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What, no re-shuffle?

Re-shuffle rumours are still afloat but persistent reports of a sweeping change appears to have died down after the President's remarks to the parliamentary group. "No Outsiders" was the message which came loud and clear. As a result stories of a three non-MP's (a business tycoon, a top bureaucrat and a party high-up) are much less in circulation; also speculation of a straight swap between Finance and Trade.

Still very much in the spotlight however is Education Minister Wijeyeratne. He himself confirmed this by telling the NSA that he had actually considered resigning his post. His vitriolic attack on "despicable and arrogant bureaucrats" also confirmed what was widely known in political and university circles about an anti-Nissanka group (Nissanka is a late-comer to the UNP) headed by a bureaucratic-academic cabal that has some Sri Kotha patronage.

Will Nissanka, an ex-CCS, go back home—to the Home Ministry and Public Administration? Or will the Diyawadana Nilame be crowned Minister of Culture? The well-informed political correspondent of the WEEKEND has confidently tipped young Ranil for Malay Street.

Local consumption

Was the SLFP's congratulatory message to 'the great daughter of India' meant more for domestic consumption? Certainly, it looked more like a gauntlet than a lady's glove. Diplomats and political observers underlined some of the more interesting phrases in the SLFP statement. Having stated that

reactionaries, local and foreign, had mistakenly believed Mrs. Gandhi's political career had ended, the statement identified the host of enemies she had to face and their assorted armory: "character assassination through commissions, mudslinging through press and radio, convictions through subservient judiciary, harassment through hirelings, aiming brickbats and catcalls at public rallies..... etc."

JVP's re-think

Just after the formation of what proved to be a short-lived 5 party 'bloc', the JVP leader, Rohana Wijeweera, made a public pronouncement that his party did not interpret this initiative as a move towards "Left Unity. All that the JVP supported was a united-oriented campaign by these parties and their trade union affiliates.

Recently the JVP High Command conducted another exercise in self-criticism and concluded that even this 'united campaign' was an opportunistic error.

Church activism

In this Buddhist country, the Christians number even less than the Hindus. But the two Churches are taking the lead in mobilising enlightened opinion on our recent discontent.

In mid-February, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the National Christian Council will sponsor a two-day "consultation" on Racism. Over 100 participants drawn from all churches will meet at Tewatte to see what they could do to improve racial harmony. The discussion has been planned by Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, Bishop Marcus Fernando and Rev. Basil Rajasinghe, President of the Methodist conference.

Quoting scripture

In the exchange of compliments between Chintaka and Touchstone I think that Touchstone, the gentler, the softer-spoken and clearly the wiser of the two is, all the same, wrong. He argues on the basis that there is an objectively ascertainable "correct Marxist-Leninist position" on any issue. Chintaka is right in claiming that quoting the *ipsissima verba* is vital, in the context that to him the "correct Marxist-Leninist position" on any issue is what Stalin said on it, and (if it does not clash with what Stalin said) what Lenin said. And so, quotation is the only way. My submission is that the correct Marxist-Leninist position on an issue depends on which brand of Marxist (out of the 57 varieties) is speaking. **Quot homines, tot sententiae.**

J. B. Ginger

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Rating Wilson

I am jotting down below a few random thoughts that occurred to me on reading Dr. A. J. Wilson's article on the Tamil problem.

Dr. A. J. Wilson can express his views as a Tamil, but if all what he says is in the name of Political Science, his rating as a political scientist reaches a low level.

One is struck by the very close similarity of his argument for settling Jaffna Tamils in other Tamil speaking areas and that of D. S. Senanayake settling Sinhalese from the over-populated South-western quarter or wet zone to the Dry Zone!

A Marxist understanding of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka is conspicuous by its absence in Wilson's paper, apart from the conventional Marxist view that ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is a byproduct of the capitalist system. One observed in the August '77 riots, among other factors, a linkage of class protest and ethnic hatred.

Dr. Wilson speaks with new elation of the single-mindedness of expatriate Tamils to liberate their homeland. I wonder whether he read an interesting and preceptive analysis of the expatriate Tamil attitude to the Tamil problems in Sri Lanka in the C. D. N. a few months back by Jayantha Somasundaram. He pointed out that the Tamil expatriate view of the Tamil problem is often a projection of the racial prejudice the Tamil expatriate encounters in his host country.

A Batticaloa Tamil.

Better read, than dead

Reader R. S. Perinbanayagam of Manipay reveals a characteristic common to Reggie Siriwardena and columnist "Touchstone" viz, the under-estimation of the importance of Theory (which I will follow Althusser in spelling with a capital "T"). Marx once said something to the effect that a

single practical step was worth more than a hundred programmatic manifestos. Lenin pointed out in "What is to be Done" that this sentiment was not universally valid, and in a situation where theoretical confusion existed within the Marxist movement quoting this remark of Marx was as apt as greeting the chief mourner at a funeral with a congratulatory handshake!

The Marxist movement in this country continues to remain in a state of theoretical confusion on the National Question, one of the strategic issues of the Lankan revolution. It is only in the 1970's, with the rise of Tamil youth militancy that the Left movement began to discover (or rediscover) and debate in earnest the Marxist theories on the national question. Of course orthodoxy in itself "solves nothing". It is necessary to go beyond the letter of the basic texts and engage in concrete analysis and creative thought. It is not possible however to "transcend" and "enrich" without first discovering that which exists. This is particularly true of the so-called New Left as well as the new generation of recruits to the "Old" left all of whom are still in the process of uncovering and assessing what the store-house of Marxism-Leninism holds in respect of the National Question. This terrain must be explored with a view to being expanded. Creative theorizing must be based firmly upon the foundations laid by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and other proven revolutionary leaders of the world communist movement. Devoid of this foundation, the "original" and "creative" approaches recommended by R. S. Perinbanayagam, Siriwardena and Touchstone would result in eclectic, revisionism or just plain dilettente-ism. The "independent conclusions" that the reader from Manipay suggests we come to would turn out to be conclusions independent of Marxism-Leninism!

This reader says that "the finest minds of (his) generation were driven into the madness of social chauvinism by the utter sterility of the sort of debate that (we) have undertaken". The very fact that extensive portions of my original series ("Myths and Realities") have been translated and republished in the two foremost Tamil political papers "Sutantiran" and "Manithan" demonstrate that R. S. P.'s views are not shared by some equally fine and perhaps more representative minds of the present generation of Tamils.

One final point. R. S. P. refers contemptuously to the 'authority of long dead Russians.' May I venture to suggest that if the teachings of those long dead Russians had been remembered and studied there would perhaps have been less dead Indonesians and Chileans. If those teachings are adhered to there may be fewer dead Tamils as well.

Better read (and well read) than dead!

Chintaka.

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NEWS
BACKGROUND

"For centuries the religion of the majority nurtured a value which embraced the concept of equality. Although the foreign domination and political upheavals at times scarred the national ethos, the ethical basis of the value system has always remained unscathed. Inequalities in education are repugnant to the national conscience which resents the manifestation of any form of social injustice."

(Education in Sri Lanka—Ministry of Education—July 1978 P)

When the Finance Minister announced that he would set aside Rs. 72 million for free textbooks for children upto grade 9, there was loud applause from government benches. Not enough, protested a few Opposition members. Mr. de Mel was willing to push up this new subsidy to Rs. 100 million. The mainstream media broke out in a chorus of cheers last week, when the well-publicised exercise was nearly over the Opposition press was busy headlining what had happened on another part of the Subsidy front. Up went sugar prices, flour, rice, and bread. Wrote an opposition columnist: "One hundred million given, more than a thousand million taken back..."

Propagandist points apart, the free textbook scheme—a well-intentioned initiative no doubt—must be seen in the context of free education whose ideal is equality of opportunity and social justice.

- * Our education is planned in such a way that for a child of school going age to benefit from its facilities he or she has to be in school.
- * Although we have regulations about school attendance it is well known that there is a large proportion of our children of school-going age who do not attend school.
- * As we go up the education ladder the numbers remaining in the schools become less and less, and even at the

level of grade 8 there is a greater number of our children out of the schools than in school.

The more number of years a student stays in the system, the more will be the resources spent on him, and the type of education at the higher levels demands an added expenditure due to the necessity of things like lab facilities. Therefore those sections of our student population who manage to stay on in the system will consume a large proportion of our resources available for education.

- * The ability to stay on in the education system, as can be shown quite clearly, depends directly on the socio-economic background of the pupil. The more affluent the pupil's family background, the greater will be the chances for him to stay on in the system and get the best out of it.

Indira, Afghanistan and SLFP

Indira's stunning comeback has already made its impact on the SLFP as LG reports anticipated since December. Besides the expected injection of new confidence, it has had an instant effect on SLFP foreign policy. A comparison between the SLFP's position on the Kampuchean issue and statement on the Afghanistan situation establishes this fact pointedly.

Though the Chinese were brazen enough to announce their intention to invade Vietnam and carry out the threat, the SLFP was clumsily heavy-handed in its evasive statement. It made itself look even more ridiculous by supporting Pol Pot whom Peking, in the face of international embarrassment, has now discreetly dumped. The pro-Peking advisory group made nonsense of the party's proud claims to genuine nonalignment.

The Indian election campaign was still on when the Afghan

- * Given this reality and by virtue of the fact that education is given free to all, it is quite clear what we are doing under the slogan of free education is to use our resources from the budget to educate those from a better social background who have a greater chance to stay within the formal education system for a longer period.

What we have tried to show above is how in the last analysis an overtly progressive step like 'free Education' in a class society actually goes to the benefit of the 'haves and thereby helps to perpetuate the class system.

— Sunil Bastian

crisis erupted. But Mrs. Gandhi had already given a fair indication of her thinking. Sensibly, the SLFP held its hand.

When it did issue a statement its criticism of the Soviet action was 'balanced' by its expression of concern over US moves, particularly Diego Garcia.

The SLFP PB discussion resulted in the inevitable isolation of the pro-Peking coterie (known in Left circles as the Sirimaolists) because the US-China relationship has now advanced to the point of open military cooperation, with Peking evidently welcoming the US build-up in Diego Garcia. Since Mrs. Bandaranaike is the chief sponsor of the Indian Ocean peace zone proposal, a proposal which led directly to the decision to hold a Colombo conference of Indian ocean states next year, it is no longer possible for the SLFP to adjust its foreign policy thinking to present Peking postures on world events.

In order to preserve its own 'nonaligned' identity vis-a-vis the UNP, the SLFP simply cannot pursue a Singapore-ASEAN brand of nonalignment, a policy orientation which is in perfect accord with US-China link-up.

And then there's always Indira. Indian diplomats have been working overtime trying to clear up the apparent confusion in Delhi's attitude after Mrs. Gandhi assumed office. Understandably Western diplomats have been equally busy trying to interpret Mrs. Gandhi's various statements to suit their common purposes.

Now, the policy statement of the Gandhi government dispels all doubts, if indeed there were any. While declaring Indira's intention to "further consolidate" its "many-sided relations" with the US and its desire to discuss all issues with China, including the boundary question, the policy statement speaks of Indira's "abiding friendship" with the USSR, and the virtue of reliability and mutual understanding which this friendship demonstrates.

The SLEP discussion had two interesting features. Ex-speaker Stanley Tillekeratne, once identified with the pro-Peking group took a vigorously independent line while Islamic loyalties seem to have influenced some others in an opposite direction including a member who is known as a PLO champion. The PLO has come out strongly in favour of Soviet support for the Karmal government.

Centenary duel

Sri Lanka is the only country where Stalinism lost out to Trotskyism during the great cleavage in the late thirties. It is also the only country which boasted a mass Trotskyist party that was once the pride of the Fourth International. But the battle of the Trotsky and Stalin birth centenary commemorations was unquestionably won by the Stalinists and this development continues to send ripples throughout the left movement since it went beyond an archaic ideological dis-

pute and paralleled political realignments within the left.

