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LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 3 No. 11

October 15, 1980

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The WEEKEND says that the estimated expenditure on housing in the 1980-84 Public Investment Program has been cut by nearly Rs. 1000 million — from Rs. 6,398 million to Rs. 5,440 million. The SUNDAY OBSERVER, in another lead story, told us that the pruning process has left the buildings program for 1981, Rs. 140 million less.

The DAILY NEWS which gave its front page to Prime Minister (Housing Minister) Premadasa's UN speech with the dramatic headline "Premier strikes a blow for the world's homeless millions" spotlighted this telling remark:

"The replacement of shanties with decent housing is not a peripheral part of development. It is the very core. It is an investment in mankind".

Surely this was also a direct blow at the philosophy of the IMF and its proteges. It would have received three cheers from economists like Dr. Gamani Corea and organisations like the Marga Institute, proponents of what is called "Another Development". Politically, it is an interesting development too.

AT HOME AND ABROAD

Like the British Prime Minister who said that he was a conservative at home and a liberal abroad many a Third World politician adopts a soul-stirring radical posture at international meetings while practising a different philosophy at home. Educated Sri Lankan readers would therefore have found this passage in the Prime Minister's UN speech a refreshing change.

"I am not talking of a new order which must exist between nations and nations only. We have to institute this order in our own countries.

"Before we ask for restraint from others, we must practice restraint and control ourselves. We cannot have a New Interna-

tional Economic Order abroad and Old Economic Order of Exploitation at home. We cannot ask for the removal of exploitation and inequality among nations, and allow economic oppression and disparities to flourish within our nations.

"The emancipation of mankind from exploitation must take place both nationally and internationally. The structural imbalances and inequalities within nations are linked together. That is as true for the South as it is for the North. There are many glass houses. Let us change these houses. Let us also not throw stones".

NO SMOKE

Is the Pettah burning? The Grindlay's fire sparked the wildest theories in a city where everybody claims to be "in the know". The wildest ranged from the Old Soldier's last will and testament to the curse of Mark. Old wiring in old buildings may be closer to the truth. This sends cold shivers down the spines of businessmen in the Pettah. It could produce a local version of the Towering Inferno.

And what of the fire brigade? Were all the fire fighters all raw recruits, green horns — in more senses than one — from the job bank? Union sources say that all the experienced hands have left the fire brigade or have been sacked after the strike. ●

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TRENDS
+
LETTERS

Tamil Literary Scene

Samudran's attempt (L. G. Sept. 15, 1980) to shore up crumbling images can't go unchallenged, if only for the reason that non-Tamil readers are likely to get a distorted picture of the Tamil literary scene.

His black-and-white scenario bears little relation to reality. The current non-debate is not between Marxists and Formalists, as he would have it, but between a vulgar, reductive Marxism and an undogmatic approach based on what the Founding Fathers of Marxism and their ideological heirs really said.

The current controversy was sparked off by a book co-authored by some young academics belonging to the progressive camp: in this concise history of 20th century Ceylon Tamil literature, the authors dared to prick some of the bubble reputations sedulously fostered by some 'pioneers of the Marxist tradition of Tamil literary criticism'. This irreverent attitude to sacred cows was, of course, heresy: though no excommunications have yet taken place, Papal bulls have been issued to all the faithful and ex cathedra pronouncements more emphatically re-affirmed.

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Since Samudran himself somewhat grudgingly concedes that "it is true that many Tamil revolutionary creative works (sic) suffer from genuine aesthetic deficiencies" (emphasis mine) and that "not all those who claimed to be progressive and revolutionary writers produced works worthy of their claim" one wonders what all the fuss is about. When a Defender of the Faith himself thus sells the pass, one can only suspect that it's the hurt pride of dented egos rather than fundamental principles which is really at issue. That's why I say the current controversy is a non-debate.

Samudran nostalgically harks back to the "stirring sixties". I leave it to the future literary historian to separate myth and legend from the facts. But if after all the "deep oratorical debates and discussions and "the qualitative leap forward", many Tamil revolutionary creative works suffer from

'genuine aesthetic deficiencies' and "the task of evolving a more comprehensive theoretical system is yet to be accomplished", one is forced to ask "What the devil have 'the pioneers of the Marxist tradition of Tamil literary criticism' been doing for the last 20 years or more?" Do they need another two decades to "address their minds to the creation of the appropriate aesthetic standards for progressive art and literature that are relevant to the Sri Lankan context"? So, all the dialectical stir and bustle of the sixties hasn't helped the movement to progress very much beyond square one, it seems.

This kind of lame defence of the indefensible recalls old Kaspar's reply to little Peterkins' pertinent query ("But what good came of it at last?")": "Why that I cannot tell", said he "But 'twas a famous victory."

Instead of labouring under a

delusion and indulging in premature victory celebrations far from the scene of battle, Samudran would do better to rush to the aid of his imperilled mentors in the real battle-field (which is not the pages of the L. G.) — armed with real guns and live ammunition this time.

Jaffna. **A. J. Canagaratna**

IRAN — a reply

The self proclaimed "Committee for solidarity with the Iranian people" seems to have taken on itself the responsibility of "delivering Iran from the Khomeini Leadership and its shackles", which in toto is against the aspiration of those very 35 million Iranian Muslims who have submitted themselves faithfully and absolutely to the leadership and the guidance of the Imam.

The Islamic Road is not at a dead end now", as stipulated

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SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 2 : Just Out

Articles

G. B. Keerawella ; The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the 1971 uprising

N. Shanmugaratnam ; Emerging Agrarian Trends and some Reflections on the Agrarian Reforms in Sri Lanka.

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October 16th and the emerging alliance

As the L. G. predicted from June 1st onwards, the Opposition parties, one by one, have lined up behind the SLFP. The immediate rallying point was the resolution to expel Mrs. B. from parliament on Oct. 16.

Eelamites joined Euro-Trotskyists and 'militant' Trotskyists, Muscovites and Maoists and Dengists in condemning the move as "anti-democratic".

The notable exception to this emerging (*de facto*) Opposition alliance was of course the maverick Mr. Wijeweera who had his say at Hyde Park on Oct. 9, just a day before all political meetings in Colombo were refused police permission for the duration. Since that catastrophic muck-up in April '71, Mr. Wijeweera's sense of timing has shown remarkable improvement. He knows where to be, and when to hit, and is resourceful enough to get his permits too.

The day before the Hyde Park meeting he had his New Town Hall conference of JVP unions. In August he had a rude shock when his brother-in-law, Mr. H. N. Fernando led away the well-organised Teachers' Union from the JVP fold. The New Town Hall conference which was quite well attended was also conspicuous by its heavy security....JVP's own uniformed security men looking suspiciously like deserters from the Imperial Guard at Republic Square.

Will there be demonstrations in Colombo on the fateful day? Will the monks take to the streets? This was the question uppermost in the minds of political observers. Will the SLFP party branches send sizeable contingents to Colombo? And if they do, will the demonstration be dramatic?

A SUN report (Oct. 9) made it obvious that the Defence Ministry was concerned with these very same questions. The govern-

ment was certain to have a 'contingency plan' to avoid a replay of Aug. 8.

As the LG goes to press, the discussion on the tactics (whether these succeed or not) gets more and more interesting.

Mrs. B. who has no taste for strikes, satyagrahas or street guerrilla combat was shrewd enough to associate herself with the July-August protests. By climbing the band wagon of working class protest....itself a direct outcome of the tightening economic situation and the mood of the hard-pressed wage earner — Mrs. B. made a bid for a leadership role. From that point, the next step was obvious — to make her own expulsion issue a slogan of the emerging Opposition and a symbolic banner of the spreading anti-government movement.

In the past few weeks, she has addressed more than a dozen rallies across the country. All of them have been well-organised (even lavishly so) and all have drawn large crowds.

The Kolonnawa meeting was a tremendous success. Plainly, the build-up of party, Opposition and public feeling was targeted for Oct. 16.

The government's offer on President J. R.'s birthday to take back the workers who have now been locked-out appeared a calculated move to disrupt the new alignment of SLFP and the other opposition parties, and the gradual identification of the economic-and-union issue with that of Mrs. B.'s civic rights.

Either this was a feint or, if it was a serious move, there was no back-up, no quick and genuine implementation of the decision, Union leaders like Mr. Batty Weerakoon have publicly stated that the re-instatement procedures are deliberately restrictive.

"The SLFP fellow with his buth-packet and blue (50/-) note has no stomach for street demonstrations....he takes in the city sights and goes home...." says a pro-JVP lawyer somewhat contemptuously.

Making a fine distinction, a veteran Old Left theoretician observed: "These new tactics come from adventurers and adventurists.... the adventurers are already sharing the spoils of the SLFP victory in 1983...while the adventurists from the so-called new Left are testing out their crazy, confrontationist tactics...which will only play into UNP hands".

Interestingly enough at the last All-Island Committee meeting of the SLFP, a Gang of Four did propose the establishment of a new 'action group' which would be entrusted with the task of mapping out a program of direct action to dramatise this issue. But Politburo members (including Mr. Anura Bandaranaike) shot this idea down as an attempt to supercede the elected bodies of the party.

Meanwhile, the government launched its propaganda counter-attack through the press and its sharpshooters, notably columnists like Chanakya who specialise in dredging up the past. With all his professional brilliance, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva played the part of Public Prosecutor in the no-confidence motion on Mrs. B. in 1975. That speech has become a much-valued weapon in the hands of the UNP propagandists, and an official publication containing the LSSP leader's speech has just come off the press.

"They are masters in sowing discord in our party" remarked a founder member of the SLFP now enjoying his retirement but still close to the High Command. He was commenting on two matters. Firstly, the Foreign Ministry press release of Indian newspaper reports on Anura's recent Delhi visit.

Anura was tipped as "hot favourite" for party leadership with Mr. Maitripala Senanayake and Mr. Stanley Tillekeratne as contenders. The other was a poster in blue urging Maitripala to lead the party and the country. Some saw the heavy hand of anti-Sirima party dissidents, while others felt it was some clumsy elephantine footwork.

Will Anura move to his father's seat, a pocket-borough which even survived the 1977 debacle? If so, who will be nominated for Nuwara Eliya? Since the party's representation in the NSA is so weak, the chances of a "man from the area" are slim. A stalwart is likely to take the place. Obviously, Mr. T. B. Ilangaratne, a founder of the party from Kandy who was airlifted to Kolonnawa to ensure that he is in parliament, has the strongest claims.

"No...no—it'll be a family man" said a UNP frontliner, smacking his lips in mischievous expectation.

As for the emerging Opposition alliance, Kalawana is certain to be the first critical test, now that the CPSL has edged nearer the mainstream.

Protest fast

The Organisation for obtaining justice for strikers has called for a nationwide protest on October 15 in support of the discontinued strikers from last July's strike. The protest for today takes the form of a fast when sympathisers will forego their mid-day meal and contribute the proceeds towards relief for the strikers.

The Organisation encourages the observance of the fast in public with the congregation of sympathisers during their lunch hour at places of worship, offices, factories, schools and colleges.

The Organisation was initiated by the Reverend Gnanabhiwansa, Beruwela Sangathissa, Kalamulla Sugathadhira, Lakshman Wickremasinghe, Leo Nanayakkara, Tissa Balasuriya, Paul Caspersz, Yohan Devananda, Carlo Fonseka, S. Nadesan and Reggie Siriwardena.

'Conspiracy' says Wijeweera

On October 9th at his Hyde Park meeting the last allowed by the police until the duration, the JVP leader Mr. Rohana Wijeweera accused SLFP supporters of trying to create trouble in a "save Sirima" campaign. He said that the JVP had picked up widespread reports of attempts to create disturbances. He spoke of sabotage and disruption of utility services. He also referred to a hand-bomb explosion in which a man had been killed. The JVP which was always accused by its opponents of manufacturing hand-bombs may become the next target of violence. He also said that there may be a conspiracy to implicate the JVP. The JVP he said is not afraid to face all these threats and plots since all the efforts of Mrs. B. to exterminate the JVP had failed.

From a working class point of view the issue of Mrs. B. and her civic rights was a trifle when compared to the rights of a hundred thousand workers who have lost their jobs, and their families who were now suffering. The SLFP he said had not organised mass rallies all over the country costing a great deal of money to support the cause of the workers. But now it was exploiting the workers' struggle to save Mrs. B. The opportunists of the Left were supporting this hypocritical posture of martyrdom by Mrs. B. These Left opportunists were political crutches on which the SLFP is hoping to hobble along to power. These Left opportunists were not thinking of the people but of Cabinet posts.

The economic crisis which will get worse will ensure the UNP's downfall. The UNP will be pushed out by the people who now know that the government has failed to honour its election pledges. The critical question was who will replace the UNP. The capitalist

(Continued on page 27)

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STATEMENTS ON EXPULSION MOVE

Communist Party of Sri Lanka

“The Communist Party of Sri Lanka considers the attempts that are being made to deprive Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike of her civic rights and expel her from Parliament as yet another sinister move to fetter the democratic process in the country. It deploras all extraordinary methods adopted by the U. N. P. to disable its political adversaries by various means including resort to special penal legislation outside the existing legal framework.

