of the specificity of the role of the 'national' bourgeoisie (which we have dealt with) and of the **subalternity** of this role. Some ultra-Trotskyist sects (e.g. the International Spartacist League tendency) tend to over-emphasize the role of bourgeois fraction so as to denigrate the depth and significance of the Nicaraguan revolution. Modern revisionists, marginal though they themselves are to the Nicaraguan revolutionary process, also tend to overstress the part played by bourgeois segments, with a view to validating their outdated and indeed suicidal theories. A third deviation which we discussed in the opening paragraphs of this article, ignores or glosses over the presence of bourgeois sections in the popular bloc. But no less an authority than the Commander-in-Chief of the Sandinista People's Army and member of the Joint National Leadership of the FSLN, 32 year old **Humberto Orgeta Saavedra**, refers, in his important '**Granma**' interview, to "the anti-Somoza bourgeois sectors".

Incidentally, the reader would be interested to know that this interview conducted by Jorge Timossi, special correspondent for Prensa Latina, and published in the '**Granma**' issue of September

2nd 1979 contains an explanation of Sandinista military strategy which fully and strikingly confirms the analysis reached deductively by the author of this series and set out in the article published in the Lanka Guardian of September 1st — Editor.

The serious Marxist must recognise the reality of the existence of anti-Somoza bourgeois sectors while simultaneously recognizing the subaltern role played by these sectors. To comprehend this, which is linked to a grasp of the point made in a preceding paragraph, of the internal differentiation and changing character of the bourgeoisie, we must incorporate into our analysis the concept of the '**power bloc**'. Deriving from Gramsci, this concept owes its currency and refined form to Althusser's student Nicos Poulantzas. The concept of the '**power-bloc**' is counterposed to the vulgar Marxist notion of the dominant **economic** classes being automatically and directly, the **political** ruling class. Buttressing his argument with a wealth of examples from history and making extensive recourse to Marx and Engels' subtle analysis of capitalist development in Britain, France and Germany, Poulantzas demonstrates convincingly that the economically dominant class does not exercise its political hegemony directly and by itself, but rather does so through a complex series of mediations involving fractions of other classes, including older (pre-capitalist) classes as well as fractions of the exploited classes and the intermediate strata. These classes and/or class fractions co-exist in a complex, unevenly structured power-bloc and the relationships between these social groups are characterized by hegemony/subalternity. The determinate balance that exists at a given moment within the power-bloc is subject to change and new configurations take place. (The expulsion of the LSSP in 1975 signalled such a change in the power bloc in Sri Lanka, for instance). A revolution causes a crystallization of a radically new power-bloc with its own relations of hegemony/subalternity.

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# A PESTICIDE PLOT?

by Ranil Senanayake

ECOLOGY

Pesticides have long been treated as a panacea for all man's problems with other organisms. Often the problems are artificial ones, created by greed and the worship of profit maximization. In agriculture we have some good examples. In the past a degree of crop loss was always tolerated. The acceptance of this loss was manifest in tradition, from European to Asian. The reasons, in tradition were multifarious, varying from the appeasement of Gods to the sharing with beasts; But the underlying principle has a strong Ecological base. Man, much less his crops, does not exist in an Ecological vacuum. We interact constantly with the world around us, and that world is composed of a multitude of other organisms.

When we look at a natural system be it forest, stream or sea, it is very difficult to find huge quantities of only one species of organism so that the presence of that organism stresses the system. What would be normally seen is a high degree of diversity i.e. many different kinds of organisms. When one organism increases in quantity it essentially acquires a sharp profile that is subject to "levelling forces" i.e. Predators, Parasites etc. When a high diversity of organisms are present the "levelling forces" are readily at hand. Thus the lower the diversity the more susceptible is the system to attack.

Agricultural fields are systems of low diversity; However, over the history of the evolution of Agro-ecosystems, the practices that were most conducive to a stable system were retained, till man had evolved highly productive, stable Agro-ecosystems. The biological balance was wrought by such subtle methods as timing, crop diversification, hedge maintenance and physical control. But as man's agricultural fields were also a part of nature there was some crop loss to pests. If this was at a culturally and economically acceptable level it was part

of the norm. Only when the loss was above this level was there a perceived danger.

It will be understood from the discussions above, that the lower the diversity in any system the more prone it becomes to disaster. This is the evil wrought by pesticides. They reduce the diversity of any system that they are used in, this in turn makes the system more prone to disaster necessitating the use of more pesticides; A truly vicious cycle. This does not mean that pesticides have no beneficial uses. Pesticides are very valuable, potent weapons against the pests of man's crops. However as is the case with all potent weapons, they should be used sparingly and only when the volume of losses is above an 'Environmentally Acceptable Loss'. To promote pesticides for use in every conceivable situation is to promote the inevitable dependency cycle.

When we ask the question, who uses pesticides? followed by the question who promotes pesticides? It is relatively simple to see who gains and who loses by the promotion of these poisons. In Sri Lanka the farmers are asked to indulge in prophylactic spraying i.e. spraying in advance of any pest appearance. It will be interesting to see the rationale that supports such a stance and to know who promotes it.

It may be that by now we have been truly locked into a vicious pesticide dependency cycle. If this is so who was responsible for starting it? For they have to

be held responsible for a sinister malaise that effects almost everyone. The malaise of Pesticide Accumulation.

Pesticide Accumulation refers to the tendency of some pesticides to concentrate along the food chain. This tendency is also referred to as "Biological Magnification" when other materials such as radioactive isotopes and heavy metals are considered. The Ecologist E.P. Odum states 'Biological magnification has come as a great surprise to physical scientists and technologists who were enthusiastic about the idea that "the solution to pollution is dilution". In other words, the belief that poisons would be quickly lost in the vast confines of nature.'

