

U.S. — CAN CARTER WIN? — Dom Bonafede

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**OCT 16
AND
AFTER**

- The Debate
- UNP's Second Strike
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— S. Sivasegaram

**Sir John —
Father
and
Son**



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DIRECT DIALLING

Commenting on Mrs. Gandhi's famous phone call, which had provoked a sharp query in the NSA, Mrs. B. told the Foreign Press Corps: "A friend, is a friend indeed."

Mrs. G. is indeed a friend. Expressing her deep distress over the expulsion of Mrs. B. the Indian Premier has added that the Bandaranaike family has faced a lot of harassment.

UNPers have reacted to these remarks with irritated incomprehension and anger. Whatever Mrs. G's personal feelings, they expected a change of heart in Delhi after JR's visit and his effusive appeal to India and to Mrs. Gandhi to lead the Third World.

Some Indian observers are equally baffled. Such thinking surfaced at the same press conference when Mrs. B. was asked by an Indian correspondent, about her "tilt" towards Pakistan in the Indo-Pak war and her "pro-Peking" sympathies during the Sino-Indian war. On the latter point, Mrs. B. flanked by two lawyers who vied with each other in giving the press a time-consuming lecture on the law and the constitution, neglected to give the obvious answer. It was Mr. Nehru who accepted the Colombo proposals *in toto*, while Mr. Chou accepted them with reservations.

What with the proposed direct dialling will trans-Palk Strait telephonic traffic increase, ask UNPers, quite upset by Indira's Big Sister act. The UNP's reply, usually channeled through the media, needs watching.

OLD SOLDIERS, NEW MYTHS

Old Soldiers don't fade away. Though he was no Mac Arthur Sir John was buried to the sound of trumpet blasts and the blare of a phenomenal publicity campaign. Nil nisi bonum and all that, but why the makings of a new cult of personality? The old Colonel, a jolly good

fellow and certainly one of the most colourful figures to stride across the political stage, albeit in his jodhpurs, was promoted General and then given a double promotion, courtesy the State-controlled media, to the rank of a national hero.

The man who was called "Bandung Booruwa" by the UNP's own Ambassador in Indonesia, Mr. A. E. Goonesinghe, was presented as one of the founding fathers of nonalignment, the Prime Minister who threatened to "wall-up" bhikkhus and bury them alive, in the manner of our ancient kings, was hailed as a Buddhist champion. What was the point then of this facile myth-making? Was it to impress on a new generation the virtues of the military personality and military discipline?

The answer may be found not in the burial grounds of the Kotelawela estate but in the morgue of Lake House. Sri Lankans whose memories are not that short will recall a Sunday Observer lead story a week before the 1956 General Election. It was Lake House's last gimmick. The whole estate was to be given to orphans. Today it will house the National Defence Academy.

GRASSROOTS, AIRBORNE

Uneven development indeed! The Daily News had its readers chuckling over the ironic contretemps of a BMICH conference of international telecommunication experts who had to co-op with "dead" telephones. And this in the age of satellites and direct dialling to all the continents.

Meanwhile we have been propelled into the helicopter age. A "grassroots" social service organisation which works mainly among rural youth and preaches self-reliance while 75% of its budget is covered by a foreign grant, may soon get itself a Bell helicopter...if the generous foreign patron obliges.

Another Triumvirate

Cicero, consul at Rome many centuries ago, was faced with an armed insurrection which he suppressed rather bloodily. He received more or less enthusiastic support for his actions from three of the major established politicians of the day, the plump old Crassus, the populist Caesar, and the avuncularly prestigious Pompey. Soon afterwards these three organized themselves into a triumvirate to govern Rome. They offered Cicero a place amongst them. When he turned this down, they banished him.

Reading the account, by Migara in the 'Weekend' of the deliberation in Cabinet concerning the removal of Mrs. Bandaranaike's Civic Rights, I was naturally reminded of that

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episode: Migara suggested that the three individuals most anxious for the deprivation were the plump old E. L. Senanayake, the populist Prime Minister, and the avuncularly prestigious President (with regard to Cicero it was said that Pompey succumbed to pressure from Caesar). It was inevitable therefore that I should have recalled too the consequences in ancient history of the like situation.

Crassus went off to Persia in search of more money, and died there. He was in any case a negligible quantity, included in the triumvirate because of past importance rather than as a 'coming' man. The real battle was to be between Pompey and Caesar; and, in time the former, since he was losing out, recalled

Cicero to his aid. But by then it was too late. After a long struggle, in the course of which Cicero did indeed side with Pompey, though half-heartedly and always complaining of the old injustice, which has in any case made him ineffectual, Caesar triumphed.

The rest is well known. Caesar was disposed of by a variety of people, notably Cassius and Brutus, who were intent on restoring the old order. But that, albeit limited, democratic system had required a system of checks and balances — a principal violation of which was the banishment of Cicero. The authoritarianism that first triumvirate had introduced could not be abolished. Mark Anthony and Augustus avenged Caesar and then fought it out

ANNOUNCEMENT

U. K. readers

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between them, the ultimately victorious Augustus established a very long-lasting autocracy.

It is tempting to draw parallels. Ananda Tissa de Alwis would make a suitable Cassius — humiliated as he was in Parliament when his kindly assertion that the Government would attempt to repeal the

(Continued on page 28)



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THE GREAT DEBATE — AND AFTER

by Mervyn de Silva

Outside, it was the battle that never was; traffic-less streets, and a deserted Galle Face green as a seemingly uneventful evening wore on. Helmeted policemen, army jeeps, commandos with automatic weapons, a solitary patrol boat close to the shore and a helicopter hovering above — all highly visible signs of total preparedness — were mocked by an enemy that was never sighted.

As the President was to say two days later in his broadcast from the faraway paddyfields of

Polonnaruwa, not even a stray dog had entered this "war zone".

Inside, it was an unequal combat, with a predictable result. The UNP's solid phalanx, its numbers overflowing in to the Opposition benches, reduced the SLFP's few survivors of the 1977 July debacle to a singularly un-Magnificent Seven, a Light Brigade which found mercilessly ferocious cannon before, beside and behind them. They didn't have a chance.

The age-ing Ananda Dassanaike, the stout soldier, his heart certa-

inly in the right place, fired away with stubborn recklessness, (mostly at the Speaker) like a cornered gunhand who knew his belt is nearly empty. In the end, he was borne rather roughly away by some khaki-clad 'heavies' in a scene the NSA will surely try to avoid in the future.

The SLFP's finest moment of spirited defiance came with Mr. Wijesiri, the burly ex-UNP'er known for his come-what-may pugnacity. Never overawed by either occasion or person, he was

IT WASN'T SAFE

The NSA restaurant, and an invitation for the tea and cakes from a mid-level TULF member.

"If the TULF was a national party like the SLFP, we would have put up a much better show, police or no police "

How come? Is the docile, tame Tamil an obsolete stereotype?

"Our leaders, our MP's each one of us, our party members and supporters have got toughened from 1956 onwards, the process of struggle .. you see we have a cause .. our people are motivated "

10 from each party branch or at least the 5 key office bearers made 110,000 or 55,000. 50 from each electorate also approached the same number in the heady calculations of SLFP supporters.

"If they get 5,000 into Colombo, they'll be lucky" pronounced a PB member of the LSSP, which tactfully dissociated itself from this "operation" of "adventurers

and adventurists". (LG Oct. 15). The "adventurers" were the SLFP's 'Gang of Four', while the "adventurists" were the Trotskyists who talked of creating 'Soviets' at the Ratmalana Workshop during the general strike.

The LG quoted a pro-JVP lawyer: "A bath-packet and a (blue) 50/- note...he will see the city sights and go home". Oct. 16, he said after the non-event, was a brief lesson in popular psychology.

The villager is a cunning fellow. He bides his time, cards close to his chest, and a non-committal or ambiguous shake of his head to every pointed question. But he took Colonel Kotelawela by total surprise and routed him, and in 1970 turned the 'green revolution' blue.

Impelled by a sense of injustice or some deep-felt personal grievance, despair or righteous anger, he can be a killer, like Silindu in Woolf's 'Village'. But he cannot be hustled, mobilised or organised

for direct action. And he hates to leave his village and operate in an alien terrain.

The Right can throw muscle into the streets; witness, the goon-squads of the CMC, the Colombo underworld or the JSS. Only the Left-led organised labour can take them on, as in June and on August 8th.

A psychological assessment of the 'enemy' is also a decisive factor. Sir John talked tough, but bluff and bombast mostly. Dudley simply didn't have the stomach for rough-stuff. With JR, the SLFP always has to ask itself the question which Laurence Olivier kept repeating in "The Marathon Man": "Is it safe?"

That preposterous proclamation that some of these contemplated "offences" was punishable by death, produced a reaction which is delightful revelation of group psychology. A SLFP voter is reported to have asked: "Habeda, sir, parata bassoth ellanawa kiyanne?" (Sir, is it true that if we step on to the road we can be hanged?).

uniquely advantaged in this exchange. Not only could he disassociate himself from the past but he knew enough of UNP doings, past and present, to make at least some people in the House distinctly uncomfortable. For instance, he kept waving a copy of the parliamentary Select Committee report on the GCEC directorate

Crime and punishment

It is good that Ratne is not a NSA member now. Otherwise this lapsed Lin Piaoist would have been heart-broken to see a Chinese patrol boat deployed against any SLFP warriors who were planning to encircle the city from countryside, supported by a sea-borne assault.

Ratne was a member from 70-77, and Hansard knows him as the man who kept Prins Gunasekera's private member's motion on the SUN going for over a year by speaking about the sun, moon and stars. In fact, it became known as Ratne's "Evrything-under-the-Sun" motion.

In one of his less sunnier moods, he lambasted the "fascist UNP" and its "fascist leader."

In the NSA tea-room one day, the fascist leader accosted the revolutionary Ratne and said: "Some day I will use these same emergency powers only to lock you up for 24 hours and you will be forced to listen to your own speeches...that'll be your punishment." Mrs. B., who was at the other corner of the room was told of the 'threat' and burst into laughter.

At Polonnaruwa last week, the President announced that he had ordered Ratne's release just before his arrival. He wondered whether Ratne was in the audience. Did Ratne have to listen to JR's speech?

Last week the whole nation had to listen to Ratne's speeches on SLBC. Ah, Facjism!

and even the most belligerent UNP'er appeared to duck for cover.

Why the SLFP yielded to a UNP-imposed time-table (a five hour debate on Mrs. B in contrast to a free-wheeling two day debate on Nihal Jayawickrema) still puzzles veteran parliamentarians. As a result, Mr. Maitiripala Senanayake had to be satisfied with a skimpy speech and Mr. Anura Bandaranaike had no time at all.

Mrs. Bandaranaike spent far too much time on outlining her public career and enumerating her many services to the country, from the schools' take-over, nationalisation of oil companies, insurance and foreign owned estates to the Sino-Indian mediation, the Sirima-Shastri pact, Kachchativu and the nonaligned movement. All this, doubtless, for the record. But all this had been said before. It is also widely known. It is already history, and no individual can be robbed of his (or her) achievements.

The occasion called for a fighting farewell speech — more of the type Mrs. Bandaranaike has been making on public platforms to large crowds. With the UNP's three year record offering any critic such ample ammunition, Mrs. B could have learnt a forensic trick from Fidel and turned accuser instead of accused. If, as Mrs. B insists, this is all politics the thrust of her speech should have directed public attention to why the UNP chose this course of action at this time and what it means. And what was the SLFP prepared to do to beat back "the threat to democracy". Mrs. B who complains that the media (except the Sun group) do not give her party a fair deal could have been sure of maximum publicity from a press that was duty-bound to report this debate in full. The only cutting edge of a long speech that was too much of a self-assessment, an autobiographical account and "for the record" testament was the question she posed in connection with the offer of a portfolio in July '77. If I were fit to be a Minister in this government how is it that I am now to be expelled from parliament as unfit to be a mere member? she asked. And if

The SUN's 'Sanjay'

A UNP frontbencher drew one's attention to another Indian parallel. For all the socialist rhetoric of the Congress, Indira's emergency was hailed by many of India's top tycoons. As in Mussolini's Italy, the trains ran on time. What is more, there was a fierce crackdown on the trade unions.

One of the victims of the Emergency was Ramnath Goenka's "Indian Express" group. Recently, Mr. Goenka lined up on Mrs. Gandhi's side in a signed personal statement in which he called for 'national unity'.

The SUN, shut down for 2 years, has not only given Mrs. B. fairly generous publicity but frequently argued on her behalf without running the risk of openly offending the UNP. Is this a pure circulation gimmick, what with Upali's 'express' about to get on the rails? "No" observed a UNP frontbencher "the SUN has stood for a grand coalition since the sixties and now it is regularly quoting Anura and making him, more or less, the SLFP spokesman".

I had accepted the portfolio would I have been hauled-up before the commission?

