

S. A. WICKS : Sri Lanka's first Marxist – Warnapala

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 3

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July 15, 1980

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..... a young female employee of a private organisation, committed suicide, because she was summarily dismissed from employment. The offence she had committed was that she 'had eaten something during working hours, contrary, to the regulations of this particular organisation.....

THE SOCIOLOGY OF SUICIDE

Priyaratna Rajapaksa



O, S W R D!

What crimes

are committed...

(Page 3)

Also:

Road to Love Canal

Alex Marshall

Insurrection remembered

Jayantha Somasunderam

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What the wise men say

Proud to pick up pledges totalling Rs. 8,432 million (a 42% increase over 1979) Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel admitted to Reuters' Paris correspondent that some donor countries had described the government's programme as "over-ambitious." He added that the government was re-examining the present housing and urban development plans.

Actually, it was the World Bank itself, in the report it submitted to the donor countries before the Paris meeting, which used the term "highly ambitious." But this was with reference to the Mahaveli.

Conceding that the government had already made "massive cuts" in the once much-vaunted accelerated Mahaveli program (now confined to 3 projects, with Randenigala postponed to 1984 and Moragahakande indefinitely), the IBRD mission wrote:

"Although the program is now much more manageable, it remains highly ambitious and will greatly strain available manpower, material and financial resources."

Housing subsidies

But it is on the housing and urban development program that the Wise Men of the World Bank (a seven member team led by one Mr. Sarwar Lateef) cast the most sceptical eye. In fact the IBRD wants major cuts in the proposed outlays on housing and urban development.

Credit, as any A-level student knows, is a vital factor in the growth of any enterprise. With what studied detachment the wise men propose that there should be even stricter limits on bank credit to public sector institutions. On the other hand, what avuncular affection gushes out as they recommended "further tax reductions to the private sector." As for "the People", the advice offered comes with all sensitivity of a butcher: "further reductions in consumer subsidies by cutting the food scheme and fixing rigid financial limits on the total

among that will be devoted to unavoidable subsidies, irrespective of erosion by inflation."

Price control

While the Minister of Local Government and Housing is hardly likely to take warmly to these Seven Pillars of Wisdom, what of the Minister of Trade who has been breathing fire on traders and manufacturers? Playing the Patron Saint of Consumer Protectionism, the Trade Minister has promised publicly to give teeth to the National Price Commission. The NPC must approve price increases for certain commodities.

The Wise Men regard this as "policy ambivalence" which will affect the "confidence" of the private sector.

Such a step could "potentially undo much of the progress made" says the report.

JVP posters

The poster, as usual, was as 'yodha' as the rally it proposed to hold. The advertising style is the party—the JVP of course. June as we reported in these columns, was a bad month for the JVP.

Having got a bad beating at Anamaduwa (whatever happened to the Rural Youth?) the JVP found itself isolated when the trade unions went into action, the JSS took to the streets and Somapala died. At the "angriest funeral" in recent years, the JVP was nowhere to be seen. Its reticence, if not silence, vis-a-vis the UNP had become a painful embarrassment by the time the SLFP-TULF-LSSP, MEP and CPC had their Hyde Park rally.

So out came the posters last week denouncing the "capitalist UNP." But if the SLFP and the LSSP (the JVP's top targets) imagined that this meant a softer line on them, they were mistaken. The parallel slogan was "Down with Capitalist SLFP and its opportunist allies..."

Voting System

Though the next elections are due only in three years time all those seriously interested in politics are already discussing and debating the proposed P. R. system. With 51% of the vote the UNP got nearly 5/6ths majority in parliament while the SLFP got only 8 seats in spite of nearly 30% of the vote. Of course the same thing happened to the UNP's disadvantage in 1970.

Your readers will be interested in these figures which were reported in an Indian journal.

Mrs. Gandhi's congress got 42.58 per cent of the popular vote but won over 350 seats i. e. nearly 67% of the Lok Sabha. Incidentally the Indian poll was very low compared to Sri Lanka's. Out of 361.7 million voters only 200.7 million cast their votes. Ours

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ofcourse has always been one of the highest in the world where there are free and fair elections. Britain is far behind us. The American elections will prove the same point. Is it not correct to say then that the US and UK voter is less politically conscious and educated than our own?

Kandy.

Vijayaputra

Neither UNP nor Intellectual

I suppose I must regard it as a high compliment that a true-believing Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist like Chintaka should have followed with a scholar's care and attention the sporadic writings of one whom he regards as a "UNP intellectual". But I am neither UNP nor intellectual. I once tried to be an intellectual but I found it too difficult. An intellectual like Chintaka should not, I submit, distort. To point out the defects of welfarism as

government policy is not to be "a critic of social welfare". (It will take too long for me to explain here why Chintaka should not call me conservative.) And on what evidence does he describe me as "scourge of university students"? I did not, as Chintaka implies, claim that Trotsky had "anything to do with" the defeat of Hitler. Nor did I, as Chintaka alleges, "equate" Hitler and Stalin — except in the degree of their flagitiousness.

I note that Chintaka and Ho Chi Minh share the view that the Soviet Union belongs to "the democratic camp", whatever that may be.

Colombo 3. V. P. Vittachi

Assam Crisis

I appreciate the analysis of Gail Omvedt on Assam Crisis. Nicaragua series was useful.

Go on with your good work.

A. Wimalathasan
Editor, 'Manithan'.

Uthumaneni

I have perused all the articles that appeared in your journal about Gamini Fonseka's "Uthumaneni" and his own version of the trials of the movie makers. The criticism and praise written about the film brought into light, I suppose, the difference between criticism based on political opportunism and of true art. I do not wish to state who belongs to which bloc as it may vary according to each reader's outlook and values. It would be more precise for me to quote here Oscar Wilde: "A cynic knows the price of all and the value of none, an artist knows the value of all but the price of none."

As W. Jayasiri has pointed out, an artist cannot be a politician or a sociologist by his work of art, if it is to be true art of any sort. I think this is where a talented and gifted actor like Gamini Fonseka has faltered.

S. Dhanapala.

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Storm over Bandaranaike Centre

Several weeks ago the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to the 'Sunday Observer' dissociating his office from a question paper on "Current problems" which army officers seeking promotion from captain to major had to answer.

For the Foreign Ministry which scrupulously avoids interventions of any kind, especially in military matters, this was an extraordinary step since the 'Sunday Observer' had in no way alluded to authorship. In fact the point of the 'Sunday Observer' story was "Who dunit?". The questions had been so clumsily formulated that many of them bordered on gibberish.

MISGUIDED MISSILES

Most of the questions looked like misguided missiles fired, probably by some computer error, from an American rocket station, so obsessive was the anonymous authors solicitude for "The US and its allies", and his concern over "Big power problems".

Before some innocent reader, understandably assuming that a question paper on Foreign Affairs had to be the handiwork of the Foreign Ministry, pointed an accusing finger at our F. O., the usually imperturbable Mr. W. T. Jayasinghe, rushed into print to deny any connection with what one young career diplomat described as "unprovoked assault on the Queen's English so very close to Her Majesty's Birthday!"

The F. O. that week was bristling with striped-pants smartness and snooty remarks. "The Army should have been advised to get its question paper on 'Current problems' set by the Electricity Board....." "Yes, there's a Big Power crisis, there....." "The Army's sneak attack on the English language was a literary Pearl Harbour....!" And so forth.

At least some top brass were quite amused. In the mess room, a Blimpish Colonel, one of the

last of the tribe, guffawed: "A major blunder, what, captain....?" But the army has kept its lips sealed and authorship is still a mystery.

No shadow of suspicion fell on the Peradeniya University which runs the only reputed academic course in this subject. Peradeniya could not possibly have been guilty of either the academic imbecilities or the verbal uncouthness.

B. C. I. S

The only other teaching institute is the B. C. I. S., the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, which conducts a one-year Diploma Course. Was it the work of some fugitive diplomat from the BCIS?

During its first few years, the BCIS had a fine reputation. Its genesis can be traced to the Colombo summit and its preparatory work. How best to use the fairly large sum of money left over from the Chinese grant for the BMICH?

A group of people met informally to discuss the matter. They had two things in common—a keen interest in international affairs and a strong appreciation of the historic role of Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in the making of our foreign policy.

The need for a teaching Institute of the BCIS type was recognised. Such an academy, bearing his name, would also be a worthy tribute to Mr. Bandaranaike's achievement in this sphere.

The Prime Minister Mrs. Bandaranaike appointed a committee to examine two project reports which had been submitted to her. The Foreign Secretary, the Cabinet Secretary, the PM's Secretary, the Secretary of Education, Foreign Ministry officials and others drawn from associated fields of professional work comprised this committee. There was unanimity on 2 points: (a) the Institute should not be mere replica of

some western "school". Its perspective should be firmly and consistently "Third Worldist". Incidentally, this point was ably argued by Indian High Commissioner Thomas Abraham in his Convocation Address in May L. G. June 15. (b) It must strive to maintain the best academic standards.

The Committee, quite rightly, was specially sensitive on the second point. It was realised that the Centre was being established under the aegis of the government, and the ruling party was the SLFP. But "party politics" should be sternly discouraged if the Centre's academic prestige was to be safeguarded. Ruling parties do favour kith-and-kin, 'catchers' and 'hangers-on' for "soft" jobs. But the BCIS should be insulated from such notorious vices. Favourites and kinsmen could always be accommodated in the State Karavatu Corporation or Bullock cart manufacturing school. In this effort, the key appointment would be that of the Director of Studies.

BEYOND UNDERSTANDING

Now a minor storm has burst over the BCIS. It can assume the proportions of a major scandal among scholars, students and well-wishers of the Centre and ruin the reputation of an Institute which can then end up as one of those tutories which grow in Maradana like mushrooms.

On May 14th, Convocation Day, the CDN, published on its leader page an article entitled "Understanding World Politics" by Dr. Piyasena Dissanayake. While the content of the undergraduatish essay was a bit out of breath in struggling to keep pace with its boastful title ("a C +, at best") said a Peradeniya don, usually generous with eager young students), the problems of understanding became painfully confusing when the CDN, nearly a month later, carried this item: **An article appeared on this page on May**

14th entitled "Understanding World Politics" under the byline of Dr. Piyasena Dissanayake.

Mr. Arjuna Kannangara was also associated with the writing of this article. By an oversight his name was left out of the byline. The error is regretted.

Dr. Dissanayake is the Registrar of the BCIS. He served in this post under the first Director of Studies, Mr. Nawaz Davood. Whether he is now Director of Studies or Acting Director or Assistant Director is something which even lecturers and students are not quite sure of. Certainly, the Council members maintain that the BCIS has no permanent Director. In fact, the BCIS may advertise the post soon.