Trotsky centenary celebrations were held only by the smaller groups, namely, Edmund Samarakody's Revolutionary Workers' Party and the Healyite Revolutionary Communist League (Kamkarumawatha). Tampoe's R. M. P. and Vasu's NLSSP held a few joint seminars, but these efforts proved desultory and neither group staged a 'show' on the big day itself. The J. V. P. which made extensive though unacknowledged borrowings from Trotskyism, remained silent.

The Stalin celebrations on the other hand, got into a fine start when the Maoist five party Nava Janata Peramuna held a well advertised and widely attended symposium on December 20th at Colombo's New Town Hall. This was accompanied by a Stalin book exhibition at the Jubilee Hall. N. Sanmugathan's Ceylon Communist Party took the initiative, supported by the JVP breakaway Janatha Sangamaya (People's League), the Nava Lanka C. P., the New Democratic Party and Wimalasiri Navaratna's Mahajana Vimukthi Pakshaya (R).

Despite the efforts of the Maoists ("gang of 4" variety), the Stalin commemoration 'show' was carried away by the Pro-Moscow Communist Party of Sri Lanka, Edmund Samarakody—T. Andradi's Trotskyist paper 'Panthi Satana' ('Class struggle') summed it up best in its issue of January 1st:—

"All of Lanka's Stalinist parties, Group and groupuscules commemorated Joseph Stalin's birth centenary;... The special characteristic of these celebrations was that the CPSL, which had given up praise of Stalin since the 20th congress of the CPSU, returned to its old habits.... In fact the Maoists were put to shame by the CPSL's 'Aththa' newspapers' praise of Stalin. The 'Aththa' editorial stated clearly that the true heirs of Stalin were not the Maoists, but the pro-Soviet CP's.... The Maoist Nava Janatha Peramuna's commemoration of Stalin is not important politically, but this is not the case with the CPSL, since its patrons

the CPSU is engaged in resurrecting Stalin and presenting him as a hero".

"Stalin" has also assumed another role as symbol and weapon in the new cleavage between the CPSL and the JVP. As the 'Panthi Satana' put it pertinently: "It would be most interesting to know the JVP's reaction to the commemoration of Stalin by the CPSU and CPSL. The JVP criticized Stalin in the post 1971 period and did so publicly after 1977. On the other hand Brezhnev and the CPSL are the JVP's close buddies...."

The CPSL Youth Federation's new organ 'Tharuna Lanka' (Young Lanka) has utilized Stalin as a weapon in its theoretical struggle with the JVP. In its series of 'Questions and Answers' on issues of Marxist theory, the CPSL characterizes the JVP's views on 'Socialism in one country' as Trotskyist in origin and proceeds to refute them by recourse to questions from Lenin and Stalin. The papers January, issue contains both a lengthy polemic against the JVP's 'secretarian position' on the question of Left unity as well as a strongly positive account of J. V. Stalin's life and deeds, replete with a photograph of the dashing young 'Koba'. The anti Trotskyist/anti JVP theoretical polemic had commenced earlier, but on a lower key, in the pages of the CPSL's now defunct newspaper 'Vama' (Left) which originally featured the 'Questions and Answers' series.

Canon James on religion & change

Christian Action started as a movement thirty years ago in Britain, spearheaded by leaders such as Sir Stafford Cripps—who formulated a plan which was at that time unsuccessful to grant India independence—and persons of the calibre of Bertrand Russell and Cannon John Collins. Christian Action is not entirely church-centred, but takes stances whereby it is able to influence church policies on concerns such as disarmament and anti-nuclear thrusts,

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International trends (2)

Kissinger and US power

by Mervyn de Silva

Icily analytical, and awe-inspiring in his gift for articulation Kissinger was the ablest western spokesman of the 70's. The conventional critique of US foreign policy sees it as too 'issue-oriented' and geared far too much to 'crisis-management'.

Kissinger had a sense of strategy. He could see the immediate in relation to the future, and the local conflict in terms of the shifting 'balance of power'. Metternichian in outlook, he had a cold, cultivated, if anachronistic, taste for 'order'. He was the 'system' manager par excellence, trying feverishly to arrange and re-arrange the parts, adjusting this and repairing that, in order to maintain equilibrium. Essentially this meant an attempt to preserve the status quo as best as possible while recognising that the basic movement in global politics represented a slow but steady diminution of US dominance over the world system. In short, he was the masterly exponent of rearguard action and strategic retreat.

In terms of pure military power (an oversimplification, of course) the US had been dislodged by the 50's from its position of atomic monopoly and had been compelled to accept later a loss of strategic superiority for 'essential equivalence' or 'rough equivalence'. Finally, SALT legitimized strategic parity.

Hence Kissinger's eager recognition of and ardent support for 'multipolarity' in place of 'bipolarity'; hence his opening to China and the so-called China card; hence his patient plan to get the USSR and the socialist bloc enmeshed in a new network of economic relationships (trade, technology, capital, long-term contracts) with the West, that would complement the agreements in the field of strategic arms, space etc. The objective was to entrap the USSR inextricably in the system by allowing for a wider Soviet role and a larger stake in

that system. In the Kissingerian construct, the effect of such a Soviet participatory role would be 'stabilising'.

By fostering what Kissinger read as the cautious conservatism of the Brezhnev years, the US would be discouraging a more assertive post-Brezhnev leadership from using the strength gained from this quiet consolidation and steady advance of Soviet power to prepare for and eventually go on the 'strategic offensive' in the 1980's — a decade where the West, already bedevilled by the manifold problems created by the generalised crisis of the world economy, would be forced into a confrontation with the Third World.

Third World

With the growth of political consciousness (often painfully sluggish process but sometimes 'a moment of sudden illumination'), Third World peoples may see that the wretchedness of their condition, the main cause of social unrest and the motivating force of political change, is the product of an exploitative system, both internal and externally imposed. In the eyes of the Iranian people, the actors and spectators of the seemingly confused Iranian drama, at least one identification is complete: anti-Shahneans anti-US. Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista leader could say 'when we ousted Somoza, we were kicking out the last US marine'.

So, the nature of Third World struggles in the 70's hammered home a fundamental truth — the integral linkage between true national independence and social transformation, what Le Duan in a celebrated essay named the 'twin banners' of liberation and socialism.

As the likelihood of external involvements in the raging Angolan conflict grew stronger, Kissinger warned the West of the consequences to NATO and western economic interest if the war led to conflagration which would engulf

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Southern Africa. In a speech in Lusaka, he stressed the importance of not permitting "radicals" to gain the upper hand and the imperative need to help the 'moderates'. By moderates he meant not merely 'moderate' governments but 'moderate' African leaders within nationalist movements. Kissinger's professorial colleague the more overbearing and less subtle Patrick Moynihan, for a short while America's UN ambassador, openly recommended that the West should break up the "emerging bloc" of Third World nations.

A graphic demonstration of the results achieved by this tactic of division and disruption (oil producing and non-oil producing for example), of co-opting and rewarding 'moderates', while isolating and pressurising 'radicals' was seen last year at two important conventions — at UNCTAD V in Manila (the economic platform of the poor) and at the 6th Summit in Havana, the main political forum of more or less the same group.

Cuba

Cuba, a small nation which had been a member of the NAM from its inception, was selected for what was probably one of the most fiercely sustained propaganda onslaughts by the western media in recent times.

One explanation was Cuba's 'high profile' in world affairs after its involvement in Africa. Stockwell's month-by-month insider's account makes it patently clear that the first Cuban contingent arrived long, long after NATO and South Africa had been deeply involved in the combined attempt to crush the MPLA, the most radical of the liberation movements. A more plausible reason was Cuba's pro-Soviet stance.

The real reason, one suspects, lay elsewhere. When the US was only a continental power and its "Manifest Destiny" did not project a global vision, John Quincy Adams, Monroe's Secretary of State, had written that 'an annexation of Cuba will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself.'

The Cuban revolution did not mean the downfall of a despot. Sgt. Batista, and the establishment of a new government. It broke America's economic stranglehold; it was an irreversible departure from the system.

The Cuban revolution did not stop with the assertion of Cuba's true independence but inaugurated the radical transformation of its society. In spite of trade embargos, naval blockades, diplomatic isolation, invasion, subversion and assassination attempts aimed at its leaders, and its own enormous difficulties — problems which have not been wholly solved still — Cuba blazed a trail in re-structuring society. It was a new model of development in the region, a national economy not linked to the US-dominated global system and in no way dependent on it. On America's doorstep, its defiance in doing so seemed as boundless as those of the Vietnamese in a different kind of confrontation. It could be a dangerous precedent to the rest of Latin America and an infectious example to other poor nations. This was Cuba's real crime. This was why it earned the visceral hatred of the US Establishment.

Radicalisation

The altered shape of the world, the new correlation of forces, the changed character of liberation struggle and the irresistible logic of its radicalizing effects remain the main lessons to be drawn from the complex experience of the '70's.

In different ways, the recent settlement in Rhodesia and the near-collapse of the Camp David accords underline this point. Kissinger was gone but the Anglo-American effort to find a diplomatic answer to the Rhodesian conflict looked like a response to his ominous warnings. Colour (black vs White) would only enhance the explosive potential of the issue and threaten strategic South Africa itself. Ian Smith pre-empted the Owen-Young move with an 'internal settlement' involving Muzorewa, Sithole etc. It was a more sophisticated exercise in the

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INDIA AFTER GANDHI

by Gail Omvedt

Indira Gandhi, the architect of India's Emergency regime and the most feared opponent for most sections of its organized Left, completed her astounding political comeback winning over two-thirds of the seats in parliamentary elections held on January 3 and 6.

The size of the victory was a shock to most political commentators here who had been predicting a period of political fragmentation, unstable and minority or coalition governments on the basis of recent splits and flux among all the bourgeois parties and clear evidence of disillusionment and disgust with all politicians on the part of the masses. All such predictions were confounded by the massiveness of Congress (I) victory.

In the midst of the victory rallies that were staged following the election the reaction of bourgeoisie was quieter but clear: there was an upsurge in the stock market and a sudden drop of one-fourth in gold prices within two days—indicating greater confidence on the part of property-holders in the economy. And leading industrialists claimed that Mrs. Gandhi's two-thirds majority "will help her to follow a bold and aggressive policy which will put an end to lawlessness" in industrial areas, where, they claimed "labourers are controlling us rather than we controlling them."

Once again the Indian electorate has upset all the predictions of intellectuals and experts. But what exactly has happened, and what lies ahead?

Character of the Election

Some features of election results:

* Mrs. Gandhi's victory was nationwide (and in that sense proved the national character of India with the exception of genuine border regions in the northeast tribal areas and Kashmir) The Congress (I) won in all states except the "red fortress" of West Bengal, nearby Tripura, and Kerala. The Akali

Dal, a religiously-based regional party in the Punjab was decimated. In Tamilnadu, the other state with a strong regional-separatist tradition in the Dravidian movement, the section of it which allied with the Congress (I) won an overwhelming victory. North-south differences which had been so marked in the 1977 elections disappeared and forecasts of regional fragmentation of India were belied.

* The Congress (I) won about 50% of total votes and outside of a few northern states, constituencies it won an absolute majority of the vote—ie even if the opposition had united against it it would have been of no use.

* While Mrs. Gandhi had solid backing from industrialists, some sections of the middle class and a good proportion of rich farmers (e.g. at least half of the powerful sugar lobby in the state of Maharashtra was with her) she managed to win overwhelming popular support from the rural and urban poor. The rural poor voted largely for the Congress (I) while urban workers gave their votes either to Indira Congress or to the Communists and other union candidates.

