

**LEFT IN INDIA (2)**

Gail Omvedt

*v s swalankaran*  
**RETURN TO STAGNATION — THE REASONS**

**LANKA**

# GUARDIAN

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## **KALAWANA: Elephantine exercises**



**ATTANAGALLA**

**Round 3 to Mrs. B**

\*

**SINGAPORE MODEL**

**No - go, says Dr. Goh**

**N. M. M. I. Hussein - Great Powers and Indian Ocean**

**H. N. Fernando - JVP's Foreign Policy**

**Reggie Siriwardena - Reply to Samudran**

● **BANDARANAIKES AND THE LEFT**  
(Chintaka)

● **HANSA VILAK**  
(Sidat Nandalochana, Kamalika Pieris)

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## RETURN OF THE IMF

The IMF team will visit Sri Lanka in February and not, as earlier expected, this month. The negotiations, if successful will mean the resumption of IMF disbursements under the Extended Facility Fund (EFF) which was suspended in mid 1980. Of the 350 million dollars (approx) in SDRs pledged to Sri Lanka as payments support for 1979-81, Sri Lanka has now drawn about 115 million dollars. The government feels certain that the talks will clear most of the points of friction which arose in early 1980 when supplementary votes pushed through by various ministries exceeded the budget allocations by Rs. 6 billion.

Certainly, the IMF "fact finding" team which was here in December was satisfied that Mr. de Mel had introduced a balanced budget by making, drastic cuts in the capital votes of 16 ministries. The IMF's main worry is inflation. This was also the theme of Mr. de Mel's budget speech.

But the IMF is also opposed to subsidies in any form. The fact-finding team gathered data on the local price structure of petroleum products, fertilizer and wheat, in relation to prevailing World Market Prices. While the fertilizer subsidy tops Rs. 1 billion, the local price of petrol is still below the World Market price. And another oil price hike of about 10% is in the offing.

## TIES WITH OPEC, ARAB WORLD

The OPEC Director General, Dr. Shihata will be here this month at the invitation of the Finance Minister. By that time all existing copies of the Great OPEC Petition undelivered are likely to have been destroyed or safely concealed in some Sri Kotha cupboard. The mainstream media, now hiding its collective head in shame-faced silence, may even come out with some gushing editorials. Certainly, we shall see no leading articles or cartoons on those money-grabbing oily sheikhs. The OPEC Petition was surely one of the silliest propoganda stunts of recent times.

It revealed a shocking ignorance of the ABC of international economics and the role of OPEC in world politics. Having refused to join the media circus in OPEC-baiting, the L. G. finds the Finance Minister's move specially noteworthy.

It was only last month that Saudi Arabia gave its first loan to Sri Lanka. Iraq has been of considerable help over oil supplies and compensatory loans. The Kuwaiti Development Fund has also joined the expanding group of aid-givers. Will this effort to strengthen Sri Lankan ties with OPEC and the Arab World be supplemented by a serious diplomatic initiative? Perhaps the report on the reorganisation of the foreign service now being prepared by Sri Lankan World Bank official D. A. de Silva will tackle this problem.

## J. S. S. vs. C. W. C.

There is trouble brewing in the hills! And its not likely to be a storm in a tea cup. The JSS under their tough Kammandant Cyril Mathew is challenging the long established Trade Union dominance of the C. W. C. For 30 years, this is an area widely regarded as "Thondaman territory" or, more picturesquely, "Thonda's thottam."

Though Mr. Thondaman was co-opted into the cabinet (another of the Suprema's masterly manoeuvres in slicing the "unity" of the Jaffna peninsula — Eastern province — hill country "Tamil speaking peoples") strains were bound to arise between the CWC and the government over long standing grievances of the plantation proletariat. In the pages of the CWC Journal "Congress News" these grievances have led CWC spokesmen to assail the 'new brown Sahibs' of the State Organisations in the plantations, their use of the police and terror tactics etc. The fact that Mr. Thondaman is a cabinet minister has not in any way changed the tone of these attacks. Now the CWC itself is confronted with a rival Trade Union which has the full patronage of the government. Will this also affect the 'political alliance' of the UNP-CWC?

## Transport travails

I refer to the first instalment of an article written by Mr. Anil Moonesinghe on the above subject. What I want to stress here is let us first assess the work done by Mr. Moonesinghe during his stewardship as Chairman of the now defunct CTB.

As Chairman, he sent out 54 top-rung executives on compulsory leave and they were subsequently dismissed from the Board without compensation. These officers however, were awarded handsome compensation by the Labour Tribunal. Furthermore, he sent out another 215 plain-clothesmen of the lower-rung of the CTB service who too were taken back with back-wages way back in 1975. Thousands of workers were transferred to distant places and during his 5 years service as Chairman there

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was utter chaos in the administration. It is a well-known fact that as soon as Mr. Moonasinghe took over office he appointed workers to protect assets of the Board. These workers formed themselves into workers' committees and they were popularly known as 'Mad Dog committees' as the majority of them resorted to corruption.

Though Mr. Moonasinghe blames the present set up in the CTB and speaks of excessive staff, it is during 1970 that there were 6.1 employees per bus which in 1974 rose to 9.1 employees per bus. It would thus be seen that there had been an increase of 3 employees per bus during the Chairmanship of Mr. Anil Moonasinghe. It is also on record that one of the biggest frauds in season tickets were detected in a depot in the Southern Province amounting to several lakhs of rupees. Bus spares, ticket machine frauds, thefts were rampant during his stewardship and the CTB was an organisation where discipline was at its lowest ebb. There was also increase in the top rung executives and most of them were his party sympathisers who were elevated to top jobs.

**B. Alakeswara**

Nugegoda.

### Petty mistake

I wish these Marxists would get one of their most over-worked clichés right. Nihal Perera (L.G. December 15) is the most recent to write "petit bourgeoisie." **Petty** bourgeoisie is OK, but if they must use the **French** adjective surely it is "petite."

**Costain de Vos**

Kollupitiya.

### Tamil literary scene

Charity prompts me to let Samudran have the satisfaction of showing that though vanquished, he can argue still. But the record has to be set straight.

I had made it quite clear why I consider the current controversy a non-debate. Of course it suits Samudran to

pretend to be dense enough not to understand my point (he should be careful though: there's a point at which, pretence imperceptibly becomes reality). Do I have to remind a Maoist that 'paper tigers' are also 'real tigers'? Or has he, like Deng, quietly buried the Chairman's thoughts?

There's another sense in which the whole thing is a non-debate. Both then and now the local Marxist gurus who are his mentors have advanced arguments long since abandoned in intellectually respectable Marxist circles. If Samudran wishes to refute this point I suggest that he faithfully summarise the **actual** arguments put forward by them (and while he's at it, why not those advanced by his bete noire the so-called Formalists?) so that LG readers may judge for themselves.

As for fantasies, hallucinations and illusions (optical and otherwise), nothing I can conjure up can possibly compare with his positively Kafkaesque scenario of the hole-and-corner, cloak-and-dagger stuff supposedly going on in the staff room of the Jaffna University. Let's look at just one more example of his tremendous capacity for self-delusion—something he wrote in his first article: "The Vellala casteists were **deeply disturbed** by the **poetry** (emphasis mine) of depressed caste writers etc." My, my! Shades of 'the pen is mightier than the sword' orations delivered at school elocution contests! So Vellala casteists who even now are brazenly flouting the country's law about temple entry quailed—in the fifties and early sixties, mind you—before some pusillanimous lines of poetry!

I can quite understand Samudran's anxiety to play down the role of the book referred to, in his solicitude for some of the co-authors. I said "the **current** controversy was **sparked off** etc." There's no discrepancy between this and his assertion that the "debate did not originate from

this book but its publication gave it a fillip". Let me set out the facts as I know them. Some time after this book was published, a meeting was held at the house of the co-authoring couple where, reportedly, Samudran's gurus were confronted by some of the younger generation, including the co-editors of 'Alai'. Since I wasn't present, I'll not report the exchanges. Following this meeting **K. Kailasapathy**—one of the pioneers Samudran refers to—fired the opening salvo in the pages of the magazine 'Samar'. The co-editors of 'Alai' wrote in, but the editor of 'Samar' declined to publish their replies. The 'Alai' resumed publication carrying these two replies and the battle was on. Incidentally, the issue of 'Samar' which carried KK's article also had an article by **Chitra Maunaguru** (one of the trinity which co-authored the book) which interestingly enough diverges from KK's argument.

Samudran makes snide references to 'Alai' in the comparative safety of an English journal. I suggest that he plunge into the real battle-field—the Tamil literary sphere—and then he'll learn first-hand the perils of being a hatchet-man.

Like a Company Chairman spouting economic jargon in a desperate attempt to hide his firm's bankruptcy, Samudran keeps intoning mumbo-jumbo about quantity, quality and historical time. When I referred to 'twenty years or more' I wasn't thinking about calendar years. According to his own account, they were hectic years: "there were novels, poems, short stories and plays that showed an unprecedented revolutionary originality and creativity; there was a conscious questioning of bourgeois aesthetic values." (Incidentally, why did the **Progressive Writers' Union** miss a golden opportunity to mark its silver jubilee this year by bringing out an anthology of progressive writing and criticism,

(Continued on page 18)

# KALAWANA : A clumsy cock-up

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Suddenly, apparently inexplicably, the UNP's prestige has plummeted. The economic situation, principally inflation, has seen the steady decline of its popularity, marked by a sharp nose-dive, for reasons both economic and political, from the July strike to the bus fares hike and budget in November. In a mild understatement, proper to the occasion, Trade Minister Lalith Athulathmudali told the party conference (Dec. 20) that things were not as bright as in 1977.

Yet, the UNP's prestige as a party was high. Whatever the personality conflicts and intrigues inside (and these are known to be both byzantine and intense) the public image was that of well-knit, firmly united organisation characterised by clarity of purpose and competence in execution. It certainly gained immensely by contrast with its traditional rival, the SLFP, where son and daughter were engaged in a pitched battle for the family seat, with the mother (party leader) sponsoring the latter, and the deputy leader and ten other PB members supporting the former. A House divided: image and reality were a perfect fusion.

Then came Kalawana, a clumsy cock-up. A UNP diary of doings, statements, nomination board meetings, long lists, short lists (including Mr. Pilapitiya, Mr. Upali Wijewardena and Mr. Lionel Gunasekera, now an independent candidate) right up to the Dec 9 decision to stay out of the Kalawana contest, speaks for itself.

## LEGAL LACUNAE

In the Law Library, every government's unofficial 'think-tank', where constitutions and laws are conceived, made, un-made, altered and re-shaped, debated and interpreted, a senior practitioner of no known ideological persuasion was heard to say "I say, is the UNP trying to do a Felix?"

The opposition alleged that the Speaker's ruling was a "gross insult to the House" but the Opposition was not present to say why. The charge that the UNP was 'doing a Felix' was a grosser insult to a party whose *bete noire* he was. In the absence of 'an interpretation ordinance' to guide us, the nearest English expression would probably be "too clever by half".

A more cutting insult was to follow in the form of a left-handed compliment by a young attorney: "But Felix had more finesse, no".

In a metaphor natural to the milieu, the UNP's *contretemps* was compared to that of a not-so crafty witness who gets snarled up in his own fabrications.

A more measured comment was made by a Queen's Council, a leading authority in this field: "the transitional provisions should have clearly stated that on all matters arising from the 1977 general election the old law would apply ... these problems could have been avoided then".