The table below indicates measurements made on the concentrations of certain pesticides and radioactive materials along the food chain. However the effects are subtle and often sub-lethal, thus people are not immediately aware of the effects. A fact not overlooked by the promoters of pesticides. I have personally witnessed a poor individual who attended a conference on pesticides a few years ago. As a demonstration of the 'Safety' of pesticides, he stood up in the audience and ate a handful of DDT. Of course he did not fall down dead, but now as he gets older I wonder how healthy he is? He was doubtless an employee of a pesticide salesman or promoter. The mere fact that they can use humans as 'demonstrative subjects' in this manner speaks volumes for their concern about human safety.

DDT		Radioactive Phosphorous( <sup>32</sup> P)		Radioactive Strontium ( <sup>90</sup> Sr)	
Water	1	Water	1	Water	1
Plankton	800	Insects	3	Sediments	200
Minnows	11600	Swallows	75000	Water Plants	300
Big Fish	34600	Duck Eggs	200000	Minnows	1000
Fish eating birds	92000			Large Fish	3000
				Mammals	3900

Concentration factors  
(Ratio amount in organisms to amount in environment)

# N M — A writer's view

by Patrick Jayasuriya

This is not an attempt at eulogy, an exercise in using the resources of prose to show how good a man was, when praise or blame are of no personal consequence to him. There is no reason to talk of the dead as though they had liked sycophants. N.M. played a substantial role in the public life of this country and has to be seriously assessed in terms of the impact of his personality and actions on society. It is also not written from the point of view of a partisan socialist nor with any personal animus against the subject. I myself have not had any personal contact with Dr. Perera. It is written from the viewpoint of a journalist—an observer of men and events in society. And Mao Tse-Tung's dictum mentioned below is as good a guideline for our profession as any other—observe the subject in action and deduce conclusions from what you observe.

I have read of how Mao Tse-Tung is once reported to have said that a sure test of a true revolutionary is to put him among workers and observe his reactions. A bourgeois mind will have a certain aloofness. This was a characteristic of N.M. from which we cannot but see his total career. **Insincerity is not imputed.** It was rather a personal and political incapacity. In a recent article in the Press, a few days after the leader's death, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva stated that N.M. had succeeded in "declassing" himself. The point is that he could not and did not do so, and that this incapacity had serious repercussions on his Party and the direction of Socialism in Sri Lanka.

N.M. was comfortable in the bourgeois world. He was at home in the world of cricket—a game associated in England (as opposed



to the proletarian sport of football) with "class" and "the club." He was comfortable in this milieu and ended up as the President of the Sri Lanka Cricket Control Board. He was comfortable in bourgeois social world—cocktail parties and the social round. The bourgeois class also felt comfortable with N.M. They accepted him as being unimpeachable—one of them, though with a slight intellectual quirk for "socialism." He was actually the epitome of how a middle class gentleman should behave. Once when some 'varsity' students got into trouble for making a noise during a visit of the then political panjandrum to their home territory, a very bourgeois Professor who liked to play safe but occasionally sported a pinkish hued shirt or tie, had condemned the young men's behaviour by saying "N.M. does not hoot" N.M. was thus the touchstone of correct behaviour and all the connotations of that, which included the feeling "have fun boys, but don't you upset my apple cart." N.M. was very much this. It is suggestive that this cultivated, urbane and witty (Augustan virtues) academic gentleman left the shores of this island in 1956 when the "yakkos" or "yahoos" seemed to have finally wised up to the appearance of things. And symptomatic too that this academic's acolyte, a Trotskyite "theoretician" and close

friend of N.M., also refused to intervene in this fracas because, he said, he did not wish to disturb his good personal relationship with the Vice-Chancellor of that time with whom he shared the condition of alopecia. The punishment meted out to the students was excessive and unjust and determined obviously by the personal political ambitions of the Vice-Chancellor who it was rumoured, wanted to be the Governor-General. So we see everything jiving with petty personal (bourgeois) politicking.

"Personality" can also indicate how far one has declassed oneself. It goes without saying that a worker can be very polite, refined and considerate in his speech and behaviour. But bourgeois conduct is quite another thing and can be affected when one is being most rude and inconsiderate. When Lenin spoke to his colleagues he was known to be very considerate, treating them as equals in a common endeavour, who could be convinced, when necessary, in an intelligent manner. Marx had said that even the most complicated theory of political economies could be explained to workers. But N.M. had the problem of being unable to bring himself into such a relationship with colleague or with workers. With the exception, of course, of Dr. Colvin R. de Silva who was as brilliant as himself. N.M. always gave the impression of arrogance and condescension and "class." Lenin had a sense of his intellectual rightness and could be devastating in demolishing ideological opponents. But it was intellectual arrogance because of his single-minded ideological purposiveness. N.M. failed to show such seriousness in his total personality. We had the piebald Fabian. His numerous conflicts

with colleagues, trade unions and associates gave the impression of a personal centre of gravitation to many of his political decisions: Conflicts with Philip Gunawardena, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva (at one time), Bala Tampoe and Vasudeva Nanayakkara all involved the personality of N.M. to a greater extent than would an impersonal ideological tussle. They seemed to spring from his inability to achieve a socialist impersonality and divest himself of the persona of the London School of Economics double doctorate holder.

