

Interview: JVP — INSIDE STORY — H. N. Fernando

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*K. S. Sirwardena*

## MINISTER DE MEL'S DILEMMAS



## Reagan : In quest of vanished glory

— Mervyn de Silva

- \* Army in politics — Jayantha Somasunderam
- \* Blok, Christ, Red Guards — Reggie Siriwardena
- \* Tamil literary scene — Samudran

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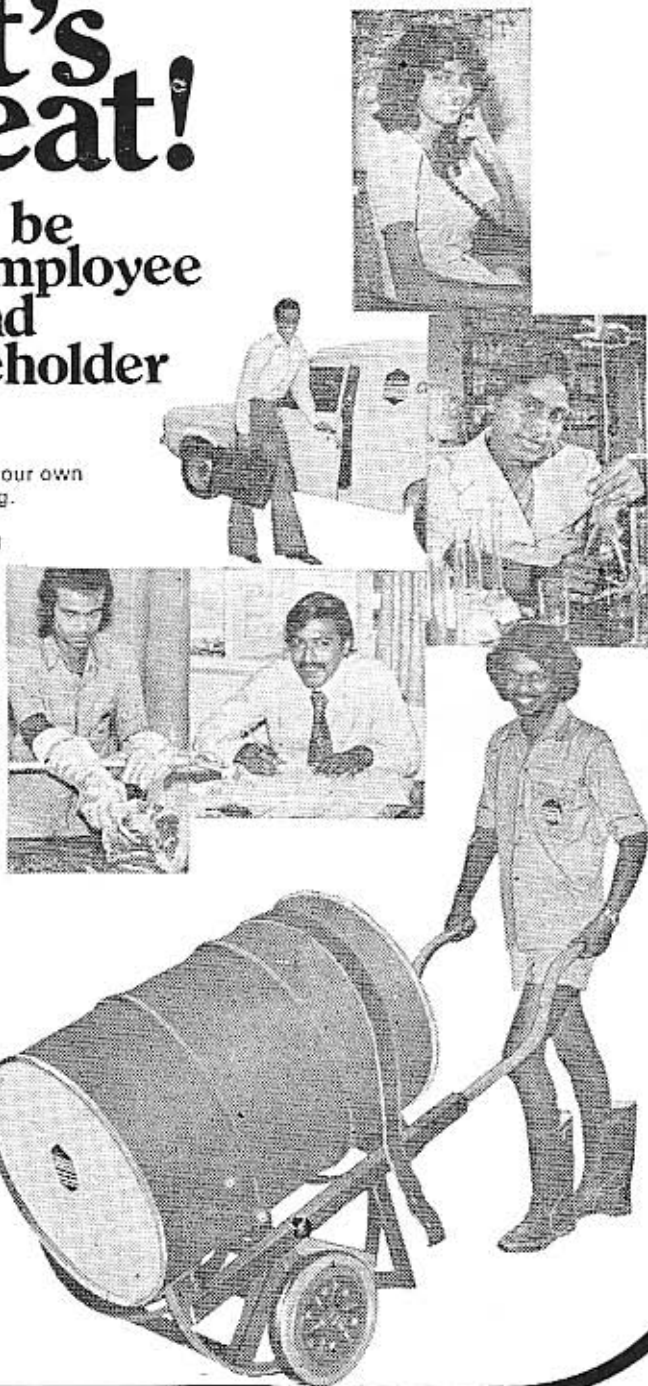
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## THE TRIBAL DRUM

Are racialists back in action? During the debate on Development Councils there were ominous murmurings among supporters of those assorted 'fronts' which parade patriotic name-boards. What makes them dangerous is that the support is often bi-partisan, meaning UNP and SLFP, the major (Sinhala) parties. They are not quite K. K. K. but they do have many important Enoch Powells as back-stage patrons.

The movement for Inter-racial Justice and Equality has issued a warning about this racist campaign. MIRJE says that certain individuals and groups in the country are using the Development Councils scheme as a propaganda platform. MIRJE says that the scheme has to be examined for its merits and demerits but much of the criticism springs from anti Tamil motives, and blatantly seeks to rouse racial feelings.

## COST OF DEFENCE

His critics were fond of ridiculing the portly, well-nourished Mr. Dudley Senanayake for his (UNP) "buth maruwa" image. But Mr. Senanayake turned this weapon of criticism against other opponents, especially those world bank experts who persisted in recommending drastic cuts in food subsidies. "I'd rather feed the people than buy bullets to shoot a hungry mob", he used to say.

Sri Lanka did have a strong case. Where as other Third World countries spent as much as 20% to 30% of their national budget on defence, the Sri Lanka percentage always ranged between 3% and 5%. It still does.

The "Sun" was right in noting that this year's defence vote has exceeded the billion mark, but it was wrong in reporting that this vote had trebled since last year. However, another comparison is worth noting. Two hundred million rupees more than last year, this year's vote is 1.2 billion, exactly the same as the expenditure on health and a little less than the money spent on the food stamp scheme.

Capital expenditure has now been reduced by Rs. 346 million.

## THREE VOICES

Honoured by his Alma Mater, Ananda, the versatile Tarzie Vittachi gave a superb exhibition of oratorical batsmanship when he delivered the Olcott memorial lecture. ("More Walcott than Olcott" quipped an old Anandian skipper when the players were leaving the field).

But Tarzie, so full of Gautama, Gandhi and the Third World, must have winced — as he listened to the welcome address. The distinguished lecturer, it was said, had come from Olcott country, the US. As a Newsweek contributing Editor and New York Herald Tribune columnist, he was introduced as "The Voice of America", his admirer's favourite station.

At this point, a free-lance sociologist, noticing that Tarzie was flanked by Lake House Chairman R. Bodinagoda and Central Bank Governor Dr. W. Rasaputram, observed: "Ananda was the Sinhala Buddhist answer to Royal, S. Thomas, Trinity and St. Joseph's. Now the emerging national bourgeoisie has really arrived. As alternate Governor to the IMF, "Rasa" is another voice of America and so is Bodi, as the voice of the multi-national news agencies. No wonder the Anglican Royalist Esmond, of the old elite, has to champion the Third World in Belgrade."

## F. T. Z. (2)

The 'Daily News' proudly announced the advent of Free Trade Zone 2 at Biyagama, near the Kelani river. The announcement however could be premature. The cost-conscious GCEC is working out the sums and is not too happy about spending anything up to Rs 500 million on infrastructural development. So Biyagama may end up an industrial area, not a full-fledged FTZ.

Incidentally, GCEC boss Upali Wijewardene was right when he called Motorola Inc. the first "truly genuine" multi-national to invest in a Sri Lankan plant to assemble semi-conductors.

## Anagarika And Racism

I have read with great interest Professor Ralph Pieris's article 'The Enigma of Anagarika Dharmapala' (LG, Oct. 15), and I have certainly found some of his revelations regarding the Anagarika's psychology useful for the light they throw on the latter's puritanical attitudes. However, it doesn't appear to me that Prof. Pieris has succeeded in exculpating Anagarika Dharmapala of the charge of racism. Prof. Pieris doesn't seek to explain the anti-Tamil and anti-Muslim utterances of the Anagarika referred to in my review of Dr. Amarasekera's book (other such utterances could be quoted). The fact that Anagarika Dharmapala 'thought of founding a Buddhist mission for the Indian coolies' (betraying word), and that he recognised that 'without the coolie the rubber and

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tea estates can't be worked' is hardly sufficient ground for holding him to be guiltless of racism. To draw an analogy, it wouldn't have been difficult to find in the last century upholders of white supremacy in the southern states of America who were assiduous in propagating the Gospel among the Blacks and also recognised the indispensability of the latter for working the plantations: that didn't make them any the less racist.

I also fail to understand the point of Prof. Pieris's observation that 'no purpose is served by categorising Anagarika in terms of unanalysed general categories such as "race". I was categorising the Anagarika's thought in terms not of 'race' but of 'racism' a very different matter. Prof. Pieris should address his criticism not to me but to the Anagarika, who used the 'unanalysed general category of race' in propagating the myth of the 'Aryan'

descent of the 'Sinhala race'. It is characteristic of racists everywhere from Nazi Germany, the United States and South Africa to contemporary Sri Lanka — that they don't define the concept of race in scientifically precise terms: that, after all, is the necessary condition of the promotion of racism as an ideology.

**Reggie Siriwardena**  
Colombo 5.

### Reply to Chintaka

Chintaka accuses me of having "actually helped organise the "Hansa Regiment" to guard Police Stations at a time when the armed forces were butchering youth in their thousands". (Lanka Guardian of 01/10/1980) This is a foul lie from his own School of Stalinist Falsification. The All Ceylon Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union of which I was Secretary at the time was not associated in any way with organising and recruiting to

Hansa Regiment. Nor was I so associated in my personal capacity.

The evolution of my ideas during 1971-1972 could be judged from the fact that at the 1972 LSSP Conference when Comrades like Dr. Osmund Jayaratne and D. G. William "unceremoniously" abandoned their position and succumbed to the pressure of the leadership, Comrades Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Edwin Kotalawela and myself were the only signatories to the second resolution who held our ground and refused to withdraw our signatures to that resolution.

In fact neither Insurgency nor Emergency was able to prevent the All Ceylon Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union from providing a militant leadership to workers in the private sector during this period — from the Metal Industries Strike of April — June 1971 to

(Continued on page 7)

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# Ronnie : Persecuted but not forsaken

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

**B**y their quotations, ye shall know them. As a brilliant alumnus of St. Thomas', who must have carried away the 'Religious Knowledge' prize along with numerous other trophies, Mr. de Mel will recognise the Biblical adaptation. Besides, Ronnie ("For God's sake don't refer to me as Ronald" he implored this reporter the other day) is a prolific user of quotes.

As a lonely 'independent' (after he crossed over from the SLFP) Ronnie drew from an astonishing array of sources to adorn his studied contributions. And he was lucky that there were a fair number of members to appreciate his erudition. But where most MP's were content "to throw the book at you, Ronnie", wrote a Lake House correspondent once "flung a whole bookshelf" — Plato and Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill and Acton, the Economist, the Financial Times, the Barclays report, and, since his ideas in those days wore a robust pink, Lenin, Castro, Teresa Hayter ("Aid as Imperialism") and Cheryl Payer ('The Debt Trap').

If his reading ranged from China to Peru, his travels, as he reminded us in the 1977 speech, broadened the mind further. He knew both systems, and both worlds, while standing firmly in the Third World. He remains one of the very few in this assembly who has a firm intellectual grasp of the international system and what makes it tick. The system conditions the life of nations, and determines the decisions of its policy makers. If this is true of politics, it is truer still of economics. And for underdeveloped nations, it is the inescapable fact of life. The system both exploits and exposes our economic dependence. In doing so, it steadily narrows the choices open to policy-makers, to presi-

dents, premiers and finance ministers.

Though he did not spell it out in quite this fashion, this was the cheerless message Mr. de Mel conveyed to his fellow ministers and MP's, as he found himself in an unenviable situation: a circumstance not without its ironies. For, in spite of his own well-informed familiarity with the global economic environment, the chronic ills of the Third World, the nature of 'aid', the role of such institutions as the IMF etc, Mr. de Mel had allowed himself in Nov. 1977, to be carried away by the heady enthusiasms of the moment.

Understandable of course. The glorious euphoria of July 1977 would have swept even the fiercest sceptic off his feet. The UNP's landslide victory could be a world record. (Mr. Seaga's party has now done slightly better, percentage-wise, in Jamaica).