* The bourgeois opposition was shattered. The Janatha Party had earlier split into the Janatha led by Jagjivan Ram and the Lok Dal led by Charan Singh and the Congress (U) which consisted of all those from the old National Congress Party who could not stomach Mrs. Gandhi's authoritarianism had seemingly been making a comeback. But the Congress (U) won only 13 seats in the entire country and was wiped out in the state of its titular head Devraj Urs while the Janata, which everyone had been expecting to at least come in a solid second, got only 31. The Lok Dal emerged as the second biggest party with 41 seats on the basis of mainly rich and middle caste peasant votes in some northern states. But no single party had enough to make it even an

*Special to the
Lanka Guardian*

officially recognized "opposition" (which requires 50 seats out of 525).

* The two communist parties together won more than any single bourgeois party but their strength was regionalized. In Kerala and Bengal where they stood as an independent left front against both Janata and Congress (I) and could project themselves as a political force truly capable of governing if they won solidly. But their incapability of leading such a political alternative nationwide left the field open to Mrs. Gandhi.

* The percentage of the electorate who voted dropped significantly from its all-time high of 61% in 1977 to 57%. In other words the "Indira wave" covered another groundswell of disillusionment and cynicism among the voters.

* The election clearly marked the dominance of class and ideological politics in India. The characterization of Indian politics in terms of caste-based "vote banks" or open corruption and buying of votes or some kind of "semi-feudal" or "patrimonial" domination of voters by rural bosses is clearly inadequate now. This fact must be stressed. It is true there was no direct intimidation; there were cases of beating and even murder of low caste voters and even some spectacular "booth capturing" (a custom particularly in the turbulent state of Bihar where hired gangsters simply capture a polling station with guns and home made bombs and mark all the ballots themselves). But—aside from the fact that this went as much against Mrs. Gandhi as for her—it was of relatively minor significance in the vast sea of the Indian political system open buying of voters was also of minute significance in contrast to massive, bourgeois-type spending on posters, jeeps, campaigning. So called "vote banks" or the need to have candidates of the same caste or religion as the main group in a constituency was of little more importance than it is in the

U. S. — the biggest symbol of this fact was that even though the Janata Party candidate for Prime Minister, Jagjivan Ram is an ex-untouchable, this had, against all predications, absolutely no impact on the low caste voting. People voted their interests as they saw them, within the framework of bourgeois democracy, and though low caste rural poor voters everywhere talked of the "pressure" and "oppression" that was a normal everyday feature of their existence, they somehow saw Mrs. Gandhi as an escape from this; they did not vote for her as a result of it.

Reasons for the Congress

(I) Victory

How then, did Mrs. Gandhi win such an impressive majority? Was it because she represents a "progressive" force because she was a "peoples' candidate" riding on the crest of some kind of popular upsurge?

First of all the elections took place on a background of worsening economic crisis marked by drought, power cuts, transport breakdowns, rapidly rising prices, much publicized "atrocities against Harijans" (ex-Untouchables), religious riots and ordinary lawlessness. The Janata Party had been discredited for its inability to do anything except intermittently repress popular movements for two years. The Charan Singh-led Lok Dal and Congress (U) so called "third force", for all its talk of fighting authoritarianism and communalism, proved incapable of even uniting to form a common front with a clear program to fight the elections, let alone govern the country. The two big communist parties, the CPI and CPI (M), had come together for the first time since 1962 in a kind of common front to the people — but this was still new, weak marked by no common program and tied to the floundering and discredited Lok Dal/Congress (U) alliance.

In other words, there was no clear national political alternative before the people. On this basis, Indira Gandhi came forward, bold and unrepentant about the Emergency; insisting that she had never had any other aim than

fighting poverty and if a few excesses had happened in the process that was minor; awakening peoples' nostalgia about a few simple gains they had seen and the prospect of exercising control not over themselves but over those who they felt were holding them down; and above all projecting herself in a ultimately decisive way as a leader the only one capable of bringing a stable government to crisis-ridden India.

There were three main components of the popular mood which produced her victory: a disgust with "all these politicians, those self-interested leaders" (in which Indira and her supporters were also included); the feeling that nevertheless Indira was perhaps a little different; and the feeling that after all the country needed a government and the people needed a ruler.

In that rural areas at least those where there was a lack of strongly organized rural unions people said often, more simply "What is all this talk about dictatorship? We never experienced it during the Emergency!" And they would point to a few visible gains, for instance the "20 point houses" that had been built in many areas. Of these they had many complaints, but they ignored the local politicians who tried to take credit for them and said, "She provided these — but these ministers and leaders who come in between cause all the trouble."

Yet the rural mood itself was as ambivalent as the urban one. Numerous of the low caste rural poor gave an overwhelming positive response to calls to boycott elections, citing examples from their own experience of the worthlessness of politicians, but then argued in the next breath that somehow it was "undemocratic" not to vote and that someone must be there to run the country. In many other cases people spoke strongly for Indira and then went into tirades on the same theme of the need to organize and struggle themselves if they expected anything. A typical response was that of a poor peasant woman after the elections who said "Oh our

mother has come, mother is in power!" Are people happy, then? we asked. Yes yes, she insisted but then went on. "But it doesn't make any difference anyway, all these leaders just act for their own interest, they come and go but our life doesn't change."

It is clear that a great deal of money was spent on the elections in an intense, systematic and ultimately successful campaign to convince voters that their hopes lay in Indira Gandhi; it is clear that the degree of strength that the government has now accumulated will be used by the ruling classes to repress the organized movements of the masses — because that is the only way they can survive in India's crisis-ridden society. It is clear also that some kind of systematic campaign will be mounted against the Communist strongholds of Kerala and West Bengal, and that a new effort will be made against the continuing insurgencies among tribal national minorities in the northeast. But the working class, which produced an unprecedented strike wave in the last two years has gained increased experience and determination in fighting various forms of repression; the different sections of the middle classes (particularly the minorities and low castes) are more volatile and frustrated than ever and will not be easily controlled; and struggles are widening not diminishing in the rural areas. The way ahead will not be simple — neither for the ruling classes nor for the Left.

Kissinger . . .

(Continued from Page 6)

South African policy of 'Bantustanisation'. In essence, it was as the UN rightly called it 'fake independence' with the collaboration of pliant native leaders. The guerrilla war went on because the Patriotic Front had been excluded from this neat arrangement where token power was given to the black while real authority remained with the whites. The new deal reached in London includes the Front. Will the transition be smooth? will the 'solution' stick?

NEXT : Palestine question

Dream of a new economic order

by Upali Cooray

The World Bank report on world-wide economic development published in August 1978 states that "Some 800 million souls still live in a state of absolute poverty. These masses of marginally employed are deprived of food, shelter, education and decent medical care."

During the last decade, there has been some economic growth and industrialisation in those countries which are often referred to as the "Third World". There has been some shift from agricultural production to that of manufactured goods. Nevertheless a very great majority of these countries still specialize mainly in supplying raw materials to capitalist countries.

A large number of these countries are now becoming increas-

ingly dependent on exports of foods. According to a study commissioned by the U.S. authorities (quoted in the **ECONOMIST** September 16, 1978). The Third World countries would have to import 120 million tons of food from the imperialist countries by the end of the 1980's.

During the 70's World Bank and other similar organisations put forward various projects to develop agriculture and "assist the peasant". In reality these projects corresponded to the profit needs of the imperialist agribusiness companies. They have stepped up their penetration of the semi-colonial world. They seek to build agricultural enclaves oriented towards export of agricultural goods for world market and import of machinery, fertilizer and "know-how" from the impe-

rialist world. Multi-nationals are now seeking to control Third World's agricultural development.

The bulk of agricultural loans provided by the World Bank and other credit institutions to these Third World countries end up in the coffers of the agribusiness companies. "Given penetration of the Third World by foreign capital and technology any loan made by the World Bank is assured of being placed in a sector where foreign concerns control investments and production". (Ernest Feeder "Capitalism's last-ditch effort to save undeveloped agricultures" Journal of contemporary Asia Vol 7 No. 1 1977.)

The outcome of this type of agricultural development and investment is the concentration of wealth and incomes in the hands of foreign and local big business and the pauperization of peasant masses.

The efforts of Third World countries to ensure guaranteed prices for their raw materials and halt the deterioration of the terms of trade has fallen flat. The slowing of industrial growth in industrial countries has caused demand for primary goods to slack off and prices to drop. At the same time advanced countries have begun to restrict import of manufactured goods from the 'Third World' by imposition of quotas, administrative negotiations and fiscal measures.

The fall in demand for primary goods and raw materials, the deterioration of the terms of trade—and the consequent effect on balance of payments, the massive loans obtained by native ruling classes to ensure "economic development" and the activities of Multi-nationals have all contributed to the increase of foreign

TABLE IV

EXPORTS FROM 'THIRD WORLD' EXCLUDING OPEC MEMBERS

	Raw Materials	Manufactured Goods
1974	63.5	35.5
1975	65.0	34.7
1976	60.5	36.7
1977	61.6	38.1

TABLE V

THIRD WORLD EXPORTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EXPORTS WORLDWIDE

	TOTAL	Manufactured Goods
1973	11.8%	7.5
1974	11.3	8.0
1975	12.0	7.1
1976	12.0	8.3
1977	12.2	8.4

indebtedness by the underdeveloped countries. Imperialist Banks have begun to participate directly in Third World investments. Thus the debt structure had changed and today a majority of loans are either granted or backed by big imperialist banks. In 1976 40% of debt of the entire Third World was financed by private loans. The tightening of credit in the United States, U.K. and other imperialist countries would not only increase debt-servicing charges of Third World countries but also restrict their ability to obtain further loans. Secondly, the rise in price of oil will create greater difficulties and make it very difficult for them to pay for their essential imports. Thirdly protectionist measures by imperialist countries would have severe repercussions for economic growth and industrial development in the Third World.

Therefore, the slackening demand for primary products and consequent decline in prices, the gloomy outlook for third world exports, and the international monetary and financial crisis,—all these developments indicate that the third world countries will not be able to sustain the relative economic growth these countries achieved in the last decade.

Conclusion

The 70's has been a turning point in history for the world capitalist economy. Sluggish growth and excess capacity has increased inter-imperialist competition and protectionist measures. Imperialist bourgeoisie is seeking to resolve their crisis (a) by attempting to raise the rate of profit at the expense of the

working class — i.e. by reducing wages and social security benefits; by "disciplining" the workers to accept the lower standard of living and higher rate of exploitation and (b) by seeking to step up the penetration of markets in the Third World and the Workers' state Russia, China and etc. As a consequence of this policy the ruling classes are coming into more and explosive conflicts with the working class and their allies the world over.

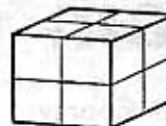
Decisive battles have not yet been fought. Today there is no single imperialist power capable of acting as the world's gendarme. On the other hand the big battalions of the working class have not yet been defeated in any decisive battles. Further the events in Iran show that the majority of the U. S. working class have no interest in getting involved in the affairs of the American ruling class. The working class must prepare for a protracted period of major class battles in the coming decade.

The crisis of the international capitalist economy has provoked a global social crisis involving every aspect of human life. The 80's will decide the manner in which this crisis will be resolved. Therefore the question that would come to the fore again and again in the coming decade will be what is the destiny of mankind — Socialism or Barbarism.

TABLE VI
FOREIGN DEBT OF UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

(Non - OPEC)	—	In billions of dollars.
1970		74.23
1975		151.40
1976		206.80
1977		250 to 260.

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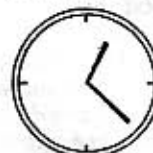
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NATIONALITY

History, myth and political conflict

The problems of nationality continue to make a strong impact on current politics, often in erratic and ugly ways, dissipate popular energies and bedevil even such organised mass efforts like the Lanout movement. Do the roots of the problem lie in a false consciousness which apparently find sanction in history, ancient and colonial?