Dr. Dissanayake has had a varied career. As a clerical servant, he was for sometime in the Cabinet office. He served our High Commission in India and London. He was also in the State Trading Corporation. As a minor official in our London mission, he was enterprising enough to pursue post-graduate studies.

At a council meeting, a point-blank question about Dissanayake's area of specialisation drew the answer that it was in "political science". Dissanayake is, in fact, the author of a study on politics — "Political Thoughts of the Buddha", a 100 page paperback published in July 1977, by the Cultural Affairs Department, Government of Sri Lanka. In a foreword, he thanks Professor Ninian Smart of Lancaster University who supervised his work. Prof. Smart's speciality is Religion rather than Political Science or International Relations.

All this is relevant in the light of a letter sent to no less a person than President J. R. Jayewardene by Mr. Arjuna Kannangara, visiting Lecturer at the BCIS.

After a minor discourse on "moral and ethical behavioral modes of society", Mr. Kannangara gets down to cases. A local professor, he says, told him of the sad

plight of a young Sri Lankan scientist whose findings were "stolen" and published under the name of another person. This leads him to dwell for a moment on the subject of "intellectual property" and the "unethical behaviour" of un-named thieves.

Mr. Kannangara claims that "Understanding World Politics" is in fact an essay written by him under the title "International Relations and the BCIS" at the request of his colleague, Dissanayake. It was written expressly for CDN publication on May 14, Convocation Day. A large part of the article, he says, is "word for word" an essay he wrote when he was a Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London in July 1978. A copy of Kannangara's original article is available!

When he handed the article to Dissanayake for onward transmission to the CDN, he took for granted that it would appear under his (Kannangara's) name. He concludes "that Dissanayake had acted in a totally dishonourable way in order so that he may have this article (written on an area of study in which he has no competence) published in the newspaper under his own name".

Kannangara's charge, especially after the curiously worded "correction" published doubtless by a needlessly embarrassed CDN Editor who has more important things to do, has become a common topic of conversation on the campuses.

If Kannangara's accusation is false or mistaken, then Dr. Dissanayake's name must be cleared in his own interests, and more so in the interests of a reputed Institute. If it is well-founded then the Council which consists of many nationally known academics like Prof. T. Nadaraja, Profs. P. P. G. L. Siriwardena etc. must surely initiate a full and impartial inquiry.

The coat and the quota

All's well that ends well? Local garment manufacturers have breathed a sigh of relief at the government's last-minute intervention to help them sell their piled-up stocks worth about Rs. 100 million. More and more the UNP's Mr. Fix-it, Trade Minister Achulathmudali came up with a compromise formula. He has used the "carry forward" allocation to create a market for these 50 odd local industrialists who were on the verge of laying-off several thousand workers.

It all started when the US, in a new protectionist drive, reduced its quotas. The new quota had to be divided between the IPZ manufacturers (largely foreign) and the rest, local. The Minister of Employment says that the non-IPZ group got as much as 49.9%, and these manufacturers should be more than satisfied because they had failed to meet the Canadian and EEC quotas.

'Between the Athulathmudali, and the mudalali, peace has been restored' wisecracked a new-style IPZ businessman. But how real is this solution? Only a sticking plaster to a wound that'll keep festering, observed an economist attached to a State bank. He made the following points:

(a) The world's wealthiest nation which presches the doctrine of 'free trade' is putting up barriers against the 'fastest-growing industry' of little Sri Lanka.

(b) In allocating the reduced quotas, the government is forced to make choices which bring to the surface latent conflicts between "foreign" interests and local business.

(c) This not only touches nationalist sentiment but the all-important political/economic question of employment because local industry is the bigger employer.

(Continued on page 6)

Chile and the Chicago boys!

FOREIGN
NEWS

When the Indonesian army having butchered half a million fellow Indonesians grabbed power, General Suharto handed over economic decision-making to a group which came to be known internationally as the "Berkeley Mafia". The 'Mafia' consisted of some highly intelligent Indonesians who had been educated at the University of Berkeley, California, and their American friends and colleagues.

When the US "de-stabilized" the popularly elected socialist government of Salvador Allende to make way for General Pinochet, the Chilean army sought inspiration from another American university, Chicago. It is there that Milton Friedman, high priest of free market forces, holds court. After the "Chicago boys" took over the Chilean economy in 1973, there has been a furious debate on the consequences of the economic policies they initiated: while admirers hail Chile's rapid recovery and economic miracle, his detractors reserve nothing but contempt for the socio-economic results of "Friedmania". (See "Chile's Chicago School Economics" by a Special Correspondent L. G. Sept 15, 1978).

Taking a 180 degree turn, the Chilean economy was made to carry a "package of reforms" in tight money supply, huge cuts in government spending and welfare, liberalised imports, and de-nationalisation of 400 state owned enterprises, including banks. Foreign investment was encouraged in various ways such as the easy repatriation of profits and capital, equal treatment for foreign and Chilean companies etc.

These incentives were proudly paraded at a conference attended by 60 representatives of the Business International Corporation, an organisation of the world's mightiest MNC's.

How real is 'the Chilean miracle'? As usual there are pluses and minuses but how do these finally add up in the life of the Chilean people?

From Santiago, Helen Spooner sent this report to the **Financial Times**.

Inflation has been lowered from approximately 600 per cent, at the time of the 1973 military takeover, to 38.9 per cent. Copper, which previously made up 80 per cent of foreign earnings, now accounts for just 47.8 per cent, as exports have been diversified. Industrial and agricultural production are up, the budget is balanced, and foreign investment is pouring into the country. International leading organisations such as the World Bank, have declared Chile a credit-worthy country.

On the other hand, the 12.5 per cent unemployment in Chile is nearly three times what it was during Sr. Allende's Government. This figure does not include the approximately 170,000 participating in the Government's minimum employment programme, who constitute 5.1 per cent of the workforce. These workers earn the equivalent of \$40 a month for working full time at menial jobs. Critics of the programme have noted that many jobs performed by these workers, such as street maintenance, garbage collection and gardening, were previously salaried positions under the Santiago Municipal Government, eliminated in the subsequent budget reductions.

These same critics would concede that Chile's exports have become more diversified, decreasing vulnerability to fluctuations in the world copper market. But such raw materials as timber, now the second largest export, and molybdenum, a copper by-product, which has become the third most important export, make up about two-thirds of the total. Of the approximately \$690m in foreign investment during the past few years, relatively little has gone into industry. Of the total foreign investment registrations, mining accounts for 89.8 per cent, and industry 7 per cent. Then, too, the 148 industrial project registra-

tions include purchases of former state-owned companies under the Government's de-nationalisation programme, many auctioned off at "fire sale" prices.

Industrial production nevertheless, grew by 8.8 per cent last year, and has been increasing steadily over the past few years.

But the future of Chilean industry under the Government's present scheme is not quite clear. A recent study by Sofófa, the Chilean Industrial Society, reported a decline in the growth of production and sales by as much as 50 per cent during the first three months of this year, compared with the same period last year.

The Government's 10 per cent tariff policy, which was to make Chilean industry more efficient by exposing it to a blast of foreign competition, has been blamed. Many Chilean industrial leaders have charged that the imports are taking an ever-increasing share of the local market, and that Chilean industry does not have the financial resources to make the investment become more competitive.

What is obvious is that an increasing number of Chilean companies are finding foreign imported products invincible competitors. From January 1 to March 30 this year, 130 Chilean businesses, ranging from factories to small neighbourhood stores, have folded. Last year this number was 368 is uncertain. Per capita What this means for the average Chilean/income last year rose to approximately \$1,500. In real terms, Chileans are about where they were decade ago. Some figures suggest that the rich in Chile may in some ways be getting richer, and the poor poorer. Consumption by the poorest 20 per cent fell from 7.7 per cent in 1969 to 5.2 per cent last year. Consumption by

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NEW US DEALS

After Oman, Kenya is the second Indian ocean state to sign an agreement with the US to give new facilities "for support of expanded US military activities in the Gulf region".

Although the US does not, according to a State Department spokesman, expect to station troops permanently, the Kenyan bases will now be available for US operations. The US military and training missions in Kenya will also be expanded.

As part of the deal, the US Congress has been asked by the Carter administration to approve 56.6 million US dollars as economic assistance, and 11 million dollars as easy-term credit to cover the sale of US arms and equipment.

Egypt

In its new plan to establish land-based air power, in the Middle east and Gulf region, the US will deploy F-4 Phantom Jets to Egypt, according to Gen. Lew Allen, US Air Force Chief of Staff.

A squadron of Supersonic fighters will operate from Cairo West airfield. About 400 pilots, crew members, operational and

intelligence specialists, logistics personnel and technicians will leave for Egypt this month. They would train with the Egyptian forces. Gen. Allen said that other aircraft will also be deployed to Egypt in order to enhance US military capability in the Indian ocean area.

While there are already 2 aircraft carriers, and 20 other naval ships in this area seven cargo ships with weapons, ammunition, food and supplies for 12,000 US Marines are due to arrive in Diego Garcia.

The prime ministers of both Mauritius and Seychelles, meanwhile, have called on Britain which has leased this island to the US as a base to evacuate these territories.

In mid-June Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao told the Indian Upper House that the US had substantially increased in naval strength in the Indian Ocean and this new deployment included several nuclear-propelled aircraft carriers, missile cruisers and submarines. India, he said, had conveyed its criticism to Washington "but no positive results had been achieved".

Chile...

(Continued from page 5)

the wealthiest 20 per cent rose during that period from 43 per cent to 51 per cent.

That is the view expressed by Sr. Andres Zaldivar, who served as Finance Minister under the Christian Democratic Government of President Eduardo Frei 15 years ago.

"The great majority of Chileans feel poorer and the nation is being turned into a giant market of imported goods, with domestic production limited to basic products," he said recently.

The coat...

(Continued from page 4)

(d) Just as the flood of imports may sweep away some struggling national industries, foreign entrepreneurs may gradually eliminate 100% native businesses.

Third World industries have to learn to live in a situation where the coat has to be tailored to US or EEC quotas, but unfortunately these measurements keep changing. All this exposes the deep-seated flaws in the strategy now been adopted by so many under-developed countries, a strategy which has led to the phenomenon of 'dependent industrialisation' at the periphery.

TU's and pay

The Railway workshop which spearheaded the 1976 general strike was back in the news last week when a lightning strike paralysed the train services. The immediate cause, it was reported, was the interdiction of 12 TU activists who had taken a prominent part in the June 5th "Protest Day".

Actually, the Action Committee at the Ratmalana workshop had already written to the JTUAC inviting its support for a general demand of a pay rise — 300/- per month.