N.M. was of the upper-middle class. He was able to afford an extended education in England and to even give personal loans to less affluent Ceylonese students while there. But he was not of the big landowning class. He continued to have the tensions and "poise" of this class position in politics and personal life. That is why he was considered safe by the ruling class. He was, by his unresolved personal ambivalences impelled to play a balancing role which assured the maintenance of the status quo. As Galbraith said of economists of his type, they help the extant system by pointing out its weaknesses only to the extent that the system may strengthen itself by making the non-radical adjustment here and there.

N.M.'s trade unionism had this effect. It corrected certain social and economic irritants which may have made the working giant of burden bound up and upset the system entirely. It provided a safety valve. And when he was Finance Minister, trade union rights were considered irrelevant and moth-balled in the Statute books to be eruditely quoted at some other time!! Mass dismissals displayed the personal nature of N.M.'s political make-up: "when I am Finance Minister, no strikes." In high office his conduct was more like that of a Colonial Secretary than a Socialist. **Efficiency, à la Colonial Civil Service, in maintaining the status quo was more important than consistency in commitment.**

Another aspect of N.M.'s double-headed political configuration was his abnormal avidity in mastering British Parliamentary procedure. It was his abnormally pronounced obsession for a Marxian socialist. The fine points were never missed and he savoured on his palate the refined taste of vintage Parliamentary wine. He was the absolute connoisseur of this deliquescence distilled for long ages under England's Big Ben. Incidentally, it also gave him a personal opportunity to display his LSE erudition to the view of Parliamentary colleagues who had not had the chance to dip into Appadorai's summaries. Even on the last lap in Parliament he was embroiled in an unseemly tussle with a trade union personality of the doctor's trade union over Parliamentary prerogative. It had almost become an obsessive-compulsive habit which made him lose a certain sense of perspective. The Sabbath was made for the people not people made for the Sabbath!! That acute observer of politics, Sir Ivor Jennings, said after meeting N.M. and others that they were not Marxists but a species of Fabian Socialists.

Another piece of Dr. Perera's tragic lack of the resolution of his personal and political dilemmas was his manner of speech at political rallies. It was again the London School of Economics intellectual talking down condescendingly to the less fortunate masses. There was an hauteur of manner, the "smiling public man" who had taken time off to meet the people. The flavour of his political speeches was eminently that of the kind 'mahatmaya' talking to the lower orders without hiding a "classy" accent. This was in contrast to Dr. Colvin R. de Silva's style of oratory where it can truly be said that he had declassified himself and uses a naturalized proletarian speech coupled with what may be a Sinhala version of the Roll involving a locomotive propulsion of limbs which amuses (and endears him to) the people, whose own natural standards of deportment and speech are far from the "stiff upper lip." N.M. was sadly unable to achieve this rapport

and that, while not particularly important in this aspect, was symptomatic of a deeper and more significant incapacity.

One need not omit mention of N.M.'s achievements—the establishment of a well-disciplined Party, the organization of a widespread trade union movement, the personal kindness, albeit of the paternal kind, during the malaria epidemic, the courage in standing up to the British colonial government (though it was the courage of a brown sahib in which the big landlords also joined), and his personal charm. But these are corruscations in terms of the large political movements engendered by men of the stature of Mao-Tse-tung. Mao was able to brush aside the trivial and concentrate on the major problem. N.M. was too often distracted by the trivial and even the frivolous in his personal and political relation. This was a defect of intelligence and character. In his political expositions he was more often what Galbraith was in economic theory—a bricklayer, who sometimes dropped bricks, rather than an architect.

It may not be fashionable to follow this sort of psycho-political personality. But it may be that on the relatively short-term view, the personal qualities of political leaders do give a noticeable tendency to movement of politics. It may also give a clue to those who may have tailored themselves in the image of N.M. as to where adjustments may be necessary. Some Marxists of course may not agree with me and assert that the individual counts for little in the movement of impersonal forces of history. But what about Lenin's warning in his last testament about Stalin's **personal** qualities? Anyway, this approach may be more productive in understanding current issues than would be to lay down ideological terms like a railway line to no conclusive end.

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*The author is a Peradeniya graduate of English and a poet*

# Mahinda — Poetry and Politics

by Yohan Devananda

The Ven S. Mahinda Thera is the type of the liberation fighter that sustained the struggle in the past and can inspire it in the future. He came from Tibet and settled down in Sri Lanka and identified himself with the freedom struggle here. We quote below from his "Nidahase Dehana" (Freedom Meditations). It would be difficult to find any book of verses anywhere with such sustained radical content from start to finish. Almost every verse sparkles with fire and yet rings out with crystal-clear simplicity and clarity. Limitations of space permit reference only to five verses. They await a competent translator. What follows is only a rough, provisional (though accurate) translation :

1. පෙර කරුමයේ හැටියට සිහි  
සිටපල්ලා  
සන දරුමයේ සැබවක් නැත  
දැනගල්ලා  
ලොව උරුමයේ අපටත් හිමි දැය  
ඉල්ලා  
බැටි කරුමයේ කිම? සටනට  
සැරසෙල්ලා

Understand that there is no truth  
in that dharma which proclaims:  
"According to your past Karma  
so you just must be"!  
Let us demand that  
in the earth's inheritance, which  
belongs to us too.  
What Karma can prevent us?  
Let us get ready for the struggle!

2. උස් නැත් කපා ඇද මිටි කැන්  
පිරවීම  
උස් මිටි දෙකම වදකොට සම  
කරවීම

උස් මතු දමකි ! ගනියකි ! සන  
පැවසීම  
උස් හඩ නගා පතුරව ! සැම නැන  
දීම

Casting down the high mountains  
and filling up the valleys  
abolition of both high and low  
and making all equal.  
That is the highest doctrine,  
that is true humanity !  
Raise high your voices  
and spread it abroad everywhere !

