

PULLOUT PUZZLE: Symbols will not suffice

— *Mervyn de Silva*

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 12 No. 7 August 1, 1989

Price Rs. 5.00

Registered at the GPO, Sri Lanka QJ/32/NEWS/88

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THE CURFEW TOLLS... WHAT PRECISELY?

Censorship was off; curfew came in by the backdoor, suddenly. For 29 hours, extended to 54. The ordinary law-abiding citizen was confined to barracks. The metaphor is irresistible. At least from July 1983 onwards, we have lived in an increasingly militarised society where the regime, assailed by violence of various kinds, forces the ordinary citizen to live under extraordinary conditions.

Two questions. Does the regime's response, its regular recourse to extraordinary procedures, all restrictive, stringent, suggest that something more than the regime is besieged? Perhaps the State itself...

Secondly, does militarisation, a process rather than a dramatic event or sudden change, have its own logic, and if so, an inevitable culmination?

THE OTHER ROHANA

At the height of the five-day 'hartal' to protest the IPKF presence, a leaflet in Sinhala had a picture of naval rating Vijitha Rohana, about to smash Mr. Gandhi's skull with his rifle butt on Galle Face Green. It happened on July 29, when the departing Gandhi inspected a naval guard-of-honour. The leaflet urged patriotic youth to take up Rohana's rifle...to carry on the struggle.

TOP PRIORITY

"Premastroika" has moved into the sphere of foreign affairs. The confrontation with India has brought home the importance of foreign policy and the need for professionalism and expertise in diplomacy. The appointment of Mr. Bradman Weerakoon who was secretary-general of a London-based international agency after serving five prime ministers, including Mr. Premadasa, to the newly created post of Special Adviser to the President on International Relations, was the first obvious sign. He will help Foreign Secretary Tillekeratne to plan

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LETTERS

George Keyt

May I have a few inches of your valuable space to rebut two references to me in Tilak Gunawardhana's article — "Some Reflections on Keyt's 88th Birthday" (L. G. 1st June 1989), both of which are inaccurate misleading, and undeserving, to say the least.

(1) I am supposed to have written a biography of Mr. Keyt of "thirty odd pages" which was sold at the Exhibition. My "George Keyt — A Life in Art" contained fifty pages, five

colour plates, and a portrait frontispiece of the artist. It comprised a lengthy biographical essay, an exhaustive bibliography of the artist's writings, assessments of his work, and a definitive record of his exhibitions. It was written as a labour of love for his 88th birthday and published, priced, and sold by the George Keyt Foundation. I was informed by the Chairman of the Foundation that it was intended as "a collector's item." I am neither a Trustee nor a Member of its Executive Committee.

(2) Mr. Gunewardhane observes that "Ian Goonetilleke is unwittingly becoming a part of this almost underworldly transaction." I must confess that I possess neither the acumen nor the inclination to aid and abet, wittingly or unwittingly, the kind of transaction with which Gunawardhane seems all too familiar.

In the course of a notably ill-tempered and irresponsible review, Gunawardhane concentrates his main fire on the Foundation, the April Exhibition, the venue, its sponsors — the People's Bank, the artist himself and his life-style, and a miscellaneous "mafia" (his term) resident in the elitist groves of Colombo 1-8. As a naturalised native of Nawinna, I am not qualified to hold a brief for them, but I can only presume that these targets are flexing their individual or corporate fingers in defence of their own positions.

H. A. I. Goonetilleke
Nawinna

LANKA GUARDIAN

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Price Rs. 5.00

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,
COLOMBO — 2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 547584

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Symbolic gestures before the hard bargaining

Mervyn de Silva

Phew! That was close. On the 28th Foreign Secretary Bernard Tillekeratne and Indian High Commissioner L. I. Mehrotra signed a joint communique on the 're-commencement' of Indian troop withdrawals. It will commence on the 29th, the deadline set by President Premadasa in his now historic Battaramulla speech. The President is on the air by evening. A political triumph for his seven-month old administration, he says. The number who left by the first vessel was about 600-700. It was a symbolic gesture and symbols can be more important than statistics sometimes.

A few hours after the announcement in Colombo, news despatches from Indian agencies reported that naval vessels were ready to leave South Indian ports to ferry IPKF battalions. Neatly timed. More crafty was the word "re-commence". A point to Mr. Gandhi. He had already commenced the pull-out, 7,000-8,000 earlier this year. In April he has told the annual Army Generals Conference that he planned to "withdraw the bulk" of the estimated 45,000 strong IPKF. In other words, in re-commencing the pull-out process, which had been halted for political reasons and to retain diplomatic leverage on an untested Colombo regime, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was doing his own thing. No 'face' lost. On the contrary, silence or muted cheers from his domestic critics.

The next problem is the phasing. Only the professionals can handle that. So the Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne was accompanied by Lt. General Sepala Attygalle, the Ministry's Secretary since 1977, and Army-Navy-Air Force top brass.

The security situation in the North-East during and after the phased pullout has been one of

Mr. Gandhi's express concerns. He describes his main anxiety as the 'safety of the Tamils'. With the IPKF out, will the LTTE go for the pro-India groups, specially the EPRLF which runs the provincial council? A bloodbath will have an explosive effect on Tamil Nadu where Gandhi's Congress received a severe thrashing from Mr. Karunanidhi's DMK. Many an Indian voter is federal in his thinking. He votes for his favourite party at the State elections (e.g. DMK or CPI in Tamilnadu or Kerala) but casts his ballot for the Congress at the parliamentary polls.

When Mr. Gandhi took up the 'safety of the Tamils' cry, Mr. Karunanidhi a member of an anti-Congress Opposition alliance, broke ranks to support Mr. Gandhi on his stand on the IPKF issue. So Mr. Gandhi and his defence advisers will discuss in operational detail the "security" arrangements in the North-East until the last Indian soldier leaves.

And then there is the related issue. The North-East Council was supposed to provide the local security with the Citizens Volunteer Force (CVF). Besides the question of funds, there were two other problems — recruitment and training. The IPKF was ready to undertake the training but the moment "recruitment" began the LTTE, other groups and many Tamils yelled "Conscription" and tales of Tamil teenagers abducted for a conscript army reached Colombo. Chief Minister Perumal denied the allegation angrily but embassies in Colombo reported a new wave of Tamil youths clamouring for visas.

While local security responsibilities post-pullout had become an immediate worry in Delhi, it was part of a larger concern over "devolution" and how far the

vesting of powers in the merged North-East had in fact taken place. Colombo argues that everything which had to be done constitutionally, legally and by proclamation (e.g. postponement of the referendum to decide whether the merger should continue) has been done. Delhi is not satisfied. So, Messrs Sunil de Silva A.G., and Mr. Felix Dias Abeyesingha, a key member of the Thimpu team and Secretary-General of the All-party conference, are in the Sri Lankan delegation.

It was not only President Premadasa's firm resolve — some would say reckless obstinacy — which irked, embarrassed and then impelled Mr. Gandhi to break the diplomatic deadlock. Nor Mr. Premadasa's newly discovered talent for the eye-balling game, an essential part of 'brinkmanship'. It was the pressure on Mr. Gandhi — the Indian press, the Opposition, regional and international opinion. Like his mother, Mr. Gandhi would have scoffed at all that if only the political climate in India right now was not so utterly uncongenial. He is under terrific attack not merely as Congress leader or Prime Minister but as a person. He and his family, and their reputation, have been subjected to vicious attacks.

And this is election year; less than six months away. The Opposition has outstanding regional leaders. It has an immensely popular candidate for Premiership in the former Finance Minister V. P. Singh. His probity is unchallenged. This is a vital factor because corruption is a major political issue. Before 100 Opposition MP's resigned their seats and marched out, they shouted "Thief, Thief" at government benches. The Bofors scandal is the Opposition's main weapon.

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Regional stalwarts don't add up to a formidable Opposition challenger with **national** backing. Many opposition parties are united on some important issues, yet divided on others. Otherwise, the Congress would be defeated by an Opposition alliance that may not, however last long — like Moraji Desai's.

Gandhi, anyway, cannot take any chances; definitely not on a foreign policy issue where the Opposition and a very articulate and vigorous press together accuse him of needlessly risking national honour and India's international prestige, the precious legacy of Gandhi and Nehru. The plight of poor landlocked Nepal, under an Indian economic blockade, won greater sympathy for Sri Lanka while exposing Mr. Gandhi to stronger attacks.

Nepal and Sri Lanka made India's bilateral problems a SAARC issue, drawing in the other major power, Pakistan, on to the Sri Lankan side, already joined by Bangladesh. The superpowers didn't censure Delhi but their unequivocal recognition of Sri Lanka's independence and sovereignty, in this particular context, was an implicit criticism of Indian policy.

Meanwhile, the consensus here continued to grow until two political parties, the LSSP and SLMP, known supporters of the 'Accord' and the Indian role, came out openly demanding the IPKF withdrawal. The LSSP said that there was no "legal basis" for the IPKF's continued stay if the Sri Lankan President wished otherwise. The SLMP's National Organiser called on Mr. Gandhi to keep his word (his April statement) to the Army and his own people, and withdraw the bulk by August and the rest before the SAARC summit in Colombo circa November.

Mr. Gandhi persisted with his invitation to a Sri Lankan delegation to discuss matters in Delhi — a symbolic concession which Mr. Premadasa would not grant until his basic conditions — there were four at the start — were met. Total stalemate. Or

so it appeared until Mr. Gandhi has made a symbolic gesture to open the door to negotiations.

In fact, contacts were established; messages received and answered through non-diplomatic channels, and finally face-to-face

exchanges — Mr. Thondaman, Mr. Deshmukh, Mr. Yaqub Khan, and the top officials, Foreign Secretary Tillekeratne and High Commissioner Mehrotra in the final phase to do the drafting of the joint communique.

Patriotic Front: anti-IPKF only ? — or anti-State too ?

The state-run press, radio and TV described "the island-wide protests" of last week as "anti-Indian Imperialism". Yet this new protest campaign, after the settlement of the transport strike and a fortnight's deceptive normalcy, was also anti-government. That was clear at the press conference which followed the impressive march of the monks to Maha Bodhi society Hall and the meeting there.

While there were many monks who may have been identified as sympathetic to the major political parties, the vast majority of younger monks in this several thousand strong procession were more pro-JVP than anything else. And it was their voice which was heard loud and clear when they urged the Buddhist clergy to work closely with the Patriotic Action Front, which is no friend of the UNP. The guiding spirit of the broad-based PAF is certainly the JVP which is following with exceptional skill the Maoist strategy of uniting the many, neutralising others, and isolating the main enemy, the regime. Or is it the State itself?

Since Mr. Premadasa's call for the IPKF withdrawal coincides with the JVP's principal slogan the state-run media evidently believes it can use the successful JVP-led campaign to the government's advantage—a singularly naive assumption. The JVP or its associated organisations didn't mount the anti-IPKF, anti-India campaign to strengthen the UNP Presidency. Indeed, the "Sattan Peramuna" which led the transport strike made the administration look impotent and

the situation almost ungovernable.

It is the UNP which is trapped in a contradiction of its own invention. On the one hand, it wants to give the impression that the JVP's anti-India campaign and the UNP's own run parallel, if not together. On the other hand, the re-introduction of the emergency which Mr. Premadasa lifted on assuming office, has seen a massive, countrywide hunt for JVP—DJV activists and sympathisers.

But Rohana Wijeweera has been in the business of anti-India polemics since the late 60s. One of his lectures to new recruits to the JVP was on "Indian expansionism". If the IPKF, as many expected, didn't budge, his thesis that the Indians are here to stay, that they did not come here to help Sri Lanka or even the Tamils but to impose its hegemonistic, expansionist will, had its final piece of physical evidence to clinch the whole argument. Mr. Premadasa knows this. In his broadcast on Friday, he argued that those who claimed the Indian troops were here to stay have been proved wrong, making protests and demonstrations unnecessary. Much would now depend on the timetable of withdrawal.