Pay demands are pouring in. About 10,000 University teachers and administrative staff have already been granted a modest concession of about 15-20% increase. The PhD's in the Arts Faculties had the satisfaction also of getting the 500/- professional allowance given to their colleagues in the Science, Medicine, and Engineering faculties.

Who will be next? The doctors? With reports of a pay rise for the police, a call for "upward adjustment" may be sounded in the services too.

The Mihintale MP (UNP) told Parliament that a family of three needed Rs. 1050/- to survive. He appealed for an all-round pay increase to workers of 250/- per month.

Meanwhile a SATYODAYA, the Centre for Social Research, continues to monitor consumer prices and living costs month by month. According to its latest bulletin there has been a 75% rise in the costs of barest subsistence between May 1979 and May 1980. A family of five, says SATYODAYA needs Rs. 1023/- to keep above the starvation line.

THE ROAD TO LOVE CANAL

by Alex Marshall

*Man hands on misery to man
It deepens like the coastal shelf,
Get out as quickly as you can
And don't have any kids yourself*

This piece of unmitigated misery from Philip Larkin, whose pessimism stands out even in England, a dark spot amid the encircling gloom, was not, we hope, meant to be taken quite seriously. But in the West, as suicides go up and births go down, it may yet be chiselled as an epitaph on the headstone of a whole generation. The cheerful consumerism of the "never had it so good" society has given way to a gnawing feeling that the good times will have to be paid for; and probably soon.

Take Love Canal, in upper New York state in the USA, a paradigm of what is wrong with the West. About seventy years ago, in the first flush of untrammelled industrialization, the canal was dug as part of a system which it was hoped would take goods down to the more densely populated markets further south. But the canal was never finished, and eventually was used as a dumping ground by a nearby chemicals firm. Finally it was covered over and generously donated by the firm to the local school board which built a school and playgrounds on it.

Some years later, residents on a nearby housing estate began to notice strange smells in their basements, then fumes, and ooziings of disgusting substances through the soil of their back yards. The ghost of get-rich quick was coming back to claim its inheritance.

Now, with the school long-since closed and many nearby homes evacuated, a study has shown up a high incidence of serious birth defects in local children. The incidence of certain

types of disease, many related to chemical poisoning, is much higher in the area than the national average. People are generally less healthy and die younger. Slowly and reluctantly the authorities have been forced to recognise they have a man-made disaster on their hands.

According to a recent book there are Love Canals all over the United States. The pursuit of wealth has poisoned the very ground on which the people live, and very air they breathe. Other writers have pointed out the murderous nature of the American diet, full of cholesterol and carbohydrates, and the life-shortening characteristics of the motor-car, practically an extension of the American psyche. Development, it seems, kills.

Add to all this a deepening economic crisis which seems to indicate a structural rather than a temporary malfunction of the system, not only in the United States but throughout the western world and one could be forgiven for taking Larkin literally; children do not play much part in such a world. As the new Director of UNICEF, himself an American, has pointed out they are in danger of becoming a new under-privileged class. The family itself is in danger; one out of every two marriages contracted in New York City this year will end in divorce before 1986.

Is this to be Asia's future also?

At this point the reader sensibly calls a halt. Even the fastest-growing countries of south-east Asia have reached nothing like the income levels of the west, nor will they for a long time. The sufferings of the old-established industrialised countries, as

they struggle to adjust to a world where their former colonies are becoming their competitors, cannot be compared to the struggles of the Asian countries to haul their populations out of the subsistence economy and break the vicious cycle of rural poverty.

Yet, the question must be asked. Several Asian countries—among them Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong—are on the verge of attaining the magic 'self-sustaining growth', at least in economic terms, and several others—Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, for example—are not so far behind. So far they have gone for growth without too much regard for the consequences. But in some of these countries at least, the consequences, social, political, environmental have come home and are already roosting in the rafters. It would seem to be a time for choices to be made—if indeed they have not already been made. How far is Asia down the road to Love Canal?

Whatever assessment are made—of the costs and benefits of protecting the environment, for example, or the desirability of rural development as against urban growth—for governments to put choices into effect is hard, and harder still under pressure. The pressures are coming not only from the pace of economic growth, which creates demands as fast as it satisfies them, but from population growth, which, though slowing throughout Asia, is still in most countries over two per cent a year, and requires from the economy enormous contributions of development capital. As the UNFPA's Executive Director, Rafael M Salas, recently pointed out, nearly 60 per cent of the increase in total world population between now and 2000 AD will be in Asia.*

But the choice is also a personal matter, and it is a fact in population at least, that govern-

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(issued by the Ministry of Plan Implementation)

ment policies have had only a marginal effect on the choices being made. Officially-supported drives to increase the rate of population growth, for instance, in France and some of the east European countries, failed to buck the downward trend, and birth rates have fallen in other industrialised countries without assistance of government policy. In the countries of the South, birth rates have usually started to fall before the government stepped in — Sri Lanka is a case in point — and falling rates can be traced to causes independent of official influences.

The decision in the West in favour of smaller families or no family at all seems to come out of a combination of consumerism and pessimism. In eastern Europe we are left with pessimism. Here in Asia perhaps the decisions are made in a more positive way. The family—even the extended family—is still very strong and the joy of children is shared among many more than the parents. At times the involvement

can be too strong—but at least the parents are never isolated as they sometimes are in the West.

Constraints are far more likely to be economic. In Sri Lanka it is clear that late marriage has been a prime cause of lower birth rates, and that marriage is often postponed because the couple cannot support a family. Land shortage in the rural areas has been frequently mentioned to this writer as a real cause of demand for family planning services. In Sri Lanka, the clearing economic climate of 1977-78 brought a mini-baby boom, and perhaps if the clouds of unemployment and low wages finally rolled away, the baby bandwagon would really start to roll.

However, apart from the constraints, there has also been a very positive side to the trend towards smaller families in Sri Lanka. Parents want the best for their children, and most couples are clear in their minds that the best will go further among fewer. Education has played its part in this, and so

have the social services, in most cases keeping up a minimum level of nutrition and well-being just above that critical threshold below which choice is an irrelevancy because things could hardly be worse.

For all of Asia, outside China and Indo-China, the main choice has already been made, to become part of the western economic set-up. But, for Asia, this does not have to be the road to Love Canal. Many of the traditional patterns of Asian life survive with all their life-enhancing qualities, among them respect for the family and for the individual's place within it. Change will happen, as it is already happening in favour of the smaller family. But changes of this sort do not necessarily lead to Larkin-like gloom. Fewer children means easier subsistence at one end of the scale, an easing of pressure on bulging cities and dwindling resources at the other and room at both ends for choice.

* State of the World's Population Report: UNFPA 1980.

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An insurrection remembered

by Jayantha Somasunderam

On the 9th of July 1970 — ten years ago — Rohana Wijeweera was discharged by the Nuwara Eliya Magistrate's Court and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna's public activity began. On the 14th Wijeweera addressed the Vidyodaya University Socialist Society. Beginning August 21st, with a public meeting at Anuradhapura, the JVP held meetings throughout the country. The last meeting before the insurrection, was held on 27th February 1971, at Hyde Park.

The JVP and its leaders came from backgrounds and experiences that distinguished them from the leaders of the mainstream left parties. Although Wijeweera belonged to a family that had worked for the Moscow CP in the South, he was converted to Maoism and became active in the Peking CP. The leadership of the JVP did not come from the big schools in Colombo, few of them had been to the Western-oriented University at Peradeniya and none to Western Universities. The JVP drew its strength from Maoists, students of small town schools and the Pirivena Universities. The JVP cadres were overwhelmingly Buddhist and drawn from the Karawe, Durawe, Batgam, Wahumpura and other depressed castes.

The JVP took root in areas that had been worked on by the Marxist Parties for three decades. Wijeweera and Mahinda Wijesekera came from the Matara District. Elpitiya in the South West had its Wahumpura caste give the JVP strong support. In Kegalle a JVP stronghold, the Batgam caste was won over by the JVP.

The rank and file of the JVP consisted of left-oriented militant rural youth. Most were from upper secondary schools, under privileged, a potential army of frustrated school leavers with meagre job opportunities. Radicalised by three decades of liberal

and Marxist politics, they had strong socialist impulses.

TACTICS

The JVP evolved its own Marxist ideology which was a hybrid. It drew on Trotsky's criticism of Stalinism and the 'popular front'. From Mao it asserted the primacy of the peasantry as the backbone of the revolution. And from Castro and Guevara it learned armed insurrection.

JVP training for their cadres emphasised neo-colonialism, attacked parliamentarianism and rejected the Left Parties. The JVP's attitude to the minorities at best was indifference, although shortly before the insurrection, despite their attack on 'Indian expansionism', Wijeweera teamed up with DMK leader Ilanchelian in support of the Kennakella Estate strike.

In its economic teaching the JVP differed little from the LSSP or CP. Not only did they point out the neo-colonial dependence of Sri Lanka's economy, but identified the United Front as part of this neo-colonial system. They called for a halt to the expansion of the tea plantations, the intense cultivation of food crops and the collectivisation of land to overcome landlessness. Urmilla Phadnis says that the JVP in its ideology was "anti-imperialist, anti-elitist, anti-bureaucratic, anti-capitalist, anti-Indian expansion and last but not least anti-imperialist-trained army and police."

It was in tactics that the JVP differed radically from the other parties including the Left. These had been concerned with trade unions, strikes, rallies and elections. In time the JVP evolved a tactic, where they functioned openly as an agitational group while at the same time recruiting to a clandestine organisation. When the Police threatened the clandestine organisation, the JVP would assume widespread armed

insurrection, the most advanced and complex form of revolutionary combat. This tactic was adopted on the assumption that the Police and Armed Forces has insufficient ammunition to survive a simultaneous uprising throughout the country.

The JVP was stampeded into its uprising. It had not made inroads into the north or the plantations. But police repression forced their hand and with Wijeweera in jail the JVP, on April 5th launched simultaneous attacks on 93 police stations, most of them in the southeast quadrant. As police stations fell, the government abandoned others, regrouping its meagre forces — anxious to protect the cities. At the height of the insurgency 100 police stations ceased to function. A 24 hour curfew was declared and claims made that upto 100,000 insurgents were locked in a battle that they could not indefinitely sustain.

UNCONTESTED

The Government's tactic of cutting their losses and regrouping paid. The JVP had only the equipment captured from police stations. They did not go on to take military bases and their equipment. The Indian Navy cordoned off Sri Lanka to ensure that no equipment reached the JVP. While the JVP held parts of Kegalle, Elpitiya, Deniyaya and Kataragama uncontested, the Army replenished its meagre stocks of arms and ammunition.