Every Sinhala child learns the Dutugemunu story at his mother's knee. There is scarcely a Sinhalese or Tamil who does not think of himself as Aryan or Dravidian. In the received wisdom of the educated Sri Lankan is the settled belief that discrimination against the Sinhalese and privileges for the Tamils were a natural extension of colonial policy.

As reported exclusively in the Lanka Guardian (Jan 15) the Social Scientists Association sponsored a two-day seminar where ten of Sri Lanka's leading scholars in spheres of study directly relevant to these and connected issues, presented papers. About 50 social scientists participated in a discussion, particularly noteworthy for its absence of the emotionalism and narrow partisanship which inevitably accompany such exchanges.

As the report published in the last issue stated "there was general agreement that the present chauvinism among the Sinhalese and Tamils could NOT derive from our historical background: a correct understanding of our history would deny any legitimacy to claims of superiority or chronological priority of any particular group....."

On account of the crucial relevance of the authoritative opinions presented at this symposium to present-day social conflicts, several of these papers, sometimes in edited form, appear in this issue. More will appear in subsequent issues.

Discussing the peopling of Sri Lanka. Dr. Senaka Bandaranayake showed how the island had been peopled by various groups of migrants at various times and the resulting amalgam had coalesced into a homogeneous society and that this process had been associated with the growth of a centralised state. Challenging the Vijayan and Aryan myths., he pointed out that priority in chronological time could not be construed as conferring any claims to priority by any particular group.

Professor Leslie Gunawardena traced the growth of a 'Sinhala' consciousness. He showed that during the early stages, the word 'Sinhala' had been applied only to the king and the king group; this identity had even been withheld from all the other retainers and followers. Later the scope of those embraced in the concept 'Sinhala' had been widened, mainly in order to cement their adherence and loyalty to the royal family. The whole process was associated with the growth of feudal kingdoms and principalities in Sri Lanka. He also demonstrated that the numerous wars fought between rulers of principalities and kingdoms in the island between themselves or with the kings and rulers of neighbouring South Indian kingdoms could not be regarded as arising from ethnic or religious conflicts. They were struggles for power between feudal kingdoms, such kingdoms often embracing people of various ethnic groups and religions. The wars between Dutugemunu and Elara have necessarily to be seen in this light: Dutugemunu had to overcome 32 other kings before he found himself sufficiently strong to challenge Elara, whose armies contained many Sinhala people and one of whose chief generals was indeed a Sinhalese. This paper also analysed the Aryan myth, its origin and the way it was used in various periods, upto the present.

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Dutthagamini—Elara episode : A reassessment

by W. I. Siriweera

Most chroniclers and historians project the views of their own age and the perception of their own situation in reading and assessing past events. The treatment of the Dutthagamini—Elara episode by different writers at different times is a clear example of this tendency: A reassessment of the writings on this subject is a pressing need because they have had a tremendous psychological impact on both Sinhala and Tamil communities.

The *Dipavamsa*, our earliest extant record of historical tradition attributed to the middle of the fourth century A.D. contains only a brief reference to Dutthagami Abhaya and Elara. It is interesting to note here that Sena and Guttika, the earliest invaders from South India are referred to as Damilas in this account but Elara is not identified as such. It merely states that the prince named Elara, having killed Asela, ruled righteously for forty-four years. In its recording of events the *Dipavamsa* further states that the prince named Abhaya, the son of Kakavana, surrounded by ten warriors, overcame and killed thirty-two kings and thereafter ruled for twenty four years. At the time of the writing of the *Dipavamsa* or during the one or two centuries prior to it, Sri Lanka did not experience South Indian invasions and the Sinhala and Tamil communities living in the island seem to have existed as best they could without conflict. This is probably part of the explanation for the brief and dispassionate nature of the narration of events regarding Elara and Dutthagamini by the author of the *Depavamsa*.

But the picture has changed completely in the period prior to the writing of the *Mahavamsa*. It is believed that the *Mahavamsa* was written in the early years of the sixth century A.D., perhaps in the time of Moggalana I (491-508).

A few decades before this period the country witnessed the rule of six Tamils: Pandu, Parinda, Khudda Parinda, Tiritara, Dathiya and Pithiya (428-455). The exact place of origin of these Tamils is uncertain. The name Pandu of the first of these rulers, has given rise to the view that they came from the Pandya country. The Sinhala sources; **Pujavali and Rajavali**; call them Tamils from the Cola country. The period from about the middle of the sixth century in South Indian history is usually referred to as the Kalabhra Interregnum and according to Tamil tradition, the Kalabharas kept the Colas and the Pandiyas in subjection. Perhaps the incursion, of Tamils to Sri Lanka in the fifth century which brought the Island under foreign rule for a little over a quarter of a century was not unconnected with the disturbed conditions that prevailed in South India at the time. The *Culavamsa* expressly states that Tamil rule did not extend to the Southern part of the Island, namely Rohana, where the Sinhalese nobles had sought refuge. But epigraphic evidence suggests that the rule of at least some of the Tamil kings extended beyond the limits to which the chronicler confines their realm.

Thus it seems that when the *Mahavamsa* was written the conflict element in the relations between the Sinhalese and the Tamils had crystallized. The political threat posed by the Tamils would have been fresh in the minds of the Sinhalese, and this background would have had some influence on *bhikkhu* Mahanama, the Sinhala Buddhist author of the *Mahavamsa*. A reading of the *Mahavamsa* account of the Dutthagamini—Elara episode shows a tendency to regard the war between Dutthagamini and Elara as a Sinhala—Tamil conflict; however a closer examination of the account tends to cast serious doubt on

this view of the *Mahavamsa* which has been adopted by so many contemporary historians.

The *Mahavamsa* clearly states that Elara arrived here from Cola country. There is no evidence as to the composition of his garrisons and the strength of his army; however, unless Elara had some support in Sri Lanka, it may not have been easy for him to occupy the throne at Anuradhapura for such a long period. As subsequent history shows most of the foreigners who succeeded in wresting the throne and ruling the country for any considerable length of time have had some indigenous support or had been backed by a foreign power. Unfortunately the chronicles do not reveal much about this aspect of Elara's rule and as Wilhelm Geiger has correctly pointed out "not what is said but what is left unsaid is the besetting difficulty of Sinhalese history",

However, reading between the lines in the *Mahavamsa* account, one gets the impression that both Elara and Dutthagamini were participants in a feudal power game and not in a racial war. The *Mahavamsa* states that, when Elara was going to the Cetiya Mountain in a chariot to invite the *bhikkus*, the point of the yoke on his chariot had struck a dagoba, thereby causing injury to the monument. On this occasion it is said that Elara's ministers told him "Oh king! our thupa has been injured by you." This clearly indicates that the ministers of Elara considered the thupa to be theirs, which means that at least the ministers who accompanied Elara in this mission were Buddhists and also most likely, Sinhalese. We also find that one of the generals of Elara was Mittha who was a Sinhalese. His sister's son was Nandimitta, one of Dutthagamini's ten commanders, to whom superhuman exploits have been ascribed in the *Mahavamsa*.

Dutthagamini's march northwards in his campaign against Elara was along the right bank of the Mahaveliganga. In the process Dutthagamini had defeated Elara's generals known as Chatta, Titthamba, Mahakottha, Gavara, Issariya, Nalika Dighabhaya, Kapisisa, Kota, Halavahanaka, Vahittha, Gamini, Kumbha, Nandika, Khanu, Tamba, Unna and Jambu. The **Mahavamsa** states that all these were Tamils but evidence for verification is limited. In the above list at least two names Gamini and Dighabhaya, sound like essentially Sinhala-Buddhist names; while the name of the ten paladins of Dutthagamini, i. e. Velu, sounds like a Tamil name. However, a detailed etymological study of the names is necessary before arriving at a conclusion. In this connection it is relevant and significant to mention that at one stage in the battle; the Sinhalese are said to have killed their compatriots because they had not been able to identify their foe. Such a situation could have occurred only if there had been a substantial number of Sinhalese in Elara's army.

Both the **Dipavamsa** and **Mahavamsa** refer to the killing of thirty-two kings by the son of Kakavanna Tissa. The two references differ only in detail and the latter states that these thirty two kings were Tamils. On the basis of this evidence it seems reasonable to assume that there were several semi-independent chiefs in the area north of Rohana when Elara was the foremost ruler in Rajarata and Dutthagamini in Rohana; perhaps Dutthagamini before giving the final blow to Elara's capital subjugated these semi-independent chiefs in his attempt to unify the island.

The achievements of Dutthagamini in the unification of the whole island under one banner and the establishment of Buddhism on a very secure basis through tremendous royal patronage had captured the imagination of Buddhist monks and the Sinhala people at the time of the writing of the **Mahavamsa**. This has undoubtedly led the author of the **Mahavamsa** to writing his text almost as an epic on Dutthagamini.

The **Mahavamsa** account states that Dutthagamini's campaign against Elara assumed the character of holy war, the sole objective of which was the perpetuation and glorification of Buddhism. It further states that a band of five hundred **bhikkhus** from Tissamaharama monastery accompanied the army and that Viharadevi accompanied her son and shared the perils and difficulties of the campaign with ordinary soldiers.

In the **Mahavamsa** one does not find any evidence to suggest that Buddhists were persecuted under Elara. On the contrary the chronicle itself states that Elara was a pious and just king and that, though himself a Hindu, he had patronized Buddhism. Elara's invitation to the **bhikkhus** of the Cetiya mountain referred to in the **Mahavamsa** may have been for an alms-giving, for some form of religious function or to seek advice or to solicit support. Unfortunately the purpose of this invitation is not given in the chronicle. But Elara's love of justice, even in the eyes of the chronicler, was stronger than natural affection for his own son. It seems that the author of the **Mahavamsa** has glorified his hero Dutthagamini for the services he rendered to advance the cause of Buddhism by building monasteries and shrines of great magnitude. Ironically, one of the warriors of Dutthagamini Abhaya Dathasena, subsequently entered the Buddhist Order after crossing over to South India, the homeland of the Tamils and found peace in the monasteries there.

According to the **Mahavamsa**, Dutthagamini having unified Sri Lanka for the greater glory of Buddhism lamented that he had been compelled to kill myriads of human beings in order to achieve this great purpose. This killing of human beings was carried out not only with the knowledge of the **bhikkhus**, but to a great extent with their approval for there were **bhikkhus** who marched with the army. Here, the **Mahavamsa** author has fallen into a dilemma and in his predicament he has improvised a convenient solution. It is said in the **Mahavamsa** that when the **arahats** in Piyangudipa knew the king's thoughts they

sent eight **arahats** to comfort the king. And they coming in the middle watch of the night, alighted at the palace-gate. These **arahats** are said to have assuaged the king's feelings and categorically asserted that all the killings of human beings caused by Dutthagamini in no way hindered his path to heaven. Their argument was that, among the enemies of Dutthagamini who lost their lives in his war against Elara, there was only one person who had taken the Three Refuges and one who observed the Five Precepts in addition. The rest were "unbelievers and men of evil life... not more to be esteemed than beasts." As professor Paranavitana's analysis has shown, these accounts in the chronicle and Pali commentaries indicate the close alliance that was being forged between the Buddhist sangha and the Sinhala State. However it is equally obvious that thinking men including the chroniclers pondered on the inevitable inconsistencies of that alliance.

The attitude adopted towards the Dutthagamini-Elara episode by Mayurapada Thera, the Sinhala author of the thirteenth century book **Pujavali** has been discussed by Liyanagama in an excellent essay entitled "A Forgotten Aspect of Sinhala-Tamil Relations." Mayurapada Thera, was a contemporary of the Indian invader Magha (1215-1252). Writing with the bitter memory of Magha's misdeeds fresh in his mind, the author has ascribed similar characteristics to earlier invasions and speak of them too in an angry and embittered tone. The good words said of Elara in the older chronicles, **Dipavamsa** and **Mahavamsa**, are not only absent from Mayurapada's **Pujavali** but he is branded as an unrighteous ruler who destroyed monasteries and the Buddhist Order.