Already however, these possibilities had been anticipated. The JVP-spearheaded anti-IPKF and President Premadasa's ran parallel when these didn't actually converge. With the monks meeting and the 5 day "hartal" which brought all work in banks,

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The Third Man

There were no "third parties" to the India-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, an inter-state bilateral agreement, Mr. Premadasa told Mr. Gandhi. The "third party" he had in mind was the armed Tamil separatist movement, represented by various parties, the "Tigers" most of all.

Besides the recommencement of the IPKF withdrawal and a mutually agreed pull-out timetable, there is a second point in the joint communique which has reduced Sri Lanka's original 4 points to two. The second point introduces the Third party — the LTTE, when it speaks of a cessation of hostilities.

The LTTE announced a cease-

fire with S. L. troops. Delhi sneered. The LTTE had done that in August '87, said the Indian government. The "Tigers", badly bruised, want Colombo to get the IPKF off its back. Hence, the talks in Colombo.

But the cold-blooded murders in this city of the TULF leader A. Amirthalingam and former M P Mr. Yogeswaran, and the widely rumoured "death" of Prabhakaran apparently in a factional dispute and a shoot-out, the climate is hardly favourable for a resumption of talks. Anyway, Dr. Bala and Co. had quietly returned to London. How will the new India-Sri Lanka relationship accommodate the "Tigers"?

Ministers go East

Three Government ministers went East on July 24 to talk to Chief Minister Varatharaja Perumal. They were Foreign Minister and State Minister for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne, Rural Industries Minister S. Thondaman and Plantations Industries Minister Gamini Dissanayake. Reports said that the decision to go East was taken because some Government members had expressed a feeling that the EPRLF, which governs the North-East Province, was being "neglected" as a result of the Government's talks with the Tigers (LTTE).

EPRLF leaders were reported to have told the ministers that they, the EPRLF, were dissatisfied with the extent of devolution so far of powers to the North-East Provincial Council. The EPRLF leaders had said that they were not happy with Colombo's attitude, and that nothing was "moving" in the devolution process.

The ministers were reported to have told the EPRLF that necessary measures were being taken to ensure a proper devolution of power to all provincial councils. The ministerial delegation had carried a message from the President that the Government was willing to talk to all parties and that there was no question of any political party or group being left out.

Media man killed

Gunmen suspected by the police to be "subversives" shot dead Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation Chairman Thevis Guruge on Sunday, July 23, on the street, near his home in Colombo 5. Mr. Guruge was also head of the state managed Independent Television Network (ITN), and one of the competent authorities administering the press censorship imposed by the Government under Emergency regulations.

Trends...

(Continued from page 1)

the re-organisation of Sri Lanka's overseas missions. He will also be assigned special missions. The other clear sign was the inclusion of former Foreign Minister Shaul Hameed in the delegation to Delhi, and the way the President's foreign policy team has been strengthened by bringing in W. T. Jayasingha, an Indian affairs specialist.

AS THE DEADLINE APPROACHED

The crippling, month long transport strike managed by a shadowy 'Satan Peramuna' (Striking Front) ended after the government conceded most of the demands to unnamed negotiators. But as the deadline set by President Premadasa — July 29, second anniversary of the Indo-Lanka Accord — for the pull out of the IPKF forces approached, sudden work stoppages halted work in government departments and banks. A bomb exploded outside the State Bank of India in Colombo Fort, another was thrown at the Indian Bank in the Pettah.

Meanwhile, the IPKF protested about 'hostile' low flying Sri Lanka Air Force aircraft over an Indian camp at Vavuniya. SLAF sources said that the midnight flight was part of training exercises, and that the SLAF did not need Indian permission to fly over any part of Sri Lanka.

TO CHINA

Sri Lanka has approached China to buy ships and gun boats, the *Island* reported. China had responded 'positively', the report said.

Patriotic...

(Continued from page 4)

corporations and departments came to a halt, the two lines dramatically diverged. The curfew, its extension for 54 hours to allow tough military action against protesters, resulted in a UNP-JVP confrontation, replacing the India-Sri Lanka confrontation—collision. M.

Sri Lanka: Rajiv's Bitter Defeat

Even as the diplomatic war between Sri Lanka and India continued last fortnight, for Premadasa there was no respite on any front. JVP raiders attacked at least five police stations, killing 10 policemen. In rural areas further south, several buses were burnt. And though thousands were arrested and troops in armoured personnel carriers blocked roads to check passing vehicles for JVP workers, it was clear that the Government had made no headway in its campaign against the Sinhala chauvinist extremists.

With violence increasing and with the Government proving ineffective, the impact on trade and commerce has been crippling.

Throughout the troubled fortnight, the Government repeatedly claimed that following the crackdown the situation was returning to normal and that the transport strike was showing signs of fatigue. Official spokesmen claimed that a substantial number of public buses were back on the roads. But the situation on the ground belied such claims. Ironically, the only parts of the island unaffected by the strike and the current anarchy were the Tamil-dominated north and north-east. This is what prompted Rajiv into making the crack in his latest letter to Premadasa that a semblance of normalcy prevailed only in areas where the IPKF was active.

Yet, unfortunately even that "normalcy" is an artificial one and no one, not even on the Indian side, had any doubt that the time had come to think in terms of recalling the IPKF. From New Delhi's point of view, all that remained to be salvaged from the ruins of its Sri Lanka policy was some pride. Admitted a senior general: "On the battlefield we may not have finished the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but we have definitely done well. The

army and the soldiers won't feel defeated even if they have to leave. But no major regional power can afford to have its army thrown out by a diktat which is what Premadasa wants to do." MEA officials indicated that the Government would be happiest with a withdrawal schedule that extended well beyond the next elections. But considering Premadasa's belligerent mood, that may be hoping for too much.

Meanwhile, as Indian policy-makers went about doing whatever damage control was possible at this stage, the Sri Lanka problem was finally beginning to become an issue in national politics. The Opposition came out firmly in support of the IPKF last fortnight. There were even allegations that the Indian Government had kept the nation in the dark about its Sri Lankan policy and had refused to accept constructive help from opposition stalwarts including the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi.

Key opposition leaders pointed out that it was India which had spurned the LTTE offer for a negotiated settlement in December last year. LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham had then tried to establish contact with India to persuade it not to concede to Premadasa's demand for withdrawal of the IPKF. When he failed to get any response, Balasingham got in touch with Janata Dal leader George Fernandes, with whom he had a secret meeting in Tamil Nadu. He requested Fernandes to mediate between the LTTE and the Indian Government, pleading that the Tigers were incapable of fighting either the IPKF or the Sri Lankan Army as their cadres were in disarray and efforts to smuggle in arms had been foiled by the Indian Navy. Balasingham feared that if the IPKF withdrew under such circumstances, the LTTE would become a sitting target for the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan Army.

Fernandes made it clear that he was not in a position to take up the issue with the prime minister. But he did promise to involve the President who happened to be a Tamil. So he sent a confidential letter to President R. Venkataraman. Says Fernandes now: "The President got back and asked for further details. He assured me that he would pass this on to the prime minister." A few days later, however, Fernandes was asked by the Government not to interfere in the matter.

The Government's wariness is understandable as it would not like an opposition leader to discover the extent of its embarrassment in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, so stark is the failure of India's Sri Lanka policy that even a staunch ally like the Soviet Union finds it hard to defend it. Last fortnight, Indian policy-makers were rudely surprised by a commentary in the official Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* which said the row over the IPKF shows India in a bad light, as a "big power trying to impose its will on a small state". "The issue has gone beyond the bilateral level," the newspaper stated.

With world opinion fast turning against its Sri Lankan policy, India actually has no choice but to get out of the mess fast. The fact that the LTTE is talking to Premadasa — the man they had dismissed as a "Sinhala chauvinist" — and that Balasingham has actually praised him for his generosity, signifies the helplessness of Indian diplomacy.

On the second anniversary of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord almost all the objectives India had set out to achieve remain painfully unfulfilled. The island's Tamils are no more secure than they were in July 1987, the LTTE is far from being finished as a fighting force, and far from be-

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Five Minutes to Midnight

Little Sri Lanka considers itself to be close to war with its neighbour India. On the night of July 14th an Indian army patrol entered a Sinhalese village near Vavuniya in northern Sri Lanka. The village was guarded by Sri Lankan soldiers. Firing broke out and four Indians were killed. The Sri Lankan army said its people had been attacked. The Indians said their men had been mistaken for Tamil guerrillas raiding the village.

The "mistake", if that is what it was, could be repeated, perhaps many times, after July 29th. By then, says Sri Lanka's President Ranasinghe Premadasa, the Indians should have gone home. Any who remain he will confine to barracks, using his authority as commander-in-chief of all forces on Sri Lankan soil. Sri Lankan soldiers will then take over from India responsibility for the security of the North-Eastern Province, where

the Tamil Tiger guerrillas seek to impose their own rule.

It is unlikely that the Indians will obey his order. They have made it clear that they will not be hustled out of Sri Lanka, to which they were invited as a peacekeeping force under an accord signed in 1987. So two armies could be roaming the region, each claiming it as its own territory.

No political compromise is in sight to end this alarming prospect. The assassination in Colombo on July 13th of Sri Lanka's leading Tamil politician, Mr Appapillai Amirthalangam, who preached non-violence, shocked not only Sri Lankans but also the 50m Tamils of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The Tigers were apparently responsible for this killing and possibly that of Mr Uma Maheswaran, leader of another Tamil group, three days later.

India's prime minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, argues that the Indian army must stay on to ensure the security of Tamils. He is anxious to protect those Tamil groups that have defied the Tigers by accepting the limited autonomy granted to the north-east, where most Tamils live. "We have given our word that we shall guarantee their security," he said this week.

Mr Gandhi's stand is winning patriotic support in India, and will do him no harm at all in the general election due in less than six months' time. Mr Premadasa, too, now has a popular issue to draw attention away from his other troubles: the collapsing economy and the political killings by the Tigers and the Marxist-nationalist People's Liberation Front. In the latest attack, this week, 13 people died in southern Sri Lanka when

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Violence and Human Rights

Reggie Siriwardena

I should like to begin by referring to the fact that the Kanthasamy Commemoration Committee has included at the end of its memorial volume my poem "Waiting for the Soldier". The reason for its inclusion apparently is that a friend sent it to him in Jaffna shortly before his tragic end. The poem was written towards the end of 1987 at a time when the hopes of peace kindled by the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord were guttering low as violence swept the country again. What the poem expresses is a sense of impotence to influence the public world — a feeling that one could only withdraw into one's intellectual interests, while being aware that one's private life might at any moment be overwhelmed by the disorder and violence outside. Why I refer to the subject of the poem here is that Kanthasamy's life offered an example of a very different response to the dark time through which we are living. Here was a man to whom it was open to devote his outstanding talents and abundant energies wholly to his professional vocation, and to enjoy the satisfaction and success to be derived from it. He chose instead to dedicate himself to the cause of fighting injustice and succouring the victims, of tirelessly striving against the erosion of humanity and reason in our society; and for that dedication he paid with his life. No, the only thing that Kanthasamy's death has in common with that of Archimedes is the triumph of brute force over the civilised virtues, and "Waiting for the Soldier" therefore can't really be an epitaph for him. Perhaps I may offer instead these lines of the English poet W. H. Auden as an expression of my own feelings about his life and death. The modest and muted tones of Auden's lines seem to me appropriate to this man who did so much quietly and unassumingly and shunned heroic and rhetoric:

**When there are so many we shall have to mourn,
when grief has been made so public, and exposed
to the critique of a whole epoch
the frailty of our conscience and anguish**

**of whom shall we speak? For every day they die
among us, those who were doing us some good,
who knew it was never enough but
hoped to improve a little by living.**

When I had the honour of being invited by the Kanthasamy Commemoration Committee to deliver this lecture, I chose "Violence and Human Rights" as my subject. I selected it as being best fitted to commemorate a man who lived to protect the rights of his fellow human beings and who died by violence in doing so. but I chose it also because no subject can be

K. Kanthasamy, lawyer, relief and rehabilitation worker and human rights activist, was abducted in Jaffna on 19 June, 1988, and is presumed to have been killed.