Within four days of the JVP attack, an Air Ceylon Trident took off from Singapore, carrying a consignment of small arms from the British base there. The next day Britain agreed to supply six Bell Jet Ranger helicopters bought from the USA. The USA was also to supply arms direct. So did India and Pakistan. When 6 IAF helicopters arrived in Colombo on the 14th they were guarded by Indian Army troops. Three

(Continued on page 20)

Suicide, a Social problem

by Piyaratna Rajapaksha

Mr. Jayantha Somasundaram, in an article, entitled, 'SUICIDE NOTES: THE LAST FAREWELL', (LG 1st. June) has drawn attention to the important question of suicide, which appears to be increasing in alarming proportions. This, therefore, deserves the attention of all who desire a healthy reconstruction of our society.

Drawing evidence from a wealth of material published abroad, Mr. Somasundaram has tried to trace the motives which make people commit suicide. In this article, my aim is to present very briefly, another aspect of the same problem, i.e. how the social environment can contribute to the incidence of suicide.

To take a concrete example, some time ago, local newspapers reported that a **young female employee of a private organisation, committed suicide, because she was summerily dismissed from employment. The offence she had committed was that she 'had eaten something during working hours, contrary, to the regulations of this particular organisation.'**

Now, isn't this inhuman? Because of the vagaries of public transport, electricity etc. many an employee may find it difficult to have a proper breakfast before they leave home for work in the morning. Wouldn't a mild reproof have been sufficient in the above case? Or better still, couldn't that firm have provided decent facilities, so that an employee could have a snack in privacy, when necessary?

This is not an isolated example, Under the conditions prevailing today, many persons find it difficult to obtain employment, and even more difficult to keep employment after they get it. This has encouraged all types of third-degree methods, since it is not difficult to find another recruit after sacking an employee. To make things worse, some persons

of the lower middle class, from, whom such employees are recruited, too often stoop to backbiting, sneaking etc. so that they can get a friend or a relative, to replace the colleague, whose dismissal they engineered. In any case, legislation preventing employees, especially those in private organisations, from sudden and unfair dismissal, is an imperative need. As for employment in the state sector, the evil can appear in another form, that is in vindictive transfers to distant stations, or in unjust interdictions. All these have a clear bearing on the incidence of suicide.

In the older age groups, it is not unemployment in the strict sense of the word, but an allied problem, which can lead to suicide. This is financial instability, especially in aging members of self-employed professions. A film producer committed suicide because of debts, and there is reasonable ground to believe that an elderly actor may have done so. Both were respected married men with families, but found that the increasing burden of debts was too much for them. People engaged in the arts and crafts are often self-employed, have no regular income, and once their heyday is over and their popularity and powers are waning, they may find life becoming intolerable for them. Clearly, the state can help them. According to Government newspapers, the present Government has started a fund for this purpose. It is to be hoped that the fund will meet the needs of all such cases in a tangible manner, and that such provision can be made to help persons in other forms of employment, too.

As numerous press items testify another type of suicide among elderly persons and invalids is increasing. This is where a person is suffering from an incurable and prolonged disease, and feels that release can be found only in suicide. Unfortunately, we don't have any sanatoria in this country, and the

establishment of at least one sanatorium for those suffering from lingering diseases, is an imperative necessity. The cheerful and healthy atmosphere prevailing in such an institution, can even cure patients. Our hospitals, besides being overcrowded, do not have such a congenial atmosphere.

Another type of suicide prevailing in many countries is best described through a concrete example. The following true story appeared in a magazine published in an affluent country. Since this is the only example from another country, quoted in this article I shall not disclose the name of the country, for I think it will be prejudicial to the country concerned. The story nevertheless is true and it is as follows:

A young girl, a teen-ager, was being educated in a high school for girls, some miles away from her home. She had to attend a concert in this school one evening, and since it was late when the concert was over, she stayed at the hostel of that school, for the night, with several friends of hers, all of them girls attending the same school. Of course, they obtained the permission of their respective parents, as well as the school authorities. Next morning, the father of one of the girls, took them home, alongwith his own daughter, in his car. He dropped each girl at her own house. Unfortunately, when the girl in question, was getting down from the car near her home, she was seen by a middle-aged woman who lived nearby, a notorious gossip. The later spread the story that the girl was seen getting down from a car driven by a man, in the early hours of the morning, and that the girl was drunk. (She was tired after spending a comparatively sleepless night.) When the story reached her ears, the girl, a sensitive type, committed suicide.

Incidentally, the above article was not about suicide, but about the evils of gossip. And gossip appears to be increasing in our

country, displacing hobbies like gardening, stamp-collecting etc. I have read quite a number of newsreports in the local press, where a coroner, after giving a verdict of suicide in a sudden death, has made some such statement as, "I am convinced that this valuable young life could have been saved, if the neighbours had held their tongues, and not given in to malicious gossip."

Since this article is about suicide, it is not possible here to touch on the other evil results of gossip, such as disruption of human relationships, including marriage, serious quarrels, and violence, not excluding homicide. That gossip leads to suicide, is clear.

Suicide is only an extreme and tragic result, and there is evidence that intolerant and inquisitive ways prevailing in our country may have contributed, at least partly to the exodus of some of our best young people, to other countries. Some time ago, I read a magazine published by a leading school in Colombo, and it carried articles by a number of students of the school-leaving age, in that school. They expressed their unhappiness that young persons are misunderstood and subjected to wanton criticism in this country, for almost anything they do, even if they have the best of motives. So they expressed the hope, that before long, they could leave for a more civilised country, where they could live in peace.

Coming back to the question of suicide, the generation gap may also contribute to it. Too often, people of different age groups and even different families have to live together, because of financial difficulties. Unfortunately, older people, who have grown in a primitive feudalist set up, with ideas of a patriarchal or matriachal

society, may try under such circumstances to impose their ideas forcibly, in a rather dictatorial manner. Result is suicide, especially by the young. Too often, a girl is forced by her elders into marriage with a person she abhors, and in such instances she and her lover, who is disliked by her parents, may run away or failing that may commit suicide together. Or each may commit suicide separately. Clearly, some more democratic methods of ironing out the differences between age groups, have to be devised. Even where marriage is not a bone of contention, acrimonious arguments between the young and the old may lead the former to suicide.

Unfortunately, in many of these cases, it is the very people, who led the young to suicide, who have the one sided advantage of giving evidence at the inquest. "I advised him (or her) and he (or she) committed suicide", is the story too often told by the elders. That humiliating language may have been used or even physical punishment given to a person who was almost an adult, is concealed. To be fair by the older folk, one cannot rule out the possibility of young people also being irresponsible, due to our debilitating pseudo culture, disseminated by unhealthy comics, poor films and other pernicious influences.

Psychologists say that living beings react to a difficult situation, in one of two ways. That is, they either face it or run away from it. And suicide is one way in which the more sensitive introverted type runs away from serious problems. The more aggressive type may find release in alcohol, quarrels, and even violence.

A healthy and temporary escape from the stresses of daily life can be desirable for most people, but in our society very few can afford to do so. Only a wealthy minority can afford to spend a vacation at a healthful resort. Even community centres, where people can spend a pleasant and relaxing evening, are not too plentiful here. All these can contribute to the increase of suicide, as well as other evils.

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The SLFP and the Left

● Another view

by Chintaka

While strengthening the JIUAC which had come under the JVP's polemical fire, the Protest Day and its immediate aftermath left the JVP thoroughly isolated from the organised working class, especially, but not exclusively, in the urban centres.

Bourgeois beneficiaries

But this is only one side of the story, and the success of June 5th/9th may well contain within itself the seeds of failure. Indeed, these may already be said to be discernible. The country's modern political history is replete with examples of the political benefit of mass struggles led by the Left accruing to the two main bourgeois political formations, i. e. the UNP and its substitute, the SLFP. The mass movement of August 1953 was capitalized upon by that most artful political demagogue S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. The 1971 Insurrection, the Manamperi and Weerasooriya killings, the Railway strike of December 1976, ironically helped to propel the UNP into the seat of power. Similarly, June 9th could well be grist to the mill of a beset SLFP leadership. The clever intrusion of the SLFP leaders into trade unionist Somapala's mammoth funeral procession, the intermingling of red-and-blue on this occasion and previously at the SLFP-LSSP-MEP May Day rally, all offer pointers to precisely such an ominous turn of events, of which June 24th was the clearest revelation to date.

LSSP moves

Just as the popularity of the ULF and the 21 demands was utilized by the LSSP in its entry into a coalition with the SLFP in 1964, the LSSP is attempting once again to channel the anti-UNP mass sentiment in the direction of a united front with the SLFP. Other sections of the Left, (such as the NSSP and CPSL) by failing to demarcate themselves sharply and clearly from the SLFP in the course of the June 5th/9th actions and carry out a

resolute 'two front' struggle, play into the hands of the SLFP.

June 5th and even more so June 9th saw the zenith of anti government protest since 1977. Will it also mark the turning point in the fortunes of the ruling UNP? While we published our own analysis of current developments in the June 15th issue of this Journal, the July 1st number contained the views of an independent commentator very familiar with trade union politics, Mr. H. A. Seneviratne. In this issue we publish another opinion by a regular correspondent who presents a long term view on the SLFP and the Left.

'Mara yuddha' in reverse

Some Leftists prattle about the need to draw the SLFP into extra-parliamentary mass struggles against the UNP. There is a case for this if the argument concerns a united front from below, aimed at winning over the SLFP's mass base. But then again, the distinction between leadership and base is not irrelevant to the UNP too, since the populist rhetoric which the UNP deployed in 1977 was designed precisely to cater to anti-establishment youth sections which rallied round that party to oust the corrupt, nepotistic and oppressive SLFP regime. (In this sense 1977 proved to be a 'Mara Yuddha' in reverse!) This fetish concerning the mass base of the SLFP is based on an archaic reading of the two parties. If it is a question of an 'anti-fascist' struggle, then sections of the UNP's support base as well as the SLFP's will have to be won over eventually. But would this lead any of our Leftists to advocate a United Front or united actions with the UNP?

Front from above

In any event, the formation of a united working class front i. e. a united front of working class parties, is the vitally necessary prerequisite for any broad anti-fascist, anti-imperialist alliance. In our context, this means that a United Left Front comprising all Marxist political organisations should be the very first step, anterior to seeking

any rapprochement with any non-Marxist regiments. But what is taking place today is the coming into being of a 'United front from above', one which embraces the SLFP leadership. Whether this is a programmatic front, an electoral front or a series of united actions is not the central issue. It is worthwhile pausing to consider what would happen if the SLFP rode to power on the crest of an extra-parliamentary wave of agitation, since after all there is no guarantee that the divided Left will win and retain hegemony throughout such a process. Such an extra-parliamentary takeover would probably mean the abolition of the residual vestige of bourgeois democracy and the unleashing of fascist violence by SLFP goon squads. The first victims would be the JVP and the Tamil people (both in the North and the plantations). Since no left entity is an island, such a process is bound to engulf the working class movement. After all in 1971 it is not only the JVP, but also the vociferously anti-JVP leftists who were subject to repression (e. g. the Maoists).

