

**SPECIAL  
REPORT**

**ASSAM** — Gail Omvedt

**LANKA**

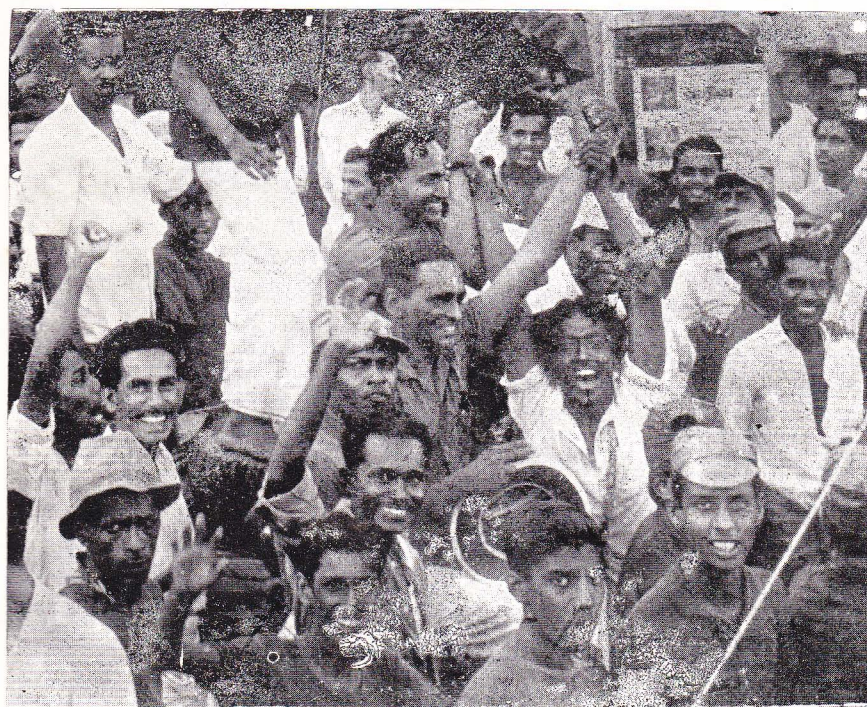
# **GUARDIAN**

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## **LEFT PROJECTIONS**



## **A FORECAST FOR MAY DAY '81**

### **The Nadesan case**

### **Co-operation among small nations**

Godfrey Gunatilleke

### **Which way for the Left?**

K. P. Silva

### **Sino-US relations**

Harry Harding

### **Suicide notes**

Jayantha Somasunderam

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## Economic Front

The UNP won Anamaduwa and it will probably win the argument with the TULF over Pottuvil but the despatches from the economic front are far from cheerful. Even the 'Sunday Observer' which led with the story on bearer bonds spoke of 'galloping inflation'. And in the War room where the ministers meet each week, the temperature of the ongoing discussion is often as uncomfortable to some members as the heat outside to the ordinary citizen. Once specific items are discussed and decisions taken, the debate gets hot and sharp over soaring prices, public expenditure, and gaping deficits.

## Imported Inflation

Veteran politicians like President JR, seasoned in the hard school of the parliamentary opposition, are shrewd enough to know that it is the UNP's performance on this front (living costs/jobs) which will prove decisive in 1983/4.

The Central Bank, an institution never given to pessimism, at least in print, has reported that inflation in 1979 was 20% compared to 15% in 1978. The most popular estimate for 1980 is 30%.

Propaganda argues that much of this is imported inflation. (Did that OPEC petition get lost in the post like Prof. A. J. Wilson's copy of the "devolution report".) As the UNP knows only too well, propaganda is no final answer. When the U. F. wailed about the "world market", the UNP sneered and romped home in a bullock cart.

## Dilemma

As the UNP approaches the midway mark in its six year term it faces a basic dilemma. It abandoned the old "seige economy" (state-regulated and inward-looking) and put its faith in an "open economy". But open to what? By strengthening our links with the US-dominated world economy it hoped to develop the country and increase our economic

independence. This strategy has also meant deepening our dependence on a crisis-ridden global economy, particularly the US, badly hit by recession. The quarrel over US textile quotas was a telling example.

The open economy is open to all the external pressures, exposing at every turn our essential vulnerability.

## Controls Again

Big business is often one step ahead of government policy and several strides away from the bureaucracy and its rules. In public the businessmen has nothing but praise for the open economy but recently he has started to grumble. His current complaints centre on the bank rate and the enhanced cost of credit. Another grievance is the virtual ban on local banks giving guarantees to foreign creditors. What he does not talk about in public but is well known in the Pettah is the common expectation that restrictions on foreign exchange may be re-introduced sooner than some people think. If such a suspicion is well-founded, it is time to ask whether the big boys are up to old tricks, i.e. loading invoices etc? In short, the

(Continued on page 27)

## Population programmes

I don't wish to take Issue with Mr. Caspersz's fairly old-fashioned views on the relationship between population and development (Guardian-May 1), except to point out that some of the most socially advanced countries of the third world (for instance China and Cuba, as well as Sri Lanka) also have the most comprehensive population programmes. Social change has indeed occurred on a vast scale in many of these countries, yet population policies—usually aimed at slower growth are still needed.

I should correct one or two points of fact in Mr. Caspersz's article, however. The UNFPA Population Needs Mission to which he refers visited Sri Lanka at the request of the Government and its membership was approved in advance by all concerned. Their recommendations concerning contraceptives and sterilization (which formed a small part of the whole) were made in response to two facts which any observer of the Sri Lankan scene will confirm—first

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that there is a strong demand among the people themselves in all parts of the country for these services and second, that the demand is as yet unsatisfied

Far from 'foreigners' (one of the members of the team was Sri Lankan and agreed with all its findings) making "brash inroads on the most intimate sectors of people's lives" the Population Needs Mission merely expressed the needs and desires of the people themselves. Perhaps Mr. Caspersz should leave his ivory tower and visit a village or two? He could take an example from the Needs Mission and visit sixteen districts of Sri Lanka in eighteen days—a delightful but exhausting trip—and he might then also change his views about the 'perks' of international travel.

**Alex Marshall**

United Nations Fund for  
Population Activities - Coordinator.

### May Day musings

May Day in countries where the Working Class is not in

power is an occasion for demonstrations of the strength and solidarity of the Workers and the setting of new goals of achievement. May Day 1980, in the City of Colombo wore its festive air as is customary, but its militancy was largely absent nor was in evidence the much needed solidarity. There has been for the last four or five years a tendency to overplay the showmanship and festive mood and to underplay the most unctuous demands of the Working Class. This tendency started during the days of the SLFP-LSSP-CP and is being continued with masterly skill by the present ruling party. If the emphasis is on merely gathering large crowds, UNP knows how best to do it. If the emphasis is on a well enacted and well timed demonstration of length embracing babes to Grandpass, then the JVP knows how best to do it. If it is a politically organised power display challenging the rulers, it

is the SLFP, LSSP and MEP combine that has retained the art. If it is a pure simple attempt to rouse class fervour regardless of real-politik, then the JATUC has done some work.

But all taken together, one sees a large volume of spectators shifting from one spot to another, the confused population, sceptical and stargazing.

There was music in one spot, drama in another, suspense elsewhere and stunts at another place. The total fare was thoroughly satisfying to the shifting shoals of stargazers constantly fed and brought up on silverscreen fare.

What, after that? Was there solidarity? There was mutual mud-throwing in the colourful slogans. Leaving the UNP show, the other three demonstrations were carping at one another. That seemed to have a keener edge than the economic hardships of the people or the

(Continued on page 28)

# Serendib is Sri Lanka.

Heracle Walpole coined the word "Serendipity", to describe "the faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries". Since the word derives from one of the ancient names for Sri Lanka, the allusion is inescapable... where better can one find scope for this intriguing faculty than in Sri Lanka itself. Take the monumental fifth-century fortress Sigiriya, for instance... you swing round a bend in the road and it's there, 660 feet above the surrounding countryside, a gigantic rock silhouetted like some crouching prehistoric monster. Your first intriguing discovery will be that it is not just a solid upheaval of the earth's crust but a legendary fortress—the setting for one of the most bizarre stories in history, the story of the God-King, who achieved a rather splendid isolation by surrounding himself with all the luxuries of 5th Century Sri Lankan civilization. We manage Hotel Sigiriya, within walking distance of the Rock... and many other hotels with access to other Serendipitous places in Sri Lanka.

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# Left projections : a forecast for May Day 1981

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

**N**ext Year's May Day will see three major political formations and a polarization of the Left movement as well as the broader anti-UNP Opposition into two main camps. This was the view of most independent political observers and was based on a reading of the sub-surface tendencies, tensions and cross-currents discernible this year. The UNP, the SLFP and the JVP are expected to constitute the three 'corners' of a quintessentially triangular political contest in the national arena. The TULF though it is the third largest political force in the island after the UNP and SLFP (placing the JVP in fourth place) is left temporarily out of the reckoning, owing to the specificity of its political programme and constituency.

The anti-UNP opposition sentiment can be expected to group itself around two main poles of attraction, i.e. the SLFP and the JVP, both being extremely hostile towards each other. The SLFP's silence and the LSSP's muted protestations notwithstanding the SLFP-LSSP-MEP trio is in the mass mind not an action bloc, but a reformed 'Samagi Peramuna' i.e. a political alliance for 1983 and beyond. The entire left movement and the organised working class, as represented in the JTUAC, is expected to be the site of a new polarization with fresh sections of the Left being drawn, albeit in varying degrees, into the SLFP orbit. The Maoist movement, both pro and anti-Deng, will fall victim shortly to the SLFP's spell and the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSLP) will very probably follow in its wake, according to many independent observers of left politics. G. I. D. Dharmasekera who fared very creditably at the last General Elections is said to be seeking

Archaic or ambiguous theoretical formulations, trade unionist politics and electoral pressures are factors which could drive much of the non-JVP Left towards the SLFP by next May Day.

SLFP nomination for Kalutara in '83. Addressing in the company of Gamini Yapa, CP (ML)'s T. Benedict and the PDP's Nandasiri Guneratne, a pre-lunch indoor gathering of pro-China Maoists on May Day, Dharmasekera called for all anti-UNP political entities, trade unions and mass organisations to come together in a solid phalanx. The JVP and CPSL were being 'sectarian' he alleged, for reasons of foreign policy. It is well known that the pro-China Left views the SLFP favourably as the leading "anti-hegemony, anti-superpower" (i.e. anti-Soviet) political force in the country. These sections have close contacts with the SLFP's 'Sirimaosists' of the Dinakara group.

The five Party bloc, Nava Janatha Peramuna, comprising true believers of 'Mao Tse Tung Thought' is expected to disintegrate soon on the question of relations with the SLFP, thus proving that five is an unlucky number for the left movement these days. This 'Peramuna' was but a reluctant participant in the CPSL led 12 union JTUAC demo and rally this year. Its leading personality N. Sanmugathasan (whose CTUF is the Front's T.U arm) had been receptive to the LSSP's call for a united May Day. He has pledged to strive towards making an anti-UNP May Day of political parties and trade unions a reality by next year. The leading Maoist paper 'Desha Vimukthi' which is the Peramuna's official organ further and strongly urges the creation of a single anti-imperi-

alist, anti-UNP National United Front of the broadest proportions. The paper, which carries spicy commentaries on the JVP and CPSL, in addition to biting criticism of the UNP, is however, relatively non-committal on the SLFP. The occasional anti SLFP comments are muted and couched in moderate language.

A constituent member of the Maoist 5 party bloc, the 'Nava Prajathanthravadi Pakshaya' (NPP), which itself is a splinter from the SLFP breakaway PDP, has lost its most prominent leader ex M. P. A. M. Jinadasa to the SLFP. Mr. Jinadasa's ex constituents have urged him to rejoin the SLFP while they themselves have also launched a signature campaign urging the party to readmit Mr. Jinadasa.

The PDP's other prominent personality was Mr. Nanda Ellawala, who stayed with the PDP during the PDP/NPP split. He, however, did not feel at all comfortable with his PDP comrades, since they are, for the most part, Sinophilic Maoists (eg. Hanguranketa's ex MMC Wimal Wijeyekoon, an excellent organizer and Yapa's former 'segundo'). Mr. Ellawala has, in the recent past, shifted his foreign policy stance to a pro-USSR one, so much so that even the Independent (anti-Deng) Maoist NPP could not accommodate him. Propelled by strong electoral pressures, Mr. Ellawala announced his decision, at a recent PDP meeting, to return to the SLFP fold.