Reggie Siriwardena's lecture on **Violence and Human Rights** was delivered at Colombo on 19 June, 1989 to mark the first anniversary of the abduction, and the release of the book.

of more pressing concern to us at a time when the most fundamental of human rights — the right to exist — is violated each day in our country. The form of this lecture is determined by the very nature of the situation we confront. Human rights are violated today by the agents of the State in the name of democracy or of the protection of the security and integrity of the country. They are violated also by militant groups in the name of national or social liberation. It would be evasive and dishonest to deal with one and not with the other. My lecture therefore will fall naturally into two parts, in which I discuss first State violence, and Secondly, militant violence. But before I proceed to deal with this dual nature of the violence in our society, there are some preliminary considerations I wish to present.

It is possible, in looking at the phenomenon of violence in Sri Lanka, to examine its larger social causes — to analyse the struggle of different ethnic groups and economic classes for distribution of power and resources, for social mobility and for control of the State. I don't question either the validity or the necessity for such analyses. But this is not the way in which I shall be looking at the phenomenon of violence. The underlying social causes making for division and conflict in our society are very real. But there is no fatality about the way in which these conditions, and the issues arising out of them, translate themselves into widespread and continuing violence. The transition from conflict to violence of that nature is dependent on decisions made by the choice and will of leaders — of those in control of the apparatus of the State as well as those contending against it. It is dependent on judgments made by the former about what is legitimate in maintaining

the security of the State and by the latter about what is justified in opposing or in subverting it. Often the decisions in this respect by one of these forces evoke a countervailing reaction from the other, as we have seen in the cycles of State violence and anti-State violence in recent times. It is this area where conscious decisions, which can raise or reduce the level of violence in our society, are made by political actors that I am concerned with in this lecture.

When I say "conscious decisions", I am not claiming that the decisive agent — the head of a government, the leader of a militant group, or any other — is always aware of the ultimate consequences of his actions. His decisions are often motivated by considerations of immediate expediency. But it is all the more important, therefore, to bring into focus the wider and long term consequences of such decisions.

Let us consider, for instance, the fateful day in 1956 when the Official Language Act was introduced in Parliament. The adoption of the Sinhala only policy was itself one of those momentous decisions that have changed the course of Sri Lanka's history. Some of us may wish that S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike had possessed the courage and consistency of his liberal principles that Jawaharlal Nehru showed when he desisted from imposing Hindi on the South. But it isn't this aspect of the events of 1956 I want to discuss but another which has a more direct bearing on the question of violence. On that same day when the Bill was introduced Tamil opponents of the Bill staged a peaceful satyagraha on Galle Face green, and were assaulted by thugs who had been transported there. The head of the government not only permitted this to happen but ordered the police away when of their own volition they had arrived to keep the peace. This was the first of a series of occasions in the fifties and sixties when peaceful protest by Tamil political groups would be met with violence. The long-term consequences of this response would become apparent in the seventies and eighties when a younger and more militant Tamil generation emerged to pursue their struggle by other means.

Let me compare these events with others which took place in the area not of ethnic but of socio-economic conflict. In 1978 and 1979 there were several cases where striking and picketing workers and demonstrating students on the university campuses were attacked by thugs, sometimes with extreme brutality. The right to picket and the right peacefully to demonstrate had until then been regarded as normal democratic rights. They were now met with violence.

What was the thinking behind those in power when they dealt in this manner with minority

satyagrahis, workers and students? Perhaps they said to themselves, "We'll teach them a lesson they won't forget!" But the lesson learnt was very different from the one intended. The leadership of the Tamil political movement and of the working class and student movements had been drawn from parties and organisations which worked within the constitutional and democratic framework. The effect of the violence used against them was to undermine their credibility. By crushing democratic and peaceful opposition, it promoted the belief that the only effective weapon against a State ready to resort to violence was counter-violence. The notorious referendum of 1982, with the widespread violence unleashed on the Government side, extended this conviction into a far-reaching scepticism about the main mechanism of democracy — the electoral process itself. Thus, in both North and South, State violence actually promoted extremism and strengthened those whose methods of dissent were the AK-47 and the T-56.

Once the State was faced with armed insurgency, a different rationale was adopted to justify the resort to unrestrained violence. The very survival of the State was threatened; therefore all methods were permissible against those who sought to subvert it. "There are no rules in war": one often heard this self-justifying maxim from those who held the power of life and death over the people. On this basis, torture, arbitrary killings, use of terror against non-combatants, could all be legitimised as necessary when the State had to fight for its existence.

There is in fact a deadly symmetry between this logic of ruling powers and the logic of militant groups engaged in mortal combat with them. Both believe that the end justifies the means. In the one case, it is the end of preserving democracy, restoring law and order, protecting national integrity; in the other case, it is the end of national liberation or social liberation. In either case, the lives of individual human beings are considered to be a small price to exact for the cherished end.

What makes this logic unacceptable are not just humane considerations, which some people will dismiss as sentimental moral squeamishness. It is the fact that the means you use determine the end you reach. As the German socialist Lasalle wrote in the last century:

**Show us not the aim without the way.
For ends and means on earth are so entangled
That changing one, you change the other too.
Each different path brings other ends in view.**

I shall deal later with the practice of militant groups, but first, the insane logic of preserving democracy by undemocratic methods and up-

holding law and order by breaking the law must be questioned. An elected government has certainly the right to defend itself against attempts to overthrow it by force. But a democratic state cannot use illegitimate methods even in fighting terrorism and insurgency without becoming indistinguishable from what it is fighting. Consequently, in resorting to such methods it alienates the sympathy and co-operation of those whom it claims to be defending. Civil wars are won not merely by guns but by the support of the people. In that political battle every victim of torture, every person arbitrarily executed, every village terrorised, is (whatever the short-term effects) a gain for the other side in the long run. That was fully demonstrated in the North and East; it has since been confirmed in other parts of the country.

I must now confront the logic of militant groups whose chosen method of political struggle is violence. The issues which arise here are different, in certain important respects, from those which relate to State violence. Governments which are elected within the parliamentary democratic framework claim to adhere to political principles that exclude arbitrary violence. When they resort to illegal terror, one may argue with them on the basis of their professed principles. But militant groups make no secret of the fact that violence is their means, and that they hold this to be the necessary way of changing society.

Militant groups in fact present themselves in the aura of a historical tradition of revolution as an act of liberation. Next month, France and the world will commemorate the bicentenary of a great revolution, and the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, and yet others after them, all make the same appeal to our faith in the right of people to overthrow unjust and oppressive rulers. Whether everything that happened in those revolutions was desirable can be questioned. But, with whatever qualifications, the liberating character of the great revolutions has to be recognised — not least, in their capacity to reassert and regenerate themselves after periods of reaction. How then can we take the position that violence in all forms and in all circumstances is to be condemned? Or must we, on the other hand, concede the claim of militant groups that whenever violence is committed in the name of liberation, it has to be accepted as justified?

I am not one of those who regard Marxist theory as a body of sacred scriptures whose canonical authority can't be questioned. In fact I don't like today even to hang a label round my neck and call myself a Marxist. But on this specific question of violence, I think there is a great deal that is valid and useful in the

thinking of the classical Marxists, and that can guide us in making a judgment about the violence of militant groups today.

The classical Marxists made a clear distinction between popular revolutions in which the broad masses intervene to overthrow the existing state, and all forms of coups, putsches and conspiracies in which an organised minority acts to take control of the state into its own hands. They also distinguished between the methods used in one and the other form of overthrowing the state. Mass agitation, demonstrations and other actions involving popular participation, the mass uprising, are revolutionary forms: terrorist acts, such as explosions of bombs in public places, sabotage and assassination of individuals, are the work of groups seeking to substitute themselves for the people as the agents of change. This doesn't mean that in popular revolutions people acted with pure spontaneity: they were always organised and led. But people in the mass don't rise unless it is clear to them that they have no other means of changing their condition. This is the moral justification of the violence of a popular revolution when it occurs: that the masses, by their action, have shown that they have no other way out.

But when a minority, determined and ruthless as it may be, seeks by its own terror and violence to change society, with the people as onlookers, then we must ask not only, "Does the end justify the means?" but also, in terms of Lassalle's question, "Do the means lead to the end?" If the end is liberation — which, if anything, must signify a freer, more just and humane society — can this be achieved by planting bombs regardless of whom they may kill, by massacring defenceless and innocent civilians because they speak a different language, or by eliminating those who are in a different political camp, and even wiping out their families? The practice of this indiscriminate and unrestrained violence coarsens and brutalises those who participate in it, those who order it and those who carry it out, and if they come to power, it will leave its stamp on the society they create. What kind of society can that be except a regimented one, run by a political leadership freed of popular control in which all dissent will be ruthlessly stamped out? To call that "liberation" is possible only in accordance with the linguistic practice of Lewis Carroll's Humpty-Dumpty for whom words meant just what he chose to make them mean.

I should like to dwell a little on the subject of individual assassinations because it is relevant to the fate of the man we are commemorating today. I think everything we have gone through in the last decade confirms the wisdom of those who ruled out assassination as a legitimate

method of pursuing liberation of any kind. You may start by killing unpopular politicians or oppressive agents of the State, and claim that their killing is just retribution for their crimes, and perhaps few people will shed tears for the victims. But once you have started on this slippery slope, there is no possibility of stopping anywhere. You will go on to eliminating police informants and feel justified again. But you won't stop there because you have already convinced yourself that the sacred end of liberation justifies the killing of anybody who is an obstacle in the way. And you are also certain that you and your group possess the only right formula for achieving liberation. The combination of complete certainty of your infallibility and total ruthlessness with regard to your means is a terrifying thing. So, armed with this logic, you will go on to kill even members of other parties or groups who claim to be working for the same ends but are doing so (according to you) by the wrong methods. But you won't stop there either. Because by the same logic, even those who disagree with you in your own group are traitors to the cause and must therefore be eliminated. And there is no reason to suppose that this process will end with the seizure of power. What it prepares the way for is a society of permanent purges, torture chambers and execution camps.

In this right we can see why Kandiah Kanthasamy had to die. He believed in the freedom of the individual conscience and judgment, and was not prepared to subordinate it

to any political group or leader. In reading the memorial volume, I have been particularly struck by some passages from his own hand, which I could not have read earlier, and which state precisely and forthrightly his commitment to independent and unfettered thought and activity. One is his admirable memorandum and project proposal for the founding of "Saturday Review". In the course of it he wrote:

This is not intended to be a political paper, nor a partisan one. It will be a forum for all opinions so far as they concern Tamil rights and race relations in this country, but yet not parochial in content... While the style of journalism will be individualistic, the approach will be liberal and catholic.

Later he said in a letter:

We should take extreme care to preserve the freedom of the press which is achieved more by publishing conflicting views rather than suppressing any.

And three weeks before his abduction, already facing threats to his life, he wrote regarding the TRRO:

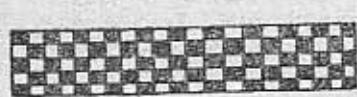
If we cannot carry on as a free organisation, we should close it down.

It isn't difficult to see that the very existence of such a man was a challenge to any group which was seeking to enforce a coerced uniformity of opinion. Kanthasamy can rightly be honoured as a martyr in a cause which too few people are prepared to defend today in this country.