Wars fought between the two kingdoms within the island and conspiracies and manouverings for political power among the chiefs were not something new in Sri Lankan history. The fact that the ruler of Rajarata during Dutthagamini's early phase happened to be a Tamil should not

(Continued on Page 17)

Impact of British policy

by Susil Siriwardene

I believe that the most open and direct manifestation of policy and action based on ethnic considerations to be found during the British colonial era is located within the area of British constitutional policy. Hence I have decided to focus attention on this limited area. Within this limited area, it is necessary to trace the impact on first, the national elite, and then, on those wider elements outside the elite. This is especially important I think, because of the most distinctive feature of our national movement, which is that the elite had only a friendly contradiction with their colonial rulers, while it must be assumed that the masses had an antagonistic relation with the British.

Resistance and the First Phase (1908-1920)

The idea of 'communal electorates' was a part and parcel of British constitutional policy from the time of Colebrooke. In the first Legislative Council of 1833, the Unofficials numbering six, consisted of 3 Europeans, 1 Burgher, 1 Sinhalese and 1 Tamil. While constitutional issues were mildly canvassed after the 1860s, they began to be articulated with some force again, only in 1908. It is well to remember, that by this time not only were the mercantilist roots of the plantation economy well entrenched and the pioneers of the English-educated elite at large about town, but the gathering momentum of the vernacular nationalist revivalist movement had also clearly registered itself. In other words, the social conditions themselves were propitious for an attitude of resistance to communal ideas. What happened in 1908 then? Let us listen to Dr. G. C. Mendis' account about it:

The English-educated middle class demanded in 1908 the reform of the Legislative Council and the establishment of territorial electorates, in

harmony with the administrative and economic unification which had already taken place. The British Government then, deviating from the objectives of the Colebrooke Reforms on the ground that society in Ceylon was still divided by race, established communal electorates instead of trying to weld the people into a single nation by the creation of territorial electorates as requested. (Mendis, p 115)

Dr. Mendis goes on to say why the middle class asked for territorial electorates.

The problems of government were now more economic and territorial than racial, as the administration for some time had been conducted on a territorial basis. Hence they demanded that territorial representation should replace communal representation. (Mendis, p. 83)

In this instance we noticed clearly that while the nationalists were acting rationally and progressively, the colonialists were acting in a way that tended to keep the various communities divided. Are we to understand this as a simple error of judgement?

Though the riots of 1915 divided up the Sinhala and Muslim peoples, it had the salutary effect of unifying the leaders of the elite. Arunachalam's impassioned condemnation of the British brutality in putting down the riots and his moving plea for the release of the Sinhalese leaders who had been imprisoned, two years later, earned him the Presidency of the Ceylon National Congress. Though we are on thin ground would we be wrong in understanding these events as further positive contributions towards strengthening and internalising resistance to communal thinking?

Surrender and the Second Phase (1920-1947)

By 1920 the unity forged under strain by the elite is definitively shattered thanks to the singular designs of Governor Manning. In that year he first drove a wedge between the Kandians and the Low

Countrymen in the Congress and made the former withdraw from it on the promise of a separate communal electorate for the Kandians. Then in 1921 he manipulated the split between Arunachalam and the Congress. In August of that year the Tamil elite formed their own Tamil Mahajana Sabha to articulate their demand as a minority community. Here is Prof. K. M. de Silva's appraisal of Manning's constitutional handywork:

Manning regarded the Ceylon National Congress as an intolerable challenge to the British position in Ceylon, and set about the business of fashioning its discomfiture with a ruthlessness that befitted a more formidable adversary... Suffice it to say that he achieved it (discomfiture) through a skilful and deliberate manipulation of the communal differences and tensions in Ceylon's plural society. Indeed his handling of the problems of constitutional reform in Ceylon would serve as an illuminating textbook case study in the application of a policy of divide et impera. (Univ. vol. 3, p. 396)

While Manning's desire to subvert is rational from the colonial standpoint, the surrender on the part of the elite like Sir James Pieris requires explanation. We must emphasize that the unity that was shattered in this instance, proved to be very costly, in that communal politics came to dominate and spread like a cancer thereafter. It is here that we have to question the whole source of strength of the elite. On questioning we find that the mass base of the elite was minimal; it was introverted and confined to a clique of families and landowning interests; it had no cultural roots amongst the vernacular national movement; its perception of colonialism was that of a master who will always act justly by his charge; what was needed was not political independence but a wider participation of the elite.

From this point, the contradictions that matured, were not between the nationalists and the

colonialists, but rather among different national communities. The fissiparous tendency proliferated and the process of organising each one's own community became the first priority. Each community turned more and more onto itself, and developed its new-found self-consciousness with fervent zeal. **Unity among and between communities, gave way to unity within communities.** This meant that communalism had passed through a new stage of rationalisation. Communalism was consolidated in the process. The visible manifestations of this trend were the Tamil Mahajana Sabha (1920), Sinhala Maha Sabha (1937), the Muslim League, and the Tamil Congress (1944) Look how the community identity is proclaimed loud and clear!

When it came to the Donoughmore Commission in 1927, communalism was institutionalised, and the minorities demanded communal representation most fervently. Now it was the turn of the colonialists to analyse its evil. The Commissioners declared:

We have unhesitatingly come to the conclusion that communal representation is as it were, a canker of the body politic eating deeper and deeper into the vital energies of the people, breeding self-interest, suspicion and animosity, poisoning the new growth of political consciousness and effectively preventing the development of a national or corporate spirit. (Dr. Mendis, p 117)

With the abandonment of communal representation first in the Donoughmore Constitution and later in the Soulbury Constitution, the wheel has gone full circle.

However, we must return to the question of the impact of these policies on the masses. What about the radicals among the elite like A. E. Goonesinghe, whose Young Lanka League cried out for Swaraj in the 1920s? What about the vernacular nationalists, whose interests would have been different from these of the elite? Finally what about the working classes and the broad masses? In other words we have to settle the question of the impact of colonial policies on other strata of our nationalist movement.

Under development of Ideology

Radicals of the twenties like A. E. Goonesinghe came to a sorry pass a decade later, when they had to seek refuge in communalism out of all slogans to stake their last political claims before leaving the stage for ever. What better irony than this of the shallowness of our nationalism. What blindspots it is capable of having concealed behind its radical facade! What it means is an imperfect understanding of the history of our plural society and the far-reaching implications of this plurality under anti-colonial, nation-making conditions. It means that our thinkers at this time had not grasped the essential nature of colonialism and the question of political power (political independence). These two issues are vitally interlinked, because the classic opportunity and experience of national unity is in the united struggle of all nationalities and ethnic groups against the colonial enemy. It is this struggle that determines the quality of nationalism, its depth and breadth. It is here that the various strata of our national movement are guilty of evasions and compromises. While it can be considered a failure of political vision, more generally it can be considered a failure in the development of ideology.

What about the next strata, the vernacular nationalists? Perhaps it is correct to say that the vernacular nationalist movement, for all its militancy and nationalism, possessed as often such movements do, certain reactionary tendencies. One of these was a communal content. Our nationalist movement also sought legitimacy and inspiration in the past. In the process, it would have naturally revived certain nationalist myths like Sri Lanka being the land of the Sinhala Buddhists. Unless such a vision into the past was balanced by a sufficient awareness of modern democratic thinking, it is very likely that its acquired nationalism would have a content of ethnic prejudice and obscurantism. Sinhala intellectuals like Cumaratinga Muni-dasa and Hemapala Munidasa would be good examples of exemplary nationalists, who nevertheless mani-

fest attitudes of unconscious communalism. Their encounter with national culture did not result in an encounter with a modern humanism and a political consciousness, which would have seen them through the ethnic barrier that has been erected in our midst. Thus we may answer our opening question by saying that many of the vernacular nationalists would have joined an organisation like the Sinhala Maha Saba, while a minority would have espoused the left movement.

Finally there is the left movement to account for. While the left movement had a correct perspective on both the National Question as well as that of national independence, and while it did a lot of individual and group work on the basis of communal unity, the whole post 1964 history of the left forces us to raise question about the adequacy and density of the perceptions worked out in the thirties and the forties. While the left comes out in a very favourable light in competition with all the other forces giving leadership to the masses during the colonial period, a more internal assesment, based on the tasks in hand seen retrospectively, shows up a certain thinness of effort. This is necessarily linked to the whole omission on the left of the cultural question, which proved disastrous later on, in the kind of guilts and distortions it produced during the 'second wave' of Sinhala nationalism as it has been called. The serious limitation of the underdevelopment of theory and research by the left movement during the first two or three decades, calls upon us to be critical of the superficial character of the perception of these issues at the start of the movement.

Our under development of ideology in general and in an issue like the unity of the different nationalities in the anti-colonial struggle in particular, is brought into relief the moment we compare the experience of our other neighbours in struggle. On the one hand, there are the teachings of the Marxist teachers who have confronted these problems clearly. Then there are

(Continued on Page 17)

Tamils : Social composition

K. Sivathamby

Ever since each of the two major communities of this island began fighting against the deculturising effect of the socio-educational policies pursued by the British, by falling back on their feudalistic, religio-cultural roots, the characteristic feature of politicization has been the polarisation of the Sinhala-Buddhist and Hindu-Tamil groups. The mode of Sri Lanka's apprenticeship to parliamentary democracy (representation on the basis of ethnic and social groups) helped to consolidate this division. At the start there was a sharpening of the ethnic differences at the level of the emerging bourgeoisie, which they later, with the extension of the franchise, transmitted to the masses, at which level it became 'race riots'. The history of the constitutional reforms of this country, viewed in this light could also be seen as the history of the attempts made to determine the political status of the Tamils within a unitary Sri Lankan State. The interaction of the socio-economic motivations, the political demands and the ensuing constitutional adjustments has led to the emergence of language and religion (more language than religion) as the main planks in the process of decolonization.

Most of the academic attempts made to grapple with and elucidate this problem, have considered it sufficient to describe the events and delineate the trends. Thus the more deep-seated problems of inter-nationality relations were explained away as the "language issue" or more simplistically the "communal problem". It is true that this was a communal problem in that it arose because these "ethnic groups have developed an awareness of a common identity and have attempted to define the boundaries of the group(s). But it was something more too, for

each of these groups had also mobilized themselves for political action and were becoming politically significant. It is at a stage like this that a community transforms itself into a nationality. A better conceptual tool is therefore necessary to understand this process and the concept of nationality is more suitable. But the unconscious impact of the Western concept of the nation-state did not permit the politicians and the analysts to view the problem in that light. The preoccupation with the nation of "the language issue" also hid from their view the 'intra-communal' differences found especially among the Tamils. Except for a few (Arasaratnam, Wilson and Jupp), others failed to highlight the significance of this situation found among the Tamils and indicate how it had influenced the formulation of the strategies adopted and solutions suggested by both the protagonists and the antagonists.

Even though there has been a general acceptance of the fact that the Tamils of Sri Lanka have genuine grievances regarding their rights as full fledged 'nationals' of Sri Lanka, there has been no unanimity of political opinion or action among the Tamils at any given moment or over a given situation. The closest ever the Tamils in this island came to closing their ranks was when the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was formed in 1972 with the coming together of the Federal Party (FP), the Tamil Congress (TC) and the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) led by S. Thondaman, along with the Tamil M. P. in the United National Party (UNP), K. W. Devanayagam. But with the formation of the UNP Government in 1977 and with the inclusion of Devanayagam in the Cabinet and later with the absorption of

Thondaman into the Cabinet (the political basis of this alignment has never been made clear), the TULF ceased to be a "front" in the original meaning of the term; it is now a combination of two parties—the F. P. and the T. C., the latter split into two over the choice of candidates in the elections of 1977 with a dissenting group under the leadership of Kumar Ponnambalam, son of its founder President G. G. Ponnambalam.