The PDP's Tennyson Ediri-sooriya who had stayed politically dormant for a while, is now working with Kumar Rupasinghe (the former 'court jester, according to Rohana Wijeweera) in the newly formed Democratic Committee. Though the latter has gained a shred of respectability in left circles owing to his present



anti-Sirimma stance, neither Mr. Rupasinghe nor Mr. Edirisooriya are thought to be divorced from SLFP politics and electoral ambitions.

Thus both the PDP and the NPP, which, it is noteworthy to recall, constituted the bulk of the old "**Janavegaya**" tendency, are expected to return to the mother party's warm embrace (if not re-enter the womb from whence they emanated), ending four years of prodigal existence. Meanwhile, the Independent Maoist oriented personality **Mahinda Wijeysekera** is also said to be seeking SLFP nomination for 1983.

If all these take place, the Maoist 5 party bloc-Nava Janatha Peramuna-will quite simply disintegrate, because two of the 5 constituent members will not go along, preferring to have as little to do with the SLFP as possible. These are the JVP break-away **Janatha Sangamaya** and the **Nava Lanka Communist Party (NLCP)**. The Janatha Sangamaya is as hostile to the SLFP as it is to the UNP and has recently concluded, at its congress, that the present stage of the Lankan revolution is socialist. (Unlike the JVP and other Trotskyists they base themselves on Lenin, Stalin and Mao and recognise the validity of the New Democratic revolution in a colonial context when the imperialist, rather than the local, bourgeoisie wields state power). Though they discern certain differences and distinctions between the UNP and SLFP these are not considered qualitative or strategic. Thus, the Janatha Sangamaya, unlike other Maoists, places the SLFP, together with the UNP, in the camp of the class enemy.

The Nava Lanka Communist Party (NLCP) presents a curiously contradictory picture. On the one hand its foreign policy posture is significantly different from that of its partners in the five party front. While its partners are sharply critical of China's foreign policy the NLCP's Ariyawansa Gunasekera visited China recently in his capacity of chief organiser of the Samastha Lanka Govi

Sammelanaya, and had discussions with Chinese leadership (Ariyawansa, Ananda Kumara, T. B. C. Fernando grace the Sri Lanka-China Friendship Association.) This development is probably not unconnected with the attacks that the NLCP has recently launched against its partner in the front (NJP), Mr. N. Sanmugathasan whom it accuses of been a trade union bureaucrat. Shan is of course bitterly opposed to China's foreign policy and the 'Three World Theory'. One might have thought that all this meant that the NLCP was relatively well disposed towards the SLFP. Indeed the party's chief theoretician, lawyer Kalyananda Thiraganama has a history of pro-SLFP politics and together with Theja Gunewardena, worked closely with the Janavegaya group for a brief period. However, the NLCP's General Secretary, K. A. Wimalapala, an old Maoist militant highly respected for his dedication and spirit, reviles those Maoists who tail behind the SLFP. The NLCP's May Day Issue of their paper 'Jana Shakthi' as well as its leaflet bears the stamp of his thinking. Therefore, though the NLCP has not demarcated itself clearly from the SLFP as has the Janatha Sangamaya, they are likely to take a militant position akin to the South East Asian Maoist parties and thereby desist from tailing behind the SLFP.

Maoists apart, what of Mr. Tampoe's RMP and Vasudeva's NSSP? Though **Mr. Tampoe** heads the Trotskyist, Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) affiliated to Ernest Mandel's U. Sec, his base, as is well known is the **CMU**, and his politics are therefore determined in the last instance by trade unionist (economism/syndicalism) considerations. Already his rivals on the Left such as Samarakkody's RWP, Keerthi Balasuriya's RCL, and ofcourse the JVP (which adheres to a de-Tampoe-ized Trotskyism) predict that his close contacts with SLITUF's Alavi Maoulana will draw him into the outer periphery of the SLFP-LSSP-MEP orbit. Mr. Tampoe's unusually subdued speech on May Day did nothing to give the lie to these predictions.

At first glance, **Vasudeva's NSSP** does not seem likely to succumb to the SLFP's centripetal pull. It must be remembered however, that alliances with the SLFP result logically from the given party's understanding of the class character of the SLFP, and the NSSP's characterization of the SLFP has from the early Vama Sama Samaja days (1972 onwards) been vague and varied. The NSSP's founder and theoretician **Dr. Wickremabahu Karunaratne** defines the SLFP as a bourgeois party, but qualifies it with such objectives as 'liberal-reformist' and 'populist, Social-Democratic'. The significance of this is that the NSSP's 'mother party' Mr. Ted Grant's 'Militant' tendency in Britain as well as its West European affiliates pursue the tactic of 'deep entry' vis-à-vis Britain's Labour Party and the Continent's Social Democratic parties eg. Spain, Wickremabahu's critics reject the parallel emphatically, pointing out that the SLFP is not a party that rests on the trade unions articulating the interests of the T.U. bureaucracy which constitutes a labour aristocracy. This after all is what European Social Democracy is all about. The CPSL's radical theoreticians trained at Moscow's Party School now point out that the liberal-reformist-populist phase of the SLFP lasted through the 1950's into the mid 1960's but has exhausted itself and since the 1970's become virtually identical to the UNP. The SLFP, says the CPSL currently is the alternate party of the bourgeoisie; the substitute for the UNP. The JVP, Janatha Sangamaya, RWP, RCL and the Marxist Youth Front (Mallawarachchi), and the CPSL thus hold essentially similar views of the SLFP, which incidentally are shared by a minority tendency within the NSSP itself identified with the brilliant mathematician Dr. Nalin de Silva. Incidentally this dissident group in addition to being strongly anti-SLFP, takes a principled position on the National (Tamil) Question; a position that is much less equivocal and more militant than the official party line. All these political parties and groups point out that the NSSP's ambiguous definition

of the SLFP could very well result in the formation of a 'bloc' with the latter party. It will be recalled that a NSSP representative Dr. Sumanasiri Liyanage shared a platform with Sirima Bandaranaike at a Hyde Park rally (chaired by Fr. Tissa Balasuriya) to protest against the new Constitution.

The JVP for instance, heaps scorn on the NSSP idea that it is both possible and permissible to enter into united action with the SLFP against the UNP government. How to protest the UNP's anti-democratic practices and harsh economic policies in the company of an SLFP which when in office did much the same thing and which will repeat its performance given half the chance? This is the JVP's pertinent query. The point is not to join one bourgeois party to combat another, but rather to oppose both bourgeois parties and do away with the capitalist system which sustains these parties, states the JVP, CPSL, RCL, RWP etc, in opposition to the Wickremabahu line of argumentation.

If the NSSP, the Maoists and Mr. Tampoe join, in one way or another, the SLFP-LSSP-MEP bloc by next May Day then the CPSL will be isolated. Will it be able to stand its ground and proceed patiently with the task of building the avant-garde party of the working class? Will it display imaginativeness and flexibility in permitting 'bloc-entries' and 'fusions' thereby internalizing the better elements of the radical left? Will it be capable of making adroit interventions and splits in those parties which may tail behind the SLFP? Will the CPSL prove capable of drawing the anti-UNP, anti-SLFP (i. e. anti-capitalist) but non sectarian (i. e. non JVP) radical left into a single front or will the Trotsky-Stalin and Sino-Soviet differences prove insurmountable obstacles to this task? Conversely will the old trade union bureaucrats and the young careerists in the Students Union (CNSU) combine to defeat the radicals of the Education Bureau and Youth League Federation, thereby re-imposing a 'right-opportunist' soft-line? In this event will the party split as in 1972?

## CPSL : Three

**"T**he CPSL's much vaunted self-criticism is rather suspect, while the Nava Samasamaja Party (NSSP) is very likely to be drawn into the SLFP orbit in the near future." This was the view expressed by Peradeniya political scientist **Laksiri Fernando** addressing the May Day 'indoor rally' of the (Trotskyist) **Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP)**. Quoting from the leading Sinhala left-wing daily '**Aththa**', the English language weekly '**Forward**' and the CPSL's 11th Congress Political Report, he pointed out that the party had presented not one, but three subtly differentiated versions of the self-criticism, and furthermore each version itself contained ambiguous formulations. The page one lead story in the '**Aththa**', published during the closing stages of the 11th Congress, quoted the new General Secretary K. P. Silva as promising that the CPSL will never enter any front, alliance or bloc with any bourgeois party. The Political Report however states that the decision to enter a United Front

In the short run Mr. Wijeweera stands to be chief beneficiary of the Left's (coming) tilt towards the SLFP since it will discredit his rivals. This will reinforce the JVP's role as the focus of intransigently anti-SLFP left sentiment. Functioning as a dynamic 'Left-Opposition,' it will be the Third Force of Lankan politics. On the other hand, Mr. Wijeweera might still regret the ultra sectarianism that led him to disrupt last October's five party 'action-bloc' (LSSP-CPSL-RMP-NSSP-JVP), thus providing Anil Moonesinghe the opportunity he sought to drag the LSSP Sirima-wards. If the five party bloc had remained intact or if it had been reconstituted after the Galle affair minus the LSSP (perhaps with fresh inclusions) the SLFP would not have fared as well as it did this May Day. And Mr. Wijeweera can only be too well aware of the threat posed to his resurgent party by a SLFP-'Left' bloc particularly if it fares well in 1983-84.

## versions?

with the SLFP in 1968 was incorrect in that given context and under those conditions since the hegemony was that of the bourgeoisie. This interpretation, said Mr. Fernando was conditional and equivocal and avoided the more fundamental issue of an alliance with the bourgeoisie. The 'Forward' version was the most watered-down one he added.

The CPSL has yet to explain the theoretical sources of the political error committed from 1968 onwards. In point of fact, the 1968 decisions were the logical product of the theory of an united front with the 'progressive national bourgeoisie'. The CPSL's current 'left turn' has a precedent in that party's policies of the late 1940's under the leadership of Harry Abeygunewardena, who was following the 'Zhadnov-Ranadive line.' This phase was short-lived and culminated with Harry's ouster. Similarly, the CPSL's present left-phase would very probably be transitory, since the self-criticism contains enough avenues for a renewed 'right turn' should the party feel itself isolated or if Soviet foreign policy needs require it. In any case, concluded speaker Fernando, the CPSL 11th Congress' position on the National (Tamil) Question, where it pays lip service to the recognition of the right of self-determination but follows the petty bourgeois Sinhala-Buddhist prejudices of the JVP in denouncing the so-called 'division of the country', reveals that the CPSL is not prepared to break through the parameters of the bourgeois state.

Incidentally, identical criticisms of the CPSL's new line were contained in a slim booklet on sale at the Dematagoda rally of the **Revolutionary Communist League (RCL)** which is the local affiliate of Gerry Healy and Michael Banda's Trotskyist group in London. Though it was publicly articulated by these two Trotskyist sources, this critical appreciation of the CPSL's 11th Congress seems to be shared to a certain extent even by non or anti-Trotskyist sections of the radical left.

சென்னை நகரில்



# THE NADESAN CASE

**W**idely publicised, even in the government controlled press, Mrs. Bandaranaike's statement before the presidential commission and its possible consequences have become the No. 1 topic of political discussion in the country. It has also attracted much attention abroad and the now familiar 'Gandhian parallel' is bound to get another airing. Interest abroad in Mrs. Bandaranaike's critical decision and her political future was doubtless intensified by the coincidence of Tito's funeral where the SLFP leader was given top billing—in the front row of world leaders, right next to Soviet party chief Brezhnev.

But another case has drawn even keener international attention, if only in the narrower circle of lawyers, academics and organisations devoted to the study and defence of democratic rights, particularly the freedom of expression.

While Lord Hoosan, representing the International Commission of Jurists was present throughout the proceedings, other organisations and many Bar councils have also showed the keenest interest in the outcome. Lawyers from abroad, (including one from South Africa!) offered their services free. But Mr. Nadesan, once a Senator and a Bar council chairman, was content to rely on local lawyers.

"A government can always learn more from the criticism of its opponents than from the eulogy of its supporters. To stifle that criticism is—at least ultimately—to prepare its own destruction," Senior Counsel H. L. de Silva for S. Nadesan, Q. C. told the Supreme Court quoting Harold Laski at the hearing into the Parliamentary (Powers and Privileges) Act case heard before a bench of five judges.

The judges are: Justice G. T. Samarawickrema, Justice V. T. Thamotheram, Justice I. M. Ismail, Justice J. G. T. Weeraratne and Justice S. Sharvananda.

## DEFENCE SUBMISSIONS

Mr. H. L. de Silva made the statement in the conclusion of his case. The

action filed by the Attorney General M. Shiva Pasupathy against Mr. Nadesan arises out of a series of articles Mr. Nadesan wrote and which appeared in "SUN" under the headline Parliamentary Privileges.