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Peace Keeping and Peace Building

Kumar Rupesinghe

1. Introduction

The Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement signed by President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India on 29 July 1987 has been seen as marking a new phase in the process of resolving the protracted social and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Indeed, it is a new conjuncture, with the shift in India's role from that of a mediator to that of a Third Party to the conflict. The Accord has serious implications for the Sinhalese hegemonic state. It requires that there are fundamental changes in the nature of the state based on Sinhalese hegemony to a liberal democratic state based on the values of a multi-ethnic plural society.

2. The Setting to the Accord — Social Stratification and Politico-Military Situation

2.1. Ethnic Stratification in Sri Lanka

While Sri Lanka has two distinct linguistic communities, Sinhalese and Tamil, ethnic stratification is more complex. There is a mosaic of linguistic groups: Sinhalese, Tamils and several religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

Ethnic stratification in Sri Lanka is characterized by a dominant majority, and a minority with cross-border affiliations to South India. Both the majority Sinhalese and the main Tamil minority have strong perceptions of being engulfed and dominated by the other. This system stratification is further compounded by the strong sub-nationalist assertions of the Indian State of Tamil Nadu vis a vis New Delhi.

Such system stratification has inherent potentials for protracted conflicts. On the one hand, Sinhalese nationalism has been mostly interpreted by the Tamils as an assertion of hegemonic

control of the post-colonial state. Such interpretations suggest that the State has pursued an assimilationist strategy, generally at the expense of the minorities. On the other hand, Tamil nationalism tends to be interpreted by many Sinhalese as an extension of the Tamil 'Dravidian' sub-nationalism prevalent in Tamil Nadu in India.

The majority Sinhalese are a linguistic group and largely also a religious group, as Sinhalese are Buddhists. Various myths exist as to the origins of the Sinhalese, myths which also constitute a part of the ideological interpretations of the present conflict. During the anti-colonial phase, the dominant Sinhala nationalist discourse expressed its hostility to the British through Buddhist revivalism, which from its inception interpreted the country as belonging to the Sinhalese. The Buddhist revival became associated with the conception of the Sinhalese as the 'Aryan' race. It also meant the rejection of not only the British, but the stigmatization and exclusion of all 'foreign' influences in the country. This tendency towards 'alienization' was extended, not only towards the 'Dravidian' Tamils, but to all other national minorities and religious groupings — Christians, Muslims etc. However, the notion of the Sinhalese as being engulfed and dominated by the Tamils from the "North" (the north of Sri Lanka and the south of India) is a dominant strain within the Buddhist militant movement. Visions of the 'marauding aliens' from the North created a series of self-fulfilling prophecies — culminating in the 'INVASION' from across the Palk Strait. More recently, the presence of large numbers of Indian troops on the soil of Sri Lanka has added potency to such a myth.

Sri Lanka's Tamils live mainly in the Northern and Eastern

provinces, although some live in the Colombo area. In discussing the ethnic conflict, most attention has been given to Tamils demands for self-determination and the manner in which the State has responded to these claims. Often ignored are the various tendencies within the Tamil Nationalist discourse — ranging from self-determination within a socialist united Sri Lanka, to the setting-up of a Pan-Tamil State encompassing Tamil Nadu as well. All of the above are differing manifestations of a classic centre-periphery dichotomy. But the widening communal divide and the emergence of Tamil Nadu as an external sanctuary to both refugees as well as Tamil guerrilla has served to activate another series of self-fulfilling prophecies — that of secession and, to a lesser extent, the Pan-Tamil project.

The Up-country Tamils, or "plantation Tamils", were originally brought to Sri Lanka as an indentured labour force for the plantation system established by the British in the Central Highlands. One of the first acts of the independent state of Ceylon was to deny Ceylonese citizenship to these people, who also constituted a significant section of the working class and a potential electoral base for the parliamentary Left. Since then the government of India and the government of Sri Lanka have sought to redefine their status of "stateless" citizens. The Sirima-Shastri Pact of 1964 and subsequent negotiations have established the numbers of persons to be repatriated to India and those to be granted Sri Lankan citizenship. In January 1986, the Sri Lankan government announced that it would grant full citizenship to the majority of these workers. One of the very first acts of the new President of Sri Lanka, Premadasa in 1989, was

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in fact to honour this pledge and thereby help to solve one of the most intractable problems concerning a significant minority population.

2.2 The Sri Lankan State and Ethnicity: the Concept of Hegemony

'Hegemony' is used here to describe the overriding ideological dominance over all political classes and structures during a particular historical conjuncture. In Sri Lanka, this can be identified in the articulation of the so-called 'Sinhala consciousness' by essentially petit bourgeois forces in the historical process.

The advent of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony can be divided into three phases:

- 1) anti-colonial agitation with its anti-state character;
- 2) post-colonial state-control and domination of the state and exercise of hegemony over other minorities;
- 3) post-agreement phase, when it again assumes an anti-State character.

We have already referred to (1) in 2.1, while (3) will be discussed at length in 3.1. With regard to the post-colonial phase, any discussion here must be related to the control of the State, welfare policies adopted by all governments, and an inherited political system which allowed for majority rule. Owing to the lack of industrialization, the State became the major vehicle of employment, disbursed through a network of patronage. The potential for patronage was used systematically by all political parties which came into power. Welfare provisions, whether for subsidies or for higher education, became a hallmark of electoral competition, nurtured by the majoritarian electoral system. A second hallmark concerned how to compete in discriminating the Tamils.

Sri Lanka inherited a political system based on the British Westminster model, with majority elections and territorial representation. Representing 3/4 of the population, Sinhalese political parties were able to gain a majority in elections by appealing to Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism. Based on control over political institutions, the State was developed as an instrument to nurture and safeguard Sinhalese interests. Thus, the Plantation Tamils were disenfranchised (1948-49), Sinhala was declared official language (1956), Tamil demands for a federal state or regional autonomy were rejected (1950s and 60s), Buddhism was established as the state religion (1972), discrimination was practiced in education ('standardization') (1970s) and state-aided settlement schemes or 'colonization' of the traditional Tamil areas from the 1920s came to alter the demographic composition to the detriment of the Tamils. These developments limited the possibilities the Tamils had in influencing the political system. Their access to resources was also limited. The coup de grace was the passage of the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution in August 1983, which led to the TULF losing their seats in the Parliament.

It can be argued that some recent trends in the development of political institutions in Sri Lanka can be interpreted as the beginning of a system more concerned with multi-ethnicity. With the Constitution of 1978 a new political system was introduced, aimed at transcending hegemony and circumventing sectarian and communal interests. This 'Gaullist system', established strong presidential powers: the President was empowered to prolong or dissolve Parliament, declare a state of emergency, and call for referendum. The office of the President was seen as a means of circumventing the narrow confines of party politics. It was argued that such a strengthened

Presidency would enhance stability, and that this was a potential tool to resolve the national question.

The new system also introduced proportional representation. Proponents of the new Constitution also pointed out that this would, theoretically, create possibilities for stronger Tamil influence, in that alliances between Tamil and Sinhalese parties opposed to the dominant Sinhalese party might gain majority in the electorates. Such an eventuality could make it more difficult for Sinhalese parties to play on Sinhala chauvinist sentiments.

The UNP government in the years after the 1977 elections went further than any other governments towards satisfying Tamil demands. Tamil was introduced as a national language, 'standardization' was abolished and a process of trying to decentralize powers was started, taking into account Tamil demands. However, these efforts to accommodate Tamil interests came too late.

In practice none of the theoretical possibilities inherent in the 1978 Constitution seen as favourable to conflict resolution have materialized. On the contrary, it was precisely during this period of a strong executive presidential rule that the country faced its worst ethnic strife and political instability. This was due to the way in which the executive Presidency was manipulated. Firstly, President Jayewardene tried to legitimize, through the use of symbols, that he was first and foremost a Sinhala-Buddhist president ('Dharmista' President, King Asoka, etc). On the first occasion in Parliament, he evoked the symbol of Duttugamunu in confronting the Tamil opposition leader, Amirthalingam. Further, after the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983, he justified

(Continued on page 16)

JSP and Social unrest

Sunil Bastian

The starting point of this article was to look at JSP as a product of the prevailing social instability in the country. Therefore it is obvious that there are speculations of the possible impact of JSP on this conflict situation. However this cannot be discussed without better understanding of the 'causes' of this conflict situation. In a more specific way one could ask the question whether this unrest was 'caused' by 'poverty'. According to this way of posing the question, if the answer to this question is 'yes' it is 'rational' to expect that a poverty alleviation programme will have some impact on the conflict situation.

First of all there are serious problems in this form of thinking in understanding the phenomenon of social unrest. There is an assumption here that social conflicts can be explained by 'causes' in a simple formal logic of 'cause and effect.' Secondly very often there is an attempt to find a single 'cause', or if there are more than one, there is an attempt to give weightage to them. Study of many social conflict situations show the difficulty and inadequacy of this kind of an approach. A social conflict situation is one where many social processes come together. There can be many 'processes' operating together in such a situation, generating many 'factors' influencing it. Which of these 'factors' really 'causes' the conflict is an extremely difficult question to answer. Even if an answer is found, 'to prove it' in the conventional sense will be a formidable task.

An alternative way of analysing the question is to look at the relationship between the

two phenomena that we are concerned with, viz poverty and social unrest or social conflict, in all their dimensions in order to arrive at a more comprehensive picture. Then we could see whether JSP will be able to address any of these dimensions and thereby have an impact.

Poverty has very many dimensions. Its ideological dimension is a powerful weapon when it comes to politics. Poverty gets interpreted and recreated in the political process as a political ideology. The characteristics of this interpretation, its dimension, its effect in society can be quite different or even not directly related either to the 'statistical fact of Poverty' or to the structures which creates it. Specially when there is a conflictual situation in the political process, it is this interpretation and political articulation of poverty that plays the crucial role. Although the way it is interpreted and put forward might not have any relation to the so called 'factual' situation of poverty, this interpretation itself becomes an 'ideological fact' that influences the conflictual process. It might even be possible that the 'statistical fact' of poverty has no relevance at all in a heightened conflictual situation. It is 'facts' in the ideological realm that takes precedence.

An important dimension in the ideological interpretation of poverty in a society like Sri Lanka is its strong moral dimension and the assigning of the responsibility to the State for this situation. This is specially true of many Third World societies where the state is considered to be responsible for 'development' and therefore for poverty

from which the citizens are suffering. This is also related to the nature of the state in these societies. Some social scientists have coined the term 'interventionist' or 'developmentalist' state to distinguish this particular state formation. In such a situation the state is held directly responsible for the prevailing situation.

In the case of Sri Lanka, this ideology is very strong because of a history of welfare oriented policies. Prevalence of poverty either in absolute or relative forms a formidable base for political agitation. Absolute poverty is the incapacity of a certain section of the population to get a predefined minimum standard. Relative poverty is the gap in the standards enjoyed by the rich and the poor. We would argue that from these two forms of poverty, relative poverty is much more a reason for social conflict and agitation than absolute poverty. In order to clarify this further we shall use a threefold classification of our social structure. This threefold classification takes into account the nature and factors linked with the upward social mobility in the Sri Lankan society. This three fold classification of our society is as follows:

- The 'elite'
- Those whose social mobility was facilitated by pre '77 policies or 'intermediate classes'
- The rest

Many studies on political sociology has shown that people who are absolutely poor do not articulate themselves politically on their own. They are too involved with their day to day

survival. It is those who are just above them ('intermediate classes') that usually become politically more active against injustices of poverty. They have a higher sensitivity regarding their status of relative poverty vis a vis those in the upper classes. Very often they have a potential for social mobility, but are thwarted due to various reasons. Their sense of relative poverty is enhanced in a situation of an expanding economy and higher level of consumption. It gives very fertile ground for ideological interpretation of poverty in the manner that we have mentioned above. In the agitations led by these classes certainly the poorer classes form a social base that can be mobilised. However relative poverty and the frustrations arising out of it can even be a reason for conflicts within the 'poorer' classes.