“Previous documents of our Party show that the C. P. S. L. itself has pointed out that glaring instances of abuse of power did take place under the previous regime, some of which vitally affected the working class. We consider that such matters which are not culpable under the ordinary law of the land are best left for judgement of the masses. Means of public exposure of such instances are possible under the democratic process.

“The magnitude of the crisis of the capitalist system to which the U. N. P. has so blatantly wedded itself with its policies has already motivated the government to take recourse to measures eroding democratic freedoms. By using their absolute majority in Parliament they passed a new Constitution paving the way for authoritarian rule. They adopted draconian legislation of the type of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Essential Services Act etc. The most recent and glaring example of repression was the way in which it dealt with the general strike and deprived tens of thousands of people of their jobs and their means of livelihood.

“It would be putting it mildly to say that the record of U. N. P. rule in the last three years is full of abuse and misuse of power for which they seek to punish others. This, together with corruption which is rampant in the U. N. P.'s hierarchy makes it clear

that this act of the government is aimed not so much at cleansing public life as at systematically destroying its political opponents.

“The U. N. P. government which tried to use the mailed fist in dealing with the working class of this country has shown by this latest act that they will stop at nothing in moving along an anti-democratic path. The C. P. S. L. considers it the duty of all genuinely democratic forces to resist all acts of the U. N. P. government which curb and distort the democratic process in the country.

D. W. Subasinghe
*Acting General Secretary,
Communist Party of Sri Lanka.*

Lanka Sama Samaja Party

“The anti-democratic process of political victimisation set going by the present UNP Government from its very inception reaches one of its peaks with the resolution presented by the Prime Minister to Parliament proposing that Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike be deprived of her civic rights for seven years and also deprived of her seat in this parliament. The resolution carries forward the attack on democracy itself which has characterised this Government's policies and actions.

“The resolution will of course be adopted by this Parliament where the Government's majority is so overwhelming as to render opposition in parliament ineffective. But the people will not be deceived by this. Nor will they be deceived by the Government's attempt to find cover for its own machiavellian aims in the proceedings and conclusions of a Presidential Commission whose very creation was part of the process the Government had conceived to attain its anti-democratic ends. It is impossible for the Government successfully to conceal from the world that its actions have been political and partisan, through, and through and victimising in character and objective.

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"The LSSP does not doubt that the masses in their overwhelming majority condemn this resolution and will support every effort to render it nugatory. The LSSP will support that effort, which will necessarily merge in the steadily widening opposition to the poverty-and-hunger-creating economic policies and the oppressive anti-democratic measures of this Government. As on other fronts, on this front too the Government, will be increasingly resisted by the masses."

Anil Moonesinghe
Acting Secretary, LSSP.

Ceylon Teachers Union

"**S**ince the 1950s two factions of the bourgeoisie, the UNP and the SLFP, have fought each other to govern this country. The attempt to deprive Mrs. Bandaranaike of her civic rights is a continuation of this Inter-capitalist feud. Let us not forget that there were several attempts by the last regime against Mr. J. R. Jayewardene personally — the Colombo South by-election affair, and the passport fiasco. Furthermore there was an attempt to postpone the General Elections in 1977. The UNP has been following an economic policy beneficial to foreign investors. The main motive behind its authoritarian constitution was to safeguard the interests which were served by these economic changes. All the efforts to curb and suppress the Trade Union Movement was part and parcel of this strategy. The hundred thousand workers, who are still locked out by this regime is the best evidence of this.

"The UNP is only continuing those policies which the SLFP tried to introduce in its last years.

"Our Union opposes capital punishment. Similarly we oppose any move by any capitalist government to disenfranchise a citizen. While we stand by this principle we must state that to give undue importance to this tussle between

two bourgeois parties and their leaders can only harm the peoples anti-capitalist struggle against the government.

"All the reformist parties have already capitalised on this situation to rally round Mrs. B for another electoral front in 1983.

"The workers struggle is our great opportunity.

"So far however the working class organisations have failed to mobilise the people by using this situation. The JVP's treacherous actions in the General Strike reveals that it has not understood this. We call upon all organisations to unite for a struggle against both the UNP and the SLFP. We cannot cheat the people again by allowing such a struggle to lead to another coalition led by the SLFP."

H. N. Fernando
Ceylon Teachers Union

Vasudeva's view

"**T**he UNP government which functions as a direct collaborator of international capitalism, is trying desperately to utilize the Commission to project an image of itself as a defender of democracy. A political gang which has directed a death blow at all the rights of the people have no moral right to speak of democracy, much less pass judgement on behalf of democracy. The massive popular discontent that has arisen owing to inflation, unemployment and bankrupt economic policies, cannot be covered up by these actions of the Govt. Indeed popular disgust will increase a thousand fold and spillover.

"If the SLFP takes the path of mass struggle on the questions of removal of civic rights, unemployment and other mass issues, then we are duty bound to join hands with it. We only ask that the DDC Bill should not be dragged in so as to sink the struggle in the morass of racialism."

Vasudeva Nanayakkara
Chairman
United Federation of Labour.

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THE ARMED FORCES IN SRI LANKA'S POLITICS

by Jayantha Somasundaram

It was her strategic importance that led Britain at the height of imperialist competition to seize Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's strategic importance was once again demonstrated in April 1942, when she stopped the westward advance of Japan. Yet when they granted independence in 1948, the British had such faith in the local rulers that they did not create a significant military force to protect imperial interests in south Asia.

The limited investment in arms and the miniscule size of the armed forces gave them no role in the immediate aftermath of independence. The Army, Navy and Air Force were set up in 1949/50 around Ceylonese who had served with the Ceylon Defence Force during the war and were commanded by British officers seconded to Ceylon. In 1962 the RCyAF was still commanded by an RAF officer Air Cdre Barker.

The social background from which they came, their education which was invariably in public schools, their training which was given at Sandhurst, Dartmouth or Cranwell and their elite status, helped to create a conservative officer corp, such as that which most third world countries are heirs to. The British practice of staffing the police and later the Ceylon Defence Force with minorities: Tamils, Christians, Muslims and Malays; meant that while Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism was at its height in the late 50s, the Armed Forces were hardly likely to be in sympathy with it.

The UNP and later the SLFP were not reluctant to use the Police and Armed Forces to combat extra parliamentary opposition. This began in 1953 when troops were used to crush the Hartal. Later Bandaranaike was to use troops to overcome strikes and to work essential civilian services.

In 1958 troops were extensively used in the face of communal riots.

Beyond Parliament

Mrs. Bandaranaike and her Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Felix Dias were more liberal in their use of the military. Not only were they deployed against strikes but they were used with ruthlessness to break up the FP's Satyagraha in 1961.

The minorities, particularly from the relatively privileged Tamil and Christian communities had been increasingly alarmed by the post 1956 reforms. The attempt to take over the denominational schools was seen as the final move to disarm these minorities and strip them of influence. The UNP had also succumbed to the Sinhala Buddhist tide, merely when they adopted Sinhala-only in 1956, but also when under the pragmatic leadership of J. R. Jayewardene they sought to out-Sinhala the SLFP over the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact and the Tamil Language Special Provisions Act of 1958. Dudley Senanayake's election campaign in 1960 when he spoke about SLFP-FP plots to split the country convinced the articulate among the minorities that they must look beyond Parliament to protect their interests.

By January 1962 the Ceylon Volunteer Force was in a permanent state of mobilisation and troops were being used all over to maintain public services. Senior officers in the Armed Forces, particularly the Police and Army, the Navy and Air Force being insignificant, plotted to take state power under cover of their increased activities. When the officers of the Signal Corp went to telecommunication centres to learn how to take

control of them, they aroused no suspicions. Felix Dias' threats against the opposition, particularly the Left, meant that junior police officers calmly accepted detention orders for the opposition leaders. In fact LSSP, MP Neal de Alwis, was arrested by the Galle S. P.

It is significant that all suspects, civilian, and military were Christian. And that the officer responsible for tip-off S.P. Stanley Senanayake, was a Buddhist, and he together with Maj. W. Rajapakse, another Buddhist were principal witnesses for the crown in the subsequent case.

Ceylonised

Given the high rank and influence of the plotters, their alleged connections with the most conservative section of the UNP then led by Colonel Kotelawala, a successful coup would have completely altered the trend of events that had begun in 1956 and had now reached their zenith.

In the aftermath of the coup there was a public outcry for reform in the Armed Forces. Sensitive to the fact that political loyalties seemed to be determined by religious identities, Mrs. Bandaranaike began a set of reforms which were implemented by N. Q. Dias, a Civil Servant who had played a crucial part in mobilising support for the SLFP.

The Armed Forces were Ceylonised. New units were set up which appealed to Sinhala cultural consciousness.

The Sinha Regiment and the Geminu Watch. An academy was set up in Diyatalawa and advanced training imparted in India and Pakistan. Mrs. Bandaranaike's relative Richard Udugama who had headed operations in Jaffna became the first Buddhist Commander of

the Army. There after there was a systematic purge of minorities from the Armed Forces. Soon the Armed Forces began to take on a new complexion.

In 1966 when faced with opposition demonstrations the UNP Government declared a state of emergency and called out troops. By now an influential Sinhala-Buddhist movement had developed within the Army. It was suspicious of the UNP which was in alliance with the FP and had been making promises to the Christians.

The Government claimed that an underground Sinhala-Buddhist movement of lower rankers within the Army were plotting a coup and arrests were made. Pro-SLFP officers including the Army Commander Maj. Gen. Richard Udugama were arrested and tried. But convictions were not obtained.

Unlimited power

In 1971 began the phenomenal expansion of the Army. The April

insurrection gave the military immense power throughout the island. The failure of the police to resist the JVP meant that from then on the police has been politically and militarily dependent on the Army. The poorly armed Police, indisciplined and unpopular with the people, often abandoned police stations and towns. It was the Army and the Air Force that re-established military and political control over the captured areas. The Air Force, augmented by Indian helicopters, Soviet fighters and US transporters flew combat sorties to bomb JVP strongholds. In the NCP, the Sabaragamuwa and the Southern Province, the Army, now equipped with automatic weapons and armoured personnel carriers, fought their way in to JVP held areas. Military coordinating officers took control of entire distri-

cts. The relaxation of normal laws gave the Armed Forces unlimited power in areas occupied by them.

Meanwhile the Army and Police were used throughout the Northern Province to meet the threat of Tamil secession. Here too the Armed Forces and Police acquired an identity of their own, distinct from the civilian government.

The Police and Armed Forces have been powerful enough with both the United Front Government and the UNP Government to have special legislation, like the Criminal Justice Commission Act and the Proscription of Tamil Tigers of Ealam Act passed. Over the last two decades the Armed Forces have become an important pressure group in Sri Lanka.

Yet thirty one years after their founding little attention has been paid to the role, influence and future of the armed forces in Sri Lanka.

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Authoritarian trends

by Gail Omvedt

If Kashmir is a trouble spot, the entire northeast region has appeared to be almost a volcano for the last year. The seven months long agitation for the expulsion of foreign nationals from the state of Assam has been suspended for negotiations with the Indian government, but the problems represented by this and the marxist-led and revolutionary national movements among tribal national minorities are incapable of being permanently solved or repressed by the present state.

The "Assam Movement" is the biggest and only Hinduized state of the region had arisen out of fears of the Assamese speaking people of being swamped by an influx of outsiders, mainly Bengali-speaking poor peasants and middle class. The influx had begun during the uneven development imposed by British colonial rule when masses of land-hungry Bengali Muslim peasants and central Indian tea plantation labourers moved in. Following independence and especially after the Bangladesh war and continuing impoverishment in that country, the Bengali "invasion" has, if anything, worsened, and the Assamese-speakers are very likely now a minority in their own state.

The demand of the current movement has been to stop immigration, remove the names of "foreigners" (that is, all the post-1951 mainly Bengali-speaking immigrants from East Pakistan-Bangladesh) from the electoral rolls and settle them elsewhere. For seven months the movement, supported massively by almost all sections of the Assamese-speaking population, has included massive strikes, disciplined and peaceful demonstrations, and boycotts of movements of oil and essential exports from the state — as well-

as occasional incidents of riots, beatings of non Assamese and economic boycotts of Assamese who refuse to support the movement.

Besides Assam, there are six other states in the region, inhabited mainly by tribal minorities living in the mountainous regions who have never been Hinduized or only partially Hinduized. In one of these, Tripura, which was formerly majority tribal but has now become 70% Bengali as a result of refugee influx, bloody riots broke out in mid-June when desperate tribals under the leadership of an extremist organisation, the Tripura Upjati Juba Samiti (TUJS) massacred Bengalis in a small market town. Resulting riots, counter-massacres and police firing, left an estimated 400 to 4000 dead and tens of thousands in refugee camps.