To his own immense personal satisfaction, Mr. de Mel, the ex-SLFP'er, saw Mrs. Bandaranaike's party reduced to a pitiful 8 seats. A massive vote of no-confidence had been passed on 'middle-path policies' on the U. F.'s half-baked 'socialism', on a 'closed' inward-looking economy characterised by scarcities, rations and queues. Furthermore The Left was dead, and with it, presumably, its high falutin' theories of neo-colonialism, dependence, the crisis of the capitalist world and the oncoming recession. The time had come to 'open' the door. All will be well. The future was bright.

So, beaming like a largesse-laden Santa Claus, the MF was photographed at the airport, with the next day's headlines announcing... 'Aid, aid...aid ...money, money, money,... pouring from the skies'. And the only prob-

lem? The money was there, more than enough, but where were the projects? (Now, we have an average 22% cut in the capital expenditure of 16 ministries). Sri Lanka, backed to the hilt by the IMF, will become one of the strongest currencies in the world! (Today, the poor rupee, increasingly short of breath, is pushing 50 ..... to the pound sterling).

Nov. 1977. Flying away from the script to enjoy the immeasurable pleasures of that time, Mr. de Mel poured scorn, ridicule, laughter and fury on his favourite targets. And then he quoted Milton Friedman.

Nov. 1980. A much mellowed Mr. de Mel, sticking scrupulously to his text, paused at a quotation from John Kenneth Galbraith. For emphasis, he repeated it in Sinhala slowly ... almost at the dictation speed used by the **Voice of America** in its 'special English news program', designed for backward, but hopefully educable, semi-literates. He quoted Galbraith ("**Nothing so weakens government as persistent inflation**"), the Brandt Report on the grim world economic outlook, and Lord Caradon's memo to Finance Ministers in the very year Mr. Mel himself attained that high station.

**"We are troubled on every side but not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed"**.

The Almighty apart, who is persecuting the MF, who is casting him down and who has not forsaken him, are obviously speculations best left to columnists like 'Deep Throat' and Migara (Weekend) and the Opposition press. His troubles and perplexities, on the other hand, explain Mr. de Mel's dilemmas,

and if this budget can be characterised in a single phrase, it is the budget of a dozen dilemmas. But what is important is that this is not just a personal dilemma for this particular Parliament could not have found a better finance minister; a man more knowledgeable about the international system and its agencies, more skilled in negotiating and better equipped with the experience of public administration and private enterprise.

Mr. de Mel's dilemma is the dilemma of a government which has embarked on a certain course. Basically, it is the predicament of a dependent economy increasingly vulnerable to the pressures of a world economic order whose iniquities and vicissitudes the Brandt Report has rather ably analysed.

In August this year, Prof. Friedman, pontiff of the Chicago school of "Monetarism" (L. G. Sept. 15, 1978) was in London. For Mrs. Thatcher's Tory government, which had committed itself fully to the Friedman formula of economic recovery, it had been no glorious Indian summer. A wintry chill was felt throughout the British economy. High inflation and high unemployment.

Like Lord Caradon and Mr. de Mel, Mrs. Thatcher was being attacked on every side; as labour was laid off, and factories closed by the TUC, and, as bank credit was squeezed, by the CBI, the spokesman of British Big Business which had put the Tories, in office. As Mrs. Thatcher and her "economic ministers" (the inner cabinet) summoned Prof. Friedman for urgent consultations, Fleet St. broke into a sardonic chuckle. The Chicago surgeon, the Michael de Bakey of monetarism was being rushed to the bedside because the patient was showing no signs of post-operative recovery!

At least one leading UK paper invited an opinion from Galbraith. Widely regarded as the finest economist produced by the western world after Keynes, JKG won renown as the high priest of the Affluent Society. Since then he has changed many of his

views, a development which has paralleled the 'shocks' and 'crises' that have continued to bedevil the western economy. In his famous Relth Lectures on the BBC, for instance he devoted more than half his time to Marx, and treated only one other economist respectfully, Keynes.

JKG was kind (patronisingly so) to Friedman, but certainly not respectful, as he examined the ideas of the man whose prescriptions have been accepted by one other regime, Pinochet's Chile. JKG did not say what Eduardo Galleano said of Adam Smith (In the periphery Adam Smith needed Mussolini!) but he did remark that Friedman, his admirers and critics, were lucky because his ideas could be tested in the ideal conditions — an advanced capitalist country, a parliamentary democracy, and a government totally committed to his ideas.

Controlling or tinkering with the machine (in this case, the money supply mechanism) he concluded, can resolve difficulties temporarily or for a fairly long period, in certain conditions. But never when the basic conditions had created 'structural' problems. The world economy was facing such problems.

It is a truism that the Third World's problems are structural. This limits the options for governing groups which would, ideally, like to follow 'democratic' 'social' 'welfarist' policies. The choices are even more difficult for popularly elected regimes. As in Jamaica.

A few days before the Sri Lanka budget, Jamaica was going to the polls in what was called "The IMF election." Having ruled the country for 8 years (two terms) Mr. Manley's left-leaning PNP was in deep trouble. While its politics had certain exceptional features (the proximity to the US giant, and the PNP's strong friendship with Cuba) its economic situation was typically 'Third Worldist'. As this election held on schedule and its result proves, it was also as much a pluralist democracy as Sri Lanka.

The sharp economic decline came with the comparatively poor prices fetched by its exports — minerals (mainly bauxite) and agricultural produce, — by rising import prices, large fuel bill, a drop in tourist income, and a severe exchange crisis. The rival JLP, wholly private enterprise oriented and openly pro-US (the party emblem, as Canute James reported, is the US Liberty Bell, including the crack in the original!) blamed the PNP's 'socialist' policies for alienating the US, and driving investors and tourists. Pointing out that tourist income had gone up in the last year, Mr. Manley charged the JLP for instigating political violence and the US media for deliberately highlighting this. In any case, he argued, that Jamaica's problems would have been worse but for the "controls" imposed by the government on economy. However, unemployment reaching 31% and inflation exceeding 26% framed the electoral mood.

In March, Jamaica broke off a three year relationship with the IMF while his Finance Minister, Mr. Small pleaded in vain for the scheduling of debts from commercial banks. (By June, IMF officials were reported to have secret talks with Mr. Seaga, the Opposition leader). The crunch came a little later. The F. T. reported:

"Mr. Manley's anger with the IMF has been building up for the past three years. But it came to a head when the Fund asked the PM to cut the budget, already reduced by US 56 million, by a further 28 million dollars. The Jamaican leader argued that this was a recipe for political suicide as it would mean the dismissal of 11,000 gov't workers at a time when unemployment was causing serious social problems".

Since the temptation to draw a parallel with the United Front and the SLFP may be strong, the reader must be cautioned. In late 1972 (i.e.) before the oil price hike, and certainly long before the LSSP was sacked), a White Paper on Foreign investment was presented by PM, in her capa-

city as Planning Minister, The Evening Standard (London) greeted it, thus: "this goes far beyond any previous concessions to foreign capital, even those offered by the preceding rightwing UNP". It hailed the offer as a 'total victory for the middle-of-the-road elements in the ruling coalition.' (Evening Standard — August 24th 1972).

Victory as now known, was not 'total' since no attempt was made to implement the White Paper except much later in the FTZ, Export Promotion, the Foreign Investment Guarantee Law.

According to Western diplomats, IMF officials in Washington state quite categorically that the SLFP in 1975 accepted 'the same stabilization package' in principle. The government finally decided to wait till after the elections to try out a change of direction.. also, we learnt there were pressures inside." Mr. Subasinghe, holding the key Industries portfolio, and the CP, were probably these "pressures." (Independently, Cheryl Payer traces the UF's relations with the IMF in her well known book.)

In this connection, FDB's replies at a recent CSR seminar are most interesting. How can you denounce the UNP as dictatorial when it is using the very laws that you conceived? "Yes, but then there was a strong opposition". How can the SLFP criticise the UNP's open invitation to the robber barons and the MNC's when you extended the same invitation? "Yes, but they didn't come."

The dilemma of limited (and unpopular) options is not the psychological malady of this or that Minister or even of this or that party (although the policies of a particular government can aggravate the problem) but of 'Third World' regimes incapable of breaking the chains of economic dependence, and the stranglehold of a world system dominated by the West, and managed by institutions like the IMF and IBRD.

While Mr. Manley, in Jamaica was getting angry, the same F. T. was reporting that Mr. de Mel

was 'exploding in anger' in Paris. The occasion was the Aid Group meeting, sponsored by the IBRD, with her 'big sister', the IMF also present.

To the surprise of the MF, and the Mahawali Minister, Mr. Dissanayake, the Bank and some donors, including Britain which had given us an outright grant (the largest) of 100 million pounds for Victoria, opened fire.

Conducting the Vietnam war, Mr. McNamara had seen the US getting stuck in the mud of Vietnam's rice paddies. Now apparently on the side of Third World 'good guys', Mr. McNamara's top representative made a symbolic gesture of the change of heart and got stuck in the mud of Sri Lanka's paddy fields at Wapmagul. But that was in 1978.

In 1980, it was a different story. Could Sri Lanka keep this pace of growth? Where was the money, the local resources? Cost escalation had made nonsense of the original Mahaveli estimates but the donors could not make the gap since they were in serious trouble too. Why this heavy expenditure on "non-productive" and "long gestation" projects? Why was the Kotte complex necessary? Why this large investment on housing and construction? Let's have another look at Mahaveli though the aid (Rs.8000 million) is pledged.

Even angrier than his colleague, the Mahaveli minister was to remind everybody that the UNP had won its great victory on two economic issues—unemployment and living costs. The Minister even had a snide reference to those parties which win elections only to send unemployment sky-rocketing—A shot at Mrs. Thatcher, surely.

To his credit, the MF returned home to warn the government and the country that the aid climate had suddenly become distinctly chilly.

This was in July, the cruellest month. The IMF worried about the rapid expansion of money supply and inflation, called for "financial discipline." But by that

(Continued on page 22)

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# THE ARMY'S EXPANDING ROLE

by Jayantha Somasunderam

The Armed Forces that came into being in 1949 and 1950 with the advent of dominion status for Ceylon, were of a limited and token nature. The Army, the dominant service, was commanded by only a brigadier — a British one — Brigadier Earl Caithness.

With the exception of the 1953 Hartal the Armed Forces were used by the UNP with caution. Nineteen fifty six saw the expansion of the Armed Forces, the birth of new units and their frequent use to augment the civil authority. This period coincides with the Ceylonsiation of the Armed Forces, the last British Commander, Brig. Sir. Francis Ried being replaced by Brig. Anton Muttukumaru OBE ED. The Bandaranaike era also saw the emergence of two new phenomena, the provision of diplomatic assignments to retired commanders: Maj. Gen. Anton Muttukumaru OBE ED, Maj. Gen. Winston Wijekoon OBE ED and Maj. Gen. Richard Udugama MBE, and their doubling in civil posts: Air Vice Marshal Paddy Mendis, SLAF and Rear Admiral Rajan Kadiragamar MVO RCyN.

In 1955 the Ceylon Armoured Corp was set up at Ridiyagama with its 1st Reconnaissance Squadron being commanded by Maj. Sepala Attygalle MVO ED. The following year the Sinha Regiment was raised at Kattukurunda under Lt. Col. Roy Jayatilke MBE. The Gemunu Watch followed in 1962, it was commanded by Lt. Col. John Halangoda. The Army Training Centre at Diyatalawa and the 4th Regiment Ceylon Artillery were also constituted during the first spell of Bandaranaike rule, 1956 to 1965.

This expansion paralleled the extensive use of the Police and the Armed Forces in civil life. The deployment of the Army against the Federal Party's satyagraha and the use of troops to perform

the work of strikers, became widespread in 1961.

The recourse to the military which had begun imperceptibly under S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, became a way of life under Mrs. Bandaranaike and Felix Dias who was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Defence in 1960.