In the course of the debate on the no-confidence motion which was unanimously defeated (another little interesting footnote to a future book on Parliamentary History) Prime Minister Premadasa said that the courts, the President, the Elections Commissioner and the Speaker were all correct in their respective decisions, actions and rulings. This implies the existence of a legal lacunae, or, laws open to interpretation which may lead to conflicts, issues which are arguable and areas of doubt. So the constitution will be amended, for the third time in 3 years, on January 6th.

## UPALI FACTOR

Whatever these finer points of law, what does the so-called man-in-the-street think? In his enthusiastic report on how the UNP

master-minded the last campaign T. D. S. A. Dissanayake speaks of "opinion-sampling", grass roots "intelligence" etc. In the Upali camp, it is said that nomination papers were ready, hotels booked, posters printed, and international market research unit alerted and Kalawana about to be "computarized". With all these resources available, the UNP would find it exceedingly easy to get an answer on average voter opinion.

The vast majority would simply say that the UNP fuked it. With the economic situation what it is, combined opposition support and Sarath Muttetuwegama's personal popularity, would have guaranteed, they would argue, a UNP defeat. And the UNP which had captured Anamaduwa did not wish to face defeat half way through its six year term, and close to the district councils election.

This highly politicized electorate has also been aware of the "Upali Factor", ever since the furore over Kamburupitiya. In interviews to the foreign press, the dynamic and ambitious Mr. Wijewardena, our first tycoon, has not denied Presidential aspirations. As a self-made millionaire (not in devalued rupees) and a kinsman of President Jayawardene he has all the right qualifications for high office. In short he would be no ordinary MP or even ordinary minister. Thus, he cannot be everybody's favourite in the UNP. By not entering the fray at Kalawana, the UNP has thus avoided defeat while at the same time seeing to it that a mighty "rogue elephant", so to say, has been "kraaled" at Kalawana.

A more "sophisticated" theory is that the UNP might have been ready to risk defeat at the hands of the SLFP but not by a Communist. What would the foreign investors think? Surely it is unlikely that

(Continued on page 4)



# Constitutional conundrum

1981. This year we celebrate 50 years of universal franchise, a proud achievement, indeed. While other nations will shower greetings and praise, the Queen will grace the occasion. Sonny Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General has already hailed Sri Lanka as a 'trial-blazer'. We shall not disappoint our distinguished admirers. "Representation" and "under-representation" have been battle-cries in man's protracted struggle for representative government. At this writing, it looks as if we may have two MP's in place of one. Carping critics can level the charge of 'over-representation' because the Delimitation Commission defined Kalawana as a single-member constituency, but the necessary amendments, it is reported, are in the offing.

Queen Elizabeth the First of Ceylon, as Jennings called her before Sri Lanka was a republic, was doubtless saddened by our departure from the Westminster model but she will realise, on receipt of the glad tidings, that Britain's "model colony" is still a vibrant democracy despite all the omnious utterances of Opposition Cassandras that Kalawana is a sinister portent.

Jennings who invented that constitutional concept of a "Queen Elizabeth of Ceylon" would have been the first to applaud our native ingenuity. Indeed a future Jennings, Anson, Laski or Erskine May, will probably devote a piquant page or two to what former Constitutional Affairs Minister, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, the **SUN**, and many others have styled a "constitutional crisis."

For the layman (not that there is any such animal in this island where every bus traveller, counter-clerk, taxi driver, jobless 'student' and peon knows his "law-points") it was more a constitutional conundrum than a crisis.

Twenty four hours before the G. A. Ratnapura, acting on behalf of the Elections Commissioner, received nominations for the Kalawana by-

election gazetted for December 10th, the Speaker rules that Mr. Abeyratne Pilapitiya, is the lawful MP for Kalawana. What is more, the Elections Commissioner goes ahead with the polls, fixed for Jan 12.

The average voter's state of mystification was excusable. **Physically**, Mr. Abeyratne is the same person who was declared elected in July 1977 — an election declared void by an Election Judge and confirmed by the Supreme Court. But **legally** he is a different person. While the case was being argued, Mr. Pilapitiya had a serious motor accident. He did not seek the customary leave of absence and no friendly MP presented such a motion — very much a part of parliamentary routine. So, that Mr. Abeyratne Pilapitiya lost his seat automatically, after 3 months of continuous absence.

Then Mr. Abeyratne Pilapitiya was nominated by the UNP under the new constitution. Though he was challenged as a 'stranger' and asked to leave the Chamber by the Deputy Speaker, the Speaker himself ruled on December 9 that he was the lawful MP "by virtue of his nomination."

## Kalawana . . .

(Continued from page 3)

Motorola or the Bank of America would have fled at the sight of a single Sarath, certainly no dangerous Bolshevik with a hand bomb hidden under his black gown or his black-and-blue Thomian tie? In any case authoritative Sri Lankan spokesmen have assured investors at international seminars that the Big Bear, to use the cosy image favoured by the SUN, cannot come tumbling down the Khyber pass into the warm waters of Bentota without over-running the entire sub-continent—a line of thinking which suggests that UNP military strategists have not yet realized that the art of war has changed since Alexander the Great.

In any case by mid-January, the end-result of all this would be (a) Mr. Pilapitiya would be in

The opposition claimed that this ruling was 'unlawful' and that the Speaker had 'exceeded his powers.' But the opposition was not present on Dec. 23 to state its case, so the Speaker's ruling must be accepted.

It is now reported that the constitution is to be amended, "In the public interest", to accommodate the man who will be elected on Jan. 12. The least that can be said about this constitution is that it is amendment-prone. One of more interesting amendments introduced what the L. G. called "the one-directional conscience". An MP can switch parties and cross the floor, without automatically losing his seat, only if this decision is endorsed by a 2/3rds majority, and only the government has such a majority.

The mystified voter may perhaps find it easier to accept the change (or metamorphosis) if he is of the Christian faith. Transubstantiation is a 'mystery' but it is a perfectly comprehensible concept in Christian dogma. What the uninitiated may regard as 'mysterious' is in fact 'mystical', another unique Sri Lankan contribution. ●

Parliament (b) the UNP would not have been defeated (c) Mr. Upali Wijewardena will have to find some other opening into politics (d) a man who wins on January 12th will also be an MP.

A student of Professor A. J. Wilson, the author of a recent book on our New Constitution, quotes Harold Laski "when the rules of the game do not guarantee the chances of victory the gentlemen of England change the rules." The great question is whether the ordinary voter, especially the SLFP supporter would lose faith in the system itself if the rules are changed so often and so clumsily that he finds the motivation transparently obvious. 50 years of Universal Franchise and we shall have two representatives for what was single-member constituency. This is 100% inflation in representation. All power to the people. — M.

# SINGAPORE IS NO MODEL

## (Come again, Dr. Goh!)

**D**r. Goh is Singapore's Ludwig Erhard, the wizard behind its "economic miracle".

It is not often that a government invites the Deputy Prime Minister of another country to advise it on how to manage its economic affairs or to instruct it on what's wrong with its economic policies and/or performance. Nor do visiting dignitaries attend political rallies in the host country, especially if the later has a multi-party system. The first step may have wounded the patriotic pride of many sensitive Sri Lankans, particularly those who believe that the people of this country are far more educated, politicised and cultured than the de-humanised citizens of that consumerist, materialistic 'paradise' called Singapore.

The second deviation may be regarded by sticklers for diplomatic decorum as a violation of known proprieties. He did not know better because he comes from a "country" which has not seen any opposition party come to power. In any case, why blame Dr. Goh when the representatives of two international agencies, the IBRD and the IMF, resident in Colombo and therefore 'accredited' to this country, were ready and willing to 'brief' the deputy premier of another country on the economic situation here. Perhaps their head offices in Washington have their own rules or have special rules for special people.

In fact, Dr. Goh's trip here as specialist consultant rather than as Deputy Premier, would have been used by both champions and critics of 'the Singapore model' to reinforce their respective arguments. For here, after all, was the formal baptism of our Singapore 'connection'.

Probably the most consistent critic is Fr. Tissa Balasuriya and his Centre for Society and Religion. Of the more forceful critics abroad is A. Sivanandan, editor of the wellknown London-based journal "Race and Class". The leading article in the current number is

on "the Sri Lankan economy by another expatriate Saatchi Ponnambalam.

At a Berlin conference on 'Technology', Sivanandan called the FTZ a 'colony within a neo-colony'. Indeed Sivanandan's argument that Singapore—Hong Kong—South Korea sourced investment will make Sri Lanka a 'periphery of the periphery' may be extended to mean that we would end up a 'neo-colony of a neo-colony'.

The advocates of a 'second Singapore' surfaced in the form of an 'ASEAN lobby' just after July 1977. While activists were found in the first and second rows of UNP benches, the 'theoreticians' were located mainly in the Foreign office and the trade chambers. The 'Follow-the-line' commentators of the media joined the swelling chorus to sing the charms of the Singapore and ASEAN way of life.

Now Dr. Goh, an efficient exponent of pure unbridled "free enterprise", has laid to rest that myth. Repeating what should have been obvious to a reasonably intelligent observer, Dr. Goh reminded Sri Lankans in the private interview-conversations which were part of his "orientation course" in Colombo that Singapore was a city-state which this country simply could not imitate. The idea of a Singapore model was contemptuously and categorically dismissed.

Not only is Singapore a city-state, it is a service centre for the region — though some of its less savoury services to the U. S. during the Vietnam war are best forgotten in these days when Singaporean leaders presume to lecture others on 'genuine non-alignments'! At a recent Colombo seminar, the LSSP trade union leader Batty Weerakoon made two other points:

(a) Singapore was a military base and the people (particularly labour) were 'disciplined' (b) the British operation against the Malayan insurgency and the Communist

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# SLFP: A phoney peace

**B**lue posters were back on the walls. 'Sirima' (see cover) was at the centre of a horoscopic diagram in which she was being bombarded with outrageous questions from all quarters. Was this Peking-style propaganda the mischievous effort of an anti-Sirima faction or the less subtle attempt of the SLFP's arch rivals to keep stirring the party pot while the inner-party conflicts were still on the boil? **The continuing crisis in the SLFP (L. G. Dec. 15) cannot be fully understood without constantly bearing in mind the steady inter-action between the internal dispute and the external pressure.**

Whatever the authorship, Mrs. B. however is in no mind to be bothered by bombardments of this kind. She has had her Dunkirk. Now it is a struggle for survival as leader (formal and or effective), for tactical accommodation to halt the rapid erosion of her once unassailable authority, for slow recovery and consolidation, and a restoration (hopefully) of her long accepted position of supremacy. This is the basic process at work in the conflicts raging within the party leadership, a situation which is largely a by-product of exogenous circumstance.

The nomination of Lakshman Jayakody reduced many informed observers to total bewilderment and others, equally well-informed, to an open admission that it was a triumphant come-back for Mrs. B.

The first reaction is understandable for Mr. Jayakody's name was hardly mentioned in recent weeks. The second is an understandable mis-reading since Mr. Jayakody is known as a Bandaranaike loyalist. (The SUN introduced him as "a close confidante").

When the news was out, a UNP stalwart told a cluster of young MPs: "These SLFP fellows have to go to a **walauwa**... instead of the Horogolla **walauwa**, they have got a man from the Balagalle **walauwa**".

But secretly the UNP is quite happy. Attanagalla has not gone to "an ordinary man from the area". **Yet a pocket borough has slipped out of the hands of the family. A Bandaranaike bastion has fallen.** The new MP however is Mrs. B's nominee, in place of Chandrika. In that sense, the UNP's self-satisfaction is not complete, its victory is limited.

