

● SPECIAL: Maldives and Youth Activism ●

— A. V. Varghese

LANKA

GUARDIAN

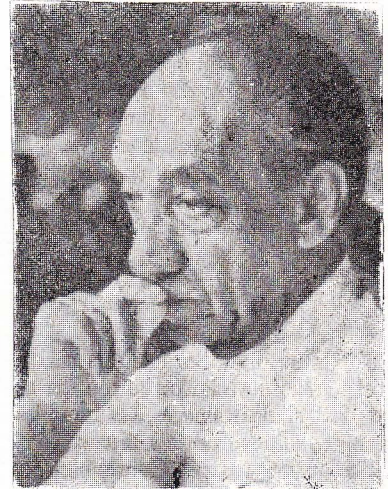
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CONVERSATIONS (3)

*"Don't be a
damn fool!" D.S. to J.R.*



THE EAST IS RED

— Mervyn de Silva

EELAM STRATEGY AND THE EAST

— Amita Shastri

The Sri Lankan Armed Force

— Bruce Mathews

PADMANABA: A RARE REVOLUTIONARY

— Dayan Jayatilleka



TROTSKY:

Waiting for Recognition

— Achin Vanaik

Liberalisation and Pluralism

— Mick Moore



Black Knight
It's your move

TRENDS

OIL TO COST MORE ?

Following the developments in the Middle East, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation will have to take a closer look at its petroleum tariffs if it is to remain viable, a CPC official said. Existing stocks will last a few months.

"We will never go dry, but prices may increase", a spokesman said.

AID PLEDGED

After briefing leaders in Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Brunei on the internal situation in Sri Lanka, Foreign Minister Harold Herat said that they had pledged aid to Sri Lanka.

These leaders had been convinced of the anti-democratic aims of the LTTE and had expressed satisfaction about government policies, the Minister said.

PLACES FOR REFUGEES

Tamil Nadu will provide higher education opportunities for Sri Lankan refugees. The TN government has instructed educational institutions to set aside 20 places in the MBBS course and 40 in polytechnic and engineering courses.

SLFP STANDS BY DEVOLUTION

The SLFP stood by its commitment to devolution pledged in the five-party Democratic People's Alliance before the 1988 presidential election. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike told a public meeting after he returned with the parliamentary delegation which visited India.

India was not providing incentives to Sri Lankan refugees arriving in India, contrary to statements in the press, an Indian High Commission release in Colombo said. Humanitarian assistance was being provided to refugees immediately on arrival and during their stay in India, as had been done in the past.

This could no way be termed incentives, the release said.

P.R.I.O. REPORT

We regret that we cannot publish another instalment of the PRIO report presented by Mr. Neville Jayaweera to a seminar in OSLO on the Sri Lankan situation and attended by a large number of Sri Lankans, many invited by PRIO, together with academics, Norwegian officials, representatives from NGO's etc.

After we had published three extensive excerpts, on July 1, July 15, and Aug. 1, and had planned to "continue" doing so, as readers would have noted, we received a telegram from a "STEINER" of PRIO "strongly" objecting to our use of the report.

In the past, we have published PRIO reports, particularly those concerning Sri Lanka. Such material has been posted to us. We have presumed that this material has been mailed to us by, or on the instructions of Dr. Kumar Rupasingha, PRIO Director and the very active organiser of consultations on Sri Lanka. Appreciating his more than academic interest in Sri Lankan society and politics, we have published much of the material. No complaints, no protests, no telegrams have reached us. So we wonder why Mr./Ms Steinar should send us a telegram over six weeks after our initial instalment from the PRIO report, when we were planning to give our readers the concluding chapters of this selfsame report! It looks a matter more for investigative journalism than "research" — Ed.

BRIEFLY

● Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader M. H. M. Ashroff made a public appeal to the nation's Muslims to remain calm and not resort to any form of violence over the spate of killings in the Eastern Province.

Mr Ashroff said that he was also appealing to "all those Muslims who support the government to make it move promptly and meaningfully in the utterly urgent need for immediate and adequate security to protect Muslims lives and homes which were mercilessly ravaged by the Tigers".

● President Premadasa assured a delegation of Muslim parliamentarians, Muslim party leaders and heads of Muslim national organisations that the government would ensure adequate security measures for Muslim villages with immediate effect.

● Mr Ranjan Wijeratne, State Minister for Defence told newsmen that he was not interested any more in a demilitarized zone around the Jaffna Fort and the hospital as the LTTE was continuing to kill civilians.

Although the government had not dropped the idea he was not willing to discuss a demilitarized zone, the minister said.

(Continued on page 24)

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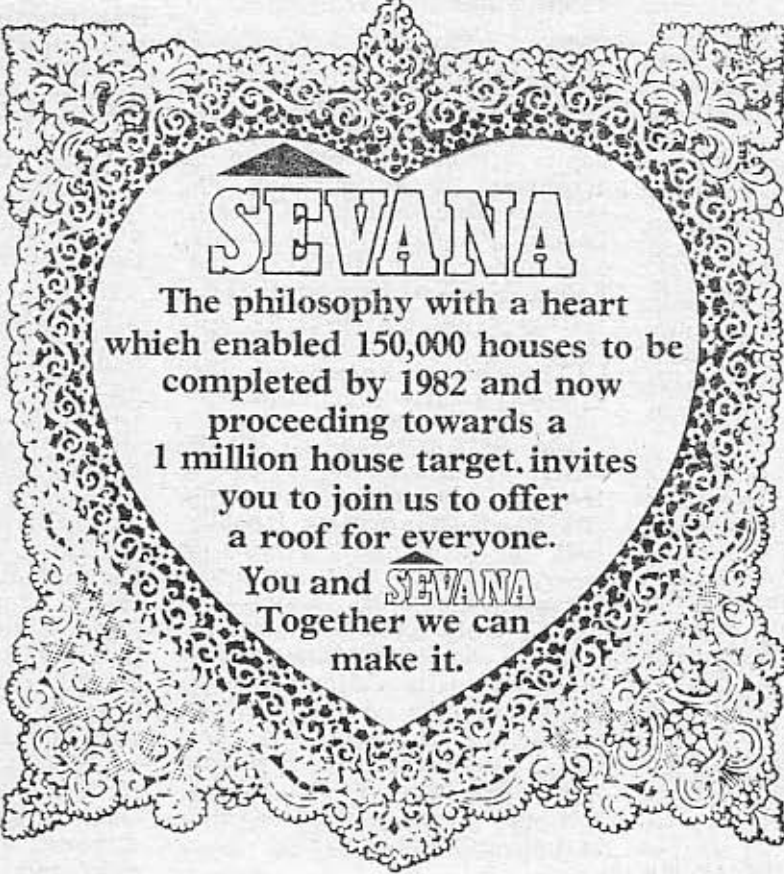
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VIOLENCE : A Fragmentation Bomb

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

The East is red. The East is 42% Tamil, 33% Muslim, 25% Sinhalese. While the North may be the Tamil heartland, the "traditional homeland" or "Eelam" concept has always had a much wider territorial embrace — the North-East in short. And this despite Ampara which is predominantly Sinhala. But then the proponents of "Eelam" would argue that it was "Amparai" before it became Ampara, to be immediately and fiercely challenged by another school of historians who will prove the contrary, that Ampara was originally Sinhala.

The issue is not homeland but land, and the land that was a rice bowl, and has once more become the green fields of the east, thanks to high-cost irrigation projects, largely financed by foreign donors, directly or through the massive World Bank sponsored Mahaveli scheme. So, people and land.

And language. There is no logical basis for a North-East merger today than the linguistic link between the Tamils and the Muslims — the Muslims being Tamil-speakers. (Many Muslims also speak Sinhala but it is NOT their main mode of communication as Sinhala, indisputably is for the Muslim in the seven Sinhala-dominated provinces.

Muslim support was indispensable, and the fact of cultural convergence (Tamil) was the main plank of a credible, viable case for a "north-east region", enjoying maximum autonomy within a united, sovereign Sri Lanka. But as the Tamil movement was gradually transformed from "federalism" to "Eelamism", and from parliamentary

politics to extra-parliamentary activism, and such activism, confronted by the State's coercive apparatus, was steadily converted to armed struggle, the Eastern province Muslim was "caught in the crossfire", metaphorically and then literally. Life itself was at stake; not just economic interest, electoral influence or cultural identity.

If the 'East' was the issue, the East also became the main battleground.

Simple arithmetic (a third of the province) has already made the Muslim, the smallest group nationwide, conscious of his strength AND weakness. The strength lay in the numbers game of parliamentary or provincial polls. Or the simplest numbers game of all, after the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, a referendum in the East after one year to decide the fate of the temporarily merged North-East. Does the Muslim use his unique position as the decisive, balancing factor to extract political concessions (i.e. sharing of power and perks) and, if so, from whom. The Tamils or the Sinhalese? Who will give the better deal? Perhaps the Sinhalese, the smallest of the three communities and thus likely to offer more, with the additional advantage of exercising power at the Centre, Colombo.

MUSLIM MOBILISATION

In any case, whatever the tactical choice, the Muslims have to be united in order to speak with one voice, and negotiate from a position of strength. Muslim mobilisation meant the assertion of a distinctive identity; an identity that made the Tamil-speaking Muslim a 'separate' community. There was

one obvious agent of mobilisation — religion; Islam the dynamic force in this 'age of identity', certainly from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 i.e. the 80's.

Tamil parliamentarism had its last dying gasp with the DDC polls, the Presidential election (a large vote for the SLFP's Hector Kobbekaduwe) the Referendum and the July 1983 anti-Tamil riots in the South, more organised than spontaneous. Eelam militancy takes over from Tamil Parliamentarism as the TULF leaders, including the Leader of the Opposition, go into exile, politically and physically.

The East, the main battlefield, gets redder. The East is militarised, with all the counter-insurgency 'expertise' concentrated in the East — new State militia such as the S. T. F. assisted by international expertise. In the run-up to the 'Accord' and the IPKF, (1983-87) the following trends become increasingly evident and assertive: the re-shaping of the Muslim identity with Islam as the instrument, the advent of new political and politico-military formations, the JIHAD, the Muslim Congress, more East-based than national, the spread of weapons, and intensified militarisation, and a more complex, confusing pattern of alignments, more shadowy than recognisable.

Enter the IPKF. Its sheer weight begins to tell in the North, and the 'Tigers' flee into the jungles, with the IPKF transforming itself from peace-keeper to army of occupation. In a more complex East however, the IPKF itself has to adjust itself to a different political-military challenge. The Indians quickly spot the relative

autonomy of the Muslim factor — a Muslim Brigadier becomes the IPKF's operational head in the East.