3. කාමුක කුහන ලොකු අයත් නපුරු  
කමින්  
බාගෙට මැටි ඉන්කා දුගියාගෙ  
නමින්  
මාරක විසත් හැම එකටම මුහුණ  
දෙමින්  
පෙරක හතක ගනාට දහසක නගිමි  
පෙමින්

In the name of the oppressed  
who are half-dead  
from the oppression  
of lustful and crooked leaders,  
facing all deadly disasters,  
I am ready to mount  
not merely seven  
but a thousand scaffolds, with love.

4. සහන ලැබෙන තුරු ලංකා  
දිවයට  
ගහන ගැහිලි හමුවෙහි සිහි වෙසින්  
සිට  
ගහන රුහුන් කහමින් යම  
ඉදිවියට  
වහණ කටත් බණ දහමින් එයයි  
මට

Confronting the attacks of the attackers  
with the spirit of a lion,  
destroying the destroyers

and going forward,  
until liberation comes  
to this island of Lanka,  
that to me is the sum  
of priesthood and of all  
religion and preaching.

5. ලොක්කන් යයි කියන මේ කාමුක  
හැත්ත  
දුක් මිස අපට සැප නොපොදන බව  
දැක්ක  
නැත්තට නැති වුනත් නොබලා ඒ  
පැත්ත  
එක්වලු අපි අපිම කරනට කළ  
යුත්ත

These so-called leaders,  
this carnal caucus,  
they bring us no joy  
but only sorrow.  
Though we may lose our all  
let us go forward regardless,  
let us unite one with another  
to do, ourselves, what must  
be done !

Something must also be said of the conservative side of religion, if the whole subject under discussion is to be viewed in proper perspective.

## The Priest

Reference has been made to the essentially radical role of the prophet and the monk. They are both, at their best, vocations that run counter to the Establishment and the Status Quo. They are essentially critical, pioneer roles that chart the future.

The role of the priest, however, is essentially conservative. The priest has a stabilising role to perform in society. He has to help sustain community life and human relationships. He works through a variety of social and cultural forms such as symbols and

sacraments, rites and ceremonies, hymns and chants, codes and laws. Through these the fundamental truths of religious and social life have to be revealed, discussed, taught, and made real to ordinary people. The priest thus performs an essential role that is complementary to that of the prophet. Further, both roles can be combined in one person. In practice, there is, and needs to be, a mixture of roles. Jesus Christ is often spoken of as both priest and prophet, servant and lord. The true man of God or man of religion combines the various roles as occasion and circumstance and the needs of the people demand.

#### Law

It would also be relevant here to mention the relative roles of laws and codes on the one hand, and spirit and love on the other. As history progresses and human life and institutions develop there

is a tendency for people to outgrow their dependence on and subjection to, laws and codes, and rites and ceremonies. Thus the Ten Commandments belong to the Old Testament and the New Testament points to something higher—the Gospel of Love: "Love fulfills the law," "The truth will make you free", "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty". It is the same in the Buddhist perspective too. The Five Precepts are essentially pre-Buddhist. The essence of Buddhism is in the Four Noble Truths and in the Eight-fold Noble path (which, basically, is not law or even precept). Where there is true understanding or awakening to the truth there follows "the good life that is completely fulfilled, wholly pure."

However, progress in history is not an automatic and inevitable process moving forward uniformly

all the time. There are setbacks, and periods of reaction and stagnation. There, is, still, a long way to go!

#### Reaction

When a society, for various reasons, reaches a stage of decline and decay, conservative forces in such a society become forces of reaction, bolstering and upholding the establishment and the status quo and impeding necessary reform and revolution. Also, the forces of oppression and exploitation domesticate religious personnel and institutions and manipulate them for their own purposes. This was the context in which Karl Marx pronounced his famous: "Religion is the opium of the masses." Marx was himself in the true Prophetic tradition. His theory of dialectical materialism has opened new horizons into the future, and a new path of liberation for the people.

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# Stalinism and Eelam

by Chintaka

DEBATE

"**T**hou lookest beauteous in thy wrath' goes the old line. Dr. David for his part has become biographical in his wrath. He describes me as "a non-party (or one-man party) journalist who has no need for guiding programmatic encumbrances, since (he) never intends to get down to political action and struggle". (L.G. Nov 1st) This is rather curious in the light of his original description (L.G. Aug 15th) of Chintaka who's "far too good a practitioner of the art of current political involvement." Contradictory characterizations one might think. Ah, but then as a Trotskyist he is consistent only in his inconsistency. Though a biographical pensketch of Dr. David is quite a temptation to any journalist I shall disappoint the reader and move on to less trivial issues.

(1) Considerations of space prevent me from undertaking the major task of filling the gaps in Dr. David's formal education on the subject of contemporary Russian history. My reply to Reggie Siriwardene (L.G. Nov' 1st page 2) traces the roots and causes of the subjectivism of Lenin's indictment of Stalin. As for the sources of the incorrect and incomplete information that Lenin received, they were the Georgian communist leaders Budu Mdivani and Philip Makharadze. Luxhman Jothikumar in his informed reply to Dr. David (L.G. Oct 15th) underscores the narrow nationalist deviation of these Georgian leaders. We may well say that it was a clear case of premature Titoism.