## INSURRECTION

The growth of the Armed Forces and Police in this decade was however modest compared to the expansion that occurred after 1970. When she surrendered Office in 1977, Mrs Bandaranaike bequeathed to her successor a military force numbering 13,700 running on a budget of Rs. 500 million per year. In 1970 the budget was Rs. 45 million.

With the outbreak of the Insurrection in 1971, the military swamped civil life. Their budget was no longer subject to Planning Ministry scrutiny. Their numbers proliferated and a new generation of weapons were provided for them by Mrs. Bandaranaike and Felix Dias. When the Insurrection proved an inadequate excuse for pumping funds into the military, security for the Non-Aligned Summit took its place.

So pervasive was the presence of the military that J. R. Jayewardene was to tell Parliament in 1974 that the Army, particularly the National Service Regiment set up in 1971, was Mrs. Bandaranaike's political instrument. He warned of the danger of the constant glitter of medals and the brass and braid of uniforms, for democracy. Finally he charged that a clique, consisting of Mrs. Bandaranaike's loyalists within the Army, was accumulating considerable power in its hands, as a prelude to a military government.

During Mrs. Bandaranaike's second period in office, ending in 1977, the Regular Army increased from 6,900 to 8,900 men.

An Army which twenty years before had been commanded by a Brigadier was now large enough to require a Lieutenant General. The Armoured Corp had its Daimler Armoured Cars replaced by Saladin Armoured Cars. The Artillery received 76mm and 85mm guns. The combat troops were equipped with automatic weapons, modern communication equipment and had BTR-152 Armoured Personnel Carriers to take them to battle.

The Sri Lanka Volunteer Force, two regiments of which were born in the seventies — the National Service Regiment and the Rajarata Rifles — had grown from 4,000 to 9,000 men.

## COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS

In 1970 the Royal Ceylon Navy had one frigate, the HMCyS Gajabahu, and 6 patrol Boats. The Regular Navy numbered 1,700 and the volunteers 200. Today the Sri Lanka Navy has 6 Fast Attack Gunboats — 5 from China and one from the Soviet Union — supported by 27 patrol Boats. The Regular Navy has 2,600 officers and men and the volunteers 600.

When Mrs. Bandaranaike took office in 1970, the Royal Ceylon Air Force with 1,650 men, consisted of a squadron of 12 Jet Provost armed trainers, 12 Chipmunk trainers, 12 Heron, Dove and pioneer communication and transport craft and 3 Dragonfly helicopters.

When she stepped down in 1977, not only was the Sri Lanka Air Force flying commercial operations, it had 2,200 officers and men and 1,100 men in the SLAF Volunteers which began in 1971. The SLAF by now had a ground attack fighter squadron of 4 Soviet MiG-17s, 1 MiG-15 and 3 Jet Provost. It had a Transport Squadron of 6 craft, a Communication Squadron of 3 craft and 16 training craft.



Its Helicopter squadron had 7 AB 206s and 6 Bell Jet Ranger 476s.

When she handed over the reins of office Mrs. Bandaranaike had not only raised the strength of the Police to 14,500 but she had also set up a Special Police Reserve Force of 4,500.

On coming to power in July 1977, the UNP was in such a position of strength that it could count on its supporters to crush opposition. For two years, whenever the opposition took to the streets, they were the recipients of violent reprisals — and the Police were often indifferent by-standers. The catalogue of violence began with the attacks on SLFP supporters on July 23rd 1977. It also lists the attacks by "villagers" on the Kelaniya University students who elected an anti-UNP student council; the attacks on the Bank strikers and the beating up of opposition trade unionists like Mowlana when they protested over leave withdrawals for public servants.

#### LAST TIME

On June 6th this year, for the last time, the UNP was able to repeat this tactic. On this the Day of National Protest, not only did CP Unionist Somapala die, but his funeral became a massive protest demonstration which encouraged workers to come out on strike in July. With JSS Union members also joining the strike, it was no longer possible to use their supporters to counter the opposition. The UNP Administration, like so many unpopular Governments before it, sought refuge and protection from the Police and Military.

At the August 8th Satyagraha held in support of the strike, the police swooped down, and arrested Vasudeva Nanayakkara, GCSU leader Mahanama and NSSP General Secretary, Dr. Vickremabahu Karunaratne. With the Police and Armed Forces given *carte blanche* public demonstrations as an expression of opposition just disappeared.

Finally, when parliament took up for debate the disenfranchisement of Mrs. Bandaranaike and Felix

Dias on the 16th October, Colombo was saturated with 10,000 policemen and troops. No public demonstrations of sympathy was to be permitted. From dawn Air Force spotter aircraft circled over Colombo and reconnaissance helicopters kept watch. At Galle Face armed toops manned barricades where they scrutinised and frisked visitors to the city. The troops in battle dress had the butts of their Tommy Guns resting on their shoulders, muzzels in the air. Beside them, their officers cradled high frequency radio telephones. And behind them in the Army Rigger Grounds, Armoured cars stood by for action.

#### Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

the Walkers Strike of March 1977. It was not necessary for Vama, as alleged by Chintaka, to tout me later as a working class leader. My own record of uninterrupted activity in all sectors of the trade union movement from the nineteen forties is there for the unbiased; and can be subjected to criticism, if necessary. But why confuse the history of individuals with that of the Vama tendency and the NSSP?

The NSSP is heir to a great tradition — a tradition established by the LSSP in its hey day, a tradition of "irreconcilable opposition to imperialism and capitalism, its passionate defence of democratic rights and its sincere regard for democratic processes, its socialist internationalism as well as its deep desire for a real national unity forged on the mutual trust of the different communities who inhabit our country, and last but not least its revolutionary faith in the capacity of the masses to achieve".

Oswin Fernando.

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# Reagan : Easy rider on American nostalgia

FOREIGN NEWS

by Mervyn de Silva

Such is America's pervasive global presence that non-American observers of US elections, particularly observers in the "Third World", tend to see the campaign and the candidates through the prism of US foreign policy and international issues.

This of course is a mistake; sometimes as misleading an error as taking the viewpoints of the **New York Times** of the **Washington Post**, the sophisticated voices of the Eastern Establishment as the true mirror of American public opinion. Visitors who travel through the Mid-west or the deep South quickly realise that they are on a 'voyage of discovery' too, discovering first of all the error of their ways, their false approaches to the 'real America', the electorate which decides who moves into the Oval Office.

In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Depression (some say that it is the worst since the Civilwar) the opinion-forming questions are inflation, unemployment, health care, social security, energy, taxes and so on. The Carter administration claimed that it had reduced inflation in the past few months from an all-time high of 18-19% to a single-digit.....between 7% and 9%. But the Reagan camp argued that this is index-fixing and government's jugglery with figures and the monetary mechanism.

Given the average American's fierce individualism and profound suspicion of government (Washington is where the big fixers are) Mr. Reagan made good propaganda out of it because there is the underlying conviction that Mr. Carter was an inexperienced, incompetent and weak-willed president.

*"Going backwards into the 1980's"*

(headline, **Financial Times** examination of US foreign policy)

*"There is a feeling in our guts that when we come through the swinging doors of the world, the people inside the tavern do not look at us with the same respect".*

(**H. Brandt Ayers**, small-town editor, Alabama)

*"The world situation and the unity of liberation movements has greatly reduced the scope for pistol-packing actors in Hollywood films"*

(**Teheran Radio** commentator)

The distrust of Washington and the Federal government is native to the grain, and tradition-bound. The less 'government', the less intervention by the Centre, the better. It is a scepticism nourished not only by the emotional impulses of regionalism but also by an obsessive concern with States' rights, a psychology moulded by the shaping forces of American history, the making of the Union. (The other side of the antipathy to the Centre is the equally strong sentiment which demands that State's rights should be jealously guarded.

That this is no academic issue meant for constitutionalists was proved by the Reagan campaign. As a man who had two fairly successful terms running California, the biggest State, Reagan could rant against all the familiar evils of federal government with fervent conviction. Intervention, ineffective laws and regulations, extravagant government spending ('fraud and fat and waste' he shouted, could be cut out to save billions) were easy targets in his sunsights.

Economic discontent and unrest are rapidly transformed into sharp social and political conflicts in a society that is not only racially mixed but one where the non-whites are the most impoverished.

In conditions of economic decline and insecurity, such tensions turn explosive in an environment that is probably more violence-prone than any other in the world. Crime, the squalor of the ghettos and the 'inner cities', youth unemployment, rising prices, and ethnic tensions — these are the deadly and potent ingredients which can make the 'melting pot' a witches' cauldron. The violent clashes which erupted in Miami and the re-arming of the KKK (an interesting parallel development to the re-emergence of neo-Fascist groups in Europe) can be taken as warning signals.

The election was held some years after Watergate, and Vietnam and exactly one year after the seizure of 52 US diplomats as hostages in Teheran soon after a revolution had overthrown the Shah, America's staunchest ally and its regional policemen, protecting what Americans call the vital choke — point of the western economy. It is not only Third World regimes which find alibis in OPEC and the Arabs. The people of America, the most profligate consumers of energy, believe that many of their troubles can be traced to the oil sheiks and the 'camel jockeys'.

In the threadbare phrase, Watergate and Vietnam were 'traumatic' experiences. But it is likely

that what happened in Iran bruised the American psyche even more deeply. It is not simply that the wound is fresh, but that the blow came from a totally unexpected quarter (the Vietnamese were Communists, anyway). More painfully, there was nothing Washington could do about it.

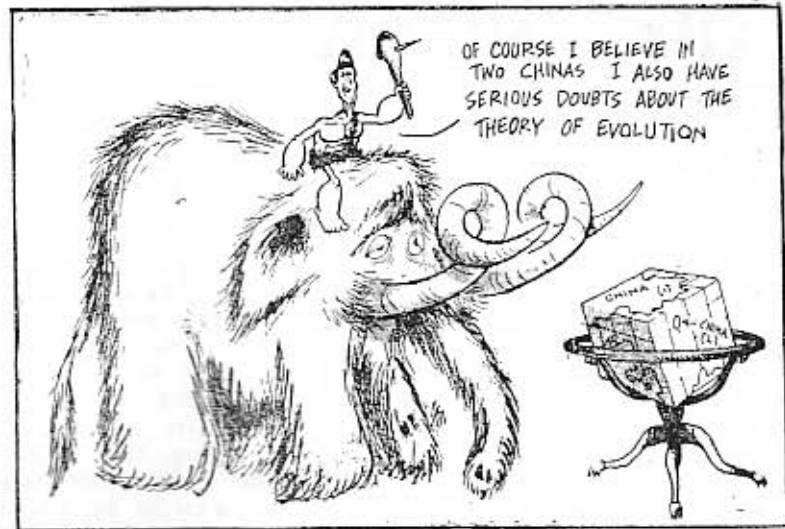
It was this helplessness (and its humiliating exposure to the world in the abortive rescue operation) which the American mind found so hard to assimilate. For the most innovative nation in the world, the belief that there is a solution to every challenging problem and the confidence in the capacity to find it, is all part of the American mystique. Effectiveness is all. Success is a fetish.

Depression at home, decline of influence and prestige abroad. How did it happen? Where did such a sorry state of affairs begin? What caused it? Who is responsible?

Ronald Reagan, the cowboy from Hollywood has been lampooned throughout the western world, perhaps too cruelly because he has after all held an important political office. But it is not Reagan that matters but the corporate interests whose candidate he was, and how their thinking was able to capitalise on the public mood. In an excellent article in the *New Statesman*, Godfrey Hodgson observes:

"The key to understanding it is the word nostalgia; yearning for the days when, as Theodore White once wrote in 1945, 'the world belonged to America', and America belonged to uppermiddle class, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant generals, and lawyers and corporate executives. It is nostalgia, sometimes vented in irritated polemic against the bringers of the bad tidings that the world will not remain forever as it was in 1945, sometimes in bitter jeremiads about the decline of American power, that must be seen as the key to understanding the sulphurous mood and volatile behaviour of Reagan's America".