MASSACRES

What then is the background to the gruesome massacres committed by the 'Tigers' in the East, North-East, North Central?

(1) The IPKF, starting with 6,000, went up to 60,000, backed up by weaponry that we cannot possibly buy. So the IPKF could pursue a 'saturation strategy', a military option not available to the SL Army. Divert and disperse is the LTTE strategy — divert attention, disperse the SL Army, especially in the present army build-up for a combined assault on Jaffna. A concentrated effort would not be possible if the Army's manpower has to be dispersed over a wider area.

(2) No civilian is any longer immune — civilians for civilians. Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims.

(3) Cause panic, provoke incidents that would increase political pressure on the government.

(4) Create tensions between Sinhalese and Muslims, Muslims and Tamils. Controlling mob violence would mean a dispersion and dissipation of army-government resources.

(5) Intelligence is a more vital need in low-intensity conflict than in conventional warfare. The Muslims speak Tamil, and thus can pick up "intelligence" better than the Sinhalese.

(6) Increase the refugee flow to incite opinion in Tamilnadu, forcing Tamilnadu to put pressure on Delhi.

(7) Civilian casualties would also invite international attention and therefore diplomatic pressure from quarters that are now, basically, sympathetic to Colombo than in the pre-1987 "J.R." period.

(8) Use the besieged Fort, with its 250 army-police, hostages, as a political-diplomatic lever.

What do we witness — armed violence, militarisation, community as victim, all civilians as targets — fragmentation.

TAMIL STRATEGY: Making "Eelam" viable ?

Amita Shastri

Previously, the greatest weakness in the Tamil argument for a separate state had been its lack of a viable economic base. The North and East were "peripheral" or "backward" compared to the "forward" southwest of the island. This shortfall seems to have been overcome by the early 1970s. The rural areas of the north and particularly the east had emerged as important paddy producing regions. The smallholders in the Jaffna region had emerged as important producers of chillies and onions. Indeed, the locus of development in agriculture had shifted to the Dry Zone, and by the beginning of the 1970s Trincomalee was recognized as holding the key to the next stage of industrialization, which would be export based.

As the leading and most public proponent of the separate state of Eelam at the time, the secretary-general of the TULF, A. Amirthalingam, argued in an interview with the author in 1981, the Tamil areas had paddy, fish, and — given suitable policies — various subsidiary crops for consumption and for trade. He asserted that the traditional lack of modern industry in the north and east was no longer an insuperable hurdle to modern statehood. It could be overcome by developing an industrial processing zone at Trincomalee, which would offer avenues for investment to local capital derived from agriculture and existing business and trade. The Tamils were already highly skilled and well entrenched in business and trade, and their talents and capital would be available and able to develop in the new state. Their highly skilled and educated youth

would find lucrative employment not only in managing the new industries but also in administering the new state. Foreign capital, foreign technology, and expatriate capital from the substantial Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the advanced industrial countries would help to set up not only the industries in the processing zone but also the advanced infrastructure like telecommunications and airports that were required to run a modern state. Most important, the new government would be free to mobilize revenue and direct expenditure for the benefit of the local region and its population. Equally important, it would be free to negotiate with and procure funding from foreign sources as an independent state.

Thus, derived from material conditions, the concept of Eelam had developed until it seemed economically viable to its proponents. The scope of support for the establishment of Eelam, however, varied within the region, and the Batticaloa district in the EP, which had the largest concentration of Tamils and had seen the least expenditure of government funds, formed strongholds of support for the separatist cause. Its most adamant and vehement supporters, symbolized by the militants, were drawn from Jaffna lower-middle-class youths, who had the least to lose in economic and political terms in a struggle for the proposed state. They also advocated a more "socialist" equalitarian model for the new state (LTTE 1983 and 1984). Backing them with some ambivalence were the Tamil upper and middle classes in the north and east: lawyers, landlords, businessmen, and professionals who backed the TULF. They had to be pushed by the radical-youth wing to demand

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a separate state and consistently sought to effect a compromise sort of separation — in effect, they sought to use the threat as bargaining lever with the central government. Despite their differences, however, they continued to speak publicly for and be identified with the separatist demand and did not disown their association with the militants. A significant segment of the Tamil lower classes, "minority" castes, and estate Tamils in the NP also supported Eelam in 1977. As in all nationalist movements, popular discourse and rhetoric welded the various groups by emphasizing the discrimination they experienced as Tamils and the "honor" that would be theirs in a separate state of their own.

To a nonpartisan but knowledgeable observer, the conception of Eelam involved various economic and political problems, and it is not being propagated or justified here. The lack of a clear geographical boundary between the proposed states would make the establishment and defense of an international boundary a contentious issue. Another problem was the location of the river heads and reservoirs required to supply the irrigation needs of the proposed state: they would lie outside the central highlands. The intermixture of ethnic populations posed another formidable problem. A quarter of the Sri Lankan Tamil population lived in Sinhalese areas, and the EP had a significant population of Sinhalese and Muslims. The estate Tamils were concentrated in the central highlands and in Colombo. The migration and exchange of populations between the two states, once Eelam was formed, would carry a heavy price tag in the extant environment of ethnic hostility and violence. Whether the minority populations that chose to remain in each of the states could attain justice was another open question. Muslims in the EP were sympathetic to the demand for greater regional auto-

nomy but not sanguine about acquiring it under the hegemony of Tamils, despite the latter's assurances. Above all, as events have proved, the success of efforts to translate Eelam from ideology to reality would depend on a different and wider set of factors: the relative strengths of the proponents of the concept and their opponent (the Sinhalese-dominated government at Colombo); regional geopolitics; and the larger play of power in the international arena. The Tamils have had strong support from the neighbouring Indian state of Tamil Nadu and from the government of India for their attempts to achieve greater justice and autonomy for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. However, belonging to the international community and sensitive to fissiparous movements within its own borders, India has consistently stopped short of support for a separate state. Under the Indo-Sri Lanka accord in 1987, India attempted to implement just such a policy and posed a mortal threat to the most militant of the separatist groups (the LTTE) in the process.

What needs to be noted, however, is that the concept of Eelam was intimately rooted in both the development and the discrimination experienced by the region and its population. The development of the region demonstrated to Tamils its potential for economic growth and opportunity. The manner in which that development was being effected, through the instrumentalities of the unitary state and majority rule consolidated in ethnic terms, made them acutely aware that they would not be share holders in this development but would be its casualties. Although their declining stake in the system explains their alienation from it and their acceptance of the separatist option, the region's perceived potential for development provided a strong, intense motivation to struggle for the goal of a separate state.

The otherwise inexplicable insistence of Tamils on a unification of the NP and EP in any scheme becomes understandable once the topography, trends, and productive potential of these regions are understood, intertwined as they have been until now with the concentration of power in the unitary center. From the Tamil point of view (as articulated primarily by middle-class Jaffna Tamils), much of the EP would have to be administered jointly with the NP if any regionalization of power and status were to be economically viable and safe from tampering by the Sinhalese majority. Such a unit would assure a viable economic space for the continuation of Tamil language and culture and be significant enough to influence the government at Colombo. Consequently, proposals that offered a devolution of authority to the Tamils in the NP but left its long-term relationship with the EP undecided, as the Indo-Sri Lanka accord did, fell short in the view of core Tamil militants. Any lasting settlement on the issue will have to take this view into account.

To return to theoretical matters, although the region itself remained agricultural and "backward" in relation to the more industrialized, economically active, and "forward" southwest, the characteristics and dynamics governing this "backwardness" were no longer the same. It was suffused with a quickening pace of change and development. The situation provided the potential for this region to become a "forward" one — in which members of the "forward" elite of Jaffna could find avenues for employment and mobility commensurate to their potential and aspirations. This demonstrated potential for a "backward" region to become a "forward" one if freed from unfavorable asymmetries in the instituted structure of power formed a critical element in the process of positive counter-identity formation in the secessionist movement.

D.S., the greatest; N.M. the ablest

[J.R. talking to the Editor of the L.G.]

De Silva:

Sir, you just mentioned 'D.S.', and I noted that your tone changed slightly. . . what was it? A remoteness, detachment, awe. . . ?

J.R.: Respect. . . Utmost respect.

Q. But you knew him as a young man. . . may be as a Minister but still quite a young man, and he was the Grand Old Man, wasn't he?

A. Sir Baron was the Grand Old Man to us. . . D. S. Senanayake was our Leader. . . no question about that. . . but he was also my friend's father. . .

Q. Friend's. . . ?

A. Dudley's father. . . that's how I regarded him, though I was, as you say, picked as a Minister.

Q. How would you rate him, now. . . ? I mean not about policies or political issues but as a politician, a political leader a national figure. . . ?

A. There's no doubt in my mind on that. . . He is No. 1, the greatest leader, we had. . . a towering personality, and not merely because of his extraordinary physique. . .

Q. Then what? What special quality made him a man of such stature in your eyes?

A. Unerring instinct. . . what is the problem he would ask, and once you explained, he may ask a few more questions, and then the decision will be made. . . the answer will be given. Simple, and straight. . .

Q. Even in the matter of Finance. . . you were. . .

A. Yes, as Minister of Finance, John Exter, who was Governor of the Central Bank went to see the Old Man before we went to London. . . It was to be my first meeting with Stafford Cripps. . . as a Minister, it was also my first visit to London to discuss a matter of special importance to this country, as an independent country. . . We were to discuss our Sterling Assets, their future, and the Dollar Pool. Britain had kept our earnings in their banks and used to treat them as theirs. . . I mean use both the pounds and the dollars. . .

Q. And so?

A. So we went to D.S. for instructions. And he asked one question. . . To whom does the money belong? We replied that it belongs to us. And he said "Then get it back". . .

Q. That was all?

A. No. . . we had to explain to him, that Britain may say 'no' or ask for time or some other arrangement. When we explained all that, he really shocked us by saying "Then leave the Commonwealth". . .

As it happened, there was no serious difficulty in getting control of our Sterling and Dollar reserves. . .

But D.S. impressed J.R. on another, and far more exciting issue. J.R. and Dudley who had an anti-imperialist, anti-British streak in them, decided that they should establish some links with the Japanese.

There was a Japanese consul in Colombo.

J.R. and Dudley saw the Japanese Consul secretly and started discussions on Japanese policy in Asia, and most of all a victorious Japan's attitude to British colonies. After the second clandestine meeting, where the Japanese consul was even more cordial, Dudley rang J.R. and to cut a long story short, informed J.R. . . "Trouble. . . the old man wants to see us. . ."

And so he did.