The P. B. Twelve ('the Dirty Dozen') cannot share this pleasure because its banner was not 'anti-family bandyism'. Their candidate was none other than Anura, the "son and heir" of the founding father of the SLFP.

In the past when questioning her absolute authority was rare, and a direct challenge nearly impossible, opposing her own daughter's nomination as MP for her own seat, would have been unthinkable. Such is the enormous ground she has lost. Lakshman Jayakody represents a recovery of some part of that lost ground. Both were the result of Anura's appearance as an aspirant, and his subsequent withdrawal, which opened the way for the compromise. That is the crux of the matter.

One of his close associates told the L. G. "At last, Anura, is thinking politically... whether you agree with him or not, he is putting politics first". He meant that he is placing his political career **before** family loyalties. As evidence, he pointed out that some of his most intimate relationship (within the close-knit family) have been put under severe stress, near breaking point, and perhaps beyond repair. But are these categories "politics" and "family" mutually exclusive? In staking his claim for the "royal seat", Attanagalla, against his sister, Anura was not only affirming the legitimacy of succession but insisting on his exclusive (not even primary) right to such succession.

Was the Jayakody 'solution' made possible by domestic reconciliation? What family pressure

alone could not achieve, the UNP did. Whether it was part of the UNP's game-plan or not, the SLFP (and Anura) felt increasingly apprehensive of UNP counter-moves from Oct. 17 (amendments to the Election Law) to the Kalawana affair. With the SLFP delaying the Attanagalla decision will the constitution be amended once more to make room for a by-election at Nuwara-Eliya? The UNP-CWC alliance might in that event, mean a defeat for the SLFP and one MP less. Anura and his backers would have to take the rap for that. Strong SLFP fears were confirmed when Trade Minister Achulathmudali, the lawyer in the front benches, speculated not-so vaguely about amendments to prevent MP's crossing from one seat to another. That clinched the issue. Probably picking up the metaphorical habits of the CDN Lobby correspondent, a cricket-loving TULF remarked:

"I say when Anura goes for a safe single to Attanagalla, the government might change the law and run out the SLFP at the Nuwara Eliya end".

Lakshman Jayakody's nomination left the LSSP-CP non-plussed. By the arbitrary application of their own norms or by simple wishful thinking, both Rightwing and Leftwing observers of SLFP politics mis-direct themselves. If personal alignments, groupings and factions are transient, ideological labels are virtually meaningless. Personalised into a Chandrika-Anura fight, the LSSP, going by their 'coalition' experience, saw it as a battle between the SLFP Right (Anura) and the SLFP Left (Chandrika). In the days of the U. F., Lakshman was known to the LSSP-CP as "the UNPer in the SLFP" "the mudalali's man" and "diehard reactionary."

Boxing rather than cricket offers more apposite metaphors for the SLFP situation. This is going to be a long drawn-out fight. Having lost the first two rounds, Mrs. B. took the P. B. by surprise in naming Lakshman and won Round



Three on points. But she's fighting with one hand tied behind her back—the law—and the knots may get tighter.

Much also is in doubt. The Oct 17 amendments have not been gazetted. The Oct 16 disabilities allow her to function as party president quite freely. So the lawyers say. And Mrs. B has got a lawyer's opinion in her handbag. But even that opinion may be 'arguable'. Another lawyer, even more formidable but of a different political persuasion, took pains to see that the 5 party meeting at which Opposition support for the CP candidate was discussed, was held, minus Mrs. B.

The law, as it stands, may favour Mrs. B. in the matter of participation and decision-making on all questions other than elections. But it is the element of doubt that is her main enemy, for it makes the politicians and the would-be politicians shrink away from open association with her. While the Oct. 17 amendments may clear these doubts to make things harder, 'guidelines' to the Elections Commissioner on "recognition of parties" and "office-bearers", under another section, could prove decisive.

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The only other front is political—the party. Mao said 'bombard the headquarters'. But where are the Red Guards to do the job, to 'purge' the Politburo etc? Like the UNP, the SLFP has constitutional problems. The 'democratic' constitution is such that the P. B. can sack the Working Committee, and not the other way about. In any case, the balance in the Working Committee makes any move by Mrs. B. extremely risky. So it is with the All Island Committee whose present mobilised strength is about 350, though it has a potential strength of 540 if all the elections to all the ancillary bodies are held. Caught in the coils of UNP-made laws, Mrs. B. finds herself entrapped by the very constitution she permitted in the name of "re-organisation" and "democratisation."

## Singapore . . .

(Continued from page 5)

movement was to become the ideological foundation for post-independence politics.

Some points from Dr. Goh's diagnosis: (1) The economy is dangerously over-heated. (2) If extravagant government spending is not stopped, inflation will be doubled—70%! (3) The poor performance of the export sector is more responsible for the huge trade deficit than free imports.

When it came to prescribing cures, Dr. Goh ran into trouble with a formidable UNP front-ranker, who has had ironically enough, close connections with Singapore. "Down, down, down" repeated Dr. Goh, almost imitating Robert McNamara who had also crowed thrice (Bankruptcy, bankruptcy, bankruptcy) in a tete-a-tete with a Sri Lankan VIP. Dr. Goh's doom-filled prophecy referred to our exchange earnings from the main export crops. "Why don't you give it back to the private sector" asked the miracle-worker from Singapore. The UNP politician, a rising star of the party, replied: "The People will not accept that. . . ." "People, people. . . I like to speak to these people. . . let me have their names and addresses." Such haughty cynicism for the people (a digit for the computer) is also part of the Singaporean life-style.

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# The Bandaranaiques and the Left

Chintaka

**"T**here, each of the two major parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party, and at its victory, are rewarded with positions. It is well known how the Americans have been trying for 30 years to shake off this yoke, which has become intolerable, and how in spite of it all they continue to sink even deeper in this swamp of corruption.

**"...We find here two great gangs of political speculators who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends—and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality dominate and plunder it."**

(my emphasis—)

This passage, is contained in the Introduction written by Engels for the 3rd German edition of Marx's 'The Civil War in France,' published in 1891 to mark the 20th anniversary of the Paris Commune. Though the passage is a comment on North American politics, it could also serve as a strikingly apt description of the operation of the Sri Lankan political system, which since 1956, has been dominated by the two main bourgeois parties, the UNP and the SLFP.

## Social class, Family power

Capitalism in the periphery is marked by the features of dependence, underdevelopment and coexistence with precapitalist residues. This is why Samir Amin has remarked that while capitalism is the **exclusive** mode of production in the centres, it is the **dominant** or **hegemonic** (not exclusive) mode

of production in the peripheral social formation. Owing to this specificity of peripheral capitalism, in Sri Lanka we may observe that the two major bourgeois political parties, these two great gangs or cartels of politicians, are organized around a few extended family groups. If we may paraphrase Nicos Poulantzas, we may say that in Sri Lanka, and indeed many peripheral societies, there is a definite need to study the mediatory linkages between **social class** and **family power**.

It is to the credit of **Rohana Wijeweera** that he has drawn attention albeit in a schematic form, to this linkage, from the inception of the JVP. The Revolutionary Policy Declaration of the JVP, a document which we can criticize on many a score, is however, correct when it states that:—

"The capitalist class of Sri Lanka, which has pursued the capitalist path of development, has built itself up around two capitalist political parties—the UNP and the SLFP—which have two major capitalist families as their roots and the mass of their associated kin groups as branches. The UNP, which has the Senanayake family as its root and the Kotelawala—Jayawardene clan as its subsidiary, and the SLFP which has the Dias Bandaranaike family as its root and the Obeyesekere—Ratwatte clan as its subsidiary, have both from time to time mustered the support of other capitalist political parties, such as the Tamil Congress and the Federal Party and the political parties of the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie such as the MEP, the LSSP and the CP and have safeguarded the capitalist path of development in this country. The UNP government led by the Senanayakes (father and son) and the SLFP governments led by the Dias-Bandaranaiques (husband and wife) and the United Front government of the SLFP. LSSP-CP have all engaged themselves in the maintenance of capitalist oppression and exploitation; they have continued

to deceive the oppressed classes to this end. Are we going to permit this capitalist system to be perpetuated through this scheme of political rotation? Are we going to allow ourselves to be fooled any longer by the two political parties of the capitalist class that have grown up around the two families that have enthroned themselves as the two royal families of Sri Lanka and those opportunists of the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie who pursued them while dressed in leftist apparel? Forgetting the traumatic experiences of the last thirty years are we going to be taken in by their dishonest, fraudulent and gilded promises?... The capitalist rule of the UNP will only continue to aggravate the current neo-colonial socio economic and political crisis. Does this mean that at the next General Elections, we are going to fall back into this hell which is capitalism by re-electing the Dias Bandaranaike family which has become the curse of the oppressed classes....?

...Yes, the time has come to cry 'Enough' to these two royal clans of the capitalist class,

Yes, the time has come to cry 'Enough' to these two parties of the capitalist class."

Truly a passionate appeal, evocative in its phraseology, of the 2nd Declaration of Havana, the implication of which is clear: In Sri Lanka, the anti-capitalist struggle runs through or is fused with, the anti oligarchic struggle, the struggle against the family dynasties.

## Mrs. B's civic rights

Far from crying 'enough!' the major portion of the Left seems to be crying 'encore! encore!' Whether they are conscious of it or not, this is the 'bottom line' of their convoluted arguments concerning the need to defend Sirima's civic rights. All of them seem to forget that the struggle for democratic rights cannot be considered in the abstract. A struggle must be waged on this or that democ-



atic issue only if it is in consonance with the strategic interests of the Socialist revolution, and I for one fail to see how the defense of Sirima's democratic rights can be in the interests of the Sri Lankan socialist revolution. Indeed I can clearly perceive just the opposite side of the story. The present defense of Sirima by the Left runs counter to those afore-mentioned interests.

In the first place, what is all the fuss about? The left leaders have failed to grasp the real essence of this matter and present it to the masses in a proper perspective. The harassment by Sirima and Felix, of the UNP since 1973 and conversely the present move by the UNP government against Sirima and Felix, are nothing but the internecine warfare of these two "great gangs" who "alternately take possession of state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends" (Engels). It is a contradiction between 'riven fractions of the same class' (Lenin). It is an intra class contradiction rather than

an inter-class one. Thus, Mrs. B is a casualty of this Mafia style internecine gang warfare of the dependent bourgeoisie's representative political formations. If the leader of one gang is wounded by the leaders of the other, the poor folk who have been and are being plundered by both gangs of scoundrels — have nothing to weep over. In fact they should rejoice because if the enemies batter and wound each other, the work of the exploited masses will be made that much lighter. This period of fratricidal "gang war" should be a period of brief respite for the popular forces, who should replenish and accumulate their strength for the inevitable showdown.

At the present moment, given the disunity of the Left, the balance of forces is such that a final, decisive struggle by the Left against the UNP Government is not feasible in the immediate

present. The failure of the General Strike proves this. The absence of a united Left front providing a combative socialist alternative, means further more that the benefit of all struggles waged by the Left and working class forces, accrues mainly to the SLFP. Immediate task therefore is for the Left to take on the relatively weaker enemy, the SLFP, concentrate all its fire on it and try to further weaken it politically. This would mean that, as in the pre 1956 period the political arena would be sharply polarized and the masses would be presented with a Left option in the inevitable contestation with the UNP. The JVP perceives this, but what it does not perceive, is the need for Left unity, both to "overtake and surpass" the SLFP, as well as to take on the UNP eventually. The CPSL's leftwing (or what some centrist CP leaders have already chosen to dub the party's "ultra left"), does understand this, but does not seem to be in the strong position that they were several months ago.