The articles in question were gone into by a Committee on Privileges of the Parliament and later referred to the Supreme Court to be dealt with according to law.

Mr. de Silva also said "Parliament has been granted these privileges in order that it may properly perform its functions of debate and legislation without hindrance or impediment in the interests of the people whose elected representatives they are. It would be a monstrous thing if those privileges, granted to Parliament in the people's interests, were to be used as an engine of oppression against the people themselves in whose interests Parliament is supposed to act."

Quoting Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which recognises the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. de Silva said this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference. The recognition of this right is not only a right of each individual but also a right of the whole community of men. In order to discover the truth a man must not only be free to think his own thoughts but he must be free to distinguish the true answer to his questions from others competing for acceptance.

"Not only is the free and responsible expression of ideas right but it is also a moral obligation of the citizen. Harold Laski has said that "a man's citizenship is the duty to contribute his instructed judgement to the public good. He cannot make that contribution if penalty is attached to the expression of his thought." This is a truth we know from our own experience. When a government seeks to suppress contrary opinions, it is simultaneously engaged in the inexorable task of digging its own grave.

In a democracy it is unthinkable that Parliament or its proceedings should lie wholly outside the range of public criticism by the general body of citizens. Parliament is not an idol before which we must stand in silent adoration.

If it is to command the respect and esteem of intelligent men it must be exposed to public scrutiny, to the critical appraisal of fair-minded men and be judged according to the criteria and standards by which all public institutions are judged.

It would be a wholly mistaken approach if we regarded the rules of Parliamentary privilege as a kind of cordon sanitaire which protected Mem-

bers of Parliament from unfriendly criticism. It is only a body of rules which have been developed to ensure that Parliament is enabled to function without unwarranted interference and unfair attacks.

It is a body of rules intended for its protection against those who seek to obstruct its proper working by infamous imputations and illfounded allegations of dishonourable conduct tending to bring it into contempt. It is a weapon to be used against those who undermine it and seek to erode public confidence in it as an institution. It is not a bludgeon to be used against citizens who in the exercise of their legitimate rights criticise it with a view to correcting an error, setting right an anomaly or remedying a defect.

To point to errors and mistakes on the part of Parliament is not defamation of Parliament because Parliament has no prerogative of perfection, no immunity from falling into error and is not endowed with omniscience.

## AG's OPINION

The Attorney-General, Mr. Sivia Pasupati said that the whole purpose behind Mr. Nadesan's article was to undermine public confidence in the functions of the House.

Addressing the five judge-Bench of the Supreme Court at the resumed inquiry into the case against Mr. S. Nadesan QC for alleged breach of privilege of the then National State Assembly, Mr. Pasupati said any reasonable reader would lose confidence in the House after reading that article which sought to point out that no justice could be expected from the House.

Mr. Pasupati at the outset referred to the law on the powers and privileges enjoyed by Parliament and said that they were not meant for its self-glorification but to ensure that it could and its members could carry out their functions without obstruction impediment or interference.

Mr. Pasupati cited passages from Erskine May on Parliamentary Privileges and said that May had listed the offences which would amount to a breach of privilege of Parliament. It would be monstrous to suggest that these powers of Parliament were given to be used as an instrument of oppression against the people themselves in whose interests it had to act.

Mr. Pasupati said that in this case it was not what Mr. Nadesan's purpose in writing the article that mattered. What mattered was the opinion a reasonable person would form upon a reading of that article.

Mr. Nadesan's defence was that he only pointed out defects. Why does he not say that this was a power that Parliament was incapable of exercising. The only matter this Court has to determine was whether the statement that has been made was defamatory.



# Sino - US relations in the 1980s

by Dr. Harry Harding

**A**merican policy towards the People's Republic of China has largely dropped out of the headlines since normalization was achieved little more than a year ago. Once it became clear that Taiwan was not about to collapse because of the changes, Public debate over U. S.-China policy largely came to an end.

To be sure, there was a flurry of discussion of the desirability of a stronger military and security relationship between the United States and China at the time of defense secretary Harold Brown's visit to Beijing in January, 1980. But, other issues, particularly Iran and Afghanistan, have pushed the China issue somewhat into the background.

In part, this is healthy, for it reflects the fact that relations between the United States and China have been developing relatively smoothly since normalization. It is also somewhat dangerous, however, for it is equally true that a number of important questions remain unresolved. The United States needs, for example, to reach an agreement on controlling textiles imports from China, to conclude maritime and aviation agreements with Beijing, to decide whether to grant official aid and tariff

preference to China, and to determine whether to relax controls on advanced technology to Beijing. But resolving these issues depends on answering a more fundamental question: What kind of long-term relationship does the United States wish to create with China in the 1980's?

One of the most important aspects of Sino-American relations since December 1978 has been the series of steps by which the bilateral agreement on normalization has been fully implemented. The adoption of the Taiwan relations act of March, 1979, defining the new relationship between the United States and Taiwan, has been one such step. Others include the opening of embassies in Beijing and Washington on March 1 of that year. The establishment of Chinese consulates in San Francisco and Houston, the opening of American consulates in Canton and Shanghai, the withdrawal of the remaining U. S. forces from Taiwan, and the termination of the U. S. defence treaty with Taipei on January 1, 1980.

In addition, however, Sino-American relations have experienced rapid development along other dimensions over the last sixteen months. First, the process of normalization has been extended from the diplomatic sphere to the economic realm.

Two agreements in particular have played a crucial role in promoting economic normalization. One is an agreement, formalized in May 1979, on how to resolve the question of blocked claims and frozen assets dating from the Korean War.

Second is the signing of a three-year trade agreement in July 1979, providing not only for most-favoured-nation (MFN) status for China,

but also for protection of American patents, trademarks, and copyrights; prevention of the disruption of American markets by Chinese exports; establishment of arbitration procedures and trade promotion mechanisms; and the expedition of visa formalities for Chinese and American businessmen.

A second aspect of U.S.-China relations over the past year has been to consolidate normalisation by creating a complex network of relationships connecting both the governments and the societies of both countries. Not only have the second-ranking leaders of each country — Deng Xiaoping and Walter Mondale — visited the other, but there have also been visits to China by almost every American cabinet officer and by the officials of a number of independent federal agencies, and return visits by a number of Chinese vicepremiers and government ministers. The U.S. goal is to forge links with as many parts of the Chinese bureaucracy as possible, in order to strengthen the Sino-American relationship by increasing the number of Chinese officials who have a direct stake in it.

And of course, there has been a host of connections forged between private American firms and organisations and their Chinese counterparts. Indeed, it is now difficult for the major American national exchange organisations even to keep track of the exchanges organised and administered by others; a number of public and private universities have established ties with research institutes and universities in China and are exchanging students and scholars.

All this has led to a great quantitative increase in almost every dimension of the Sino-American relationship.

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— (Courtesy USICA)

A third aspect of Sino-American relations over the past year has been the clear willingness of the U. S. government to extend official aid to China's civilian economic development. This has involved official agreements between the two governments, by which the United States has offered the assistance of virtually every federal department to the economic and scientific modernization of China.

Fourth, the military and security relationship between China and the United States has developed much more rapidly since normalisation than most observers would have predicted when normalization of relations was established. It is true, of course, that Sino-American relations have had an important security component from the very beginning.

It is also true that the Carter administration had, even before defense secretary Harold Brown's visit to China in January taken several steps which signalled a continued American interest in China's securpokuk but it was during that visit that the military and security relationship between China and United States took a "Leap forward". Originally, the visit had been described as a way of beginning arms control discussions with the Chinese, and of introducing Beijing's leaders to president Carter's principal national security advisers. However, as a response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, the visit took on a different tone. The Secretary informed the Chinese that the United States was now ready to move "from passive to more active forms of Security cooperation" with Beijing, and that this would include "complementary" and "parallel" actions "in the field of defense as well as diplomacy."

Secretary Brown also conveyed the administration's willingness to sell advanced, dual-purpose technology to China on a case-by-case basis. Specifically, he announced that the United States would sell the Chinese a landsat satellite ground station. Although the United States would ensure that the data sent to the ground station did not have military application, the station's equipment — including

## BALL GAME

The Sri Lanka Olympic Committee has decided to participate in the Moscow Olympics. Sri Lanka is most unlikely to win any medals at this most competitive of sporting festivals. By this decision however, Sri Lanka a leading non-aligned country has teamed up with many Third World nations in refusing to be bludgeoned into joining Mr. Carter's dubious boycott campaign.

Whenever the black nations and liberal opinion in the west raised the issue of apartheid, the odious racist doctrine of the fascist regime in Pretoria, and called for the boycott of South Africa in the field of sport, western politicians and the media shouted back the sanctimonious slogan "keep politics out". The same is true of Arab and Palestinian appeals against Zionist Israel.

But there is no plainer example of a politically motivated boycott campaign than this. It is both anti-Soviet politics by the US and presidential politics by Mr. Carter. The new cold war is an unmistakable part of the presidential ball-game. Thus well-informed US commentators know that the dispute between Mr. Cyrus Vance and Dr. Brezezinski surfaced during

computers and taping equipment — could have military use. The landsat sale was described by state department officials as part of a new policy, under which Washington would be willing to sell dual-purpose technology to the Chinese as long as there were reasonable assurances that it would be used only for civilian purposes.

About two weeks after secretary Brown left China, however, the administration announced a further loosening of export controls to Beijing. A pentagon press conference declared that the United States would now be willing to sell equipment to China that clearly had military use, including trucks, equipment, early warning radar.

**NEXT : America's four options**

the winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid. Mr. Vance it is now known, was deeply upset when he was compelled to adopt a public posture which was not only indefensible but also did damage to the detente which he had so painstakingly attempted to strengthen. It also did damage to his reputation as a distinguished diplomat and to his moral prestige as a man of good sense.

Current diplomatic pressures and the propaganda campaign mounted by the US, vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and Iran are part of a piece. In the case of Iran the purpose is to punish that country in every possible manner for the "crime" of breaking the US stranglehold on the Iranian economy and for ending nearly 20 years of US domination. In the case of the Soviet Union the motivation is more complex. But one of its many features is the effort to weaken relations between the socialist camp and the Third World whose common aim is to transform the present US-dominated global economy into a more equitable system.

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## SPECIAL REPORT

# ASSAM

by Gail Omvedt

**I**nsurgency in India's strategic northeast region and most recently ongoing agitation in its biggest state, Assam, is providing a serious challenge to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's drive to consolidate her power in the country.

The Assamese-speaking original inhabitants of Assam have been increasingly confronting the center in the demand to prevent "foreigners" (mainly Bengali-speaking migrants from Bangladesh) from claiming citizen status, jobs and land. The movement which had been simmering with sporadic outbursts for decades, took an explosive turn with the demand to postpone parliamentary elections and remove the names of foreigners from electoral rolls; it has continued since with peaceful strikes and satyagrahas, attempts to blockade oil production, and occasional chauvinist and brutal attacks against Bengali-speakers as well as communist activists who have been identified with the Bengalis.

In turn, repression of the movement has included police rampages and rapes of women, curfews, arrests of activists and firing on and killing of demonstrators. But Indira Gandhi has met with the movements' student leaders and the state, clearly concerned about its ability to control the region, is attempting to take a more sophisticated response.

Though leadership of the Assam movement is currently in the hands of students and with a right wing tendency, at the same time rebellions of tribal nationalities in the same region have been taking a left and increasingly Marxist-Leninist direction. Unlike the Assamese, who by and large still consider themselves to be Indians and Hindus, these nationalities feel little identification with Indians and are increasingly calling for independence.

The Naga liberation movement, which has been one of armed struggle ever since the Nagas declared their own independence one day before the Indians, has recently seen the emergence of a pro-Chinese leadership linked with the Burmese communist party across the border. The insurgency in Mizoram to the south has currently been brought under uneasy central control, but it is almost equally old and determined and neither the development money poured into these states nor the presence of tens of thousands of Indian troops can control the situation for long. And now in Manipur which links these oldest centers of insurgency, a new revolt has grown up under the leadership of two Marxist forces, the pro-Peking Peoples' Liberation Army, and the Peoples' Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK). The first group is mainly rural based, the second centers on urban youth, but both are carrying on armed struggle and both are identified with a strong anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmanical tribal cultural revivalism among the Meiteis or Kangleichas, the main nationality of Manipur.

In Tripura, tension between tribals and Bengali-speakers (who now constitute a majority in the state) has widened, while in adjoining Meghalaya a new organization, the Peoples Demands' Implementation Convention (PDIC), has begun to grow among the Khasi and Garo people, agitating against the influx of nontribals.