The Tripura situation also illustrates starkly the dilemma of the CPI (M), India's leading parliamentary communist party, in finding a way to unite revolutionary militancy with the Parliamentary path. In pre-independence years the Communists in Tripura had built their base by leading militant peasant struggles of the tribals. But with the influx of Bengalis the CPI (M) had been elected to the government of the state largely through Bengali votes in 1977 and since then has tried to somehow walk the tightrope of protecting both Bengali and tribal interests. But this proved impossible within India's bourgeois framework, and the tribals, pushed back into the marginal areas of their own territory and stimulated by "anti-outsider" agitation elsewhere erupted. Since then the CPI (M) government, its own cadres falling before the storm of ethnic hatred and participating in the riots on both sides, has been able to

do little but call on the central government for support.

In the border states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur a different kind of revolt has been going on. The Nagas have been carrying on armed struggle for independence from India since 1947, the Nizos for about two decades. The most significant recent development is the supersession of the bourgeois nationalist leadership of Phizo in Nagaland, by a section of Nagas led by T. Mulvah who are Marxist in ideology and have strong links to the Communist Party of Burma, which itself controls a significant and perhaps growing section of Burmese territory. In the partially Hinduized state of Manipur also two new Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organizations have emerged and one, the People's Liberation Army, also has links with the BCP and the Chinese.

The political situation in the area is thus extremely complicated. The Assam movement itself not only has undertones of simple anti-Bengali-ism but has been under the leadership primarily of students operating under a Gandhian and anti-communist ideology, and the largest Communist party in the state, the CPI (M), has been under attack throughout the region as a spokesman of Bengali interests. The TUJS in Tripura also emerged as an anti-communist force among the tribals, and there is some good evidence of foreign missionary involvement through Baptist organizations. Concurrently, the big parliamentary communist parties, the CPI and CP (M), have opposed the Assam movement and have been more vociferous than Indira Gandhi herself in protesting against the "breakup of India" and charging that the whole turmoil is a result of foreign and reactionary conspira-

cies. Thus CPI the (M) joined with its supposed main enemy, the Indira Congress, in Bengal in a "counter-bandh" to protest oppression of Bengalis in Assam.

On the other hand, there is not only a growing communist force on the eastern borders of the region, with tenuous but growing links with the student groups leading the anti-foreign struggle in various northeastern states, but the whole situation raises the issue of the self-determination of minority nationalities in a stark form. It is clear that the main dynamic for the region's movements is not coming from outside interests but from the uneven development of capitalism in India, and that whatever the variations of its leadership, the Assam and related movements have posed the biggest political challenge to the Indian state in the last year. In contrast to the CPI and CPI (M), almost all Naxalite groups, various independent Marxists and most socialists now give qualified support to the Assam movement and full support to the Naga, Mizo and Manipuri struggles.

The Drive towards Authoritarianism

In the face of all this, Mrs. Gandhi's government is moving to consolidate its powers of repression. Recently it has promulgated new measures for preventive detention ("to curb religious riots") and has given the central government the right to declare certain regions as "disturbed areas", which gives police the authority to shoot on sight. Up to now the state governments have had this right; and currently areas defined as "disturbed" include Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, some parts of Andhra where the Naxalites have been organising struggles among agricultural labourers and poor peasants, and some parts of Kashmir.

Indira Gandhi is also moving at the constitutional level. She is asking for two basic changes in the Indian constitution, one to give the Lok Sabha (Parliament) the right to amend it by a two-thirds majority, the other to

make the "Directive principles" superior to the "Fundamental Rights."

Both of these involve moves towards dictatorial powers, and in fact Amendment 42 which embodies them was first passed during the Emergency, later reversed by the Janata government and then restored in 1980 by the newly elected Congress (Indira). But at the same time they are changes that can be said to be "democratic". Assuring parliament the right of amendment is to make the "peoples' representatives" superior to the Supreme Court. Similarly, the Directive Principles are those sections of the Constitution which mandate social justice, the right of work for all, abolishing inequalities of wealth, etc. while the Fundamental Rights include not only the freedoms of speech, assembly, organization but also the right to property. Indira Gandhi is clearly resting her popular case for these changes on arguments that the right to property should no longer be allowed to stand as an obstacle to social justice, and that a group of "wise old men" (ie the Supreme Court Justices) should not be allowed to block the will of the elected representatives of the people.

At present the Supreme Court has struck down the 42nd Amendment once again as being in conflict with the fundamental nature of the Constitution, and Mrs. Gandhi is clearly going to move to supersede the Court in some way. But for the left this issue poses a dilemma: the authoritarian direction is present for all to see, but simply to oppose the amendments without calling into question the entire nature of a bourgeois constitution would mean only taking a stand on the basis of the most formalistic bourgeois principles (the superiority of the court over the legislature; the superiority of individual rights over social welfare).

Meanwhile Sanjay Gandhi's crucial position in the accumulation of power remains unfilled. He had been essential to a process

(Continued on page 32)

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RATMALANA.

INDIAN OCEAN

US Prepares Springboard

In New York, Prime Minister Premadasa has reiterated Sri Lanka's position on the Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposal and her strong opposition to the militarisation of the Indian Ocean. A few days later, the Indian foreign minister, Narasimha Rao, joined other nonaligned delegates in attacking the US project of a Rapid Deployment Force, and its more recent proposal of a joint western interventionist force.

Despite the opposition of the nonaligned countries, and particularly the littoral states, the US is going ahead with its plans by activating those military arrangements it has lately reached with various governments from Egypt to Oman.

As the official "Baghdad Observer" noted "Egypt has become a hotbed for US military conspiracies" in the area. So much so that even patriotic elements in the Egyptian armed forces have

openly resisted Sadat's efforts to give the US a chain of bases in Egypt. On June 4 when the Egyptian air force commander, General Shebana was to meet a US military mission at Cairo West air base to discuss joint exercise (these exercises were in fact held recently) the US F-4's were met with automatic gunfire. As the *ECONOMIST* reported three Egyptian officers were killed, and twelve, including Gen. Shebana, were wounded. The ambush, wrote the same journal, was organised by a group of eight Egyptian officers. Shebana himself had been appointed commander after another anti-Sadat plot. Now, US servicemen are being moved away from the main cities to places like Qena in upper Egypt.

The US, according to Richard Halloran of the *NYK Times*, is now planning the first major overseas exercise of the RPD. In November, 1,400 soldiers will fly

to Egypt "in another step in the gradual build-up of a US military presence in the Middle East and the Gulf region".

Meanwhile the attention of the OAU and the nonaligned countries is being focussed on Somalia. While the OAU committee which recognised the Ogaden as an integral part of Ethiopia, was in session, the US signed an agreement with Somalia for use of its naval and air bases in exchange for 40 million dollars, part of which will be spent on equipment for the Somali army. The OAU called on Somalia to write off its territorial claims. But now with US patronage and help, it can step up the war in the Ogaden.

Commenting on the fact that the Sultan of Oman had 'donated' the Isle of Masira to the US, the *Baghdad Observer* said. The series of military bases in Egypt, Somalia, the Sudan and other Arab territories are now the foundation for the new US military strategy..."

Progressive governments and liberation movements are the main targets of this strategy and the RPD is its instrument.

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MASTERS

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

by Selvi Thiruchandran

I fully agree with Mr. Francis Perera (LG Aug. 15) when he says that the idea of secularism be extended to the state school in their attitude towards teaching of Religion. In my opinion, teaching of Religion in schools and making it a compulsory study doesn't seem to achieve its objective or aim. The objective as should be expected from the decision makers of this scheme is to make better citizens of the Sri Lankans. How far are we going to achieve it? The Religious instruction further divides the class room into religious groups, in addition to the divisions, we already have on linguistic grounds according to the media of instruction. A class room for example can be divided into 5 religious groups, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Catholics and Muslims. Should we go on dividing those young minds? Is so much specialised knowledge on Religion revealed in these class rooms?

A child falling into the age group of 7-15 is often confused at this type of separatism. Seeds of dissension are sown very unconsciously. The idea of a common heritage and the idea of belonging to one nation are being shattered at a very early age.

Further more, Religion for the small one, is a way of life for which the elders and parents set an example. Each community has a set ethnic sociological, pattern of which Religion is the most important component. Customs habits and mannerism of a society invariably has at its bottom a religious sanction which the child picks up with much ease and dedication. Religious instruction here becomes superfluous. Its a case of acquiring it from the atmosphere prevalent at homes.

But the argument that our indigenous culture is being infiltrated by western influences and there-

fore instruction in Religion with an awareness to ones own social values is necessary, doesn't hold water. Half an hour of teaching Religion within the four walls of a class room is not sufficiently forceful, to stop the so called alien influences that one acquires everywhere outside the four walls of a class room. One has to live it and face it. Influences will have its effects good and bad. Society absorbs it willingly and unwillingly. This is a pattern in evolution. A Sociologist can sit and analyse the causes for it and also tell us the adverse effects, But he or anybody else cannot suggest a satisfactory remedy. Religious instruction is certainly not the remedy. It does not solve the problem even half way.

What do you understand by teaching of Religion?

Are the various Religious Philosophies, the dogmas and theories taught in school. No these are beyond the comprehension of a young student. Then what can you teach as Religion. This is a dilemma faced equally by the teachers and the text book writers. The text books are supposed to put these various religious philosophies in to simplified forms. The child is not convinced. Doubt, disbelief, loss of interest and confusion are the results? All religions have a lot of myths and legends which is open to criticisms by a young mind.

I have a few interesting examples to illustrate my point. A book on Hinduism for Grade II has a story of how Lord Siva and his consort Uma Theyy appear in person and give the Saint Gnana-sambandan (at the age of 3) milk. Because he drank this milk he acquired the wisdom. The term used to illustrate this complex idea is "Gnanappal" (Gnana - wisdom,

Pal - milk) the Goddess is supposed to have given him the milk of knowledge. The Knowledge here meaning the knowledge of soul and universe. (Atma and Brahma). The saint to be, because he was fed with the Gnanappal became a saint. When I asked my daughter to relate this story, she very confidentially told me that Goddess Uma Theyy gave the "Baby" yanaippal" (yanai - Elephant, Pal - milk). A child of seven can easily comprehend milk. But not the milk of wisdom. Elephant to her is more realistic and more practical in her mind.

I have been often told by my daughter that "Lord Buddha is no good. He left his child and the mother and ran away. She feels sorry for the child and her mother. The idea of renunciation was not conveyed at all. It didn't appeal to her or rather its beyond her at the age of 7. "Satya SaiBaBa" is even better than Lord Siva. He can perform better magic than Siva, is yet another misunderstood statement of hers.

Are we not making a mockery of religion in attempting to teach it in schools? Will this not produce a generation of misguided and confused youth in whose hands the future of our country lies

Are we preparing our children to engage in bloody battles on grounds of Religion when we are busy trying to prevent them fighting on language issues.

I have come to the conclusion that teaching of Religion has not done anything better now than when we were small, when no religion was taught at all. But contrary to expectations it can have adverse results.

BUDDHISM AND SRI LANKAN POLITICS

(As seen by a non-Buddhist in the context of the current dialogue between Religion and Marxism)

by Paul Caspersz S. J.

The Mahavamsa, or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon, unique for its early origin in the historiography of South Asian lands and written probably earlier than the comparable Chronicles of England and France, was composed by a Buddhist monk called Mahanama in the sixth century after Christ. It is a history—conceived, like parts of the Old Testament, in religious terms—that has profoundly influenced not only all the subsequent interpretation of the centuries that went before it, but also all the future evolution of the country.

The first Chapter, concerning the visits of the Buddha to Ceylon, ends as follows:

Thus the Master of boundless wisdom, looking to the salvation of Lanka in time to come, and knowing in that time the highest good for the hosts of asuras and nagas and so forth in Lanka, visited this island three times,—he, the Compassionate Enlightener of the world; therefore this isle, radiant with the light of truth came to high honour among faithful believers—
Here ends the visit to Kalyani.

Here ends the first Chapter called The visit of the Tathagata, in the Mahavamsa, compiled for the serene joy and emotion of the pious.

The Mahavamsa is history, but history in the manner of the Bible. Hence it is not relevant to discount its value by saying that the visit of the Buddha to Ceylon in fact never took place, for it is history composed, as the conclusion of every chapter pleasingly confesses, "for the serene joy and emotion of the pious". Today's historian holds that the Buddha did not visit Ceylon. Mahanama, using another historical literary form, held that he did.

The Mahavamsa strengthened the tradition it received that Ceylon, or Sri Lanka, the island of light, had to be a Sinhala Buddhist country. The origins of the Sinhala people are placed with the arrival of a band of Indo-Aryan colonizers from North India under the leadership of Vijaya (the princely son of an incestuous union of brother and sister, who were the offspring of a North Indian princess and a lion; Vijaya's father killed the lion and hence was a parricide; Vijaya himself was a violent man who was finally punished by his father by being put forth to sea on the fateful voyage which brought him to Ceylon) in the fifth or sixth century B. C. With an uncanny premonition of the importance for its entire future history of identifying race with religion in Ceylon, Mahanama places the arrival of Vijaya on Ceylonese soil on the very day that the Buddha died and attained nirvanic consummation. It is almost as if the mission of Vijaya is to maintain through the race he founded in Ceylon the unbroken continuity of the presence of the Buddha on this island.