However it is at this time of dissensions and defections that the TULF has emerged as the voice of the oppressed Tamils. It is important to note that it is the national situation that has helped it to emerge as the main opposition group in the parliamentary politics of this country. It is also of interest to note that the unilateral accommodations made by the ruling parties on the status of Tamil language (both the SLFP and the UNP) have not been accepted as agreeable solutions because the TULF had not accepted them.

There is also another dimension to this problem which exhibits the internal contradictions within the Tamil 'community'. The defection of C. Rajadurai, the First M. P. for Batticaloa from the ranks of the TULF and the defense he made for his cross over to the UNP that, among other things, his action would help the Tamils of the Eastern province to develop themselves is an indication that labelling the Tamil issue as just a language issue or communal problem would not be enough. The lukewarm attitude of the Tamils of the districts of Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mannar and Vavuniya to the issue of standardization and the provision of district quotas in University admissions—an issue which has more than any other factor led to the rise of

a militant youth movement in Jaffna—is also very revealing. If, along with these, we take the utterances of S. Thondaman that he has joined the government in order to work for the alleviation of the conditions of the neglected up-country Tamils, it becomes clear that the Tamil problem is not just a language issue or a communal problem. We need to go beyond the limits of ethnicity to understand this problem in proper perspective.

It is significant that progressive opinion in this country now realises the need for a radical change in the attitude towards this problem and that the Tamils of Sri Lanka should be taken as either a nationality or a nation, having the inalienable right of self-determination. This would therefore be an opportune time to analyse the character of the social composition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

“Tamil”

The word “Tamil” refers to the language and its users. The South Indian usage includes the Muslims too (quite often they are referred to as Tamil Muslims). But in Sri Lanka Muslims have a separate identity. The F. P. therefore has been trying to popularise, with very limited success, the term ‘Tamil-speaking peoples’. The religio-cultural traditions and historical conditions of Sri Lanka have given the Muslims a separate political identity. Thus we are left with only the ‘Tamils’.

It is a well-known fact of Sri Lankan history and politics that the Tamils in Sri Lanka are divided into two primary groups—the Indian Tamils and the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The term ‘Indian Tamils’ refers mainly to those plantation labourers brought from South India in the 19th century and to their descendants, the bulk of whom are yet on the plantations; a small percentage of that group has migrated to urban areas and have become merchants or monthly-wage earners. This term also includes the South Indian merchants especially the Chetties, who had established themselves in Colombo and other

provincial towns. There is a Chetty population in Jaffna town; this settlement is not directly connected with the above-mentioned migrations.

A closer look at the social organization of the Sri Lankan Tamils reveals that, in spite of ethnological homogeneity they would in terms of geography, economic organization, social structure and level of development fall into two distinct groups—(a) The Tamils of the E. Province (mostly referred to as Batticaloa Tamils and (b) the Tamils of the North. Here again, the second group has a further division—(I) The Tamils of Vanni and of Mannar district and (II) the Jaffna Tamils.

An attempt will be made in this paper to go into the socio-economic foundations of each of these groups of Tamils and to indicate the relationships they have with each other. It will also be shown how in spite of the group rivalries there is an overriding urge for unity and solidarity which brings them all together as a nationality.

“Indian Tamil”

The “Indian Tamils” living in the plantation areas are the descendants of those Tamilian workers who immigrated from South India in the latter half of the 19th century. “Their social customs and practices, though essentially of the Hindus, differ from those of their co-religionists in Jaffna, Batticaloa or Trincomalee.

The customs and ceremonies also vary according to their caste or village in India from where they originally came some 150 years ago. The system of recruitment of labour at the Tamilnadu end, the physical isolation of the group here in the plantations, and the type of labour organization both in regard to their work and their trade-unions and above all their political isolation from the Sinhalese people among whom they worked, have cumulatively helped to preserve their separate identity and to maintain the caste continuities as it had operated in the places of their origin.

The continuity of the caste system is the result of the interplay of certain other factors which may briefly be recapitulated here. First, the relative isolation of estate labourers from the wider Sinhalese society has contributed to the caste system. Further the host society has a caste system of a kind which is not inimical to the continuity of caste system among the immigrant labourers. Second the two important features of the immigration pattern viz., the large scale family immigration and the Kangany system of recruitment prevented labourers from attaining anonymity. Third, the productive organization of tea plantation was not so disturbing as to break the traditional images of castes. Fourth, the formation of labour gangs under Kanganies, particularly under Sub-Kanganies strengthened the caste and kinship ties. Fifth, there were informal sanctions such as social boycott and ridiculing in public which maintained caste norms. Finally the festival and ritual occasions provided an arena of caste activities.

Next: Caste continuities

Impact of . . .

(Continued from Page 15)

the teachings of bourgeois humanists. Finally there are the examples of people like Jose Marti and Sukarno, who perceived these issues with great clarity. See what Sukarno's biographer has to say about the development of his thinking in his early years around 1926:

His political instinct led him to believe that he could bridge these divisions. His eclectic inclinations fitted him for the task and led him, in his own elaboration of nationalism, to draw on a variety of intellectual sources. He could apply a Marxist analysis of imperialism or make use of Muslim hostility to infidel domination, but in so doing he was concerned to develop the central idea of the nation as an entity which could reconcile conflicting elements in Indonesian society and subordinate them to an overarching ideal. (Legge, p. 80)

NOTES (All quotations from) — Dr. G. C. Mendis: Ceylon Today and Yesterday, Associated Newspaper Ltd. 1963. — Prof. K. M. de Silva (ed.): University of Ceylon History of Ceylon, Vol. 111, 1973. — J. D. Legge: Sukarno, A Political Biography, Pelican 1973.

National dialogue : an experiment

by Godfrey Gunatilleke

The dialogue was conducted among a number of rural communities as well as selected urban groups. The rural communities were chosen from different locations in the Island representing different types of villages and covered agro-climatic, occupational socio-economic and ethnic variations. The selection was purposive and not by any means fully representative. The communities that have been selected include among others a coastal village where the primary occupation was fishing, a community of wage labourers of Indian origin in a tea plantation in the hill country, an agricultural peasant community which was already deriving benefits from government irrigation programmes in the dry zone, a community of new settlers under a government irrigation project, a rural community in the south of Sri Lanka adjacent to a tea estate, a village community in the central region of Sri Lanka in close proximity to a tea plantation, a rural community in the wet zone close to market towns and in a region where there has been considerable development of commercial plantations, a semi-urban community close to Colombo in the outskirts of the urban commuter belt, a community of Sri Lankan Tamils in the northern part of the island, a community with a predominantly Muslim population, and a slum community in Colombo City.

The dialogues at the national level were organised for 10 groups. Three were organised by the voluntary agencies largely representing the young Western educated elites. These were held in Colombo and included business men, trade unionists, executives in the private and public sectors, mercantile clerks. Two of the seminars were organised specially for the trade unions; one was held in English and the other in Sinhala. Two seminars were held for the professional groups, particularly the academic community, and three seminars were organised by the National

Council for Religion and Peace' one being conducted in English and the other two in Sinhala.

It would be seen that the programme was able to include a very diverse group of citizens in both the rural and urban sectors. The selection of rural communities covered a fairly representative segment of the rural sector and included communities which would have presented problems which were typical of the regions in which they were located. For example, the outlook of the coastal fishing village would provide some insight into the profile of aspirations of these rural communities which are scattered along the southwest coast and which are exposed to strong urban influences. The community of plantation workers has been selected from the community of Indian immigrant labour which accounts for a significant part of the agricultural workforce. The village community in the north-central dry zone reveals the changing nature of aspirations in a peasant community which is being drawn into a major development programme of the government and therefore offers interesting insights into the nature of responses of rural people regarding the prospects for improvement of material well-being. The four communities which are contiguous to the commercial plantation sector represent for different socio-economic situations with different levels of income, widely varying resource bases and different levels of dependence on wage employment. The national dialogues covered a broad spectrum of the main interest groups — the business sector, the academic community, religious organisations, trade unions and youth. In the selection of the urbanised groups there is also some attempt made to involve the participation of people with different political affiliations representing the broad spectrum of political opinion in the country.

What are the perceptions and aspirations of the average Sri Lankan household, rural and urban, regarding development? In a project sponsored by IFDA (International Foundation for Development Alternatives) a research team of the Marga Institute sought answers to this question. Though the limitations on time and resources could permit only a small sample of the population, the Institute felt that the methodology which was used and the locations selected could open up a 'National Dialogue on Development', which hopefully could be linked more effectively at some future date to the decision-making processes. The paper was prepared by Godfrey Gunatilleke, Director Marga, while the Research team consisted: Sunimal Fernando, Consultant/Sociologist, Rex Casinader, Assistant Director, Rural — Horape: Henry de Mel; Mirissa: Amarasiri de Silva; S. B. Dissanayake; Henegama: Conrad Ranawake; Walgampaya: A. K. Basnayake; Malwanahinna: M. D. Ellepola; Madakumbura: M. H. E. Ariyaratne; Wegalla: G. Amarasena; Ritnagiri Estate: L. Shanthi Kumar; Namal Oya: Gamini de Alwis; Kaledivulwewa: S. A. D. Neville; Mathagal: L. Shanthi Kumar; Kirillapone: R. W. Jayasinghe. National — M. J. Perera, Associate Director, Sydney Wanasinghe Ms. Yvonne Schokman, N. Abeynaike, S. Ranatunge.

The methodology that was followed adopted two different approaches for the rural part of the project and the national urban part. In the case of the rural dialogues it was felt that the project would have to be structured around a representative sample of household dialogues which would eventually lead to a village seminar. Therefore from each village a few households were selected from different income groups. For the purpose of the selection a broad classification of the income groups in the villages was made. In most villages the classification was based on observations and studies that had already been made in these villages as part of a programme of village studies which had focused on the structure of power in these communities. The classification however was not made on any accurate survey of income data as this was not important for the

project. It was possible to group the households into 3 or 4 categories on the basis of general observations made regarding the standard of living of these households and broad estimates of their income. As far as possible the selection was to cover the different age groups. Therefore from each income category an effort was made to select households from four age groups spanning "young" households between 20 and 30 years of age at one end, and "old" households where the family head was over 55 years. In the actual selection of the households however it was not always possible to get all the age groups in each income category. As might have been expected, most of the households in the higher income categories were in the older age groups. The object of selecting households in this manner was to gain some understanding regarding the differences in aspirations related to income and age. The selection of the households also paid attention to such criteria as caste, village leadership, political affiliation. While keeping within the basic framework of income and age, families were selected so as to include village leaders who may have had decided views about development and the future of the village as well as households who had positions of authority on account of wealth, caste and status. Ideally the dialogues conducted within this framework was expected to provide profiles of expectations which would have enabled one to identify the perceptions of the future and the articulation of needs at different income levels and in different age groups. As will be explained later in the analysis of the content of the dialogues, the reality did not correspond so closely to the expectations that were implied in the framework.

One researcher was assigned to each village. He was expected to hold approximately 20-25 household dialogues which were to be conducted in depth with groups of family members present and participating in the discussions. Of course the dialogue was primarily directed at the head of the family with other members intervening when they felt inclined to do so. The researchers were expected to

create a sufficiently informal atmosphere so as to enable the respondents to articulate their views freely. The research generally have reported that the methodology that has been adopted has been successful insofar as they were able to elicit a high degree of participation from the households. ●

Next: Structure of dialogue.

Canon James . . .

(Continued from Page 4)

development and specific actions in community living, and of late it has discovered significance of the religions of the world, acting and witnessing away from the traditional acceptance of conservatism to being transformed as positive forces of change.