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# In search of national heroes

Jayantha Somasundaram

In the nineteen sixties a lot of commonplace things were considered bad form and decadent. First they did away with racing and sent away the race horses; Then they did away with New Years Day, but the revellers wouldn't go away. So, necessity being the mother of invention, they annointed January first as 'national heroes day.' And after that, they went in search of national heroes.

In 1848, for the last time, Sri Lanka took on the foreign invader in a hard fought rebellion. Sri Lanka has been in search of national heroes ever since.

The leadership of the nation was thereafter given over to a few families—we have in fact been ruled by dynasties ever since. In the Legislative Council for example, with exception of E. H. Dehigama, the seat for the Sinhalese was held continuously by a member of the Bandaranaike-Obeysekera clan. When they wore top hat and tails they were called 'Dias', when they shed them for cloth and banian they became Bandaranaikes.

The Tamil seat was likewise dominated by one family, to which Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy and his nephews the Ponnambalams belonged. But they enjoyed nothing like the monopoly of the tame Sinhalese aristocracy.

The polite historians at our universities refer to these people as the 'Reform Movement'. In their anxiety to come up with a nationalist movement they grab desperately at the Buddhist revival movement of the Anagarika Dharmapala with one hand and the Hindu revival movement of Arumuga Navalar with the other. But these were parochial movements which in themselves never laid claim to national leadership. And to stylise them as our nationalists would be almost as monstrous as to apply the term to their progeny like K. M. P. Rajaratne and Suntheralingam.

Whichever way you cut it, Sri Lanka had no nationalist movement of the type that grew in India under Mahatma Gandhi, in Indonesia under Ahmed Sukarno and in Indochina under Ho Chi Minh. This is why it becomes necessary for us in retrospect to create national heroes and even calendar a day for them.

The Ceylon National Congress has a history and a performance that are equally miserable. It originated in 1882 as the Ceylon Agricultural Association which C. H. de Soysa "the wealthiest of Karawe entrepreneurs" set up "to safeguard the interests of the Ceylonese planters" according to Dr. K. M. de Silva, Professor of Ceylon History. At a time when it was not embarrassing to emulate India, this organisation adopted the name Ceylon National Congress.

The franchise was introduced into Sri Lanka against the wishes of the 'nationalist leaders'. The limited franchise of 1910 was the gift of the Earl of Crewe, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Universal Franchise in 1931 came in the teeth of opposition from our national heroes — both Sinhalese and Tamil.

In 1915 the bulk of our national heroes then in the Legislative Council endorsed the repression of the British. S. C. Obeysekera, the current member of the Dias-Bandaranaike clan told the Council that the jailed Ceylonese were "half a dozen designing villains who have been trying to pose as leaders of the Buddhists." He identified them as 'nobodies who belonged to the lower section of the Sinhalese community trying to make somebodies of themselves.'

Not surprisingly the Colonial Office itself in its official correspondence referred to S. C. Obeysekera as "a silly old ass." They characterised A. J. R. Soysa as one who "can't put two words together and was therefore likely to give

no trouble." Reginald Stubbs sums up our national heroes as "a decent lot of people but by no means intelligent and with absolutely no backbone."

The Ceylon National Congress which was instituted in 1919 soon became a low-country Sinhalese caucus because the Tamils abandoned it in 1921 and the Kandyans formed their Kandyan National Assembly in 1925. The Congress became a farce that the Senanayakes themselves left it to the mercies of the Communist Party in 1945.

History is important not merely to provide us with laughs, it is also enlightening because it tells us about the kind of background and mentality that dominates the life and work of our leaders.

Old habits die hard. The first cabinet in the dominion had D. S. Senanayake as Prime Minister, son Dudley as Minister of Agriculture, nephew Sir John as Minister of Commerce, nephew R. G. as Minister of Trade and cousin J. R. Jayawardene as Minister of Finance.

In the Republic we had the Ratwatte-Dias-Bandaranaike clan in power. History keeps repeating itself, appearing sometimes as tragedy and at other times as comedy.

## NEXT ISSUE

- \* H. A. Seneviratne : Tissa Abeysekera's film on N. M.
- \* Jayantha Somasundaram : Is Borman dead ?
- \* Sagara : The forming of Content
- \* Sanmugathan's "Mao on Trial" which was unavoidably held over from this issue.

# Return to Stagnation — the reasons

Gail Omvedt

FOREIGN  
NEWS

**W**hy this return to stagnation?

First, the CPM's opposition to the Assamese movement and to the Naga and Mizo armed revolts in the northeast has left it without any leadership role in the major political issue of the last year. Even though the party calls India a "multinational" country it has in recent years refused to grant that the nationalities have a right to self-determination on the grounds that a "breakup" of India would only aid imperialist conspiracies. In essence, the party has put its **bets against** the development of the northeast movement into a revolutionary struggle capable of shaking the Indian state and instead is standing with the bourgeois state against the movements.

Corresponding to this is the high priority the CPM is placing on the protection of its existing governments in West Bengal and Kerala. Generally the party's policy is to work as an honest reform government within the capitalist framework and to increase its base by promoting anti-feudal land reform and economic development. The latter necessarily means both attempts to woo Indian and multinational big business to invest in the states and to subdue trade union strike movements. This in turn has led to a fair amount of disillusionment both among urban workers and petty bourgeois intellectuals in Bengal, where the party has been in power now for two years, though it still retains some substantial rural support at a result of efforts to protect sharecroppers and peasants against absentee landlords. Even in the rural areas, however, the CPM's base is among the middle masses of the countryside in a way that may only aid the development of an emerging kulak class, and the land reforms currently passed by the West Bengal government are little more than what some other states have done under Congress governments throughout the years. For this reason, many Calcutta intellectuals are arguing that

the Left Front government is "what the Congress was in 1952" (when it first came to power after the idealism of the independence struggle) — "sincere, reformist, uncorrupt but nothing more." In Kerala also, where land reforms have substantially abolished feudal landlordism but left a high degree of capitalist land concentration and a still impoverished agricultural labour class, the government hardly knows how to go ahead apart from formulating a pension program for labourers and trying to woo Bombay industrialists. The result in both cases is a stagnation in the support base of the Communists and threats from the right together with discontent on the left.

The CPM, much more than the old CPI, has always had a very tightly disciplined "Stalinist" party structure. This has had advantages in giving it a core of relatively loyal and militant activists; but its negative side is the party's sectarianism in mass organisations and in regard to opponents on the left. This is especially true in regard to the Naxalites, whom the CPM treats as a kind of disease afflicting the Indian political scene and not as a genuine part of the left. The kind of infighting which had been characteristic of the worst years in Bengal ("they killed us, we killed them"), is the way a young CPM cadre referred to it offhandedly) seemed to have lessened during the Emergency as both trends found themselves confronting a dictatorship, but now it has returned. Particularly in parts of Andhra where the ML forces are expanding among agricultural labourers and dalits and confronting a middle rich peasant CPM base, and in some incidents in Kerala and Tripura where Naxalites have come into confrontation with the CPM-ruled governments, the confrontation has been violent. While some of this might be due to Naxalite adventurism, the CPM's sectarianism stands out even more when it refuses to support Nax-

alites on civil rights issue (it threatened to walk out of a left and democratic front meeting a year ago when the question of a resolution condemning the murder of Naxalite student leader was brought up). Other democratic mass workers who have felt the weight of beatings and charges of "extremism" or "conspiracy" by the CPM include a number of Christian church-linked radicals who have been working among fishermen in Goa and tribal peasants in Maharashtra.

The basic problem with the CPM is that, like the CPI, it still defines a national bourgeoisie and a "rich peasantry" as a part of its front. In the Indian context this no longer seems to work. The result is that in the rural areas the organising of agricultural labourers continues to be subordinated to the needs of richer farmers (in essence capitalist farmers) and Naxalites and other groups are condemned for trying to pit "agricultural labourers and tribals" against the "rest of the peasantry." Similarly, in the political oppositional movement, the LDF represents a conscious strategy of alliance with bourgeois parties in which no call is given for real peoples' power but instead the focus is simply a change in government — i.e. replacing Indira Congress by the CPM or its allies.

Thus the LDF is faltering; the CPM, its leading component, has no strategy for leading the alliance beyond organising mass pressure for a change in the government or for the protection of its own state governments within the existing bourgeois framework. There is no effort to build up a genuine, mass-based left unity including dissident communists such as the Naxalites or a growing number of semi-Marxist radicals, and no real attempt to adopt methods of struggle oriented to building up popular organs of peoples' power. And so, quite naturally, for the impatient masses of India who have already become disillusioned with the bourgeois opposition, this new



opposition does not appear as a significantly different alternative.

### The "Far Left" Against the Bourgeoisie—But How?

Slightly over thirteen years after the Naxalbari revolt and the formation of a new trend of "communist revolutionaries" and ten years after the founding and dispersion of the CPI (ML) in a storm of police bullets and state repression, the Naxalite movement continues to survive and even slowly grow in India, although the various groups remain badly factionalised and politically uncertain.

In many areas, such as Bhojpur and Champaran in Bihar state, and many Telengana districts in Andhra and in pockets elsewhere, Naxalite groups have been able to maintain an unshakable base among the rural poor in the face of all types of police repression, including laws declaring these areas "disturbed" (giving the police rights to shoot on sight) and mass arrests and frequent killings of cadre. Among industrial workers, the various ML groups still have nothing to compare in strength to the trade unions of the CPI and CPM—but there is a genuine base in many disparate sections including parts of the mining and steel belt and some advanced industries.

Outside agricultural labourers and poor peasants, the Naxalites still have their greatest influence among the petty bourgeoisie, including students. This includes the building of democratic rights organisations throughout the country which take up not only issue of protection of the rural poor and Naxalite activists against police repression but also atrocities against women, repression against workers' organisations and other problems. These organisations are still themselves weakened by their splits (there is a tendency for each ML faction to try to have its own democratic rights organisation) but there is some tendency to unity growing and so far they remain the only force in the country actively taking up democratic right as such.

Besides this the ML groups (along with some independent Marxists) have been playing a leading role in a recent resurgence of what might be called a "peoples'

## Lesson for some of the President's men

Once the elected Prime Minister (or President) moves into his office, the bureaucracy takes over the real job of house-keeping. In its various formulations, the old adage pays tribute to the enormous, invisible authority of the permanent civil service, the hidden seven-eighths of the ice-berg of state power. In this, it is submitted, is the secret of the continuity of policy.

Contesting this proposition, some seasoned Washingtonologists point to the importance of the novel American practice whereby the new President brings with him several hundred top aides who form the upper crust of the key institutions. Others disagree. Officialdom, they argue, licks the ideas of the politicians and their advisers into shape. In the final form as policy, the shaping spirit of the bureaucracy is all important.

Students of foreign affairs will watch how the pros and cons of this debate will work out as Ronald Reagan and his men take over. Already the problems of transition have overwhelmed a few, if not all the President's men.

Calling him a 'confused American strategist', a **Peking Review** analyst, Ren Yan, slaughtered Ray Cline, one of Mr. Reagan's advisers on Far Eastern affairs. After a

culture" movement. Songs, street plays, poster exhibits, peoples' science fairs, and various experiments in mass-level political education have brought about a kind of **left cultural renaissance** that is the biggest since the 1940s when the Communists founded their Indian Peoples' theatre Association and Progressive Writers Association. All kinds of trends, including women's groups, and CPM-sympathetic groups have been a part of this movement. Most are on a localized basis, while the biggest mass cultural organisations at present are probably the Naxalite-led Revolutionary Writers Association in Andhra and the independent (but close to CPM Samudaya drama group in Karnataka state.