Who had reduced America to such a station and what was to



be done? California's most prestigious 'think-tank' is the Hoover Institution of War and Peace, at Stanford. (Reagan is one of its honorary fellows, along with Alexander Solzhenitzyn, the man who has regretted the defeat of the German army at Shalingrad, and the outcome of the Vietnam war). A 868 page volume of essays entitled "The United States in the 1980's" opens, as the same commentator notes, with a contribution by professor Milton Friedman, high-priest of monetarism and the academic guru of the fascist Chilean Junta, it is called 'the Tide is Turning'.

Hodgson sums up: "The tide is turning, they say, against New Deal liberalism, and socialism, and welfare programmes, and the self-interested strategems of the arch-villians, who are the New Class of Left-wing academics and bureaucrats, social workers and intellectuals. All that is needed now is a last effort for America to become Number One once more, and the tide will run against Soviet Cummunism as well".

This propaganda blast blew in Carter's face with double-barreled force because of his ideological lineage as a Democrat and his presidential profile as a weak, indecisive leader.

This assessment of the electoral mood was not confined to radical or Left-inclined correspondents. Reporting from the US, Ian

Davidson of the *Financial Times* said "it is common ground that mood of the people is now one of robust notionalism and that it is likely to last for a considerable time — "The Russians have been pushing us around far too long... we have emerged from the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate paralysis".

If the long-planned Reagan campaign nourished nostalgic yearnings for America's vanished supremacies in order to exploit such sentiment better, Mr. Reagan's pledged prescription is a militarily stronger America. The solution raises so many questions which cover the over-lapping areas of economic policy, the arms budget, foreign policy, and military strategy. Detents is predicated on "essential equivalence" or "rough equivalence", meaning an agreed assumption of strategic parity between the US and the USSR.

Mr. Reagan's aides have spoken of a 10-20% increase in defence spending. And yet Mr. Reagan is committed to tax cuts and reduced government expenditure!

While he certainly put up a better performance than his rival, the one question which reduced Mr. Reagan to an incoherent, and evasive waffle was that fired at him during the TV debate by a correspondent of the *Monitor*. How did he reconcile the two promises?

(Continued on page 11)

# DENG SPEAKS

— to Oriana Fallaci

*Q: Let me clear a point, Mr. Deng. When you say the ideas of Chairman Mao do you mean what is known as "Mao Tse-Tung Thought"?*

A: Yes. You know, during the revolutionary war, when the party was still in Yemen, we put all the ideas and the principles advocated by Mao Tse-Tung together, we defined them as "Mao Tse-Tung Thought", and we considered it as the thinking which would guide the party from then on. But of course Mao Tse-Tung Thought was not created by Mao Tse-Tung alone. Though most of the ideas were his, other veteran revolutionaries contributed to the formation and development of the thought. To mention a few names only, Chou En-lai and Liu Shaoqi and Chou Teh.

*Q: Yes, but since you call them mistakes, Mr. Deng, shouldn't you admit that the mistakes began almost at once, that, for instance, the Great Leap Forward was a mistake?*

A: Of course. When I indicated the late Fifties as the beginning of all the mistakes, I referred to the Great Leap Forward. However, here, too, it wouldn't be fair to blame Chairman Mao only. Here, too, we veterans had a good deal of fault. For instance, the fault of acting against the laws of reality and pretending to speed up the economy with methods which ignored the economical rules. In fact, it's true that Chairman Mao was the main person responsible, but it is also true that he was the first one to understand the mistake, to suggest corrections. And when the corrections were not carried out because of negative factors, he made his self-criticism of negative factors, he made his self-criticism. It was 1962. But again we failed to draw lessons, and so he started to launch the Cultural Revolution.

*Q: What did he really want with the Cultural Revolution?*

A: To avoid the restoration of capitalism in China. Yes, this was the intention. Chairman Mao's intention, I mean, not of those who would become the Gang of Four. The point is that, in spite of the good purpose, the intention derived from a wrong judgement of the Chinese reality. And again Chairman Mao was mistaken. He was also mistaken in choosing the target to hit. He said that the target should be the target to hit. He said that the target should be the capitalist roaders in the party, and by this he had a large number of the veteran revolutionaries attacked. At all levels. People who not only had excellently fought for the revolution but who also had rich experience in administration. And among them there was Liu Shaoqi, soon arrested and expelled from the party. As a result, all the revolutionary cadres were decimated. Chairman Mao himself acknowledged it one year or two before dying. It was when he said that the Cultural Revolution had been wrong for two things: because it had decimated the revolutionary cadres and because it had waged an all-round civil war.

*Q: So it really was a civil war.*

A: What else? People were divided in two factions that massacred each other. And since the old revolutionaries had been knocked down, only those who claimed to be 'rebels' ran rampant. Such as Lin Piao and the members of the Gang of Four. Oh, so many people died in that war!

*Q: How many?*

A: It is hard to estimate because they died of all kinds of causes. Besides, China is such a vast country. But listen. So many died that, even if other tragedies had not taken place during it, the number of the dead would be enough to say that the Cultural Revolution was the wrong thing to do. Now,

*The Lanka Guardian has already published (October 1, November 1) excerpts from the interview given by the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping to the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci. Recently the "Peoples Daily", Peking, published this interview in full. We now publish a final extract from this exclusive interview.*

to return to the question you raised in the beginning and the distinction I made, I will conclude with saying that Chairman Mao's errors were political errors. This does not diminish them true, even less does it justify them, but it is one thing to speak about political errors and another thing to speak about the crimes like the crimes of Lin Piao or the Gang's. Yes, of course it was Chairman Mao who permitted Lin Piao and the Gang of Four to exploit his political errors to usurp the power, but....

*Q: In conclusion, the next congress of the Chinese Communist Party will not end as the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party, where Khrushchev denounced Stalin. Am I wrong?*

A: You are not. We shall certainly evaluate Chairman Mao's merits and mistakes which characterised his life. We shall certainly affirm his merits and say that they are of primary importance, acknowledge his errors and assess that they are secondary, and while making them public we will adopt a realistic attitude. But also, we shall certainly continue to uphold Mao Tse-Tung Thought, which was the correct part of his life. No, it isn't only his portrait which remains in Tiananmen Square: It is the memory of a man who guided us to victory and built a country. Which is far from being little. And for this the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people will always cherish him as a very valuable treasure. Do write this: We shall not do to Mao Tse-Tung what Khrushchev did to Stalin at the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress.

*Q: The things I don't understand are many, Mr. Deng. To*

begin with, the case of Chou En lai. How do you explain that he was the only one they did not knock down during the Cultural Revolution? How do you explain that, well, being the noble person we know, he never tried to stop the infamies which happened under his eyes, for instance the shameful arrest of Liu Shaoqi?

A: Let's begin with saying what kind of man Chou En-lai was. A man who worked very hard and never complained. Listen, there were days when he worked even 12 to 16 hours out of 24. I can tell you because I knew him since France where we were together and I regarded him as my elder brother. We joined the revolution almost at the same time, Chou En-lai was much respected by all, friends and enemies, people and comrades, and this partially explains why he wasn't wiped out by the Cultural Revolution, why he always remained at this post of premier: something which was a great fortune for many. It also explains why he could exercise his influence as moderator and act as a pillow cushion which softens the blows. Many losses could be avoided thanks to Chou En-lai many people could be spared thanks to his role. But, in those years, he found himself in the most difficult position. And he often said things that he would have wished to have not said, he often did things that he would have wished to have not done. This in spite of the fact that people forgave him all. For instance, when Liu Shaoqi was expelled from the party and jailed, it was Premier Chou En-lai who read the report of Liu's so-called crimes.

Q: Chou En-lai did that?

A: Yes, Of course the report had been written by others. But it was Chou En-lai who read it. He had to. He could not avoid it.

Q: Awful. Sad, awful. It shows, once again that revolutions do not change men and that, after a revolution, the same horrors take place as before. As a proverb says in my country: "Everything changes and remains as before."

A: Well....I can only answer that we may prevent or try to prevent such things by establishing an effective new system. You see, a while ago I mentioned the word "feudal". Well, some systems of our recent past have just the

## Reagan . . .

(Continued from page 9)

Where was he to find the money? It was then that he spoke of "fat" and "fraud". If his enhanced arms budget "brings joy to the boardrooms of the military-industrial complex in the wintry season of recession" what cheer will he bring to the ordinary American? And what effect will it have on foreign aid programmes? For the 'Third World', now living through an even colder winter, a new arms race is a chilling prospect.

In his reaction to the news of Mr. Carter's defeat, Iran's prime minister was quick to underline Mr. Reagan's declared partiality for Israel. President Sadat who put all his trust (and Egypt's hopes) in the vanquished Mr. Carter was "emotional" when he heard the news. US commentators have Mr. Reagan's plans to use Israel as an operational base to combat "communism" in the area.

The new man in the White House, however ambitious he is or however different he wants to be, often finds that the legacies of office carry certain constraints which circumscribe policy choices. Mr. Reagan's views on Taiwan which prompted even the *ECONOMIST*, a Reagan supporter, to chuckle about riding a white horse into a China shop, cannot possibly destroy the Sino-US rapprochement.

The felt need to project a double-image of a strong America led by a 'no-nonsense' tough-guy President resulted in what to many outsiders seemed a noisy exhibition in sabre-

stigmas of feudalism: the worship of the individual, the patriarchal way of running things, the life-long tenure for the official. China is a country with a history of a thousand years of feudalism, see, and because of this our revolution has been suffering a lack of socialist democracy, of socialist legality. Now we are trying to correct all that to finally establish a real socialist democracy, a real socialist legality and . . . Listen, there is no other way to avoid in the future what happened to Liu Shaoqi. ☉

rattling and a naive display of virility. Stephen Rosenfeld, an editorial writer of the *Washington Post* put it rather well: "The dynamics of the campaign have made machismo in the Gulf, the test of presidential leadership".

More seriously, he concluded: "Suddenly, without thinking, and talking and arguing it out we are heading back into the intervention business with a vengeance....in the region where the stakes could not be higher and the chances of a misstep greater".

The world of the 1980's is no movie-set. A US Seventh Cavalry, bugler and all, dressed in the combat uniform of the Rapid Deployment Force, strikes one as a scenario better ordered for Woody Allen or the *Mad* magazine than for Ronald Reagan, President.

Yet, military adventurism in the service of the "robust nationalism" and the newly acquired machismo cannot be ruled out, especially in other areas where the risks may not be perceived as high. Say, Central America.

On the other hand, Reagan may, at least at the start, be so preoccupied with domestic economic problems that we may have a more withdrawn inward-looking (and protectionist) America. But the temptations to show off that the US is once again "Number One" may be too compelling. Then the Presidency, as it often happens, will be an awakening for Mr. Reagan, an awakening to the simple, stark fact that 1980 is not 1945. The only question is . . . and it is a troubling one . . . will others have to pay a price for the education of Ronald Reagan?

# PROSPECTS FOR SOUTH

by N. M. M. I. Hussain

This subject has special importance consequent to the break-down of the bi-polar world which emerged after the Second World War, and in the context of the possible emergence of new centres of power. The important question for the future in the sphere of international relations is whether a traditional world order will be restored based on power centres, balance of power, alliance systems involving unequal relations between states, or whether a new world order can be established on the basis of the true independence of states as distinct from merely formal sovereignty, equality of status in relations between states arising from sovereignty, and international co-operation on the basis of peaceful co-existence. It is the second alternative that has seen widespread acceptance in the Third World countries.