As for Dr. David's slightly 'doctored' chronology of Lenin's 'conflict' with Stalin on the national question, it is interesting to note that in April 1922, when Lenin thought of going to the Caucasus for reasons of health, he asked that arrangements be made to have coded communications with the Bolshevik Central Committee

and Stalin. Obviously this was because he considered the latter, his most loyal lieutenant. As for the autonomization plan Lenin's criticisms were in the main, **stylistic**, and Stalin himself reworded the Central Committee Commission's resolution in accord with Lenin's views. This was in September. In October 1922 the Georgian Communist leaders were reprimanded by Lenin who told them to follow Stalin's directives. At this point the CC of the Georgian CP collectively resigned and sent Lenin a telegram of apology.

"But then", says Harvard University's Professor Adam B. Ulam, veteran Sovietologist "the second phase of his illness intervened, and, as on some other things, Lenin's attitude towards the complaints of the Georgians underwent a change." My reply to Mr. Siriwardene outlines the ensuing events and I do not consider lengthy repetition necessary. The point is that there were no differences of principle between Lenin and Stalin on the national question. The Georgian affair was a relatively minor incident and Lenin's criticisms were of Stalin's strict **organizational policy** towards the Georgian 'Communists'. Subsequent facts (outlined in Jothikumar's Oct 15th reply to Dr. David) showed that this policy of Stalin's towards the nationalist deviation in Georgia were correct. Lenin did not and could not know of these facts because after his second stroke, he had no possibility of following these events. Meanwhile, the friction with Stalin over the latter's strict medical regimen had also intervened.

As for the 12th Bolshevik Congress, Dr. David asserts that Lenin's "sharp rebukes of Stalin on the Georgian issue were unknown to the congress. They were kept a guarded secret by a small section of the leadership."

This, I am constrained to say, is nonsense. Robert C. Tucker, Professor of Politics at Princeton and Director of its Russian Studies Programme (no Stalinist falsifier, surely?) tells us that the Bolshevik Politburo decided that instead of being published as a congress document, Lenin's notes on the Georgian incidents should be read to the various delegations in closed session, and this was done. Thus the material was communicated to the 12th Congress via the delegations. Furthermore, Dr. David overlooks another 'trifle', namely that the issue was raised by the Georgian dissidents Mdivani and Makharadze, Chief Commissar in the Ukraine Rakovsky and Ukrainian Bolshevik leader Nikolai Skrypnik. Nikolai Bukharin also voiced criticism of Stalin. However, the 12th congress as a whole endorsed Stalin's proposals and did not condemn Stalin on the Georgian issue. So much then for Dr. David's account of the 12th congress proceedings. The "small section of the leadership" that Dr. David indicts wrongly, incidentally happens to be the Bolshevik Politburo and Central Committee! The point I made in the L.G. Oct 1st reply, thus stands—the leading organs of the Bolshevik party (its PB, CC and Congress), which were in a better position to judge the issue at hand than was the bedridden Lenin, endorsed Stalin's position. So, the stone launched by the sling of David passes harmlessly overhead.....

If Dr. David cares to read Stalin's Works Vol 5, he will see that the latter's speech to the 12th congress contains a strong condemnation of Great Russian chauvinism. The various local chauvinisms were largely reactive in origin he said. Certain quarters wanted "to accomplish by peaceful means what Denikin failed to accomplish i.e. to create the so-called One and Invincible," warned Stalin, who went on to state in no uncertain

terms: "owing to NEP, great-power chauvinism is growing in our country by leaps and bounds, striving to obliterate all that is not Russian, to gather all the threads of government into the hands of the Russian element, and to stifle everything that is not Russian." Thus, Stalin at the 12th congress,

(2) Dr. David has taken umbrage at my "references to mandatory reading". If however, he had pursued this task with the requisite diligence, he would have seen the subtle differentiation in Lenin's attitude (post-1917) to the secession of Poland, Finland and the Baltic countries on the one hand, and the Ukraine, Transcaucasia and Central Asia on the other. Finland, as Jothikumar relevantly notes, (L.G. Oct 15th) had special privileges of internal autonomy even under the Tzarist Empire. Having strong bourgeois leaderships, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia chose to secede. In the interests of the class struggle and socio-historical development, Lenin sent the Bolshevik armies in 1918 to Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia with a view to setting up Communist governments. The Bolshevik armies were thrown out and in 1920, Soviet Russia signed a peace treaty with these states. (In the face of the Nazi threat in 1939-1940, however, the USSR's need to extend its defence perimeter enabling it to have 'defence-in-depth', necessitated the invasion of Finland and the Sovietization of the Baltic states). As for the Ukraine, Lenin's collected works Vol 27 (an addition to Dr. David's reading list) provide us with his views that the strength of bourgeois nationalism there was a short run testimonial to Bolshevik weakness. In 1919 the Bolshevik army extended deserving aid to the Ukrainian masses which resulted in the formation of a Ukrainian Soviet unit, which in turn became closely associated with the RSFSR. It was a similar set of events in Byelorussia.

This is why I say that there was never any serious asymmetry between Lenin's and Stalin's positions on the National Question either in the pre-or post-revolutionary situations. If the facts do

not fit Dr. David's preferred view of Lenin as hero and Stalin as evil knave, the inconvenience is regretted. History, even that of a revolutionary movements does not lend itself to interpretation in such Manichean terms.

Stalin's anti-semitism is fiction. Kumar David dates Stalin's deviation on the National Question circa 1925. The Bolshevik campaign against anti-Semitism reached its height however, in the late 1920's and early 1930's. When WW II broke out, Stalin ordered the transportation of the Jews to safety beyond the Urals, so that the marauding Nazi armies may not reach them. After the war, Stalin supported the Jews demand for self-determination both militarily (guns via Czechoslovakia) and diplomatically (in the U. N.) so much so that Stalin was dubbed "the God Father of Israel." Strange kind of antisemitic persecution ...!