Hammering home the same point more vigorously Mr. Wijesiri raised other questions which the student of Sri Lankan politics, especially the relations between our two major parties, is obliged to consider seriously. In 1972, Mr. Wijesiri said the Leader of the Opposition had publicly pronounced that the UNP had no future and on this assumption he had favoured the grand coalition. A few years later, the young Anura Bandaranaike had been offered the Kalawewa seat on the understanding that the UNP would not contest him.

The process of contention and co-operation between the two

leading competitors for electoral power is of course affected by the balance of power between them at any given moment. In a particular political context or economic situation (the general conditions one might say of "crisis") competitive interests are sometimes superceded by the larger and more fundamental interests of the Political Establishment which perceives threats and challenges confronted by the Establishment as a whole. The 1971 insurrection was certainly such a challenge. Likewise even a government with a five-sixths majority about to embark on a new economic strategy with its inevitable impact on mass living standards (withdrawal of subsidies, inflation etc.) would dearly cherish the support of a bi-partisan consensus.

The exceptional skill and self assurance with which Prime Minister Premadasa skippered his team and controlled the debate according to his own game-plan, was the most noteworthy feature of the UNP's performance. Returning to the press gallery after a fairly long break, the following held my attention almost as soon as the debate got under way:

(1) After three years in office, the Prime Minister is very much in command of the House and never shy or reluctant to impose his authority or crack the whip whenever the occasion arose. "I am speaking for the government, Sir....." "as far as the government is concerned, Sir" "speaking for the government, Sir". Such remarks often prefaced a categorical, and obviously unchallengeable, fiat from the Prime Minister on the official government position. Even senior ministers were promptly (sometimes brusquely) brought into line. Such was the unhappy experience of the Minister of State when he suggested, in response to a provocative question by the Opposition Leader about a possible Supreme Court order in favour of Mrs. Bandaranaike's writ application suggested that the NSA resolution could be rescinded. "That's out of the

The elephant never forgets

Some months before he died, N. M. was ill in bed. By his side was Prof. Carlo Fonseka, and the conversation turned to the topic of the day. If Mrs. B. is summoned by the Commission and found guilty, will the UNP actually move to expel her? Of course, said N. M.

The Professor disagreed. "But, sir, JR is surely the politician who is most conscious of class-interestand Sirima has proved she is a reliable defender of the capitalist system."

"I say Carlo" said the double doctor gently, drawing the Professor away from the LSSP study class, "I don't know about class-consciousness and class-interests, but, I know JR. His son, of all people, was arrested as a suspected insurgent, kept in the police station for two nights and made to eat from a **belek pingana** it...must have had a terrible effect on JR...he has told me this story several times...if it could happen to his son, whose son was safe? ... no, Carlo, JR never forgets"

question.....I tell the House that the question of a repeal will not arise, as far as this government is concerned" or words to that effect was the PM's peremptory interjection. Towards the end of the debate the Prime Minister, his eye on the clock, gave even the Trade Minister a bit of a hurry-up when he had exhausted the time given to him.

(2) Mr. Premadasa has always been recognised as the best debater in Sinhala. He has now acquired a remarkable fluency in English and switches from language to language with confident ease, even when

discussing technical matters like parliamentary procedures. The true test of a debater is his quick-wittedness, revealing itself best in the instant retort. Except for one lapse into a risky remark about Mrs. B and Mr. Nixon, the PM excelled himself. The House roared lustily as one brilliant, if brutal, back-hander sent Mr. Anura Bandaranaike reeling, never to regain his composure. In an emotionally charged situation, it was understandable that Mr. Bandaranaike should show signs of impatience and annoyance, particularly at the way the proceedings were going. Nimal Karunatilake, the SLBC commentator who covers the NSA daily, tells me that the young second MP for Nuwara Eliya has "matured fast". The Opposition certainly is a better school for toughening than the comfortable benches of government. But the emotional strain was evident. So perhaps it was better that he did not participate in the debate.

(3) The inspired final move exposed the fine hand of a masterly parliamentary strategist. The PM had said he would take half an hour for his reply. When his time came he turned back and called on the young MP for Mawatagama, much in the manner of a Chappel or Clive Lloyd putting on a Thomson or Andy Roberts for a final fiery spell.

As if a dam had burst, the pent-up anguish and anger of this backbencher, an authentic victim of the Emergency, exploded in the face of the SLFP. His own experience, retold with passionate conviction, was such a perfect example of the UNP's strongest argument against the abuses of power under the Emergency that even the cleverest lawyer or debater would have been reduced to silence. And that silence was total when he produced the picture of some innocent youth, beaten to death, he said, by the police and buried in some SLFP politician's backgarden.

T. U. L. F.

Yet, the day ultimately belonged to the only non-combatant in this war of words. It belonged to the TULF.

"We are neither SLFP nor UNP" said Mr. Amirthalingam. "Nobody, not even the UNP, was as harassed as the TULF. In fact, we have been victims of both parties.

Sustained by the moral strength of this position, the TULF leader rose to the full height of his august office: a feat that has often eluded him, not because of any personal inadequacy but because of an objective circumstance, itself the result of an electoral quirk. According to the rules

of the parliamentary game, the leader of an essentially regional party, a party representing a national minority, is called upon to play the part of the official, the national, opposition, the President's 'shadow' prime minister.

Refusing to subordinate principle to partisan politics, Mr. Amirthalingam bridged the gap between TULF boss and Opposition leader with admirable rectitude and poise. Whatever the rights and wrongs, legal and moral, of this case, this was not the way to deal with political opponents, he said.

An unusually subdued and serious Mr. Gamini Dissanayake raised the fundamental issue of power and responsibility of

the real practical problem of accountability and institutional checks. The electorate, it is true, is the ultimate arbiter but what happens between elections? Mr. Mr. Nixon's case may be peculiarly American and native to another system. Yet it does raise the same basic issue.

Such was the Opposition leader's poise that he could afford to put on a charitable smile when Mr. Athulathmudali, a seasoned speaker used the old debater's dodge of lightly dismissing Mr. Amirthalingam's ably presented case by attributing his concern for Mrs. B. to old-fashioned chivalry.

CENTRAL WEAKNESS

The lawyer in Mr. Athulathmudali fared better. His speech exposed a central weakness in Mrs. B's general campaign. It lacked a consistent strategy. Of course one speaks with the advantage of hindsight, and it is always easy to be wise after the event. An interesting comment on the Bracegirdle affair in the current issue of the YOUNG SOCIALIST which has recently made a welcome appearance, offers a study in contrast.

The issue was inherently and profoundly political but the fullest use was made of the law and the courts. But the latter exercise was part of the broader strategy and that remained resolutely political.

Mrs. B. and her advisers, both political and legal, seem to have been in different, often contrary, minds. Will it, won't it? Would the UNP actually go in for the 'kill'? Or would the passage of time bring its own satisfying solution? Were the mediators and the messengers of comforting news right? If so, a political attack would be needlessly provocative and self-defeating?

Mr. Athulathmudali examined the moves after the Commission's summons were issued. If the Commissioners were biased and the procedure itself a violation of natural justice, why not boldly denounce this "mock trial" and refuse to participate in its proceedings in any way? (An Indian

Mrs B : On the road

Cheered and mobbed whenever the SLFP motorcade stopped on the road to Kandy, Mrs. B's spirit soared when she saw the huge crowd which had gathered to greet her when she arrived at the Hill capital. There was one unruly incident on route — at Kadugannawa where stones were thrown at the SLFP motorcade, a few persons injured and some vehicles damaged.

"Everybody is equal before the law" — JR. Under this motto, UNP posters announced meetings at which the President and his Ministers will address the public on "the Sirima issue". So the UNP band-waggon is also on the road, drawing large crowds too.

While the enthusiasm of loyal SLFP supporters run high, the party itself is already facing two problems. The first, though tricky and likely to sharpen personal conflicts, is bound to be resolved soon. It concerns a successor to Mrs. B as the Attanagalla MP. If Annura gets the seat, the problem will be more difficult in as much as a party nominee has to be found for Nuwara Eliya. While the party's young

radicals, mainly remnants of the Janavegaya Group, seem to favour Mrs. Chandrika Kumaranatunga, the party's established leadership may tip the scales for Anura.

The second problem is far more serious. What does "public office" mean? Can it be interpreted to include an office-bearer in a recognised party? Official recognition to a political party (recognition brings many advantages, including government funds) is granted by the Elections Commissioner to whom the party constitution and office-bearers list have to be submitted.

The party manifesto may have the restoration of civic rights as a priority item. If the SLFP wins a two-third majority, the constitution of course can be changed. Can a resolution which seeks to put this election pledge into effect be passed by a simple majority? In this case, Mrs. B can be in parliament within a month of the General Election. This could be the beginning of a tense tussle between the President and the leader of the party in power.

correspondent has made some interesting contrasts with Mrs. Gandhi's approach in a similar situation).

LALITH'S QUERIES

Why, asked Trade Minister, request time to study the evidence and the list of witnesses? And was it after such a scrutiny that it was decided to make a statement and withdraw without participating in the proceedings in the manner Nihal J. and FDB did? Why was the writ application made only after the NSA resolution was tabled? In arguing against Mr. Amirthalingam's point of order, the PM and other UNP speakers made much of this point that the timing revealed an intention to stultify parliament.

Oct. 17, when the UNP took the Opposition by surprise and introduced amendments to the election law which enhanced the disabilities imposed on Mrs. B. et al, produced an irony which has gone unnoticed.

The propaganda line in the SLFP press was based on the assumption that an adamant P. M. was taking the initiative on this anti-Sirima move, while the President was, if at all, a reluctant partner in the enterprise. Exploiting this perceived conflict or difference of opinion, the SLFP tried to widen the division, concentrating its fire on the P. M.

What is abundantly clear is that at least in the final stage there was perfect coordination and only a division of labour ... the P. M. commanding troops on the parliamentary front, in a strategy carefully mapped out by the Commander-in-Chief at UNP headquarters, War-Room or whatever.

IRONIC REVERSAL

On Oct. 17 the SLFP's tactic was turned against it. Instead of the SLFP trying to isolate the PM and dividing the UNP leadership, the UNP Prime Minister, full of solicitous concern and praise for the SLFP's No. 2, was trying to split the SLFP.

The best example of British brain-washing, the middle-class Sri Lankan, arguments live as an

SECOND STRIKE

Refusing to fall into the trap which the SLFP propagandists created for themselves by presenting the Prime Minister as "the bad guy" and Presidentt JR as the (relatively) good guy, the L. G. styled the October 16th operation as "J.R's surgical strike". It is unthinkable that a move of such tremendous importance could be initiated and planned by any other person than the President, the Party Leader, the head of the Government and Commander-in-Chief.

Before this fateful week was over the UNP displayed its second-strike capability. Again the swift, surprise blow. The new amendments to the election law indicate that the UNP's aim is the total immobilization of Mrs. B. On October, 16th, it was clear that Mrs. B. would have to hibernate between nomination day and the election itself. But before nomination day she could func-

tion openly and effectively as party leader. She would not be reduced to a mere figurehead or hollow symbol. But after October 17th this question is open-ended. And it is not just a legal question only but very much a matter of day-to-day politics.

Forty eight hours earlier the government parliamentary group had met. A UNP MP, obviously no ordinary back-bencher, judging by his speculative cast of mind, asked Mr. Jayewardena what he would have done if he had been found guilty by a Commission. He said he would resign his post as party leader. Then, somewhat in the manner of the Ayatollah calling on the Americans to apologize for their crimes, the President added that he would also apologise to the people. Mrs. B. however is in no apologetic mood. (See "On the Road").

Irishman, is a parliamentary pundit, perversely legalistic. Every office train, bus, popular canteen or provincial club is crowded with unlicensed jurists who know their Erskine May and Jennings as well as the average schoolboy knows his Wisden and his MCC rules.

Thus, the never-ending public debate on fundamental rights and the Constitution, the laws of evidence, writs, retro-active legislation, offences unknown to the Penal Code or ill-defined, and sub judice.

Mrs G.

But this argument is slowly dying out, and politics takes over. In the public mind, it all boils down to a single question: **Can Mrs. B do a Mrs. G.?**

Quite rightly, Mrs. B says that the voter will decide the issue finally. The UNP has accepted the challenge. Having forced the SLFP into a unilateral ceasefire

in the war that never was, having seen his parliamentary commander crush the enemy in the NSA, the President himself is stepping out to fight the only war that ultimately matters in this system, the battle for 'hearts and minds.'

The Polonnaruwa crowd may be shrugged off as organised show-biz but not the highly successful Nugegoda meeting where JR was bold enough to state the issue bluntly. As the posters said: "JR on the SIRIMA ISSUE". And, according to the PM the UNP will campaign on this same issue at the DDC elections.

In 1972, the correlation of forces (SLFP-LSSP-CP) made the UNP the weaker of the two traditional rivals, the UNP and SLFP. In the face of a threat (the JVP and/or the Old Left) JR was ready to close ranks with the SLFP. 1977 saw a dramatic electoral shift of the balance of forces. With the economic

situation leading to a steady erosion of the UNP's popularity. JR has moved swiftly to re-affirm and perpetuate the UNP's pre-eminence within the two-party Establishment.