These movements in the northeast at present have various goals and varying leaderships with ideologists ranging from Gandhism and pure bourgeois nationalism to Marxism-Leninism. Yet they are occurring in an area that has been historically almost outside the control of central powers, next to Burma where Communist and tribal national forces have long maintained independent armies and liberated zones, next to turbulent Bangladesh which has its own "tribal problem" in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and next to the massive Bengali region which has long been a center of

Communist influence. There is an increasing effort to coordinate organization and movements, and together they are posing the most serious challenge to the Indian state today.

Yet outside forces, most especially the US and USSR, have been trying to influence developments in the region, and because of the gulf that has arisen between the Assamese and other groups and the dominant left forces in the region (especially the CPI (M) because of its identification with Bengalis and failure to support nationality demands), Indira Gandhi is likely to be able to maintain control for the present. In fact the Assamese and other northeastern movements pose a challenge to Indian communists as well—a challenge to take a clear position of leadership on the nationality issue.

### Behind the Assam Crisis

What are the roots of the Assam crisis?

Basically they lie in the multinational character of India and in the uneven development caused by continuing imperialist exploitation.

The whole northeast of India has been culturally and ethnically a transition zone between India and southeast Asia as well as a mountainous area whose tribal nationalities as the Nagas and Mizos were never really a part of the Indian cultural-social structure or ruled by Hindu kings. In contrast, the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley adopted Hinduism and developed Assamese, an Indo-European language, but this process occurred relatively recently, in the 16th-17th centuries. The Assamese, at a relatively lower level of feudal society, still practicing some types of shifting cultivation and with many tribal remnants in their culture and society, were consequently much less numerous than the neighbouring Bengalis inhabiting the rich plains and deltas of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers.

But it was colonial rule that transformed these differences into often violent contradictions. The Bengal region was the first conquered and most exploited; terrible

famines resulting from Imperialist plunder in the 18th century killed millions of people, millions more died of malaria and other diseases resulting from Imperialist "development" efforts after late 19th century, and an exploitative and feudal land structure left food production stagnant while population grew.

The result was an imperialist-induced "pressure on the land" that pushed increasing numbers of Bengali-speaking peasants (mainly Muslims) to move into neighboring Assamese and even tribal areas in search for land. At the same time, British tea planters grabbed upland in the Assamese hills and imported debt-bonded tribals from central India as plantation labourers, while Punjabi and Mawari merchants moved into Assam and Bengali-speaking middle classes moved in with British encouragement to dominate education, the professions and the bureaucracy in Assam.

After independence, the biggest Bengali-majority district became a part of East Pakistan and for the first time the Assamese people were in a majority in a state of their own with some chance for democratic advance. But under the new bourgeois Indian state and continuing imperialist uneven development, it remained a backward region even while it came to supply much of India's oil as well as tea and other exports.

And after independence the Bengali influx began again, this time with Hindu refugees from East Pakistan, an influx which has become even more intense since the Bangladesh war. There have been consistent movements and agitations in Assam, including demands for "full autonomy" in 1975 leaving only defense and foreign affairs in the hands of the Indian central government, a demand similar to what Mujib Rahman had earlier made in Bangladesh. In the recent explosion the demand is simple: that 1950-51 be taken as the "cut-off year": all immigrants before this (including Bengali-speaking Muslim peasants) would be accepted as full Indian and Assamese citizens, but subsequent immigrants (most of whom constitutionally are foreigners) must be identified as foreigners, their names struck from the elec-

toral rolls, and the responsibility for their welfare should be taken by the Indian state and not mainly the Assamese. (It should be noted that population density in Assam is exactly the same as in India as a whole; it only appears "lightly populated" in contrast to the Bengali areas).

The Assamese fear is quite literally one of being swamped culturally and economically by Bengalis. In 1971 out of 14,630,000 people, indigenous Assamese-speakers constituted only about 4,350,000 in Assam itself. Another estimated 5 million were Bengalis (including 2 million immigrant Muslim, many of whom have been relatively "assamized", 1,600,000 Bengali Hindus in the Brahmaputra valley, and 1,400,000 Bengalis in Cachar district which is now majority Bengali. In addition, there are 80 million Bengalis across the border in Bangladesh and 50 million in West Bengal state in India, while Bengalis now constitute 70% of the population of Tripura state, (which was 1,560,000 in 1971. It is expected that the 1981 census will reveal the Assamese to be even more of a minority in their own state.

### Communists and the Northeast

From the point of their own national existence and from the point of view of constitutional legality, the Assamese have a reasonable demand. But politically the northeast situation has always been complicated. Before independence the Muslim League emerged as the main spokesman for the Bengali Muslim peasants, taking as their slogan "land to the landless", i.e. the right to have land anywhere in Assam. The bourgeois-led Congress Party, helped by Gandhi's policy of giving representation and rights to different linguistic nationalities, became the main leader of the Assamese. Here participation in the anti-imperialist struggle against the British was always combined with attempts to maintain the "line system" which tried to prevent immigration into certain areas, i.e. with efforts to maintain the Assamese identity or rights as "sons of the soil."

The acceptance of the characterization of India as a multinational state and of national rights to

self-determination apparently never helped the Communists to take any concrete position regarding the Assam issue. Before independence the then-united CPI more or less fell into a chasm between the Muslim League and the Congress party, trying to voice both slogans — "land to the landless" and Assamese national rights — at the same time. With a base mainly among Bengali and other immigrant workers and the Bengali middle classes, it could never take a clear stand or gain much of a base among the Assamese themselves.

Today this failure has led to a severe contradiction, after the CPI (M) which is still the largest communist force, emerged as leaders of Left Front governments in Bengal and Tripura in the 1977 elections. But they have become largely identified with Bengali-speakers in Assam, and Tripura has now become the main example of a Bengali numerical domination feared by the Assamese and tribal minorities. The Assam movement has included attacks and beatings of Communist cadres, and the CPI and CPI(M) have responded by characterizing the movement as a chauvinist one. Articles in respectable Marxist journals sometimes have an almost colonial tinge, characterizing the Assamese as an "easygoing", "lazy", "backward" people in contrast to hardworking immigrants who are said to have "developed" the region, and tending to attribute the whole agitation to CIA and RSS (Hindu reactionary) influence.

In fact the two big communist parties have never given consistent support to nationality demands in the region. The CPI which emphasizes central power, has always characterized the Naga and Mizo movements as "separatist", "anti-Indian" movements in which the hated Maoists are said to be joining with the CIA in an attempt to dismember India. The CPI(M) describes India as multinational and gives great emphasis to national rights—but has remained absolutely and opportunistically silent even on the heavy repression exerted in Nagaland and Mizoram. Cadres when asked will often say, "but we are simply



not strong enough to challenge the state on this issue. Wait." In fact, the CPI(M)'s multinational policy has been reduced to asking for more financial powers and more autonomy for the states, which is used to consolidate their West Bengal and Kerala base and attempts to form alliances with bourgeois-regional governments in other states, but which has completely failed to pose them as a leader in a revolutionary working class policy for the northeast region.

The Naxalites have also been divided on the northeast issue, though there is intense debate on the nationality issue in Marxist-Leninist ranks though they have been bolder than others in speaking out for the rights to self-determination of the Nagas and Mizos, their effort has been a weak one on the whole and they have not built enough base to make their varying civil liberties and democratic rights organizations into genuine mass political organizations.

And regarding the recent Assam movement they have been ambivalent. The main Bengali and north India-based groups have taken a position close to that of the CPI(M), more or less echoing the claim that an India-wide social revolution is the only way to solve the unemployment and land problems of the Assamese. But some south India Naxalite groups, who have been much more sensitive to the nationality issue than the northerners one (such group apparently argues that the main contradiction in India is now between the different nationalities and the center) have supported the Assam and other movements. And recently dissident Marxist-Leninists in Assam itself have formed an Assam Communist Party and have been taking part in efforts to coordinate insurgency throughout the northeast.

As a consequence of the stuttering and even antagonistic left response to their problems, the Assamese movement and some of the tribal movements have been as much anti-communist as opposed to the Indian bourgeois state. And in spite of its solid base in West Bengal and Kerala shown

in the 1980 parliamentary elections, the Communists (which for the Indian masses is mainly represented by the CPI and CPI(M)) are showing themselves unable to give any oppositional (let alone revolutionary) political leadership in India in the region and as a whole.

### Indira's Drive for Power

It is almost certain that the Congress(I) will win the upcoming state elections scheduled to be held in nine states at the end of May; and thereby will emerge as the dominant party at both the state and national level almost everywhere except in Kerala, Bengal and the northeast. Indira as prime minister has put this kind of consolidation of power ahead of any effort to really form a national political program, and one of her earliest acts was the dissolution of the noncommunist oppositional state assemblies in February.

Opposition efforts to protest the heavy handed dissolution failed because the Janata Party had done the same in 1977 after its central victory, and because divisions in the opposition have reached almost laughable proportions. The Janata Party split into three sections following its defeat, though one has now dissolved itself with Jagjivan Ram's unhealed and unmourned entry into the Congress(Urs). The Bharatiya Janata Party (which is in fact the old RSS-Jana Sangh under Atul Bihari Vajpayee's leadership) is going its own way, while the other Janata Party and the Congress(U) and Lok Dal are engaging in alliance discussions with the Communist forces as well. But few in India are paying much attention to these manoeuvres the Congress (I) is expected to have a solid victory even though the Lok Dal and even the left have some basis among peasants and agricultural labourers in some northern states. Turmoil continues in India, but at present the masses (including even the Assam dissidents) look to Indira Gandhi as the only force capable of solving their problems.

And Indira continues to consolidate her personal power within the state bureaucracy as well (some of the earliest acts were

new appointments in the bureaucracy and police, especially in Delhi) and in the Congress(I) itself. There old Congress bosses, those who had in the past local power bases and those who joined the Congress(I) only before the elections both to bring their own bases into the party and to maintain their hold, have found themselves increasingly taking a back seat to the "new men", the younger "loyalists" who stayed with the Congress(I) through 1977 and 1978, an utterly ruthless and pragmatic crowd characterized only by their loyalty to "Sanjay and Madame". They are now just about numerically dominant in the parliament and in the party as a whole and they will tend to be pro-American and open to multinational entry but not out of any ideological conviction, they are prepared to swing to Russian aid or to any political direction that "Sanjay and Madame" command.

In fact this is a further authoritarian consolidation in the Congress(I), overriding almost all of the forces in the past who had constituted rich peasant and kulak interested in the old Congress party in the form of the power of "local bosses". The party is becoming an increasingly tight machine geared to the needs of the bourgeois state as a whole, ready to discipline even the bourgeois opposition (including landlords and kulaks) in these interests, capable of both massive repression of mass movements as well as moving to coopt them. And this is all being done in a context that clearly poses Sanjay Gandhi as the heir to the prime ministership.

The left and democratic forces (including an increasingly strong dalit movement and emerging women's groups) have been able to do little to oppose this process. Yet massive discontent and skepticism remain in India, and the turmoil in the geographically sensitive northeast, in spite of its current uncertain direction, in spite of clear activity by CIA and KGB and countless other forces, continues to have a relentless thrust and a revolutionary potential.

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GARADS



# Which Way for the Left?

K. P. Silva, General Secretary, CPSL

In our symposium 'Which Way for the Left' we published Question and Answer interviews with almost every Marxist group in this country. We have now invited the three major parties-LSSP, CPSL and JVP to participate in this discussion.

**Q:** On October 2nd last year (1979), five leading left parties including your own, came together publicly and announced that they had agreed upon a programme of united action. Now this agreement is no more. What was the role played by the CPSL in this drawing together and what, in your assessment, were the main causes for the breakup of the newfound unity?

**A:** It is in accordance with the political line adopted by the Xth Congress of our Party held in March '78, of broadening and strengthening the unity of left forces, to resist the attacks of UNP government on the standards of living of the people and on trade union and democratic rights of the working class and other working people, that we actively supported a move by the JVP seeking united action of the five left parties to oppose the so-called Prevention of Terrorism Act. Later the Essential Public Services Act was also included. We contributed to that five party unity by surmounting the obstacle created by the refusal of the LSSP to work with the breakaway party led by Vasudeva Nanayakkara which called itself the "LSSP (new leadership)". We worked actively to persuade both sides to come to a compromise on the basis of changing the name of the Party led by V. Nanayakkara to "Nawa Sama Samaja Party" (NSSP).

Later this new found unity broke up as a result of both the JVP and the LSSP retreating from that position. It turned out that JVP's unity move, which was a departure from their "go it alone" policy, was not quite popular within that party and soon afterwards they began to extricate

themselves from their original commitment. The LSSP's choice of Podi Athula as its candidate for the Galle by-election showed that they were not in favour of an alliance with the JVP. The Galle by-election helped both the JVP and the LSSP to put a final end to the five party unity of October, 1979.