D.S. knew all about it, and there was no need for the two 'anti-British' conspirators to deny the secret pow-wows. Dudley and J.R. offered their explanations and justified their talks, arguing that it was better to make contact with the "winning side" in order to advance the cause of Ceylonese independence.

"Don't be damn fools" said D.S. for the second time. Japan will never win the war. . . the Americans will soon enter the war on Britain's side. The Americans will crush Japan. . .

Both young men then lamented the inevitable postponement of Ceylon's date with destiny, and dawn of independence.

"Nonsense" said D.S. "Can't you see what's going on in India. . . Britain will have to grant India independence. . . they can't hold it any more. . . Once India is granted freedom, there is no reason to keep Ceylon. . ."

Q. So "Kalev John", for all his lack of formal education and his rough, rustic manners, was gifted with a remarkable lucidity of mind that helped him grasp the

essentials, what is now called the nitty-gritty. And that's what made him such an extraordinary leader in your view?

A. Yes, but something more. Not only was he able to grasp, as you say, the fundamental, the basic and then make up his mind. He was totally calm, never excited when faced with a problem. You must realise that a leader must not only examine the problem, analyse the situation, and grasp the essentials, but he must also act. And he must act with absolute calm and composure, if he is to be a true leader, giving confidence and courage to others. D.S. could do that. Clear, straight, ready to face the consequences.

Q. So what happened?

A. We did what D. S. asked us to do... We discussed it with Sir Stafford Cripps. He realised that we had made up our minds. He raised no objections. We had our way. Sad to say, next day Sir Stafford had to go to Switzerland... and there he died...

Q. You mean, the shock...

A. No, no, nothing to do with us or our discussions!!!

Q. So that was the end of your Japanese connections... until your speech in San Francisco...

A. Yes... The Japanese consul had told us, Dudley and me, that if Japan enters the war... to contact him in Kabul... he had been posted as Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan...

Q. One thing puzzles me... I mean about Dudley and you... I would have thought that your education, your social background, your values, the books you read, the cricket that you enjoyed so much would make you utterly pro-British...

A. Both of us, Dudley and I, had the highest regard, the warmest feelings for the finest in English culture, the British politi-

cal system etc but we were anti-imperialist. I was totally immersed... in my reading... in the Indian nationalist movement... all the great leaders, all what they had written... their speeches...

Q. But what did you actually do... I mean to promote your anti-British cause...?

A. Why, I told you, we conspired with the Japanese until D.S. told us not to be bloody fools...

Q. What about the others, besides Dudley and you... what about S.W.R.D. who finally emerged as the spokesman of nonalignment, anti-imperialist, and so on.

A. Like everybody else who held these anti-British imperialist views, we did not help the "War Effort"... in fact we opposed it... collecting money and so on. S.W.R.D. also asked the local bodies not to contribute to the fund... then Sir Geoffrey returned. He was furious, especially about local bodies getting instructions not to contribute. We then learnt that Sir Solomon had to pacify Sir Geoffrey before he took any action against SWRD.

Q. You are suggesting that SWRD was weak, contrasting him with your hero, D.S....

A. Nothing to contrast... that was obvious then, it is obvious now.

Q. But S.W.R.D. himself was a hero to millions, as the architect of the "1956 revolution"... My generation remembers him in that way, his name indissolubly linked to '56, a turning point in our history.

A. He was a brilliant orator... superb debater... well read in the classics but he couldn't make up his mind, take firm decisions or act decisively... a weak man...

Q. You haven't mentioned Sir John...

A. Not made for politics... warm-hearted man... outspoken man... too outspoken... said anything that came to his mind...

Q. Some said anything that came to his mouth...

A. May be... but I should not talk too much... you see there was a family feud that had caused bitterness... my father's family had done something to his father... I would rather not talk about it... the story is well known... A murder case.

Q. And Dudley?

A. We were like brothers... more than friends... then some evil-minded people, for their own ends, poisoned his mind against me... I am happy we became friends again the year before he died... there was a group that created trouble... over the premiership... all I can say now as I told him when we became friends, I shall always regard him as a brother...

Q. Of the Left leaders, who was the ablest...?

A. I knew them all... N. M. Colvin, Pieter, Bernard... Philip not so well... Colvin was my close friend... I knew N. M. from University College days...

Q. Who was the ablest...?

A. N. M. ... such a cool head... But he couldn't convince me about Marxism, and I couldn't convince him either, the difference between Marxism and Buddhism, that was the issue I kept taking up.

I could've convinced him on dictatorship, on democracy but now the Soviet Union is proving that my way was right...

De Silva: Ah, Sinatra-ism...

SRI LANKAN ARMED FORCES

My information concerning the strength of the Sri Lankan armed forces and the police comes from interviews and private sources, except for statistics on the size of the Special Task Force, which are not made public. In a condensed and simplified format, the services can be placed in the following perspective.

— Bruce Mathews

Army

The army has 2000 permanent force officers and 32 000 permanent other ranks, with 450 volunteer officers and 11 000 other ranks also currently in service. The infantry comprises by far the biggest element. At its core are five infantry line regiments. These are the Sri Lanka Light Infantry (commonly referred to as the Ceylon Light Infantry), the Sinha Regiment, the Gemunu Watch, the Gujabahu Regiment and the Vijayabahu Regiment. Each regiment has three regular battalions and two volunteer battalions, at 850 men per battalion (except for the Sinha Regiment, which has three volunteer battalions). There is as well the Commando Regiment of 450 soldiers (trained in tasks such as hostage situations) and a Special Forces Regiment (550 troops trained for special raids and patrols, not to be confused with the Special Task Force, which operates under police authority). Three other units (the National Auxiliary Force, the Rifle Corps and the Volunteer Regiment) provide supplementary troops. A Pioneer Corps of two volunteer battalions provides labour for construction. The standard infantry weapon is the 7.62 mm Chinese T 56 rifle. A few units have the 5.56 mm FN carbine. Each battalion also has a support company

providing mortar and medium-calibre machine gun firepower.

The artillery is comprised of three regular units (the 4th, 5th, and 7th Regiments) and one volunteer unit (the 6th Regiment). Each has four batteries, and 800 men. The standard arms are 85mm field guns and 76 mm howitzers (Yugoslavian), 4.2 inch mortars and some vintage 25 pounder field guns.

The armour component is made up of two reconnaissance regiments (the 1st and 3rd), with 700 men in each. Various types of armoured personnel carriers are in service, like the Saladin, Ferret and Buffalo.

The engineers comprise three 800 man units (1st Field Regiment, 1st Plant Regiment and the 1st Volunteer Regiment). There is also one Electrical Mechanical Regiment of 1500 men.

The service corps has two regular units (1st and 3rd Regiments) and one volunteer unit (the 2nd) of 850 men each.

The signals corps is comprised of two regular regiments (1st and 2nd) and one volunteer regiment (1st Volunteer). Each unit has 800 men.

The ordnance corps is comprised of about 2000 men (operating at the depot rather than the regimental level). A medical corps of 1000 regular and 700 volunteer personnel (this includes about 30 regular and 30 volunteer physicians) staff several forces hospitals.

There is as well a National Armed Reserve, which trains personnel for the regular and volunteer forces of the army, as well as for the Home Guards (which is under the supervision of the police). Since 1983, some

20 000 troops have gone through this unit.

The army is further organized into two divisions (one north and one south of Matale), each with four brigades. The latter are also in fixed geographical locations (for example, the 14th Brigade is always at Anuradhapura).

Navy

The navy has 350 regular officers and 5600 regular other ranks, with 30 volunteer officers and 400 volunteer other ranks in service. Its principal vessels are three surveillance command ships (converted container vessels with 60 crew each); six Chinese gunboats, with a 25 mm cannon capable of off-shore support for land-based operations, and crews of 25 each; 15 Israeli 'patrol attack' craft with a 20 mm cannon and crews of 10; 16 patrol vessels with a 20 mm cannon and crews of six; two 40-metre locally built slow patrol vessels, capable of sustained voyages with crews of 40; two landing craft (LCMs). Only about one quarter of the navy is at sea. The service has an increasingly heavy security responsibility on land.

Air force

The air force has 583 regular officers (60 of whom are pilots) and 7900 regular other ranks, with 150 volunteer officers and 1000 volunteer other ranks. It consists of four wings (No 1 Training Wing, Anuradhapura; No 2 Transport Wing, Ratmalana, No 3 and No 4 Helicopter Wings, Katunayake) and 12 bases. Its principal aircraft are nine SIAI Marchetti SF 260 TPs (which can be used as fighter-bombers); 14 Bell 412 or 212 helicopters (capable of modest 'gunship' capacity);

(Continued on next page)

two Y8 (Chinese) transports (large, long-range carriers); six Y12 transports (smaller, limited range planes); and three AVRO HS 748s (medium transport planes with limited range). The air force sees itself as entirely a transport and coastal patrol command. It is not equipped to have a combat role. Like the navy, the air force is also involved in land-based security operations.

Police

There are 2700 regular gazetted police officers and 23 100 regular police other ranks, with 8000 reserve constables in service. These operate out of approximately 330 police stations. Also under police jurisdiction are the Special Task Force (STF), Home Guards and the Citizens Volunteer Force (CVF). The STF is a paramilitary outfit well known (or notorious, depending on one's point of view) for its effective role in the Eastern province prior to the Indo-Lankan Accord. It may number about 2000 all ranks. Second, the Home Guards

are an able auxiliary force, armed only with shotguns, and recruited for local security needs. They have a good record of bravery and diligence. Their present strength is 6000, down from 12000 before the Accord. There are plans to use them extensively in the troubled plantation sector. Third, the CVF is recruiting only in the Eastern province, and aims for a strength of 1500.

As with the other 'volunteer' sections of the forces, so too the reserve police, Home Guards and CVF receive no pensions, even after years of service. The only advantage of volunteer or reserve status is that one can refuse to take a dangerous or unwanted posting.

Finally, it should be noted that methods of collecting and disseminating intelligence information have modestly improved since the introduction of a National Intelligence Bureau in December 1984. The NIB stands as a separate entity to the police and armed forces. Its information is forwarded inde-

pendently to the Joint Operations Command (comprised of the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs and the heads of services). The JOC in turn conveys information to a separate Security Council appointed by the President. As such, the Security Council has the potential to be a top-level 'think-tank', reaching out to a wide range of specialists. It could also include such important figures for the well-being of the country as the parliamentary leader of the opposition. This situation does not prevail, however, and the Security Council appears to remain dominated by the political personalities and aims of the governing party alone. Currently, President Ranasinghe Premadasa has kept the defence portfolio for himself, and the Defence Secretary is Foreign Affairs Minister Ranjan Wijeratne. The Ministry of National Security, so critical in period prior to the 1987 Accord, has now been disbanded.