(To be continued)

whirlwind tour of Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Taiwan, Ray Cline advocated the "upgrading of US relations with Taiwan" and asked mainland China to open up the country to the outside world". He also invited China to adopt more civilised norms of behaviour"

The P.R. analyst wrote: "Mr. Cline should study a little Chinese history and acquaint himself with the fact that the Chinese people are not in the habit of currying favour with or falling on their knees before any foreign power. They also know how to deal with those who try to provoke them and who slight their national sentiments and sovereign rights".

While Mr. Reagan's spokesman Brady did his best to sweep away the broken crockery after Cline had crashed through the China shop, a top State Dept. Official, according to the **NYK Times**, was accusing Reagan advisers "of endangering the life of the US Ambassador" and "encouraging increased brutality by rightist forces" in El Salvador, thus contributing to the murder of three American nuns, and the assassination of six Salvadorean leftist leaders.

The accusations were made by Patricia Derian, Assistant Secretary of State, in an interview with the Associated Press. The Reagan aides had criticised US Ambassador Robert White for "supporting economic reforms in that country" and for attacking the human rights record of the junta responsible for the current bloodshed. The aides had suggested that the Ambassador would be fired.

Joining his colleague in accusing the Reagan aides of worsening the crises in Central America, the US Ambassador in Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezzullo said he feared that the Reagan administration would "feed its rightwing" by letting it "eat up Latin America". Ambassador Pezzullo told the **Washington Post**: "It is cheaper than some other places like the Middle east, Soviet union or China where no president is going to have much room for radical policy changes".

# Towards a new domestic order

C. A. Muzammil

The question of raw materials is at the core of the call for a New Economic Order. Three-fourths of the earnings of the developing nations come from raw material exports which depends on the demand originating from the industrial world. Although the volume of exports by the developing world has increased by 30% in twenty years, its earnings have increased only by 4%. For example, a developing world which exported 25 tons of rubber in 1980 could buy 6 tractors. In 1975 it could only buy two tractors for the same quantity of exports. A link between the prices of the poor world's raw materials and the rich world's industrial products is called for by the N. E. O. to change this situation. Secondly it calls for new international agreements to provide stable markets at stable prices, for stable quantities of raw materials. Thirdly it urges the developing countries to form more producer associations, like O. P. E. C. to bargain for better prices. Fourthly it urges restraint on the development of synthetic substitutes. The late Algerian President Houari Boumedienne said "The raw material producing countries insist on being masters in their own houses. This means nationalising the exploitation of resources and controlling machinery governing their prices."

The Declaration also calls for accelerated industrialisation of the poor world. By this, it means to create more employment, save money on imports and earn money from exports. The target is 25% of the world industry by 2000 A. D. instead of the 7% of today. To achieve this the developing world wants financial help and an end to the rich world's system of "low import tariffs for raw materials and high tariffs for industrial products, which blocks the industrialisation of the poor countries" (J. den Uyl, the Prime Minister of Netherlands).

The New International Economic Order also calls for the re-loc-

tion of certain industries, like shoes and textiles, in the poor nations. It also demands reform of the international monetary system with changes in the voting system of the I. M. F. and the World Bank, to allow full participation by developing nations. **The inflation and world monetary crisis which was not caused by the poor nations and in the 'resolution' of which they did not participate, has hit them first and hardest.**

The NIEO also calls for more aid. The percentage of rich nations have reached the halfway mark of the UN aid target of 0.7% of G. N. P. Today, aid stands at \$6 billion a year, and the developing world's repayments on past loans now total over \$4 billion a year. Aid to Africa is almost equalled by the return of its export earnings on servicing past debts. A review of debts and special measures to help the nations most seriously affected (MSA) by present crisis, are also essential elements of this Economic Order.

It is argued by many developing nations that they are being forced into unequal agreements with the large multinational companies as they starve of other sources of investment and industry. The MNC'S take significant decision making power out of the hands of governments by their enormous influence over the economic climate of the developing countries. It has been noted that many multinational companies have higher incomes than the majority of poor nations. As the late Pope Paul once said "A bargain struck between unequal partners is not a bargain". Therefore the N. I. E. O. now calls for international control over multinational companies.

The 'Declaration' also calls on the rich to share technology, and seeks changes in the shipping and insurance industries, on which the developing nations are so heavily dependent and over which they have so little say. Finally it

demands of the developing nations that they work more closely together and co-operate rather than compete in the process of industrialisation, create 'common market' for one another's benefit and share the lessons of one another's development.

Much of the NIEO is not new. What is relatively new is OPEC, and the growing solidarity of the developing world. The actions of OPEC have doubled the trade deficit of the developing countries. And at the same time it has also tilted the balance of wealth and power in favour of some of the developing nations.

"It is now our fervent hope that the oil-producing countries will be in the forefront of our struggle for a more equitable international order" says Aziz Ahamed of **Third World Forum**. And Manuel Perez-Guerrero replied "OPEC countries are loyal members of the Third World whose interest we will promote by the use of our bargaining power."

It seems, and indeed it has been argued even by the "Group of 77", that the underdeveloped countries are now co-operating together to venture into new fields to develop their economy, and that this has threatened the rich world. The developing world is planning out its own development programmes. Some of these nations are going in for nuclear power. The threat from the OPEC to the living standards in developed world has proved effective they fear, and if more and more producers associations are formed, their economy would be in great danger. And what's more, the developed nations are losing their markets for their production because the developing nations are themselves producing such commodities. Further more the developing nations are gradually fighting for their freedom-politically and economically. One by one the capitalist world is shrinking in number. Therefore, in order to

safeguard the deteriorating state of affairs in the developed countries and create a buffer to the forces of the developing world, this NIEO should be promulgated they say!

The redistribution of wealth between nations is clearly of no use if it is achieved at the expense of the poor within rich nations and for the benefit of the rich within poor nations. The principles of the N. E. O are more equal distribution of wealth and more participation in the making of decisions by those whom they affect. **These principles of the N. E. O are as relevant and necessary within nations as they are between nations.**

Yet, a recent study has shown that wealth and income in Latin America is concentrated in the hands of the richest 20% of the population and even more intensely in the hands of the richest 5%. According to James P. Grant, the total income of the richest 20% in Mexico is now sixteen times greater than the total income of the poorest 20%. India too has been called by an Indian economist "a society of the top 10%". "The average income share of the lowest 40% in all underdeveloped countries as a group amounts to about 12.5%," reports World Bank Economist Holb's Chenery. This maldistribution of income within developing countries deprives the poor majority of the basic necessities of life and so contributes to the crises of food, population, unemployment, violence and the environment. Redistribution of existing wealth within the developing countries would not in itself solve the problem of poverty. World Employment Programme researches have shown that the rich in the developing countries spend much of their surplus wealth on luxury goods from abroad. This does nothing for the balance of payments, local industries, employment or social cohesion. Sri Lanka is an example.

'Economic Growth' alone is widely recognised as no longer adequate as a measure of development. A World Bank report has concluded "More than a decade of rapid

economic growth in underdeveloped countries has been of little or no benefit to perhaps a third of their population. "There is an opinion today, which argues that the new ways of development should be based on the satisfaction of basic human needs such as food, water, health care, housing, education and employment.

Within the developed world too, the distribution of wealth is dangerously skewed. **There are the dispossessed within the rich world itself.** The 16 million Americans who live in poverty in the richest nation on earth; the 2,000 old people in Britain who died of cold in the mild winter of 1972; thousands of 'Red-Indians' in Canada who suffer from poverty due to discrimination—are some of the examples. The process of injustice between rich and poor nations has become very clear in recent years. The lessons the developed world are learning from the third world are reflected in their society. It is found that the same process is going on in both 'worlds'. That is, the processes which make some affluent are the same processes which lead to destitution for others. And there are even those who argue that a N. E. O. is also in the interest of the developed world. Mihajlo Mesarovic says "we are not the developed world but are actually the over developed world."

All of the above arguments add upto the central task of exploring paths by which inequalities between and within nations might be reduced. If so, it has to be recognised that the redistribution of wealth also means the redistribution of power and that such a move is likely to be resisted by those in whose hands that wealth and power is now concentrated. The redistribution of wealth and power and increasing participation in decision-making clearly implies much more than economic adjustments with present frameworks. It implies, as the N. E. O itself states, a new relationship be it between rich and poor nations, rich and poor within nations, employers and employees, leaders and led, men and women or the

human race and natural environment. The ideal needed is a harmonized co-operative world in which each part is a centre, living at the expense of nobody else, in partnership with nature and in solidarity with future generations.

In 1974 a U. N. symposium concluded: "we have faith in the future of mankind on this planet. We believe that ways of life and social systems can be evolved that are more just, less arrogant in their material demands, more respectful of the whole planetary environment."

The road forward does not lie through despair of 'Doom-watching' nor through the easy optimism of successions technological quick fixes or documents and orders. It lies only through co-operative search for ways to achieve fundamental human rights, through building of social structures to express those rights.

What ever 'Declaration' may be made, the United Nations cannot legislate changes. It is a forum in which changes can be discussed before the governments of the world, and acquire an acceptability.

There are entrenched elites who will relinquish nothing to the underprivileged except under the duress of armed force i. e. peoples war. As such a peaceful change towards a just society is more problematical than ever.

Today what is experienced is a great hesitation to promulgate this order is declared, the problems of the poor would not be solved. The Marxists in the developing poor nations in fact demand an independent and just society and economy, and to achieve this they aim at a struggle by the proletariat supported by the working masses of every such nations. It is only through socialism that an equitable distribution of wealth and power could be attained. Marxists have two major arguments regarding this N. I. E. O. It is said, once this new international economic order is declared, and if followed by the capitalist countries, than the advance towards socialism

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GARADS

# JVP's FOREIGN STANCE

*Interview with  
H. N. Fernando*

Q 6. You and your union's newspaper have always shown a keen interest in world affairs and revolutionary struggles throughout the world. Do you have any comments on the JVP's international line and its foreign policy positions?

A: My opinion is that up to now we do not have sufficient facts at hand to perceive, clearly, the JVP's international policy and its programme of action in connection with international issues. A smattering of information can be gleaned from their publications, 'The Party Manifesto', 'Looking back at 1971', and 'Opportunism or Internationalism?'. Yet, when one looks at the crisis confronting the present leadership of the JVP, we see that the international policy they have put forward up to date is also spawned of their usual 'refined' brand of Idealism; unable to face up to the problems created in putting these policies into practice, they have resorted to pragmatism and flight. Their words and actions of the past clearly reveal this.

The First party congress of the JVP, which was held a few months ago, received a number of greetings from revolutionary organisations abroad. This is seen as proof of the revolutionary nature of the JVP. Yet, the time is not ripe to arrive at such a conclusion. To the world outside, the JVP is a militant party that dealt a heavy blow to the capitalist system in Sri Lanka, a party with a majority of followers who have spent time in prison. International revolutionary organisations have not yet had the time to contemplate the path on which the JVP has travelled since release from prison. They are also not as close to the situation as we are. Our situation is different. Living within the country, we can clearly see the path that the JVP has embarked upon as soon as they placed their first step upon it. For us, it isn't difficult to decide whether the present leadership of the JVP, which at first went to great lengths to negotiate recognition by numerous internatio-

nal forces that support the old reformist parties, declared even the devil's grandmother to be a revolutionary internationalist when that ploy failed, through genuine revolutionary need or whether it was motivated by sheer self-interest. We consider 'revolutionary internationalism' and 'A Red Asia' to be concepts that are only idealistic declarations, on the JVP's part because their practice is completely opposed to these declarations.