**Q:** Meanwhile: the LSSP-CPSL United Left Front, (which was itself a truncated version of the LSSP-CPSL-PDP front formed in 1977), has also come apart. What were the central reasons for this split?

**A:** Our Party entered into an Electoral alliance with the LSSP in 1977 on the basis of a common Election Manifesto. After the elections, it was the aim of both parties to strengthen this alliance on the basis of a common political programme in the new situation. For the achievement of such political unity, it became necessary to work out a common strategy and tactics concerning trade union unity, the broadening of left unity and towards the SLFP. However rather than coming closer on these matters, we somewhat drifted apart on the above-mentioned issues. On the basis of both long-term and short-term goals defined by the Xth Congress of our Party in 1978, we placed greater stress on strengthening broad trade union unity including trade unions affiliated to the SLFP, and on the achievement of unity and closer cooperation of left political parties and groups. The LSSP on the other hand drifted towards a policy where the main stress was placed on joint activities with the SLFP at party level. Their behaviour at the Galle by-elections, which was

detrimental to the continuance of the five party unity, and their recent proposal to have a joint May Day Rally with the SLFP show this trend.

However, our Party has always recognised and still recognises the need to work together with the LSSP as a Left Party.

**Q:** There is an allegation that the JVP and your party restricted participation in the campaign of united actions to the 5 parties, on the basis of foreign policy positions. Is this correct? Since there was no programmatic front entered into by the five parties, why were other left groups (chiefly Maoist) not incorporated into the action campaign? Surely such a broad basing would have prevented any single party gaining a disproportionate weight within the 'bloc' which permitted it to put a brake on Left unity according to its whims and fancies?

**A:** The invitation in mid 1979 to five left parties to discuss about joint action was an independent initiative of the JVP. Our Party actively supported this move since we considered the getting together of these five parties would be a big step forward. Our Party works for broad left unity and united action of all left and democratic forces based on such left unity.

**Q:** What are the prospects and preconditions (both objective and subjective) for the restoration and expansion of left unity? What are the concrete proposals you put forward and the transitional intermediary stages you envisage as necessary for the achievement of this goal?

**A:** All left parties and groups have differences in the assessment of socio-economic developments of our country and different viewpoints about the path of struggle. These differences which are a reflection of the conflict of proletarian and petty-bourgeois attitudes, obstruct left unity.

Our experience, particularly during the last two years, has convinced us that left unity on the basis of a common political programme cannot be achieved in a hurry. It depends chiefly on the development of the independent political role of the working class.

The intermediary stage, during which these differences could be narrowed down, will be a period of united action against common enemies and around issues that we can agree upon at any time, on questions affecting the working class, the peasantry and other oppressed sections of the population and the development of united mass struggles both at trade union and political party levels. The aggravation of the general crisis of world capitalism and its serious repercussions on the bourgeois society in our country is an objective factor which serves the cohesion of left forces.

Q: Much interest has been evoked in Left circles, by your party's self criticism. Could you sketch out its main points for us and also tell us why this selfcriticism has not been made public?

A: The Communist Party follows the Leninist method of criticism and self-criticism to improve party's work by correcting mistakes and by learning from past mistakes.

In the recent past our Party self-critically reviewed its work during the period since the formation of the SLFP-LSSP-CPSL United Front in 1968, and particularly our work during the period of our participation in the United Front Coalition Government. Our criticism and self-criticism dealt with both inner-party matters, which are confined to the party, and on matters of policy which are of public interest. Our self-critical review of past political policies are contained in documents of the Xth (1978) and XIth (1980) Congresses of our Party. These are public documents. Some of these self-critical assessments have also been voiced by our speakers at public meetings.

The gist of our thorough self-critical review of the past is that it was correct in 1968 to have formed a United Front with the SLFP and the LSSP to defeat the UNP government at the 1970 general elections. But in retrospect, we think that in the balance of forces prevailing at that time, it was a mistake to have entered the coalition government. When the balance of forces was unfavourable to the working class both inside and outside the government. We could not sufficiently influence government's policies. The adverse effects of many policies of that government on various sections of the population caused widespread dissatisfaction. As a result our association with that government diminished the confidence which the masses had in our Party and its image.

Q: What is the CPSL's current assessment of the role and potential of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)? What is your present position on the vexed, interrelated questions of the national bourgeois and the stage of the revolution? Why has the Party stopped short of explicitly characterising the present stage of the revolution as 'socialist'?

A: The SLFP has **historically** exhausted its anti-imperialist role. I say "historically" because the SLFP, (and for that matter, even the UNP) may be capable of effecting some progressive acts within the neo-colonialist bourgeois framework and which are of an anti-imperialist character. Basically, there is no difference between UNP and SLFP policies. But the SLFP which has an anti-imperialist and nationalist past has collaborated with left forces. Therefore, there are certain anti-imperialist sections still following that party, which should be won over by the left.

It is our position that it is only an anti-imperialist alliance led by the working class, which can now complete anti-imperialist tasks, which are intertwined with certain anti-capitalist tasks, as well. We consider that in our conditions there is no dividing wall between the completion of the anti-imperialist revolution and

the commencement of the socialist revolution. However, it is true that we have not characterised the present stage of the revolution explicitly as "socialist" for the following reasons:-

(a) Despite the leading role that the working class will have to play in the current stage of the revolution, we envisage transitional stages in social transformation, in an under-developed capitalist country like ours, in building a **socialist economy**.

(b) The strongest enemy people have to face in the present era of transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale is imperialism, headed by American imperialism. This global aspect will certainly draw in wide non-proletarian sections of our country into the struggle first against imperialism, and who will finally turn against capitalism as a whole, as Lenin pointed out. Our revolution then will be a continuous one going over from anti-imperialist to the socialist stage.

Q: There is a school of opinion that the imperatives of electoral politics will eventually force the CPSL into a realignment with the SLFP, despite your present anti-SLFP stand. A muting of the anti-Sovietism of SLFP foreign policy as it seeks to imitate Indira Gandhi a superficial leadership change which means little in class terms; Soviet foreign policy perceptions concerning Sri Lanka and South Asian region or quite simply, the proximity of general elections-these are factors, which, according to some analysts, will drive the quintessentially parliamentarist CPSL back into the arms of the SLFP. What is your reply?

A: Our Party has declared our general political line in the new situation since the break up of the SLFP, LSSP, CPSL United Front both at IXth and Xth Congresses quite clearly. We cannot help it if any one entertains doubts.

Q: The CPSL's new line concerning the SLFP and the stage of the revolution has been criticized by Maoists as 'neo-Trotskyist' and inspired by those sections within the CPSL leadership who

came over from the LSSP. Another motivation, according to these Maoists, was the attempt of the CPSL to accommodate and approximate the JVP's positions. What were the real factors (internal and external) which provided the sources of inspiration (theoretically and politically) for the new general orientation? Did the thinking of any particular segment of the world communist movement, or the examples of any specific revolutionary leaderships provide inspirational impulses for the new militancy?

A: Our political line is worked out by application of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory to prevailing local conditions taking into account experience from our own revolutionary practice and the experiences of fraternal parties, particularly of those working conditions similar to ours. In view of the Maoist line of collaboration with imperialism and local reactionary forces we are not surprised when they slander our policies as adventurist.

Q: Your party gave considerable prominence to the Stalin centenary, even surprising the Maoists, according to some commentators. Some interpret this as a rearguard action by the Stalinist old leadership against the neo Trotskyists within the party, while others take the contrary view that it is an ideological corollary of your new 'hard' political line. Still others think that it was a purely Soviet phenomenon which you had no choice but to reflect, despite your friendly relations with the essentially Trotskyist members of the erstwhile 5 party bloc. Yet another view is that it was a riposte to the LSSP and for the JVP. What is the reality?

A: Our celebration of the Stalin Centenary is in consistency with the common international assessment of the role of Stalin in consolidating the socialist system in the USSR, and defending it from its external enemies and from internal enemies such as the group led by Trotsky. Communists, while criticising and denouncing certain serious mistakes committed by Stalin, pay due tribute to his historic positive role.

Q: Your party is said to have tilted towards the JVP, owing to foreign policy considerations. What is the state of your present relationship with the JVP? How do you characterize the ideological-theoretical positions of the JVP and at which points does the CPSL demarcate itself from these positions?

A: There is no truth in any assumption that our Party has "tilted" towards the JVP, because of common attitudes on international issues. We endeavour to work in cooperation with all left forces both on national and international issues.

It is well known that we have certain differences with other left parties, just as with the JVP, on both local and international issues.

Q: What are your views on the LSSP's present policies and practice, with special reference to its assessment of the SLFP?

A: We would not like to comment publicly on the present policies of the LSSP. It is best that you clarify these points directly from the LSSP.

Q: Your position on the National (Tamil) Question in the North and East seems to have set the CPSL as far apart from the militant Tamil youth as it was from the militant Sinhala youth in 1971. Your respected party organizer V. Ponnambalam quit over the CPSL's refusal to clearly commit itself to the cause of Tamil self determination, which leaves you with virtually no support base in the Tamil areas. Why is it that the CPSL which prides itself on internationalist solidarity with national liberation struggles the world over, is so cautiously conservative on the Tamil issue?

A: We refer you to our document on the question of national minorities adopted by the XIth Congress of our party which will be printed shortly for wide circulation.

Q: How would you characterise the present conjuncture as the country moves into a new decade, with a UNP regime at the helm? What are the tasks of the Left in this conjuncture?

(Continued on page 24)

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# Small nations : How much co-operation ?

by Godfrey Gunatilleke

**T**he project on Cooperation among small nations in Asia in the context of the changing Asian Political Economy, was expected to examine the problems encountered by two groups of small nations in Asia—one group in South Asia near and around India, and the other group in the South-East Asian region with China as the growing centre of political and economic power in this region. In both situations the small countries were perceived as a grouping around two economies of gigantic proportions, both possessing massive potential for accumulation of economic, political and technological strength. Two papers were prepared on the problems of the two groups of countries. These papers provided an overview of the situation in each region.

The consultations examined the presentations that had been made in the papers and explored several themes which were not fully covered in these presentations. The papers had adopted different approaches to the treatment of the subject. In the case of South Asia, the paper examined the problems in relation to the configuration of power in the South region as a whole with India at the centre. It analysed the nature of relationships that were growing between the small countries of the South Asian region and India and thereafter examined the prospects for alternative patterns of regional cooperation.

The paper on South-East Asia analysed some of the conceptual issues relating to balance-of-power strategies and the factors which drove small nations to "policies of strategic checks and balances involving support for non-hegemonic politics." It dealt with some

of the main political, cultural and economic features which characterised the relationships among small countries in the South-East Asian region and identified some of the preconditions for genuine regional cooperation. At the consultations it was agreed that the two papers would be further elaborated on the lines which were indicated at the meeting. The participants were also of the view that the project could be developed further into a second phase in which institutes and scholars from small nations in other regions including the developed countries, could meet to consider the role of small nations within a global perspective, analyse their relationships with the major power centres and examine how small nations could participate effectively in processes of global decision-making in order to bring about a more equitable distribution of power in the international system.

With the emergence of the People's Republic of China and India as the two major centres of growth, the political and economic relationships both in South Asia and South-East Asia have to be viewed within the changing configuration of power which would follow. The analysis in the papers and the discussions at the meeting attempted to identify some of the major factors which will govern the relationships between the small nations and the two big powers in the region. Underlying the analysis was a normative frame of reference which projected the desirable pattern of relations and in terms of which the relations in South Asia and South-East Asia could be evaluated. This frame of reference was derived from the basic concepts which have shaped the goals and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement as it evol-

This paper has been prepared by Godfrey Gunatilleke, Director, Marga Institute, as a report to the International Foundation for Development Alternatives on the Project on "Cooperation among small nations in Asia in the context of the changing Asian political economy" which was sponsored by the Foundation. The report is based on the presentations in the papers and the discussions at the meeting held in Marga Institute. However, the author accepts full responsibility for the views expressed in the report as well as the emphasis given to specific issues. The paper on South Asia was prepared by N.M.M.I. Hussein, Director of Asia Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, and the paper on South-East Asia was co-authored by Rudolf S. David, Emmanuel Esguerra, Gonzalo M. Jurado, Felipe B. Miranda, and Francisco Nemenzo, Jr.

ved during the last two decades, as well as the Declaration of the New International Economic Order. On the one hand these concepts emphasize certain political preconditions for an equitable world order which includes the absence of colonialism, imperialism, neo-imperialism and all forms of domination of one nation by another.