It is largely the thesis of this paper that Buddhism is the key to the past 2300 years of the political history of Ceylon. It is the bliss and the bane, the ecstasy and the despair of this history. And if this paper has also to present, in some form, a guideline for those who hope to influence its future evolution, then the programme it suggests is that every move on the island's political chessboard must be made with an awareness that Buddhism, since it will continue to be, should be made to be not the blight and the bane, but the bliss and the ecstasy, the hope and the salvation, of the multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural people who today call themselves the citizens of Ceylon.

For Ceylon is today just such a plural society. According to the last official Census (1971) the Sinhalese were 72 per cent of the population, the Tamils 20.5 per cent, the Moors and Malays 7.2 per cent, the Burghers and the Eurasians 0.3 per cent. The Buddhists were 67.3 per cent of the population, the Hindus 17.6 per cent, the Christians 7.9 per cent, the Muslims 7.1 per cent. It is to the credit of Buddhism that though ours is only a small island of 35,000 square miles, four major world religions coexist within it, each safeguarding its own authenticity and vitality.

The Sinhalese, heirs to the Mahavamsa, claim for Ceylon a Sinhala—Buddhist identity. It is a claim which is sectarian and non-Asokan and today is most hotly contested by the Tamils. Who first left their footprints on this island, the "Aryan" immigrants from North India (who later became Buddhists en masse), or the "Dravidian" Tamils (who remained Hindus), it is impossible in the present state of evidence to say.

For the racial origins of the modern Ceylonese people lie obscured in the pre-Christian, indeed in the pre-recorded, history of the advent to India of the Negroids, the Austroloids, the Mongoloids, the Dravidians, the Mohenjo-darans and the Harappans, and the Aryans. From India, already probably as mixed as a fruit cocktail, the descendants of these various races found their way to Ceylon when Ceylon was yet joined to India by land. Each immigrant wave brought into the island its own cultural contribution of symbols and artefacts embodying the symbols. The definitions of the symbols—whether of implements used for agriculture and hunting or objects of ornament and art or of patterns

of social organization — were handed down to successive generations, forming cultural traditions which came to be jealously guarded down the centuries.

What cannot be denied is that about the time the Sinhala language-religion-culture identity began to be established, there was a parallel, perhaps consequential, assertion and development of the Tamil language-religion-culture identity in the island. Buddhism was officially introduced into Ceylon by invited emissaries from the Emperor Asoka in India in the third century B. C. The myriad forms of Hinduism ranging from animism and solar worship to intellectual Brahmanism antedated the official introduction of Buddhism. It is probable that the two identities would have merged but for one factor. This was the proximity of Southern India which served to keep distinct from each other the two identities of the Sinhala and the Tamil peoples.

The case for separateness however must not be over-stated. Until well into the Christian era there seems to have been fundamentally harmonious cultural interchange. Even Vijaya is said in the Mahavamsa to have sent for a wife and for his followers' wives to the Pandu King of Madura in Southern (not Northern) India. The introduction of Buddhism in the 3rd century was not by any means an act aimed at and against the followers of the older Hindu religion but was, in all probability, a bid on the part of the centralizing Sinhalese Kings to introduce, and then to patronize, a new religion (already authenticated and patronized in India by no less a person than the great Emperor Asoka himself) which would legitimize and strengthen their own authority in the island. The Kings could forget only at their own risk that other pre-feudal or feudal princes and chiefs were always potential contestants for central power.

In the light of what was said before, and in the context of the current dialogue between Marxism and Religion, this is a point which calls for further clarification. That Buddhism is the key to the entire

political history of the Island has already been put forward as the chief thesis of this paper. Then how can it now be stated that Buddhism itself was the answer to the need of a religious justification for the emerging new socio-economic and socio-political structures of society? The second assertion implies the acceptance of the Marxist principle of historical materialism, which reduced to its most basic formulation, is that the economic system is the structure, or the infra-structure, on which all the other social structures, or superstructures, are constructed. But the first assertion seems to deny what the second asserts. Is then religion, as the Buddhists would probably like to have it, or the economic system, as the Marxists would certainly want to have it, the key to the political history of Ceylon?

I would seek to resolve this superficially daunting problem by maintaining that though the economic is nearly always the basic determinant structure of society, in Ceylon the dominant structure has been Buddhism. Buddhism was introduced to provide ideological justification for the monarchy and the emerging socio-political system. Henceforward, it would be the dominant element, influencing, but never superseding, the determinant economic structural base. It would sometimes in its own organization be influenced by the changes over time in that economic base but would never abdicate its role of dominance.

The political history of Ceylon from the introduction of Buddhism to the end of the 10th century A. D. centres round the kingship which had its seat in Anuradhapura, in what is now the North Central Province of the island. A strong centralized authority exercised by the king and sanctioned by Buddhism was necessary for the maintenance and development of the complex hydraulic civilization of the period. This does not mean, however, — though it was until very recently the commonly held belief — that the exceedingly clever and intricate network of inter-connected artificial tanks and reservoirs of monsoonal rain water was begun by the Indo-Aryans.

Today there is increasing evidence that the beginnings of the tank civilization antedated the arrival of the Aryans. That it was continued and intensely developed by the Sinhala kings who promoted intense links between the tank and the temple is only another testimony to the continuity and creative fusion of pluri-cultural traditions in the country.

Next: Sinhala — Buddhist Identity

The Enigma ...

(Continued from page 19)

descredit him. 17. Diary 17/4/1919. 18. IGP's Report of 28 May — 3 June 1915. 19. Diary 4/4/1918. 20. Diary 13/1/1920 21. Diary 1/3/1920 22. in Guruge ed. 23. Diary 18/1/1918. 24. cited in Gananath Obeyesekere, Personal Identity and Cultural Crisis. The Case of Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka. In The Biographical Process, ed, Reynolds and Capp. 1976. 25. Letter from W. R. Castle of the Department of State, Washington, to H. Charlton of the British embassy 3/12/1925. 26. Letter to Governor Anderson 7/9/1917, from Calcutta. 27. Letter to the Governor 24/11/1917, from Calcutta 28. Letter to the Governor 21/10/1917 29. *ibid* 30. Letter to the Governor 1/1/1917 31. Letter to the Governor. 3/1/1918 32. Letter to the Governor 30/10/1916 33. Letter of 16/4/1915 34. Letter of 18/9/1917 35. *ibid* 36. Diary 19/6/1920 "maiden" refers to the Calcutta esplanade. 37. Letter to Mrs. Foster 2/12/1930, atour's italics. 38. Obeyesekere, *op. cit.* 39. Diary 1/4/1920 40. *ibid* 23/6/1920 41. Obeyesekere, *op. cit.*, Carlo Fonseka LG 15/8/1980 42. of Marco Pallis. Do Clothes Make the Man? The significance of Human Attire (in The Way and the Mountain, London 1960.)

43. Bandaranaike equated politics with opportunism and compromise. Addressing the University Union Society in Colombo, during the War, on Local Government he dismissed a question on the ethical aspect of local politics with his sinister grin: "Another time when I come to speak on morals ..." Morality and politics were separate. Hence his failure. 44. of the extensive discussion of the interpretation of Buddhist texts designed to create an inner-worldly asceticism, in the Tokugawa period (in Ralph Pieris. Studies in the Sociology of Development. Rotterdam University Press, 1969: pp 157-16 45. per contra M. W. Roberts. Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Sri Lanka. Colombo p 55, and Obeyesekere, *op. cit.* that in 1906 Anagarika was "the undisputed Buddhist leader." This is arguable. He had to contend with rival factions, including the karava group. 46. Letter to the Governor 7/8/1917 47. Ramanathan to the Governor, 1917 in Guruge *op. cit* p. lxl. 48. Trust deed application No. 665 No. 415 of 29/11/1930.

THE ENIGMA OF ANAGARI

by Prof. Ralph Pieris

This note is an attempt to clarify some issues raised in the debate on whether Anagarika Dharmapala was a Marxist or racist (L. G. 15 August), making use of some of his less known writings. My argument is that no purpose is served by categorizing Anagarika in terms of unanalysed general categories such as "race". His writings bristle with contradictions. While there is no doubt that much of his life was spent in espousing the cause of the Sinhala Buddhists, he was disillusioned by his own people, and had scant respect for the clergy and the Theosophists. Writing to the Governor from Calcutta in 1917 he says: "I know the treacherous nature of the Sinhalese. Rest assured Your Excellency, never again will I criticize the 'foreign whites'. Against 'the unpleasant friends I had were all Buddhists'. In 1920 he was reflecting on the bankruptcy of the Buddha Sangha: "The Bhikkus of Ceylon are of no use to the world. They eat and sleep"², while the Theosophists, with whom he had been closely associated as a youth, he described as "perfect fools".³

His attitude to the British was completely contradictory. Having inherited three lakhs from his father, he used the money for charitable purposes and for a number of scholarships "in your Excellency's name, with your permission".⁴ While bitterly complaining of persecution by the British, he had a sneaking admiration for the foreign whites. This basic contradiction remained throughout his life. After all, his "onlie begetter", as he himself repeatedly said, was Mrs. Foster of Honolulu and

his enigmatic relations with her deserve some attention.

They appeared to have first met on 17 July 1893 on board the SS Oceanic, anchored in Honolulu harbour. It is possible that she read of his speeches in the Parliament of Religions the previous month. She was obviously impressed by his personality although she was vague about his beliefs, as he was by her charity. In fact he idealized the association in Buddhistic terms. In a letter to Mrs. Foster of 1930, addressing her as "Dear Sister", he refers to an earlier donation to erect a Mausoleum "to deposit the ashes after our bodies are cremated at the hallowed site called Isipathana Benares":

Dear Sister, I do not wish to trouble you but the finishing structures of the beautiful Vihara must be given. Your name will live for at least a thousand years because of the great sanctity of the hallowed spot.⁵

Again :

Our previous karma have brought us (Mrs. Foster, Anagarika, and his mother born on 21/9/1844, 17/9/1864, and 4/8/1847 respectively) together, and all the good I have done since October 17th. 1893 belongs to you.

The letter is signed "your affectionate brother".⁶

According to the **Star Bulletin** of Honolulu, Mrs. Foster disposed US \$1.4 million to charities, and left an estate of over \$3 million.⁷ An obituary notice mentions that she was widely known as a philanthropist, her interests extending "as far as India where she is said to have helped a noted **Hindu cultist** who established a religious institution there".⁸ The "Hindu cultist" had already founded the Mahabodhi Society in Calcutta. In her will Mrs. Foster left \$50,000 to the Reverend Anagarika Dharmapala for schools and hospitals in India. "The schools and hospitals opened by the Rev. Dharmapala in Calcutta and on the island of Ceylon are known as the Mrs. T. R. Foster schools and hospital."

The British persecuted him because they mistakenly supposed him to be a communist. He was in fact innocent of Marxism, and the only evidence of radicalism in his thinking is his comment that Bertrand Russell's **Principles of Social Reconstruction** "is Buddhism." The garbled police report which states that he was suspected to have been in touch with "a notorious Indian Bolshevik" M. N. Roy, is totally false. But he did write to the Governor of inequitable distribution of wealth. "There is excessive wealth and appalling poverty in the island. The few have wealth and the majority are sunk in poverty, immorality and ignorance". He did not however seek to change the economic order, and thought of founding a Buddhist mission for the Indian coolies, "for without the coolie the rubber and tea estates can't be worked."¹⁰ These are not the musings of a racist. An entry in his diary reveals that he was no Marxist either, and reflects rather his **bourgeois** notions: "Christianity was intended for the low. Paul mixed himself with artisans wherever he went".¹¹ This is another contradiction in his thinking. For he sent youths as far as Japan for training in textile weaving, and founded a number of industrial schools for the production of artisans! He justified the caste system.¹² He writes of a "spy" in Calcutta, one Bodhipala, "a Sinhalese Catholic of the fisher caste"¹³

It is likely that his animus against the Sinhalese was directed against the activities of the karava Christians, who launched a campaign against him bringing to the attention of the Governor allegedly seditious articles in his journal **Sinhala Bauddhaya**, especially in the issue of 30 May 1914. It was sent by the Managing Editor of

Formerly Professor of Sociology, University of Ceylon, Dr. Pieris has served as a consultant to various U.N. agencies. At present he is Consultant, Marga Institute.

KA DHARMAPALA

Lakmina, a karava named Fernando through the Freudenbergs. A major dispute was on the translation of *para sudda*, which the government translator correctly rendered as "foreign white man", while others had different interpretations (white pariah, dirty Englishman, white devils). The Freudenberg translation submitted to the Governor was:

The white pariah is a shameless sinner. It is a characteristic of the European to give his wife to others to for purposes of cohabitation. Dancing by holding the waist and rubbing bodies together is the cause of women losing their virginity. The white pariahs cohabit adopting the same fashions and styles as dogs and pigs. The white pariah does not mind his wife cohabiting with other people and what happens after he has finished his job... Roman Catholic nuns are excellent matchmakers. These nuns are not virgins. The evil deeds perpetuated in the European convents are terrible.