The so-called Jewish Doctor's plot of the late 1940's was part and parcel of a purge that Klushev tells us Stalin was planning in his last years. In his speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU Khrushchev said that had the purge taken place many of them would not have been there, himself included. Stalin's last writings, notably 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR' reveal that the views of his opponents at the time were the same that came to the fore after his demise and Khrushchev's ascendancy. The history of world communist movement would have been different had the purge come off.

The Volga German autonomous republic by the way was abolished as punishment for the disloyalty of its inhabitants who actively assisted the Nazi German invaders.

Dr. David recognizes "the economic and cultural advances that most nationalities and especially the more backward ones achieved in the post revolutionary period ...." In some magical-mystical manner, however all this has been achieved despite Stalin, behind

the back as it were of the Stalinist party which, let us remember was a **totalitarian party in the Gramscist sense of the word**. That is to say, a party which was the leading and guiding force in each and every sphere of Soviet socio-political life.

(2)+(3) Let us wade out of the murky waters of Soviet history to the much more important terrain of the national (Tamil) question of contemporary Sri Lanka. Dr. David sees a contradiction of my support of Stalin's practice in post-revolutionary Russia and my support of Tamil self-determination. (I might add that unlike Dr. David I endorse and advocate the Tamils militant struggles to exercise that right to the fullest). In seeing a contradiction (and hinting at hypocrisy?) Dr. David reveals once again Trotskyisms Chief characteristic: Its complete incapacity to make a concrete analysis of a concrete situation. In my reply of Oct 1st (L.G. page 28) I stated quite clearly that **"When directed against the infant, encircled Soviet socialist state, the phenomenon of bourgeois nationalism had objectively a retrogressive content."** Stalin's article of October 20th 1920 (Pravda) which I quoted said "...but.....the demand for secession.....at the present stage of revolution is a profoundly counter-revolutionary one." Lenin's remarks of 1916 (Discussion on Self-Determination summed up), which I reproduced state that "Suppose that a number of nations were to start a socialist revolution....while other nations serve as the chief bulwarks of bourgeois reaction - then we would have to be in favour of a revolutionary war against the latter...."

Only the most myopic could fail to see that all this refers to certain concrete conditions and circumstances; to a certain balance of forces. I refuse to follow Kumar David and abstract Stalin's political practice from the specific and historically concrete conjuncture of post-revolutionary USSR. Stalin's practice, necessary at the time and therefore correct, cannot be

abstracted and generalized into universal truth. Such metaphysics and dogmatism, I reject. My defense of Stalin and my wholehearted support of Tamil national (political) independence are perfectly compatible and indeed mutually supportive.

My aside about the "Trotskyist fetishization of the programme" derives from the critique made of Trotskyism by Regis Debray and Joao Quartim, who speak of the Trotskyists' utter inability to distinguish between the minimum programmes, recognise the importance of the former and realize that even the 'mildest', superficially 'reformist', anti-imperialist/democratic programme when it articulates the deepest grievances of the masses and is coupled with an armed struggle strategy can prove more effective than an overtly socialist or 'Transitional' programme. Drawing up neatly divided "sacrosanct" programmes, says Debray, is the kind of hobby only a Trotskyist intellectual can afford the luxury of indulging in, since historically Trotskyism has proved itself incapable of posing a successful or even a serious armed threat to state power. The Trotskyist topography of the Sri Lankan Left and the arithmetical bulk of the NLSSP can mask that reality only temporarily. Better perhaps a one-man (Stalinist) party than a four-man International!

So Dr. David supports the right of self-determination, but does not advocate, (recommend, put forward) or support the Eelam demand! Contrary to Dr. David's sophistry, it is not necessary that a Marxist party's programme should flow from (take as its point of departure) the Eelam demand, if that party is to support the demand. The Bolshevik programme did not flow from or take as its point of departure the National Question. Similarly a Marxist party while having the proletarian seizure of state power as the point of departure of its programme can incorporate the slogan of political secession on behalf of or put forward by a given oppressed nation.

True, recognition of the right of self-determination does not mean the advocacy of separation in all cases, but Dr. David's studied ambiguities, deliberate obfuscation and tortuous argumentation cannot disguise the un-Leninist character of his position. Lenin spoke of Marx and Engel's advocacy of separation of Ireland "a splendid example of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressor nation should adopt towards national movements, an example which has lost none of its immense practical importance". (Right of Nations to self determination). In the 'Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination', he says that socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies...they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising.... Those socialists who fail to do this, says Lenin, "defend the right to self-determination hypocritically and by words alone; they consider excessive the demand for free political secession; they do not defend the necessity for revolutionary tactics on the part of the socialists of the oppressor nations....(and they) avoid the very question of the frontiers of a state forcefully retaining underprivileged nations within its bounds .....they prostitute Marxism, having lost all ability to understand the theoretical significance and practical urgency of the tactics which Marx explained with Ireland as an example...."

In his draft thesis on The National and Colonial questions for the Comintern's second Congress, Lenin wrote that "All Communist parties should render

(Continued on Page 24)

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# Literature and Revolution reassessed (2)

LITERATURE

by Reggie Siriwardena

Trotsky's account of post-revolutionary Russian literature assumes that the old culture of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie died with the revolution, while the rise of a new culture must be prepared for by the building of the material and social foundations for it: hence the contemporary hiatus in literature. (Unlike some other Soviet theorists, Trotsky contended that the new culture when it came into being would be 'classless' rather than 'proletarian'.)