Social contradictions generated by the development policies followed since 1977 should be understood within this ideological interpretation of poverty and the important role played by relative poverty and 'intermediate classes' in social conflicts. Broadly speaking this group formed the social force that changed the course of Sri Lanka's post independent history in 50s and the 60s. They were and are the ardent supporters of the pre '77 package of development policies. These policies helped in their competition with the 'elite' and in their upward social mobility. The bulk of the population of Sri Lanka falls to the third category of 'the rest'. In rural areas marginal farmers and landless labourers fall into this category. So-called welfare policies in the past have not changed their condition much. However they form the social base of mass politics.

Generally the post-'77 policies had led to greater social polarisation. The specific character of this polarisation can differ from area to area. In the paddy sector for example the situation of the small farmer and marginal farmer has deteriorated. However for the purpose of a con-

flict analysis what is more important to know is the relationship between social polarisation and the emergence of a conflictual situation rather than a description of polarisation in general. The growing income distribution gap after the implementation of liberalised economic policies is one reflection of this contradiction. It is important to interpret this worsening situation of income distribution in social terms in order to understand the nature of social unrest in our society.

We would argue that the changes brought about by the policies introduced in 1977 had led to the growth of the gap between the 'intermediate classes' and the 'elite'. Politically the former group is very articulate and forms a part of the class block that rules this country. In addition nationalism and chauvanism has also been one of the potent political weapons of this class. Today it is a very useful slogan for these classes. Therefore the growing income gap and social polarisation between the 'elite' and the 'intermediate classes' is a basic underlying reason for the prevailing social unrest. They articulate this contradiction politically, making use of nationalist and chauvanist slogans as well.

If JSP is strictly implemented, all the beneficiaries of the programme should be from the third poorest group mentioned above. However the limitations in the implementation process gives lot of room for social pressures. This will help the 'intermediate classes'. This will ensure a fair proportion of them among the beneficiaries. As these groups are politically very important JSP can help to dampen the conditions for social conflict to some extent. At least it will neutralise a part of the potential social base underlying the social unrest. However the main focus of JSP will still be the poorer group lying at the bottom of the social ladder. This will be an attempt to undermine the political clout of the 'intermediate classes'. In

other words in class terms programmes like JSP can very well help the bourgeoisie by getting the support of the poorer classes, in their struggle against the power of 'intermediate classes'.

This capacity of JSP to reach the real needy will also be important in an ideological sense. JSP could change the image of the liberalised policies. It is bound to give the image of a development model that is concerned with this 'poorest' section at the bottom of the social ladder. Looking at the propaganda generated in the mass media this is certainly an objective of JSP. Even the very term 'Janasaviya' has these objectives. Thus it could very well create an image of a development model taking care of those right at the bottom of the social ladder, while maintaining the basic structures for the accumulation process of capitalism which benefits those right at the top of the social ladder. This could be another answer to the political challenge from 'intermediate classes'.

NEXT: Janasaviya and the Left

Peace Keeping....

(Continued from page 14)

the issues on the basis of the Sinhalese. Jayawardene was caught up in a political trap partly of his own making where he tried, in vain, to win over the Sinhalese constituency with a tough military stance on one hand, while at the same time trying to solve the national question through negotiation and accommodation. These contradictory positions could not be sustained and his room for manoeuvre severely restricted when he signed the Indo Sri Lanka accord, where substantial devolution of power had to be provided for the Tamil speaking people of the North and the East. At this point President Jayawardene had to manage a multi ethnic constituency where the Sinhalese nationalists began to turn their guns on him.

NEXT: Ethnicity and Class

The Marxist Left and the "Crisis of Civilisation"

Dayan Jayatileke

In any other country, this would be a pre-revolutionary crisis, but here it's a pre-fascist crisis. There are two ways to go — socialism or barbarism. We, the left, are not in a position to deal with it militarily, in which case it would have become an excellent revolutionary situation, because other ingredients all seem to be there, though only superficially so. We must meet this politically.

I can understand the zeal with which these young people of the JVP must be consumed as they fight their 'patriotic war'. As high school students all of us were, after all, enthralled by romantic nationalist fiction such as Martin Wickremasinghe's "Rohini". When the legend of 1971 is tacked on to the saga of struggles waged by the Sinhalese down the ages, what a heady brew it must be! In a society that was not multi-ethnic in its composition, that did not have an internal national question, the JVP's 'patriotism' would have been acceptable to any rational revolutionist. Were we right not to have based ourselves on 'red Dutugemnuism' in the post-83 conjuncture? I believe so. Though we should have made public our critique of the Anuradhapura massacre at that time. Now, I begin to understand how it must have been to be a Communist in Italy or Germany in the 1920's and 30's witnessing the magnetic attraction and elemental force of the fascist phenomenon.

'Bright Red' Fascism

Earlier we could cheer on all anti-systemic movements even if

(This is part 6 of "Work in Progress" based on a lecture given at the J.N.U., Delhi organised by the Radical Students Union of India).

we disliked certain aspects of them, but not after the experiences of Kampuchea and Iran. If one were to read the various biographies of Marx and Engels, one would find that most of their political struggles, especially within the First International, were waged precisely against 'Left' elements, many of whom **took active part in the European uprisings of 1848.** The struggles against Bakunin, Blanquists like Emmanual Barthelmi, individuals like Weitling, August Willich Gottfreid Kinkel all fit into this category. The struggle against the great anarchist Bakunin was very bitter and personal. It must be borne in mind that all these elements were far more decent human beings, several times over, than Polpot or the mullahs. The correspondence of Marx and Engels shows the intensity of the animus that they had towards these elements who, it must be stressed were more populist and 'practical' revolutionaries than they.

So the Marxist attitude towards today's Polpotists is part of the tradition of Marxist struggle against anarchism, populism, ultra-leftism and terrorism. The fight against the Anarchists in the First International, the liquidation of the anarcho-Trotskyists of the POUM during the Spanish civil war by the Red Army volunteers, the betrayal of Trotskyists in Saigon to the colonial police by Ho Chi Minh, their wiping out in China by Marshall Chu Teh, the bloody battles waged by the cadres of Communist Party of India (Marxist) against the Naxalites in West Bengal, the invasion of Kampuchea and the ousting of Polpot by Vietnam, are all landmarks in this long struggle. It has often been remarked upon by commentators that such struggles are more bitter than those

between the left and the bourgeoisie. This is true and necessarily so. In Sri Lanka today this struggle also converges with two other struggles which Marxists waged with resoluteness throughout the world viz. **against racism and against fascism.** Likewise anarcho-terrorism in current context.

Perhaps the wish of the 'God of History' is not that we of the left bring about systemic change, but build up a counter-veiling force that will stop such forces. Perhaps from a civilizational point of view, that is more important than systemic change. One is sadly conscious though, that even if the country emerges from the 'black hole' into which it is disappearing, the current experiences and those of the past years would have proved so traumatic that armed struggle of any variety will be rejected by the Sinhala and Tamil peoples for quite some time to come.

What went wrong?

Why did the combination of rapid dependent capitalist growth, deepening economic crisis, bourgeois authoritarianism and an armed national liberation struggle at the periphery not result in the upsurge of a Latin American-type of revolutionary movement in southern Sri Lanka? How comes it that the primary anti-systemic polarity that was generated was not the Sandinista type of rational revolutionary polarity which was a secondary one that never got beyond the preparatory phase of the 'accumulation' of personnel and resources, the stage of gestation? Why is it that the rational revolutionaries never got beyond this phase of 'primitive accumulation', which involved actions that were meant

to help construct an instrumentality which could then reach out to various social forces, beginning with the advanced sectors? Why is it that these outfits never made past the crack down that the actions provoked, to that stage of growth where reaching out to the masses, the 'accumulation of social forces', the phase of accumulation 'proper' could have been placed on the agenda?

Was it absolutely necessary for a movement to have to recourse to irrational appeals and historical myth to build a powerful apparatus? Was it due to the fact that the Sri Lankan crisis was catalysed by an **ethnic struggle**, unlike those in Latin America? This alone would not suffice as an answer, since the secessionist struggle of the Muslim Moros of Mindanao, in the Philippines did not generate a majoritarian chauvinist backlash and certainly did **not** cause the revolutionary CPP-NPA to abandon its stand of autonomy for the Moro people or make room for Pol Pottism.

How comes it that far from displaying a moral hegemony, the vanguards themselves (JVP, LTTE) are part of the 'crisis of civilization'?

Marxism, said Mao, is a "wringing 'ism'."

Sri Lankan Marxists should not shy away from the sweat, toil and agony of the mental labour that they must engage in, in order to find answers to these questions. We must not be intellectual reformists, satisfied with tinkering with our earlier views, but must rather be revolutionary analytically, i.e. ready to uproot, overturn and revolutionise our own intellectual postulates to cope with the challenge of the new questions. If we are intellectually lazy and do not face up to this new task it would be a careless, even criminal neglect and a gross dereliction of responsibility, involving human costs in terms of precious cadres, material and social forces. Never have Sri Lankan Marxists needed to be more creative and incisive in their analyses than

now, since dogmatism defeats, myths murder and cliches kill.

At one level the answer to the question resides in the balance of forces between the Right and Left within the Eelam movement. Consider, after all, what the situation would have been had it been otherwise... The LTTE could have been the kind of national liberation movement that not only weakend the system but helped by its actions, the authentic left in the "mother country". This is the impact that the struggles in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau had on the Portuguese situation. Why was this not so?

Again, why didn't the left forces within the Eelam, unite with each other? This could have altered the balance of forces between the right and the left within the movement, perhaps forestalling certain outcomes (like the Accord) and resulting in certain others. Just as the Lankan left was historically split as a result of external events (Trotskyism vs. Stalinism, pro-Soviet vs. pro-Chinese, the various splits in Maoism and Trotskyism worldwide), the internationalist Southern revolutionaries were split this time too, as a by-product of contradictions extrinsic to their national formation (PLOT vs. EPRLF). Had it not been for the intense rivalry between PLOT and the EPRLF, which were contending for the same space (the 'real Tamil left'), the Vikalpa Kandyama, NJVP, SJV, Janatha Sangamaya and Uduwarage Henry Perera's 'Red Soldiers' would probably have been able to unite in a single organisation or at least a single bloc. Such a unified or collective vanguard of the anti-racist southern revolutionaries, might have given the JVP a much better run for its money within the anti-State struggle.

Why did the Sinhala opposition feel more exercised by the **possibility** of a north-east merger, than they did about the dismissal of over 70,000 striking workers or the referendum of 1982 December which closed off the Parliamentary path?

Why mobilize people with slogans against the Provincial Councils such as "thirty percent of the land and sixty percent of the coast land is being given away to ten percent of the populace"? Why are such slogans reminiscent of Adolph Hitler's cry for '**Lebensraum**'? Why do they fetishize the **unitarian** character (ekiya bhavaya) of the Sri Lankan state, which is a product of British colonialism, instead of limiting themselves, as rational revolutionaries would, to defending the **united** character of Sri Lanka? What is it that they are defending in 'unitarian-ness' that is not present in a united but federal, semi-federal or devolved polity? Is it not the prerogative of **colonisation of land**? In the absence of a class of large landlords and thus in the absence of a classic Agrarian Question, why does the latter undergo a displacement and reappear articulated within a chauvinist discourse in which the north-eastern Tamils are presented as a 'collective landlord' and the Sinhala nation, a 'landless nation' as it were? Why and how, this transmutation of the (trifle dubious) nation of 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' nations into 'land owning' and 'landless' (therefore land hungry) **ethnic** communities? How do we explain '**peasant chauvinist**' discourse and blood-curdling slogan like "J.R. tho rata kewa, api tho kanawa"?