The international order which is envisaged is one which promotes and safeguards the sovereignty and equality of nations and is based on principles of non-intervention and the absence of political formations which concentrate power in a single nation or a group of nations. It could be said that essentially such an order is non-hegemonic in character. On the other hand, the definition of international goals has focused on the economic order and stressed the need to alter the existing asymmetrical pattern of economic relations between developed and developing countries. These changes imply a new international division of labour in which the

exchange among nations is increasingly carried out on a basis of equality. The reduction of asymmetry and inequality requires a structure of trade which is radically different from the colonial structures based on the exchange of primary commodities from economically weak nations, with manufactured products from economically powerful nations. The present project on small nations examines whether the prevailing conditions may tend to reproduce both the political as well as the economic configurations of the prevailing international economic system which is characterised by unequal relationships. The study therefore was expected to examine the preconditions for patterns of relationships which are in accord with the principles accepted in the Non-Aligned Movement and in the Declaration of the New International Economic Order.

The discussions highlighted significant differences in the two situations in South Asia and South-East Asia both in regard to the political as well as the economic trends and developments. These differences are manifested in several important areas. First, in the South Asian situation the politics of the region as well as the relationships among the countries in the region did not feel the full impact of cold-war diplomacy. In the case of South-East Asia, super-power diplomacy and the East-West conflict dominated the postwar development of the region. These deep conflicts and sharp confrontations between the big powers fundamentally influenced and shaped the policies and responses of the small nations in South-East Asia. It produced a more clearly identifiable community of political interests in a group of South-East Asian nations which resulted in the collective arrangements for their security. In the case of South Asia, there was no major escalation of cold-war politics in the region. It could even be said that the absence of close interaction among countries of the region or movement towards alliances and coalitions might be partly attributable to the very fact that the super powers did not complete

strongly to assert their presence in the region and to draw countries or groups of countries more closely into their orbit.

Of course there have been various interpretations of the attitude of the two super powers to the role of India in the South Asian region. The discussions at the meeting did not attempt to examine the various facets of cold-war strategy in relation to the South Asian region which may have contributed to the situation. But it was agreed that the major forces determining the relationships in the South Asian region were internal to the region and grew out of the political inheritance following on partition of India and subsequently the independence of Bangladesh. When this is said, it has to be noted that the north-western and north-Eastern frontiers of the Indian sub-continent did become a politically sensitive area in which the extension of the influence of the big powers, particularly the Soviet Union, China and the U.S., posed continuing problems. In the case of South-East Asia the emergence of Vietnam and Cambodia as Socialist systems and the conflicts that have arisen in their relationships with the other major Socialist powers have become a new factor in the politics of small nations in South-East Asia.

At the discussions it was agreed that the studies should further analyse and elaborate the international power conflicts in the region from the point of view of the small nations and their policies for managing their external relationships within this context. In the case of South Asia, all the countries in the region, including both the group of "small" nations as well as India, are members of the Non-Aligned Movement and to that extent share a common ideology in regard to the major power blocs in the world and relations with them. Pakistan and Iran which remained outside the Non-Aligned Movement till the last Summit were exceptions, but for a long time Pakistan had shown a fair degree of ideological commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement

and sought membership within it. The membership of South Asian nations in the Non-Aligned Movement has certainly contributed to the containment of cold-war conflicts within the region.

In the discussion of the role of small nations in South Asia and South-East Asia, there was the underlying assumption that the countries contiguous and close to the two big powers were relatively small and therefore had comparable problems pertaining to the relationships of small nations with the dominant big powers in the region. In this context one option open to such countries was to cooperate among themselves in order to create a structure of countervailing power which could manage the small-big power relationships. The definition of "small" however is a relative one. Both Pakistan and Bangladesh have populations in excess of 70 million. In demographic terms they would be regarded as large countries with populations bigger than those of West Germany and U.K. The fact however is that in relation to India both in terms of population and national output, they are approximately 1/9th.

In the South Asian region we have two moderately large countries — Bangladesh and Pakistan — followed by much smaller countries — Burma, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan. When we come to Iran the pattern alters in an interesting way. Though demographically small, Iran has a gross domestic product which is nearly half of the gross domestic product of India. In South-East Asia the pattern in terms of size is not very dissimilar. Again the group of countries outside China can all be regarded as relatively small. There is of course Indonesia which by itself in terms of population, territorial spread and resource endowment has the potential to develop into a major economic power, but in relation to China it is still less than 1/7th in terms of population and a much smaller fraction of China's gross domestic product. In the situation that has been described, what are the factors that provide the motivation and the community of interests to create stronger

ties of cooperation among the small nations in these two groups? It could be argued that the current economic trends may tend to produce a pattern of relationships in each of these regions in which the economic exchange and the linkages between a big power and the next major power in the region might grow significantly faster than the linkages between the big powers and the region as a whole. In such a scenario the important axis in South Asia would be Iran and India, and, provided the political constraints are overcome. In South-East Asia it would be China and Indonesia. This pattern of relations of course would be different from the model in which small nations act together to evolve a more equitable pattern of relations with the big powers. As stated earlier, the underlying concepts in that model are those which have emerged from the Declaration of the New International Economic Order and the principles of Non-Alignment.

The grouping of the ASEAN nations offers a framework within which conceptually such a pattern could emerge. In such a pattern the strength of the moderately large economies such as Indonesia throw their weight together with the smaller countries in achieving a more equitable balance within the region as a whole. This of course raises a number of issues which are internal to the group of small nations taken together and to the pattern of relations which they evolve among themselves. Given the diversity in size which is further complicated by the different stages of development reached by the different countries in the region, the problems concerning relationships between small nations and big nations are of a more complex character than can be assumed in a model in all countries outside the major powers — India and China — are grouped together as small, with a blinding community of interests in their relations with the big powers.

Next: Power centres

## Rise in Third World debt seen

by Bhajj Khindaria

GENEVA

**T**HE FOREIGN debt of developing countries which do not export oil will reach \$440bn in 1981, up from an estimated \$384bn this year and \$329bn last year.

The current account deficit of such countries will reach nearly \$70bn in 1981, a rise from an estimated \$63bn this year and \$41bn last year.

These forecasts were made in a report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) whose decision taking board met here to review problems plaguing economic relations between rich and poor countries.

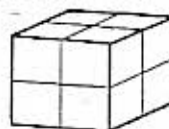
The board, in its meetings, highlighted the dramatic deterioration in prospects for the economic development of poorer nations as a direct result of the economic stagnation and recession still dogging the Western industrial nations and Japan.

According to a keynote report prepared for the board meeting the purchasing power of non-oil-exporting developing countries will increase this year by less than 1 per cent because of sharp drops in their exports to richer nations suffering economic slowdown.

The poor export earnings also mean that such developing countries will manage to increase imports by only about 4.5 per cent a year in 1980 and 1981, compared with about 9 per cent in 1978 and 1979.

The world's 30 poorest nations will achieve economic growth rate of only 2.6 per cent this year, which could rise to 3.4 per cent next year, provided that they manage to get enough foreign aid to sustain current import levels and their economic development plans are not scuttled by drought or famine.

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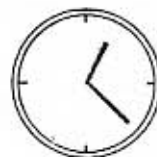
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# In the Sandinista fist

by A Special Correspondent

**W**hile it is very true that there exists an asymmetry between the bourgeois-laden governmental structures advanced non-capitalist coercive apparatus of the new state, we must recall the famous phrase "all political power flows from the barrel of a gun." And in the new Nicaragua the gun is grasped firmly in the Sandinista fist.

Having said this, the focus of our attention must now be shifted to other levels. The armed Sandinist movement does not exist in a vacuum or hover in mid air. Earlier in our series we have described the FSLN as a vanguard organisation adopting a mass line, organically linked with the mass movement and the leading factor in the creation of mass organisations. Now, in victory as in struggle, the FSLN is indissolubly connected with and rests upon the masses. It is the FSLN which has won, in and through the struggle, the position of hegemony in the popular consciousness. Commander Tomas Borge, veteran Sandinista, leader of the Protracted Peoples War' tendency and presently Minister of the Interior drew attention in his 'Newsweek' interview late last year. (1979) to the important fact that the Nicaraguan revolution had given rise to more advanced mass organisations than had the Cuban revolution at the time of its triumph in 1959. Indeed we may note that the final insurrection in Nicaragua had a much greater intensity than the Rebel Army's final thrust on to Havana.

The degree of consciousness and organization of the mass movement in Nicaragua is probably higher than was that of the July 26th movement. If all political power flows from the barrel of a gun and the gun is grasped firmly in the Sandinista fist,

*"The 6th World Congress of the Communist International sends fraternal greetings to the workers and peasants of Nicaragua, and the heroic army of national emancipation of General Sandino, which is carrying on a brave determined struggle against the imperialism of the United States. The Communist International calls upon all working class organisations and the entire proletariat of all countries ... to support General Sandino."*

— Excerpt from the resolution adopted by the 6th Comintern Congress meeting in Moscow 1928. Quoted in the Comintern Journal International Press Correspondence (INPRECORR) Sept. 1st 1928.

then the arm behind the fist is that of the mass movement, while the 'body' itself comprises the popular social sectors of Nicaragua. Therefore we may well say that if the latent contradiction with the bourgeois dominated governmental sectors becomes an antagonistic one, it is the Sandinist forces that will, in all probability emerge as the primary aspect of the contradiction. Such a contradiction will have to be resolved by the overthrow, dismantling or merely purging the spheres of government and thereby firmly relegating the bourgeois fractions to a

position of subalternity in a new power bloc. The Peoples Democracies of the post-war period provide examples of such transitional situations. On the other hand, the way in which the PCP, MFA and the radical left were outmanoeuvred by Social Democracy and Imperialism in Portugal furnish in negative example and remind us that the victory of the socialist option is not inevitable in transitional periods, and that restorationism is within the realm of logical possibility. Yet in Nicaragua, the politico-military weight of the Sandinistas, together with the social weight of the mass organisations render it extremely difficult for the bourgeois sectors to wrest and retain, for any prolonged period, the hegemony that the FSLN won gun in hand during the period of armed struggle against the Somoza dictatorship.

Here an objection may be raised, invoking on its behalf the spectre of Algeria where the army itself assumed a Bonapartist role and then proceeded to reverse the gains of the revolution and build up dependent capitalism. Is it not probable that the FSLN's National Directorate would itself play an essentially similar role? However, the answer is that despite slight and superficial similarities, the FSLN's forces are qualitatively different from the Algerian army of Houari Boumedienne. Ruth First explains to us in 'The Barrel of a Gun' that the Algerian regular army was a non-combatant one based in Tunisia and kept physically

separate from the 'Wilayas'—the Guerilla command groups which were the real forces engaged in the armed struggle, by the Meurice line of fortifications built by the French along the border. The Wilayas themselves had been **militarily** weakened by the defeat sustained in the long Battle of Algiers, which paradoxically had **politically** weakened the French. With the Evian agreement negotiated by the new Gaullist regime, 3 groups contended for power and influence within the nationalist movement: namely, the bourgeois reformist politicians, Boumedienne's regular army, and the guerilla command groups. The first two groups based in the exterior (Tunisia) united to crush the power of the Wilayas, who were already weak militarily having borne the brunt of the struggle. Then in 1963, the regular army ousted the politicians (reformists and radicals) and seized power in a coup d'etat.

In Nicaragua though there may be a distinction between the forces that operated from inside the Costa Rican border and the detachments that spearheaded the urban insurrections, there is no cleavage as existed in Algeria between a non-combatant regular army and a combatant guerilla force. The Sandinista army headed by its National Directorate of **Field Commanders**, is a revolutionary army of the people, formed, transformed and tempered in a way of the people.

Finally let us, shift our attention from the political instance to **the ideological instance**, for Gramsci and Mao have, in their separate ways, emphasized the ideological hegemony of the proletariat, the decisive importance of the correct (proletarian) line.

It is of no mean importance that portraits of General Sandino are present in every corner of Free Nicaragua, because the ideology of the FSLN revolutionaries and the dominant ideology (as opposed to bourgeois reformism) of the Nicaraguan revolution is **Sandinismo**. This is no empty symbol or concessionary gesture by immaculate Marxists-Leninists

to 'backward' popular sentiments. To the contrary, '**Sandino lives!**' in the heart of every Nicaraguan revolutionary. Sandinism is a powerful expression of anti-Imperialism, of revolutionary nationalism. It is also infused with an egalitarian social content since it based itself on the worker-peasant masses and led their struggle **precisely at a time** when bourgeois reformism had capitulated to imperialism. Its vision of the future was egalitarian and co-operativist. Though in the strictest sense Sandinism may be said to correspond to the class position of the petty-bourgeoisie, it is stupidly arrogant to dismiss it, as Trotskyists do as a petty-bourgeois nationalism opposed to scientific proletarian socialism. Indeed, the task of "identifying class interests with national interests, and national interests with international interests" (Le Duan), of synthesizing "tradition and the revolution" (Nguyen Khac Vien), is one of the key strategic problems for Marxist-Leninists in the colonial, semi colonial and dependent (neocolonial) countries. Fidel Castro carried forward the traditions of 'one hundred years of struggle' dominated by giants like Maximo Gomez, Jose Marti and 'the Bronze Titan' Antonio Maceo and fused this tradition of rebellion with Marxism-Leninism.