Trotsky's view of the relations between class, individual literary genius and historical circumstances seems altogether too mechanistic, particularly when applied to a time of revolution and its immediate aftermath. It is characteristic of a revolutionary era that by rendering social institutions and ideologies suddenly fluid, it creates the conditions under which the writer of genius can take a startling imaginative leap of thought, outdistancing his time. (Blake's poetry, written during one such revolutionary era, is a striking example.)

It can be suggested that Blok's *The Twelve*, as a visionary poem fusing past, present and future, was just such an inspired imaginative act made possible by the revolution. *The Twelve* was not, however, Blok's last word: at the end of the same month, January 1918, to which *The Twelve* belongs, he wrote *The Scythians*—a poem on which Trotsky was silent.

I have no space here to write about this extraordinary work in detail, but *The Scythians*, through symbol and historical analogy, in effect holds out to the 'old world' of Western Europe 'for the last time, the opportunity to embrace fraternally the Russian Revolution. But the poem also foreshadows, in the event of this opportunity

being missed, the withdrawal of the revolution into its national shell and the ascendancy of its Asian component over the European. ('We shall open wide our gates to the East,' wrote Blok in his diary at the same time.)

One can see why Trotsky ignored *The Scythians*: to his Eurocentric vision the poem must have seemed either meaningless or alien. Yet Blok the poet in a prophetic moment of insight saw more clearly the actual course of the revolution for the next few decades than the political theorist and man of action who was to be crushed by the very forces that Blok foresaw in poem. A proof that the writer's imagination can run ahead of material reality!

In writing about the poet of peasant origin, Sergei Esenin, Trotsky himself was to recognise that literature need not necessarily be limited in significance by the class and social context in which it is produced. In a memorial article in *Pravda* in 1926, shortly after Esenin's suicide, Trotsky did attribute the poet's weakness to his class background: 'he was uprooted from the past, and had not been able to sink his roots into the new times.' But, self-contradictorily, he went on to give a broader human value to Esenin's lyricism, suggesting that the suicide was the outcome of the thwarting of these lyrical impulses which Soviet society could not yet afford:

'His lyric spring could have unwound to the end only under conditions when life was harmonious, happy, full of songs, a period when there ruled as master not rough combat, but friendship love and tenderness.'

Trotsky looked forward to a fuller humanity of the future for whom these feelings would come into their own: 'The revolution, above all, will in lofty struggle win for every individual the right not only to bread but to Poetry.'

It is not easy to reconcile the limiting class analysis with the broader human value given to Esenin's work: what Trotsky was saying, in effect, was that Esenin would be fully appreciated only in the classless society of the future. What he was willing to claim for Esenin, however, he was not ready to concede to Anna Akhmatova (because the former was peasant and the latter bourgeois by birth?), though there seems to me no doubt that she was the greater poet. Trotsky referred to her as 'very gifted', but treated her poetry (at this time, mainly personal poetry of love) disparagingly as a survival of the past.

Trotsky couldn't in 1924 have foreseen the remarkable development that Akhmatova's writing would undergo in the 'thirties, especially in *Requiem*, where it became 'the mouth through which a hundred million people cry.' However, already in 1923 Aleksandra Kollontai, feminist and Bolshevik, was more sympathetic to Akhmatova's work, recognising that in her love poetry there was expressed the suffering of a woman over man's refusal to love her as an autonomous person. Kollontai found in this an explanation of Akhmatova's popularity with working-class women readers in spite of the fact that she was not a Marxist.

At the time of *Literature and Revolution* the most vigorous literary avant-garde consisted of the Futurists, whose most brilliant poet, Mayakovsky, was being boosted by some circles close to the ruling party as the laureate of the

revolution. Lenin, whose literary tastes were strongly traditional, found the literary experimentalism and iconoclasm of the Futurists uncongenial. Trotsky, more modern in his tastes, was willing to recognise the merits of the Futurists' struggle against the old poetic vocabulary and forms. But he was not willing to accept Mayakovsky, as some other Soviet critics did, as the authentic voice of revolution, because he saw in his work the expression of a flamboyant individualist who had insufficiently merged his personality with the collective struggle.

Trotsky's twelve pages on Mayakovsky represent his best writing as a literary critic. A few sentences must serve to indicate here their direction and their quality:

'The poet is too conspicuous—he allows too little autonomy to events and facts. It is not the revolution which wrestles with obstacles but Mayakovsky who displays his athletics in the arena of words, sometimes performing genuine miracles, but frequently lifting with heroic effort notoriously empty weights....It is impossible to out-clamour war and revolution, but it is easy to get hoarse in the attempt...Mayakovsky shouts too often where one should speak; and so his cry, where cry is needed, sounds inadequate.'