With measured calculation and genius, Charles de Gaulle stood 'above' party politics to make himself the symbol of France, but he never ignored the realities of power. He was the leader of a party which bore his name. In the intricate inter-party game of combinations and permutations, in the power-equation so to say, the Gaullist party under his command was a major factor in achieving the sort of 'stability' or equilibrium which he desired.

In the Oct 1st issue, the LG quoted Dr. Colvin R. de Silva on Mrs. B's effort "to make the SLFP the sole political agency of the capitalist forces in Sri Lanka, displacing and destroying the UNP in the process."

The ambitious aspirant to 'sole agency' has now been displaced, if not destroyed. As an experienced politician, JR, is conscious of the 'pendulum effect' in our electoral politics and aware of the unwisdom of any pursuit of an elusive exclusivity.

PRESIDENCY

There's a new complicating factor—a party leader who is also president in a constitution which has yet to be tested under the pressure of political actualities which cannot be measured with any certainty now; a president whose party may have a narrow majority in 1983, or be badly defeated. A rival party in office? A coalition? Obviously, the parliamentary balance is bound to affect the presidential contest six months later.

In anticipation, the options are being enlarged, the room for manoeuvre widened.

High-ranking members of the Buddhist clergy and Christian bishops, trade unions and civil rights organisations, ex-Trotskyists and neo-Trotskyists, Muscovites and Maoists, influential businessmen and western diplomats, Tamil nationalists and Sinhala racialists took up Mrs. B's cause. For many,

it was a simple issue of democratic rights. For the opposition, it was an anti-UNP move with a high propaganda potential. For the Kandyans, Mrs. B. is the politician who broke up the low-country monopoly. For others, she is the authentic Sinhala champion, a Buddhist Boadicea.

BIPARTISAN BUSINESS

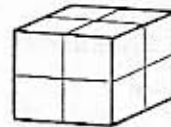
A new stratum of big business, increasingly linked with foreign capital, regard her as the author of Export Promotion, FTZ and Foreign Investment Guarantee Law. They would welcome a bipartisan consensus in support of the new economic strategy. It is sound political insurance. They share with western diplomats a nervous apprehension about a 'decapitated' or enfeebled SLFP that may be driven into alliance with the Left in which the Left cannot be "controlled" as easily as Mrs. B did. Expelled from the NSA, even Mrs. B herself may support extra-parliamentary agitation.

Western envoys who know that Mrs. B, deep-down, is anti-communist, also recall with satisfaction her "co-operation, not confrontation" line at the Colombo non-aligned summit, and her Belgrade-oriented "anti-bloc" position which won plaudits from both Washington and Peking.

The influential FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, in a despatch from Colombo noted that the expulsion could, in the longterm, weaken the 'democratic institutions.'

But western diplomatic efforts were hamstrung. Recent conversations between key western envoys and the UNP High Command, whenever manoeuvred into a dialogue on human rights and Mrs. B, ended usually with the eager envoy deftly thrown on the mat by a master of verbal judo, using the weight and thrust of the diplomat's own arguments to floor him. After a dead-pan disquisition on democracy, dictatorship, emergency powers, rule of law and the rights of the people, the argumentative leverage of the Nixon case and that of the corrupt Congressman made way for the final 'throw' and the coup de grace.

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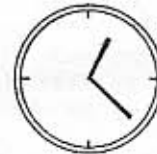
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ADSEL

SIR JOHN AND HIS FATHER

— A study in contrasts

by Mangala

The station master came up to meet me as I got out at Headcorn Railway Station. He dutifully conducted me to his room and promptly informed "Brogues Wood" that their visitor had arrived. The Englishman who took me to "Brogues Wood" kept on describing the beauty of the surrounding English countryside and he was eager to assure me that his master too was almost English.

The owner of "Brogues Wood" was not an English Squire. He was not even British. Still, there was ample reason for the British Establishment to treat him as one of them. He was one of their most trusted friends from Sri Lanka. It was Sir John Kotelawela, whom I was visiting.

Sir John received me with utmost friendliness and inquired after my family. His natural friendliness and jovial nature immediately put one at ease. Fortright man that he was, one could see he did not hold back much, or restrain himself. It was entertaining just to listen to his string of anecdotes; many about "uncivilized niggers". How Zhombe asked for the list of passengers instead of the Menu; How too many Africans fall into the river at Cambridge, refusing to let go the pole stuck in the mud.

It was easy to see though that in an international gathering, quite apart from his political speeches, this banter could have annoyed many a leader from newly independent emerging countries. Not only Pandit Nehru but even western leaders would have sometimes found his expressions embarrassing.

Incipient Stage

In spite of his tough and fearless character, he was in essence the very negation of his father. His father John Kotelawela senior was a radical who had been associated with the Anagarika Dharmapala. At that stage neither a conscious national liberation movement nor

an organised working class movement existed. Both these were at their incipient stage. But John senior represented the most militant expression of these.

He was the leader of the famous Bullock Cart strike of 1906. And this was a lot more than a mere strike. Masses of people took to the streets during the strike forcing the police and military to retreat. This incident was only the first of a kind to which belong the Hartal of fifty three and the nineteen eighty Satyagraha. John senior, was then a forerunner of militant working class politico and hence, of Samasamajism.

His participation in the 1906 strike was not an isolated incident. Even prior to that he was an active member of the Temperance Movement and was a hero of the people; instrumental in awakening them into national awareness. He had a tragic death and many of his relatives still refuse to believe that he actually committed suicide.

In 1908 he was taken into custody on suspicion of murder of his brother-in-law. Apparently his lawyers, who were brought from Britain, were confident that he could be freed. Nevertheless he is alleged to have taken poison the day before the trial. It is also said that there was not a single competent doctor in Colombo that day as they were all attending a party in Kandy. As a consequence he did not get proper medical attention. Nevertheless, a mini-riot broke out when people heard that their hero was dead. Calm was re-established only after his wife, Alice, announced that she accepted the verdict of suicide and that she did not suspect any foul play. Myth or fable this story still has strong currency within the family circle.

Family Dialectic

Clearly, Sir John stood in direct opposition to the movement of which his father was a pioneer.

He may have inherited some of the personal characteristics of his father. But true heirs to the traditions initiated by John senior were the Samasamajists. It was the latter who continued at a higher plane the battle against the British and the struggle of the workers.

Even in a spirit of charity one could not characterise Sir John as a nationalist. He stood for complete integration with Western imperialism and was far more pro-British than any of his colleagues in the National Congress. This paradox was, in a sense, a contrast to the father/son contrast in the Bandaranaike family. However, SWRD was not a total negation of his father's politics either. Perhaps the application of the dialectical rule of negation in the continuity of politics within a family, is not all that simple.

Sir John was not just conservative. He was the acme of out-spoken, haughty conservatism. He relished the role of the low country village Ralahamy who used "Umba - Ban - Bolan" liberally on anybody. It is strange yet telling how J.R. is trying to revive this old Ralahamy image and make it respectable once again. Perhaps this image is vitally necessary for the stability and preservation of the *status quo* that J.R. is aiming at. He is too astute a politician to indulge in image building for purely sentimental reasons.

However, Sir John in the last stages of life, was to profit by this strategy of J.R. He died basking in glory and was given a general's funeral with brass and braid, pomp and pageantry; something we thought belongs to the past.

Though he fought radicalism ferociously, true to his "Kultur" bourgeois background, Sir John sensed where things were moving. At my grandfather's funeral, when he was told that I had become a Samasamajist after entering the University, he looked at me pensively for a while and said, "..... you cannot stop young people turning towards communism. In time to come the whole world will be communist. Anyway, I do not want to live to see that."

Candidates' styles, philosophies offer voters a choice

by Dom Bonafede

As the 1980 Presidential campaign enters its final phase before the November 4 election, American voters are faced with making a choice between three major candidates, differing in personality, style and political philosophy.

The consensus of public opinion surveys and political analysis is that the race between President Carter, the Democratic Party incumbent, and Ronald Reagan, the Republican Party challenger, is closely-matched and that the outcome is dependent on several factors, any one of which could mean victory or defeat. Prominent among these are the prevailing health of the national economy, unforeseen developments abroad, the performance of the two candidates in the crucial period just prior to the election, the persuasive impact of their media advertising and the sharpening distinction between them on major national issues.

Still another potentially decisive element is the independent candidacy of John B. Anderson, the Illinois Congressman. Although Anderson's popular standing has perceptively slipped, he could nonetheless play a significant part in the election, particularly if he siphons votes from Carter in some of the big, closely-contested states which are regarded as a tossup between the President and Reagan.

Essentially, the campaign is being waged less on ideological grounds than on the issue of character and competence. Carter maintains that his Republican opponent, a former two-term Governor of California, does not

possess the experience and presidential qualities necessary to lead the country, while Reagan attacks the administration's record, citing increases in inflation, unemployment and interest rates, the deterioration of U. S. military strength, the drop of the dollar on the world market and the diminished stature of the nation's leadership position in the international community.

To a large degree, Carter's reelection campaign is comparable to that of 1976, when he marched to victory by making an issue of the deficiencies of his opponent and presenting himself as a more viable candidate.

Now, as then, Carter enjoys the advantage of a broad Democratic Party base, which includes Blacks, Hispanics, Jews, Liberals, Catholics, union workers, European ethnic groups and the underprivileged.

In 1976, Carter won the Presidency by running against the Washington political establishment as an "outsider." The question now is whether he can repeat his triumph as an incumbent with a record to defend. Although Carter has received low performance ratings in the polls, his aides are convinced that the voters will see him in a more favourable light when they are reminded they could do worse by switching to a candidate of unknown presidential quality.

Reagan, meanwhile, possesses traditional Republican strength throughout the West and among Northern farmers, suburban dwellers, the higher-educated, those in the upper-income brackets, corporate executives and the majority of White protestants. Although generally perceived as a model Conservative, he has moved towards the political center, occupied by the vast segment of

American voters, many of whom remain undecided and thus hold the key to the election.

Reagan is making a determined appeal to blue-collar workers, ethnic minorities and rank-and-file union workers and is likely to cut into Carter's support along those blocs. Expectedly, Reagan will also draw votes from Carter's stronghold in the South, especially in the historically Conservative rural regions.

Both candidates are following a "big state strategy" — meaning they are focussing their attention and resources on heavily-populated states with large electoral votes, such as California 45, New York 41, Pennsylvania 27, Texas 26, Illinois 26, Ohio 25, and Michigan 21.

The theory behind the strategy is that by holding on to their regional support, and winning some of the big states, a candidate can more easily gain the 270 electoral votes needed to be elected.

As the third man, Anderson offers himself as an acceptable alternative to Carter and Reagan and hopes to capitalize on voter volatility or perhaps some unpredictable development which would radically change the present two-party political alignment. His following is mainly from within the Vietnam generation, many of whom consider themselves Independents or Kennedy-style Liberals. Most of Anderson's constituency is drawn from large, industrial states, namely New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. His chances, considered highly remote, rest on the indecisiveness and shifting attitudes of the voters. Nevertheless, he could exert a catalytic impact on the election by influencing the result of a few key states.

Conceivably, Anderson's candidacy could deprive either Carter

(Dom Bonafede is chief political correspondent for the National Journal, a Washington-based weekly magazine on Politics and Government.)

or Reagan of a clear majority of electoral votes and throw the election in the House of Representatives. Such a possibility becomes less likely as former supporters of Senator Edward M. Kennedy switch to Carter and Anderson's rating dwindles to single-digit figures.

As the campaign progresses, the contrast between the candidates on pertinent issues becomes more pronounced. On some issues — such as the need to stabilize the economy and strengthen U. S. military forces — the differences between Carter and Reagan are more in degree than objective.

Reagan's economic stimulus proposals call for an immediate three-year tax cut of 30 percent for individuals and modest reductions for business, along with severe cut backs in government expenditures. Carter favours deferment of a smaller personal tax cut until next year with emphasis on stimulating business investment and industrial productivity.

Both candidates favour fewer Federal regulations and less government intervention in business, but Reagan, in classic Republican tradition, is an outspoken advocate of a Free Market system. Carter, however, can point to the deregulation of the airline and trucking industries during his administration. He has also implied that the end of the recession troubling the nation is in sight, as reflected in an upswing of economic indicators.

The President has suggested that the election could have an impact on "whether we have peace or war." During campaign speeches, he has portrayed Reagan as a militarist, who urged American intervention in several international disputes, including those involving Cuba, Lebanon, Ecuador, Cyprus and Southern Rhodesia.

Carter also suggested that Reagan's defense posture was, in effect, an endorsement of "a massive nuclear arms race against the Soviet Union."

Correspondingly, Carter has proudly proclaimed that no American troops have been sent into combat during his administration. And, unquestionably, the centerpiece of his foreign policy was the Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel.