It was this special emphasis placed by Christian Action that Canon Eric James highlighted in his address on 'Religion & Social Change'—which he delivered at the YMCA Forum Hall. Canon James, Director of Christian Action is also Canon of St. Albans Cathedral. In the absence of The Rt. Rev. Wickremasinghe the meeting was chaired by Sevaka Yohan Devanada of the Devasaranaramya, Kurunegala. Bishop Swithin Fernando was also present and took part in the discussion.

In the course of his address Canon James emphasized the the basic rights that a society should guarantee which he defined as (1) the right to life in a non-discriminatory society. Creation of such a society entails a radical restructuring which will of necessity set in the forefront the centrality of the class struggle of radical self criticism at every stage of the developing and changing society. The radicalism of Jesus Christ must be the activating force for any realistic structural change. If the aims struggle and spirit are not taken from Christ, said Canon James, the whole enterprise of change may end in excessive power being concentrated in a bureaucracy, which considers itself infallible in its power, or it may take forms of neo-marxism which would blunt the edge of structural change. Any struggle to be meaningful must take its stand at the centre of the heat of the struggle. As

a follow up on the lecture and discussion it was decided that a Seminar be organised in March, at the Kurunegala Town Hall on the theme 'Religion and Development'.

— Kumudini Rosa

Dutthagamini . . .

(Continued from Page 13)

lead one to interpret the Dutthagamini-Elara epoch as one of serious rivalry and conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. In fact in ancient politics feudal chieftains, royal princes and religious organizations which were also part of the feudal structure played a more important role than ethnic groups. It is interesting to note here that Dutthagamini's warrior Dathusena who was referred to above as one who went to South India and entered the Buddhist order, did so because Dutthagamini is said to have given an order to kill him. The narration of the story states that some favourite warriors of Dutthagamini had poisoned the mind of the king against Dathasena saying that the latter posed a treat to the royal authority.

The treatment of the Dutthagamini-Elara episode in the three important texts, the *Dipavamsa*, the *Mahavamsa* and the *Pujavali* differs from one another and throws light not only on the development of historiography of Sri Lanka, but also on prejudices that have entered into historical records. The views of the authors of these texts which have had a wide influence on the shaping of contemporary attitudes (both Sinhala and Tamil) have to be re-examined in the context of the circumstances under which each of them wrote. Special cognizance has to be taken of the purpose of each author, and of the climate of thought prevailing at the time of writing these three texts. As a result the Dutthagamini-Elara episode persists in the minds of the average Sinhalese as a holy war for the protection and glorification of Buddhism in general and an ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in particular.

Race and Class in poetry, drama

by J. Uyangoda

PIBIDENA PEYA—(Hour of Awakening)

An anthology of Tamil Poems in Sinhala. Translated and Edited by Parakrama Kodithuwakku. Published by the Christian Workers Fellowship.

Parakrama Kodithuwakku, who about a year back, edited a collection of Tamil poems in Sinhala, has now come out with another anthology entitled. **PIBIDENA PEYA** (Hour of Awakening). The special feature of the present anthology is that it is devoted to what one may call, the Tamil poetry from the 'up-country'. All the writers come from the hill country plantation areas, and the subject-matter is essentially the oppressive conditions and genuine grievances, resentment and remonstrances etc of the Tamil plantation workers and their families.

It is an undisputed fact that the plantation Tamils are the most oppressed section of the people in this country. Their state of oppression has been two-fold. Firstly, as a nationality group they are discriminated against and neglected. And as workers, they are exploited. Therefore, it is natural that the real sufferings of the Tamil masses in the plantation areas should have been reflected in the creative writings of their sons and daughters. Parakrama deserves our warm congratulations for having brought out this anthology thus providing an opportunity to the Sinhala reader to share the authentic experiences of that section of their compatriots.

The underlying theme of all the poems (including the two prose-writings) is the revelation, in varying degrees, of many aspects—economic, social, political etc. of the oppressive conditions of the Tamil plantations population, accompanied with a strong element

of protest. In other words, the writers represented in this volume are not only aware of the plight of their own brethren, but also aware of the fact that only a radical transformation of the existing order of things can bring about any real solution. To put it another way, poetry, for them is both a vehicle of protest and a vessel of hopes for a new and better order.

The anthology opens with a simple but powerful poem by Pana Thangam, a teacher by profession. His is an appeal to the plantation workers, to awaken, to rise and struggle. Kurungi Nadan—also a teacher with working-class origins—exhibits a fine poetic instinct coupled with a political awareness. His poems about the most unhappy ordeal of the repatriates (a superb translation too) is one of the best in the anthology. In all his poems, his message is clear and straightforward—Rise against injustice; struggle for emancipation. Special mention must be made about Kurungi Thennavan and P. Mukkan—two working class poets.

The most political conscious among the poets in this volume is P. Mukkan, a worker now migrated to India. He displays a superb poetic imagination enriched by an understanding of some sorry aspects of contemporary Lankan politics, including trade union politics, as it affects the plantation workers. Mukkan's subject matter is so rich and real that even the translator is at his best in these (Mukkan's) poems. Others represented in this anthology are Ismailia Davood, K. Sivagnam, M. Nesan and C. Kumar. The prose-essay of M. Nesan entitled "After the August" is an impressionistic portrayal of the situation immediately after the communal riots of August '77. He raises the question: What is the way out for the plantation worker? To go back to India or to live in fear? "No," says Nesan, "Build up a new leader-

ship so that you can combine your efforts with that of the world proletariat."

Without any doubt, "PIBIDENA PEYA" shows that the Plantation Tamils have a rich and militant poetic tradition—though it may be very recent in origin—parallel to the Black literature in America.

MAWATHE API—A play produced by Nalan Mendis.

A group of young theatre enthusiasts have recently produced a remarkable play entitled "MAWATHE API". It was first staged at the Tower Hall Theatre, on December 11, for an invited audience. The first public show was on January 18, at the Lumbini Theatre. Nalan Mendis has produced "Mawathe Api" on behalf of the Social Realistic Art Circle. The script is by Kingsley Loos, who plays the main role too.

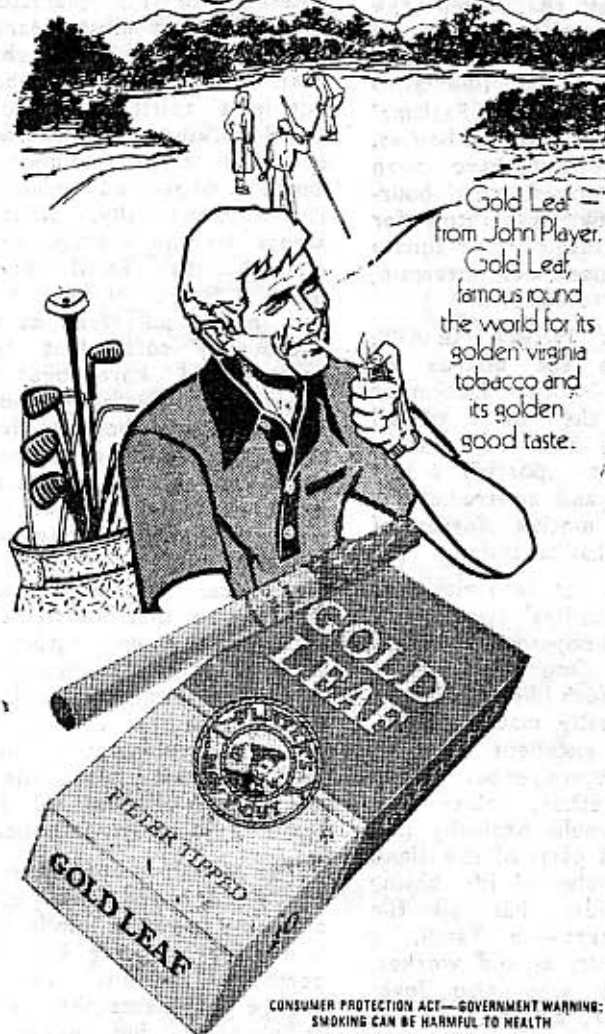
"Mawathe Api" deserves consideration of both the critic and the theatre-goer. Nalan Mendis provides the audience with an entirely new experience, unlike the common, if not cheap, stuff we are more than familiar with. His effort to depict some aspects of the Sinhala-Tamil National Question—a controversial and explosive issue in itself—through the medium of theatre, is commendable, in spite of various lapses one can notice as far as the craft of the theatre is concerned.

The story unfolds at a work site in the Dry Zone—perhaps in the Mahaveli basin. A group of young workers who have come from various parts of the country take temporary residence at a camp. Appuhamy from the South, Bandara from Kandy and Sangarapillai from Jaffna are among these workers. Not unnaturally, the Sinhala workers are extremely chauvinistic and their attitude towards Sangarapillai—the Tamil

worker, in particular and the Tamil people in general, is hostile. Meanwhile, another young worker—Bandu comes to the work-site. A man with ideals (incidentally, he carried a violin wherever he goes!) marks the beginning of radical changes in the attitudes and outlook of all the workers. Bandu represents the politically enlightened and socially conscious segments of the petty-bourgeoisie. He succeeds in convincing the Sinhala workers, by confronting them with concrete problems and situations of the senselessness and irrationality of communal hatred and the necessity of class solidarity. Meanwhile, communal riots break-out. Sinhala villagers start looting and killing Tamils. But, now the Sinhala workers—including Appuhamy and Bandara no longer racially conscious protect their comrade from Jaffna—Sangarai. By this time, Bandara is killed for his "sin of protecting an alien". Sangarai, now having lost his employment as a result of a strike, leaves for Jaffna. Bidding farewell to his fellow-Sinhala workers, Sangarai overcome with emotions, says, "I will join the struggle there, comrades, it is upto you to go on with your struggle." Memorable words!

"Mawathe Api" is clearly a committed play. The young men of the Social Realistic Art Circle seem to have realized the unavoidable responsibility of art to do its historically determined duty by society. When society is in turmoil and when the struggle of the masses is growing, the dramatist can no longer indulge in bringing petty affairs of extremely individualistic nature to the stage, as happened in the 1960's. Kingsley Loos, the script-writer, though he is an amateur in his craft, still displays, in terms of subject matter, a commendable maturity which even our experienced and senior playwrights most often fail to reveal. His actors neither shout heavily-worded political slogans nor utter oblique and pungent phrases that make the audience uneasy. "Mawathe Api" shows the direction along which Sinhala theatre should traverse in the present decade.

Player's Gold Leaf for good taste.



Gold Leaf
from John Player.
Gold Leaf,
famous round
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Race in Theatre

by Sunila Abeysekera

This is an age when theatre proliferates at an incredible rate. Each day brings with it a spate of posters and banners, advertising plays with titles that range from the obscure to the ridiculous. Almost all of them have a brief and uneventful run, usually so brief that even the initial sum of money spent on the production cannot be recovered. Yet, perennials like 'Suba saha Yasa' and 'Keleni Paalama' continue to run to packed houses, whether because they have been adopted by a 'nouveau riche' bourgeoisie who seek desperately for 'culture' or because of their innate ability to amuse and entertain, I don't venture to discern.

Nalan Mendis' 'MAWATHE API', which went on the boards for the first time in mid December stands out in the midst of all this hurly-burly as a play with a genuine intent to portray a few of the conflict and contradictions that are the motive forces of society in Sri Lanka today.

The action is set into the background of a 'waadiya' (workmen's lodging) of an anonymous 'development' scheme. One development scheme being much like the other, it does not really matter which. This was an excellent play to assemble a heterogeneous group of people together, since in a 'waadiya' one would normally find persons from all parts of the island and from all walks of life coming together. Mendis has all the 'type' characters — a Tamil, a Sinhala chauvinist, an old worker, a revolutionary who also loves music, a villager, a woman. However, one of the main shortcomings of the play was Mendis' inability to develop any one of these characters as a flesh-and-blood figure devoid of stagey posturing.