**The loudly proclaimed revolutionary internationalism of the JVP was clearly exposed in the recent Iraq-Iran conflict.** Nobody who looks into the background of this crisis will say that the birth of this conflict is rooted in the issue regarding the Shat-el-Arab straits. The root lies in the differences that have sprung up between the two countries of late. Iran has moved from being a firstclass imperialist stooge to being anti-imperialist. Isn't the hostage issue the one that has dealt the most severe blow to America's imperialist pride in the recent past? It is very clear that the present ruling forces in Iran consist of middle and small capitalists, the middle class and the clergy. Yet, unlike during the regime of the murderous Shah, the atmosphere is now favourable for the growth of left-wing forces in the country. The present era in Iran is one of transition. Not only progressive forces but even the imperialists themselves believe that left-wing forces such as the Fedayeen, the Tudeh and the Mujahidin are daily growing in strength within Iran, and will, in time, play a key role in national politics. If not for the blind, tradition-bound, deistic and feudal ideology of the mullahs, there is no doubt that the situation in Iran would have been resolved more favourably.

The position of Iraq is different. It seems that the anti-imperialist and radical policies of Iraq's rulers have undergone a serious change in recent times. The last months have shown the consistent erosion of the anti-imperialist stands held

by the rulers of Iraq, who have received the support of many reformist leftwingers. As Iran became strongly anti-imperialist, Iraq, which up to then had espoused similar views, began to loosen its own anti-imperialist ties. These efforts can be identified as a part of Iraq's desire to be a new force in the Middle East. The toppling of the Shah in Iran and subsequent upheavals were advantageous to the Palestine issue. Yet, the war commenced by Iraq has confused the situation. Today, Iraq receives the help and support of a number of pro-imperialist Arab countries. They too sought to avenge the blow dealt by Iran to their American protector and benefactor. To this end, they used Iraq. The fact that several anti-imperialist, radical Arab states have assured Iran of their support shows us that it is not religious reasons, as is stated, but political ones that lie at the root of the Iraq-Iran conflict. However, the only hope of all anti-imperialists is that the crisis should be resolved as soon as possible, and that the anti-imperialist forces in the Middle East should be united against imperialism.

The JVP does not have the inclination to seek out the realities of the situation. In this crisis, they are fully on the side of Iraq. They spare no words in heaping invective on Iran. At a time when the majority of other progressive and revolutionary groups were silent in this connection, the JVP clearly took a stand on this question. We expected them to barricade the Iranian Embassy—but for some strange reason, this did not take place! Even more surprising is the action of the SLFP joining forces with the JVP on this issue. The SLFP went so far as to berate the Iranian Ambassador in Sri Lanka. As we see it, either the SLFP has accepted the JVP's loudly proclaimed policy of 'revolutionary internationalism' or the JVP has accepted the SLFP's 'Middle Path Bandaranike Path' policies. Or

else, Iraqi oil has succeeded in uniting the two! It enters our minds as to whether this friendship on an international issue between two parties which are sworn enemies at the national level is a gloomy hint at what the future holds in store! It would not be unjustifiable if observers were led to wonder if the JVP, which a year ago traversed the countryside speaking of the 'End of a Journey' for the SLFP, has now embarked on a 'trip' with the same SLFP! Isn't the present leadership of the JVP, which is replacing Marxism with pragmatism, only concerned with consolidating their own position?

Q 7. Your union took up an advanced position on the question of the Tamil people's self-determination. What is your opinion of the JVP's position on the National Question?

A: Just like every other reformist left-wing political party in this country, the JVP too does not have a straightforward policy regarding the national question. The reason for this is clear. In order to achieve at least some degree of success in an election, one has to pander to the psyche of Sinhala-speaking majority of this country. Most of them are chauvinist. In order to win them over, these parties are compelled to structure their policies in a way that is unjust as far as the Tamil-speaking people are concerned. Thus, instead of carrying on an active ideological struggle against the chauvinism which is an inevitable result of capitalism and neo-colonialism, these left-wing parties only reinforce it further. Using the theory that the LSSP's position regarding the national question led to their losing the support of the Sinhala masses in the '50s as a yardstick, The JVP therefore put forward an unmarxist position regarding the national question. It must be said that the book written by Lionel Bopage, a member of Politbureau of the JVP in this regard is extremely confused. On the one hand, the book accepts the right of self-determination of the Tamil-speaking people. Yet, by saying that since these people are in the

grip of a bourgeois political party — the TULF — they are unable to use this right to attain socialist objectives, it contradicts the earlier statement. It is clear that they confront a severe crisis concerning the unity of Marxist theory and practice, with regard to the national question. It can be definitely said that this policy is one which has been spun out of the basic strategy of the party — the parliamentary path.

We see the only path to the solution of the national question in Sri Lanka is to be that of national equality and integrity. This is the solution to both the chauvinism of the Sinhala-speaking majority and the communalism that has grown in the Tamil-speaking people due to national oppression. An enormous social debate and transformation is necessary for this to take place. It is our task for today to work towards these goals.

(To be continued)

### Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

with Sinhala and English translations, so that the whole world could see its splendid achievements? Surely it can't be lack of money — they had plenty of it, and to spare, for so many tamashas earlier. Lack of self-confidence perhaps) He gives a number of reasons to explain (away) why a comprehensive theoretical system relevant to the Sri Lankan context hasn't yet been formulated. Among them is the curious argument that it's due to the enemy's poverty of theory; doesn't he realise that this argument can cut both ways? Off-hand, I can think of a better reason why all this praxis has brought forth only a ridiculous mess in the theoretical sphere. Samudran's pioneers though even now ritualistically bewailing the absence of 'a comprehensive theoretical system of aesthetics' are busier resurrecting old fogies with little or no relevance to life in the last quarter of this century or the development of fresh Marxist perspectives. So that even

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# Great Powers and Indian predominance

N. M. M. I. Hussein

This paper has so far sought to establish that some degree of regional co-operation should be possible at present, which could become very considerable in the course of time. The question of whether this will be possible without leading to relations of dominance and dependence within the region has to be examined.

It has been noted in this paper that India has managed to establish satisfactory and friendly relations with all its neighbours from 1977 to the present time August 1979. These relations may deteriorate but the demonstration of the possibility of good-neighbourly relations remains significant for indicating that co-operative regional relations without dominance and dependence should be possible in the future.

The present section will examine the relevance of South Asia's relations with the great powers, the U. S. and the Soviet Union, as they obviously have a special importance for the problem of working out co-operative relations in South Asia without linkages of dominance and dependence. It has already been surmised in this paper that South Asia could become an area characterised by intensified great power rivalry, but the great powers could also provide extra-regional options important for achieving a balance within South Asia.

South Asia is a region that as a whole had, from the time of decolonisation in the late forties, an unusually independent position in relation to the great powers compared to the other regions of the Third World. The Arab countries, for instance, had to keep aloof from the Soviet Union for many years, quite unlike India. It seems retrospectively astonishing that when Egypt bought arms in 1955 from the Soviet Union, the first Arab arms purchase from a Communist country, it was regarded as so daring a departure from the established norms that it was necessary to pretend that the arms were of Czechoslovak provenance. No such

constraint could have been imagined for India at the time. One of the countries of the region, Pakistan, did have special relations with the U. S. but that was motivated by Pakistan's assessment of its own interests in relation to India and not by any enthusiasm to participate in the cold war. Significantly Pakistan established very friendly relations with China from the early sixties, at a period when China was anathema to the West, while preserving friendly relations with the U. S. and this was done without any apparent difficulty.

From the time of decolonisation in the late Forties South Asian countries seem to have been in an unusually independent position in relation to the great powers compared to countries in other regions, Latin America, the Middle East, South East Asia and East Asia, some which acquired a similar position only at a later period. Part of the reason might have been that South Asia neither constituted what could be regarded in traditional terms as a legitimate sphere of influence of the U. S., unlike Latin America and the Pacific, nor was it regarded as of crucial importance in the confrontation against the Soviet Union. The more important part of the reason probably was that in the perception of the great powers India had the potential for great powers status, and this meant that neither great power was anxious to have special relations with most of the countries in the vicinity of India in the same manner as with countries in some other regions. Of the two great powers, the Soviet Union has all along had excellent relations with India, and it is regarded as significant that it has been especially co-operative in helping India build heavy industry, usually regarded as the sine qua non for great power status. The U. S. has occasionally had troubled relations with India but this does not preclude recognition of a special status for India, as shown by the statement of Nr. Warren Christopher, U. S. Deputy Under-Secretary of State,

in 1977, that the U. S. regards India as having a 'predominant' position in the sub-continent. This was subsequently clarified as referring merely to the economic weight.

It can be argued that the earlier propensity to view India as having some sort of special position would have been strengthened after the early sixties when it became apparent that a bi polar world was not feasible and that a future world order had to be approached on a multi-polar premise, unless of course the postulates of Non-alignment are accepted. International trends since then may be interpreted as favouring a multi-polar world even more strongly, and there could be a greater propensity today to see some countries, such as India, as having a predominant position in their regions.

This does not mean, of course, that there will be no great power interaction in the region and that the South-Asian countries will only have the problem of working out satisfactory relations between themselves. It is to be expected that both great powers will, for various reasons ideological or otherwise, avail themselves of any opportunities that may arise to establish special relations with the South-Asian countries. This has already happened in the case of Afghanistan after April 1978. The fact that a region has a potential power-centre should only mean that the thrust of the great powers may be as intense as in some other regions. Consequently the small nations of South-Asia could for the most part anticipate less danger of satellisation in their relations with the great powers. The great provide the extra-regional options that will help small South Asian nations avoid a sense of claustrophobia, and this could facilitate easier intra-regional relations.

## Afghanistan

Striking illustration of an internal momentum driving a South Asian country towards special relations with a great power is provided

by the case of Afghanistan. What took place in April 1978 has to be understood in the context of developments in Afghanistan since 1919. The attempt at a radical transformation of the country by the modernising monarch, Amanullah, who was inspired by Kemal Ataturk, failed in the twenties due to obscurantist forces and Afghanistan had a very different evolution from that Turkey. Daud's anti-royalist coup in 1973 merely meant the continuation of royal rule under republican guise. In April 1978 only six percent of the population was literate, and, it must have seemed to the Khalk and Parocham parties that there was no prospect whatever of dynamic development for Afghanistan except through a revolution and special relations with the Soviet Union.

South Asia as a whole has not shown the economic dynamism of East Asia or even of South East Asia, and the prospects are regarded as less hopeful than in the Middle East, Africa, or Latin America, because of relative paucity of resources in relation to population. Sometimes, the economic development of a South Asian country, has seemed impressive, Pakistan for instance, which in the last decade was written up by Peter Druker as showing together with South Korea the most impressive performance among the developing countries, but that image of Pakistan changed subsequently. It can

be argued also that India's performance has been impressive enough, judged in terms of the Mahalanobis model of capital intensive development though not in terms of meeting the needs of the masses, but development economists have inclined to be schizophrenic about India and there is also the view that its performance has been unimpressive. It remains that the South Asian countries are an appreciable distance away from self-sustained growth and they are not regarded as displaying the economic dynamism characteristic of some regions. 'South Asia' even seems to be a pejorative term among development economists.