The answer to the problem resides in the nature of the Sri Lankan state and civil society and in the class components of the anti-systemic movement. Especially important is the question of **political leadership**, of the social forces which are incorporated into the vanguard organisations, of their level of consciousness and political culture. Let me explain.

Lenin and his brilliant colleagues fought a **precapitalist** (monarchic) State; the Chinese and Vietnamese leaders, **foreign** oppression; Fidel and Carlos Fonseca fought **usurpers** and **puppet** regimes. None of them,

(Continued on page 21)

Economics and the Absence of History

Akmal Hussain

The IMF is imposing a policy package through loan conditionality on a whole range of Third World countries stretching from Sub Saharan Africa, South and South East Asia to Latin America. These policy proposals are based on a highly sophisticated corpus of economic theory that goes under the name of Neo Classical economics and which has dominated main stream economic theory during the 20th century. As IMF policy is adopted, more and more countries of the Third World are getting drawn into the trap of growing poverty on the one hand and a net transfer of their non-renewable resources to the international financial system on the other. The recent rioting against IMF policies in Jordan and before that in the Philippines and Mexico, suggest that the people are beginning to say no to the IMF. Perhaps it is now time to examine in a scientific way the theoretical basis of IMF policy. The following series of articles is a rudimentary attempt in this direction. This critique of the economic logic of the IMF, is located in a fundamental re-examination of the methodology of mainstream economics as it has evolved in the 20th century.

Neo Classical economics (the dominant orthodoxy in economics to-day) sees economics as essentially concerned with the allocative problem: i. e. How to combine available inputs (resources) for maximizing the production of that **particular** basket of goods which would maximize the satisfaction of consumers. For example Robbins defines this approach as follows:

"Economics is the science of the allocation of scarce resources for the satisfaction of multiple ends."

Out of this approach has emerged a conceptual apparatus designed to show that the process of production and distribution of goods is determined by immutable and neutral laws of the free market. Output is supposed in this schema to be generated on the basis of three resources or "factors of production": Land

Labour and Capital. Each factor of production has a price; rent is the price of land, wage the price of labour and profit the price of capital. The crucial proposition that serves to enclose economics within a purely technological, hence "value free" realm is that under conditions of market equilibrium, the price of each of these "factors of production" is equal to its "**marginal product**". The marginal product is defined as the addition to total output brought about by applying an additional unit of that factor of production, other things remaining the same. Now since the addition to output induced by an additional unit of a particular factor of production is technologically determined, the equivalence of marginal product to price means that the distribution of income between social groups has a technological rather than a social

basis. Thus rent, wage and profit express not a relationship between people in the course of human history but between in-puts (units of factors of production) and outputs.

Let us examine two fundamental concepts, wage and profit to understand how orthodox economics excludes both people and history from its domain. Consider the concept of **wage**. The non-economist would have a perfectly sensible definition of wage. He would say, that **wage** is an amount of money paid by an employer to an employee at regular intervals of time. In terms of this common sensical understanding wage clearly cannot occur in all periods of history and all forms of social organization. Wage is only possible at that **particular** period in history, and within that **particular** society where employers and employees exist as distinct social groups. But this is not the way contemporary economics propounds the concept of wage. Here wage is seen as the **marginal product of labour**, i.e. it is an output produced by a **unit of activity**. Thus Neo classical economics fails to make a distinction between the proprietor of a workshop operating his own lathe machine and a worker employed in a factory or between an owner cultivator and a serf. Since each of these individuals engages in labour therefore, the argument goes each has a marginal product that is technologically determined. It therefore cannot have anything to do with the **bargaining** power of workers according to this theory.

Let us take profit as another example. Now the overall rate of return on capital in the economy is defined as the profit rate. In Neo Classical theory, the profit rate is supposed to be the **price** of capital. This is again technologically determined because under conditions

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of equilibrium it is argued the **marginal product** of capital (in the aggregate) becomes equal to the profit rate. As Cambridge economists like Joan Robinson and Pasinetti have shown, there is an inherent inconsistency in this explanation of profit. If profit is the marginal product or the price of capital then the aggregate amount of capital in the economy must be capable of measurement independently of the profit rate. This of course is not possible. Let us see why this is so. What is capital? It is machines and productive assets of various types in the economy. How do you add up machines of various types? You obviously cannot do this by **adding up the number** of machines. Adding up for example a machine producing cloth with a machine producing steel would be like adding mangoes and apples. So the only other way is to find out the prices of machines and add those up. Therein lies the contradiction. For inherent in the price of the machine is a profit rate. Thus the contradiction of the Neo Classical theory of profit as the

price of capital is as follows: In order to estimate the overall profit rate on capital you have to measure the value of capital in the economy. But in measuring the value of capital you have already **assumed** a profit rate! Thus Cambridge economists have shown that in fact Neo Classical economics does not have a credible explanation of how profit arises in the economy. The professed argument that profit is the marginal product of capital, and hence purely technologically determined does not stand up to scrutiny. So we are obliged to seek an explanation of profit in the dialectic of power which emerges in history when the owners of the means of production become a social group distinct from those who use them.

If we take off our Neo-classical glasses for a moment, a simple but important perception becomes apparent. The human enterprise of producing and distributing goods involves essentially a social relationship between people as they interact

with each other and with nature. The form of this relationship is historically specific. Thus for example the social relations between landlord and serf that were involved in production in 16th century Europe, were quite different from those prevailing between capitalist and labourer in the 20th century capitalist west. The former were determined by extra economic coercion, or the terror of tradition, while the latter are conditioned by the hidden hand of the market. Similarly the relationship between the ruling elite in Europe and the people of the colonies was structured by the coercive apparatus of the state in the 19th century, while in the late 20th century, this relationship is determined by the Neo-classical rationality of international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank.

Yet what is a **historically specific** relationship between **people** is inverted by Neo Classical economics and presented to us as a universal and **ahistorical** relationship between **goods**: Between inputs and outputs.

The problem with such an inverted and abstract specification of "economic reality" is that since relationships between people are filtered out, ethical and emotional responses to this economic reality are also precluded. Both the brutality of the oppressor and the cry of the oppressed creature that actually echo through history are concealed under the coverlet of an "objective" or "neutral" logic. There is therefore little chance for the conscientious student of economics to study the linkage between peasant uprisings that swept 17th century Europe, and the Mau Mau rebellion in Africa, or the "Hour of the Furnaces" during the Spanish invasion of South America; the passion that charged Dullah Bhatti's resistance against the Moghul establishment; the longing for freedom that filled the hearts of those

Towards a New Economics

*We have inhabited spaces
Bound by certainties,
Now the clamour of sure strategy
Of closed circuit logic,
is ruptured
By the sharp edge of silence
bred in the womb of streamlined solutions,
By the battered soul
seeping out of vacant eyes
so easily banished below poverty lines,
Yet lands that lie waste,
Forests cut into oblivion,
Species gone extinct,
Civilizations rendered mute,
With their absence
Testify
The deadly thinness of our expertise*

Akmal Hussain

(Continued on page 21)

The Marxist...

(Continued from page 18)

initially and primarily, fought **capitalist** exploitation. Coming from relatively privileged classes, they fought regimes and States which were **anachronistic** and therefore an **affront to them**. In these societies, daily life itself contains affronts to the progressive intelligentsia and marginalizes them. Of course, their revolutions rapidly transitted to socialism. I had wondered, long before I reach the Trotskyite Tony Cliff's excellent introduction to Paul Frolich's book on Luxemburg, why we and others like us, didn't throw ourselves fully into the practical military type activity. Then I realised that we were not **quite** as outraged by this set-up as Fidel and Che were by Batista, or the Fedayeen e Khalkis by the Shah. And understandably too, since J. R. Jayawardena wasn't Sergeant Batista! It is much more difficult in a society such as ours where the middle-class intelligentsia has other avenues and opportunities, emulate Che and Chou En Lai.

On the other hand, those who do hate the System and are willing to hurl themselves body and soul into the struggle are those who, because of the 'Sinhala only' language policy of 1956 aren't sufficiently grounded theoretically. The post '56 situation in Sri Lanka is **uniquely tragic** in the Third World. Our anti-capitalist youth neither have a mother tongue which is widely spoken (e.k. Arabic, Spanish) nor do they know the language of the colonizer (Portuguese, French, English, Italian, German). If the left has a future in Sri Lanka, it lies in the creation and incorporation of a new generation of bi-lingual revolutionary intellectuals.

Lenin and Luxemburg: A Digression

To restate my point, I wonder how many of the world's great revolutionary leaders would have remained that way, to that extent, if they were faced with a modern **capitalist** State, regime and

economic system! This is why Tony Cliff is correct when he rates Luxemburg higher than Lenin. **But** this does not mean she was the better revolutionary or has more to contribute to the world revolutionary movement. It possibly means (though he doesn't say it explicitly or perhaps even realize it) that if such things can be measured, she had a greater or deeper **commitment**. Not so much to **revolution** (of which Lenin was the unsurpassed strategist and tactician), but a deeper **anti-capitalist** commitment, a deeper commitment to socialism (socialist democracy). In short, a deeper commitment to a different **quality of life**. I suppose, Lenin's specific greatness (or genius) resided in his grasp of the **autonomy of the political instance** of the social formation. But as Debray points out self critically, this sometimes leads to vanguardism and **politicism** not **socialism**. 'Focoism' in Latin America was an extreme manifestation of the deficiencies of Leninism, says Debray in answer to those who said that it was a rejection of Leninism (party). The answer to focoism he says is therefore to be found not in Lenin, but in Luxemburg. But we know (though Debray doesn't write of this) that Lenin was a master at grasping the 'conjuncture', while Luxemburg hardly had any conception of it.

Some conclude today that Luxemburg was more correct on the national question than Lenin. I feel that they were each correct in a different dimension of the problem. She felt that all nationalisms should be combatted because they **finally** prove counterproductive. Lenin sympathised to a point but in "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination", criticized her "Junius Pamphlet" strongly because he felt that some nationalisms were useful anti-systemic forces. China, Vietnam, Angola, etc. prove that Lenin was operationally more useful while Sri Lanka may prove that Rosa Luxemburg was right.

(To be continued)

Economics...

(Continued from page 20)

who fell at Jallianwala Bagh. He is equally unaware of the historical significance of the present. Thus Intefada the current struggle of the Palestinians, or the struggle for democracy in Pakistan may appear interesting but not relevant to his subject. The trajectory of resistance and struggle that has fired the imagination of those engaged in the creative quest is sadly invisible to the eye trained in Neo Classical economics. It is not surprising that in a methodology where the human presence is systematically excluded, we find that human history is also absent from its desolate terrain. Thus various forms of resistance and struggle appear to the professional economist not as vital responses of conscious human beings to economic processes, but as mere anecdotes quite beyond the pale of his discipline.

(To be continued)

Five Minutes...

(Continued from page 7)

grenades were thrown at a religious procession.

Neither leader has right entirely on his side. Mr Premadasa, unreasonably and without prior consultation, asked the Indians to leave by the end of July when they had already agreed to go by the end of the year. But India, whatever it may feel about its moral duty towards the Tamils, has no right to remain in Sri Lanka, a sovereign state, when it is told to go. With 45,000 Indian troops obstinately entrenched on Sri Lankan soil, it is five minutes to midnight.