The subject of this paper has acquired special importance also in the context of disillusionment about the prospects for the restructuring of international economic relations, more specifically in the context of disillusionment about the prospects for effective action through UNCTAD.

## THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION

The South Asian region is taken as including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

The region is distinctive in showing an overwhelming disparity in size, population, economic and military power, between a potential great power, India, and the other countries of the region. There are significant disparities in other regions as well, between Indonesia and other South East Asian countries for instance, but the magnitude of the disparity within South Asia is much greater and should make the problems of regional co-operation in this region rather special.

The region abuts on the Soviet Union, a super-power, and on a

potential great power, China, while the other superpower, the U. S., is physically present in the Indian Ocean. The region is unlike Latin America which is in geographical contiguity to only one super-power, the U. S., or the Arab world or Africa which are not geographically contiguous with any of the great powers. South Asia cannot be ignored by the Soviet Union or China, and consequently it cannot be ignored by the U. S., It would appear to be a region with a high potential for great power interaction. This could imply disadvantages for the region in some ways, but also prove a potent psychological factor in preventing undue anxieties over the possibility that intra-regional relations will lead to dominance and dependence as a consequence of the disparities that are so notable a feature of the region. The option of significant extra-regional links should be seen as facilitating regionalism in South Asia.

The South Asian region opens out, in addition to the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union and China, to the Middle East, South East Asia, and the Indian Ocean. This geographical feature of South Asia promotes a sense of the option of extra-regional links with countries other than the great powers. It has to be noted also that Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh are predominantly Muslim countries enjoying economic and other links with the wider world of Islam. It should not be difficult for South Asian countries to avoid the sense of claustrophobia which will make regionalism much more difficult.

The ratio of population to resources is regarded as peculiarly unfavourable in South Asia. Some of the poorest countries in the world belong to this region. The region seems to be characterised by spreading instability, probably as a consequence of economic

difficulties combined with rising mass political consciousness. Theoretically, the present time could be propitious for a search for hitherto unexplored strategies of development, including regional options for development.

The region is characterised by extraordinary linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and other diversity, even to the extent that it might be questionable whether it is meaningful to speak of 'South Asia' as a 'region'. In the study of international regionalism, it has been recognised that geographical contiguity does not, of course, suffice to bring about regional integration but merely facilitates it, successful regionalism depending on variables such as 'homogeneity' interaction or transactions, and mutual knowledge (in the terms used by Philip E. Jacob and Henry Teune in their study 'The Integrative Process,' included in *Politics and the international System*—edited by Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr.). It might be argued that the lack of homogeneity is not an important variable as the countries of ASEAN appear to have developed a sense of ASEAN identity even though they lack homogeneity. This could be for the reason that other variables have been operative in the area to an extent significant enough to counteract the lack of homogeneity. The importance of homogeneity in promoting co-operation is illustrated by the relations between many of the Islamic countries. The extraordinary diversity of South Asia is an important, though not perhaps insurmountable, obstacle to the development of regionalism.

## ABSENCE OF SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL GROUPINGS

South Asia is notable for its lack of regional groupings, in contrast to most other regions of the world.

# ASIA

After the Second World War, there was an increase in the consciousness of the need for intra-regional interaction. This led to regional groupings covering most areas of the globe: NATO, Warsaw Pact, Common Market, COMECON, OAS, OAU and the Arab League. It is to be noted that the Americans, East and West Europe, Africa and the Arab World are covered by these regional groupings. In addition there are several sub-regional groupings within those regions. In South East Asia, a part of the region is covered by ASEAN. It is notable that there are no regional groupings in South Asia and East Asia.

Unlike Latin America, West and East Europe, the Arab world, and Africa, South Asia has no sense of homogeneity and furthermore there has been no political need for intra-regional interaction which could promote regional groupings as in the case of South East Asia. There is also the factor, unlike in other regions, of the disparity between the biggest country in South Asia and the other countries of the region.

What requires to be assessed is whether the disparity and the lack of homogeneity will always prevent regionalism in South Asia. Interaction between the South Asia. Interaction between the South Asian states could promote a sense of regionalism as in the case of ASEAN. Unfortunately South Asia seems to be characterised more by dissension and conflict than by positive interaction.

## SOUTH ASIAN RELATIONS

### (a) Iran

A clarification is required regarding the inclusion of Iran in South Asia, as it could be equally well regarded as belonging to the Middle East in terms of religion and culture. Iran sometimes emphasizes its Aryan character, which leads to its identification

*The Marga Institute will be holding a regional seminar on "The possibilities of co-operation among South Asian nations." This paper, especially prepared by the author for this seminar will be presented at a conference to be held in Colombo shortly.*

with South Asia. It has special links with Afghanistan and Pakistan through religious, linguistic, cultural and ethnic bonds. Iran has had a pre-occupation with the Indian Ocean.

It has importance as a pivot connecting South Asia to other regions. At present some of its relations with neighbouring countries, including Afghanistan, are disturbed. The appeal of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran could become a significant force in the Islamic countries of South Asia. In the past Iran has had special relations with Pakistan and India, and played an important role in promoting understanding between the two countries. The former Shah mooted the idea of a South Asian Common Market.

### (b) Afghanistan:

After the Revolution of April 1978, Afghanistan established special relations with the Soviet Union. Afghanistan's questioning of the Durand Line and support for Paktoonistan has caused problems with Pakistan. Relations have deteriorated also because of Afghan refugees in Pakistan who are alleged by Afghanistan to receive Pakistani assistance to enable them to function as rebels. It has also been alleged that China has been involved in sending supplies for the Afghan rebels through the Karakoram Highway. Developments in Afghanistan since April 1978 have meant increased great power involvement in South Asia, in which context dissension between Afghanistan and Pakistan could acquire special importance. It has to be noted, however, that Afghan-Pakistan relations have for decades been ambivalent rather than hostile.

Afghanistan has had normally very friendly relations with India. This may be the consequence of the principle supposedly enunciated by Kautilya that the enemy is the neighbour while the friend is the neighbour of one's neighbour.

### (c) Nepal:

After a period of special relations with India, Nepal appears to have sought equi-distance between its giant neighbours, India and China. This is the apparent motivation for the 1975, proposal to establish Nepal as a Zone of peace, a proposal endorsed so far by Pakistan, Bangladesh and China.

### (d) Bhutan:

Under the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949, Bhutan agreed to be 'guided by the advice of the Government of India in its external relations', which could be regarded as indicating special relations between the two countries. It is important to note that Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of India and not to have its external relations determined by India. In fact at the UN and other international conferences, Bhutan votes independently of India on controversial issues.

### (e) Bangladesh:

Bangladesh regards itself as a pivot between South and South East Asia. President Ziaur Rahman has been very conscientious in developing relations with countries in both regions.

After the breakaway from Pakistan, Bangladesh had cordial relations with India which deteriorated over the problem of the Ganges waters. This appears to have led to specially friendly relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, after the Janata came to power in India, accommodation was reached on the Ganges waters problem.

### (f) Pakistan:

Pakistan as a Muslim country has important links with the rest of the Islamic world. Consequent to the Afghanistan Revolution, Pakistan is regarded as the buffer between the Soviet Union and

its ally, Afghanistan, and the rest of South Asia. Pakistan has specially friendly relations with China, relations which have acquired a strategic dimension with the completion of the Karakoram Highway.

Relations with India have proved notoriously difficult, with three wars between the two countries since the time of independence. It is significant that while Pakistan has been going through a difficult period, there have been no complaints about Indian interference in any way.

The only Indo-Pakistan problem that has been intractable so far is Kashmir. It seems to have a significance which makes it more than a territorial problem. Pakistan may feel that its Islamic national identity is involved in the problem, while India may equally feel that its secular national identity is involved.

(g) **India:**

Problems remain, as in the case of relations with China, but improvement has been noteworthy. It could be that consequent to the break up of Pakistan, India gradually came to feel more secure, and consequently relations with neighbours eased. Even if this hypothesis is not correct, the fact remains that a stereotype of largely unsatisfactory relations has broken and there has been effective demonstration of the possibility of India having friendly relations with all its neighbours, even if some bilateral problems have yet to be solved.

(h) **Sri Lanka:**

Theoretically Sri Lanka should be the most vulnerable to India of all its neighbours, but it has had more consistently friendly relations with India than any of India's other neighbours. It seems

to be very significant that while India and China were having bad relations, Sri Lanka managed to have good relations with both India and China at the same time. An important part of the explanation might be that India's relations with its neighbours have been largely determined by security pre-occupations.

(i) **Maldives:**

The Maldives has not been much involved with the rest of South Asia. The only foreign missions in the Maldives are those in India, Pakistan and Libya. The Maldives acquired international importance after the British relinquished the Gan Base in 1976, which led to speculation about Soviet overtures for use of its facilities. It is curious that neither the U. S. nor the Soviet Union maintains resident missions in the Maldives.

(To be continued)

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# Movement — no Messiah needed

by Vikramabahu Karunaratne

**A**n objective situation favourable to populist politics emerged in the '50s. Unlike in mid '20s and late '30s, this time, the capitalist boom created conditions for decades of populist politics. Parliamentary democracy granted by the British Raj was an added advantage. Populism was able to overwhelm the independent working class movement to win the leadership for themselves. Naturally it was dominated by the new radical bourgeoisie. Thus in power, in addition to its Sinhala chauvinism, it cleared the path for the new layers of bourgeoisie in general, and carried out a series of reforms mostly affecting rural society. Of these most important were the expansion of education combined with the extension of state sector producing more employment and the development of cooperative movement.

By the mid '60s the economy was moving into crisis and the militant, united, working class movement was challenging the leadership of populism. No longer was there any room for the inflationary program of populism. There were deep divisions as to the path they should follow. While the right wing moved towards the U.N.P, the so called "left" wing became the instrument of popular frontist manoeuvre for the bourgeoisie. Popular front governments of 1965 and 1970 were marked by counter reforms and cuts in living standards. This was so, in spite of the reorganisations carried out, which were really surgical operations done on the ailing capitalist system. Naturally such sharp reorganisations antagonized certain conservative layers of the bourgeoisie. Hence the pressure and support of the working class was vital in carrying out these reforms. Popular frontism is a delicate operation. Masses tend to go beyond the limits set by the bourgeoisie. This happened several times during the period 70/76. However the main purpose of stalling, demora-

lizing and confusing the proletariat, was achieved.

Populism drew people into active participations in politics even in 50's. Not only were there gatherings and shouting slogans such as 'Ape Anduwa' but also there was in the villages, an open defiance of the traditional elite. Part of this energy was channelled into communalism by the populist leadership. However the social nature of mass intervention continued and increased significantly from the late 60s. In fact institutionalizing mass participation was one of the main objectives of the U.F. Front. Nevertheless the masses understood the strength of their actions and in fact it was this mood of mass democracy that enabled Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna to prepare the youth for an insurrection. Even after 1971, the masses were brought into the street to oppose the U.N.P and to consolidate the land take over. During this period many populist M. Ps formed Militia type organisations imitating Chinese or Cuban red armies. Many of the others were mobilizing support in their respective electorates for their efforts to eliminate private property and convert the entire economy to a self sufficient cooperative!

Today, even as a means of playing popular frontish tricks on the working class, the SLFP has ceased to be very useful to the bourgeoisie. In spite of the demoralization and confusion created by the previous coalition government, the proletariat, united under the ITUAC, is today moving into independent class actions. When the proletarian movement gathers momentum, drawing other layers, behind it, it will widen the cracks within the populist movement. Once it is clear that the SLFP in its present form, is incapable of involving working class parties in a fresh coalition, quite possibly serious attempts will be made to

present a "left" wing of populism. In fact such a process started in 1977 with the formation of the so called united left front of the LSSP and CP and PDP. The most peculiar feature of this front was that the central leader of the front was not specified. Subasinghe stood as a bad substitute for somebody more important who was to emerge later from the SLFP. A kind of John the Baptist announcing the coming Messiah! But this Messiah was not necessary. The proletarian movement did not gather any significant strength to necessitate such a split in the SLFP. The bourgeoisie need not worry when the U.N.P. clearly dominates the mass movement. But today things are changing fast. When the bourgeoisie sees that the working class is emerging as a national force giving leadership to other oppressed layers, it may seriously resort to a second edition of popular frontism using a "left" faction of, or restructuring the SLFP for this purpose.