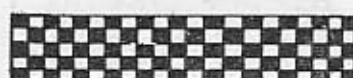
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IPKF in the quagmire

(An Indian Defence Review comment)

For quite some time now the world has been fed with stories, in the main emanating from the USA, arguing the case for seeing India as an 'ascendant' power in the region. Others, such as the smaller peripheral countries of South Asia, including the India-baiters in the West, have preferred the word 'bully'. But in either case is implicit a recognition that India is becoming a dominant factor to be reckoned with in South Asia. The latest pronouncement in this respect is that from Ambassador-designate to India, Mr William Clark, who told the Foreign Relations Committee in Washington on 1 November 1989 that 'India has emerged as an economic, political and military force' and 'how we deal with one another from this point forward will have a major impact upon not only our bilateral relations but on the alignment or world powers'. On the same day, Senator Edward Kennedy answering a question immediately after a meeting with India's Ambassador, Dr Karan Singh, on Capitol Hill, acknowledged that despite the fact that the US itself was gradually warming towards the Soviet Union, some elements, both within Congress and without, continued to look askance at India for its alleged tilt towards Moscow. Those who indicted India on that score were viewing the situation from the perspective of a different age. They continued to see things of a period that was no longer there, Senator Kennedy said. 'Unfortunately, some of them take isolated incidents and distort them,' the Senator pointed out. It was his firm belief that India was today not what it was some years ago. India was now willing, poised and able to play a constructive and legitimate role in the region. An increasing number of people in America were becoming aware of the true state of affairs.

There is reason to believe that the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka was unofficially encouraged and endorsed by the major powers including the USA. Yet the moral of the Sri Lankan impasse is that dominance in a region carries with it an obligation to hone up whatever skills New Delhi has in political interpretation. It is obvious that New Delhi in the euphoria of the Rajiv-Jayawardene Accord had got the Sri Lankan situation hopelessly wrong.

If India is indeed dominant in the region it will be all the better for cultivating an ability to read political situations in its neighbouring countries with greater skill. In the main, official foreign opinion has chosen to remain discreet on the Sri Lankan issue. But the unspoken message is clear. Given that military intervention was necessary the political programme that followed it was deeply flawed. Emissaries, seemingly picked from a hat, flew to and from between Colombo and Delhi. Neither Sinhalese opinion nor Tamil feelings were taken into account in India's calculations, with the implication that if Jayawardene agreed to anything, all the others' opinions were beneath notice.

In contrast the LTTE and, in particular its principal theoretician and negotiator Dr Balasingham, conducted themselves with diplomatic aplomb, determination, flexibility and a fine sense of opportunism, which together commands respect, and from which our foreign service pundits could pick up a point or two on how these things should be done. For, despite the Indian insistence on the LTTE giving up its arms and the IPKF's subsequent efforts to force it into submission, LTTE policy has never deviated from a patient bid to seek the understanding and cooperation of the Indian Government. As Dr Bala-

singham has said, 'We haven't closed the doors with the Government of India. We need India and the Indian masses.' And yet it is apparent that the LTTE will only negotiate from a position of strength, whether political or military — political in that it intends to govern the North-eastern Province, and military in that it will not hear of its armed cadres laying down their weapons.

India should see this as an invitation to withdraw militarily and to cooperate on the political front on a totally new basis — on a clean slate, as it were — created

- first by the IPKF withdrawal.
- second by a cease-fire among all the Tamil groups,
- third by deploying a police force consisting of Tamils, and
- fourth by the dissolution of the North-east Provincial Council and the holding of fresh elections.

These proposals politely avoid saying but clearly imply that the 1987 Accord is now better buried, and there is no future for India or anyone else in the Sri Lankan context in pretending that the EPRLF is not a creature of India's making.

A capacity to extricate itself from political error is surely the hallmark of any 'dominant' power. There are the examples of the withdrawal of the US from Vietnam and more recently the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. But as yet there is little inclination in New Delhi to arrive at the right conclusions from its Sri Lankan experience. Despite pressure from the JVP the Sri Lankan Government has gone further along the road of estimating the LTTE at its proper worth than the Indian Government. Such in fact is the flexible diplomacy, the resilience of the LTTE leadership, that it is even prepared for a dialogue with the EPRLF. Thus there is a basis, however nebulous, for a genuine accord provided India

switches from a military to a political role based on a correct reading of Sri Lankan realities.

Meanwhile the so-called peace committee sponsored by the Sri Lankan Government (pending an expected Indian withdrawal, consisting of 28 parties, most of them armed, inclusive of the LTTE, cannot be expected to usher in an era of peace. At best it can act as a forum for an exchange of views and positions on the vexatious problem of devolution of power to the Sri Lankan Tamils. If India persists in propping up the EPRLF and continues attempts to arm it and stalls withdrawal until Tamil security is achieved to its own satisfaction it will sink further into the Sri Lankan quagmire than it has already. It may be more than a bit galling to eat humble pie in accepting Dr Balasingham's formula as the one way of escaping the quagmire, but that is the reality, the bottom line, as far as India is concerned. It does not help for our foreign service pundits to keep on harping about the 1987 Accord being 'very much in force'. It breathed its last quite some time ago' but New Delhi has yet to summon up the political courage to accept this as a *fait accompli* (*Sunday Mail*, 22 October 1989).

Recent Developments

A new dimension to the ethnic problem in the North-eastern Province of Sri Lanka is the emergence of the Tamil National Army (TNA). A cadre of an estimated 3000 Tamil youths trained in the use of small arms and support weapons, the TNA is acting as a *de facto* security force to prop up the Provincial Government of Vardaraja Perumal, the EPRLF supremo. There have, in this context, been accusations by Colombo that these illegal and extra-constitutional cadres have been trained and armed with the full knowledge and assistance of New Delhi. Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne, accused the IPKF of

conniving in training and equipping an illegal army in the North-east, posing a threat to the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka. No doubt this cadre is intended to combat the LTTE, in view of the latter's determination to wrest control of the North-eastern Province, once the IPKF pulls out by early 1990.

As has been feared, the withdrawal of the IPKF (at the time of writing, the IPKF has been withdrawn from three districts) has begun to create an explosive situation in the North-eastern Province. There have been clashes between rival Tamil groups and also between the TNA and the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. In the race to fill the vacuum created by the IPKF's withdrawal, they seem bent on exterminating each other. To an extent, this is advantageous to the JVP who in the Central and Southern regions of Sri Lanka have been combating the Sri Lankan Armed Forces successfully.

The scenario that appears to be unfolding has the potential of pushing the country into a regular civil war. A full-scale confrontation between the LTTE and EPRLF cadres, at this moment, seems likely, with the Sri Lankan Army covertly joining hands with the LTTE. The casualties which the Sri Lankan Army has already suffered during a short period are an indication of their inability, except probably by the excessive use of force, to control the complex situation. An excessive use of force resulting in genocide of Tamils, they fear, will slow down or even put a stop to IPKF withdrawal.

The fact however is that the EPRLF Government has survived all these months on Indian support. Once the support is withdrawn, Mr Vardaraja Perumal's Government is more than likely to collapse. Colombo's apprehension that New Delhi has had a hand in the training and equipping of TNA cadres, further complicates the issue.

Whatever the military potential of the EPRLF cadres, it is doubtful whether they can take on the LTTE in a prolonged fratricidal war. Besides, one must remember that the Premadasa Government is more inclined to reach an agreement with the LTTE than the EPRLF. In such a scenario the chances of the EPRLF and its allies scoring a lasting victory in the present confrontation are slim. The future much depends on the steps which the Premadasa Government intends to take — they are not inclined to allow the EPRLF to fortify itself. The question of striking a deal with the LTTE based solely on the convergence of present interests is also debatable.

COMMENT

One of the key proclamations of the National Front in its election manifesto was that the IPKF would be withdrawn from Sri Lanka — whether by end December 1989 or early 1990 is a matter of logistics — but pull out it must. For too long has the Indian Army been fighting, what could be termed a proxy war, in Sri Lanka. Despite many handicaps involving interpretations of the minimum use of force, human rights etc., the Indian soldier, and particularly the infantryman, has done the country proud. Large numbers of them have laid down their lives and many have been wounded and a proportion of these handicapped for life. Many of them did not understand 'our cause and why we fight in Sri Lanka'. But fight they did. The IPKF operations brought a measure of peace to the strife-torn North-eastern Province and produced a climate where elections could be held. It was as a result of this that the EPRLF Government of Vardaraja Perumal was installed. The remaining part of the agreement between the two Governments has had to ride rough weather, as a result of Premadasa replacing Jayawardene in the seat of power in Colombo. Whether the

(Continued on page 19)

SITUATION IN THE MALDIVES**A period of big changes****A. V. Varghese lately in the Maldives**

On the evening of June 21, a day prior to the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. V. P. Singh's visit to the Maldives at the behest of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, TV Maldives beamed a long clip of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi on the campaign trail in Bihar.

The Maldivians have a soft corner for Mr. Gandhi who sent Indian soldiers to the rescue of Mr. Gayoom in the face of the coup attempt by Tamil mercenaries in November 1988. Twenty months later, political realities at home have compelled Mr. Gayoom to call Mr. Singh over for a fresh display of solidarity.

BENEFICIAL

The exercise has been mutually beneficial, in different ways. India rests assured that this small State within its sphere of influence respects its clout. Mr. Gayoom could show his people that he enjoys big brother's unstinted support. However, he gave the game away when, unasked for, he informed the Indian Prime Minister about the political reforms he wishes to implement. Thereby hangs a tale.

Anybody in the capital city of Male will tell you that the Maldives has entered a "period of transition" from a controlled, conservative, theocratic society to a modern, democratic state since the November 1988 coup attempt. Maldivian intellectuals believe that it will also be a "period of turmoil" before the foundations of a democratic Maldivian State are firmly laid.

Mr. Gayoom, who has ruled the Republic since 1979, is aware that his decisions will play a key role in determining the

future of the country. He also knows that the possibilities ahead are limited — the Maldives can become an even more rigidly-controlled Islamic fundamentalist State, a dictatorship or a democratic State.

Mr. Gayoom's dilemma relates to the choice he has to make. He hopes that the people will help him make the right choice. But that would imply his granting the people the right to openly criticise the present form and methodology of Government. Mr. Gayoom has taken hesitant steps in this direction. Among the members of the Majlis (the Parliament) and in the recently formed Presidential Consultative Council he has initiated a fierce debate on the pros and cons of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.