(Economist)

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Naipaul's 3rd World — The Importance of Being Negative

Izeth Hussain

We have to note also the impoverished religious life of Naipaul's community, portrayed in his first two novels and his other writings. Earlier, there had been a re-invigoration of Hinduism in the West Indies through the introduction of Bakhti cults from India, according to a Sri Lankan anthropologist, the late Chandra Jayawardena. But Naipaul knew only a formalized ritual Hinduism without any content whatsoever. As he says in *Fireflies*, his community confused religion with magic. It appears that the ecumenical outlook, one of the glories of Hinduism, with its respect for other religions, had degenerated into a superstitions dread about offending strange gods.

Naipaul deplors the de-tribalization that takes place through conversion to Christianity, but in his first two novels he betrays a curious ambivalence of which he was probably unaware. He shows insight into the sociology of conversion by noting that not only the converts but also the achievement-oriented Hindus take on Hindu names. In a revealing episode the Hindu lutchman in *Fireflies* buys a counterpane for his wife before attending a carol service, an unexpected lapse from male chauvinism which moves her to tears. The Trinidadian Hindu was expected to keep his wife in her place, with frequent beatings. In this context, Christianity is evidently a humanizing influence, and the reader is given the impression that practically anything is better than the ghastly Hindu society from which Shiva and elder brother V. S. fled. Both had recurrent nightmares about returning to Trinidad and never being able to get out again.

The community portrayed so honestly in *Fireflies* and *Chip-Chip Gatherers* is an atypical one, which will probably not be understood by Westerners and perhaps not even by members of the majority communities in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. What Naipaul is writing about is not just another Asian society or just another minority community, but a peculiar, almost hermetically insulated community which avoids interacting with others as much as possible. Such communities are usually more backward than others. They certainly seem more unsatisfactory than others.

In Naipaul's community power and money had become supreme values, while a ritualized religion pushed into the background had the function of legitimating the social order. The only salvation is to go abroad, preferably to Britain, or to become a doctor as the medical profession is more prestigious than any other. Anyone trying to step out of his prescribed place in the hierarchy provokes venomous hatred. A female in *Chip-Chip Gatherers* wishes on another female the punishment that ought to be meted out to her mother, "And not only on Sita; but on everyone like her who aspired to break their chains". Sita, an illegitimate girl to boot, reads books which means she is trying to get out of her station in life. In any case, reading books is a deplorable and dangerous habit, as is made clear by the wealthy businessman, Egbert Ramsaran, who refuses to provide a school with the library it lacks and instead donates a superfluous lavatory. The purpose of education is to acquire the skills required to accumulate money and exercise power. As he tells his son "Don't try any

of this doctor and lawyer funny business on me". The dialogue, a constant marrel in both books, relieves to some extent the depressing impact they could have for some readers.

Shiva Naipaul may be concentrating on the uglier aspects of his community, an inference that might be drawn by recalling the genial comic spirit which reigned in the earlier fiction of his elder brother, V. S. Naipaul. Actually, the comic spirit is in operation in *Fireflies* also. The important point, however, is that his portrayal of his community is essentially true of a certain kind of Asian community.

His scrutiny is certainly harsh and unillusioned, but we must note that in both novels there is a humane intelligence at work. This is quite clear in the extremely poignant conclusion of *Fireflies*, when Baby Lutchman is bereft of her sons. One of them, Bhaskar, tells her before going abroad "You are stronger than all of us put together", because she can only live for others. There is a tragic dignity about her at the end, but her society cannot respect her fate as tragic because it is incapable of "breaking down the dykes that separate man from man", which is one of the reasons why the tragic can be life-giving. The standards from which Naipaul judges his community are unexceptionable.

This account of Naipaul's peculiarly limited cultural background makes one wonder whether it limited his ability to understand some of the Asian societies, more particularly the ones with rich cultural traditions. One wonders about this after reading his piece on Morocco, "Victim of Ramadan". As a brown Asian

in Morocco he was constantly mistaken for a Muslim and expected to observe all the rigours of the fast, which led him into a series of extremely annoying contretemps. And that is about all he had to say of Morocco. Perhaps he could not have made any sense of Islam. And perhaps he could not have grasped much about the humanizing power of Buddhism, judging from his dismissal of the argument that Sri Lanka's Buddhist heritage inspired our basic needs strategy which placed Sri Lanka surprisingly high, for so poor a country, on the quality of life index. At the other end of the spectrum, his kind of cultural background could have limited his understanding of the potential for creativity in being human, which could have led him to misjudge the prospects of some societies which do not have a heritage of high civilization, point which we will examine later.

Some of Naipaul's limitations seem to arise also out of problems of a technical order. This can be approached by noting the unsatisfactoriness of what will interest the Sri Lankan reader more than any of his other writings, his lengthy article on Sri Lanka, *Unfinished Journey*. Our strictures here might seem unfair as it may be an unfinished and uncorrected piece of writing. His father-in-law found the last page on the typewriter, and published the whole article. However, some of the features of even an uncorrected or unfinished piece of writing could be revealing.

What will strike the Sri Lankan reader at once is that hardly any of the details ring true. At the British Council he met a slim lady, a detail which the Sri Lankan readers will recognize

as authentic as many of our ladies are slim. But the general impression given is that he is writing of a country rather different from Sri Lanka. For instance Tissa, a writer and a government official, earns a salary of Rs 1,300 p.m., has a wife and four children, a thousand books, and still squanders his money on books and arrack, which every Sri Lankan will regard as an impossible feat of legerdemain. Curiously, elsewhere Naipaul says that books in Sri Lanka are as expensive as gold dust. Another interesting detail is that he makes the head of an institute say "I am not understanding fully", and later "I am still not understanding fully". Surely, no educated Sri Lankan uses the English language with quite so much originality.

The explanation for what looks like mendacity might be that he was not writing a straightforward account of Sri Lanka, but was perhaps writing in the tradition of the documentary of the Thirties with its mix of reportage and fiction. Sometimes, perhaps often, there was more fiction than anything else, as in the case of Isherwood's *Good-bye to Berlin*. It is doubtful according to Bernard Crick's biography that Orwell witnessed a hanging before writing *A Hanging* or shot an elephant before writing *Shooting an Elephant*, thought the reader might be struck by the immediacy of the experience conveyed through Orwell's brilliant writing. Certainly in the case of Orwell's account of his schooldays, *Such Were the Joys*, there were serious distortions. The explanation for all this is that realism does not require verisimilitude, and the documentary writer was aiming at realism.

Fitting Naipaul's writings into the genre of the documentary might explain only some of their features. It should be more appropriate to fit him into the New Journalism associated with the name of Tom Wolfe, the identifying characteristic of which is the use of novelistic techniques. In such journalism

the writer himself is present as an "I", characters are drawn as in fiction, dialogue is used partly as an economical way of delineating character, places are described for their symbolic suggestiveness, and so on. All these are features of Naipaul's non-fiction prose.

In the New Journalism the reader has the sensation of being thrust into an experience, of being immersed in it, without an adequate evaluation of the experience, or sometimes no evaluation at all. This is probably why Naipaul is sometimes depressing to read. Arguably, if there is indeed inadequate evaluation in his writings, he should not be criticised for what he is not trying to do. True enough, but all the same the healthy organism wants to understand on experience when it is a negative one, get to grips with it, do something about it, and this is all the more important when it is the fate of a Third World country that is in question. In Naipaul's writings we get a powerful projection of the rottenness of some Third World countries, but our understanding of what exactly is rotten and why is not much advanced.

If we compare Naipaul's "Victim of Ramadan" with Orwell's "Marrakesh" we find that Orwell gives us so much more about Morocco in just a few pages, and tries to account for the state of that country. Naipaul, in the *Aryan Dream*, wrote brilliantly on the Shah's power-mania which portended some sort of disaster for Iran, while Western and pro-Western experts were babbling about the Shah's White Revolution. But Naipaul went back on his judgement after experiencing the rigours of Islam in Morocco, and regretted the demise of the Shah and his White Revolution. Orwell would have condemned both the Shah and what followed, probably recognizing that the one spawned the other. In "Passports to Dependence", Naipaul condemns the Ugandan

(Continued on page 28)

BOOKS

The memoirs of the veteran Communist leader, N. Sanmugathan has been published under the title "**The Political Memoirs of an Unrepentant Communist**". The first chapters are being serialised by the "*Daily News*". The book will be reviewed in this journal's Sept. 1 issue.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Amarawansa

Among the bewildering array of weekly, fortnightly, and monthly publications that have sprung up in response to the burgeoning demand for reading material from the ever-growing Sinhala reading public, රාවයා (RAVAYA) a monthly magazine edited and published by Victor Ivan, stands out as one of the best, catering as it does to the more intelligent and discriminating reader. In the June issue of this much sought-after periodical was a contribution entitled "දුප්පත්කම අත්රැම ගැනීම හා පිටු දැකීම" (Understanding and Eliminating Poverty) by Vasantha Dissanayake, whose forthright comments on the government's Poverty Alleviation Programme are indeed noteworthy.

In the opening paragraphs Dissanayake sets out the casual factors underlying the aggravation of poverty during the last decade. "Until ten years passed the government thought only of rapid economic development. No attention was paid to the need to ensure that the benefits of development were dispersed equitably. "The dreadful social consequences which we are witnessing today are due to a few people plundering the benefits of the rapid economic development. As a result the trend towards narrowing the sharp disparities in income distribution was weakened and the country has been pushed in a direction which widens such disparities. While the share of income of the 10% receiving the highest income which was 42% in 1953, declined to 30% by 1973, after 1977 it increased to 39% in 1979, 42% by 1982, and reached 49% by 1985. As against this the share of total income received by the 40% receiving the lowest incomes which was 13% in 1953, rose to 15% by 1973, and after 1977 it declined to 12% in 1979 and as low as 7% by 1985. In no other country in the world

has the gap between these two groups widened so much. The share of income received by the highest 10% was not as high even in the richest countries of the world like the U.S.A., Switzerland, and West Germany, or even in the Asian countries like Singapore, Korea, and Taiwan which Sri Lanka has keenly looked up to as models. In the former group of rich countries the highest 10% of income receivers had only 20 to 25% of total income. In the latter group of Asian countries the share is only 30%. But the highest decile of income receivers in Sri Lanka received 50% of the total income!"

"While the government was not interested in adopting measures to counter this situation, it abandoned the welfare policies which were followed upto 1977, whereby taxes levied from the highest income receivers were used to maintain those of the lowest income groups, because such measures were considered as penal actions which discouraged the efficient capitalists. At that juncture the government never thought, even for a moment, that a policy which made the few rich people richer, and the vast majority of poor people poorer, would in the end become a challenge to the entire social system. But as a result of the terrible consequences which became evident after ten years, the government has been obliged to address the country in a different manner."

The programme of poverty alleviation is seen as something that is being undertaken not out of genuine generosity or benevolence, but out of sheer self-interest and instincts of self-preservation. Dissanayake perceives it in terms of rich house-holders living in the lap of luxury and were cruel enough to chase away poor people calling at their gates for some help, suddenly adopting a friendly

tone when confronted with a situation wherein their watchers and minions failed to subdue and disperse a rebellious group of sons and daughters of those poor people, who now gathered outside the gates demanding in threatening tones, "give back to us all that you have plundered from us". Realising that they now face a disastrous situation, they come on to the balconies of their beautiful mansions and addressing the people with great compassion say; "Friends, please refrain from creating any commotion. We will give you not only enough food and drinks, but also other riches. Please queue up in a disciplined way to receive those things."

Commenting further on the change of heart, he goes on to point out how the government which pruned the rice subsidy of Rs. 1500 million in 1978, on the grounds that the country could not afford it, have now become kind enough to provide Rs. 100,000 million to maintain the poor. "This is comparable to a massive compensation paid to make amends for some destructive act committed by oneself. But payment of compensation for a crime committed should be undertaken with a sense of genuine repentance and not with an affected sense of solemn generosity."