In other words, an extra-parliamentary struggle involving the SLFP leadership will probably catapult precisely this leadership into power and accelerate the process of fascistization which has gradually been taking place from the 1970's onwards; that is under both the SLFP regime and the present UNP regime. Far from embracing in its ranks the SLFP leadership, any real struggle by the Left should not merely bypass but also be directed against this bourgeois formation. The struggle should surely be against the dependent big bourgeois ruling class, fractions of which wield hegemony within and through both the UNP and the SLFP. It is absurd to struggle against the UNP solely, rather than the UNP and SLFP co-equally, simply because the spin of the electoral roulette wheel has placed the UNP rather than the SLFP, (the other bourgeois politi-

cal formation) in power. **Reducing, or more correctly, diverting the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist struggle into an exclusively anti-UNP struggle aids the class that stands behind the UNP, since it leaves intact its alternative candidate, the SLFP.** The fundamental question of the bourgeoisie's class rule remains unsolved and indeed unposed.

All the super-subtle distinctions concerning the SLFP's 'Rightwing', 'Leftwing' and 'Centre'; between its 'leadership' and its 'base', do not enter the picture when the discussion concerns the UNP. And why not? Surely what is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose as well! Why the special preference for the SLFP? Is it just that middle-aged, middle-class, male leaders of the Left movement have a deep seated psychological need to be under the protection of a strong matriarchal figure?

The assertion that the SLFP represents the 'national bourgeoisie' as opposed to the UNP which represents the compradore, and the statement that the SLFP is 'progressive' or 'democratic' (as opposed to the UNP which is fascist), have yet to be demonstrated by analysis on the terrain of political economy, sociology and political science. All these characterizations contained some truth in the past (1950's and mid 1960's), but in the last one and a half decades, the national bourgeoisie has undergone a process of compradorefication and has emerged as a neo-comprador (dependent) monopoly bourgeoisie, which, in the context of severe economic crisis, is abridging bourgeois democracy and tending towards neo-fascism (dependent fascism). **The process began under SLFP rule in the 1970's, is being continued under the UNP and could be taken to completion by either party or an alliance of sections of both.**

The struggle against neo-colonialism and neo-fascist tendencies, that is to say, the struggle for national independence and democracy, must take the form of a struggle against this dependent bourgeois class. The Left and

working class forces have to raise high the banners of National Independence, Democracy and Socialism — banners under which neither the UNP nor SLFP can or should be permitted to raise. The anti-imperialist, anti-fascist struggle must be carried out against both the UNP and SLFP. It cannot be carried out in the company of, still less in conjunction with, one, against the other. Of course those who wave the red banner (or the Red Book) only to cling to the blue sari-pota, will disagree vehemently.

What then of the JVP? They have been accused of tailing behind or collaborating with the UNP, but almost all their accusers speak from positions to **right** of the JVP, in a context in which there is a significant political space to the left of that party. The JVP is now a curious admixture of right-revisionist parliamentarism and ultra-left sectarianism, just as it is of abstract (neo-Trotskyist) internationalism and social chauvinism. **Yet, few Left parties have the moral right or credibility to criticize the JVP for collusion with the UNP, since they themselves are colluding even more blatantly with the SLFP.**

The (Maoist) Janatha Sangamaya, sections of the CPSL and a clutch of Trotskyist groups are, sadly enough, the only exceptions. The CPSL could have capitalized on the JVP's isolation in the June actions, had it stuck firmly to its recently proclaimed anti-capitalist line. But instead of this, it tied itself up in knots by calling for unity in action of all anti-UNP political parties (including the SLFP) on June 5th and writing to the **leadership** of the SLFP, to help combat its substitute, the UNP. The CPSL's contortions resulting from its being impaled on the horns of a politico-theoretical dilemma, has elicited giggles from the LSSP, which is consistent at least in its opportunism. Thus the promise and potential of the CPSL's "hard-line" is as yet unfulfilled. In fact there are significant signs that under pressure from the T. U. bureaucracy, sections of the CPSL hierarchy have already begun to retreat slowly and surreptitiously from the Positions of the Central

Committee/Politburo special session's self-criticism (as reproduced in the party's internal bulletin at the time), as well as from the positions of the XIth Congress Political Report.

Though it is fraught with irony, we may say that the JVP has played no small part in the SLFP's ongoing revival. By breaking up the 5 party Left bloc and perpetuating the disunity of the left movement, the JVP has only enhanced the credibility of the SLFP as the main alternative to the UNP. Confronted with a fragmented and bickering left, the stature of the SLFP is automatically enhanced in the minds of the masses. Though it now acknowledges that, in the context of the present economic crisis, the capitalist class can no longer rule within the confines of bourgeois democracy the JVP also claims that there does not exist in Sri Lanka today, the objective necessity for a united front of the Left! This contradiction is glaringly obvious in the resolutions passed at its first Congress. But there is none so blind as he who will not see. The ferocious sectarianism of the JVP plays directly into the hands of the right opportunists of the LSSP, who prefer an alliance with the SLFP (i. e. renewed service in the employ of its imperious old mistress) to the company of assorted bearded young 'aliens'. The JVP and LSSP are thus two perfectly complementary sides of the same coin, splitting the Left and thereby strengthening the SLFP — the former helps the SLFP unconsciously and objectively; the later' consciously and subjectively.

Perhaps there are rational elements in the JVP leadership who perceive this, but the JVP dilemma is not an easy one to resolve either. Their sectarian war cries appeal to the psychology of the party's petty bourgeois youth base. However, employment imperatives may drive these self-same youth into the SLFP camp as 1983 approaches, while the rest may desert in droves if Wijeweera fails to fulfil his promise and prevent a SLFP victory in '83/'84. To block the SLFP, the JVP cannot fight alone. It needs to stand at the

(Continued on page 18)

MORE ENCOUNTERS

by Nihal Perera

The landlords old and new arrived. The M. P. now moved over to them. In a moment he had invited a dozen of us to his jeep and we were travelling across the settlement — past newly barbed wired lands and deserted stretches which he repeatedly termed were the sites for his model houses. It was indeed a treat to watch this talented lawyer deal with the gathering, representative of almost all classes in the peninsula — a feat which is so ably executed by his party as well. At one point he would be talking to the villagers, then whispering to the landlords, driving home a point to the youths and even remembering to summarise matters for me. "You are indeed a great absorber M. P., "I ventured once the tour was over and we had come back to the starting point, "I can now understand what happened to poor V. P." "Yes", he said with a smile, "we absorb everyone around us." He was not exaggerating. And having drunk some moru which he had thoughtfully brought along, he climbed into his jeep and left, his rising — sun flag fluttering in the air.

We — the villagers, the youths and I — now sat down under the palmyrah trees to discuss the problems at issue. But before that, a word about the organisers of the 'field seminar' — the youths. They have each one of them at some stage or other, actively worked for their cherished goal of Tamil Eelam and suffered physically in the process. They are today grouped together in an organization called, ARAVELY PORATTAM KULU which loosely translated means 'Non — Violent Direct Action Group.' In the face of the severe repression unleashed on them, these youths have arrived at a decision to modify the methods they have adopted so far, though not of course, their goal. They have also realized the need to work among

the people and indeed learn from them. Hence their involvement in issues such as those of Vermbarai. In fact they had spearheaded the move to block the eviction of depressed caste tenants recently from another village — Punnalaikutuvan. True they were not highly versed in Marxist theory as I found out at a discussion at Comrade N's house at Kopay later in the day. But it is my firm belief that here was material which, if properly directed, would be an asset to any revolutionary party.

The problems of Vermbarai (which are by no means peculiar to it) which I was able to piece together from the explanations of the A. P. K. youths and Mahalingam, the 36 year old bare — bodied natural leader of the 'Pallar' people of the village, could briefly be stated as follows. Their roots stretch to the recent abnormal increases in land values throughout the peninsula. This situation is aggravated by those returning from abroad, wanting to invest in land in their home areas. (I am told that in addition to professionals and migrants to Mid — East some 5,000 youths have so far gone in search of work to West Germany!) This process is naturally striking the very roots of the remaining feudal structures in the peninsula. 'Landlords' who were content with the extraction of free services from depressed caste tenants occupying even infertile tracts, are now hovering with title deeds and pushing claims to lands which they had hardly bothered to look at for decades. Events like evictions and house burnings that recently took place in Chavakachcheri are the inevitable results.

The legal claimants to the land at Vermbarai are members of a Malavarai (Mudaliyar) family possessing a reputation extending beyond the area, as patrons of