The Maldivian Constitution gives the people the right to freedom of speech. But that freedom is revoked by the Penal Code. Article 38 of the Penal Code guarantees critics of the system who "by spoken or written words or signs arouse anti-Government feelings" a stiff sentence of exile on one of the outermost islands in the 1,200-island archipelago-nation. Mr. Gayoom, once an exile under Article 28, is facing pressure to abolish it and thus to prove his commitment to the concepts of freedom of speech and an open society.

But Mr. Gayoom's recent backtracking on promises to grant this fundamental right has strengthened the ranks of an amorphous underground opposition in a Republic where "party politics" is a bad word. There is no ruling or opposition party here. Only informal coteries and a personalised politics built upon a network of family ties.

The President thus is the head of one such coterie representing the interests of the Endherimagu and Kolige families. There can be no opposition party so long as Article 38 remains in force even though Mr. Gayoom has gone on record as saying that he is not opposed to party politics.

Mr. Gayoom has also suggested that the right of freedom of speech must result in press freedom and recently he gave the green signal for a free press. But he was not happy with the consequences of that decision.

BANNED

In January 1990, a group of dissidents floated a bimonthly called the *Sangu* (the Conchshell). In the islands, the conch is used to sound an alarm and to rally the islanders. The *Sangu*, in its role as the voice of the unseen opposition, did exactly that. It published a series of exposes of the misdeeds of the President's brother-in-law (wife's brother), the powerful Minister of Defence, Trade and Industries and Director of the monopoly State Trading Organisation (STO), Mr. Ilyas Ibrahim.

Even as the sixth issue of the *Sangu* was poised to hit the stands, the Government banned it charging its editor and staff with "encouraging certain elements to take the law into their own hands and to engage in unlawful acts which might endanger public places and property and result in civilian harm".

MAJLIS POLLS

At the time of the *Sangu's* closure, its key editorial assistant, Mr. Mohammed, Nasheel, was in Sri Lanka. There he gave an interview to a Lankan

paper and wrote a hardhitting article in *The Island* criticising the Government's action. On his return to Male, his passport was impounded and he was arrested and held without being charged for eight days, for interrogation by the National Security Service (NSS). He is now fighting a case foisted by the Government which takes him to task for alleging in his article that the November 1989 polls to the Majlis were rigged. His case may yet become a *cause celebre*.

The *Sangu* also had the last laugh at Mr. Gayoom who, stung by the criticism that his brother-in-law was an embezzler, ordered an audit probe into the affairs of the STO. The probe revealed that huge sums had indeed been siphoned off by a top STO official close to Mr. Ibrahim. Mr. Ibrahim was then requested to attend a sitting of the probe panel. Mr. Gayoom also asked him to resign as Trade Minister. Mr. Ibrahim immediately caught a chartered Air Maldives flight out of the country. He is understood to be in Geneva now where he has personal fortune deposited.

Mr. Gayoom whose popularity had soared after the November 1988 coup attempt, is now suspected by the Maldivian public of having arranged Mr. Ibrahim's safe getaway. He has not bothered to dispel the doubts of the people either. So far, no investigation has been ordered into the getaway episode or Mr. Ibrahim's assets, most of which he is understood to have liquidated before his escape on May 31 this year. With his getaway the spotlight is now being focussed on the Fisheries Minister, Mr. Abbas Ibrahim, brother of Mr. Ilyas Ibrahim, also accused of corruption and nepotism.

With the *Sangu* banned, another magazine called the *Hukkuru* (Friday) has taken up the cudgels on behalf of the amorphous opposition. Soon after Mr. Ibrahim fled, Mr. Gayoom reshuffled his Cabinet portfolios

among his Ministers in a face-saving exercise. In a recent issue, the *Hukkuru* has lashed out at the President's "confusing, contradictory and hypocritical" press policy and his attempts at hoodwinking the people by reshuffling portfolios instead of replacing his Ministers who are under a cloud. Opposition sources think that the next journalist to face the big stick will be the *Hukkuru's* outspoken Ahmed Wahid Ali. The two other newspapers in the Dhivehi language — *Haveeru* and *Anfathis* — are Government subsidised and owned by Mr. Abbas Ibrahim and the Minister for Presidential Affairs, Mr. Mohammed Zahir Hussain respectively.

Corruption, moral and monetary, and widespread nepotism, have been the bane of Maldivian politics and the peaceful, hospitable islanders are most

agitated about it. The first President of the Maldives, Mr. Mohammed Amin, was beaten to death by the islanders for his debauchery and tyrannical methods. The first President of the Second Republic, Mr. Ibrahim Nasser, left the country before the islanders could mete out justice to him.

LOSING THRUST

Mr. Gayoom, elderly, respected and still popular with the islanders, is slowly losing their confidence though with his toleration of corruption and nepotism and the increasing use of the NSS to harass his political adversaries. The situation is such that barring a coup by an ambitious rival — Mr. Ilyas Ibrahim is mentioned in this context — the growing opposition movement will see to Mr. Gayoom's removal or reform within the next two years.

THE MALDIVES SITUATION — II

Opposition movement dominated by youth

A. V. Varghese

The driving force behind the growing opposition movement in the Maldives is the youth. And this is not surprising given the startling fact that 60 per cent of the nation's population comprises youth below 24 years of age. Walk into any Government office and young, fresh, bright faces greet the inquirer.

The youth are neatly dressed in western clothes, fashion conscious, efficient, courteous and addicted to Coca-Cola and Hindi films.

Indeed the fledgling opposition movement in the Maldives has a leadership whose average age is around 30 years. Most of the youth have been educated overseas — in the United Kingdom, the USA, Sri Lanka,

Karachi, India and even Moscow. Their exposure to the western democracies and the scientific mode of learning has fired them with ideals perhaps incompatible with traditional Maldivian culture and Islamic values.

The amorphous opposition is largely made up of these educated youth who fear that the nation may become progressively fundamentalist and incapable of keeping pace with the developments in the modern West.

Aware of the ambitions of this new, now generation, Mr. Gayoom has been filling key Government posts with its representatives. Eighty per cent of the members on the President's Consultative Council are youth. It is an open forum. Mr. Ga-

Gayoom's difficulty lies in convincing the impetuous youth that change can only be gradual and not sudden. What the idealistic, impatient youth of the island need is political maturity.

Mr. Gayoom has to act fast if he wants to remain the country's leader for another decade. For the first time in Maldivian history, an opposition candidate defeated the powerful Ilyas Ibrahim in his home borough of Male in the Majlis elections last November. The giant-killer was the 37-year-old Dr. Waheed, a charismatic new generation leader with a Ph.D. acquired from Stanford University. Dr. Waheed ran a full-fledged political campaign against his opponent successfully. Soon after the polls though, six of his campaigners were arraigned under Article 38 and exiled.

In the close-knit community of islanders, the role and actions of the National Security Service, the police-cum-military organisation handling internal security and defence, are being monitored with some apprehension. There have been reports of police harassment, torture and brutality towards suspected dissidents, the extent of which is being probed by a representative of the United Nations Commission of Human Rights.

COMPULSORY DRAFT

There are many youngsters who are also unhappy with the system of compulsory draft by which the cream of the youth are dragged into a life of armed drudgery. Naturally, there are dissidents in the NSS who are awaiting reform.

According to opposition sources, there are at least 16 members in the 48-member Majlis who are pro-reform. In the 13-member Cabinet there are at least four Ministers who back the "reformists". The opposition is biding its time, willing to give Mr. Gayoom a chance to bring in constitutional reforms. They are seeking a separation of powers between the police and the judiciary, for

instance. The results of their campaign are slow in coming, but are coming in. Mr. Gayoom recently abolished the police courts where one was convicted out of hand.

The opposition is also pushing for a clear demarcation of powers and responsibilities of the President and his Ministers. They also want the Constitution redrafted to provide for a modern democratic legal and political structure. The administrative rules are also sought to be reframed so that merit and not family connections determine promotions to high positions.

The nucleus of the dissident force in the Majlis consists of Mr. Mohammed Latif (the most outspoken MP), Mr. Ibrahim Sharif (MP from the largest atoll of Addu), Dr. Waheed, Mr. Ibrahim Didi and Mr. Adam Abdul Rahman. The opposition sees a potential presidential candidate for the future in the present Attorney-General, Mr. Ahmed Zaki.

The opposition politicians are unhappy with the present Constitution which does not allow them to move a no-confidence motion against the President. Nor can the Majlis be convened except by the Speaker who seeks permission from the President. "The system is built to help the President and his friends to evade issues," says Mr. Mohammed Nasheel. For instance, there were attempts to get the Majlis convened after the coup attempt and more recently after Mr. Ibrahim's getaway. All in vain.

The dissidents hope that the President means what he says when he told Prime Minister V. P. Singh about his intentions to decentralise power. They also hope that the Majlis will become the body to which persons in authority will be accountable as the true representatives of the people.

Even as the opposition concentrates on raising public awareness about such issues, its leaders insist that the Maldives cannot become a pluralistic so-

ciety in the true sense of the word. Though there is a clamour for freedom of speech, there is no democrat on the islands seeking a fundamental right to freedom of religion.

A BLEND

The opposition leaders are convinced that Islam contains adequate concepts for the ushering in of an Islamic democratic state. Their attempt is to hold back the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism and to graft principles of western democracy onto an oligarchic, theocratic structure.

India, it seems, has a role to play in bringing this experiment to fruition. "If India is truly interested in the Maldivian people as opposed to Mr. Gayoom and the interests he represents, it must exert pressure on the Maldivian Government to make constitutional changes within a set of time and ask it to introduce immediate reform measures like the abolition of Article 38" say extremist opposition members like Mr. Mohammed Nasheel.

Another top opposition leader, unwilling to be identified, said: "Another Government in the Maldives would be more friendly to India than the one led by Mr. Gayoom who is basically more pro-Arab than a friend of India. After all, it was SAARC that brought him closer to India — and (also) the timely help rendered at the time of the coup."

The opposition leaders are concerned that the movement for democratic changes must coincide with action on several fronts. It is widely accepted that the Republic has made good headway under Mr. Gayoom in the sectors of primary education and health. But much remains to be done in terms of higher education and broad-spectrum health services.

There is also a great shortage of housing and the fishermen, who constitute 40 per

(Continued on page 19)

K. Pathmanaba: Political Philosophy and Praxis

Dayan Jayatilleka

Comrade Pathmanaba was first of all a revolutionary. He was a revolutionary, a Marxist-Leninist, a national liberationist and a humanitarian socialist. If we were to forget his characteristics we would then also forget his contribution. Pathmanaba was not just another leader of the Tamil National movement cut down by the LTTE. He was more, and this we should always remember.