Still, this is fairly unlikely. What the bourgeoisie has in mind as the real alternative, is a right wing dictatorship. Towards the end they will need to mobilize radicalized petty bourgeoisie in fascist organisations which will do the spade work for the establishment of a dictatorship. Such organisations can develop within the frustrated petty bourgeoisie, some leading layers coming from the disintegration of SLFP. Impatient radical petty bourgeoisie, particularly the youth, are looking for a quick, radical solution. These layers have rejected the populism of the SLFP conclusively. In fact they have been moving away from it for the last decade and half. It is from these left moving masses that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna collected its membership. Then, with the proletariat submerged in a popular front, petty bourgeois youth had to move into a new radical organisation. The JVP developed into a mass youth move-

ment filling this political vacuum. Today even the JVP cannot have any independent existence. Either it should move towards the working class or should disintegrate in stages, some moving towards semi fascist organisations. It is the extremely radical nature of the masses that prevented SLFP leaders moving into any actions against the UNP during the last 3 years. They do not dare to start anything that they cannot finish. With the proletariat capable of independent actions, their fears are justified. However in order to keep the masses within the confines of their influence they have to propose some pseudo-militant interventions. So we hear of fire-crackers thrown at UNP neighbours houses when price hikes are announced!

In the present situation populism is not an alternative policy for the bourgeoisie. Those who consider today the SLFP as the viable alternative party of the bourgeoisie, are making twin mistakes. On the one hand they are totally confused as to the alternatives available to the bourgeoisie. First of all if the SLFP is just another UNP, then it is not an alternative. Secondly the intensifying Capitalist crisis has put an end to both the UNP's pro-Imperialist liberalism and SLFP's "anti-imperialist-populism." On the other hand they don't seem to understand the growth and decay of the SLFP. In particular they ignore one fact that it is the "left" moving section of the SLFP that will be used for Popular Frontism. For this reason they could make the serious mistake of categorizing a new popular-front as a genuine worker-peasant alternative and wing of the SLFP. We may be asked to accept that as the "left alternative"!

Today the acute crisis in capitalism does not leave any room for reformist illusions. Inflation combined with stagnation has become a common feature throughout the world. In spite of 8-6% growth (these figures are exaggerated and there were special reasons for the growth) during the last two years, our

country is no exception. In recent months, the pronouncements of the Finance Minister have become increasingly frightening. The bourgeoisie has no alternative except to place heavy burdens on the masses and bring misery for decades to come—even then without any hope or way out. Revolution and Dictatorship of the proletariat is not a "day dream" any longer. It is the only way out. In concrete terms dictatorship of the proletariat would be a government of the left, based on workers, peasants and soldiers councils with a program to end imperialist domination and for agrarian reorganization, national unification and democracy. Naturally such a government can be established only by a mass movement which goes beyond parliamentary politics. In other words, by means of a massive hartal movement.

What parties will dominate this Government? With the present alignments within the organized working class, it should be explained as a government, with Samasamaja-Communist domination. Even the JVP can join only as an auxiliary force representing petty bourgeoisie youth. However considering present day politics of the JVP, one is justified in concluding that with the rise of working class activities concentrated around the JIUAC, this party, because of the inability of its leadership to orient towards the working class, will go into deep crisis. The possibility cannot be ruled out of a semi fascist organisation emerging out of the disintegrating Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna.

In building up a mass movement which can establish a revolutionary left government, the question of drawing populist masses into actions will arise over and over again. (In Tamil speaking areas it will be the pro-TULF masses.) The JIUAC will remain a centre for mobilizing of the working class. The process of democratization with work place and regional branches has already started. Even if this guarantees the struggle of the working class, how will the Sinhala rural masses be drawn into support

it? What are the means of establishing peoples committees of action representing the struggles of youth and the peasantry? It is here that the question of **United Actions** with the SLFP against the UNP arises even when one clearly rejects coalitions and United Fronts with the SLFP or a "left" wing split of it. Today the SLFP has become a complete contradiction. The bourgeoisie in the leadership is frightened by the militancy of the masses who are following them. Hence it searches a way out **within** the bonapartist constitution. The rank and file are harassed by the present regime and the arrogant upper classes in every sector of the economy, and is bent in the opposite direction. They are preparing for the impending "return-bout". This, combined with the objective pressure due to higher cost of living, has created an explosive situation within the ranks of the SLFP. This is exactly why the leaders are afraid of giving any sanction for direct action. They are scared that the masses may take the hint seriously and go beyond their control to rally behind the proletariat. What they really like would be actions glorifying their own leadership and not directly connected to the problems of the masses; i.e. following the example of Indira.

Clearly, a call for active struggle based on specific questions affecting the masses, is to the advantage of the proletariat. In such attempts for united action, it is futile to place emphasis on the participation of leaders at national level, though this should not be excluded. On the contrary, interest of the proletariat should be towards forming regional peoples committees, defence committees etc and drawing the rural masses into active struggle initiated by the proletariat. Somewhat similar tactical questions can be raised in relation to TULF. Rejection of popular fronts is only a negative answer. That is certainly a necessary but not a sufficient answer. Positive, creative answers should be given to these tactical questions if we are to build a massive Hartal movement and install a revolutionary left Government.

# JVP — THE INSIDE STORY

## Interview with H. N. Fernando

*Q: Why did you leave the JVP?*

A: A spokesman for the JVP had informed certain newspapers that I had been expelled from the JVP as well as from the Central Committee of the Socialist Union. To date, however, I have not received any intimation to this effect. According to the Constitution of the JVP, such a step cannot be taken without first holding a Disciplinary Inquiry. At the same time, I hold office as a member of the Central Control Commission that is in charge of Disciplinary and Financial Affairs within the party. I do not know if the JVP's leadership, acting against the party's Constitution, have taken such steps against me without my knowledge.

*Q: What made you stay on for so long? And, indeed, what motivated you to join the party in the first place?*

A: I was associated with the JVP from as far back as 1968. After having been imprisoned in connection with the struggle of 1971, I resumed work in the Ceylon Teachers' Union after being released from prison. In 1971, after the proscription order on the JVP was lifted, as an organisation we strengthened our links with the JVP. It is worthwhile recalling that, in 1976, the CTU was the Convenor of the Janatha Vyaparaya (People's Movement) to win the release of political prisoners. It is significant that you ask me the reasons which led me to join the JVP. As a person who had been associated with the LSSP from a young age, by the end of the 60s I had reached a position where I could no longer agree with the theoretical deviations taking place within that party. After the LSSP joined hands with the SLFP, which is a political party that represents the capitalist class of Sri Lanka, I left the party. Among the subjective factors that led to the birth of

the JVP, a major one is the confusion and disillusionment created by the class-collaborationist politics amidst the leftwing in Sri Lanka. At that time, we held the JVP to be the political party of social revolution, not of social reform.

*Q: Tactics flow from strategy, and the JVP's tactics within this general strike flowed, according to your union's statement from the strategic line that in the present context it is unwise to struggle against the UNP. The JVP also says that such struggle would benefit the SLFP and its 'left' partners. What are your criticisms of this explanation?*

A: The idea put forward by the JVP that by engaging in confrontation with the UNP, which is the party in power, one is exposing oneself to repression and that thereby the SLFP and its 'left' henchmen gain strength, is totally false. By not engaging in an active struggle against the political repressions and economic policies of the UNP, the JVP is alienating itself from the confidence of the masses; **at the same time, they fulfill the very task they seek to avoid — namely, popular acceptance of the SLFP as the only alternative to the present regime.** The people place their confidence in a tangible organisation that struggles against the barbarism of the ruling class, not in an 'unconquerable Party of the future.' Confronting the question of how one is to build up a non-bourgeois 'third' popular force in the face of two bourgeois political parties that already have a mass base, we see that the JVP has erred in its choice of both strategy and tactics.

*Q: Apart from your difference concerning the JVP's attitude to working class struggles, do you have any other political differences with the JVP leadership?*

A: We can have only political, and not personal, differences with the leadership of the JVP.

According to our understanding, just as we joined hands with the JVP by taking into consideration the historical significance of the JVP within the left movement in Sri Lanka, we criticise the position of the JVP today with that same historical significance uppermost in our minds. Yet it seems that the leaders of the JVP consider the differences that have arisen between us to spring from personal, and not political, roots. While those in positions of leadership publicly bragged about killing us off, a handful of misguided members who are blind to all but the words of their leaders, were bold enough to attempt assault of individuals and destructions of our offices. It was with great difficulty that we managed to avoid such confrontations. In truth, in the face of this situation, we had serious reservations regarding the political ideology and structure of the JVP. It must be mentioned that, without doubt, all these incidents led to the acceleration of the political differences between us.

On the other hand, the recent strike gave us an excellent opportunity to gauge the mentality of the JVP's leadership. A major allegation levelled against us from their public platforms, was that we had no right to call out our membership on strike when our wives had not joined the strike. The problem lies not in the true or false nature of this statement, but in the attitude revealed by it. It is only a full-blooded male chauvinist who would argue, in simplistic terms, that the mere fact of the husband's going on strike would be sufficient to make the working wife also come out on strike. There are many wives who, either due to their level of political consciousness or to other reasons, have not struck work while their husbands participated in the recent strike. A woman has the full freedom and right to do so. If we are to criticise

her, such criticism should be aimed at her level of political consciousness and not at the fact that she refuses to emulate her husband. Yet, if we are to measure participation in the strike in terms of political consciousness, it becomes unnecessary to talk in terms of a male female ratio because, as we know, a large number of male workers also did not participate in the strike. It should go without saying that the level of revolutionary socialist consciousness of an individual is best determined according to the male-chauvinism inherent in that individual's ideology.

*Q: What about the JVP's theory and ideology? How do you characterise the JVP's ideological positions and what criticism would you make of such position?*

*A:* Not even what could be called a substantial, let alone a complete, analysis of the JVP and the struggle of 1971 has been made up to date, within the JVP or outside it. The analyses put forward have been either biased, or false. Even the JVP itself does not have a correct understanding of what it is. In this connection it should be pointed out that they came out from prison and began engaging in open political activity without making an analysis of the struggle of 1971. They should realise that shortcoming is not fulfilled by merely declaring themselves to be the 'revolutionary political party of the proletariat'. In the same way, no other left party has an analysis of the JVP. It seems that many attempt to pass off criticisms made at a personal level, as their political analyses. This brings to mind the proverb about people who live in glass houses not throwing stones!

The struggle of 1971 was a protest against the social injustice which had to be endured by the generation which was born in the era of social reform that took root in this country after 1956. If one is to define the majority of those who participated in this struggle as a class, they belong to the rural proletariat. I do not go so far as to

identify the JVP as the 'left political party of the rural proletariat.' Yet, this party had maximum participation from this class. Since youth constituted the largest proportion of our population, it is only natural that such a new political party would have a majority of young persons taking an active part in its activities. In addition, they received the support of rural 'lumpens' and students. Today, we realise that the JVP ideology had not been sufficiently subjected to the influence of Marxism. The JVP was able to grow as a social force because it embraced the strategy of the armed struggle and because of its style of work which attempted to cover its activity from the eyes of the state machine as well as from traditional Marxist parties. Today we see the fact that by 1971, the JVP had not been able to widen its sphere of influence to include the urban working class, to be a major factor behind the semi-Marxist eclectic ideology which was put forward by the JVP as the theory of social revolution. They did not receive this opportunity due to two factors: One, that the opportunist reformists who reigned supreme within the working class movement placed every obstacle possible in the path of the JVP; and, two, that the leadership of the JVP at that time had no clear awareness of how to join forces with the working class movement.