On his part, Reagan has proposed a defense policy calling for a dramatic buildup in U. S. military might, strong enough so "no nation will dare violate the peace." Urging a firmer response to Soviet aggression around the world, Reagan favours the withdrawal of SALT Two from Senate consideration in exchange for new arms-control negotiations with the Soviet Union. He has further taken issues with Carter over the partial embargo of grain sales to the Soviets on the grounds it was unfair to American farmers. Similarly, he opposed the draft registration, claiming that the armed forces could be strengthened and troop morale improved by providing American servicemen with better pay and enhanced benefits.

Reagan has endorsed the controversial MX Missile but criticizes the plan to place the missiles on an under ground "racetrack" to foil enemy attack as being too costly, without comparably increasing national security.

On other issues dividing the two principal candidates, Reagan favours a constitutional amendment to ban abortions, a move opposed by the President. Concerning the energy issue, Reagan believes in less emphasis on conservation and environmental measures, preferring instead increased exploration for oil and gas on federal lands and off-shore areas and expanded utilization of nuclear power under stringent safety standards until alternative energy sources are developed. Reagan also opposes the administration's gradual de-control of oil and natural gas, while advocating a softer "Wind-fall profits" tax to increase production.

He has made it evident that he prefers to let the free enterprise system work its will and that there would not be government bail outs of crippled corpo-

rate giants, such as the Chrysler Corporation, during his administration. In the social assistance area, he favours the transfer of Federal Welfare programs to the States, and is opposed to a National Health Insurance program. Carter favours a phased-in Health Care program.

Carter and Reagan have each spoken out against big government and have pledged to reduce the size of the Federal bureaucracy. Yet, during Carter's stewardship, the so-called "Permanent Government" has grown slightly larger and two Cabinet-level agencies have been added, the Department of Energy and the Department of Education. Reagan has inferred that he would dismantle the two departments but has not been explicit as to how he would go about it.

In an attempt to avert jurisdictional competition and bureaucratic tension between the White House-based National Security Council and the State Department, like that which has plagued recent administrations, Reagan said he plans to reduce the size of the NSC staff and make it more of a coordinating operation than a policy-making arm. Other recent Presidents have sought to redesign the NSC but found that they relied on its in-house informational and advisory capabilities and its rapid response in crisis situations.

As the candidate espousing "the difference" between himself and his opponents, Anderson has suggested that Americans must adjust to a more austere lifestyle in recognition of the economics of scarcity. To reduce consumption of imported oil and U. S. dependence on producing nations, he has proposed a 50-cents-a-gallon tax on gasoline. He also has come out in favour of registration of handguns, adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment and freedom of choice for pregnant women. Conversely, he opposes reductions in personal income taxes until the Federal Budget is balanced, the MX Missile program and a peacetime draft.

(Continued on page 13)

DENG SPEAKS

— to Oriana Fallaci

Q: Do you mean that capitalism isn't so bad after all?

A: It depends on how you define capitalism. Anyway, capitalism is superior to feudalism, and we cannot say that everything which has been developed in the capitalist countries is of a capitalistic nature. For instance, technology, science, and even economic management, which is a sort of science, are useful for any country. We intend to learn all that for serving our socialist construction.

Q: Yet, years ago, when you became aware that the Great Leap Forward had been a failure, you acknowledged that man needs some personal interest to produce. I would say, to exist. Doesn't this mean to put in discussion, communism itself?

A: According to Marx, socialism is the first stage to communism and a very long historical period. In this stage we should still apply the Principal of "from each one according to his ability, to each one according to his work." We should combine the interest of the individuals with those of the country. Only in this way shall we be able to mobilise in the masses, the enthusiasm for production. Well, as long as it helps the development of our productive forces and our efforts to lift ourselves from backwardness and poverty, the help of the capitalistic West will be beneficial to our country. So I think that the advantage we gain will far exceed the bad effects that might be brought with them.

Q: "It doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it eats the mice", you once said Mr. Deng. Will you apply such pragmatism, such tolerance, to the political life, too? I ask this because I recall an answer you gave in America: "In China we will have to wipe out the dictatorship and enlarge democracy." Or something like that: What demo-

cracy were you speaking about? The one which is based on free elections and party-pluralism?

A: I never gave such an answer! Never! It must have been a misunderstanding. However, I can tell you that after the overthrow of the Gang of Four we emphasized very much the promotion of the socialist democracy. Without giving up, of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat are the two aspects of one antithesis, and I should add that proletarian democracy is far superior to capitalistic democracy. So we are now stressing the importance of the four major principles: socialism, dictatorship of the proletariat, Marxism and Leninism, elaborated by Mao Tse-Tung thought, and the leadership of the Communist Party of China — and this means that the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat remains untouched.

Q: Now I understand why in Tiananmen Square, just facing the portrait of Mao, there are still the portraits of Marks, Engels, Lenin, Stalin!

A: Well, before the Cultural Revolution, those portraits were put out only on important occasions. Yes, this was the practice. And it changed during the Cultural Revolution, when they decided that the portraits should stay there all the time. But we intend to go back to the old practice.

Q: I see, But, important occasions or not do you have to put out Stalin also?

A: We think that Stalin's merits and contributions to the revolution exceed his mistakes. Using our Chinese habit, the grades for Stalin are 30 per cent for his mistakes and 70 per cent for his merits. Also Chairman Mao used to say so and, after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the Chinese Communist Party, expressed a very clear evaluation of Stalin. In fact, we said

that we would always regard Stalin's works as classical works in the international communist movement. You know, we are also aware of the mistakes committed by Stalin towards the Chinese revolution. When, after the Second World War, there was a rupture between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang and we engaged in the liberation war, Stalin was against us. Yet, not even this ever changed our views of him.

Q: And Krushchev?

A: Krushchev? What good things did Krushchev do?

Q: He denounced Stalin.

A: So you think that this was a good thing he did?

Q: More than good. I would say holy. For Christ's sake, more people were killed by Stalin than by the whole of the Cultural Revolution put together!

A: I am not sure about that. Not sure at all. Anyhow its impossible to make such a comparison.

Q: So you prefer Stalin to Krushchev in any sense?

A: But if I just told you that we shall never do to Chairman Mao what Krushchev did to Stalin?

Q: And what if I answer that in the West you are called the Chinese Krushchev?

A: (He laughs very loud). Listen, in the West they may call me as they like, but I knew Krushchev very well. I had to deal with him for 10 years, personally, and tell you that comparing me to Krushchev is stupidity. Krushchev only did bad things to the Chinese. Stalin instead did something good for us. Shortly after our People's Republic was founded. Stalin helped us sincerely in establishing or modernizing the industrial complexes which would

Candidates' . . .

(Continued from page 11)

Each campaign operation has its own peculiar characteristics and is reflective of the candidate's political needs.

For the most part, the campaign operations of Reagan and Anderson, including trips, paid media advertising and political events, are dictated as much by available funds as voter strategy. Anderson, as an Independent candidate, must rely heavily on contributions to underwrite his campaign: hence, his activities are restricted by the amount of funds collected.

At most, he will raise 15 million dollars or about half the 29.4 million allocated major party candidates Carter and Reagan in Federal campaign funds for the General Election.

But, as with all incumbent Presidents, Carter has an advantage

over opposing candidates. He may make selective appointments and Federal grants. He dominates the news. Cabinet Secretaries and other high-level political appointees serve as surrogate speakers on his behalf. He has access to government resources, including a personal Air Force under his command.

Costs of his campaign activities are borne by his re-election committee, but it is frequently difficult to draw a line between political and governmental functions.

From now until the election, the candidates will wage a considerable part of their campaigns through paid media commercials, the great bulk of it on television. The importance of paid TV advertising is underscored by the fact that Carter and Reagan will each spend more than half of their allotted 29.4 million dollars in Federal campaign funds for television time slots. Anderson forces hope to put at least two million

dollars in television commercials during the last couple of weeks of the campaign.

Notwithstanding the long, sometimes chaotic process, stretching out over more than a year and including 38 state primaries and caucuses, the campaign typifies the openness of the American political system — and offers assurance that the American political process will endure.

Deng speaks . . .

(Continued from page 12)

serve as the basis of Chinese economy. Of course, such help was not offered free, we had to pay for them, but, when Krushchev came to power, everything changed. Krushchev tore up all the agreements between China and the Soviet Union. All the contracts that had been signed during Stalin's time. Hundreds of contracts. Oh, this discussion is impossible! Let's do so: You keep your view, I keep mine, and we stop talking about Krushchev.

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RISE AND FALL OF SINHALA

by Vickremabahu Karunaratne

During the past few decades, nothing has created more controversy and rift among left political circles than the question of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The saga of this controversy is full of truly exposed opportunism as well as sectarian blindness. One would not be exaggerating, if one were to say that the tragic collapse of the old left leadership directly rested on this question. Once they erred on this, they could not help moving into making a series of blunders, and in particular, making a completely incorrect assessment of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the TULF. Among the attempts of the old left leadership to categorise the SLFP, the writings of Hector Abhayawardhana and V. Karalasingham stand out prominently. They have attempted to stray away from limited classical formulae; still they have not gone beyond presenting an empirical — impressionistic picture and have failed to understand the inner dynamics of the movement. In contrast the Communist Party has always been satisfied with clear simple formulations such as "progressive national bourgeoisie party" or "spent force", "alternative capitalist party" etc.

Any serious attempt at understanding the SLFP (JVP or TULF) must consider the inter-relations between the classes, the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. Not just the inter-relations at any particular moment, but the growth and evolution of such inter-relations. The bourgeoisie, a tiny minority in society, dominated the politics of capitalist society by its ability to manoeuvre the petty bourgeoisie of town and country. Slogans and methods of this venture changed according to the needs of the particular historical period. Naturally, there were splits among the bourgeoisie on these questions at every stage of development.

At early stages of development of western capitalist society, the

bourgeoisie was opposing old structures of feudalism. Once it defeated the forces of the old society, the bourgeoisie felt the pressure of the new class which is of its own making: the proletariat. The attitude of the bourgeoisie towards the proletariat changes in the course of time. At first, it was a clever master trying to handle the growing demands of a maturing slave. Later, a reactionary parasite fighting for survival at any cost even resorting to acts of cruel barbarism. Thus one could separate three classic stages of bourgeoisie politics. Firstly, the bourgeoisie used the petty bourgeoisie masses in the form of Jacobinism, where the radical masses of town and country were used in a violent sweep against the old society. The clearest example of this is of course the French revolution. Secondly, in the era of consolidation and expansion, capitalism contained the petty bourgeoisie i. e. by means of **Reformist-democracy**. The latter included the social-democratic movement where the middle class prevailed over the trade union movement. In Germany, the period of reign of William II was marked by such a growth of reformist democracy. Finally in the period of crisis and decay, **Fascism** becomes the instrument of the bourgeoisie by which the desperate petty bourgeoisie masses are used to attack and destroy the trade union movement. This was clear during the pre-second world war period throughout Western Europe. In all these movements it is the new radical bourgeoisie as opposed to the conservative old guard that takes the initiative in mixing up with the plebian masses.

The established, cultivated bourgeoisie is repelled by mass politics. During all these stages of development such layers opt for cautious-conservative policies. At the dawn of capitalist society the established bourgeoisie were Liberal monarchists. With one foot in the old order and leaning

on monarchy they opposed Jacobinism and advocated **constitutional liberalism**. During the period of reform, the conservative bourgeoisie was busy expanding the bureaucracy and trying to establish '**Law and Order**'.

They were dreaming up efficient formal structures which will bring eternal stability to the capitalist society. Finally, as the end of capitalist society approaches, with rising working class militancy, more cautious sections of the bourgeoisie advocate **compromise and conciliation** with the proletariat. In other words duping and mis-leading the worker before paving the way for a strong Bonapartist government. Only when every trend of popular frontism and Bonapartist politics fail in containing the rise of working class militancy that a significant section of the bourgeoisie turns towards fascism. From all these, one should see clearly that within western capitalism there always existed alternate policies for the bourgeoisie, one mobilizing the petty bourgeoisie masses and the other more cautious and trying to use established structures.

Imperialism and the integration of the world economy changed significantly the pattern of development for individual countries. Hence in an under developed country the petty bourgeoisie does not go through those classic bourgeois political stages. True Jacobinism can emerge only if there are urban radical masses based on small scale production. Imperialism destroys such modes of production and instead introduces modern capitalist large scale production. Thus in place of an urban democratic mass force, the growth of the working class takes place. Rural masses struggling against land lords, money lenders and old social parasites find their enemies backed by the neo colonial, capitalist state. Hence in the initial stages, rural masses led by alienated radical intellectuals tend to be against the progress of modernization. Various forms of

POPULISM

rural socialism combined with ultra nationalism posed in opposition to the ideology of the working class, dominate the thinking of the awakening rural masses. Russian populism starting from the Narodniks and ending in the Social Revolutionary Party and Kerensky remains one of the best examples of this complex process.