Comrade Pathmanaba's political career goes back to the first years of the decade of the 1970's. He participated in the activities of rising Tamil student and youth fronts, in protest against racist policies implemented by the United Front Government of the day. It is this Government, consisting of so called progressives and left parties, that reinforced the foundation of the Tamil Eelam demand, the cornerstone of which was laid by Bandaranaike policy of Sinhala only in 1956. Comrade Pathmanaba participated in the early 70's in the campaigns of agitation launched against media wise and district wise standardisation and the discriminatory 1972 Constitution.

His specific contribution to the Tamil Nationalist Movement and the Progressive Movement of Sri Lanka as a whole, begins however, in the mid 70's. He was one of the founders of the very first socialist oriented organisation within the Tamil National Liberation Movement. This was the Eela Viduthalai Iyakkam or Eela Liberation Organisation founded in 1974/75. This organisation was formed as a result of the attempts by Pathmanaba and others to give

the Tamil Nationalist Movement a mass base. He was one of that group of youth militants who were the first to break with the bourgeois and Parliamentary policies of the Tamil United Front. I think we must stress this fact, since both Velupillai Prabhakaran and Uma Maheswaran remained within the political and ideological ambit of bourgeois TULF politics, until much later in the struggle.

Pathmanaba and others attempted to take the message of Tamil National Liberation into the countryside and among the working people. In doing so they encountered a fundamental problem. What would the struggle for Tamil Eelam bring to the workers and peasants, particularly peasantry and those suffering from caste oppression? It is in answer to this question that the political philosophy of Pathmanaba took a sharp turn to the Left. This is why the Eela Viduthalai Iyakkam was formed as a socialist oriented organisation dedicated to the cause of Tamil National Liberation.

Pathmanaba believed to the unity of theory and practice and as such the ELO resorted to the tactic of armed expropriations. He participated personally in the Puloly bank operation, which was one the first such in the history of the Tamil resistance. In the immediate aftermath of that armed expropriation, Pathmanaba who was on the run, was sheltered, protected and assisted by the people of the area. This deepened his love for and respect for the so called common or ordinary people. He realised that the people could be a great source of protection and even of wisdom for the National Liberation struggle. His pro people orientation deepened qualitatively as a result of this experience.

The Eela Viduthalai Iyakkam did not survive the repression unleashed as a result of the Puloly bank operation. As the organisation disintegrated, Comrade Pathmanaba left the country and went to England. He agreed, due to the pressure of his family, to recommence his studies and registered as a student of Accountancy while in London.

But from the very first day he reached England he was a manifestly restless young man. His thoughts were entirely devoted to the task of getting back to his native land as soon as possible. When in London, all his free time, social contacts and his personal interactions were devoted to the attempt to win over friends and acquaintances to the cause of the national Liberation struggle. It was while in London that he joined and in fact helped to form the General Union of Eelam students — GUES and the EROS. He was in the first batch of Tamil militant activists to receive training from the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in Lebanon. His experiences and those of his Palestinian people and strong bond of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. Almost a decade later, when he was the head of a fairly strong Liberation Organisation himself, he did his very best to give moral material and political support to the Palestinian fighters. It was during his spell with the Palestinians that Comrade Pathmanaba also developed a strong sense of solidarity with the Eritrean liberation struggle.

Comrade Pathmanaba made his journey back in 1978. Before returning to Sri Lanka he spent sometime in India laying a firm foundation for the subsequent activities of his organisation. His political work in India had been with smugglers

Asst. Secretary and Member, Political Bureau, Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP).

and social bandits and also with the most hard core Tamil Nadu nationalists. Pathmanaba however, established a firm links with the Marxist Leninist revolutionary elements in Southern India. He learnt much from them himself but his choice of allies is further testimony to his ideological and political clarity and his socialist revolutionary commitment.

Having set up a GUES committee in Madras under Comrade Suresh, he returned to Sri Lanka, working politically not only in Jaffna but also in the hill country. Comrade Pathmanaba made serious and extensive efforts to recruit Tamil youth from the Plantations and those from the Colombo schools for the cause of Tamil National Liberation. In doing so he broke with the narrowly limited, Jaffna centric outlook of other Tamil National Liberation fighters. Pathmanaba also made a very serious attempt to establish contacts with Sinhala revolutionaries. He met many such and tried to convince them of the need to support the cause of Tamil self determination. He was not successful in most cases. However, what is important is that he had departed completely from any kind of narrow Tamil nationalism or chauvinism.

From these earliest days in 1978, when we first met in Peradeniya, he was very clear that the Tamil National Liberation struggle was the first step and stage of an overall socialist revolution throughout Sri Lanka. The Tamil struggle itself would make the transition from its national democratic stage and culminate in the setting up of a socialist Tamil Eelam. Of these two propositions Pathmanaba was very convinced and these ideas were ones which he had arrived at independently. His attempt to link up with Sinhala revolutionaries was in consequence of this strategic vision of his.

In 1981 he broke with the EROS on the question of the lack of democratic centralism. While that was the issue on which the

rupture took place, the founding of the EPRLF permitted Comrade Pathmanaba to operationalise his own distinctive conception of the National Liberation struggle. He attempted to give the struggle both a socialist political education as well as a base in a network of mass organisations. This is why he was insistent on the need to set up an array of popular organisations such as the Rural Workers and Peasants Front, the Eelam Womens Liberation Front, the Fisheries Workers Front and the Plantation Proletarian Front. These mass organisations he later attempted to group in a single popular bloc called the Eelam People Liberation Front. This was in 1983.

He was very clear that the armed organisation should be based on and draw from the mass organisations and be under the political leadership of the party. Hence his adherence to Mao's triad of the party, the Army and the United Front. But it was not dogmatic Maoism, as his idea of the separate mass organisations subsequently grouped in a popular bloc demonstrates. I believe that he had evolved his own synthesis of the idea of the PFLP of Dr. George Habash, of the Eritreans and of the Indian Marxist Leninist organisations. As a Marxist, he had great respect and love for Stalin, Mao, the Vietnamese and particularly for the Che and Fidel.

Certainly it is obvious that he was not able to fulfill all his goals in this regard. It is obvious that this organisational structure did not function in the way that it was meant to and should have. This was due to two sets of reasons. One set of reason consists of avoidable subjective mistakes and organizational errors. The other set of reasons are those due to the trap of history and geography.

Comrade Pathmanaba, like all of us, inherited historically determined conditions and circumstances. He was attempting to build a socialist national liberation organisation within an

ethnic and social formation that was characterised by conservatism and ossified social structures. His attempt to fight against caste domination and class exploitation, together with his insistence on the need for Women's emancipation within the National Liberation struggle, earned the EPRLF the enormous hostility of entrenched, privileged social strata within the Tamil nation. The result of this was the narrowing of the economic resource base of EPRLF.

When in the aftermath of July 1983 the militant movement sought refuge in South India and made their base there, the EPRLF was distinguished by its refusal to compromise on its ideological convictions. All the other groups benefitted from the largesse of the Tamil Nadu state government and of the most nationalistic, even chauvinistic, political and bourgeois elements in Tamil Nadu. Comrade Pathmanaba's steadfast refusal to attack Sinhala civilian targets in Colombo or elsewhere did not endear him to bourgeois Tamil nationalists in India or the West, who were bank rolling the the terrorist operations which were undertaken by some other groups despite their verbal commitment to the principles of Marxism.

The Indian Central Government, for its part, did not take kindly to the EPRLF's efforts to establish relations with progressive national democratic states, throughout the Third World — such as Syria and Libya. Thus the EPRLF was unable to strengthen itself by soliciting support by those who would have been its natural allies. The orthodox Marxist parties of India, wary as they were of the Tamil demand for self determination, did not support EPRLF as strongly as they probably should have in the mid 80's.

The cumulative consequence of all this was that the EPRLF was militarily far weaker than the more nationalistic, or might I say chauvinistic Tamil Eelam groups. This of course led cer-

tain Sinhalese revolutionaries and Marxists to seek alliances with the larger, more prosperous Tamil Eelam groups, those with a higher profile, at least propagandistically. At that time, particularly with the Damoclean Sword of the Prevention of Terrorism Act hanging over their heads, most Sinhala leftists and radicals chose not to ally themselves with the EPRLF and were even contemptuous of this organisation. The bandwagon effect started much later, when the going was easy and the gravy-train was rolling.

The weaknesses of the EPRLF however were, as I said, sourced largely in its correct adherence to fundamental principles of Marxism and Leninism and revolutionary internationalism. There were weaknesses which were due to avoidable errors and I might say that some of these were perhaps located in Comrade Pathmanaba's own style of leadership. Frustrating though these were to some of us at that time, in retrospect I firmly believe that it is far better that Comrade Pathmanaba had those characteristics than the opposite ones. I think he himself was aware of this, namely, that it was better to err on the side of democratism even to the point of liberalism, than to to err in the opposite direction.

I feel that the belatedness of the EPRLF's attempt to develop a powerful military apparatus was also due to Comrade Pathmanaba's own philosophical conviction that what was most important was a mass struggle, mass organisations and a correct political orientation. It would have been very easy for him, trained in Lebanon by the Palestinians, to have plunged into the 'prestige' race of launching military attacks on Sinhala targets. But I believe he restrained himself and consciously refrained from succumbing to a militaristic deviation. Perhaps he foresaw in some way the brutalisation that was to set in, in the Tamil Liberation struggle. Whatever the reason, I would say that history has vindicated

Pathmanaba's refusal to take easy path of militarism at the expense of politics and mass organisation.

When the LTTE launched its attack on Anuradhapura in 1985 and then again on the TELO in May 1986 Pathmanaba and the EPRLF took a very clear position. On both these occasions, Pathmanaba went against the tide. He extended full support and solidarity to the TELO and his was the only group to have a hartal in protest at the killing of the TELO cadres by the Tigers. By doing so Pathmanaba incurred the undying hatred of Prabhakaran and the tigers. He would not have been unmindful of this. But nonetheless he adhered to principles. He did the right thing in the face of injustice.

The LTTE's weakening of all other Tamil organisations left these organisations with little choice but to be dependent increasingly and I might even say almost totally, on India. The EPRLF was no exception. Towards the end of his life, the last two years, Comrade Pathmanaba found himself in an unhappy and unfamiliar position, far away from the path he had envisioned, the path in which his main Indian allies would be the Marxist Leninist revolutionaries of that country.

I would say that Comrade Pathmanaba's greatness resides not only in his positive achievements but most certainly in the wrong things he consciously desisted from doing. The EPRLF under his leadership did not engage in the killing of Sinhala civilians. It did not engage in killing of its own militants. It refused to engage in drug smuggling as a source of revenue. On this last issue, the otherwise so gentle Nabha was very firm.