Despite the opinion of the Attorney General that it would not be judicious to prosecute Anagarika for articles which were "the language of religious fanaticism rather than sedition", he was convicted, and the conviction upheld in appeal by Walter Pereira, Puisne Judge, who however agreed that the official translator's version of *para sudda* as "foreign white man", was correct.

Anagarika had few friends, but many enemies, who were responsible for his martyrdom and exile in Calcutta. Attempts were even made to deprive him of the Foster legacy by the executor of the Foster estate, who wrote to the Governor's Secretary:

A friend of mine in England with whom I had more than once discussed the situation, ascertained from a gentleman named Alexander who had been in the Civil Service in Ceylon that in his opinion the Anagarika

Dharmapala was not all that Mrs. Foster thought he was, and he believed that Dharmapala was appropriating for his own use a considerable portion of the money which he received from Mrs. Foster and which was supposed to be utilized for the benefit of the institutions with which he was alleged to be connected.¹⁴

Such allegations of misappropriation, and the charge that Anagarika was "a thoroughly unreliable fellow", were groundless and based on mere hearsay. Rival bodies envied the funds received by Anagarika, and at the end of 1930, C. K. Ratwatte and Sarah C. Soyza, representing the Sadachana Bauddha Kulagama appealed to Mrs. Foster for funds for a Buddhist Girls' College. But she was already dead.

Anagarika was closely watched when he was abroad, and even during his last years of exile in Calcutta. Accounts of his "grossly immoral" conduct by the police were grossly exaggerated. "He is suspected, not without reason, of making use of boys for the purpose of carnal intercourse against the order of nature".¹⁵ The introspective Anagarika did not hide his homosexual proclivities, as his modern epigones have.¹⁶ These tendencies probably had their origin in his early association with certain Theosophists. He recounts a "scandal" which occurred in 1889 when he and the Theosophist C. W. Leadbeater were living together at 161 Maliban Street, Colombo. "He kidnapped Jinarajadasa and had the boy concealed. Jinarajadasa's father came rushing upstairs with a loaded revolver to shoot Leadbeater. I reasoned and calmed him. I saved C. W. L's life".¹⁷ Anagarika's introspective diaries came into police hands, and led them to investigate his "unnatural practices". They found that Leadbeater "got into trouble in Madras", and that Buddhist Priests visited him, but little else.¹⁸ Anagarika himself confesses that: "Since 1908 my life has been a

mixed one. I began to live with Naranath since January 1907. Since then it has been impure."¹⁹

There were a few Buddhist families in Bengal, chief among them being the Baruas and the Mookerjees. Naranath, alias Naresh Kumar was apparently an intelligent youth, who later became Mayor of Calcutta. It is clear that Anagarika was enamoured of him, and was sorely disappointed when the boy did not visit him. There are many entries in his diaries about visits of "dear Naresh". Again, "Naresh did not come to see me. Such is life".²⁰ When Naresh married it was a major psychological crisis for Anagarika.

The prolonged persecution of Anagarika by the British is remarkable, being on the most slender evidence that he was involved in the 1915 riots, and had associations with foreign revolutionaries. On the one hand he roundly condemned British rule.

The British in Ceylon for over a hundred years did nothing to the people except to exploit them. (They) introduced opium, gave intoxicating drinks, destroyed the morality of the people, opened roads and railways for the benefit of the British planters, alienated the land from the people, destroyed their industries and agriculture, made slaves of the people and today they are starving. A few Sinhalese made money by trading in liquor.²¹

He maintained that no nation can be great unless it was independent, and cited examples of small countries which were sovereign. "As slaves no economic or social progress is possible". Self reliance and import-substitution were essential.²² While advocating political independence, he never suggested violent or non-violent methods of achieving home rule, except to state that military discipline was necessary for the progress of a nation, that indolence comes when there is no military discipline. "The nation that lacks

military discipline is dead."²³ As to how a militia, could be organized he was silent, but in a vitriolic attack on the British he suggested a mode of symbolic resistance:

You should assault the lawless British wherever you see him. in front of every house make a scarecrow of the white man with banana trunks, deck the scarecrow with a pair of trousers, and beat it in front of your children. Then when your children grow up they will assault the alien British.²⁴

His many letters to the Governor reveal his mental and physical anguish when exiled in Calcutta, for alleged seditious activity. He was even watched when he was abroad. The British Embassy in Washington was contacted and there is a report from W. R. Castle of the Department of State that Anagarika "has his luncheons and teas at Mr. Kira's restaurant, where he holds forth to an admiring audience."²⁵ Anagarika pointed to the power of agitation, citing the case of Mrs. Besant who though interned with a flourish of bureaucratic trumpets, was released, "such is the power of agitation." He did not seek notoriety, and observed absolute silence, although for a few hundred rupees he could have moved the Indian press to set up an agitation on his behalf.

It is a commonplace saying that the British sense is blunt, and the only way to provoke it is by continuous agitation and that is the method the British themselves adopt in England.

But he trusted the power of **Truth** and the Governor's good sense.²⁶

He claimed that the punishment meted out to him for articles written before the 1915 riots was unjustified

Is the British nature so hardened as not to feel the suffering of others who are not British. What harm have I done that I have been so cruelly treated?²⁷

For several months in the year 1915 I was so closely watched that I shut myself up in a room

and never went out even to the verandah.²⁸

Two years and four months close confinement shattered his constitution and he was practically an invalid.²⁹

In 1917 he wrote to the Governor pointing to the absurdity of their assessment of his influence:

Rest assured, gracious Sir, that I am incapable of doing any injury to the mighty British Empire over which the sun never sets, whose existence depends on the will of nearly 400 millions of people.³⁰

In the following year he asked why he was still without freedom, while all others implicated in the riots had been released. "Is there no freedom for me?... Do you still believe that I could create a revolution?"³¹

On Anagarika's part, there is a curious schizophrenic-like ambivalence towards the British. While attacking the colonial rulers in articles in his Sinhala paper, and advocating home rule, in letters to the Governor he claimed complete loyalty. It was not hypocrisy, for he well knew that his enemies would convey any seditious sentiments to the authorities. The Sinhala Buddhists were "loyal to the core." "We never even in a dream wish that the British should leave the island, but we wish that the British should protect the historic Sinhalese race."³² The point of departure was that "the Buddhist civilization is unegoistic, the European civilization is individualistic."³³ He appealed, "Excellency, give me the opportunity, and I shall show my intense loyalty to the good King George V."³⁴ On hearing of the illness of His Excellency, he even planned a **diga puja** at a Calcutta shrine.³⁵

I had a nap in the afternoon and I dreamt that I was taking tiffin with the late King Edward and he complained that the pavillion was not properly built. I told him that when his son visits India, a Pavillion will be erected on the maidan.³⁶

It is not the purpose of this note to reconcile the contradictions confronting Anagarika: his anti-colonialism and his admiration of

"the foreign whites", his asceticism and his carnal desires. In 1930, the year of his higher ordination, and just three years before his death he claimed that Buddha preached that "eternal happiness can be secured here in perfect consciousness, by leading the holy perfect life."³⁷ By here he obviously meant "in this life." It has been suggested that Anagarika was a modern analogue of the early Calvinist type of reformer, motivated by a this-worldly asceticism.³⁸ He eschewed politics and did not even join the Ceylon National Congress. But latterly he was disillusioned. "Buddhism has no friends today. All are after Mammon and pleasure"³⁹, including the "bioscope people".⁴⁰ S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike is alleged to have inherited Anagarika's mantle.⁴¹ This is arguable, literally and otherwise. In a sense Anagarika was an individualist. He scorned the Buddhist laity and clergy, and adopted a unique togalike dress to distinguish himself from the monk, as did Targore and Ananda Coomaraswamy. This is significant, as the dress one chooses is a touchstone of one's personality.⁴² Bandaranaike adopted the dress worn by the rural bourgeoisie, and by those who purported to be their leaders. He was prepared to join the Ceylon National Congress, while heading the Sinhala Maha Sabha, and finally agreed to a pact with the traditional left, as well as to make concessions to the Tamils. His failure in these tactics was proved in the 1958 racial riots and by his own assassination.⁴³ His contradictions beset even the present government. The pursuit of material pleasure by the "bioscope and TV people" can not easily be reconciled with spiritual renunciation. The this-worldly asceticism, which succeeded in Europe through the Protestant Ethic, and in Japan in the Tokugawa period,⁴⁴ has not succeeded in Sri Lanka.

A final comment on his great "influence" in Sri Lanka.⁴⁵ Although he was eulogized after independence, he did not desire to have a mass following, as did the Bandaranaikes. After the riots of 1915 he was persecuted, and prac-

tically the last two decades of his life were spent in exile in India. In 1917 he claimed that unlike Mrs. Besant "I have observed absolute silence...and did not seek notoriety."⁴⁶ Sir P. Ramanathan's assessment is more to the point, at least for the post-1915 period:

I have known him from the days of his youth. He is an ascetic but caustic also, not sparing even his own countrymen and priests. They have refused for the last twenty years to hear him and his influence counts for the nothing in Ceylon.... Mr. Dharmapala's return to Ceylon appears to have being objected to by the Police Department, who do not appear to know that in Ceylon he had been a negligible factor.⁴⁷

Anagarika lacked the support of the armed forces and the bureaucratic machinery which the Bandaranaiques had after independence, to quell racial riots and coups against them, the populist movements they created, but could not contain. A National Planning Council produced a massive **Ten Year Plan** in 1959, but it could not

be implemented, because it did not answer the populist pressures generated in the process of competitive vote-bidding at elections. Anagarika was less ambitious, more realistic. In a Trust Deed of 1930⁴⁸ he sums up his ideas for a nationalist revival:— A press to print in devanagari type, books and pamphlets on physical science and morality; "to educate illiterate people in domestic science, hygiene and home industries"; to revive ancient Buddhist arts and crafts"; to found Buddhist medical colleges; to revive and carry on the ancient ideal of Brahmacharya— a life of self-abnegation and disinterested service for the welfare of the many and the science of Buddhayoga; the celebration annually of the birthdays of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Foster, the settler and his parents, the expenditure not to exceed a thousand rupees a year.

Footnotes:

1. Letter to the governor, 24/11/1917
2. Diary, 13/1/1920
3. ibid 29/6/1920
4. Letter of 20/11/1917 to the Governor, from Calcutta
5. Letter of 2/12/1930 to Mrs. Foster.
6. Letter of 2/12/1930 to Mrs. Foster.
7. 29/12/1930.
8. Mrs.

Foster's father came to Honolulu in 1820, just in advance of the Missionaries, as a carpenter aboard the *Hermes*. He was from London and took to shipbuilding, first building a vessel out of materials from a shipwreck. Her husband was also a shipbuilder, and died at the age of 34. She acquired a considerable fortune and bought a tract of 5050 acres on Windward Oahu (Honolulu Archives, "History from our Files"). To the city authorities she left the Foster Botanical gardens and a legacy of 10,000 (Advertiser, Honolulu 20/12/1930). To local charities she left 25,000 for a maternity home. She died in December 1930 at the age of 86. 9. Diary, 15/9/1920 10. Diary, 16/1/1920 11. Diary, 25/6/1920 12. cf his writings ed. Guruge, entitled *Return to Righteousness*, Colombo 1960, p. 128 and passim. 13. Diary 20/3/1918. 14. Letter from the executor of the Foster estate, from Honolulu, dated 24/3/1931, to the Secretary to H. E. the Governor. 15. Actg. I. G. P. CID to the Colonial Secretary, 16/6,1925.