The OLAS General Declaration which proclaimed that "the principles of Marxism-Leninism guide the revolutionary movement of Latin America" also proclaimed, in its second thesis, that "the Revolution in Latin America has deepest historical roots in the liberation movement against European colonialism of the 19th century. The epic struggle of the peoples of America and the great class battles that our people have carried out against imperialism in earlier decades, constitutes the source of historical inspiration for the Latin American revolutionary movement."

Sandinismo must therefore be understood as a vehicle for national-popular mobilization against imperialism and the oligarchy, as well as a necessary stage in

## Marxist State?

*Nicaragua now appears to be well on the way to becoming a pro-Cuban Marxist state, senior U. S. officials said here.*

*White House, State Department and Pentagon officials said in a series of recent interviews the Carter administration had lost hope that the Central American country could be encouraged onto a moderate democratic course — Dateline: Washington, Sunday.*

*— Reproduced in "Ceylon Daily News" Monday April 28th 1980.*

socialist project significant enough, this was the position held by the Comintern in its 'Third Period' when it is alleged to have ignored the importance of nationalism. At its 6th Congress in July 1928, the Comintern unanimously approved a resolution affirming its strong support for General Sandino's war of national liberation against U. S. imperialism and urged that all the affiliates of the Comintern, especially those in the America's should support Sandino by all possible means. In accordance with this, Chinese Communist Party and the Left Kuomintang named an armed detachment after Sandino!

Of course, the contemporary Sandinista movement as it was reconstituted in 1962 by Carlos Fonseca Amador, (whose renegade brother is the Trotskyist Fausto Amador) is not simply a revolutionary nationalist movement. Writing in 'Tricontinental' magazine (the Havana based organ of OSPAAAL) in 1969, Carlos Fonseca identified the sources of inspiration of the FSLN (apart from Sandino) and stated that they base themselves on 'the teachings of Marx, Lenin, Fidel, Che and Ho Chi Minh.' It is this ideological strand that the FSLN will have to refine, clarify and strengthen in their new stage of development. **Lenin tells us that the petty bourgeoisie cannot be a stable ruling class, but can only be, in the final analysis, a stepping stone either for the**

dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is true in the ideological theoretical realm too.

Anti Imperialist revolutionary rationalism, though an important, indeed inevitable stage, is still only a transitional stage, a 'stopping stone'. The reformistic liberal bourgeoisie and the social democrats will seek to wave the banner of Sandinism against socialism, against Communism, since the three specific features of the Cuban revolution viz the ambiguous position of the United States, the ambiguous (latterly, supportive) position fractions of the domestic bourgeoisie and the supportive position of the surrounding bourgeois states, are present in Nicaragua, there will be efforts to replay the Cuban scenario differently this time. If these efforts are to be foiled, Sandinismo will

have to 'commit suicide' ideologically (to use a famous idea of Amilcar Cabral) and be (reborn) as a scientific socialism, the ideology of the proletariat. In this process, elements of Sandinismo will be negated while other will be re-affirmed and reappear at a higher stage of the dialectical spiral contained within a new, enriched synthesis. It is only by **moving forward** to scientific proletarian socialism that the revolutionary, nationalist anti-imperialism of Sandinismo be **preserved**.

The fact that the portrait of Che Guevara often accompanies that of General Sandino in Free Nicaragua is a symbol that the advanced elements of the FSLN are conscious of and have undertaken this task. Che used to point out the negative example of Jose Pope Figueres who led a

successful nationalist revolution in Costa Rica in 1948, became President and then negated the peoples aspirations by selling out to US interests representing the great monopolies—which wanted an 'honourable' popular government with a 'good' reputation. The FSLN will take care to avoid these 'pitfalls of a purely national consciousness' (warned on another continent by Fanon) and Nicaragua will probably provide a real example of a viable synthesis of indirect representative democratic institutions and organs of direct popular democracy as argued for by Rosa Luxemburg.

Indeed we may confidently expect that the New Nicaragua will be a free, independent, democratic and **socialist** Nicaragua, where the working masses are the collective masters and makers of their own destiny. **(Concluded)**

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# Planning at district level

by Neelan Tiruchelvam

**T**he Executive Committee would be the political executive at the district level which is collectively responsible and answerable to the people for the implementation of the development plan. Functional responsibilities may be distributed between individual members of the Executive who may within these spheres provide political direction and supervision to the District Administration. The District Administration would have two categories of servants and officers. Firstly, servants and employees appointed by the Council and subject to its control. This category would include officers required within a district and who would form part of an administrative and technical pool which would primarily service the needs of each district. Secondly, other officers who may be posted to such Councils by the Government and whose services may be secured by the Council for the discharge of its functions and responsibilities. There would need to be a District Secretary, to be the bureaucratic head of the district administration, subject to the direction of the political executive and accountable to the Development Council. The implementation of the plan would be through the instrumentality of the District administration. Each district may also explore the potential of involving the private sector and other non-governmental organisations in the execution of developmental projects.

The other concept which is basic to the scheme envisaged herein is that of the district development plan. The preliminary work relating to such a plan, including technical feasibility and detailed financial estimates of projects would have to be initiated by the Executive Committee. The Plan may be in respect of any of the subjects to be devolved on Development Councils. It is an imperative

requirement of the terms of reference that the subjects include, (a) agriculture and food, (b) land use and settlement, (c) animal husbandry, (d) co-operatives (e) small and medium scale industries, (f) fisheries, (g) rural development, (h) housing, (i) health services, (k) cultural affairs (l) minor irrigation, (m) agricultural marketing, (n) social services, and (o) agrarian services. (vide paragraph 12 of the White Paper). The addition of irrigation works which are of an intra-district character, and district level employment need to be considered.

The draft plan which is so formulated by the Executive Committee will be presented to the Development Council which would be required to debate and vote upon it. The statutory responsibility for preparing an annual district development plan would be vested in the Development Council. The plan would include the proposals relating to the financing of annual expenditure whether by revenue, borrowing or grant. A plan which is so formulated by the Council would need to be 'approved.' Once the plan has been so approved, the Council and the Executive Committee would assume responsibility for the administration in respect of such matters as are referred to in the said plan. The Development Council should also have the power of formulating any scheme of importance to the district in respect of subjects outside the aforesaid list. The Government should have the power of transferring such development scheme to such Council.

As regards the financial structure of Development Councils, a significant component of their financial needs would be met through grants from the centre. There has been concern that the

present system of financial allocations as represented by the decentralized budget does not adequately take note of the varying financial needs, developmental potential and implementation capacity of different districts. Undeveloped electorates with population dispersed over an entire district have hitherto been denied the special consideration that they require. There is accordingly the need for an independent Grants Commission to evolve objective criteria for resource allocation based on area, stage of development potential for raising revenue and expenditure needs. One possible approach would be for such a Commission to develop a formula-based system of grants which is operative for a period of years. Such a system could facilitate stability and predictability in the financial arrangements of districts without depriving the scheme of the flexibility which may be called for by major calamities and unforeseen contingencies. Stable financial arrangement could further enhance the capacity of Development Councils to make long term projections with regard to development priorities. A Grants Commission would further minimise the intrusion of political considerations and other subjective factors into decision making on resource allocations.

Direct grants would need to be supplemented by additional resources. The capacity of Development Councils to mobilise such resources would no doubt vary. The Secretary to the Ministry of Finance and Planning has drawn attention to a few supplementary taxes and charges on activities within a district which may be levied by Development Councils. (vide memorandum dated October 12th, 1979.) He further added that there is, 'no objection to Development Councils underta-

king commercially viable development projects financed by Commercial Banks or a Development Bank'. He has further pointed to the possibilities of Development Councils borrowing from the market through debentures, bonds and stocks provided such Councils have the capacity for repayment. In our view there is scope for imposing levies on economic activities within a district, without adding to the fiscal burden of ordinary people. In addition there is need to examine the possibilities of revenue sharing schemes or the assignment of sources of revenue to such Development Councils. We may also note that the Government has recognized that Development Councils could expedite the integrated development plans for districts financed by the World Bank and other international organizations. (Vide paragraph 4 of the letter dated 13th November, 1979, from the Secretary to the President). Such projects are now in operation in Kurunegala, Matara and Hambantota; and similar support for other districts is under negotiation.

We need to refer to the Government's decision to vest Development Councils with local government functions relating to rural areas. In this respect the Development Council would become the legal successor of all existing Town Councils and Village Councils and would be responsible for the local government functions which were within their jurisdiction. We note that this policy decision recognised that existing local authorities in view of their limited powers and financial resources have little capacity to transform the quality of life of the people for whom they were responsible. The aggregation of rural local bodies at the district level will facilitate greater rationalisation of revenue collection and expenditure on local government services. The institutional void at the village level may, however be filled by the creation of an institution which could make direct representations to the Development Councils on matters which concern a village or a cluster of villages.

The magnitude of the effort which should be directed towards a resolution of the development crises facing several districts, calls for concerted action by the political executive, district administration and local government. The innovations that have been recommended provide a framework for the integration of institutions which have worked in isolation for many decades. Structural changes, however, imaginative become meaningful only if they result in an improvement in the quality of life in all its elements. If this experiment is to succeed the new structures would need to be sustained by a deep and abiding commitment to the sharing of power and responsibility with the people in respect of problems which intimately concern a district.

We summarise our recommendations as follows:—

- (1) The Development Council to be a corporate body with subordinate lawmaking powers subject to the approval of Parliament. The Council to have statutory authority to levy taxes and raise loans and invest its income.
- (2) The Council shall be composed of all Members of Parliament in a district and a specified number of members, elected at a General Election for the purpose of such Councils. An elected Chairman to preside at the Development Council. The District Minister will not be a member of the Council but whenever appropriate send messages or address the Council. The District Minister to assume the agency and co-ordinating function of the Centre in respect of activities not forming part of the plan.
- (3) The grants, revenue, charges and loans recovered by such Councils to be credited to a District Development Fund.
- (4) The political executive at the district level to be the Executive Committee which would be collectively responsible to the Council and consist of three or four members of the Council appointed by the

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District Minister and the Chairman. The District Minister will be the head and the Chairman an ex-officio member.

- (5) The functions of the Council to include, (a) the formulation of the district development plan, (b) the implementation of the district development plan, (c) the co-ordination and evaluation of district development activities and (d) the expenditure of funds vested in the District Development Fund.
- (6) The functions of the Executive Committee to include —
  - (a) the formulation of a draft district development plan;
  - (b) the implementation of the district development plan and the supervision of the district administration; and
  - (c) any other powers which may be delegated by the Development Council.
- (7) The subjects to be devolved on such Councils to include the subjects referred to in paragraph 12 of the White Paper. This means that the Council may formulate a district development plan in respect of such subjects. Once the plan is 'approved' the Council will assume responsibility for the administration in respect of such matters as are referred to in the plan. The Council may also formulate any development scheme in respect of a subject outside the list and request the government to transfer such a scheme to the Council.
- (8) An independent Grants Commission to be empowered to make financial allocations to such Councils, and to establish a formula based system of grants.

(9) Development Councils to become the legal successor to all Town Councils and Village Councils within a district and to assume the local government functions in respect of the rural areas within a district.

(10) Development Councils to expedite the implementation of integrated district development projects funded by international agencies.

(11) The District Administration to consist of —

- (a) officers and servants appointed by the Council;
- (b) such other officers who may be posted to such Councils by the Central Government or whose services may be utilised by such Councils.

### Which way for . . .

*(Continued from page 15)*

A: As I have mentioned earlier, the present stage of the revolution is one in which the working class and the left should strive to lead the national struggle against imperialism and for socialism. In tackling tasks, we should keep the above long-term perspective in mind, act and behave accordingly.

The development of the independent role of the working class, of the unity of organised trade unions, as well as unity of left forces at political party level, through development of mass struggles should take precedence over our involvements in temporary contradictions and struggles between groups of the national bourgeoisie. We do not in any way propose that the left should be indifferent to contradictions among bourgeois groupings. We should strive on the contrary to exploit such contradictions in our favour without jeopardising the strategic tasks of the working class and the left.