Populism develops to be an independent national movement only when a section of the bourgeoisie decides to dominate and use it for its own purpose. New layers of bourgeoisie are interested in arriving at a new deal with imperialism, undermining old forms of imperialist domination. To achieve this they move into the leadership of the national mass movement (petty bourgeoisie) and subordinate the proletariat. Such a populist leadership once in power will strive to stall the movement of masses and move rapidly from half hearted reforms to counter revolution. The aspirations of the radical bourgeoisie have a relatively independent existence only in a period of international capitalist expansion. Under such circumstances it is possible to arrive at a new deal with imperialism establishing a period of limited reforms. Thus, in effect, populism arises as an instrument of capitalist expansion and once in power, (in a period of international capitalist expansion,) develops towards reformist democracy including certain features of social democracy. The latter includes the organization of trade unions, participation in working class struggles etc. During such a period, certain changes in the nature of imperialist domination takes place, while old social structures are reorganised. However these changes do not in anyway abolish imperialist domination or the under developed nature of the society.

As the capitalist crisis develops populist movements incapable of continuing popular reformist programmes develop deep internal

conflicts. While the awakening petty bourgeoisie expects more reforms and far reaching changes, the bourgeoisie at the helm recoils from reform and moves towards counter reforms and closer connections with imperialism. Torn between two utterly conflicting motives, and with its programme bankrupt, the populist movement goes through a series of splits. This process will be enhanced by the independent development of the working class movement. It is the "left" moving section of the populist movement that will be useful to the bourgeoisie in the next stage of development. As they will represent one section of the populist which will gain the confidence of the working class, thus producing a reliable investment to contain and dominate the working class movement. A political block between the populist and the working class party will be used to contain the rising militancy of the proletariat. This apparent collaboration between the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat will be in fact an instrument of counter revolution by the bourgeoisie. In spite of the sharp dissections and surgeries done on the capitalist system, such a popular front will be a means of disorganising, demoralizing and confusing the working class, and a method of passing the burden of capitalist bankruptcy on to the toiling masses. Once the working class is demoralized, steps will be taken to strengthen the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie will turn towards stabilizing a Bonapartist regime.

With the increasing Capitalist crisis the bourgeoisie will have to go beyond all these measures. Once it realizes that it cannot save the system except by massive counter reforms it will strive to smash TU's and other organizations of the working people. Remnants of old populism will disintegrate rapidly with some sections following the working class organizations and others turning towards reaction. Of the latter, a substantial section becomes the raw material for fascist and semi fascist organisations. Thus, populism which developed as the alternative policy of the

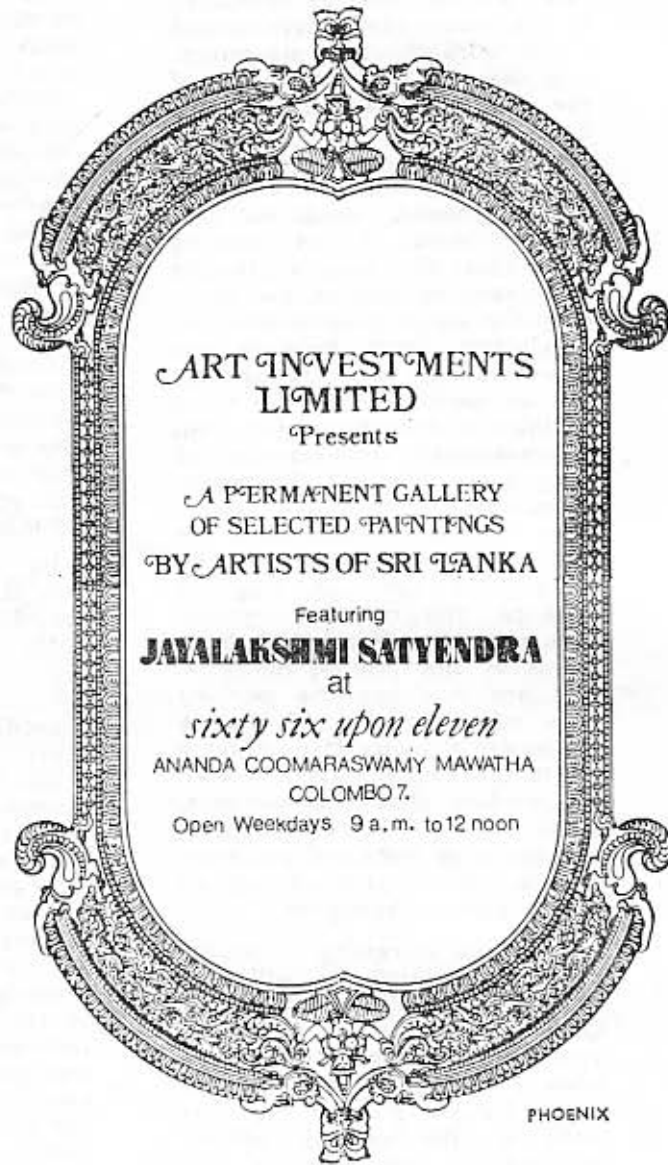
bourgeoisie in an underdeveloped country during an era of capitalist boom, ceases to be an alternative in any sense of the word in a time of acute crisis.

SLFP

Based on the above stated theoretical analysis, it should be easy to evaluate the historical development of the SLFP. The Populist basis of the SLFP can be traced to the early stages of Bandaranaike politics. He was always sensitive to the aspirations of Sinhala rural society. In 1926 he gave voice to the needs of provincial leaders who were against the domination of national politics by the urban upper strata of society, when he launched the Progressive Nationalist Party. The programme of this group was extreme Federalism, far more elaborate than that of Kandyan National Assembly; a kind of utopian provincialism. This did not survive for long, with increasing independent activity of labour under the leadership of Goonasinghe he recoiled from popular politics and buried himself in conservative Congress politics

He reemerged into popular politics as the economic crisis retarded towards the middle of the 1930s. By then he had won general loyalty from village leaderships through the association of village council chairmen. The Sinhala Maha Sabha was started in 1937 as a Sinhala nationalist movement, claiming to unify Sinhalese who were divided according to caste, low country, up-country distinctions etc. Though it did not branch out in opposition to the Congress it kept its relative independence and radical Sinhala nationalist campaign till it joined the U.N.P. in 1947. By then the militant, independent, workers movement was gathering momentum again under the leadership of the LSSP. For the second time Bandaranaike abandoned populist politics to hide behind the reactionary bourgeois leaders throwing large numbers of his followers into disarray. On both these occasions his politics remained parochial and limited. Clearly no section of the bourgeoisie had yet taken a firm decision to pursue populist politics!

(To be continued)



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PHOENIX

Sinhala Buddhist identity

by Paul Caspersz S. J.

More and more studies of ancient and mediaeval Asian history are today revealing the immense resilience and the steady changes of the Asian village through time. Far from answering to the Western mental image of the stagnant, unchanging, Eastern village where development was strangled by a rigid central despotic power, the Asian village has been all through history the secret of Asian vitality. It has been its salvation through time. On it more than on the town should depend the future evolution of Asia, of which Sri Lanka is a part. The reason for the resilience, as well as for the response, even though only gradualist, to the demand for change, is the intricate and all-pervasive interpenetration of religion and politics even at the basal village level. In Ceylon the religion was Buddhism.

But these were pre-feudal and then feudal times both in Sri Lanka and in neighbouring South India. So from the earliest times the Kings of Ceylon and of Southern India began to cast covetous eyes on each other's territories. In the fifth and sixth centuries the invasions of warriors from the South Indian Pandyan, Pallava and Chola dynasties began to cause various problems to the Anuradhapura Kings. It was at this time that the Mahavamsa came to be written. Mahanama therefore tends to interpret all Ceylon's history from the time of Vijaya to his own in the light of the contemporary tension between the Sinhalese Kings, upholders of Buddhism, and the Tamil invaders, followers of Hinduism. What were essentially struggles between feudal chiefs, the Mahavamsa tends to report as racial and religious wars.

Finally, weakened as much by internal dissension and rivalry as by the foreign invaders, Anuradhapura was sacked by the Cholas at

the end of the 10th century and the capital moved further to the east and south and became established at Polonnaruwa.

In the 12th century there was a brief springtime for Sinhala Buddhist rule. The period saw some of the finest development both in the island's architecture and sculpture always around a Buddhist religious theme and in the area of irrigation. What is important to notice is that it is Buddhism which continues to provide the linkages as well between politics and society as between agriculture and society. Rituals were built around the tank-fed agriculture linking the villagers to the monks who are not only the beneficiaries of, but also the mentors to, the holders of political power.

But after the 15th century there began a period of tragic and uninterrupted decline. Four developments must be noted. First, the abandoning of the once great Dry Zone civilization symbolized even today by Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa and the drift of weakened Sinhala power to the south-western Wet Zone. Second, arising out of the first development, the growth of an independent Northern Tamil Kingdom. Third, and arising out of the first and second developments, the beginning and growth of an independent Sinhala Kingdom in Kandy, in order to protect the People of the area from exactions from the North since the Sinhala Kingdoms of the southwest were either unwilling or unable to help them. Finally, profiting from the dissensions within and between kingdoms, came the Portuguese traders, priests, colonizers and conquerors.

As the curtain falls in 1505 on 2000 years of recorded history and rises to show the white European in power at least in certain areas of the land, it is time

to return to the thesis of this paper. From the time the people of Ceylon adopted Buddhism, they found in it the source and inspiration of their lives. In their poverty and oppression, Buddhism gave them moments of bliss and ecstasy, not merely as opiate consolation but as the foundation of their self-identity. But in so far as from about the 6th century it promoted not merely a self-identity, but an other-excluding identity, it prevented the growth of a unity of people that transcended the barriers of race, language and religion. It turned what were largely containable political divisions into ethnic and racial ones. It set-up a Sinhala Buddhist identity that, setting itself up as a national identity, tended to look upon anyone not a Sinhalese and not a Buddhist as an alien. Finally, in so far as it was the religion of the state power, it was never allowed to operate as a challenger to the dominant organization of society and so never revealed its potential for radical social change.

Never, until the foreigner came. And even then, not until the last wave of foreign conquest.

When the Portuguese arrived in 1505, the island of Ceylon, like the island of Britain in Caesar's time, was divided into three parts: the Tamil Northern Kingdom with Jaffna as centre, the Kandyan Sinhalese Kingdom of the Kandyan areas, and the Low-country Sinhala Kingdom of Kotte in the south-west maritime districts. The Portuguese by the end of the 16th century conquered the Kotte areas and in 1619 annexed Jaffna, thus ending about 4 centuries of separateness of the North from the Sinhala areas. In 1638 Portuguese power passed to the Dutch who ruled till 1796 when the British took over. In each of the three instances of foreign conquest, it was the Sinhalese who made the unpardonable mistake of invi-

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ting the foreigner. They invited the Portuguese to solve the internal power struggle between Sinhala rivals to the Kotte throne. They invited the Dutch to keep the Portuguese at bay. Finally, they invited the British against the Dutch.

The Portuguese and the Dutch, relatively to the British, left things, at least on the surface, much the same as they were before. They introduced—by persecution, dubious means of conversion and by marriage with local women—Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity. They initiated new linguistic streams. They started registers for landholdings. The Dutch also made a lasting contribution to the island's legal systems, codifying the laws of the Tamils and the Muslims, and introducing into the Sinhala areas the system of the Roman-Dutch law which continues to this day. It is possible therefore to argue that by 1796 enough had been done for the cracks to show in what seemed like the unbreakable monolith of the pre-colonial way of life of proud and ancient peoples.

What was begun by the Portuguese and the Dutch was completed with remarkable thoroughness by the British. The British succeeded where the Portuguese and the Dutch had failed: they annexed Kandy. By the 1830s Ceylon had a unified administration. The division into three parts of the island was gone and Ceylon from north to south, from the west across the central highlands to the east, was now one political entity.

Either because they took time fully to realize what had happened since 1505, or because the changes had not taken place on a wide enough scale, the monks and the lay Buddhist leaders—except during the rebellions of 1817-1818 and 1848 which were quickly and ruthlessly suppressed by the British—bided their time till the last decades of the 19th century. Then they began their agitation and proclaimed that the changes must be undone and the island return to its Sinhala Buddhist identity.

The bliss and the bane occurred together. The Sinhala Buddhists did little really to unite in their anti-imperialist and anti-Christian campaign with the Hindus and the Muslims who had also started their revivalist movements. Still less were they prepared to perceive the potential of the anti-imperialists among the Christians. Very importantly also, the analysis of foreign economic exploitation was nowhere so rigid or so deep as the analysis of the religio-cultural hegemony exercised by the foreign rulers and their native allies. Those who gathered around Anagarika Dharmapala—first, the person, then the symbol—were cultural activists, and by no means social revolutionaries.

No one realized the bane, actual and potential, so well as the British masters. Introducing by slow stages from the 1830s the hitherto unheard of principle of representative and elected governments, they did little or nothing to prevent what was divisive in the beneficial system of elected representation. By the time that, in return for the loyalty of their local subjects during the war, they gave Ceylon the qualified independence of Dominion Status in 1948, Ceylon was, to all but the incurably blind and optimistic, a divided nation. The Tamils had begun to put forward their claims for recognition as a distinct and even as an oppressed communal group within the geographical boundaries of the island.