16. In the volume edited by Guruge a photocopy of the police report expurgates para 5. It reports the "revolting and bestial behaviour" of Dharmapala towards the Indian boy Nares, as narrated in his diary which fell into police hands in 1915. Two boys from Kandy and Matara, aged 11 and 13 accompanied Dharmapala to India (DIG, 10/5/1921). There is no trace of any bestial behaviour in the diaries, and the allegations were obviously fabricated in order to

(Continued on page 15)

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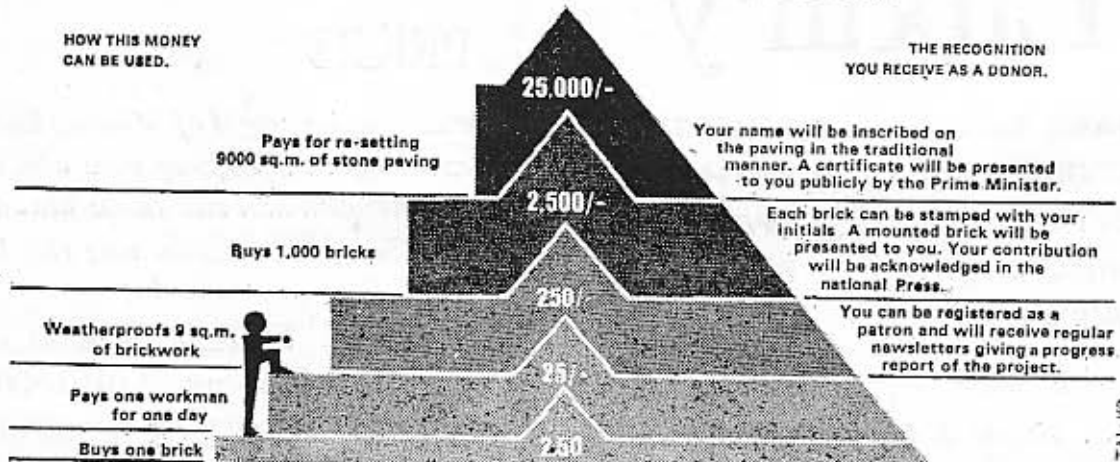
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THE OPPOSITION'S DECLINE

by Dr. W. A. Wiswa Warnapala

When the Speaker, Sir Francis Molamura died in July 1951 Dr. N. M. Perera informed the Prime Minister of 'the desirability of setting up a healthy convention with regard to the appointment of a Speaker. Though the Opposition took the initiative there was no response from the Government. The Speaker of the 1956 Parliament was elected with the approval of the Opposition. H. S. Ismail attended the first meeting of the Opposition and his permission was sought by the Leader of the Opposition to propose his name for the office of the Speaker. Such factors as party rivalry, the lack of homogeneity in the Opposition and the failure to maintain a dialogue between the Government and the Opposition on conventions relating to parliamentary institutions interfered with the recognition of the need to establish this convention

Increase in the volume of parliamentary business during the past three decades demanded an understanding between the Government and the Opposition, and the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition consulted each other on major issues such as the Budget Debate, Throne Speech Debate and Votes of No—Confidence in the Government. The selection of speakers and the allocation of time created problems for the Leader of the Opposition. In the selection of the front-bench speakers there was this problem because an Opposition frontbencher replies to a Government front—bencher. The Leaders of the parties and the former Ministers were given precedence over others in the Opposition. C. Suntharalingam, a former Minister contended that he as an ex—Minister, was entitled to be heard before anybody else in the Opposition except the Leader of the Opposition. Certain members of the Opposition, therefore, disagreed with the decision of

the Leader of the Opposition on matters relating to the arrangement of the business of the House. Conduct of the business of the Opposition suffered owing to the absence of 'official assistance to organise the Opposition' In other words, it referred to the need for staff assistance. Dr. N.M. Perera speaking on this subject, complained that the Opposition had been given a stenographer and a peon for the purpose of attending to both correspondence of the members of the Opposition and the organisation of its parliamentary business.

He wanted a senior officer to be assigned to the Opposition to undertake matters relating to the organisation of its parliamentary business. The Opposition, especially during the initial phase, had to fight a battle in order to get its status established within the arena of the Sri Lankan parliamentary system. The multi-party character of the Opposition largely interfered with its efficient role vis-a-vis the Government.

Namasivayam, while enumerating the weaknesses of the Island's parliamentary system, says 'this weakness has been particularly so in the case of the Opposition groups and has been well illustrated by the fact that, unlike Britain, Ceylon has never had a 'Shadow Cabinet' ready to replace the Government when it has lost its popularity. The multi-party Opposition or the presence of conflicting groups of parties militates against the recognition of the principle of the Shadow Cabinet. With the organisation of the Opposition, a specific group of Opposition leaders emerged to direct and coordinate the activities of the Opposition. Since most of these men were ex—Ministers, their meetings came to be described as 'ex-Cabinet' or 'late Cabinet'. This was the nature of the beginning of the institution in Britain. The development of

the Shadow Cabinet, therefore, was a direct result of the emergence of 'the organised Opposition', which in effect was a by-product of the two-party system. The British experience was that the emergence of 'the organised Opposition' demanded the selection of a potential Cabinet and they, with general agreement, began 'shadowing' specific offices. The purpose is to ensure that there is an alternative team ready to take office which team has had the opportunity of working together in the Opposition. Prevalence of this arrangement eliminates haggling over the distribution of offices. It helps in the appointment of men whose contribution from the Opposition was on subjects closely related to their subsequent ministerial portfolios. The Shadow Cabinet, which includes a body of men who specialise in and take responsibility in Opposition for particular subjects, established some principle of collective unity, and this, in the working of the Cabinet, provides the basis for collective responsibility. Normally the prominent members of the Opposition are included in the Shadow Cabinet. There is some relationship between the final appointment and the organised pattern of 'shadowing' of specific subjects. The existence of a Shadow Cabinet is certain to give considerable trouble to the leaders of parties. The invitation to serve in the Cabinet is regarded as sure inclusion in a future Cabinet. The principle of 'shadowing' also demanded that the particular person speak frequently on the subject and this specialisation virtually guaranteed him of his place in the Cabinet.

All these considerations are applicable in the context of a two-party system, the main feature of which is the preparedness of a party to take office. An Opposition, consisting of a multiplicity of parties with conflicting ideolo-

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gies, cannot give birth to a Shadow Cabinet. It was this character of the party system which prevented the recognition of this institution in Sri Lanka. In addition, the fluidity of the party system does not support the emergence of a team within the ranks of the Opposition. The composition of the Opposition made the recognition of the principle of shadowing impossible and Opposition spokesmen, instead of speaking on specific subjects, concentrated on the entire Cabinet of Ministers. The absence of 'shadowing' by the leading members of the Opposition resulted in the conversion of Question Time into a front - bench exercise in Sri Lanka. The Government, therefore, adopted the attitude that responsibility resided with the individual Minister and this, according to Jennings, was the influence of the Donoughmore tradition. Though the nature of the party system and the fluidity within the ranks of the Opposition discouraged the formation of a Shadow Cabinet, the L.S.S.P. which emerged as the main party of the Opposition in 1956, wanted to experiment with the principle of 'shadowing' specific subjects. The leadership of the L.S.S.P. appointed its 'Shadow Ministers' without consulting the other parties in the Opposition. The parliamentarians of the L.S.S.P. constituted themselves into a 'Shadow Cabinet' and this 'informal' arrangement was short-lived because the Shadow Cabinet Ministers themselves trespassed their areas of responsibility. Edmund Samarakkody was the 'Shadow Minister' who spoke on foreign affairs. He and the others successfully kept to their allotted fields for some time. Robert Gunawardena violated the Principle of 'Shadowing' and this, coupled with such factors as the need to keep to constituency grievances, interfered with the continuance of the arrangement. The role of 'shadowing' was not recognised by the Government and often Ministers of the Government were not in their seats to listen to the particular 'Shadow Minister' from the Opposition. The emergence of party coalitions as 'alternative governments', though

it brought no 'Shadow Cabinets' into existence, created confidence in the minds of the leaders of the constituent parties that they would be members of the Cabinet of Ministers. Pieter Keuneman, in the course of his election campaign in 1970 said that the UF Government needed a strong Cabinet. In other words it meant that the leaders of the parties need to be included in the Cabinet. The coalition of parties, though it wanted to maintain the unity of the individual parties, did not want to commit itself to a 'Shadow Cabinet' because it would have interfered with the distribution of portfolios. Since the leader of the majority party in the coalition is expected to take both party and other factors into consideration, he was not prepared to encourage 'claims' for respective portfolios. The experience of the UF Coalition in relation to the Ministry of Finance was a good example.

The leaders of coalitions, therefore, leave room for the recognition of 'the principle of accommodation', which neither interferes with the number nor with the type of portfolio. The single parties, which in the popular eye represented an alternative government did not indulge in 'shadowing' because they did not have the strength for the purpose. The size of the Cabinet in Sri Lanka increases with every reshuffle of the Cabinet, making it impossible for the Opposition team to play the role of a Shadow Cabinet. The allocation of functions within the Cabinet is not done on the basis of unity of purpose, specialisation and the need for coordination. The heterogeneous nature of a Ministry interferes with 'shadowing', the basis of which is specialisation.

The composition of the present U.N.P. Cabinet, with its three types of Ministers - Cabinet Ministers, non-Cabinet Ministers and District Ministers - makes 'shadowing' an impossible task largely because of such factors as the size of the Cabinet, the nature of the Ministerial hierarchy, irrational division of subjects and the number of Ministries under the charge of a Cabinet Minister.

Such factors militate against the development of the principle of specialisation by members of the Opposition. Above all, the system of proportional representation which gives rise to both political instability and coalitions, is certain to discourage the emergence of a Shadow Cabinet. The authors of the proportional representation scheme, on the other hand, are certain to argue that the parties which operate under such a scheme could obtain sizeable support which could potentially become the alternative government. Proportional representation, unlike the 'first - past - the - post' system, will not allow one party to obtain 'far more than its share of seats' and thereby weaken the Opposition and make it ineffective. In other words, the exaggerations of majorities lead to weak oppositions. Sri Lanka experienced this after July 1977.

The electoral victory of the UNP in July 1977 though it resulted in the establishment of a stable government, failed to create the prerequisites for the effective functioning of the parliamentary system. The UNP was able to win 140 seats in a legislature of 168, and the SLFP, which had 90 seats in the previous Parliament, was able to win only 8 seats. The Marxist parties, which successfully maintained some representation in the national legislature from the very inception of the parliamentary system, lost it altogether. These two factors, in effect, explain the absence of an effective Parliamentary Opposition representative of the national trends in politics. The parliamentary Opposition, came to be formed by the TULF and the SLFP and the main platform of the TULF is the creation of a separate State in the North and Eastern provinces of the Island. It, therefore, lacks the perspective of an alternative government and it is the SLFP, with its national base and experience, which is expected to play the role of an alternative government. A political party representing the interests of a minority, forms the main force of the Opposition for the first time in the history of parliamentary government in Sri Lanka. A.

Amlrthalingam, the Leader of the Opposition, has said that he does not consider himself as an alternative Prime Minister. The Opposition, as demonstrated during the past three years, has been ineffective because its major segment advocates a separate state. This together with the absence of Marxists, who now concentrate on extra parliamentary modes of struggle, has created a vacuum in the arena of parliamentary politics. The present composition of parliament does not provide encouragement to the Opposition to play an effective role and the preponderant majority of the party in power is an obstacle. The unique character of the present Parliament is that it has 105 members who have entered Parliament for the first time. This means that 62.5% of the membership comes within the category of 'freshers' in Parliament. Another significant feature is that 46.5% of the membership of Parliament is under 35 years of age. Such vital changes in the composition of Parliament are certain to affect the role of parliamentary government and this is reflected in the proceedings. Perusal of speeches made during important debates shows that the quality has deteriorated. This is partly due to the ineffective nature of the Opposition.

The constitutional changes introduced in February, 1978 brought about a decline in the role of the Opposition. Article 161 of the Constitution, which prevented defections from one party to the other, was amended in February, 1979 to allow members of the Opposition to cross over to the Government. Article 161 of the Constitution was introduced as a means of deterring defections by members of the party in power, and it, in fact, became an opportunistic method of protecting the majority of the party in power. The abolition of by-elections and the adoption of the method of appointment by the respective political party had an impact on the Opposition. Yet another factor is that the scheme of proportional representation has been weighted in favour of the major political parties. Section 99 (5) specifies

that parties polling less than one-eighth of the total votes polled will not be allotted any seats in Parliament. This high cut off point favours the major political parties and goes counter to the very objective of the scheme because the minor parties are certain to be eliminated from the parliamentary process. The small political parties, which have hitherto played a role in government in association with the major parties, will now be excluded from the process of parliamentary politics.

The Marxist parties, which maintained their representation in the Island's legislature till the debacle of 1977, played a key role in parliamentary politics and as the vocal segment of the Opposition, utilised available parliamentary opportunities as a means of making the official Parliamentary Opposition effective. Dr. N. M. Perera, writing on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the LSSP in December, 1977, said that 'our absence from the centre of political activity has created a vacuum in the arena of politics'. The reference was to the absence of Marxist parties in Parliament. Question Time, the Adjournment Motion, the Debates and Votes of No-Confidence and such conventional parliamentary opportunities were converted into effective weapons of the Opposition. The Adjournment Motion was employed more in the form of another question time. The Marxist parties, according to Dr. N. M. Perera, used Parliament as 'an effective forum for mass propaganda', so evident in their utilisation of parliamentary time. Recognition of the techniques employed at Westminster was largely due to the key role which the Marxist parties played in parliamentary politics. The maturity of the parliamentary system grew with the participation of the Marxists in the system. The emergence of an effective Opposition depends on the nature of the party system. Although the existing political parties believe in the parliamentary form of government, evidence is lacking of their capability of providing the necessary basic requisites for the growth of an effective parliamentary Opposi-

tion. The social and economic cleavages in Sri Lankan society do not encourage the development of a two-party system based on clear cut principles and are certain to give birth to a multi-party system, from which coalitions of parties can emerge to provide stability in the system.