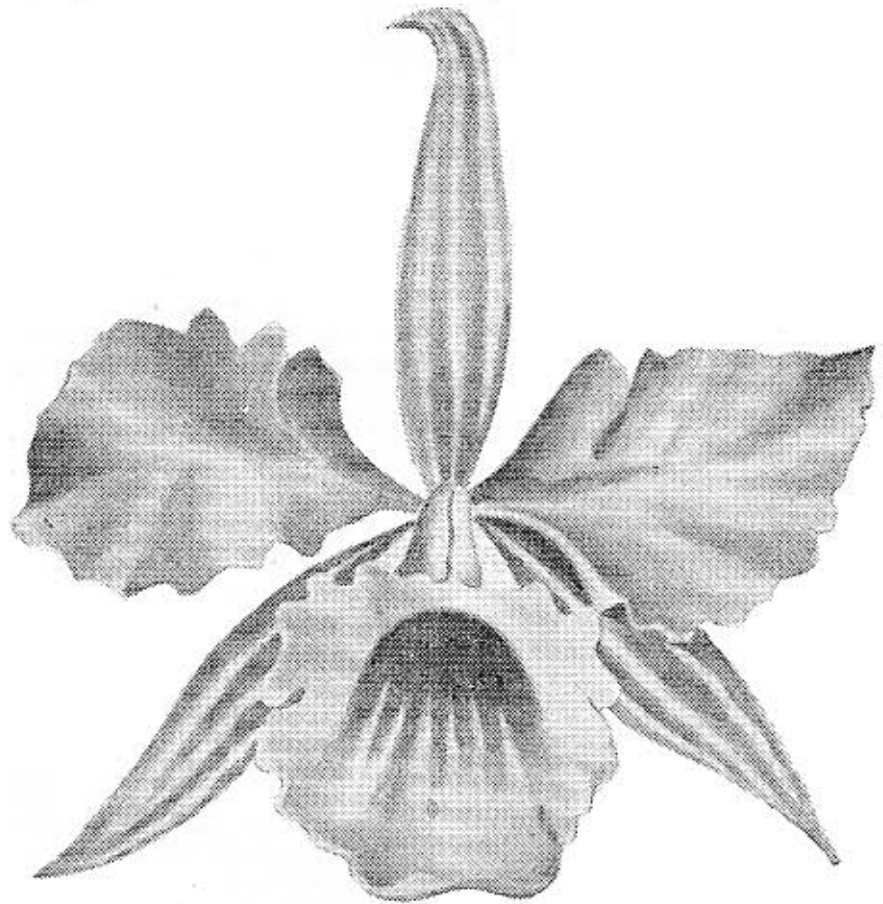
education. The present occupiers — the villagers — descend from those that were settled in this land a century or so ago by this family. Their relationship had essentially been feudal, with the villagers performing various labour services (free labour at weddings and funerals, and compulsory labour on the landlord's properties etc.) in return for the right of settlement. They were in addition bonded settlers who were not free to leave the village. Though the people of Vermbarai were never in any sense cultivators (they earn their living from fish vending and toddy-tapping) they had over the years developed the rock strewn, infertile land. In fact the segment occupied by the villagers was now in an ideal state for cultivation. According to the youths this land could today fetch as much as Rs 10,000/- per iacham or parapu (about 1/16 of an acre) in comparison to the unoccupied and therefore undeveloped sector where the price would not be anything more than Rs. 3000/-. (Over 300 families occupy the 400 odd lanchams that constitute the village). The landowners were now in an unholy hurry to obtain vacant possession of the land, especially the developed sector — and I was able to spot a number of potential buyers hovering in the vicinity that very morning.

Apart from legal means the landowners were now resorting to various ruses to push the villagers out. Firstly a move is afoot to block all paths leading to the settlement under the guise that these were unauthorised clearings. Secondly fines are im-

posed on the cutting of leaves from the palmyrah trees, which the villagers proudly point out had been planted by their forefathers. Work on a temple and a library under construction by the villagers have been forcibly halted. A ban has been enforced on the construction of permanent structures and a villager is now facing trial for putting up a house with a cemented floor. I was taken to witness a pathetic sight of a 60 year old, one-legged person, father of 6 children — Kathiran — salvaging materials from his house which had been pulled down on account of his having put up an "unauthorised" fence. The latest method of harassment adopted was the non-issue of food stamps to the villagers — a sure indication that government officials were not very neutral on this issue.

The villagers and Mahalingam were full of praise for the A.P.K. youths. They had done the impossible — brought the M. P. to the village! But what of it? The youths quite correctly were cynical of what could be achieved through him. In fact his tactics were not very difficult to fathom. He was urging the villagers to move their huts to the undeveloped segment. This he loftily promised would be turned in to a Model Village with Premier Premadasa's aid (as his colleague Rajalingam is attempting to do in the highly politicalised Nelliaddy area). Thus the landowners would be able to sell the developed land at fancy prices and in addition obtain a sizeable sum as compensation from the government for the undeveloped land! Everybody would then be happy and Kopay would again have as its M. P., the brilliant lawyer cum theoretician Mr. Kathiravelupillai.

As T. remarked later on while analysing the morning's events at Kopay. — "Our M. P. may be a charming and clever absorber. But he would soon learn that there are limits to this kind of politics". Perhaps the ilk of A. P. K. and Comrade Mahalingham would prove this some day — in the not too distant future.



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HOTEL TAPROBANE, FORT. TELEPHONE: 20391

CHINA AND MAO

I cannot permit Chintaka's comments on my article on "China and Mao" to go without a reply although I do not want to take part in an extensive debate.

Chintaka does not agree with the correct Marxist-Leninist thesis, so clearly enunciated by both Lenin and Mao, that classes and, therefore, class struggles continue to exist even after the socialist revolution. Following from his incorrect assumption he does not agree with the view of Marxist-Leninists that capitalism has been restored in the Soviet Union and is being restored in China. There is no point in quoting Stalin to me on this point because it is precisely on this point that I think Stalin erred.

Let us, therefore, go back to Lenin. In his famous book, "Left-wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder", Lenin said: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against a more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased tenfold by its overthrow (even if only in one country), and whose power lies not only in the strength of international capital, in the strength and durability of the international connections of the bourgeoisie, but also in the force of habit, in the strength of small production. For, unfortunately small production is still very, very widespread in the world and small production engenders capitalism and bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale. For all these reasons the dictatorship of the proletariat is essential, and victory over the bourgeoisie is impossible without a long, stubborn and desperate war of life and death, a war demanding perseverance, indomitableness and unity of will."

In another of his famous works, "The proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", Lenin says: "The transition from capitalism to communism represents

an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has been terminated, the exploiters will inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this hope will be converted into attempts at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters—who had never expected their overthrow, who never believed it possible, who would not permit the thought of it—will throw themselves with tenfold energy, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundredfold, into the battle for the recovery of their lost "paradise", for their families who had been leading such a sweet and easy life and whom now the "common herd" is condemning to ruin and destitution In the wake of the capitalist exploiters will be found the broad masses of the petty bourgeoisie, to whom vacillation and hesitation the historical experience of every country for decades bears witness—one day they march behind the proletariat, the next day they will take fright at the difficulties of the revolution, become panic-stricken at the first defeat or semi-defeat of the workers;"

To quote Lenin again: "Yes, by overthrowing the landowners and the bourgeoisie we cleared the way but we did not build the edifice of socialism. On the ground cleared of one bourgeois generation, new generations continually appear in history, as long as the ground gives rise to them, and it does give rise to any number of bourgeois."

Thus Lenin, quite clearly pointed out that classes are not eliminated with the socialist revolution; that the deposed bourgeoisie is, in fact, stronger than the victorious proletariat; that small production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously; that the overthrown exploiters will make frenzied attempts to regain their lost "paradise"; and that the entire historical epoch of transition from capitalism to communism will witness a long, stubborn and

● A reply

by N. Sanmugathasan

desperate war of life and death between the two classes. It might be pointed out that no where in the world has communism been established yet.

What must be stressed is that it is relatively easier to physically overthrow the landlords and capitalists and to confiscate their property. However, confiscation of their property does not amount to **confiscation of the reactionary ideas in their minds**. Daily and hourly they are always dreaming of a come-back. At some stage, they attempt to convert their dreams into attempts at restoration. At the same time, new bourgeois elements are coming into existence. These arise from the privileged sections of the workers and the Party and the state organs who are corrupted by the bourgeois style of life. As Yao Wen-yuan wrote: "The existence of bourgeois influence and the existence of the influence of international imperialism and revisionism are the political and ideological source of the new bourgeois elements, while the existence of bourgeois right provides the vital economic basis for their emergence."

This is theory and it was this theory that was put into practice in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. To say this is not to belittle either Lenin or Stalin. To say that the Second International had degenerated to revisionism by the time of the Second World War is not to belittle its founder, Engels. The Soviet Union of today bears no resemblance to the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin. I give a few examples. Khrushchov enlarged the private plots of collective farmers from $\frac{1}{4}$ acre to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre—thus further engendering capitalism in the countryside (instead of restricting them and finally eliminating them). Material incentives for increased production were introduced. Foreign monopolies, like Fiat, were allowed to invest capital and exploit Soviet labour and take away profits. Soviet capital was invested abroad e. g.

France. As a political consequence of the restoration of capitalism and its development into Soviet monopoly capital and Soviet imperialism took place the aggression against Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan and Soviet support to fascist Ethiopia's war against the Eritrean Nationalists.

Chintaka wants to know how the restoration of capitalism could have been effected without violence or revolution. Surely, people have heard of the strategy of "taking the fortress from within", of palace coups where change of personnel at the top led to change right down the line. What happened in the Soviet Union was a palace coup. But it was not without an element of force. This was provided by the Minister of Defence, Marshal Zhukov—the only professional, military man to hold that post up to that time. He was a war hero but had been demoted by Stalin because of his Bonapartist tendencies, to which Khrushchov himself was to testify later in his "Memoirs". In mid-June 1957, Khrushchov found himself in a 4:7 minority inside the Political Bureau but refused to resign and continued to filibuster till his friend, Zhukov, air-lifted pro-Khrushchov members of the Central Committee in army transport planes to Moscow and procured a majority for Khrushchov. Zhukov threw the entire weight of the Soviet military establishment on to the side of Khrushchov.

In China, the four leaders who supported Mao were arrested without even the decision of the standing committee of the Political Bureau. As Martin Nicolaus says in his book, "Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR," "Without a doubt, his (Khrushchov's) power grew out of the barrel of a gun; only, not the gun of the revolutionary soldiers and peasants, but the gun of a bourgeois officer corps."

I would respectfully request Chintaka not to ask me respect the views of people like B. T. Ranadive or Wang Ming, both of whom were and are renegades from Marxism-Leninism and did enormous damage to the commu-

nist movements of their respective countries. As for the criticism about the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, it was not a political revolution against the bureaucracy. It was an attempt to seize back a part of the state super-structure which had been taken over by the capitalist-readers inside the Chinese Communist Party. It was the greatest mass, revolutionary movement that the world had seen. It was an attempt to safeguard and strengthen the dictatorship of the Proletariat in China, to prevent China from changing colour and from going the way the Soviet Union had gone and to preserve China as a base for world revolution. It was the greatest intellectual ferment that the world has seen.

There is no point in quoting the CPSU, the present Chinese leadership or the Vietnamese CP on the Cultural Revolution. They are all modern revisionists who are guilty only recently of unjustified aggression against their neighbours—the first against Afghanistan, the second, against Vietnam and the third against Kampuchea. You can hardly expect aggressors to have correct ideas about the Cultural Revolution. To them, it was anathema. Ruling parties are not always correct. As for Enver Hoxha, I have personally listened to his effusive praise of the Cultural Revolution. His volta face can neither be explained nor excused.

As for the theory about World Revolution, Chintaka wants to know where it differs from Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. It is quite simple. Trotsky's theory postulated that the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia would evolve into a socialist revolution and that the latter revolution could be safeguarded only on the arena of international revolution. History did not quite turn up this way. Socialism triumphed in one country first and, then, in a number of other countries later although world revolution has not arrived. What the theory of World Revolution postulates is that the final guarantee for the success of socialism in one or a number of countries depends on the final victory of

world revolution. If the latter is delayed and socialist countries are forced to exist in a world where imperialist countries dominate, the possibility exists of imperialism corrupting socialism—as has already happened.