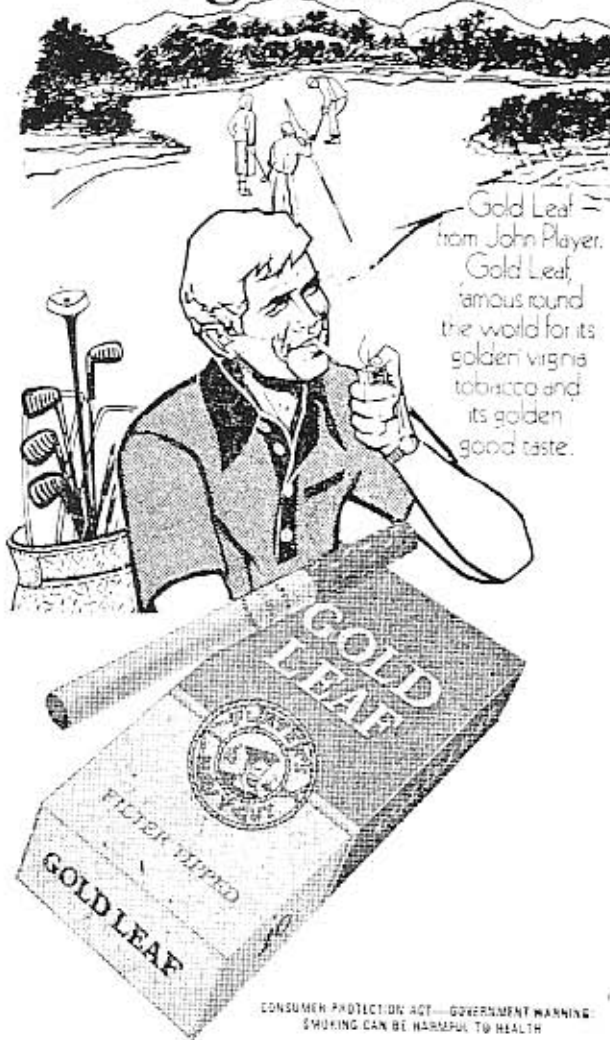
In their original context these observations are supported by what was being called at the same time in England 'Practical criticism'. However, for Trotsky the words on the page are not the end of criticism: the examination of style and form is linked with the social analysis, the first being treated as illustration and confirmation of the second.

But Trotsky, who took an independent view of Mayakovsky, was more uncritical in dealing with the popular versifier Demyan Bedny, whom he described as 'the poet who, more than anyone else, has the right to be called the poet of revolutionary Russia.' In Trotsky's praise of him the commissar overshadows the critic:

'Not only in those rare cases when Apollo calls him to the holy sacrifice

(Continued on Page 24)

## Player's Gold Leaf for good taste.



# The politics of children's books

AS I  
LIKE IT

Touchstone

When I was around ten or eleven (this was in the colonial era) I used to soak myself in the boys' adventure fiction of writers like Rider Haggard, R. M. Ballantyne and G. A. Henty. The heroes were all white-skinned; the natives ranged from the quaint and comic to the treacherous and bloodthirsty. I didn't realise it at the time, but I was being indoctrinated in the political and racist attitudes of imperialism.

The revelation that a good deal of supposedly innocent and amusing children's literature was drenched in reactionary values came when, as a young university student, I read in the wartime *Horizon* George Orwell's essay, 'Boys' Weeklies'. Orwell's piece (it is now reprinted in his *Collected Essays*) was a pioneering study of the boys' magazines of that time—the *Gem*, *Magnet* and the like—bringing out the class and political attitudes implicit in them.

The kind of analysis that Orwell made has now been carried out more extensively in a two-part study by Bob Dixon entitled *Catching them Young* (Pluto Press). I haven't seen the first volume, which is subtitled *Sex, Race and Children's Fiction*, but the second *Political Ideas in Children's Fiction*, has a chapter, 'Empire: Fiction Follows the Flag', which is a critical survey of imperialistic children's fiction, from *Robinson Crusoe*, through *Masterman Ready*, *The Gorilla Hunters*, and *King Solomon's Mines*, to *Dr. Dolittle* and the new variations of imperialist adventure in space fiction.

Bob Dixon also has an excellent chapter on Enid Blyton; still the most popular children's writer in middle-class Sri Lankan homes: summing up, he says of her: 'What overwhelmingly pervades every aspect of Blyton's work ... is the insistence on conformity—and conformity to the most

narrow, establishment type beliefs, practices and values.' Not all Dixon's criticism is destructive: one of the most useful aspects of his book is that he draws attention to children's fiction which, without losing adventure or excitement, offers a more critical view of class, racial relations and social institutions, as in the work of Third World writers fighting back against the imperialist ideology of English children's fiction as well as books by some recent English writers with more civilised values.

A valuable exercise—can one hope that university students of mass communication will attempt it?—would be to take Bob Dixon and George Orwell as a model for the study of the social atti-

## Literature . . . .

(Continued from page 23)

does Demyan Bedny create, but day in and day out as the events and the Central Committee of the Party demand.'

The words were retrospectively to acquire a historical irony: in a few years, with Trotsky out of power, other versifiers were to write as the Central Committee of the Party demanded, and the results were to be much less to Trotsky's taste.

(A broadsheet of translations, by the author of this article, of the poetry of Anna Akhmatova, one of the writers discussed here, has just been published.)

## Stalinism . . . .

(Continued from page 21)

direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and under-privileged nations (e. g. Ireland, American blacks etc) and in the colonies. Without (this) condition, which is particularly important, the struggle against

tudes promoted by the indigenous comic-books and picture-stories that are now the staple reading of many Sri Lankan children.

## Problem corner

A palindrome (as many readers may already know) is a sentence or word that reads the same both backwards and forwards. Perhaps the most famous of all palindromes is the sentence with which Adam is said to have introduced himself to Eve: 'Madam, I'm Adam.'

Recent research into the Garden of Eden has established that Eve's answer was another palindrome. Can you work out what it was? (Solution next time.)

the repression of dependent nations and colonies, as well as recognition of their right to secede, are but a false signboard, as is evidenced by the parties of the Second International."

Dr. David's recognition of self-determination is verbal and hypocritical. But we should not be surprised, after all in 'The Discussion of Self-determination summed up' Lenin spoke of "those who recognize self-determination as verbally and hypocritically as Kautsky in Germany and Trotsky and Martov in Russia." In another paragraph of the same essay, Lenin said "as for the Kautskyites, they hypocritically recognize self-determination - Trotsky and Martov are going the same way here in Russia." And Kumar David goes the same way here in Sri Lanka!

(This correspondence is now closed)





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