He upheld the idea of the death sentence for any members of the EPRLF who engaged in drug trafficking. He used to say that "all that we do, all our struggles are based on love for human beings and the ideals

of humanism. Drug trafficking results in the destruction of the lives of great many human beings in other countries. This makes nonsense of the ideals to which we are committed." This indicates very clearly the humanism that infused the socialist revolutionary commitment of Comrade Pathmanaba. His refusal to permit internal killings, at the time when other pseudo socialist organisations in the Tamil Eelam Movement were maintaining torture chambers and death camps, attests to his fidelity for the cause of democracy, while his refusal to entertain the idea of killing Sinhala civilians is testimony to his internationalism.

The fact that Comrade Pathmanaba was himself deeply involved in the attempt to construct a joint revolutionary project of Sinhalese and Tamils and did not sub-contract this task to this or that glib ideologue as did other Tamil liberation organisations is further proof of his deep personal commitment to the goal of what he called the 'total revolution' in Sri Lanka. It is not only physically that Pathmanaba stood head and shoulders above other leaders of the Tamil Liberation Movement but also in his internationalism and humanism. The evolution of the world Communist and Revolutionary Movement has indicated Pathmanaba's own ideological formation and synthesis. Pathmanaba stood for, believed in and acted with a democratic, humane socialism, which is an ideal the world Marxist Movement has now endorsed as its goal.

In his humanism Pathmanaba was like Vijaya Kumaranatunga, who was himself profoundly anti-racist internationalist and totally committed to the idea of a democratic socialism.

Viewing comrade Pathmanaba in historical perspective is no easy task since there are a great many personal memories and experiences that we have shared in our odyssey. But that is a much longer story for a different time. I will say that Comrade

Pathmanaba was certainly one of the outstanding Marxists produced by the Tamil nation of this country — the others being Comrades Vaidyalingham, Kandiah and Shanmuganathan — the last whom Comrade Pathmanaba greatly respected. But I could say that none of these other Marxists had the opportunity or perhaps the capacity and motivation to unite theory with armed revolutionary practice. In that sense it would not be inaccurate to say that Comrade Pathmanaba was the greatest Marxist-Leninist revolutionary leader produced by the Tamil community. I would even go further. If I am asked who was the greatest revolutionary Marxist-Leninist leader that we have produced in Sri Lanka, I cannot think of anyone but Pathmanaba.

The detailed analytical assessment of Comrade Pathmanaba is a task for another forum. But let me say that understanding Pathmanaba brings us face to face with a great many problems of revolutionary strategy and theory of political philosophy and practice — be it the relationship between the political and the military, the party and the united front, the maximum and the minimum programme, internationalism and nationalism, socialism and humanism, relations with bourgeois state, and the crisis of the World Communist Movement. Pathmanaba's practice and thinking involved all of that and much more. Understanding Pathmanaba would shed great light on the history of Tamil liberation struggles, the nature of the Tamil social formation, the history of the Sri Lankan revolutionary process, the political processes of South Asia and the trajectories of the revolutionary movements of this complex, violent part of the world and the world as a whole.

Pathmanaba has left behind his organisation which has proved its remarkable resilience whenever it was attacked by the

fascist LTTE. He has left his organisation behind in the hands of his close comrade-in-arms Comrade Suresh Premachandran. But above all Pathmanaba has left us with his example. He was never a talker and a writer. But what he stood for, he acted out and acted upon. Therefore we have to gather together, systematize and share our reminiscences of Pathmanaba. And above all we have to follow his example. The Tigers may have killed Comrade Pathmanaba. But as Vijaya Kumaranatunge said at the funeral of Nandana Marasinghe, "they may kill the liberationist, but they cannot kill the liberation struggle. For the liberation struggle is eternal." Someday when the peoples revolutionary forces of the Sinhala, the Tamil and the Muslim communities wage their combined struggle against reaction and imperialism, the world will know this — for surely at some decisive stage and determinant of Vijaya and Pathmanaba!

Pathmanaba's moral and ethical stature does not diminish but grows with each passing day as we reflect on the civilizational crisis of our country and our revolutionary movements. I will conclude this, having searched for a slogan which may synthesize Pathmanaba's ideas, his theory and practice, our own historic, existential encounter and indubitable future reencounter. And that slogan is this — **SOCIALIST REVOLUTION OR DEATH!**

Opposition. . .

(Continued from page 15)

cent of the population, have special problems. The Maldivian atolls are also threatened by rising sea-levels. The widening economic gap between the capital, Male, and the other islands has also to be bridged.

Such problems apart, the Maldivians are set on making a mark in the community of nations as a progressive, self-sufficient society. They believe that democratic Islam will help them to achieve this status. They seek Indian sympathy and assistance. But Indian hegemony is totally unacceptable.

The Maldivian people and the growing opposition are seeking fresh assurances from the Indian Government that equality will be the basis of a bilateral relationship — whether or not Mr. Gayoom remains in power. In short the Maldivians desire genuine non-interference by their country's big neighbour in its internal affairs even as they set about creating their own political history. Mr. V. P. Singh of course, reiterated that this is the cornerstone of Indian policy towards its smaller neighbours. The Maldivian opposition hopes it will remain so if and when Mr. Gayoom is toppled "by the people."

IPKF in. . .

(Continued from page 12)

Rajiv Gandhi-Jayawardene Accord has relevance at this point of time in view of the new Government in New Delhi is for both countries to decide. But what should be made quite clear in unambiguous terms is that India cannot and will not stand by and simply watch if any scale of genocide of the Tamils of Sri Lanka is attempted by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces; and secondly, that India cannot but react to any attempts by extra-territorial powers to gain a military foothold in Sri Lanka, inimical to India's interests.

— Indian Defence Review

Economic Liberalization versus Political Pluralism

Mick Moore (Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex)

I. Introduction

Is there a positive symbiosis between the liberal economy and the liberal polity? From the time the question became meaningful, mainstream Western social theory and doctrine has tended to give a positive answer. It has generally been possible convincingly to argue an intrinsic causal connection between the dispersal of economic (and thus political) power inherent in the competitive market economy and the pluralism which is central to all definitions of the liberal polity. At a 'broad-brush' level the historical evidence is supportive. There is a strong empirical association between liberal democracy and (successful) capitalist market systems. While there are a number of quite plausible arguments indicating some potential deep and long-term causal connections between capitalism/the market economy and political unfreedom, the balance of long term historical evidence appears to support orthodoxy.

However, the short term may not simply be the long term writ small. And in the contemporary world our attention is directed less to episodes in the 'natural' expansion of the market economy than to a category of processes which may usefully be viewed as somewhat distinctive: *economic liberalization*, where this implies a very conscious and urgent attempt by the state to bring about a rapid expansion of the private over the public economy, of market over non-market resource allocation, and of competitive over hierarchically-determined economic decisions.

Contemporary evidence on the political correlates of economic liberalization appears ambiguous. In some hitherto statist-cum-authoritarian regimes, notably socialist China and the Soviet

Union and capitalist Taiwan, recent moves towards economic and political liberalism have been closely connected both in time and in the perceptions of both proponents and opponents of reform. Some mildly contradictory evidence comes from Britain since 1979 under the Prime Ministership of Margaret Thatcher. Here relatively radical economic liberalization has been associated with political centralization along several dimensions. The most disturbing indications of the possibility of perverse political correlates of economic liberalization have, however, come from the peripheral capitalist countries, above all from the Southern Cone of Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. In Argentina, Brazil and Chile in particular, a new set of economic policies, liberal at least to the extent that they involved a major opening of protected import-substituting economies to foreign trade and investment, appeared to go hand-in-hand with military government; with overt, organized and intellectually-elaborated projects to depoliticize society and institutionalize military-cum-technocratic rule; and with organized terror conducted by state agencies against their own citizenry. It was the regimes of this period which put such phrases as 'death squads' and 'The Disappeared Ones' into the common vocabulary; generated films like *Missing*; declared liberal democracy to be subversive; and killed, tortured and exiled thousands of political activists, trades unionists, intellectuals, students and journalists, as well as more arbitrarily-chosen suspects.

The notion that there was some structural linkage between (a) these grotesque political regimes and (b) attempts to renew capitalist growth on the basis of a more liberal economic regime, received formal theoretical elab-

oration above all in the work of Guillermo O'Donnell on 'bureaucratic-authoritarianism.' From a functionalist stance O'Donnell argued an intrinsic connection between authoritarian, repressive, exclusionary regimes and a particular stage of capitalist development: one involving the 'deepening' of the capital goods stock and the opening up to foreign trade and investment. Leaving aside the fundamental objections held by many scholars to any variant of functionalist social theory, a number of doubts arise about the empirical validity of the O'Donnell thesis. It is to the great credit of Latin American studies that the thesis was soon tested in a consistent and scholarly fashion. It was found sadly wanting. It is part of Latin America's continuing tragedy that, despite a period of widespread democratization in the early 1980s, state terrorism recurs in patterns which bear no evident relation to governments' economic policies.

Since the rejection of the O'Donnell thesis we have lacked a credible theory which hypothesizes clear structural linkages between authoritarian regimes and attempts to introduce more economic liberalism into relatively backward capitalist countries. Yet suspicions that there are such linkages remain widespread.

Despite the rejection of the O'Donnell thesis, other scholars have convincingly argued that there were clear causal linkages between the processes of political authoritarianism and the economic liberalism to which the thesis related. Characteristically substituting an empirical, behavioural and contingent approach for O'Donnell's emphasis on deep structure, societal function and historical necessity, A. O. Hirschman has traced savage authoritarianism and faith in market discipline to the deep frustrations of Latin America's bourgeois and military strata after long periods of populist mobilization of the lower classes, entrenched trade union power, political instability,

economic stagnation, arbitrary economic policy, restrictions on international economic transactions, hyperinflation, corruption, and damning radical intellectual critiques of class rule. Looking at six large Latin American states, Sheahan has demonstrated a positive correlation in the 1960s between the degree of political repression and the extent of shift towards market-oriented economic policies.

Other, less impressive evidence from other parts of the Third World is sometimes used to fuel general suspicions of the political implications of liberalized economic policies: the alleged connection between authoritarian regimes and successful, capitalist free-market economic policies in Taiwan and South Korea, and the public disorder and consequent political repression that often seems to follow from the acceptance by Third World governments of the liberally-oriented economic policies associated with major stabilization and structural adjustment loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It is in fact the prevalence of such involuntary economic liberalizations in the Third World since the early 1980s which currently provides the main motive and reference point for the articulation of dissident doctrines about the perverse relationship between economic liberalization and the type of political regime.