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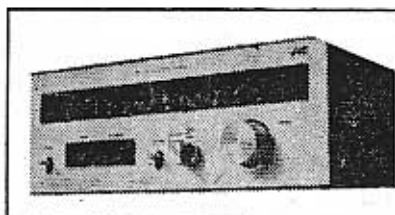
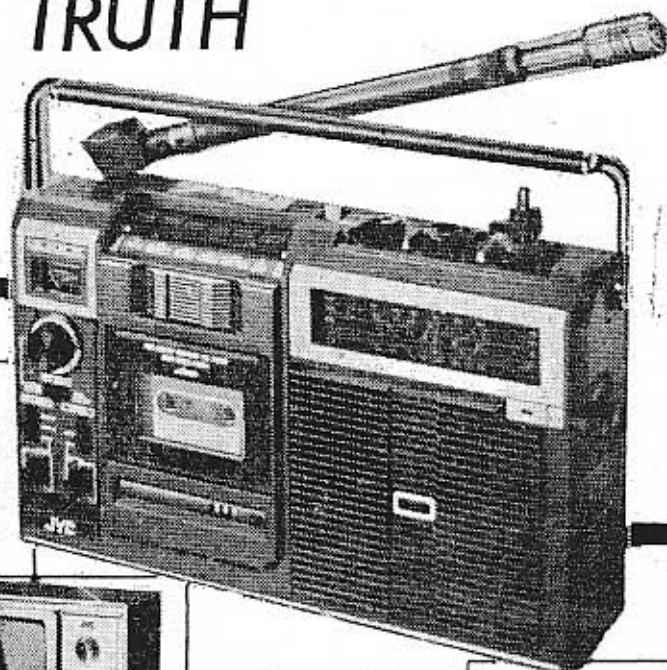
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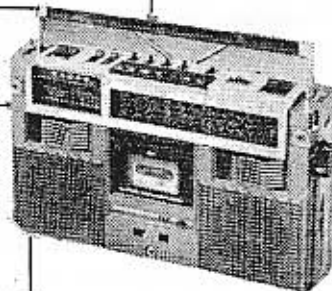
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# Suicide notes : The last farewell

by Jayantha Somasunderam

Statistics tell us that more people kill themselves than end up being killed by others. In the UK for men, homicide is the cause of 0.8 deaths per 100,000 while suicide is the cause of 11.4 deaths. Men however are more prone to suicide than women. Further, it was found that suicide rates fell during war time, confirming Freud's theory that during national conflicts the collective aggressiveness of people are directed towards a common enemy.

Sigmund Freud had already identified two basic instincts in mankind—Love and Destruction. In suicide the two instincts would appear to be blurred by parallax. Oscar Wilde who said that "To love oneself is the beginning of a life long romance," was also the one who wrote "yet each man kills the thing he loves.... the brave man with a sword."

A study was recently conducted among 79 graduate students at the University of Illinois. The sample who averaged 24 years, had 43 who were planning suicide, 21 who were entertaining suicidal thoughts and 15 who had attempted suicide. The study which was reported in *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* classifies their motives into four. The first were lonely due to the breakup of a relationship. The second had health problems. The third experienced failure. And the fourth wanted to hurt others.

One finds an amalgam of these motives in the suicide note that this wife left behind

"I took them because I could not go on. I wanted Jim back. He left me a week ago. He has been playing about with another woman. If my marriage breaks up, it will be the same as my own home. Ever since I remember as a child my father played about with women. My mother took it. I swore no man would do that to me. I am furious and it hurts but there is also something wrong with me. Jim is not like my father. I said just now he was playing around with another woman. That's not true. I pushed him into it. I told him if he didn't like it, he could look for somebody else and he did. I got what I asked. Now I want nothing except him. Without him life is nothing. I can't face my mother; I can't live on my own, I can't cope. I did not want to kill myself, just to get him back. It's blackmail I know, but if it doesn't succeed....the next time ....there won't be a second chance, I will make damn sure."

At the other end of the scale is what Emile Durkheim in *Suicide* classified as altruistic suicide. Our culture damned the suicide a coward—they will even send him to jail for an unsuccessful attempt. But in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution there emerged a group of poets who killed themselves in heroic opposition to the situation in their country.

Boris Pasternak who wrote about them says that "To start with what is most important: we have no conception of the inner torture which precedes suicide. People who are physically tortured on the rack keep losing consciousness, their suffering is so great that its unendurable intensity shortens the end. But a man who is thus at the mercy of the executioner is not annihilated when he faints from pain, for he is present at his own end, his past belongs to him, his memories are his and, if he chooses, he can make use of them, they can help him before his death.

"But a man who decides to commit suicide puts a full stop to his being, he turns his back on his past, he declares himself a bankrupt and his memories to be unreal. They can no longer help to save him, he has put himself beyond their reach. The continuity of his inner life is broken, his personality is at an end. And perhaps what finally makes him kill himself is not the firmness of his resolve but the unbearable quality of this anguish which belongs to no one, of this suffering in the absence of the sufferer, of this waiting which is empty because life has stopped and can no longer fill it.

"It seems to me that Mayakovsky shot himself out of pride, because he condemned something in himself, or close to him, to which his self-respect could not submit. That Yessenin hanged himself without having properly thought out

the consequences of his act, still saying in his inmost heart: 'Who knows? Perhaps this isn't yet the end. Nothing is yet decided'. That Maria Tsvetayeva had always held her work between herself and the reality of daily life; and when she found this luxury beyond her means, when she felt that for her son's sake she must, for a time, give up her passionate absorption in poetry and look round her soberly, she saw chaos. No longer screened by art, fixed, unfamiliar, motionless, and, not knowing where to run for terror, she hid in death, putting her head into the noose as she might have hidden her head under her pillow. It seems to me that Paolo Yashvili was utterly confused, spellbound by the Shigalyovshchina of 1937 as by witchcraft; and that he watched his daughter as she slept at night and, imagining himself unworthy to look at her, went out in the morning to his friends' house and blasted his head with grapeshot from his double-barrelled gun. And it seemed to me that Fadeyev, still with that apologetic smile which had somehow stayed with him through all the crafty ins and outs of politics, told himself just before he pulled the trigger: 'Well, now it's over, goodbye, Sasha.'

"What is certain is that they all suffered beyond description, to the point where suffering has become a mental sickness. And, as we bow homage to their gifts and to their bright memory, we should bow compassionately before their suffering."

The last farewell of suicides has now been subjected to statistical analysis. Bjerg Kresten has done this in *Essays in self-destruction*. He says that an analysis of suicide notes reveals that 81 percent had frustrated desire. This was personal in some causes: "I'm too lonely." "I don't have a friend." Some causes were responses to others: "I hope nobody hurts you like you have me." "I have been treated like a dog." "I can never stop loving you so I shall take this way out."

Kresten says that in 59 percent of the notes the dominant

feature is intolerable strain: "I am all mixed up." "I can't go on like this." Closely related to them are the 17 percent who show dislike of themselves: "I've been a sham and a failure." This is the only decent thing to do." Six percent believed they were expected to do this: "This is what you wanted." "I took the pills for you." "I hope you are satisfied."

In at least 7 percent of those reviewed there is the hope of a better future across the grave: "I am going to meet my Dad." "I hope one day we will meet in heaven."

In 6 percent of the suicide notes the victim becomes accusatory: "You drove me to this." "You have killed me."

And finally the 4 percent where the aggressive, punitive element come out clearly in the last farewell: "I hope you have my last breath on your mind forever." "I hope each time you pass a cemetery you will have memories of one who is there."

### Trends . . .

*(Continued from page 1)*

large inflows of capital may be leaking out, quietly.

### Palestine

The SLFP press maintains a steady provocative fire on the UNP about Israel. It claims that known UNP sympathisers have formed a lobby to push the government into allowing Israel to open its embassy in Colombo. Refusing to be provoked the UNP stays patiently in the trench.

It is not only a question of oil. It is a sign of the PLO's world-wide success that the Palestine Day meeting in Colombo was addressed by everybody from Dr. M. C. M. Kaleel to representatives of the ultra-left. Said one observer: "The call of Palestine is so strong that even the JVP condescended to come to the same platform as the SLFP!"

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## Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

failures of the govt. When such a devil dance was going on in the three-cornered mud-slinging competition, it was no wonder the rulers were coolly squatting on Galle Face regaling themselves with tales of sculptors and swinging to the beat of Hindi Music! Has the May Day become a day of entertainment in Sri Lanka?

Gone are the days when capitalists were frightened of the display of militant solidarity of the Working Class and took protective measures to shield their showrooms. Gone are the days when slogans were resolves and challenges; promises and proclamations. Today's slogans are ritualistic. The May Day should not become another ritualistic perahera, with more spectators than participants. In the perahera we used to count the elephants, what do we count in the May Day processions? We should be able to count on the processionists and their proclamations.

Hatton R. R. Sivalingam

### 'Uthumaneni'

With reference to Uyangoda's glowing tribute to Gamini Fonseka and the film 'UTHUMANENI' I quote from George Orwell:

'The fact is that this business about the moral superiority of the poor is one of the deadliest forms of escapism the ruling class have evolved. You may be downtrodden and swindled, but in the eyes of God, you are superior to your oppressors and by means of films and magazines, you can enjoy a fantasy existence in which you constantly triumph over the people who defeat you in real life. In any form of art designed to appeal to large number of people, it is an almost unheard-of thing for a rich man to get the better of a poor man... Film magnates, press lords and the like amass quite a lot of their wealth by pointing out that wealth is wicked.

'The formula 'good-poor-man defeats bad-rich man' is simply a subtler version of 'pie-in-the-sky'. It is a sublimation of the class struggle.'

What is the social injustice portrayed in the film? The rude behaviour of a police constable? The puerile tantrums of a lawyer? What of the injustice that would make it possible for Baby Mahattaya to expropriate his poor neighbour's land? What of the injustice of a system that would force a woman to wait...and wait...for her betrothed to give his sister in marriage before he could marry her? What of a film that presents all these injustices as 'givens' in a society, while presenting real social problems as purely 'personal' ones and ones which demand an 'individual' solution?

Colombo S. Kottegoda

### Anamaduwa

Although the CDN of 9.5.80 by its editorial on the Anamaduwa by-election result tries to lull the government into a state of complacency, it would be well for the government to realize that nearly half of the total voters at Anamaduwa do not seem to be endorsing the gigantic development efforts of the government.

To be exact the 18,552 votes cast for the UNP is just 161 votes more than half of the total polled (36,782) at Anamaduwa. Panadura V. K. Wijeratne

### Mass media

V. K. Wijeratne, writing from Panadura to your second anniversary number, of May 1st refers to the fact, that, a "Vacuum has been filled," in the field of mass-media, in this country, during those two years.

Suffice it, for me to point out, that, the popular press, in many countries, is even dubbed "yellow", because of cheap-sensationalism, hankering after a dubious popularity and lack of intellectual as well as other forms of journalistic honesty.

May your worthy journal continue, to make good, at least to some extent, these glaring deficiencies in our mass-media!

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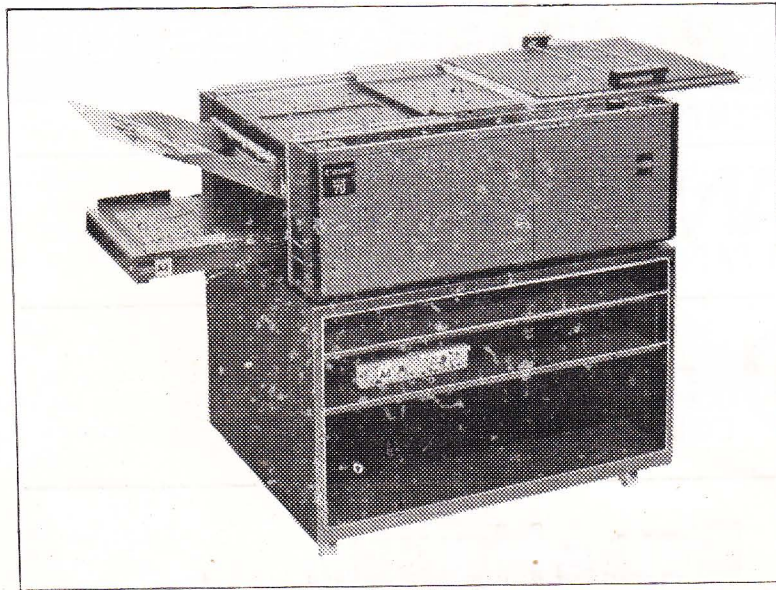


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