The question of the rights of the Tamils—to their own language, to their own traditional homelands, to equal education in the state system—has continued to bedevil the Ceylonese political scene from the 1920s to the present day. It is significant, though it has strangely never been pointed out, that the religious freedoms of the Hindu Tamils have never been threatened.

This is perhaps a part of the bliss of Buddhism. In the summarized view of the present writer, the way to extend this bliss from

the religious to the political field lies through an analysis of the basic socio-economic foundation of society. Has Buddhism enough potential in its philosophy and in its doctrines, in the heritage of its history, to lead Buddhists to such an analysis of society as will show them that what matters is not whether a person is a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, not whether the person speaks Sinhala or Tamil, but whether a person has the same social and economic opportunities as anyone else in the land? What matters is the liberation of all the people in Ceylon from the structures of injustice and oppression that stifle the development of the overwhelming majority of peasants, urban industrial workers and estate workers. The final ecstasy of modern politics, which will also be the final ecstasy of Buddhism, will be its fulfilment in the Buddhist ideal of the equal and free society, which Asoka had, but lacked the analysis and the social production base to achieve in his time. In that final stage, the State, as the Marxists need to be reminded, will disappear. But Buddhism will at last be free to be itself.

(Concluded)

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THE TAMIL THEATRE

—Then and Now

by N. Sundaralingam

The staging of 'Maname' by Dr. Saratchandra in 1956 was, and is still being considered a landmark in the development of the Sinhala Theatre, both by the Sinhala and Tamil theatre historians and critics. The play, I believe, opened up new horizons, provoked much thought, widened the theatrical experiences and provided new challenges to the younger theatre enthusiasts who were in search of new vistas through the medium of the theatre. The staging of 'Maname' and its popularity as a creative theatre art had its effect on the Tamil Theatre too. Dr. Saratchandra in some of his articles and in his book on Folk Drama has mentioned that the Nadagam Style had its origin and roots in the Naddu Kooththu style that was prevalent in the Mannar and Batticaloa districts. Perhaps his comments coupled with the popularity of 'Maname' inspired Dr. Vithianathan of the Peradeniya University to revive and experiment with the Naddu Kooththu style.

This style, though at the time of revival and sophistication was considered obsolete and old fashioned, was a popular art form in the villages of Batticaloa, Mannar and Mullaitivu districts. Primarily what Dr. Vithianathan did was the urbanisation and sophistication of this folk art. He chopped off the theatrically uninteresting portions in the scripts of the 'Naddu Kooththu' which was traditionally performed for a whole night and made it a two hour presentation mostly suited to the time pressed urban population. The dancing styles, singing modes and movement patterns were left untouched though in the third production of his a bit of Bharata Natyam was introduced and instruments like 'Thavil' and 'Uddukku' were

used. The contents of the plays remained mythical. In his third and fourth plays 'Ravanesan' (1965) and 'Vall Vathai' (1968) stanzas from Kamba Ramayana was used and an attempt was made at characterisation, which was alien to the traditional Naddu Kooththu form. He was very lucky to have got students like Mounaguru and Perinpanayagam, the products of free education and the introduction of Swabasha in our educational system in 1956, to help his productions. Both hailed from areas where Naddu Kooththu was and is still practiced and they themselves were exponents in the dancing and mode of singing peculiar to this folk art.

Dr. Vithianathan's first production was 'Karnan Por' (1962) and his second was 'Nondi Nadagam' (1963). Karnan Por, Ravanesan, Vall Vathai were of the 'Vada Modi' or the Northern style, and Nondi Nadagam was of the 'Then Modi' or the Southern Style. The Vada Modi and Then Modi plays, or Kooththu to properly call it, differ in the dancing and singing styles and also in costumes and stage props. The Then Modi or Southern style of dancing is more vigorous than the Vada Modi or Northern style of dancing and calls for a lot of stamina from the performers. Then Modi style of singing is more draggy than the Vada Modi style, understandably to suit the tempo in the dancing. Also the Then Modi costumes and props are lighter than the Vada Modi costumes and props. This gives the performer of the Than Modi style more freedom and ease to dance and to do his movements.

So, at the Peradeniya University from 1962 to 1968 we find that an urbanised and partly sophisticated folk theatre taking a strong footing, while at the Colombo University some enthu-

siastic youngsters of the Science, Engineering and Medical faculties with the help of outside directors like Shanmuganathan, Dr. K. S. Nadarajah and Dr. K. Sivathamby concentrating on plays on social themes. The late Prof. K. Kanapathypillai of the Department of Tamil laid the foundation for this trend in the Colombo University as far back as 1936 when the Arts Faculty too was functioning at Colombo. Prof. Kanapathypillai was the first one to introduce the spoken dialect of the Jaffna population — particularly that of the Point Pedro and the suburbs — in the medium of drama. Being a linguist himself, through his unstinted effort, he was able to earn a literary merit to the spoken dialect which was then considered as the language of the lower class by the erudite and sophisticated class. This movement later led to the emphasis on what is known as the 'Native Smell' in the Tamil creative writings in Sri Lanka. Later, plays of A. Muthulingam a renowned short story writer, that of A. N. Kandasamy a progressive critic, novelist and that of Sokkan a short story writer and poet were staged. These plays portrayed the lives of middle class Tamil families, their values and how sometimes by their prolonged stay in Colombo and its suburbs found it difficult to fit into and reconcile with the life pattern and values of the Jaffna society.

Outside the Universities, the Tamil Drama was taking a different course. In Colombo farces and short skits frequently went on boards. A dramatic troupe called "Raj Comedy productions" was very popular for its slapstick comedies and impromptu playlets. In Jaffna the influence of D. M. K. playwrights like C. N. Annadurai, M. Karunanithy and Sirttarasu and that of the Tamil cinema was tremendous. Also the

Parsee Tradition plays, popularly known in Tamil as the 'Special Dramas' or 'Annava Marapu' which was taken to applaudable heights by Krishna Alwar, C. T. Selvarajah and the rest in the forties was very popular. Dramatic personalities like V. V. Valramuththu and Natkunam excel in this form of dramaturgy even now. So, in all, we find that in the mid sixties the Tamil Drama took different courses and their objectives diversified that nothing tangible could be achieved in the field of creativity. But the seeds for the transmission of culture and tradition and for the widening of the potentialities and scope of traditional and social plays were sown during this time.

It was in the late sixties and early seventies that a serious Tamil Theatre Movement really blossomed. Students who took keen interest in the production of plays both at Peradeniya and Colombo teamed up after their studies and started producing and writing plays of their own, combining the experiences they gained with the traditional and modern plays produced at the Universities and elsewhere. It is heartening also to note that outside producers and playwrights as Zuhair Hameed and Fousul Ameer and others were coming out with serious artistic productions at this juncture. These new playwrights and producers were also keen followers of the social changes that were taking place in and around them and they tried to reflect these changes in their artistic creations. They very consciously used the theatre medium as a tool for a social dialogue with the masses and in bringing about a social change. Mounaguru who was the backbone in Dr. Vithianathan's effort to revive and urbanise the Kooththu tradition produced a Kooththu called 'Sankaram' (Destruction) in support of the mass struggle of the depressed castes to gain temple entry at Maviddapuram. Another group of actors called 'Ambalathadigal' produced another Play called 'Kanthan Karunai (The grace of Skanda)' in the 'Kaththan Kooththu' tradition

again in support of this mass movement for the eradication of untouchability. Both these plays imbued new content into the old traditional forms, making these forms more socially relevant and meaningful. Another play called 'Apasuram' (Discord) made use of the absurd theatre style to put across a concrete idea on the ways of the politicians and priests. 'Kalam Sivakkirathu' a play by R. Sivanathan another offspring of the Colombo University underlined the importance of the unity of the Sinhala and Tamil peasants to liberate themselves from the burdens and ills of the class society, while R. Murugaiyan a product of the Ceylon University and a widely known poet wrote 'Kadooliyam' (Hard labour) a play on the exploitation of labour and the liberation of the down trodden.

So in the late sixties and early seventies we find the Tamil Drama in a period of experimentation, gathering momentum gradually. Theatre personalities who were earlier obsessed and conditioned by the Proscenium Arch Theatre and its realistic and naturalistic modes, started consciously to search for new forms to express their social awareness and creative urge. The emergence of the stylised theatre in the Sinhala Drama greatly influenced these young Tamil producers. They began to search for these elements in their traditional folk theatre. The result was that a good admixture of the old traditional forms and the modern theatre techniques began to precipitate. We could see this conscious effort of these producers and playwrights in plays like Kadooliyam (1971), Puthiyathoru Veedu (1971), Kanthani Karunai (1974), Villippu (1975), Kalam Sivakkirathu (1976), Apasuram (1976), Ekalivan (1978), Athimaidan (1979) Poruthathu Pothum (1980) etc.

Unfortunately the social and political instability in 1971 and 1977 greatly slowed down this

gradually gaining momentum of the search for a new form of dramatic expression. A cultural vacuum was created after August 1977. By 1979 conditions improved and the Tamil Theatre became active again. Translated plays began to appear in quick succession. These were produced only by a single group. This rapidity coupled with calculated wide press publicity gave the casual onlookers of the development of Tamil Drama the impression that the new trend in Tamil Theatre is translations. As Mr. K. S. Sivakumaran notes in his article on Tamil Drama (L. G. May 1, 1980), "Not that this exercise was absent earlier, but the rapidity with which these translated plays go on boards with a vengeance is strikingly phenomenal". Naturally so. But arithmetic and geometric progressions are not reliable and dependable units in the measurement of social trends. In this process, the search for eminent playwrights and dramatists of the calibre of Shakespeare, Kalidasa, Racine, Ibsen, Chekov and the rest in the past and present Tamil Theatre by the specialists in translations, resulted only in the painting of poor portraits of Tennessee Williams, Lorea, Brecht, Arbusov and the rest in Tamil. This result is quite understandable when one searches for Theatre Personalities of world fame and not social roots in a drama alienated culture, little realising that centuries and centuries of unstinted, conscious and consistent hard labour and toil by known and unknown play-wrights and artistes in search of National Theatres in societies which nurtured and nourished these dramatic activities for generations, could only throw in a handful of great playwrights like Shakespeare, Kalidasa, Ibsen, Racine and so forth in each culture. Yet the search for their equivalents in the Tamil Theatre goes on regardless. None the less, the main stream in the Tamil Theatre continues to be the search for a new form of dramatic expression of social awareness and creative urge — a truly National Tamil Theatre — based on, yet different from, the traditional theatre forms. This search goes on quietly, undaunted and unruffled.

approach that has resulted in a mechanistic and distorting reduction of art to ideology, treating form and style, not as an organic element of the work, determining meaning, but as a mere sugar-coating for the ideological pill, whether that pill is regarded as beneficial or pernicious. Unfortunately, the greater part of what passes for Marxist literary (and theatre and film) criticism in Sri Lanka (in Sinhala, English, and perhaps in Tamil too, though I can't pronounce on this last) belongs to this mode.

Samudran says: 'Art is time-conditioned; so are aesthetic values.' I agree. But in working out the implications of this position, one is compelled to recognise the vital inter-dependence of content and form. Form is really the means by which the writer structures his experience. In periods when there are common assumptions, shared by writer and reader, about the categories in terms of which experience is to be structured, form tends to solidify into conventions. In periods when there are no such definite and stable assumptions, or when established assumptions are being challenged by new ones, literary forms tend to become dynamic, to undergo radical changes. These periods of revolution in literary form are associated with periods of social crisis or social revolution. It is for this reason that, for instance, the rise of bourgeois social reactions was accompanied by the rise to dominance of realism as a literary form, while the twentieth-century crisis in bourgeois society has been accompanied by the growth of non-realist and anti-realist forms of various kinds—expressionism, surrealism, absurdism, Brechtian 'alienation', etc. One can't understand such developments if one treats form merely as a secondary element in literature. In eras of literary revolution, the new content of experience is inseparable from new forms. Brecht—one of the writers Samudran refers to with approval—offers a good example. Samudran should consider why Brecht attributed so much importance to the form of the 'epic theatre'

as the essential means of communicating what he had to say. It is possible to imagine a production of, say, *Galileo* or *Mother Courage* that keeps the plot, the characters and the dialogue but translates the theatrical mode of the performance into traditional naturalist forms: would that leave unaltered Brecht's essential meaning?

Finally, a word about the opposition Samudran sets up between Marxists and formalists—an opposition which is a throw-back to the literary controversies of the first decades after the Russian Revolution. Looking back at these controversies in historical perspective, I think the formalists were wrong in dissociating form from the social meanings of literature—but no more wrong than the theorists of 'socialist realism' were in reducing art to ideology. There were however in the 1920s in the Soviet Union a group of critics who, while relating literature clearly to its social context, profited from the methods of literary analysis evolved by the Russian formalists to clarify the specific qualities of a literary work that distinguish it from political or philosophical discourse. In the work of these critics what is positive and valuable in the formalist tradition is assimilated into Marxist criticism, and the opposition Samudran maintains is transcended. I have written earlier in the *LG* on the major work (a study of Dostoevsky) by the outstanding critic of this group—M. Bakhtin. The restoration of Bakhtin's work to favour in the post-Stalin period is a welcome sign that the Soviet Union is outgrowing the crudities and rigidities of the aesthetics of 'socialist realism' and regaining contact with the more creative period of Marxist literary criticism in the 'twenties. Bakhtin seems to me a finer Marxist critic than either Lunacharsky on the one hand or Trotsky on the other (the best that can be said about both of them is that writing as critics-cum-commissars, they didn't do so badly!)