The Tamil was played by Granville Rodrigo, appearance, expres-

sion, delivery of dialogue all caricatured to a point where the largely Sinhala audience tittered and at times even burst into loud laughter at his mere appearance. He was full of brotherly feelings towards the Sinhalese, even those who maligned him most, and the weakness of this character came through to us most clearly when confronting the Sinhala chauvinist. Even though Mendis probably set out in a spirit of portraying a Tamil working man's character—the character of a member of Sri Lanka's oppressed national minority—sympathetically, what comes across to the average viewer is, one, that the Tamil character is made a figure of fun, and, two, that he is portrayed as a 'weak and weepy' sort. Not that Sangarri should have been a Tamil chauvinist. Certainly not. But he could have been made into a truer representative of the oppressed Tamil people of this country. As it is, Mendis defeats the purpose of incorporating a Tamil character into the play in the first place. And it was especially unfortunate that Rodrigo's 'hamming' of the explanation of his experiences of caste discrimination within the Tamil community meant that the central theme of discrimination existing at all levels was lost somewhere along the way in the midst of gales of laughter, some of it unsympathetic.

The Sinhala chauvinist is a young hot-blood; here, too, since his antipathy towards Tamils is explained away as being due to purely personal reasons, the sudden change of heart he undergoes is plausible, but nevertheless it weakens the representation of Sinhala chauvinism in all its nuances. The old worker once again represents a by-now-familiar point of view, combining disillusionment with idealism, yet always on the right side; the revolutionary is surely too good to be true, and

it was indeed a pity to see a promising young actor like Loos burdened with pretentious dialogue and pedantic delivery. The villager is once again a caricature—the classic view of a traditional villager as a timeserver, a coward, is maintained; the figure of the young 'over-seer' is trifling to the point of being insignificant; and as for the sole female character in the play, who is depicted at the start as a woman of easy virtue and strength of mind, she too undergoes a change of heart, the revolutionary professes his love for her, she is 'reformed' (!) and presumably goes off with him to live 'happily ever after'. Alas for the broken dreams and shattered illusions of womankind!

Altogether too many changes of heart—altogether too many crises—this is what made 'MAWATHE API' a mere skimming off the top of a pot that contained a veritable store of solid dramatic material. By trying to touch on the issue of racial and communal conflict, while at the same time tackling the issue of worker-employer relationships and man-woman relationships, along with a host of other, equally complex situations, Mendis put himself into the position of casting a brief but superficial glance at each issue without ever coming to grips with any one issue in its total perspective. Nevertheless, let us pass on with the reiteration that it is significant that he chose to discuss these themes at all.

Even though for these reasons 'MAWATHE API' leaves the discerning viewer with a feeling of not having gone far enough and deep enough, yet Mendis has to be singled out for his courage in even attempting to tackle such a complex theme. The production was pleasing, and in general quite skillful; the costumes, sets, lighting, all were in keeping with the atmosphere of the play. A word must be said about Khemadasa's music, which contributed a great deal towards the creation of the mood that was a very necessary part of 'MAWATHE API'. It seemed a pity that the chorus was not arranged better, because

(Continued on Page 24)

ONE OF US

by Parakrama Kodithuwakku
Translated by Reggie Siriwardena

Stop it
Stop it
Stop that fight:

King Elara,
get off that elephant
King Dutugemunu,
give Elara a chair.....!

*

Here she goes round the
rubber trees
together with the tapping gang
Mother's gone a-milking
Sarasvathi
in her full-smiling lips
brightens Elara's smile

Below the tea bushes
hands aching
soaking in the windy drizzle
flashing her bronze eyes
under the pimples of sweat
silently waiting
in her nostril
a quartz-stone gleaming

Nithyakala
Elara's sister
Sarasvathi, Nithyakala

*

We bathed in the Menik
Ganga together
We worshipped at Sripada
together
We were in one gange at
school together
We ate vadai at the thosa-
kade together
At Kataragama
Somadevi from our office
Was given his address
by Sivalingam.....!

The Elara-Dutugemunu
battle!
Victory upon victory for
Dutugemunu!!
Elara's corpse on an
elephants back!!!

NATIONALITY

Stop that applause
Stop that applause
Stop that applause
to hell with that clapping!

Who has
one.....single.....tear
to offer
that name?

He who died that day
Was one of us.....!
one of
our own
blood-relations.....!

Parakrama Kodithuwakku is among the most distinguished of contemporary Sinhala poets. "One of us" is characteristic of the new consciousness he has brought to Sinhala poetry, with his critical reaction against obsolete and retrogressive elements in the Sinhala cultural tradition. Two other poems of his were published in English translation in the "Lanka Guardian" Vol 1, No. 4.

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Question for Shan

AS I
LIKE IT

Touchstone

I was happy to read Mr. N. Sanmugathan's forthright attack on the policies of the present Chinese regime (L. G. Jan 15) including his description of the Chinese attack on Vietnam as "aggression" - and agree with a great deal of what he says. But Shan, while "anti-Teng" (I notice rejects even the present regime's spelling), remains loyal to Maoism and to Mao, with whom he is pictured on the same page reverentially shaking hands. The question that the article provokes in my mind is this: How, if what Shan says about the Mao era is true, could his death have been followed by so far-reaching a counter-revolution?

All that Shan offers as an explanation is this: "But Mao's power and influence was on the wane ("How? why?" interjects Touchstone), and he died in September 1976. His death was the signal for counter-revolution to re-raise its head." This seems to me to elevate the role of one man in a way that is non-Marxist and non-historical. It is an extension into the sphere of political analysis of the cult of Mao's personality that flourished when he was alive.

The ease with which Mao's policies were overturned after his death and "mass demonstrations" organised to support the official line against the deposed followers of the dead man suggests a bureaucratic power struggle in which the masses were only spectators, and therefore casts doubt on the popular basis of the regime in Mao's own lifetime. Contrast the ideological and power struggle in the Soviet Union that followed Lenin's death, which involved a prolonged public controversy and struggle that went on in the party and the nation for several years. In China apparently all that was necessary was that the leadership should denounce the so-called "Gang of Four", and thousands of people could be made overnight to rush

out into the streets, shout slogans and wave placards.

Nor does Shan, in his critique of present Chinese foreign policy, take account of the fact that the beginnings of this policy were in Mao's lifetime - the shift from encouraging liberation movements to courting reactionary regimes in order to forge alliances against the Soviet Union. Surely, in foreign policy, the watershed is not 1976 but 1971 - signified by the stand taken by the regime on events in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, to be followed later by its attitude towards the Chilean coup and the armed struggles in Africa.

The green tree

I must thank Chintaka for correcting me on my attribution to Heine of the quote, "Theory is grey, my friend; the tree of life is always green." (I haven't read either Heine or Goethe, and I was citing Lenin's use of it from memory). However, what is more important is what the line signifies - that, confronted with a changing historical reality, the adherence to inherited theoretical formulae can be disabling.

Chintaka thinks I haven't met his basic point; it seems to me he hasn't understood mine. He still maintains that to establish that one's view of self-determination is "the correct Marxist position," it is necessary to show by quotation that it is in conformity with what Marx, Lenin etc said on the question. I disagree, because (1) Marx died nearly a century ago and Lenin over half a century ago, and history hasn't stopped evolving since then; (2) one should be prepared to admit the possibility that not every word of Marx and Lenin is infallible Holy Writ.

I concede to Chintaka that the innumerable theoretical polemics in which Lenin engaged did sometimes "resemble the theological battles between rival sects of Christians". However, Lenin has other claims to our respect

-including his readiness to abandon a theoretical strait-jacket when it proved useless (witness the context in which he quoted Goethe - thank you again, Chintaka.) It is a pity that too many Marxists should imitate Lenin only in their pettifogging polemics. If Chintaka thinks this is a "liberal bourgeois" reaction, it doesn't worry me. I am glad it seems to be shared by Mr. R. S. Perimbanayagam and Ms. Sudharma Dhanapala in your correspondence columns.

Coin problem

The solution to the coin-weighting problem in the last column; Take one coin from the first bag, two from the second ... and so on, up to all ten from the last. Weigh all these coins together. If all the coins had been genuine, they would have weighed 550 grammes. If they are one gramme short, it is the first bag which contains the counterfeit coins, if two, the second; and so on.

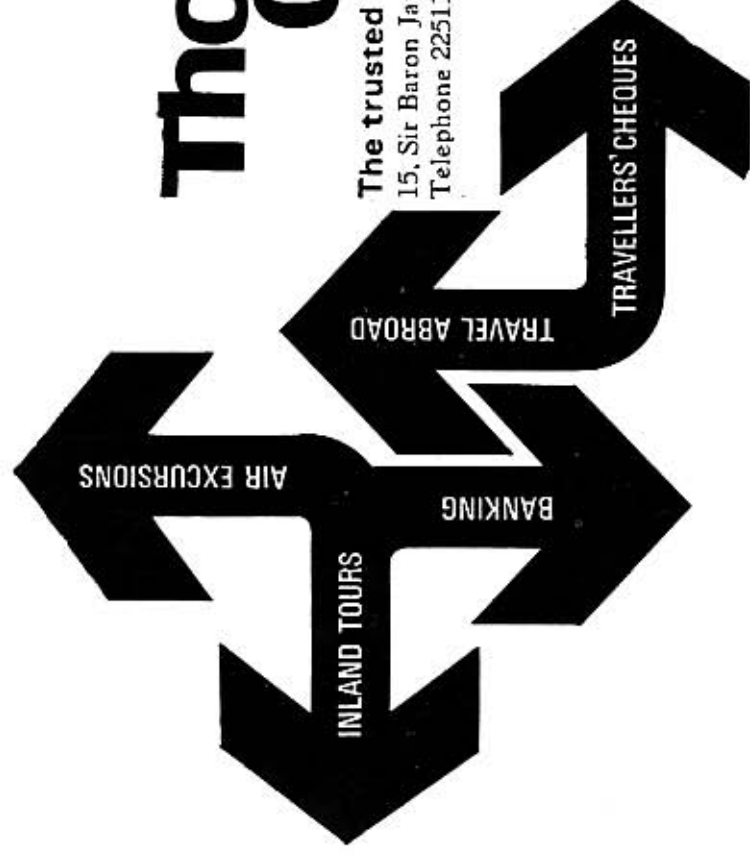
Race in ...

(Continued from Page 22)

at times the singers being dispersed all over the stage, their voices did not come across as powerfully as they could have. And the performances were all competent, the flatness of the characters notwithstanding;

In the same breath, however, one must stress on the importance of 'MAWATHE API' as an experiment in using theatrical form and theme in a new context, as an attempt to draw Sinhala theatre audiences right into the vortex of contemporary crises, as an attempt to portray the crying need for unity among working people, irrespective of caste, creed or race, in a dramatic form. In this sense, 'MAWATHE API' can be seen as an omen, a sign of things to come in the future of Sinhala theatre in our country.

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(The Arts and Society)

The First "Lanka Guardian" publication in Sinhala

The book presents in Sinhala translation a selection of articles published in the "Lanka Guardian", with emphasis on the social context of the arts. It will be the first of a series of paperbacks which the "Lanka Guardian" will publish this year. Some of the contributors and subjects in this volume are:

Charles Abeysekera	on	Amaradeva
J. Uyangoda	on	Rukmani Devi
H. A. Seneviratne	on	Martin Wickremasinghe
Reggie Siriwardena	on	Leonard Woolf
Gamini Dissanaiké	on	Lester James Peries
D. Jayatilleke	on	"Puran Appu"
Ananda Jayaweera	on	Sinhala Cinema and oppressed groups

Among the other topics included are:

the Tower Hall theatre, the films "Palangetiyo", "Ahasin Polowata" and "Gehenu Lamai", Sinhala cinema, class and personal relations.

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