With the lifting of the proscription order on the JVP, our one hope was that the JVP would fulfill the primary task of delivering the working class from the clutches of opportunism and reformism within whose grasp it was tightly locked at the moment. A large number of persons actively engaged in the activities of the CTU joined hands with the JVP with this hope uppermost in their minds. This is because most of us believe that the triumph of the Sri Lanka socialist revolution depends on the coming together of the revolutionary forces of the rural proletariat and the urban working class. Yet, the recent strike proved that we could no longer entrust such

hopes to the JVP. The process of a general strike, which is already under way, is the first organised attack launched against the UNP government presently in power. The political orientation of any party—be it bourgeois, reformist or revolutionary—is revealed in its attitude to a strike of this nature, launched by the militant sections of the working class. The 'protectionist' stance adopted by the JVP to escape from the state machinery clearly reveals their attitude. This 'protectionism' is directly linked to the basic strategy of the party. We say that if elections, with mass participation, are seen only as a tactic which brings us closer to our goal of socialist revolution, than a 'protectionist' line in the face of the economic 'guerilla struggle', which is a strike, is irrelevant. Such a line becomes necessary only if elections are part of the final strategy of the party. **Thus it becomes clear that the strategy of the JVP is geared to elections.** This is the line of action of reformism, not of social revolution. We must keep in mind that there are many parties which have chosen the path of reformism while mouthing revolutionary slogans. Parliamentary elections have been the strategy of the two other major left-wing parties in the country—the LSSP and CP. We never imagined that the present leadership of the JVP would, so quickly, seek equality with the LSSP and the CP, who, after years of experimenting with their chosen strategy and after suffering defeat upon defeat, have proved that for them there is no other path. When, upon the strength of the 1971 struggle, the JVP leaders received the support of the masses, they directed it to the building of a movement of social reformism. We are doubtful of the success of such a movement as the JVP is now trying to build, because the right-wing parties such as the UNP and the SLFP also enjoy mass support. On the one hand, we see that the present leadership of the JVP has been confronted with the problem of

*(Continued on page 24)*

# TAMIL LITERARY SCENE

## — A reply to my critics

by Samudran

I am pleased to note the response to my article on the Tamil literary scene. I thank all those who have replied and commented. As criticisms have come from a variety of sources I wish to deal with them separately taking up only the vital points of disagreement.

A. J. Canagaratne in his self contradictory note has mixed up many issues raised by me. In the first place he makes an attempt to take us from a debate to a "non-debate." According to him there is no debate between Marxists and Formalists. There is something called a "non-debate", between a "vulgar, reductive Marxism" and an "undogmatic Marxism". He shifts the focus **totally** away from Marxism vs Formalism and then reduces it to nothing. Having done this, he makes a big fuss about a "real battle-field (which is not the pages of the LG)" and what is more, he tells me warningly to "rush" there "armed with real guns and live ammunition this time". There is a "non-debate" taking place in "the real battle-field" and I am asked to rush; a fine fantasy. I wonder what poor old Kaspar would have to say now. Incidentally my "imperilled mentors" are none other than Marx, Engels and their heirs. They do not need my aid. It's their followers like us who need to use their scientific teachings as an aid to apprehend reality in order to change it.

AJC would have done better if he had turned the erudite side of his mind to some real issues raised by me. Instead, he has, perhaps due to his "undogmatic approach", belittled them and made them appear as "non-issues". When a debate becomes a non-debate, issues naturally become non-issues, and having done this by sophistry, AJC enjoys waxing eloquent on the "hurt-pride of

dent-ed egos". But I am not letting myself dragged into personality clashes bypassing the subject that is at issue.

AJC seems to adopt a quantitative unilinear approach towards historical changes. His emphasis on my point of "many" revolutionary creative works having aesthetic deficiencies, and his indictment of the pioneers of Marxist literary criticism for not moving beyond "square one" for **twenty years or more** clearly reveal such an attitude. This may be an "undogmatic" attitude but certainly it is not based on "what the founding fathers of Marxism and their ideological heirs really said". I would still maintain that the sixties marked a 'great leap forward' in progressive Tamil literature and arts and its **prime mover** was linked to the struggle against untouchability and caste oppression. I would also argue that such leaps do not occur every decade, nor is there a regular cycle of leaps. After all history zig-zags.

The significance of the sixties lies in a rare but not so unusual coincidence of praxis in two realms, both related but yet having their own internal laws of development, Politics and Culture.

It was a great leap due to the following reasons; that historical instance of praxis produced artists within overt social commitment to a higher level of consciousness than in the past; there was a clear theoretical acceptance of the primacy of content over form by these artists; they all came to be influenced to varying degrees by the rising tide of the liberation struggles all over the Third world and the student revolts of Europe and America; there were novels, poems, short stories and plays that showed an unprecedented revolutionary originality and crea-

tivity; there was a conscious questioning of bourgeois aesthetic values.

This does not, however, mean that there were no deficiencies or failures. In fact in quantitative terms, if one were to enumerate the entire lot of creative writings produced in the name of progress and revolution, there may be more failures than successes. But my point pertains to the **qualitative** changes from the pre-sixties to the sixties. I would also remind AJC that even after many more "great leaps" and with the most sophisticated theoretical system of artistic reflection, creative arts will not be totally free from aesthetic deficiencies. Marxists do not subscribe to any static perfectionism. Such a "stationary state" can not exist in any realm of human activity. AJC is not justified in bemoaning over not moving beyond "square one" for twenty years. In looking at historical developments, **Marxists do not go by pure chronological time. Historical, dia-chronic time is what really matters.** When a period of relatively intense activity is followed by one of reduced activity and temporary setbacks for the class struggle, one must look for the objective and subjective conditions and causes that create such moments of history rather than blame individuals for not sustaining the upsurge.

A comprehensive theoretical system of aesthetics is not something that can be created by the pure brainwork of one or two scholars without any reference to the broader contest of the class struggle, where the instances of **dominance** may vary. Why can not people like AJC become more analytical using their "undogmatic approach" and enlighten us on the complexities of varying historical

**moments.** But, that would mean moving from a frame of impressionism based on quantity, to a plane of abstraction based on **dialectical logic.**

As regards creative works having certain artistic deficiencies but yet being worthy of praise as important works I could only remind AJC and his ilk of the views that Marx and Engels had expressed on contemporary works.

AJC refers to a book on the history of 20th century Tamil literature as having sparked off the current controversy. In this statement he subsumes the main aspect of the controversy as it has developed i. e. Marxism vs Formalism.

I must point out here that the debate did not originate from this book, but its publication gave it a fillip. It was capitalised upon by the formalists to attack fundamental Marxist positions. The authors of the book have presented certain criticisms of progressive literature. Some of them are valid and constructive, while others are superficial, unsubstantiated and false. All these criticisms were taken out of context by the traditional opponents of Marxism and used with a vehemence which caused a lot of embarrassment to the authors themselves. I wonder how many of the three authors of this book would identify themselves with the now overt, now covert formalist attacks mixed with personal vendetta that appear in the pages of Tamil Journal "Alai" (wave).

Are pages of **Alai** the "real battle field" or is it that corner of the staff room of the Jaffna University where opponents are surrealistically court martialled in absentia?

I do not see anything wrong in "nostalgically harking" back to the stirring sixties. After all it is natural to revolutionary passion to relive the moments of a known upsurge which is so close in historical time and space, and where one sees an organic coincidence of praxis in two different realms of the superstructure, Politics and Culture."

As regards AJC's hallucination of crumbling images I have nothing to say. I am all for undogmatic Marxism and I have no optical illusions about the present controversy.

Now, I come to the comments of S. Sivasegaram. This gentleman, I am afraid, has not read my article fully. He has deliberately distorted some of my ideas to make his "refutation" an easy task; thus some of the views which he sets out to refute are products of his own warped imagination. He has also invented non-existing contradictions in my article.

It is crystal clear that Sivasegaram's mission is to reduce an entire period of more than three decades of cultural activities to nothing. He seeks to do this in order to set up some individuals of his own choice as the true forerunners of a progressive tradition which is yet to be born. In this process he attacks all and sundry with a nauseating viciousness.

I have not stated anywhere that all those who identified themselves with the progressive movement were Marxists. All Marxists are no doubt progressives, but, in our context, all progressives are not necessarily Marxists. In my view all those who are opposed to Imperialism and national oppression, and repression of the working class are progressive. But, it is a fact that the Marxists were the leading activists in the progressive movement. It is also wrong to identify the progressive literary movement today with one particular faction. It is as I pointed out in my article highly splintered. When I speak of progressive movement it does not necessarily mean that I have always the Progressive Writers Association in mind. Neither have I ever harboured the illusion that national unity could be achieved by writers, however progressive, conferring with Ministers.

Balendra was not the "main target" of my article as Sivasegaram tries to interpret. I did not mean to "complain" when I said that Balendra's translations had gained

considerable popularity among the middle class theatre goers. I was simply stating a fact and Sivasegaram is being puerile in his attempt to deduce an implication that the "audience to which the progressive lot catered were proletarians." They all cater to similar audiences.

He complains that I had very little to say about Balendra's stagecraft. Since Balendra was not my "main target" the article was not devoted to an examination of his stagecraft. I know it would be a worthwhile and interesting exercise and Balendra deserves greater attention from critics. However, I would not rush where angels would fear to tread and conclude that "his contribution towards the creation of this tradition is certainly more than that of all the progressive dramatists put together."

Only a subjectivist, mechanical mind could make such a sweeping conclusion, infused with an overdose of enthusiasm for an individual, Sivasegaram loses his balance altogether. It is true that Balendra has made an impact but to go further and compare his contribution vis-a-vis other, one must engage himself in a deeper scientific analysis. But, Sivasegaram's assertion is not the result of such a study. It shows his antipathy towards "all the progressive dramatists put together".

As regards aesthetic standards in literary criticism I would refer Sivasegaram to the works of the names I have "dropped" as a first and essential step.

He tells us, "the shallowness of the progressive Tamil literary scene is only a reflection of the shallowness of the progressive Tamil political scene." He does not go further and tell us about the causes of this "shallowness", instead he gives us a discourse on the Sinhala radical movement. He quite angrily refers to the "Tamil Communal Wolves" but is very soft on Sinhala nationalism and is very generous towards the Sinhala radical movement based on it. He deals with the progressive side of Sinhala nationalism and seems

to be fighting shy of looking at its negative, reactionary side. We have had a good quota of apologists for Sinhala chauvinism among the Tamil leftists and, "sad to say", some of them pose as super Marxists.

I am being accused of rejecting art forms of feudal and bourgeois societies. This is nonsense. I reject only reactionary bourgeois and feudal artistic values.

And, now we come to the most amusing part of Sivasegaram's piece. After prescribing what the Tamil public needs today he goes on presumptuously to tell us that progressive theatre (and he is sorry to say that!) must "wait until time is ripe for the development of a genuine progressive movement" (emphasis mine). So, we have not had any progressive theatre at all so far! This is in the first place a fantastic falsification of history. (Dr. Sivasegaram has here said exactly what the Tamil right wing was dying to hear from someone like him for years). Secondly, such a view reflects a highly erroneous line of thinking. The class struggle is always on and the contradiction between progress and reaction takes place continually in all spheres — economic, political and cultural. The instances of dominance may vary depending on the circumstances. Even when an organized progressive movement is totally absent the seeds of progressive culture are certainly present among the exploited and oppressed labouring people. Progressive, popular arts have existed in all pre-capitalist societies, of course in an oppressed state. To say, that the time is not ripe yet for progressive theatre in a society like Sri Lanka, which has seen many struggles in the political and cultural spheres, is sheer balderdash.