Improvement in the efficiency of the Opposition cannot be confined to the effective utilisation of parliamentary opportunities traditionally recognised as techniques available at Westminster. Members of the Opposition do not get enough information to enable them to participate effectively in the parliamentary process. This question was discussed at the 20th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in Colombo in 1974. The nature of the party composition and the lack of agreement on fundamentals do not encourage the bureaucracy to respond with information and this, in my view, is a factor which interferes with the proper functioning of the Opposition. The national Press can effectively assist the Opposition in its parliamentary role. Sri Lanka's experience in regard to this is unique. The national Press, though it now remains largely state-controlled played a partisan role and it suppressed or distorted news relating to the Opposition. This weakness of the national Press resulted in the emergence of an equally effective party Press which includes both dailies and weeklies. The partisan character of the national Press militates against the emergence of the Opposition as an alternative government. The national Press, in the eyes of critics, does not make an effort to help the Opposition in the improvement of its efficiency and effectiveness. The Opposition should be allowed to make use of all the available parliamentary opportunities to express itself and failure to provide it with the basic requirements is certain to interfere with its 'responsible' role. Any attempt to limit its legitimate parliamentary role is certain to push the Opposition towards confrontation and it is potentially dangerous to the very stability of the parliamentary system.

(Concluded)

CONTROLLED COUNCILS

by G. G. Ponnambalam (Jnr.)

That the Councils have to dance to the tune of the Minister of Local Government is again shown by the fact that the Minister can call for proceedings of the Council or its Committees, call for figures regarding the administration and the accounts, and woe be unto any Council that carries in giving this information (Sections 62 and 63). The Minister can cause an inquiry to be held if he feels that the Council is shirking in its duties (Section 64) and can give a directive to Councils, on receipt of the report, to perform its duties within a specified time (Section 65), and if the Council still does not carry out his Directives, the Minister will direct the District Minister, or some other person of his choice to carry out that duty (Section 66).

No By-law made by the Council has the force of the Law unless confirmed by Parliament, (Section 68) and only the Minister of Local Government has power to make regulations, which in turn have to be approved by Parliament (Section 69). In respect of Bye-Laws, it would seem that the Councils have less effect than Municipal, Urban, Town or Village Councils, because the bye-laws made by the latter have to be approved by the Minister of Local Government whereas the bye-laws made by the Development Councils have to be confirmed by Parliament before they become effective.

The head of the Council is its Chairman, an 'elected member', and the District Minister is under him. But when it comes to the Executive Committee, the all important and implementing body, the head is the District Minister, a direct representative of the Government and an appointee, of the President, and the Chairman is under him (Section 30 (2) and 31). The reasoning here is beyond comprehension. It would

seem that the District Minister is all important in the Executive Committee (Section 30 (1)). The President's concurrence is needed to determine the nature and functions that are to be assigned to each Member of the Committee and its the District Minister who formally assigns these functions (Sections 30 (2) and 34 (e), which shows that the power of the Members of the Committee who are all ultimately elected by the people at the General or District Council Election, depend solely on the pleasure of the Government in that the President and the District Minister have a great say.

This Act therefore, does not detract from the constitutional provision that the executive power of the people shall be exercised by the President. We see that the District Minister is a direct appointee of the President. The District Secretary is also an appointee of the President. The District service is directly under the supervision of the District Secretary. As such, one could expect the President to wield some influence over the officials also. The assertion, therefore, that the Council will be independent and autonomous is a myth. For, we see in the Act many provisions where the President, the Minister of Local Government, the 'appropriate Minister', and to a lesser extent, the Minister of Finance, having direct control over the Councils.

These provisions also do not permit of decentralisation of administration, because it is clear that Councils are completely controlled by Parliament and the Cabinet. Decentralisation means greater opportunities for the people in the various districts to actively participate in the fashioning of a better life themselves and prosperity both economic and social.

Are the Development Councils local bodies? Generally, Local Authorities are entrusted with functions for the protection and promotion of the comforts, convenience and welfare of the people. They are mainly concerned with public utility services and provision of civic amenities. They can also enter into an agreement with any other Local Authority for the joint execution of any work or administration of any public service. The Presidential Commission on Development Councils seems to think that these Councils cannot be viewed as local bodies, as they are only concerned with the promotion of the execution of individual items of work.

But Development Councils are supposed to take the place of Town and Village Councils. Who takes over the functions performed by these smaller Councils? There were over 630 such Councils. These Councils elected many thousands of members. These members were humble rural people who hitherto had played a constructive role in the administration of their own areas. Today, at the most, we will have less than a 160 such 'elected members' over the entire island. Thus, far from making the people partners of the Government in the development process and achieving a clear link between the people and the administrative machinery, these councils would place them at a greater distance from government, administration and development than before. People in the rural areas are going to have a sense of grievance and to be more frustrated today because they will not be able to play even the part they have played till now in the administration of their areas, through the smaller Town and Village Councils, and their opportunities for participating in the administrative structure will be more

limited now by the Development Councils. Infact the small Councils did not have the vast constraints by which the Development Councils are curbed in their activities by this Act. How then can one say that these Councils will extend the concept of participatory democracy? If the Development Councils do not have the powers of even the smaller councils, as has been said by the President, how are the Development Councils an improvement on the smaller councils? The people in the village would be deprived of the opportunity they so far enjoyed through these smaller councils to focus local opinion that affected the well being of the village community and to bring it to bear on the responsible higher authorities, and represent the wishes of the inhabitants on any matter affecting them. They also would not have an opportunity to comment or a right to be consulted on any proposed development of significance.

Village level priorities must be taken into account at a lower level than the district level. It is said that the whole district would hereafter participate in the election some of those who would serve in the Council. Surely this was so when the people in a District elected their Town and Village Council members of that District. So this is nothing new. If the Development Councils are intended to cover whole districts, one cannot understand why the Government has permitted other local bodies like Municipal and Urban Councils within each District to exist side by side, with Development Councils and also allow duties and functions to overlap.

How would these Development Councils affect the Tamil speaking people? Would they result in greater discrimination?

Education is one of the subjects left to the Council. At the most, there will be about four or five Councils covering the Tamil speaking areas. What will happen to the Tamil schools in the other 19 or 20 Districts? There is a likelihood of those schools being closed for political reasons.

Again, because the medium of instruction could be in any one of the national languages, Tamil speaking persons in those other districts will think it worth their while to have their children study in the Sinhala medium in order to obtain jobs more easily, thus further affecting the existence of Tamil schools adversely. This would result in those 19 or 20 Councils readily closing these Tamil schools.

Are the people of each district to be employed in that district only? If this is so, the 60% of Tamil speaking people living outside the North and East are going to be gravely affected by these Councils. They will lose their jobs and will be displaced as well.

One of the more important factors that is conducive to economic development is effective means of communication. Communication is a subject that does not come within the purview of these Councils. How could Councils open up new areas for agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation works, and rural development without first having roads, let alone railways?

Again, electricity is a subject that vitally concerns the people in those areas where there are frequent power failures and where the voltage changes so often, that it leads to other problems. If this subject is left to the Councils, those areas afflicted by the inadequacy of electrical supply will do something to rectify matters.

Water supply is again an important subject that has not been left to the Development Councils. Water supply is a problem in very many rural areas.

What is the language of communication between those different Councils? What is going to be the language of communication between, say, the Jaffna Development Council on the one hand, and the President, the Minister of Local Government, any 'appropriate Minister', and the Minister of Finance, on the other hand? This Act does not answer this

question. In what language would the proceedings of the Councils be if such Councils have members of more than one racial group?

No two or more Councils can join hands in order to develop some scheme which will be of common benefit to them all, and which could lead to greater economy of expenditure. This is explicit in Section 17. Each Council, therefore, will have to be very parochial and work with blinkers. In this respect it would be better to have the present set up, where the Government will be able to undertake some meaningful development of a major project covering a number of districts. To make matters worse, the Councils are further curbed in their activities by the existence of the Municipal and Urban Councils, and the duties and functions assigned to them, as is shown by Section 17.

It is argued that these Councils will enable the Tamil speaking people to safeguard their traditional homelands from further erosion. Nowhere in the Act is there provision regarding colonization. If the TULF is referring to one of the subjects in the First Schedule, namely, land use and land settlement, surely does not this also depend on the 'appropriate Minister'?

Will each Council be given the same amount of money by the Government? If the Councils in the Tamil speaking areas receives step motherly treatment, to whom could they turn to? Whether the TULF will vote with the Government on the budget will perhaps depend largely on this matter.

It must not be forgotten that the Regional Councils Bill, 1957, and the District Councils White Paper, 1968, were both attempts at a political solution, to the ethnic problem, whilst this Development Councils Act puts forward only a scheme for economic development of the various districts. If any one were to say that the Development Councils Act gives more power to the Tamil speaking people or that its effect, achieves the purposes of

the Regional Councils Bill or the District Councils Bill, that would be the height of dishonesty.

As this Act puts forward a scheme that is in conformity with the unitary character of the Republic and for the economic development of the Island as a whole, the TULF, which is irrevocably committed to the establishment of a separate State, can have nothing to do with this Act. More so because, during the last General Election and the Local Bodies Election they cried from roof tops that they were not in the least interested even in the economic development of the Tamil speaking areas before achieving the separate State, and further that any meaningful development of these areas can only be achieved after Tamil Eelam is established. This high faluted stand was taken as an answer to the All Ceylon Tamil Congress. Why then this early and complete capitulation?

The only reason that could be given is that the TULF wants the present parliamentary hegemony perpetuated even in these Councils. It must be remembered that the 'elected members' will have to be less than the number of parliamentarians of that District (Section 2 (1) (c)). The significance of this reasoning assumes some proportion when it is realised that the only two political parties that have supported this legislation are the U. N. P. and the TULF, the only two parties that stand to gain at the Development Councils Elections; Could one say that packing the Councils with 'ex officio members' like the Members of Parliament is democratic? No doubt even these members were elected by the people at some stage. But why did not the framers of this legislation give a chance for a completely new set of people to be elected to these Councils? What is the rationale in making the Members of Parliament members of these Councils?

The argument that the Members of Parliament will have wider interest than the 'elected members' who would necessarily

have only provincial interest does not hold water, because it was not very long ago that these Members of Parliament were also elected by the very same people who will now elect the 'elected members' envisaged by this Act.

What then is the positive aspect of this Act? If nothing else, the Development Councils Act has achieved two things. That is, that the TULF (which is today nothing but the Federal Party) has appreciated and accepted, at long last, at least in principle the stand of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress over the course of the last three decades that emphasis must be placed first on the immediate economic upliftment of the Tamil speaking people and the advancement of their areas. The TULF support for the purposes of this legislation has been a complete and total vindication of our stand. It is a rule that realisation dawns on them rather late! This Act has also brought the U. N. P. and the T. U. L. F. together, emphasised further by TULF withdrawal from the five party front against the Government on the strike issue for a reason that only someone intellectually crooked will claim to be valid. Henceforth there will be no references from the TULF quarters that the All Ceylon Tamil Congress is an agent of the UNP or that it is part and parcel of the UNP. I was always of the view that the TULF was only recognising itself in others. My opinion has been confirmed today even to the point of being accepted by a large majority of their own supporters. Now stand by for the day when, six months before the General Elections, the TULF will say that they have been 'played out by the Government' and break with the UNP in order to face the hustings.

The All Ceylon Tamil Congress is a party that has always been committed to the political and economic emancipation of its people. As such, we as a party, more than anybody else, will be only too quick to grasp any measure that will lead to greater and a better economic position

of the people and their areas. But will the Development Councils, as constituted under this Act, lead to a better economic standing of the Tamil speaking people? The foregoing analysis will show that the Councils will be so stultified by constraints, lacking in initiative, so dependant on certain Ministers in the Cabinet, and watched over menacingly by the President, that they can never do justice to the purposes for which they will be established.

(Speech delivered at the Centre for Society and Religion on the seminar on "DEPENDENT CAPITALISM & DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM" on the 3rd of September 1980)

'Conspiracy' . . .

(Continued from page 4)

SLFP has no solution to the economic crisis. Yet, the Left opportunists are once again trying to deceive the people.

In order to win sympathy from the people and support abroad, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike had said in Delhi that the CIA was responsible for plots against Mrs. Gandhi, Mr. Bhutto and Mrs. B. Referring to reports in the **Lanka Guardian** and other papers, Mr. Wijeweera said that it was the US Ambassador Prof. Wriggins who had pleaded on behalf of Mrs. B.

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PHOENIX

POLONNARUWA

*In the ancient forest
Monkeys watch with wise eyes.
A warm smell of grass and
Such silence under the old trees —
An intimation of endless sleep,
Of time moving unceasingly
Flowing through the centuries
Past into present and eternity.
In this glade
Time is quintessence, is
Carved in the rock's face, drifts
In cloud shadows from an invisible horizon.
A hawk spirals slowly, — wind sifts
Dry leaves, and through the trees
Glimpses of water, a flock of birds
Skimming the sun-glazed surface.
Their reflection darkens the vast smooth whiteness.*

*Here there is no evasion:
That which has been done or not done;
The futility of dreams and passion;
Love given or withheld. Loneliness
And yearning. Awareness of
The final mystery: that there is only now
This one and only time. An intermingling
Of images — transient
Like birds in flight. A confrontation:
The morning's sparkling incandescence
And then the long unlovely night.*

— Anne Ranasinghe

Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

by the self styled committee for solidarity whereas all other roads — Capitalist, Communist, Socialist, Marxist, Baathist and other nefarious roads originating from the haunted house of Zionism that at one time penetrated into Iran have now certainly come to their dead end and have since been demolished beyond identity.