The correct position has been stated by Mao as follows: "According to the Leninist viewpoint, the final victory of a socialist country not only requires the efforts of the proletariat and the broad masses of the people at home, but also depends on the victory of world revolution and the abolition of the system of exploitation of man by man on the whole globe upon which all mankind will be emancipated."

Finally, let me say that I defended Stalin and all that was correct in his views and actions long, long before Chintaka took to political journalism. I have no need to make a choice between Stalin and Mao or Maoism. Let me also ask Chintaka not to worry about my alleged isolation. I have never counted heads. Nor am I going to do so now. In Sri Lanka, if you want to be with the majority, one should join the UNP or the SLFP—if you follow Chintaka's logic. But I prefer to stick to my principles.

The SLFP . . .

(Continued from page 14)

head of a united Left formation, like India's CP (M) does at present. Yet, its sectarianism prevents it from achieving this. The circle is a vicious one.

A convergence of the radicalized CPSL (or, of the CPSL's radicals) and the rational sections of the JVP, is perhaps the best hope for the emergence of an anti-capitalist (anti-UNP/SLFP) but non-sectarian Left alternative, i. e. a kind of Lankan CP (M). But this unfortunately is a very long shot. The likelier prospect is the UNP remaining in power or the recrudescence of the SLFP with a long 'left' tail, and a fresh coat of pink varnish. And either prospect should heartily sicken any progressive, for that elusive "left unity" would finally be achieved in a very concrete form—in the prisons and grave yards of this country.

In defence of Uthumaneni

by J. Uyangoda

“UTHUMANENI” is dangerous and illusory, says Touchstone. For him, it is something about individual revenge — an individual resolution of social conflicts (L. G. Feb 15). Mr. H. A. Seneviratne also has a similar criticism. **“Uthumaneni”** fails to be convincing as regards “its proclaimed protest against injustice..” (L. G. April 1)—Another lesser known critic has serious doubts about the “Social injustice portrayed in the film.” (L. G. June 1). Now comes Mr. W. Jayasiri seeking to enlighten us on Marxist aesthetics and “reality”. He concludes on an apocalyptic note that **‘Uthumaneni’** re-introduces the milieu of South Indian cinema tradition which may destroy at one blow “what we have tried to nurture with great difficulty over a long period.” (L. G. June 15)—Not only the Sinhala cinema, but cinema criticism is also in crisis, according to Mr. Jayasiri.

Do these critics seriously and honestly think that Siripala (the main character in **“Uthumaneni”**) should have joined the revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat and launched a struggle against the capitalist system, instead of stabbing to death those who raped his sister? Looking from Siripala’s point of view, it is no doubt that his revenge is merely an individual solution. What else can he do when he is confronted with a grim reality which offers no solution in the accepted avenues of religion, law etc? In order not to “distract attention from the social changes that are actually necessary” (Touchstone) should he wait till 1984 to vote for Comrade Wijeweera at the next Presidential elections? Or should he contribute to the **“KAMKARU MAVATHA”** Party Fund “not to allow the film producers to be the real victors”. (Jayasiri) In **“Uthumaneni”** Siripala is not as contrived and artificial as our critics want him to be. **On the contrary,**

he is true to his character. It is a vulgar kind of interpretation to say that Siripala’s killing of four culprits who were exonerated by the courts serves only the psychological satisfaction of the audience. Siripala is compelled to take that personal revenge by the logic of circumstances and events. And the four “villains”, for Siripala, are **not merely four individuals but also the most approximate personifications of a whole array of hostile and unsympathetic forces.** That is precisely why this **“personal revenge”** has something beyond personal. Moreover, Siripala’s decision to kill the four men symbolises a definite rupture from the religious passivity under which he was nurtured as a peaceful, and harmless villager. And therefore it is misleading to perceive that Siripala’s quadruple murder is merely an escapist kind of finale.

A criticism that has been levelled against **“Uthumaneni”** is that it does not portray social injustice. According to my opinion, the film exposes aspects of the oppressive reality of our social system in three ways. Firstly, the animosity that Baby Mahaththaya has against Siripala and his family which is based on **property interests** of the village land owner — politician. Thus, **‘Uthumaneni’** portrays (of course, with limitations) an aspect of the class struggle in the village in an undistorted way quite distinct from most of the trashy and “elitist” films with rural settings. Secondly, it is a grim revelation of the injustice of the bourgeois legal system which serves power and privilege. Thirdly, for the first time in Sinhala cinema, it exposes one illusory aspect of the dominant ideology of our society that is, the religious passivity and pacifism. True enough, Gamini Fonseka may have not effected this exposure consciously and deliberately. Despite the fact that Gamini Fonseka is a dissident or disap-

pointed bourgeois political personality, his sensitivity to human condition brings these three aspects to the surface. As H. A. Seneviratne correctly says we sometimes do not see what is! H. A.’s own comments on **“Uthumaneni”** are a good example.

Can one appreciate, let alone evaluate, any artistic creation by reducing its theme and story to a set of simple statements. This is the first question one should ask from Mr. Jayasiri, having read the very first paragraph of his article (L. G. June 15). Not only a lesser cinematic work like **‘Uthumaneni’**, but also a great novel like **“Anna Karenina”** becomes a mere formula when its plot is reduced to absurdity. In this Jayasirish way, in Pathiraja’s **“Bambaru Avith”** too, there is a village, a poor fisherman family, a rich Mudalali etc. The poor family consists of “dharmishta’s living quietly and minding their own business, where as the rich Mudalali spends every minute in doing wrong with his acolytes. (W. Jayasiri himself, aptly enough, plays the role of one of them!) He is corrupt, decadent and barbarous—in short, ‘adharmista’ so on and so forth. But, to my knowledge no critic (with the exception of H. A. Seneviratne) has been unkind or vulgar enough to look at **“Bambaru Avith”** in such an absurd and reductionist way. Jayasiri’s method of **reductio and absurdum** has prevented him from understanding even the finest points in **“Uthumaneni”**.

Jayasiri’s harsh verdict on **“Uthumaneni”** is perhaps based on a kind of subjective attitude towards the film maker rather than the film.

As far as the entire history of Sinhala cinema is concerned, there had been two dominant trends. The first was the trashy cinema—the mirror reflection of South Indian celluloid dream world. The other is, what one may call, the “elitist” cinema, mainly

represented by Lester James Pieris. Besides these two trends, there has been developing a third trend since the early 1970's which I may call "The alternative Sinhala cinema" — a precursor of a ("Sarungale") Wasantha Obeysekera and now Gamini Fonseka with "Uthumaneni" represent, according to my view, this alternative trend. What is new in this trend is not merely or mainly the technical achievements of the film-makers, but **the social relevance of these**. This is what is most important whatever the shortcomings as far as cinematic form is concerned. I unhesitatingly include "Uthumaneni" in this alternative category mainly because of the power of its theme and the subject matter.

As regards critics, such as Touchstone, who allege that "Uthumaneni" does not go beyond the individual satisfaction of a "lone avenger" or that it does not draw attention to the collapse of the bankrupt capitalist system, I strongly recommend Reggie Siriwardene's article entitled "**Pathiraja, Politics and Cinema**" that appeared in the **Lanka Guardian** several months back. Reggie Siriwardene, one of our most sensitive, Marxist oriented literary critics, has this to say, (paraphrasing one of Engels statements) regarding a certain criticism levelled against 'Bambaru'.

"As for the view that the ending is defeatist, I think one is back here to the question whether art should portray reality as it is or as one would wish it to be. The gulf of communication between the alienated left-wing intellectual and the village fishermen (in "**Bambaru Avith**") is part of the reality that the film maker sees. **Within that situation and within the community that the film portrays, it would be unreal to smuggle in a hopeful solution. No more than the novelist is the film maker obliged to serve on a platter the future historical resolution of the social conflicts which he describes.**" (L. G. August 15, 1978 page 17 — emphasis added)

An insurrection . . .

(Continued from page 10)

days later Air Ceylon flew in nine tons of military equipment which the Soviet Union had made available from supplies in Cairo. On 20th April Soviet Air Force Antonov transports flew in a set of Kamov helicopters. The next day the Antonovs brought in six MiG-17s. On May 6th the USSR announced that it was providing Soviet armoured cars to Sri Lanka. On the 21st and 22nd of April, Australia and Yugoslavia announced their decision to send in arms and equipment.

This sudden influx of arms and ammunition rapidly altered the balance against the JVP. The Army took Yugoslav artillery into Kegalle to flush out the rebels. By the end of May the insurrection was completely crushed. The JVP had no strategy for protracted warfare, nor had they the organisation for guerilla warfare.

This JVP uprising led to the emergence of a powerful, influential and ruthless armed force. It broke the back of the Left parties which were trapped politically by the insurrection which they could only denounce at the cost of long-term influence. The SLFP was isolated from the electorate due to the harsh measures adopted — curfew, censorship, trial without jury, postponement of elections, suspension of habeas corpus and other civil rights.

The uprising questioned the efficacy of a parliamentary system that could not accommodate a generation of educated youth, nor keep politicians aware of their needs and strengths. The mass parties like the UNP, SLFP, LSSP and CP seemed to have no place for them. The JVP charge that leaders in Parliament were of a different class and therefore they themselves of a different sub-culture, seemed valid now. ●

It is also Engels who said somewhere else that the portrayal of real conditions of society alone suffices to shatter the optimism of the existing social authority.

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DR. S. A. WICKREMASINGHE

Sri Lanka's first Marxist

*ARAGALAYAKA ATHI-
THAYA — Life and Times of
Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe by
Ranaweera Leslie Gunawardene.
Pragathi Press, 1980*

The Marxist movement of the island, though it produced a core of dedicated leaders in the course of its history in the last forty years, failed to give birth to a well documented and comprehensive history. The movement, however, claims ownership to a rich storehouse of source material consisting of pamphlets, booklets and documents. The only question is whether they have been preserved in the respective party archives. The writer is aware that certain individuals, who once held key positions within the movement, possess some of these materials and neither the researcher nor the general reader could find access to them. A comprehensive history as well as biographical works on the colourful personalities of the Left — Phillip, NM, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe and Colvin — need to be published in the interest of posterity. It above all, has a special relevance at this juncture because of the attempt by a vociferous section of the emerging 'new Left' to deliberately minimise the contributions and the impact of the 'old guard' of the Island's Marxist Movement.