Turning next to a consideration of the flaws in the scheme as conceived and announced by the government, the writer sets out the grounds on which he questions the effectiveness or otherwise of the strategies to be adopted. The main weakness in the overall strategies to be adopted lies in the inappropriateness of the way in which resources are to be mobilised for financing the PAP... "It is just and fair that at least some part of the wealth plundered from the people should be re-

distributed among them. But the funds required for this purpose must be obtained from those plunderers and not from the people". If inequities in the distribution of income is the main cause of widespread poverty, any measures designed to redress such distributive injustices must be financed with resources extracted not from the masses, but from those super capitalists who had amassed wealth without any limit. The strategy adopted for implementing the PAP is not the method set out above, but is, instead, the popular 'Anchor' method!

The second shortcoming is that the programme does not include any national plan of action to create an environment conducive to a just and equitable distribution of incomes within the country. A direct treatment of the external ulcer alone will not suffice. It is necessary also to treat the internal causes. There is no reason to think that any plan of action to alleviate poverty without changing the social environment which promotes inequities in income distribution, can be effective. Contending that the main factor which created the environment wherein poverty got aggravated during the last decade, was the so-called open economy, the writer goes on to explain how the steady decline in the acreage and output of subsidiary food crops between 1977 and 1985 impoverished the rural farming population, who are the worst affected by abject poverty today. The output of, and acreage under, Cowpea declined by 24% and 20% respectively, while the decline in respect of Red Onions was 27% and 29%. Similarly the output and acreage of Chillies declined by 14% and 27%, while other crops like Maize, Kurakkan, and Meneri fared equally badly. Imports of these commodities increased several fold during this period. Rural poverty is attributable mainly to the shrinkage of opportunities for the rural folk to be economically active within the open economy. Production of subsidiary food crops

is as important a source of income as Paddy production for rural farmers. When one or both of these decline, their economic activities get narrowed down and incomes decline. When these activities expand their incomes increase accordingly. Directing the country towards self-sufficiency in food crops, that can be grown in Sri Lanka, could sharply increase economic activity among the rural farming population and thereby increase also their incomes. It is not possible to achieve this objective under a policy framework which continues to allow the free play of market forces.

The effects of the open economy on the industrial sector has been equally disastrous. Apart from industries producing sub-standard products which cannot compete with imported goods, even industries manufacturing products of good quality and finish have been adversely affected. It is necessary to reformulate policies so as to protect at least the viable industries producing quality goods. It is only then that local industry can be expanded and improved in such a way as to reduce unemployment at least to some extent.

"It is absolutely necessary to contain ostentatious living at levels consistent with Sri Lanka's economic capabilities. It is not necessary to squander the limited foreign exchange resources to satiate the greedy desires of Sri Lanka's super rich. As estimated a few years back the value of imported goods remaining unsold in the market alone amounted to about Rs.30,000 million. Even though we have adequate supplies of clean water, Sri Lanka's super capitalists cannot do without even imported water! The basic cause of the disaster we are facing today is the distasteful longings of these super rich. If they can limit their ostentatious capitalist wants to suit the country's economic capacity, the country will be able to reduce the wasteful expenditure on their consumption needs.

"In the context of the dreadful conditions prevailing in the country today, it is not only super capitalists who should tighten their belts. It is necessary that politicians, who represent their interests, also should limit the wasteful expenditure in which they indulge. Sri Lanka is a small country of 25,000 square miles and it takes only a few hours to go from one end of the country to the other. In this context, the preference shown by politicians for high priced luxury motor vehicles like D.K.W, Rolls Royce, Mercedes Benz and Pajeros, instead of low priced simple vehicles, is indeed disgusting. India used a type of locally produced motor cars even for the SAARC summit meeting. In Sri Lanka even Provincial Council members cannot do without Pajeros costing over a million rupees." After further comments about the colossal expenditure incurred on the erection of edifices like the new Parliament buildings, air-conditioned and plushly carpeted office blocks to enhance their own pomp and glory, and the urgent need to re-examine the justification for such expenditure, he goes on to state "Sri Lanka has become the country with politicians drawing the highest remuneration relative to the average income of the people. If politics is a public service, why do these servants of the people need such high salaries? Before preaching to the country it is very important that politicians should shape their own lives in keeping with those sermons. It is only then that professional politicians can assuage the feelings of disgust that are increasingly engendered among the people, and regain their confidence."

"The other conspicuous flaw in the government's poverty alleviation programme is the absence of any strategies to contain the destructive effects of inflation resulting from policies devised to depreciate the value of the rupee. Sri Lanka has today become the highest inflation rate in Asia excepting the Phillipines. Inflation reduces the real value

of peoples' incomes and accelerates (the spread of) poverty. In the absence of measures to control prevailing inflation, it will be impossible to prevent the evaporation of the financial assistance granted inflationary conditions. That was what happened to food stamps given as relief to the poor."

In conclusion the writer stresses the need for a balanced and unified approach. "For ten years the government thought only of rapid economic development, and gave no consideration to the problem of poverty. The government now seems to be concerned with poverty only, and not with general economic development of the country. In the same way that the one-sided policies of the past produced disastrous consequences, it is not unlikely a policy that lays emphasis on poverty (alleviation) only, without consideration of general economic development, could be equally disastrous. What the country needs is a programme which integrates both aspects. It is only then will it be possible to ensure economic development of the country in addition to the elimination of poverty."

Other views on poverty alleviation and the national crisis :

The "Lankadipa" of Sunday 16 July, beginning a new series under the heading සිදුවන්නේ කුමක්ද? කළයුත්තේ කුමක්ද? (What is happening? What should be done?) seeking to present the views of leading persons of learning, in the fields of social and economic affairs, on the prevailing unrest in the country, started off with the comments of Dr. Neville Karunatilake, Governor of the Central Bank, and of Dr. Wickremabahu Karunaratne.

Dr. Karunatilake while conceding that inflation and unemployment are foremost among the many casual factors underlying the prevailing unrest, and that the spread of employment opportunities outside the Western Province has been limited, asserts that it is wrong to conclude

that the open economy was the cause of the current economic problems and youth discontent. Neither is the collapse of the rural economy attributable to the open economy. These problems have arisen because of shortcomings in implementation of the policies relating to the open economy. It has to be admitted that the country's commercial class thought of their profits only without thinking of the country and venturing into production activities which could create more and more employment opportunities, and that production facilities came to be located mainly in urban areas it is also correct to say that certain rural and small industries were adversely affected. The 'Janasaviya' programme has been formulated to remedy these shortcomings.

"If there is unrest among the youth due to unemployment arising out of underdevelopment, the only solution is to implement the 'Janasaviya' program successfully. Government has directed all its efforts and commitment towards this end. The only solution to today's problems is the 'Janasaviya'."

Pointing out that the monies paid under the Janasaviya have to be utilised for the purchase of locally produced goods, he contends that the open economy will, therefore, not be an impediment to the development of local production activities. If goods produced at village level cannot be sold in the domestic market due to imports, prevailing import export policies will be adjusted and higher duties imposed on imported goods with the implementation of the Janasaviya. After setting out how recipients of Janasaviya assistance will be able to join the productive process by undertaking sub-contacting and other production activities on a self-reliant basis, he asserts that Janasaviya is capable of bringing about a complete transformation of the rural areas within two years of its commencement.

"It is only the Janasaviya programme which has the eco-

nomie potential to overcome the present crisis. If the youth participate in this program and make Janasaviya the only weapon to help them stand up on their own this crisis can be overcome."

Dr. Wickremabahu Karunaratne stresses the need for restructuring the rural economy as a lasting solution to the prevailing crisis. His view is also that the current uprising is a direct outcome of the socio-economic crisis brought about by the economic policies pursued by the government over the last decade, and the widening disparities in income distribution. The rural economy and the small industries sector have collapsed under the economic and social environment which came into being under the open economy. It has widened the divisions in society and bred resentment and despair. Realising that the crisis connected with the prevailing unrest is essentially one that springs from the economic crisis, and that this has to be overcome, government is seeking to develop the villages by directing investments towards the rural areas. The main aim is to promote investments on behalf of the rural people and get them involved in production.

The objects of the Janasaviya and the Gramodaya schemes which are intended to help the people in rural areas to develop themselves, activate the rural economy and improve conditions, in the villages are of some value. But can there be any benefit if the objectives remain unfulfilled? This was what happened in the past. If the Chairmen of the Gramodaya Mandalayas ensured that these objectives were translated in to action, would the rebels keep on searching for them and killing them? The truth was that the villagers continued to be exploited by these new leaders who were cast in the same mould and behaved in the same way as the old Hamus, Nilames, Mudalalis, Arachchis, Brokers, and Money-lenders. They

also came to be looked upon as parasites exploiting the village. It will not suffice, therefore, to talk about laudable objectives only. They have to be translated into action.

"There has not been any real change in the village. There have been changes only in the form of exploitation and of the persons who indulged in exploitation. This is the basic cause of this uprising. There has to be a real change in the village. If so what is the economic plan that can overcome the core factors behind this rebellion? It must be a plan to win over the village and then win over the country. Basically the village needs an economic plan to raise the rural population, who are living in an underdeveloped environment, to a higher economic plane."

While there has to be a radical transformation of the entire rural economy is the Janasaviya prepared to undertake such a task? If the scheme is to be implemented in accordance with its objectives, there has to be a village level authority which can activate, direct, and manage the factors of production in the village, and provide management skills, provide markets, and a host of other services. If this is not forthcoming the monies that are being distributed will, in the end, come to be invested in rural projects belonging to multi-national corporations, and the villagers will end up as their slaves, and inflation will increase two or three fold. That will only serve to aggravate the rebellion.

The real solution is to change the production relations in the village so as to rid it of the exploitative elements and restructure the rural economy under an authority which will be free of the influences of the exploitative elements. At the national level, it will be necessary to subject the open economy to strict control so as to activate the production capacities at the village level. Will the capitalist

class who are deriving immense benefits under the open economy, and who brought this government into power, allow such a thing? Is the government prepared to incur the displeasure of those who helped it to come into power? Are the authors of this scheme ready to face the challenge that will emanate from the capitalist class?

It will be difficult to implement the Janasaviya without a radical social, economic, and political struggle. Without such a social transformation can there be a solution to the rebellion? Contending that the government is thus at a point at which a critical choice of action has to be made, he asserts that there has to be a real change in the rural and national economy to bring about an end to the uprising. If not the crisis will deepen and move towards further conflicts and the economy will collapse.

Naipaul's . . .

(Continued from page 24)

Indians for not having taken to politics to secure their interests, but surely if they had, not many would have got out alive after the brutal Idi Amin came to power, something Naipaul should have been able to understand as the member of a minority. In *Unfinished Journey* he dismisses the idea that the relatively high quality of life in Sri Lanka could have had something to do with Buddhism. The point is that he dismisses it scornfully and in passing, without discussing it. On the other hand, the Cambridge anthropologist, Edmund Leach, who lived in Sri Lanka and thought about it responsibly, examined the idea and agreed with it. These are just a few examples to show that Naipaul does not much advance our understanding of the societies he writes about.

Next: **New Journalism**

Sri Lanka: . .

(Continued from page 6)

coming a stabler, friendlier and even grateful neighbour, Sri Lanka is a strife-torn, sullen and bitter liability. Worst of all, for India and its army, there can be no totally honourable escape from the mess it has got itself into. To that extent the Sri Lanka policy has been the Rajiv Gandhi Government's greatest political defeat. No degree of valour on the military battleground or skills in diplomatic letter-writing can brush that bitter reality aside.

(India Today)

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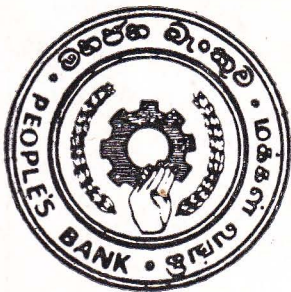
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