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THE TAMIL LITERARY SCENE

Comments on Samudran's article

by S. Sivasegaram

I find it necessary to refute some of the arguments presented by Samudran in his article in Lanka Guardian (Sept. 15) on the Tamil literary scene. The views expressed are not entirely based on facts and certain interpretations of recent events are rather unscientific. There are places where it appears that Samudran has still not resolved certain major contradictions within himself before proceeding to comment on related issues.

Does Samudran, who appears to be more sympathetic towards those whom he calls Maoists, believe that the various factions which describe themselves as Marxist are all Marxist? Does he now subscribe to the view that parties and groups loyal to Moscow are progressive? The article does seem to suggest the various parties and groups, the feuding factions within them, and an assortment of fellow-travellers constitute what he chooses to call 'the Tamil progressive movement'. Leaving this contradiction aside let us now turn to the views expressed in his article.

It is claimed that "...the dominant anti-imperialist trends in Sinhala art and literature often manifested chauvinist (emphasis Samudran's) tendencies, the works of Tamil anti-imperialist authors stood for national unity.. They were fully opposed to Tamil chauvinism". What is the truth? After the LSSP and CP (Moscow) started to compromise on the national minority problem in the period following the '56 Elections, the so-called Sinhala progressive writers aligned to these parties, as

well as those belonging to certain other groups, simply echoed the political opportunism of their political leaders. As for the Tamil 'left' politicians who were thrown to the Tamil communalist wolves, what else could they do but cry for national unity? Their desire for national unity perhaps was genuine, but certainly not the manner in which it was expressed. In fact, when Pieter Keuneman (then General Secretary, CP (Moscow) and Minister of Housing) declared at the Congress for National Unity convened by the (Tamil) Progressive Writers' Association in 1975 that communal feelings were strong among the Tamils while they are not so among the Sinhalese, no 'progressive writer' of the PWA dared correct or contradict the view expressed! Such! Is the progressive stuff of which the "progressive writers' movement" is made.

Samudran seems to imply that the reference by Balendra (the main target of his article) to one of the 'progressive' drama producer as an ex-dramatist is so significant that it endorses Samudran's view that the pioneers of the Tamil 'radical theatre' are today conspicuous by their inactivity'. The sarcastic reference by Balendra was, in fact provoked by the ex-dramatist who in his efforts to belittle Balendra's contribution to Tamil drama claimed himself to be a greater dramatist. Balendra, perhaps, paid too much of a compliment by calling him an ex-dramatist.

'Samudran' also complains that Balendra's translations have gained considerable popularity among the

middle class theatre-goers. Does this imply that the audience to which the 'progressive' lot catered were proletarian? It was, and it is, still the middle class which provides the audience for the Tamil theatre. The working class, it is sad but true, still remains opiated by the South Indian films in the MGR-Sivaji tradition.

According to Samudran.. "neither the politics of Brecht nor the concept of the epic theatre seems to appeal to (Balendra's) heart.. He is more committed to stagecraft *per se* than to any ideology.. He has shown a slight tendency towards existentialism". Balendra's stage rendering of Brecht's 'The Exception and the Rule' was, in my view, faithful to the original, and there is no evidence of an attempt to distort Brecht's message. (Balendra, incidentally, is not the translator but only the producer-director). Balendra has also produced several South Indian Tamil plays and, recently, one from North India. He also produced one play written by a member of the 'progressive group' (eenipatikai, a satire on the late Dr. N. M. Perera, and a third-rate play, despite a serious effort by Balendra to make something out of it). It is strange that Samudran has little to criticize about Balendra's stagecraft. There are several flaws, some of them obvious, and critics in Peradeniya, where Balendra has a good audience, have pointed out these flaws to him. It may be that Samudran is a little lax about 'stagecraft *per se*' even when it comes to Balendra. (Or is he awaiting the 'new aesthetic standards' to be developed?)

Samudran's next major target is the group of 'pseudo-Marxists' who allegedly are trying to look

beyond Marxism. I do not think that this is a serious offence since many of the 'non-pseudo-Marxists' in the 'Progressive camp' have not had a serious look at Marxism itself! Simply claiming to be Marxist and dropping names ranging from Lenin to Lu Xun means little more than familiarity with these names. To reject art forms developed in bourgeois (and feudal) society as reactionary is infantile, nonsense. The masses are the creators of everything of value in society, and it is up to the progressive forces to extract what is good and relevant from the past and reject what is bad and irrelevant. Every literary form in modern Tamil, with the exception of poetry, is from alien sources and, very often, from the West. There is a great need for the Tamil People to familiarize themselves with every modern form of creative art and literature and adopt them, where suitable and necessary, for the purpose of developing a new and powerful tradition in literature and art.

What Balendra is doing is in a sense, continuing what Drs Kandiah and Indrapala sought to do in '69 - '71, i. e., exposing the Tamil audience to a variety of new and interesting stage experiences. Without knowing the more positive experiences elsewhere, without serious study of the art form itself, and without daring to experiment, it is not possible to create effective drama, progressive or otherwise. Balendra's 'translations' of course, will not be part of the great Tamil theatrical tradition of tomorrow; but his contribution towards the creation of this tradition is certainly more than that of all the 'progressive dramatists' put together.

It is interesting to note that Samudran has not commented on the use of stage techniques and even themes borrowed from the West (of course, via the Sinhala stage, which perhaps purifies them of the pernicious influence of Western decadence) by the 'progressives'. What is really depressing is that the 'progressive' Tamil plays hailed by the critics of the same camp are bad drama and worse propaganda. It should be noted that even their form reveals nothing revolutionary or

proletarian: the plays are bourgeois in form and badly handled. They are lacking in aesthetic standards, irrespective of the scale one may choose, and Samudran's solution appears to be the rejection of standards altogether. The real issue is not about the precedence of form over content or vice versa but about the presence or absence of aesthetic standards and, perhaps, of form itself.

I would like Samudran or any of the members of his camp to be more specific about the 'new standards' that they are talking about. I would also like them to clarify their position on the existence of certain universals in aesthetics. Indeed without defining 'progressive aesthetic and other standards', critics of that camp will find it difficult to assess art and literature—in a 'progressive' manner.

The shallowness of the 'progressive' Tamil literary scene is only a reflexion of the shallowness of the 'progressive' Tamil political scene. The radical politics among Tamils has no broad popular base. The Tamil 'left' leaders were simply echoing the sentiments expressed elsewhere and were, often, out of touch with reality. The 'progressive writers' were no different. The Sinhala 'radical' movement did, nevertheless, have some popular base and there was, in addition, a national awakening, which was, of course, bourgeois. Correspondingly, there was something genuine, although deficient, in the 'progressive' Sinhala art and literature. Nationalism was the stronger force, and this, perhaps, explains why no 'progressive' dramatist could ever surpass Sarathchandra.

What the Tamil public needs today is familiarity with good theatre, exposure to a variety of experiences, and good and honest critical standards. Progressive theatre, I am sorry to say, has to wait until time is ripe for the development of a genuine progressive movement. Attacking and attempting to destroy good theatre merely because the 'progressives' have no alternative to offer, will only help further degeneration of the Tamil theatre where the influence of the South Indian cinema is no negligible force.

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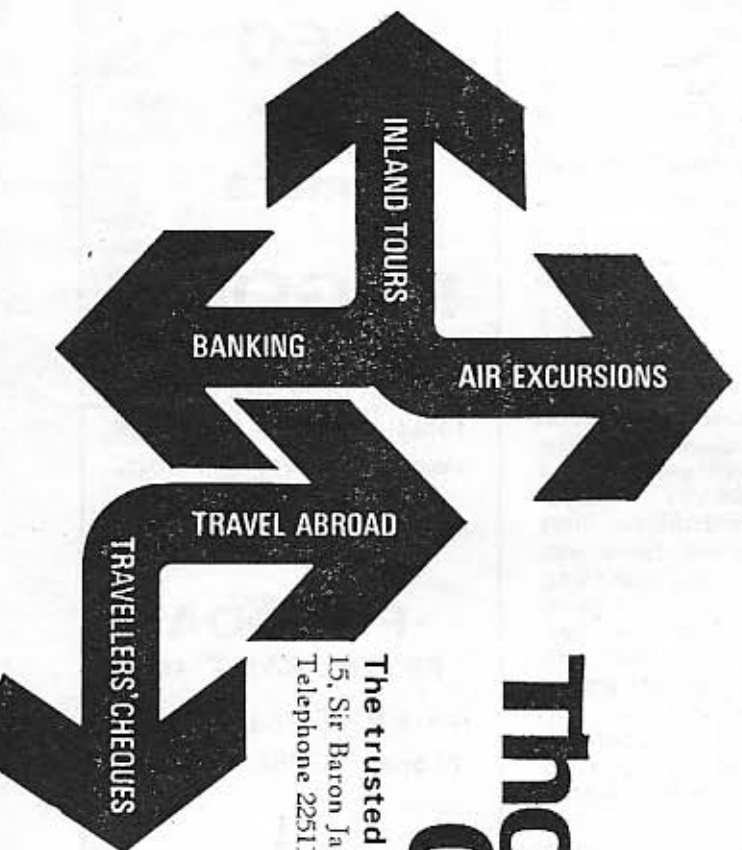


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GARADS

Of medicine and sorcery

AS I
LIKE IT

Touchstone

My re-reading of *War and Peace* (see 'Notes of a horizontal man,' *LG*, Oct. 15) reminded me that Tolstoy was a complete sceptic about medicine. When Natasha falls ill after breaking off her engagement to Prince Andrei and attempting disastrously to elope with Kuragin, Tolstoy speaks of the 'substances, for the most part harmful' which the doctors made her swallow. That sounds like Dr. C. V. S. Corea writing of antibiotics in one of his crusades in the Press against allopathy. However, Dr. Corea wouldn't find much comfort in Tolstoy, whose scepticism extended to all schools of medicine: in one devastating parenthesis in the same chapter of *War and Peace* he brings together 'healers, sorcerers, homeopaths and allopaths.'

Tolstoy goes on to explain that the doctors who treated Natasha did, however, serve one purpose—the only use he thinks doctors can have—that of satisfying the need of the patient and her family for reassurance—the same need, he says, that a small child feels when, having fallen and hurt himself, he runs to his mother or nanny to have the painful place rubbed. Similarly, Natasha's doctors soothed the Rostovs by telling them that everything would be all right 'if the coachman went to the chemist's and bought for a rouble and seventy kopecks some powders and pills in a nice box, and if the patient unflinching took these powders in boiled water in two hours, no more and no less.'

In *War and Peace* there are several false rules and codes which different characters try to impose on the flux and the complexity of life—in war, government, love and family life—and it is evident that for Tolstoy medicine was just another such false code. I suppose the reaction of any doctor to this would be to dismiss him

as a crank. However, his observation that the real function of doctors is to serve a psychological need seems remarkably perceptive in the light of what is known today about psychosomatic disorders, and about the effectiveness of placebos. As for his remark about the 'harmful substances' that patients are made to swallow, it evokes a sympathetic response in me since I have just spent two weeks trying to get over attacks of dizziness brought on by a laxative I was asked to swallow as a preparation for an X-ray.

A new talent

I have been told that Parakrama de Silva's first feature film, **Hevani Eda Minissu**, has baffled many people—not just members of the mass audience, but even some filmgoers with a serious interest in the Sinhala cinema, probably because of its non-linear narrative. That is a pity, because I found it one of the most interesting and original films to have come from the younger generation of film-makers. What faults the film has are largely those which derive from Sunanda Mahendra's novel on which it is based. Why, for instance, inflict on the Sinhala audience Blake's **The Sick Rose**, recited by Dharmasiri Bandaranayake in a bad English accent? But the film takes an honest and penetrating look at middle-class alienation, and the visual treatment has much imaginativeness, spontaneity and freshness. Since the film has had little publicity I should like to urge everybody interested in good Sinhala cinema to catch it before it disappears from the circuit.

Lawrence and Taos

Sri Lankan-born Gamini Salgado, now Professor of English at the University of Exeter, writing in *TLS* about a visit to Taos, New Mexico—D. H. Lawrence's one time home—reports that it was with the greatest difficulty that he found in the town anybody to whom Lawrence's name meant anything at all. 'If there is one public figure who is a living legend in Taos, whose name one meets at every turn in bookstore, bar and street sign, it is not D. H. Lawrence but Kit Carson, the celebrated Indian scout who made Taos his home during the last years of his life.'

Gamini Salgado, who earned his doctorate with a thesis on Lawrence's poetry, has also written a student's guide to *Sons and Lovers* and a case-book on the novel.