The usual explanation for the inadequate performance of the South Asian economies as a whole is the unfavourable ratio of population to resources. But the ratio has been equally, if not more, unfavourable in other areas, for instance in Japan, South Korea, or Singapore, which have shown a notable economic dynamism. This paper accepts the view that the basic determinants of economic development are the cultural factors influencing behaviour patterns and institutions. The causes of underdevelopment are not to be found in imperialism, neo-colonialism, inadequate rates of savings and investment unfavourable terms of trade, inadequate aid, the inequities of North South Economic relations, the difficulties in the way of indus-

trialization and other difficulties due to unfavourable 'initial conditions.' Japan broke through to a modernized economy after 1868 by generating its own capital out of domestic resources and while it had only silk exports to pay for imported machinery. Some Third World countries have fared notably better than others while facing the same or similar unfavourable conditions. It seems a realistic hypothesis that the basic determinants of economic development are cultural factors influencing behaviour patterns and institutions.

If the factors required for dynamic change are not to be found in a society, it is most likely to follow from a high degree of interaction with a developed centre, judging from the historical evidence about the dynamics of cultural change. Probably the most important factor behind the relatively high economic dynamism shown by some of the South East Asian or Latin American countries, compared with South Asian countries, has been their higher degree of interaction with a developed centre. It is significant that Afghanistan sought special relations with the Soviet Union, and it may be significant also that Bangladesh and Sri Lanka now place so much emphasis on foreign investment. There may be a growing recognition in the region that a higher degree than in the past of interaction with a developed centre is required for economic dynamism.

## Letters . . .

(Continued from page 18)

if they had all the world enough and historical time, there would still stretch before them vast deserts of nullity.

It's this kind of literary grave-digging and the critical high-jacking they indulge in that has partly led to the progressive movement being in the doldrums today. When you begin to function like a Mutual Admiration Society, no worth-while standards can possibly emerge.

A good example of this critical high-jacking is the over-rated *Sankaram*, a play dealing with bloodless abstractions. It was performed recently in Jaffna, for the first time after eleven years. The leaps I saw on stage were quite pleasing to the eye but I

must say that, ideology-wise, the play was a great leap backwards — into the arms of the TULF with whom the left movement here is having a running battle about shelving the class struggle till the Tamil nation wins its freedom. No one doubts the revolutionary intentions of the play-wright: what's at issue here is the actual effect of what we see on the stage. The counter-revolutionary implications of the ending are obvious to any one with even a nodding acquaintance with Marxism. How come then that our revolutionary pundits missed the obvious? I can only explain it on the basis of Mutual Admiration. (Strangely enough, I understand the play-wright had, at a post-performance discussion, defended his ending on the ground that the traditional form demands that the climax be the battle

between the protagonist and the antagonist! Who's being a formalist now?). *Sankaram* is a text book illustration of what happens when you ignore the inter-dependence of form and content — the point that Mr. Reggie Siriwardene made with characteristic lucidity.

Samudran seems bent on making this exchange as interminable as the legendary Hanuman's tail (and knowing what havoc that caused Ravana's Lanka, I wouldn't want the same fate to befall the Lanka Guardian). I have no intention of wasting any more time — and space — on Samudran. If, Kaspar-like, he wishes to interpret my unilateral withdrawal as another 'famous victory', he's welcome to thump his chest and proclaim he's the greatest.

Jaffna.

**A. J. Canagaratna**



# Form, content: art ideology

Reggie Siriwardena

While thanking Samudran for his painstaking and courteous reply to me (LG, December 1), I wish to conclude my share of this discussion by summing up what seem me the main points of agreement and disagreement between us. But first, a word about my purposes in intervening in this discussion.

If I understand him correctly, Samudran says his first article was provoked by a conflict between Marxists and formalists in the Tamil literary world and what he sees as a tendency towards the isolation and over-valuation of form by certain Tamil literary critics. I am, of course, unable to comment on this. But I should like to say that in writing my rejoinder to Samudran, I too was influenced by a current literary context. Too often in contemporary Sinhala literature we have had plays, poetry and fiction in which a progressive ideology has been offered as if it were a guarantee of artistic excellence, without either the substance of lived experience or the writer's command of his chosen literary form to support it. Whether there is any parallel in the Tamil literary situation I can't say, but I did have this Sinhala literary context in mind when I objected to what seemed to me Samudran's over-simplified opposition between Marxism and formalism.

Now to sum up. I am glad Samudran agrees that literary form and content are inter-dependent, and that 'the practice of extracting the ideological content alone for approval or condemnation' is not a valid method of criticism. But when he goes on to say that 'the assertion of primacy of content over form is not relegating form to a less important place but identifying the more decisive of the inseparables in determining meaning and artistic quality', I am frankly unable to understand what he means. To me it seems obvious that if you hold content to be 'more decisive' in determining meaning and artistic quality, then you must hold form to be 'less important'.

In what way does Samudran believe content to be 'more decisive' than form? In the process of literary creation or in the finished work, as apprehended by the reader? Neither of these positions seems to me tenable. For it is simply not true that in creating a work of literature, the writer begins by conceiving 'what he wants to say' and then working out 'the way in which he is going to say it'. Only inferior and unsuccessful works—products of pure will and celebration—are written in that way. Everything we know about the psychology of literary creation from the records left behind by great poets and novelists suggests that in the act of conception and production there is a continuous interaction between content—so that to ask which of them is more decisive is like asking which came first, the chicken or the egg. And if this is true of the process of literary creation, it is equally true of the act of literary apprehension. The reader, if he is at all sensitive to literature, doesn't go through form to content, as if the form were only an outer covering to be discarded once the content has been reached. In responding to the literary work, he grasps content as embodied in a particular form, in a simple act of imaginative apprehension.

I think Samudran's own statement that content itself is 'a product of artistic reflection of reality' points to the fact that we can separate form and content only as abstractions for the purpose of analytical convenience. For if, as Samudran says, 'the content of a creative work... is the result of a consciously pursued process of artistic reflection of particular phenomena through the "prism of the inner world" of the artist,' (and I agree, except that I would question whether this process is always 'consciously pursued'), then at no stage does the artist conceive content, as it were, in the raw but always incarnated in form.

Samudran has misunderstood me when he claims that in describing the content of Shelley's *Song to the Men of England* as I did, I was adopting the method of the socialist realist critics whom I criticised. Samudran has, I think, failed to take account of the fact that Shelley's theme is a generalised social observation and exhortation (not, for instance, the suffering of an individual worker). But what makes the poem more than an intellectual statement is Shelley's imaginative and emotional response to his social perception, organised and articulated through poetic form.

Finally, about Brecht. Samudran says: 'My position is that Brecht was a great socialist.' He is, of course, entitled to give the term his own meaning in using it in this way. But Samudran should consider the significance of the fact that in his lifetime Brecht was stigmatised by the high priests of socialist realism for the 'formalist' elements they found in his plays. I am ready to take Samudran's word for it that Lukacs in his later writings accepted Brecht as 'the greatest realist playwright of his time', but when Brecht was living and working, Lukacs failed to see his importance, nor did he pay to him a fraction of the attention he devoted to traditional realists like Thomas Mann. I have just been looking at a critical work written in conformity with the doctrines of socialist realism—Boris Suchkov's *A History of Realism*. I have failed to find in it any reference to Brecht, though it devotes several pages to Mann, Hemingway and even Steinbeck. These examples point to the dangers of setting up realism as the only literary form that can be sanctioned by a Marxist ideology. Samudran's stretching of the socialist realist form to include Brecht is no doubt a lesser evil as compared with the dogmatic exclusion of his work, but if we are to call Brecht 'realist', then why not Marquez or Carpentier? Does the term have any definition or utility at this point?



# UNIMPRESSIVE

Kamalika Pieris

'Hansa Vilak' is one of the few Sinhala films of recent date to be received with uniform applause by the critics. Reviews of this film have primarily concentrated on explaining a new cinematic mode, on delineating theme and intent, and on calling attention to the fact that this film shows commendable enterprise in a fledgling director. Apart from a few reviews which tend to glance rather cursorily at the film, the general tone of the articles may be interpreted as instructional and or explanatory, indulgent, rather than objectively critical.

Contrary to the critics, I found 'Hansa Vilak' unimpressive on several counts. It can hardly be considered to be an original and innovative film when it is so obviously derivative. A film of this genre was bound to arrive on the Sinhala screen sooner or later. It is the Sinhala counterpart of the introspective or psychological film of the Western cinema.

More significantly this film does not move beyond the initial influences from which it derives. By expressing the central idea in general social terms rather than in specifically local ones, and in failing to reflect through its subject matter the character and mores of the society in which the film is set, this film has lost the chance of converting a derivative experimental technique into an outstanding film. Let me elaborate by selecting just one aspect of the social background. This film depicts a situation which if it takes place in Sri Lanka, usually involves the participation of family, friends, relatives, neighbours and colleagues. These categories contribute willy nilly to the emotional situations which arise. Apart from the scene between Nissanka and his brother-in-law, the characters in this film appear to live in a social semi-vacuum

more reminiscent of other cultures than of Sri Lanka. As a result, this film which has a Sri Lankan locale could well be transposed into another setting without it affecting the film very much.

It is evident that Bandaranayake has not waited to acquire some degree of proficiency in the medium before he ventured into a cinematic style which calls for considerable vision and dexterity in planning and execution. This film fails to come off at a first viewing not because the audience is unable to respond to a difficult film — as some critics suggest — but because there are serious technical weaknesses which prevent us from grasping fully the various nuances of the film. It obviously lacks the editing skill needed for a complex presentation of this sort. We can work out the general drift of the film, but, thanks to a confusing array of sequences, we are not always sure where reality ends and fantasy begins — and the point of it all. In addition some parts of the film were photographically uninteresting.

These weaknesses can be readily attributed to the inexperience of a new director. But precisely for this reason, constructive comments would have been welcome. There is a tendency in most reviews of local films to gloss over technical weaknesses and overemphasise theme and intention. This may be due to the fact that critics are all too keenly aware of the financial and technical difficulties under which these productions are created. However, it must be kept in mind that a developing medium needs guidelines along which to improve. A sympathetic silence on technical weaknesses can be interpreted as a tacit encouragement to continue in the same way.

Content-wise, the biggest problem in this film, it appears to me, is that the story gathers momentum without sufficient explanation. Because of this, it is difficult to relate the later fantasies to the introspection displayed in the early part of the film. The initial fantasies can be accepted as natural to the situation, not so the later fantasies. Further, key events in the film do not always ring true. For example, the scene at the police station looks improbable and slightly melodramatic. Certain details need reconsideration. Samantha takes her child along when she visits her husband's mistress.

Bandaranayake has not subjected his text to a sufficiently rigorous analysis as regards natural behaviour and the buildup of emotion and tension. This is a basic directorial flaw in most of our local productions, both in the theatre and in the cinema. Directors tend to concentrate on finding an 'interesting' subject and on getting their thematic slant across. They are satisfied with approximations for everything else. To digress for a moment, this is the cause of much of the unevenness of contemporary films and plays, with their improbable plots, behaviour which is palpably out of character and innumerable loose ends.

The most that can be said for 'Hansa Vilak' is that it is a daring venture for a beginner, but it is certainly not an accomplished film or anywhere near one. Its contribution to the mainstream of Sinhala cinema is largely that it adds to its growing eclecticism.

# WEAK SCRIPT

Sidat Sri Nandalochana

The advance publicity that 'Hansa Vilak' had received in the Lanka Guardian could only have led one to believe that it was an outstanding film. I cannot share that view and unless one is so terribly middle class in one's attitudes and worships tradition there seems little point in the film. The film deals with the break-up of two marriages and the attendant miseries that ensue and the Director leaves the spectator in no doubt where his sympathies lie. I have no serious objection to the subject matter provided it is dealt with in an adult way without subjecting the spectator to a sermon. I detest moralising even if it be on celluloid and I think any discerning cinema goer would prefer to have his sermon from the pulpit.