To think that "good theatre" must precede "progressive theatre" is absurd. Then what is "good theatre" and what are "good and honest standards?" good for whom?

I think the studied and refreshing intervention of Reggie Siriwardene deserves to be taken up separately.

## Sociological Association

A Professional Sociological Association was formed recently with Prof. Ralph Pieris as its first President and Newton Gunasinghe as Secretary, together with a committee representative of the major institutions where sociology is practised.

The objectives of the Association are (i) to provide a forum of discussion and research in the broad sense; (ii) be concerned with the content and dissemination of sociological knowledge and (iii) act as an advisory group on sociological themes when such advice is sought and when it is thought fit.

At its initial discussions the Association has taken a strong national bias with some members expressing concern about tendencies to foreign domination (formal or informal) of some of the key University departments of sociology. Consequently the Association has specifically restricted its membership to those of Sri Lankan nationality.

The members include Dr. Susantha Goonetilleke, Sarath Amunugama, Kumar Rupasinghe, T. V. Edirisinghe, Kapila Wimaladharma and Dudley Dissanaikie.

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## Mrs. B blames US

**M**rs. Bandaranaike has told K. K. Sharma of the Statesman (Calcutta) "that she suspects the USA has been given rights to establish a naval base at Trincomalee."

Mrs. Bandaranaike's reference is obviously to the proposed oil refinery which a US firm, according to the 'Daily News' and 'Sun' hopes to construct near China Bay. According to the local press Rizaco International was ready to invest nearly 700 million dollars to build a refinery with a capacity to refine about 150 thousand to 200 thousand barrels of crude oil. Under this deal, the government would give 2,500 acres in exchange for 20%

of the shares of a new company floated here.

Reporting from Colombo, the Indian journalist quotes Mrs. Bandaranaike in an exclusive interview with him. "We do not have any oil. We already have a refinery. So why do we need another refinery?" she asked. The U.S. interest in Asia was growing and she feels it is not satisfied with Diego Garcia. "I think they would be happier with Trincomalee".

Mrs. Bandaranaike has also told K. K. Sharma "what has happened to me follows a pattern in Asia. First Mujib went, then it was Mrs. Gandhi's turn (though she has now come back), then Bhutto was killed and now it is my turn". ●

## Ronnie . . .

*(Continued from page 5)*

time supplementary votes had made gaping holes in Mr. de Mel's balanced budget. The ceiling on Treasury bills had been exceeded by an unprecedented 5000/-million and agitated MF was writing to the president. The IMF acted. It suspended disbursements to Sri Lanka under a three-year agreement signed in January 1979 for support amounting to about 350 million dollars.

In the same month came the general strike over the demand for an all-round pay rise of 300/-per month. The strike was broken, 44,000 workers dismissed (official count) but the government knows that the unions are restless. What could the MF do? Present another balanced budget when the overall deficit was 15 billion rupees, exactly half the budget? While Migara's (Weekend) account of frantic behind-the-scenes activity indicates the strong conflicting pressures on the Minister his disclosure of the last minute additions (pages 61a, 61b) underlines how tricky and precarious was the final compromise. Could local

resources be raised by taxing the rich who had already been granted large concessions? Could prices be controlled and import curbed? A market economy and open trade is the UNP's credo. It is this policy which the IMF decided to back. That is the point of its exercise. Subsidies have to go and so the CTB, an employment exchange, has to raise fares by 50 to 60% but can the government remove the food stamps scheme which maintains half the population at subsistence level? Inflation, argues the MF, is less than 25% but it still far too high. So an average 22% cut in the capital votes of 16 ministries. The Randalgala project is postponed by a year and thousand million cut from the Mahaweli vote together with drastic reduction in the vote of the Ministry of Housing and Construction. What now happens to the hopes of the MP's create jobs? Revenues increased by new prices of milk, cigarettes, liquor and enhanced postal rates etc. More is in the offing. Aid to Sri Lanka per capita is one of the highest and foreign sources account for more than half the budget deficit (Rs. 8,100 million). The strike was contained as the

## NO JVP SALUTE

**I**n local politics, Mr. Rohana Wijeweera is the maverick par excellence. Sometimes he plays this role on international issues too. On the Iraqi — Iranian war, the JVP has chosen not to take sides although the JVP's contacts with Baghdad are so strong that there was a delegation from Baghdad at the JVP conference.

Understandably, the UNP government has also remained silent in this war between two of our major oil suppliers. The SLFP which condemned Vietnam over the Kampuchean issue, and remained silent on the Chinese invasion of Vietnam lined up strongly on Iraq's side.

The CMU which is so close to Mr. Bala Tampoe (the leader of the Trotskyist RMP) recently held a meeting at which a resolution was passed saluting the victory of the Polish workers. The CMU paper **Vanguard** reports "all but one of the delegates, a supporter of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), stood up in salutation, while the JVP sympathiser continued to remain seated, indifferent and unconcerned." ●

JSS and the MP's know by the promise of a pay rise of Rs. 70/- has been granted to state employees.

"When we pay the bus fare, the "take home pay" will be less by the time we reach home" says a CMU official sourly. And the police banned all pickets, hoisting of black flags and any demonstrations on November 12th Protest Day because a "group of persons" (un-identified) may lead a counter demonstration.

— M. de S.



# Blok, Christ and the Red Guards

**B**lok's *The Twelve* is not only the major poem to have come out of the Russian Revolution; it is also one of the peaks of modern European poetry. When Blok wrote it in 1918, he consummated an extraordinary process of poetic development for which there is no parallel in the work of his European contemporaries except in that of W. B. Yeats. Like Yeats, Blok developed out of the late Romantic twilight, through an eccentric personal cult expressed in symbolist terms (in which the poet was the high priest of a truth revealed only to the Initiated), towards a visionary and prophetic poetry that was deeply engaged with the realities of the contemporary world. Blok's major poems — *On the Field of Kulikovo*, *The Twelve* and *The Scythians* — are the counterpart in this process of development of Yeats's *Easter 1916*, *Meditations in Time of Civil War* and *The Second Coming*.

Just as the Irish Easter uprising and Civil War compelled Yeats to come to terms with the turbulence and violence of the age, so the much larger convulsions of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 exerted a similar influence on Blok. In making this comparison, however, there are two differences between the Russian and the Irish poet that must be noted.

The first is a difference in social outlook. Yeats had a strong allegiance to the way of life and values of the Anglo-Irish landed gentry, and his response to the national upsurge in Ireland (in poetry as in life) was, therefore, profoundly ambiguous. Moreover in the post-Civil War period, he moved steadily to the right, and ended in the last decade of his life as a sympathiser of the Irish fascist movement, and an admirer of German and Italian

*This is the first part of an article commemorating the centenary of the birth of Aleksandr Blok, which falls this month. Blok is regarded by many critics and readers as the greatest of modern Russian poets. His masterpiece, **The Twelve**, to which this article is mainly devoted, was written two months after the October Revolution.*

fascism. Blok, an aristocrat by birth where Yeats was only pro-aristocrat by association, was nevertheless deeply stirred by the events of 1905, and found his greatest poetic inspiration in the revolutionary storm of 1917. The response evoked in him by October was the climax of his life and his poetry; in his last years he sank into a political despair which found expression only in the self-chosen silencing of his poetic genius.

The second difference between Blok and Yeats is in the tempo of their poetic development. Blok wrote his masterpiece at the age of 37, and died three years later. If Yeats had died at the same age, we would have remembered him only as a minor Victorian poet who would have earned a footnote in the literary histories. (Dying young has, of course, been the fate of many of the greatest Russian poets, from Pushkin and Lermontov to Blok, Yesenin and Mayakovsky. Moreover, *The Twelve* is, to my mind, a greater achievement than any one of Yeats's poems. The Christ-symbol which crowns the poem facilitates a comparison with *The Second Coming*; Blok's poem surpasses Yeats's not only in its greater technical originality but also in its profounder historical vision.

*The Twelve* is a long narrative poem set in the Petrograd of January 1918, when the poem was written. It opens with wintry images of black night, white snow and wind in the Petrograd streets. The violence of the wind, whipping up the snow, knocking people off their feet, tearing away the banner with the words, 'All power to the Constituent Assembly', is caught in the whirling rhythms of the opening part of the poem. The energy of the

wind and the snowstorm is the elemental energy of the revolution itself. Just as the wind blows away the banner with its slogan of the bourgeois parliamentarians, so the workers' and peasants' Soviets had swept aside the Constituent Assembly only a few days before Blok began to write his poem.

Blok's personal diary records his preoccupations during these days. The Constituent Assembly met for the first and last time on January 5-6, before being dissolved. On January 5, Blok recorded in his diary, 'Instinctive hatred for parliaments, constituent assemblies and so on.' On January 7, he jotted down fragmentary thoughts about Christ, linked with the conception of the poem. On January 8 the diary says, 'The whole day — *Twelve*', and the next day, 'The article "The Intelligentsia and the Revolution" completed.' This was the article which Blok ended with words addressed to the intelligentsia:

'The demon once commanded Socrates to listen to the spirit of music.

'With your whole body, with your whole heart, with your whole consciousness, listen to the Revolution.'

'The spirit of music' was the phrase through which Blok habitually referred in his writings to the natural and primal energies which he conceived to be at the heart of life. It was the release of these energies which he responded to in the Revolution, and which he incarnated in the dynamic rhythms of wind and storm in the opening part of *The Twelve*.

Against the backdrop of the storm appear the twelve — Red Guards on patrol, marching through the streets of Petrograd. They are vigilant because the

## Blok Christ . . .

enemy is wide awake and active, they are also imbued with the revolutionary atheism of the Bolsheviks:

" Freedom, freedom,  
Hey, hey, without a cross!"

But one of them, Petrukha, is troubled by the infidelity of his girl, Katka, who has become the mistress of a bourgeois officer, Vanka. In the course of their march the twelve run into Katka and Vanka speeding in a cab, and Petrukha shoots at Vanka and unintentionally hits Katka, who is killed. When the twelve continue the march, Petrukha is haunted by guilt and remorse for the dead girl, and even murmurs a traditional prayer for the dead, although his comrades urge him to forget what has happened: this is no time for personal preoccupations. As they march on, keeping 'in revolutionary step', they see

ahead of them a figure with a red flag. Suspecting a trick, they call out, 'Who goes there?' Receiving no answer, they fire, but they lose sight of the figure and never discover who it is. But the poet does, in the startling conclusion of the poem. In front of the twelve, carrying a red flag, walking through the snow, unharmed by the bullets, is Christ:

' White roses garlanding his head,  
Jesus Christ goes on ahead.'

The conclusion confirms the significance of the title: the twelve Red Guards who disown Christ are, unwittingly, his new Apostles.

(To be concluded)

## JVP . . .

(Continued from page 18)

whether they are to continue to suffer the bitter experiences which they have to go through

If the social revolution is to be fulfilled. According to our understanding, they seem to have adopted a clear position in this respect. When a party with a membership which, in 1971, carrying locally manufactured hand bombs and rifles, confronted an army equipped with modern armaments, is now overcome with fear at incidents such as stoning which occurred on the Satyagraha Day held recently, and even comes forward to issue statements decrying such incidents, it is not difficult to arrive at a conclusion regarding their state of mind.

It only remains to be said that the attempt of the present JVP leadership to instill social reformist attitudes in their membership, without their ever being aware of it, under the pretext that all other parties are trying to destroy the JVP, is now painfully transparent.

(To be continued)

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