Age for hanging

'They are too young to be hanged,' said a Ministry of Justice spokesman to the *Daily News*, talking of sixteen-year olds. This was to announce the Ministry's proposed 'reform' of raising the minimum age for the death penalty from 16 to 18. Apparently, if you are old enough to vote, you are qualified also to hang. It reminds one of the parody of A. E. Housman by an English writer of light verse:

'What, still alive at twenty-two—
A fine, upstanding lad like you?
And bacon's not the only thing
That's cured by hanging on a
string.'

I WOULD GIVE HALF MY LIFE

*I would give half my life to
the one who could make a weeping child smile,
And would give the other half to protect
a fresh flower from destruction.*

*I would walk for a thousand years
after a song
And travel through a thousand valleys arduous
to cross.*

*And ride all the stormy seas
to gather the fragrance of the lilac.*

*I am human, with all the cares of humanity
Can I have peace while blood is being shed?*

TAWFIQ ZAYYAD

Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

Disabilities Resolution, did the Supreme Court find in favour of Mrs. Bandaranaike, was conclusively rejected by the Prime Minister. Gamini Dissanayake, with his penchant for citing history more or less, usually less, appropriately, would be thoroughly happy considering himself 'the noblest Roman of them all' in the part of Brutus. And Lalith Achulathmudali, with his capacity for speaking with cynical brilliance on even shameful subjects, would make an excellent Mark Anthony; while, doubtless, there are numerous contenders for the role of the ultimately victorious Augustus.

But such speculations, though amusing are useless. It is perhaps more salutary simply to remember that, in acquiescing in the banishment of a political threat who nevertheless shared his basic concept of politics, Pompey was sowing the seed for the destruction of the system and the values that he was held to cherish. Of course there were those who said that he had no values at all, that his banishment of Cicero proved that nothing mattered to him so long as he could continue in power. On the whole such a view probably does him a little less than justice: he was probably merely a short-sighted man who thought that previous

principles could be safely abandoned at times in favour of an immediate practical advantage.

University, Peradeniya. **R. Wijesinghe**

Civic Rights

The legislation to deny civic rights to Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike and Mr. Felix Bandaranaike in pursuance of the recommendation made by the Special Presidential Commission appears to be one which calls for serious consideration.

The legislation appears to overlook and negate certain basic principles of democracy. This issue does not appear to have been seen in the correct perspective. The denial of civic rights to a citizen appears to be much more than a punishment meted out to that individual citizen. It is really a denial of the right of the electorate to choose that individual as a representative of the people. It is the denial of the freedom of choice.

That the legislation can really deny the electorate its freedom to choose the individual whom they want to represent them is not just idle fancy.

If an individual has done something wrong, he could, be dealt with under the ordinary laws and by the ordinary courts of the land.

A finding of misuse or abuse of power is a value judgement. Value judgements are not universal; they can differ from person to person. The value judgement on this issue, which the majority party in Parliament may reach, may not be the value judgement the electorate makes.

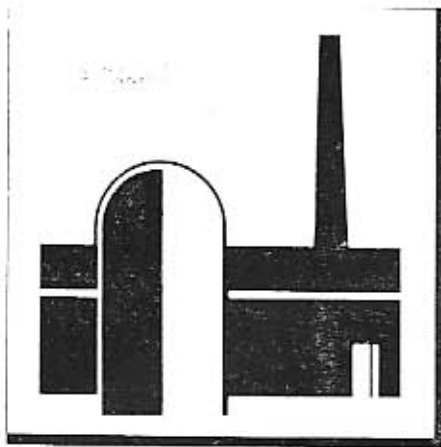
G. G. Ponnambalam Jr.
General Secretary-A.C.T.C.

Civic Rights (2)

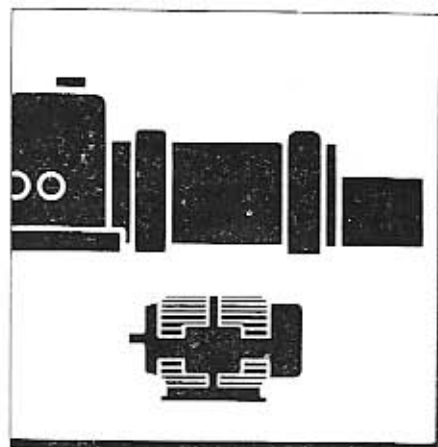
The current topic is on the deprivation of civic rights of the former Prime Minister Mrs. Bandaranaike for abuse and misuse of power. Let us examine the effect of losing the civic rights and also the findings of the Presidential Commission. If the thinking of the masses was that the Presidential Commission was formulated to kill politically the adversaries of the government in power, it is a wrong notion. The Presidential Commission would hereafter act as a deterrent to corrupt politicians, corrupt officials and also politicians who favour nepotism. It would be an eye-opener to the party that is to come into power that it should not abuse or misuse power. If we logically argue this point, whatever the intention of the framers of the Presidential Commission were, there is one conclusion that, this Commission would stand as a bar to political corruption and the party that is in power would ensure greater care in the administrative machinery of this country.

Presidential Commissions will play a vital part in the political arena of Sri Lanka in time to come and would remodel the society. This piece of legislation is a turning point in our political life and would no doubt stand as a revolutionary piece of legislation drafted during this century to cleanse the society. It too has its 'boomerang' effect.

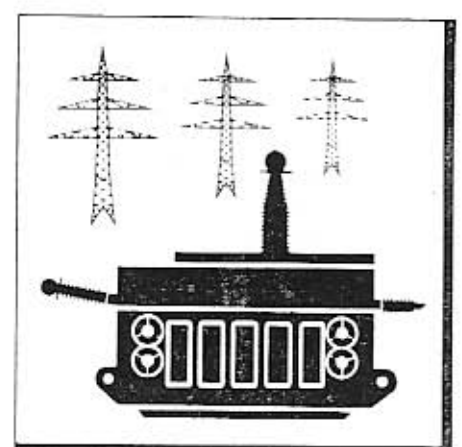
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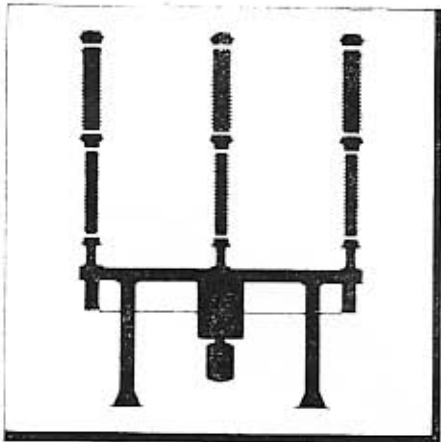
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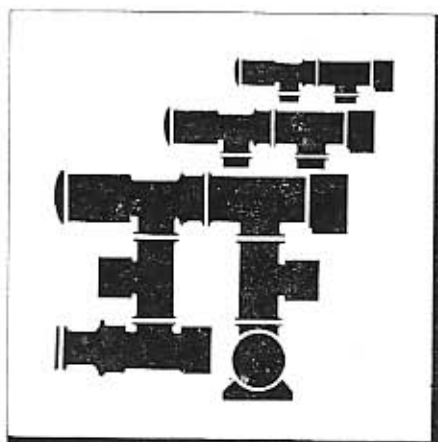
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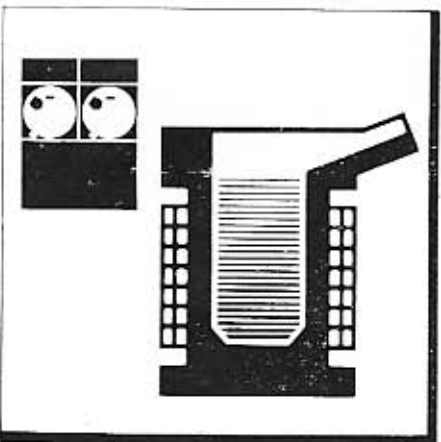
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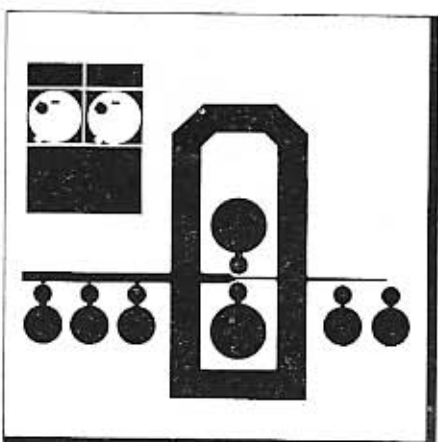
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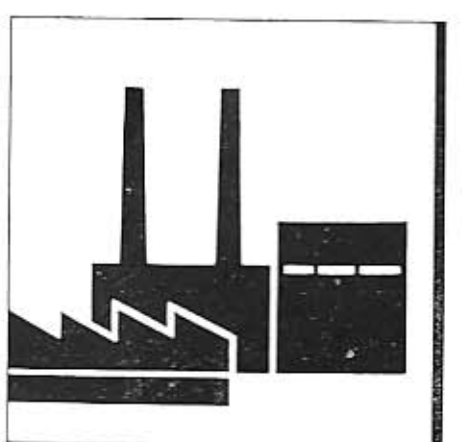
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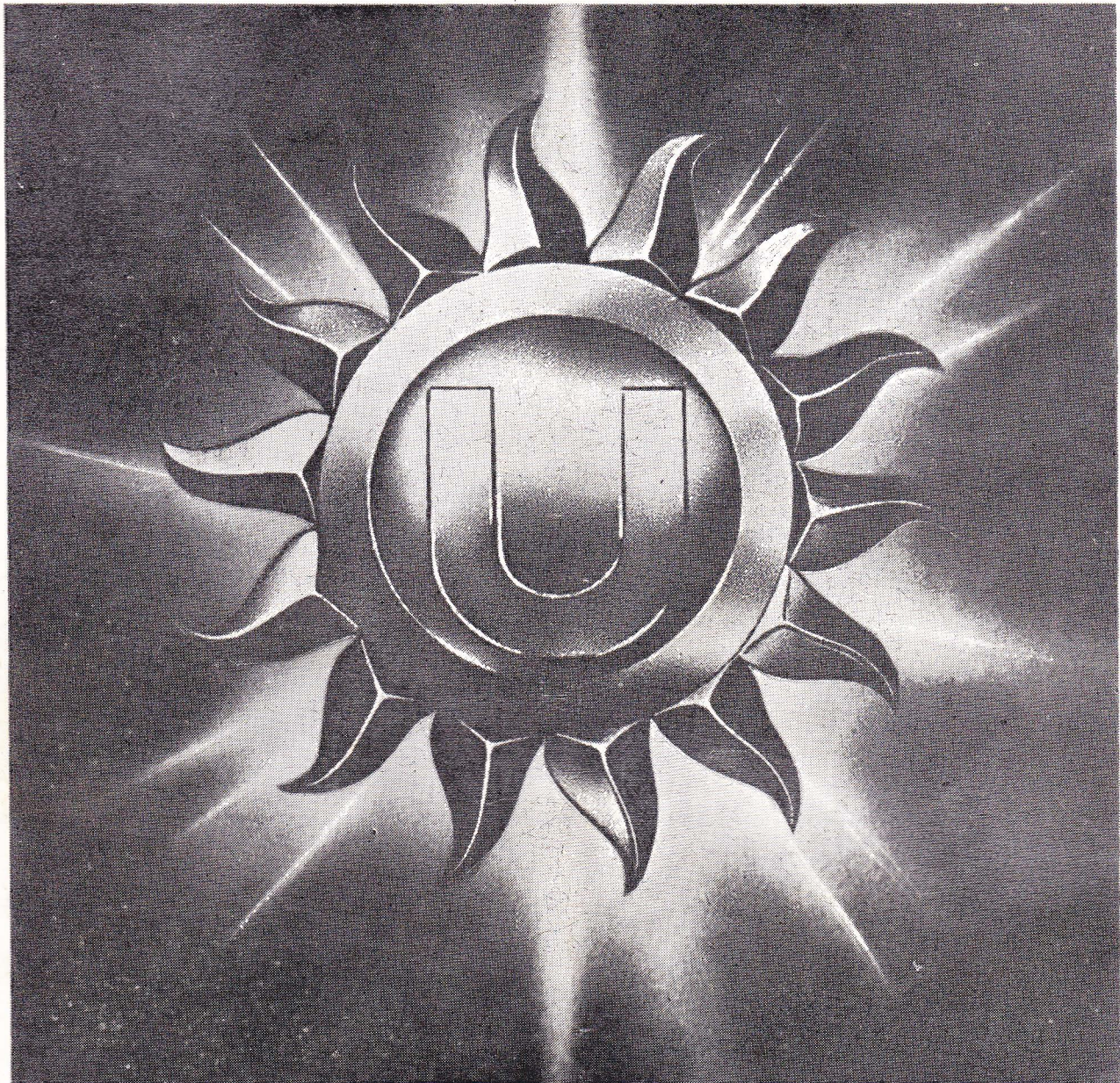
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