The weakness of the film is the weakness of the script and although Bandaranayake the director deserves credit for his adroit craft-

manship, he must take the rap for the overall disappointment since he is his own script writer. Had he chosen to deal with an extra-marital love relationship, pure and simple, without emphasising its infidelity I am sure that the tragedy and the poignancy of the situation would have surfaced. The spectator would then have been feeling enough to react to the tragic web which the protagonists were caught up in. But in Hansa Vilak — what a beautiful title — the Director has not been able to raise himself above middle class banalities.

The content apart one must give credit to Bandaranayake for his sure grasp of the medium and I am sure that given a decent script he will realise his undoubted potential. The film starts off very promisingly with some arresting camera — work but soon begins to meander lazily to its predictable

end. Some cynic may well identify shades of Satyajit Ray and Lester James Peiris but where they are concerned the deliberately slow movement of the camera helps to heighten the conflicts and climaxes which are seldom unconvincing.

Even if the film escaped being a total tragedy some of the acting came dangerously near to being so with the exception of Swarna Mallawaarachchi whose good looks are not her only asset. Henry Jayasena's deterioration since his memorable performance in Gamperaliya is sad to see and he leaves one with the impression that he is not willing to make the required transition from the stage to the screen. A larger than life portrayal is all very well on the stage but on the screen it could prove tragically hilarious. Not to be outdone the meddlesome policemen complete the hilarity.



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# A literary compromise

AS I  
LIKE IT

Touchstone

A few years ago a book prepared for HNCE English and titled **Reading with Understanding** created a furore among conservative school-teachers and dons by its departures from the academic beaten track. 'The Bard is out and the Beatles are in' reported one newspaper. **Reading with Understanding** was one of the educational casualties of the 1977 change of government, but the new A-level texts in English produced by the English Syllabus Committee of the Ministry of Education show that the revolution it was intended to effect in the teaching of literature has not been entirely without result.

The 1981 texts are a compromise between older and newer approaches. The poetry anthology compiled by the committee falls into two completely unrelated halves. The first is an academically conservative selection of English poetry where I find the choices timorous and unimaginative. The second half is more adventurous, with a grouping of Third World poetry and pop songs by Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, John Lennon and Paul McCartney. The selection of short stories even keeps three of the pieces from **Reading with Understanding**—the stories by Silone, Premchand and Sillitoe. Perhaps those whose blood-pressure was raised by the HNCE book won't be entirely calmed by the new texts either. However, what is lacking in the new selections is a sense of a coherent educational purpose: the committee, I fear, has fallen between two stools.

## Pushkin in translation

Aleksandr Pushkin's novel in verse, **Eugen Onegin**, is one of the most brilliant and readable long poems in any language, but its pleasures have up to now been inaccessible to English-speaking readers without Russian. Not for lack of translations, but previous attempts at rendering **Onegin** in English verse fully deserved the ferocious onslaughts made on them by Vladimir Nabokov in his edition

of the poem. Nabokov, who had the talents to do better, contented himself by producing a faithful literal translation and erudite commentary.

Now at last there is an English verse translation of **Eugen Onegin** which doesn't disgrace Pushkin — by Charles Johnston in Penguin Classics (£ 1.50). The problems of translating **Onegin** are among the most arduous that any translator can face, especially if he tries, as Johnston does, to preserve the complex stanza-form of the original, but most of the time the new version succeeds in surmounting them. A sample of 'Pushkin-Johnston at its best: Lensky, dying in a duel, is compared to a deserted house:

'But now the mansion is forsaken;  
Shutters are up, and all is pale  
And still within, behind the veil  
Of chalk the window-panes have  
taken.

The lady of the house has fled.  
Where to God knows. The  
trail is dead.'

## My old school

'Where were you educated?' When asked this question, I often feel inclined to answer, "In the Colombo Public Library." It was in that old building at Edinburgh Crescent, out of which the library moved a fortnight ago into its bright new home, that I discovered for myself in my teens all that literature which influenced me in growing up—the poetry of Eliot and Auden, the novels of Silone and Dos Passos, the prose of the early Orwell, the literary criticism of Leavis and the political literature of the Left Book Club. A mixed bag, undoubtedly, but though

I have changed my mind about much of it since, I can't deny that the Public Library gave me what I didn't get from my school education. So as an old boy let me wish it fresh success in an era when inflation abroad, the falling rupee and the swollen costs of paper and printing at home have put both imported and indigenous books out of the reach of the common reader and made library services more precious than ever.

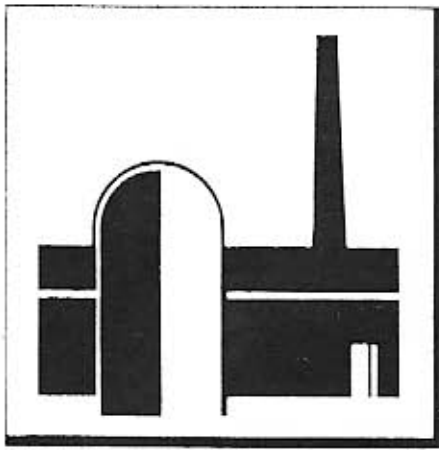
## Toward a new . . .

(Continued from page 15)

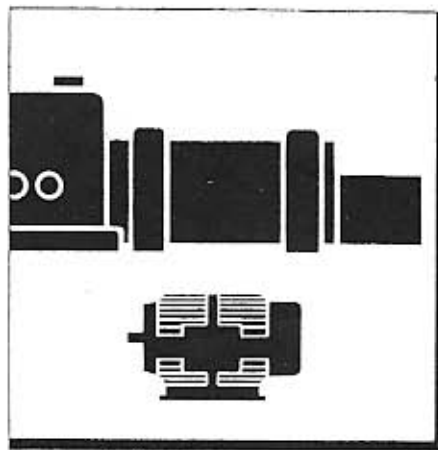
would be **delayed**, but would eventually give rise to a more effective and stable struggle by the peoples. This is because the people in such countries would have had a taste of this new order by this time **and recognised its limitations**. On the other hand in the event that this New International Economic Order is not promulgated, the agitation among the people will increase rapidly, and the process of the Peoples struggle for socialism would get underway without much delay.

Finally we must bear in mind that the new and humane course will remain a beautiful but impossible dream right until each one of us is prepared to change the course of our own life. Within our own small districts, where we live and work, we can use our eyes and our senses and contribute by studying, organising and putting into action the methods for change — i. e. for changing this capitalist set up into Socialism.

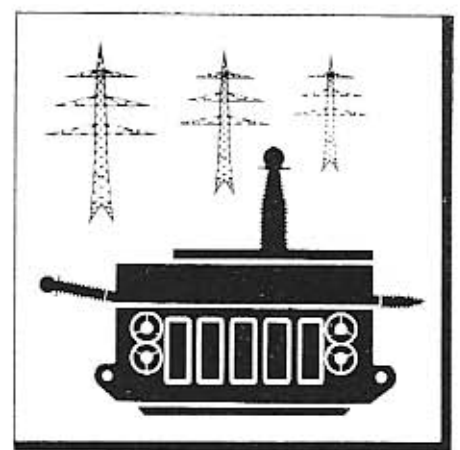




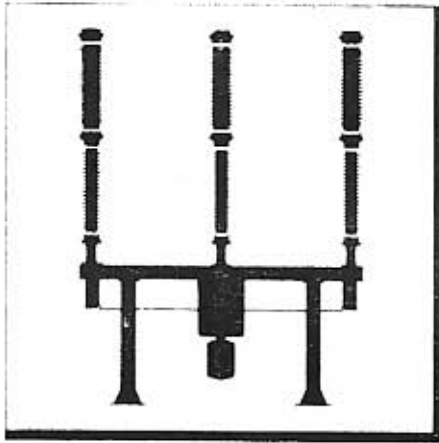
Steam and gas turbine power stations



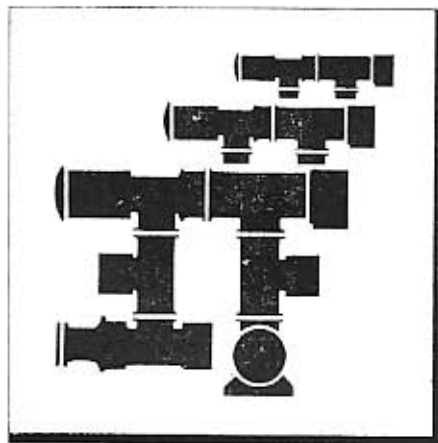
Generators and motors of all types and sizes



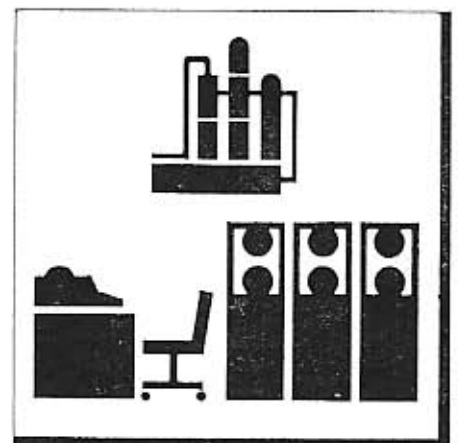
Large power transformers



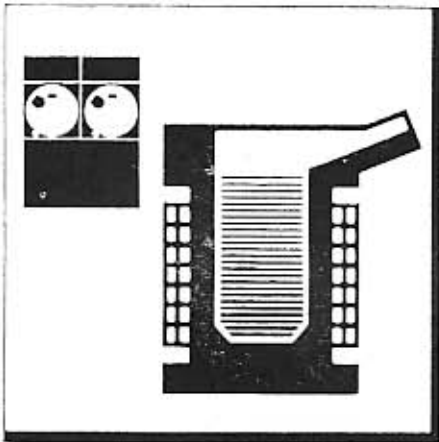
SF<sub>6</sub>-circuit-breakers up to 420 kV



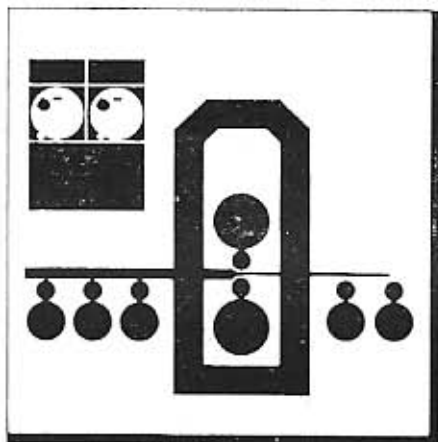
Medium- and high-voltage switchgear up to 525 kV



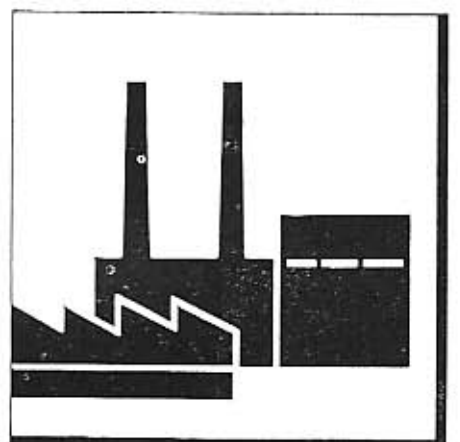
Tele-control and data systems,



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