Prof. Leslie Gunawardene, in his own right as a historian and a Left wing intellectual cum activist, has made use of the life and times of Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe to write the history of the first important phase of the Left movement of Sri Lanka. Prof. Gunawardene's study, though it concentrates mainly on one of the leading pioneers of the island's Marxist movement, is certainly a scholarly attempt to assess the importance of the Left wing movement, in the modern history of Sri Lanka. Prof. Gunawardene deserves our praise for



Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe

his scholarly analysis of the role of the Left in its early period. Though several studies examined the origin of the Left wing politics in the Donoughmore period, they suffered from the drawback that the respective authors failed to consult all the available sources, specially the plethora of pamphlets, newspapers and booklets in Sri Lanka. The Marxist movement, from its very inception in the early thirties, used the medium of the main national language to talk politics to the ordinary masses of this country and this contribution of theirs, along with the wide variety of Sinhala phrases and terms which they introduced into the political vocabulary of the masses, provided the impetus to both political participation and mobilisation. The effect of this process was first seen during the Donoughmore period and it was accelerated during the subsequent decade. No bourgeois historian was able to successfully assess the significance of this vital current in the history of Sri Lanka.

Prof. Gunawardene, more in the spirit of a historian whose task is to debunk some of the views of his colleagues in the profession, has written the biography of Dr.

S. A. Wickremasinghe in so scholarly a fashion that it places the left movement in the correct historical perspective. One simply has to read this book on Dr. S. A. to get a clear picture of the role and tasks of the Left movement in the past three decades. The emphasis, in the main has been to demonstrate the effect of the Left movement in the area of national independence and anti-imperialism. The processes through which the country achieved national independence was accelerated by the militant forces of the Left which successfully involved the participation of both workers and peasantry in mass politics. Dr. SA's entry into the first Donoughmore State Council in 1931 heralded a new era in legislative politics for the simple reason that it was he alone who led a struggle against both imperialists and their national agents, for the emancipation of the oppressed classes of this country. Dr. S. A. remained the single Marxist in the legislature dominated by the elite whose only aim was to retain and control the power of the State in the interest of Imperialists and their national agents. He utilised the floor of the State Council to talk of the peoples right for national independence and also to look at the numerous problems of a people under colonial subjugation from the point of view of Marxism. As an elected member of the State Council, Dr. SA took the grievances of the people before this limited legislature and demanded legislation to solve the problems which afflicted the people in the early thirties.

Some of the most basic social and economic rights, which the ordinary masses enjoy today, reached the statute book largely as a result of the pioneering efforts made by Dr. S. A., who saw in the attempt to impose British political institutions on Sri Lanka, a relationship to the forms of colonial economic exploitation. In 1933,

he, while speaking on the subject of constitutional reform, remarked that political control by the people could be achieved only "by organising the people of this country to fight on a organised basis to win for our poor workman and the poor peasant his economic freedom, the absence of which is the root cause of our political subjugation." (State Council Hansard Vol. 11, 1933). This amply demonstrates that the forum of the legislature was seized to raise issues close to the hearts of the masses of the country. Deviating from the conventional political jargon of the elitist politicians who envisaged nothing beyond constitutional reforms be used such phrases as 'the organised masses' and 'the reactionaries'. The **nationalist** issues, which later became significant in the political history of the country, attracted the early attention of the pioneering Marxist, Dr. S. A. An example is the rejuvenation of Ayurveda. It was Dr. S. A. who suggested that Ayurvedic physicians should be allowed to give evidence in court; he also wanted the Ayurveda college to be given a recognised status. In this way, he pioneered the cause of the community of Ayurvedic physicians of this country. Education, Labour and Health Services attracted his attention and he was able to impress upon the legislature, the need to introduce changes and improve the available facilities. **The social welfare measures, which are now under attack by a regime which does not recognise social welfare as a prerequisite of economic development, entered the statute book primarily due to the impact of the Left movement, and Dr. S. A. in this context, played a most significant role in the first State Council.**

The emergence of the Left movement, apart from its historic role in the last four decades, was the most important factor in the process of political modernisation of Sri Lanka. The formation of the LSSP in 1935 and the activities which immediately preceded the emergence of the first radical political party have been examined by Prof. Gunewardene who, has revealed a lot of inter-

esting and useful information on the early phase of the Marxist movement. Dr. SA's student days in London and his close relationship with the Indian student community are replete with information useful to the study of the early phase of the movement. The author, by focussing on this aspect, helps in the education of the present day youth in regard to the early, militant, phase of the Left movement. 'National independence' and 'Socialism' became the main slogans of this political party which according to the author, played a vital role in the political development of the country. The ideological differences, which surfaced during the World War II, brought about a split and it was this which gave birth to the Communist Party with Dr. S. A. as its live-wire. Though both the imperialists and their national agents strived hard to crush this Marxist party during its formative days, Dr. S. A. dedicated himself unremittingly to the building up of a working class party. The history of this period has been discussed in this book in such a way so as to see that it helps all people who are interested in the Left Movement. The background to the understanding, which developed between the CP and the CNC in 1943, including those domestic political factors which characterised this entente, has been examined with the discipline of a historian and an attempt has been made to establish the view that the sole purpose of this understanding was to accelerate the process of the struggle for national independence. The militant trade union struggles and the general expansion in the activities of the Left gave birth to a new political situation in 1947 and it reached the peak stage with the General Strike. The 4th Congress of the Communist Party, which was held in 1950 at Matara, has been examined primarily to drive the point home that it was Dr. S. A. who spoke of the necessity of a front to fight the UNP. The Hartal of 1953, the 1956 victory of the MEP and the attitude of the CPSL to the subsequent changes were all part and parcel of this strategy, about which Dr. S. A. and others of the CP

attempted to convince the remaining forces of the left. This struggle for a broad front, gave birth to the 1963 ULF which, in effect, represented the most historic achievement of the Left movement. Prof. Gunewardene, perhaps with a purpose, focusses on the formation of the ULF and sees as a milestone. He has chosen to end his scholarly-cum-political analysis of the story of the Left at that point. The fragmentation which one sees inside the ranks of the Left in the 1970's reflects the ideological disputes and differences on tactics and strategies. This book, therefore, becomes relevant for those forces which aim to bring about unity within the ranks of the Movement.

Prof. Gunewardene, though he concentrates on Dr. SA's role as the pioneer of the country's Marxist movement, has not neglected to examine and assess some of his ideas on economic development, industrial development and the generation of hydro-electric power. His writing on these subjects have been discussed with a view to emphasising that it is this leader of the Left who first spoke of the projects which are now being launched as ideas emanating solely from a very different group of leaders. Dr. S. A. understood the need to harness the water resources for development several decades ago. **Prof. Gunewardene's work, though it concentrates primarily on the biography of Dr. S. A. is, in all its facets, a history of the Left movement in first three decades.** It, therefore, is certain to invite the attention of those people who are interested in both modern history of Sri Lanka and the history of the Left movement, which, in its initial phase, displayed the character of a militant movement without which the process for national independence would not have been accelerated. Dr. S. A. was undoubtedly one of the central figures of the struggle for national independence. The best tribute, which we can pay this 'Grand Old man' of the Left who dedicated his entire life to the cause of the peoples emancipation is to derive inspirations from his 'life and times'.

— Wiswa Warnapala



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WOOLF'S SECOND NOVEL

AS I
LIKE IT

Touchstone

Leonard Woolf's second and last novel, **The Wise Virgins**, has recently been reprinted by the Hogarth Press for the first time since it was published in 1914. Although it appeared only a year after **The Village in the Jungle**, it is a very different kind of novel. Its hero, Harry Davis, is a young Jew who comes from a social background very similar to that of Woolf himself, and the central relationship of the novel, Harry's love of the beautiful and intelligent Camilla Lawrence, is based on Woolf's courtship of Virginia Stephen. In the novel, however, the relationship comes to nothing when Harry is trapped into a marriage with an immature suburban girl. There are several other characters in the book who are derived from real people in Woolf's circle.

The Wise Virgins appeared only two months after the outbreak of World War I, and that seems to have killed the novel as far as sales were concerned; Woolf recorded in his autobiography that he made only £20 out of it. Woolf never thought of republishing it, partly at least because his mother objected to the portrait of her in the novel. Although it doesn't compare as a fictional achievement with **The Village in the Jungle** (and it is interesting that Woolf should have done better as a novelist with the peasants of Hambantota than with the inhabitants of Kensington and Putney), **The Wise Virgins** is, as Virginia said in her diary, 'a remarkable book; very bad in parts; first rate in others.' Perhaps there was a novelist lost to contemporary English literature when

Woolf chose to devote himself to nursing his wife's talent and her health.

Which English?

An anonymous writer in the **Daily News** referring obliquely to this column (the **Lanka Guardian** is apparently unmentionable in the columns of the State-controlled Press) speaks of my quotation from Daniel Jones, 'I take the view that people should be allowed to speak as they like,' and comments:

'This is a most extraordinary statement; a man goes to all the trouble of writing and publishing a book which is accepted as the last word in English pronunciation and he then goes on to say, in a manner of speaking, "Take no notice of my book; go ahead and speak any way you fancy." It is incredible, to say the least.'

Which just proves that the writer, like most users of Daniel Jones in Sri Lanka, hasn't understood the purpose for which the book was compiled.

Daniel Jones never intended his dictionary to be 'the last word in English pronunciation'—that is, a Bible laying down how people should speak English, though that is what Sri Lankan elocutionists have consecrated it to be. His purpose wasn't to prescribe 'correct' norms of pronunciation but to record accurately for the purpose of scientific study the pronunciation of 'Southern English people who have been educated at the public schools,' as he makes quite clear in his introduction.

There was a time, of course, when the pronunciation of this class of English speakers was re-

garded as 'superior' to any other, and was the only one normally heard in the House of Commons, the law courts, the universities, the BBC, the officers mess and the upper-class clubs. This wasn't, however, a matter of linguistic correctness but of class superiority. Any good linguist will tell you that no one dialect can be regarded as being more 'correct' than any other. This is how a distinguished literary scholar who was born into a working-class family saw the imposition of an upper-class speech as a linguistic standard on other speakers of English:

'In its name, thousands of people have been capable of the vulgar insolence of telling other Englishmen that they do not know how to speak their own language. And as education was extended, under mainly middle-class direction, this attitude spread from being simply a class distinction to a point where it was possible to identify the making of these sounds with being educated, and thousands of teachers and learners from poor homes became ashamed of the speech of their fathers.' (Raymond Williams: **The Long Revolution**.)

But especially after the post-war social changes in Britain, this situation has ceased to exist, and once despised class and regional accents can now be heard in all those institutions where Southern public school English used to be the only acceptable norm. And with the innumerable varieties of spoken English in the contemporary world—from American, Canadian and Australian to West Indian—it is time that Sri Lankan teachers of speech stopped imposing on their pupils the sounds recorded by Daniel Jones for another purpose altogether—with the painful results so often evident in the English-language theatre and the SLBC.

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