The Iranian people had two broad aims, very, lofty which were, destroying Shah and all that he stood for—Capitalism, Imperialism (of the USA) and Communist Imperialism (of the USSR) etc., on one hand and establishing Islam in its pristine purity totally in all walks of life, from the individual to the state, on the other. Persian chauvinism and Shi'a dominance are but the puerile imaginations of the so-called solidarity committee. True facts are unequivocally enshrined in

the Constitution of the Islamic Republic.

The Arab, Kurds, Turkomans, Azerbaijanis, Buluchis are only safe now under the Islamic Republic.

'Gap between the Khomeini Regime and the Minority Groups', is a pitiable assumption originating from a confused mind.

The solidarity Committee opines that the Iranian woman are oppressed, impoverished and are denied self determination. The way the women expressed their enthusiasm in rallying behind a leader has no parallel in the contemporary history of the world.

The Solidarity Committee, we regret to observe, is ill informed on Islam. Iran is for Islam.

M. D. M. RIZVI

Secretary,
Organisation to Support
the Islamic Revolution in Iran

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Arts and polemics

by K. S. Sivakumaran

One of the fundamental flaws of the local Marxist critics of Tamil literature is their dogmatic insistence that polemics or debates on literature and the arts can easily be reduced to a confrontation between formalists and socialist realists. This idea of antipathy towards formalism is prevalent only in the Sri Lankan Tamil cultural scene. The idea itself has become outdated. "Marxists fight formalists with outdated theoretical weapons! (to exchange SAMUDRAN's words).

As an observer and participant of the indigenous literary movements, I can unhesitatingly say that Samudran (LG-Vol: 3, No: 9) has overtly misrepresented the case of the real students of the arts and literature who may or may not be sympathisers of Marxist ideologies. Samudran accuses that those who claim aesthetic elements added to socialist or social protests in order to avoid blatant propaganda, are all formalists and that the formalists or genuine artists overemphasise form and beauty. This is not true. Further while art and literature can be an instrument of the mass movement to promote an idea it should also give aesthetic satisfaction. Otherwise lovers of art and literature need not go for them: they can pretty well attend a public meeting for Marxist approach to life. After all Marxist approach is not infallible and it is not the only correct view of life. There are other views too, which enable one to see life in complete or different perspectives. Samudran wants "creation of appropriate aesthetic standards for progressive art and literature that are relevant to the Sri Lan-

kan context". But already in Tamilnadu, the Marxist critics there are trying to evolve a more comprehensive theoretical system, and Sri Lankan Tamil Marxist critics can benefit from them.

I agree with Samudran, however that it is not really correct to "marry bourgeois form with proletarian content". But a convenient device would be to call a proletarian art as such and a bourgeois art as such. The confusion arises only when attempts are made to bring ideological art form into the mainstream of universal art and literature and using the Marxist yardsticks to measure all. On the other hand if the position suggested is held, both proletarian art and bourgeois art forms can grow side by side (and I feel that they should — to see the other side of the picture or to have the third view on the subject). At least it gives me, as a student of literature and arts, great pleasure to delve in to different areas of philosophy or thought (Marxism, Existentialism, Freudism etc.) and emerge enriched rather than look at things only from Marxist point of view, because Marxism itself is subject to change and it is either losing its vigour or diverting itself into different areas, thus losing its original form—revisionism, Maoism, new leadership in China, Euro-communism etc. I must admit that I cannot debate on this subject as some committed theoreticians would do. As a piece of information, I can state that there is an attempt by South Indian Marxist literary critics to explain Marxist views on literature and arts in a

more broader and universal way than the local Marxist critics. (However Samudran is right in saying that at present Sri Lanka formalists are incapable of discussing and refuting Marxist positions theoretically).

The local progressive critics can benefit from South Indian critics who are more accommodative to accept literary values, than our local Marxist Tamil critics, who dismiss everything aesthetic as bourgeois aesthetics. This is indeed very regrettable.

My reading of David Craig's edition of "Marxists on Literature" also enlightens me that one cannot reduce the argument to mere assertion of Marxism vs Formalism. Raymond Williams, Arnold Kettle and David Craig for instance are British critics who judge literature not merely from the Marxist point of view, but in totality. To explain my point of view, I wish to quote from David Craig: "Surely if literature affects action or changes someone's life, it is not by handing out a recipe for the applying but rather by disturbing us emotionally, mentally because it finds us so that after a series of such experiences and along with others that work in with it, we feel an urge to do something or at least to ask ourselves a question. There is no one factor that leads to action. It is the whole of your personality that is involved when you act, and literature helps to mould or realign your personality by widening and by sorting your experience." So let's think about the arts and literature as total experience and not as fragmented pieces.

Notes of A Horizontal Man

AS I
LIKE IT

Touchstone

After the first trauma of being wrenched from one's normal existence to a hospital bed, being warded is a condition to which one becomes soon habituated. Illness makes the routine of hospital life a reassuring and comforting cocoon; even the unusual hours of waking, eating and sleeping cease to be strange. One gradually sinks into a state of *oblomovshchina* — that of the hero of a nineteenth century Russian novel, "Oblomov" for whom the horizontal was the normal and preferred position.

Since my last experience of a non-paying ward of the General Hospital eleven years ago, things seem to have improved. This is, of course, a particularly good ward since it is a teaching one; its reasonably clean, the quality of medical skills is high, most of the nurses are efficient as well as kindly, and there are troops of medical students who prod you and listen to your insides through their stethoscopes and ask you the same questions. Each student has a particular patient whose case he or she follows with special attention; my student is a charming Tamil girl with a marvellous pair of eyes. Even the toilets, which I was dreading after my last experience of them, turned out to be not impossible; is this because they are cleaned more often, or have the sanitary habits of the generality of patients improved over a decade? One improvement I would suggest is a hand-rail to help infirm patients to lower themselves to and rise from a squatting position. Its true that if you are really helpless, you are supposed to be dependent on bedpan and urinator, but getting these, when you want them, from an attendant is one of the less happy experiences of hospitalization, since there aren't enough attendants to go round. However the strength of our family system does help partly to make up for this: most patients who are very

ill have a member of their family standing by.

Visiting hours also testify to the fact that our family system is still thriving; no wonder the Health ministry had to go back on its rule of two visitors per patient at a time. However desirable this might have been on medical grounds, the U. N. P. might have lost an election on it. Visiting patients, like weddings, funerals, pilgrimages and seeing people off at airports, is part of the national way of life. Once in this ward there were 22 people who came together to see a single Muslim patient — perhaps a whole minibus load from Beruwela.

Illness, like death, should be a great leveller, but although there is no discrimination generally between patients in the quality of medical treatment, there are points at which class tells, in the hospital as outside. But since the visible and audible marks of class are clothes and language, "unaccommodated man" stripped of these, is, as I discovered, "a bare forked animal". The day I entered hospital, I was too ill to struggle into trousers and saw no reason to, so I went as I was, in my sarong. I was armed with a letter from the doctor who had previously seen me at a channelled clinic and expected to be admitted to his ward.

(I am well aware that this is a privilege enjoyed by the relatively affluent; others go to the O P D clinic and take their chance.) The admitting officer spoke to me in Sinhala, so I answered likewise. I ultimately found myself on the verandah of a different ward from the one where I had expected to go, and it took half a day before my sister, with the help of a friend, got me transferred to the

other ward. Of course; the admitting officer was within his rights in sending me where he chose, but it rarely happens so. My sister, who accompanied me, was sure that it was because I went in a sarong, with my hair overgrown and my beard unkempt after twelve days in bed, so that I was taken to be her cook, who would'nt be choosy.....

As it happened, I was able to test this hypothesis two weeks later. I was sent home for two days, and asked to get myself admitted to the ward to have an X' ray, since the diagnosis was still uncertain. This time I was feeling much better, so I arrived in trousers, with my hair and beard trimmed. As I got off the taxi at the entrance to the O. P. D, an attendant started forward to ask whether I was a patient and proffered a wheel chair. (Nobody had paid any attention to me at the entrance the first time, although I was much more ill then, and I had walked to the admissions office, and from there to the ward.) This time I was wheeled to the admissions officer (a different one), who spoke to me in English, asked me not to get out of the wheel chair when I tried to, and admitted me without any difficulty to my ward where I was duly wheeled by the attendant

In the next bed there is a boy of ten or eleven who has difficulty in breathing. I learn that his problem is that as an aftermath of rheumatic fever, one of the valves in his heart has contracted. (His growth is also apparently stunted by this; he has scabies, too, by the way.) The hospital has done what it could for him, and he now seems much better, but I heard one of the doctors say the only

certain cure is to perform an operation on him and insert an artificial valve. It can be done here, but the valve costs Rs 14,000. One look at him and his parents is enough to tell you that would be a sum beyond their dreams. Nor does our free health service run to such luxuries, although I see from the headline in an Opposition newspaper, which a patient is reading on the bed on the other side of me, that we have sunk 1,150 million rupees in the mud at Kotte.

There are several British medical students working in the ward, Carlo tells me they come here because the classical diseases in their full florid vigour can now be observed only in the Third World. According to him, half the beds in British hospitals are set apart for psychiatric medicine, because of the stresses arising from the breakdown of the family.

However, even these cases, he says, are often trivial — like a girl swallowing six aspirins as a suicidal gesture because she has had a quarrel with her boy friend and has nobody's shoulder to cry on; whereas in Sri Lanka we had 2,500 suicides last year — a higher rate than western countries. He repeats one of his **bons mots**: "The difference between west and east is that there they have sanitation without sanity, and here we have insanity without sanitation".

To all the differences between Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky as novelists, pointed out by Merezhkovsky, Berdyaev & George Steiner, I should like to add one that I have just discovered. If you read Dostoyevsky when you are ill, he makes you feel worse, because you get the impression that not only you, but the whole world is sick, while regarding Tolstoy sustains you when you are ill, because he convinces you that life is endlessly rich and inexhaustible. While I was ill, at home, I re-read "The Brothers Karamazov", and it depressed

me intensely. What I had been reading in the ward is "War And Peace" — the perfect book for hospitals, as for desert islands, not only because it is so long, but because by its marvellous density and fullness of life it compensates you for your exclusion from the world outside.

The amiable (and no doubt intelligent) medical students who talk to me in the ward are, because of our narrowly specialised system of education, ignorant of any thing concerning the humanities. When one of the doctors asks me about the Sinhala cinema, they are out of their depth. Some of them look at my Russian text of "War and Peace" and are curious; one of them asks whether the language is Chinese, not knowing, therefore, even the look of Chinese characters. When I say it is a novel of Tolstoy, the name means nothing to them. I suppose a comparable group of arts students would look equally blank if one said "Mendeleev" to them.

One of my fellow patients, who has spent five years in the Soviet Union, says this would be impossible there, where medical students read creative literature, and humanities students have a grounding in the sciences. (We have, of course, inherited the British separation between "the two cultures".) He also remarks that every doctor should read Chekhov's "Ward No 6". True.

J. comes to see me, and talks of the medical practice of regarding the patient as an "object", which he argues is necessary, since any emotional involvement with the patient would interfere with the detachment that the scientific approach requires. I disagree, not because I am for emotional involvement with the patient, but because I think treating the patient as an "object", though it seems very scientific, detached and neutral, is in fact ideologically loaded with a particular way of looking at the

functions of medicine in society. By and large our approach to national health is to set up a network of hospitals, staff them with trained doctors and nurses, stock them with a variety of drugs (on all of which the bill goes up year by year), and when people fall ill, we isolate them as objects, (often isolating just that part of them that has gone wrong), tinker with them like a machine that has come to a repair-shop and send them back in working order. It is arguable that this method works with patients of my class; but on a national scale, it is obvious that the enormous expenditure on health services yields no commensurate gains in the elimination of disease. For the mass of our patients, disease is the result of malnutrition, bad sanitation, bad housing and lack of industrial health regulation, so that our priorities should really be preventive rather than curative medicine, and such an approach would require treating the patient not just as an "object", but as a human being interacting with his social environment.

Authoritarian . . .

(Continued from page 9)

of reshaping the Congress Party from a factionalised, boss-ridden structure to a tightly disciplined machine, pragmatic, blindly loyal to its leaders and capable of appealing for popular support even over the heads of local power holders. At the time of his death over half of the party members of Parliament and the majority of chief ministers in Congress (I) — ruled states were Sanjay men." Now renewed faction fighting has broken out in the party, especially between the Old Guard and Youth Congress people, and it will not be easy for Mrs. Gandhi to control this. Pressures to bring in Rajiv, "Sanjay's brother, as a replacement, simply show the need for the ruling class in the tumultuous India of today to have a party with clear, ruthless lines of control to supplement Indira Gandhi's populist appeal.

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