In 1977 Sri Lanka elected a new government which began to initiate a process of economic liberalization. At that point Sri Lanka had been invested with an image of a country which had failed to live up to its economic growth potential, but had nevertheless an enviable record of mass welfare provision and was one of the few genuine liberal democracies in the Third World. The proponents of economic liberalization (naturally) argued that the consequent more rapid material progress would help preserve these social and political achievements in the face of increasing threats arising from poor economic performance.

History tells a different story. There was soon created a new political system involving a high degree of centralization of power around an Executive President. The government began to repress democratic opposition parties in a harsh and extra-legal fashion. The life of the existing Parliament was extended for a further full six-year term in 1982 through a referendum marred by force and fraud. The Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic conflict, which had long been simmering, burst into open warfare after major civilian violence against Tamils in July 1983. Resort to violence for political and criminal purposes became widespread. By late 1987 the state system itself had begun to disintegrate in an alarming fashion: control of the Tamil north and east of the country was divided between an Indian military 'peacekeeping' force and the remnants of the main Tamil separatist guerilla army; in the south the radical Sinhalese JVP youth movement was in open armed conflict with state agencies and the cadres of the ruling party, and was attempting to establish some kind of territorial control. The government was deeply unpopular and sustained in power in part by the force of a much-expanded (but still unreliable) military-cum-political intelligence apparatus and by the arming of its own cadres. A multidimensional process of 'political decay' had set in.

A casual acquaintance with the outlines of Sri Lanka's recent history seems adequate to establish at least a *prima facie* case that this is yet another example of the politically corrosive consequences of economic liberalization. Quite predictably, variants of that case are argued by Sri Lankans opposed to the present government. The purpose of this paper is to test those arguments, or at least those aspects of them which are testable. For after major civilian attacks on the Sri Lanka Tamil minority in July 1983 the various dimensions of political decay became intimately

interrelated in vicious circles. The Tamil separatist guerillas obtained masses of recruits, more financial, logistic and moral support from their own community and agencies of the Government of India. The Government of Sri Lanka spent much more on defence, armed civilian supporters of the ruling party, and nurtured new military units which had so much licence to 'deal with' the Tamils that they rapidly became brutalized. Time and the popular Sinhalese nationalist reaction against the government's acquiescence to the Indian 'invasion' of the north and the east in August 1987 led to the use of the armed forces against the government's Sinhalese opponents. After July 1983 the (geo-) political-cum-military situation took on a violent dynamic of its own which far outweighed any possible causal linkages with economic liberalization.

The focus of this paper is therefore on the period between the election of the new government (and the first measures of economic liberalization) in mid-1977, and mid-1983. More specifically, we shall be looking for evidence of any causal linkage between economic liberalization and (a) the centralization of state power; (b) the repression of democratic opposition; and (c) the sharpening of Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic tensions.

The main conclusion is that there appears to have been relatively little causal connection—and even less connection of a systemic or generic nature—between economic liberalization and any of these three dimensions of 'political decay'. This conclusion is, however, limited and modified by dilemmas as to how we are to understand the content of the term 'economic liberalization'. As a process of privatization, marketization, and creation of competition between economic enterprises, liberalization seems exonerated. But in Sri Lankan conditions—conditions fairly typical of many developing countries—the process described

as 'economic liberalization' actually involved a large net increase in the foreign aid inflow and a corresponding expansion in the size and salience of the public sector. There are some reasons for suspecting that this set of processes played some causal role in encouraging and sustaining authoritarianism. The corollary of these conclusions, not argued here in detail for lack of space, is that the main causes of political decay lie within the Sri Lankan political system itself, and are not to be found within the sphere of economy.

II. The Sri Lankan Background

Sri Lanka has been to poor Asia as Costa Rica has been to Latin America. Each has been almost a model of political pluralism; democratic electoral competition; tiny military establishments; effective public administration; relative socio-economic equality; major welfare expenditures on health, education and food subsidies; low rates of mortality and illiteracy; and relatively egalitarian and non-coercive patterns of social relations. Both could once have been seen as staging posts on the road to a social democratic utopia.

In 1981 Sri Lanka celebrated a half century of universal suffrage. In each of the six general elections between 1956 and 1977 governmental power shifted between two major political parties, each with a relatively distinct electoral and policy profile, at least in the socio-economic dimension. The United National Party (UNP) has fairly closely resembled a moderately conservative Western Europe party, having its main base among the more wealthy and generally favouring private enterprise, albeit in a pragmatic fashion. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), more oriented to the poor and those of low status, more statist in economic policy, and less pro-Western in foreign affairs, can credibly be described as centre-left. For most of its existence it has been in electoral or governmental alliance with one or more of a succession of smaller, parliamentary Marxist parties.

An important societal pillar of the Sri Lankan polity has

been the indigenous elite which grew up in the colonial period around commercial and capitalist enterprise, the white collar professions, and the early and thorough indigenization of the state bureaucracy. Socialized around attendance at a few British-model public schools in Colombo and residence in Colombo's Cinnamon Gardens area, this elite developed a coherence and consciousness which partly transcended particularistic caste, ethnic and regional identities. With roots in most ethnic, caste, regional and religious groups, the elite developed on the basis of individual or family participation in a wide range of occupations: commerce, capitalist enterprise (especially plantation ownership), urban landlordship, the professions, public service and electoral politics. This was not a 'national' bourgeoisie' in the sense in which this term is normally used — i.e. a conscious and active opponent of imperialism/metropolitan capital. It was, however, a single, national elite marked by relative coherence, self-consciousness, and capacity for coordinated, self-interested action. It continues to occupy almost all significant positions of political leadership.

A major material pillar of Sri Lanka's social democratic consensus has been the heavy taxation of the large (but relatively) shrinking plantation sector to finance the welfare state. An important component of welfareism — i.e. routine, institutionalized distribution of material resources to the mass of the population — has been the expansion of the small family farming sector through the continual alienation of small plots of Crown land to the landless and more expensively, through the establishment of irrigation colonies for small farmers. Most beneficiaries have been of the majority Sinhalese community. These colonies have gradually filled the hitherto sparsely populated areas of the Dry Zone which formerly separated the Sinhala-speaking areas of the southwest of the Island from the Tamil-speaking areas along the northern and eastern coasts.

Large welfare commitments and the well-established practice

of absorbing the surplus output of the higher education system by expanding the public bureaucracy left little scope for major expenditures on military hardware. Military expenditure has been delightfully minuscule and the armed forces small and mainly ceremonial. For two decades after the last British bases were closed at the end of the 1950s there was a tacit but effective consensus that the international powers would keep their hands off Sri Lanka and that India had a special role as umpire and guardian.

This apparent idyll was not unmarred. Indeed, it was only the newly-arrived tourist who viewed Sri Lanka in anything like idyllic terms. There were plans for at least two military coups in the 1960s. In 1971 a poorly-coordinated armed uprising of rural Sinhalese youths under a Marxist-Leninist banner came strikingly near success in many areas. Thousands were slaughtered as troops, acting in the name of a government controlled by an SLFP-Marxist coalition, re-established control. That government ruled under Emergency legislation for most of its seven-year period of office, and stayed so long in power only by using a new constitution as a pretext for extending the life of the existing Parliament. Frictions between ethnic communities, especially between Sinhalese and Tamils, had gradually exacerbated over decades. The most pitiable victims were the Indian Tamils who mostly manned the tea estates. Disenfranchised immediately after Independence and trapped in a stagnant and heavily-taxed sector of the economy, they could do little to protest at or escape their serfdom. The Sri Lanka Tamils, at Independence well-established in commerce, public service and the professions, had gradually been edged out of their niches as the state was largely Sinhalaized and the economy partly socialized. Their elected representatives have been powerless in an electoral system which has successively given Parliamentary majorities to one of two major Sinhalese-dominated parties. In the early 1970s a handful of Sri Lanka Tamil youth began to organize armed resistance.

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Rehabilitating Trotsky: Why this unjustifiable delay ?

Achin Vanaik

It has been five years since Mr Gorbachov came to power. Every major Bolshevik leader who was wrongfully accused and sentenced in the infamous purges and Moscow Trials of the 1930s has now been fully rehabilitated by the court of history itself bar one — Leon Davidovich Trotsky! This shameful lacuna does grave damage to the integrity of Mr Gorbachov's commitment to glasnost and the restoration of truth. It was, after all, the Soviet president himself who said very correctly that if truth cannot be restored to the understanding of the past then there can be no coming to honest terms with the present and therefore no movement to a truthful future.

Yet five years on, that simple decree of official rehabilitation of the single most important and greatest of Stalin's foes, indeed the man whom all historical evidence now confirms beyond doubt was perceived by Lenin himself to be his natural successor, is still missing. The incongruity and dishonesty of this failure is all the sharper because the fundamental crime with which Stalin charged all those leaders who have now been rehabilitated was of Trotskyism or of abetting Trotsky to overthrow the Soviet regime, through criminal methods. If they have now been exonerated how on earth is it possible to refuse to do the same to the very person in whose name they were wrongfully incarcerated and sentenced?

But, say, Mr Gorbachov's supporters both domestic and foreign, Trotsky will eventually be officially rehabilitated. This is almost certainly correct. But this will not do, nor should this likelihood be allowed to assuage the consciences of those who have hitched their hopes to the wagon of the Gorbachov reformers. They must not be al-

lowed to divert attention away from what is the crucial question — why this unjustifiable delay? Why when every other major Bolshevik leader including Bukharin has been rehabilitated in the name of rejecting the terrible Stalinist legacy, the single greatest, most courageous, most consistent and indeed the first major leader to launch the political struggle against Stalin has not?

It is in attempting to understand this 'riddle' that we can come closer to understanding the limitations of Gorbachovism



Trotsky

and the current reform movement in the USSR. To all those who claim in the name of socialism to have finally come to terms with the horror of Stalinism and who express their new found determination to fight against its past, contemporary and future manifestations, there is a problem. Trotsky and Trotskyism got there first! After decades spent in attack on the two for opposing Stalin and Stalinism as the essential embodiment of Socialism (give or take a mistake or two) how does one come to terms with Trotsky or Trotskyism now that one has to repudiate Stalinism? Surely an honest re-evaluation of Stalin

requires a corresponding and equally honest re-evaluation of Trotsky? And the very first step in this must be his immediate and unqualified rehabilitation. What holds true for Bukharin must hold true for Trotsky? So why the delay?

One explanation of this is obvious. The rehabilitation of Bukharin and others, for example, can be used to endorse Mr Gorbachov's present turn especially in the field of economic policy. Trotsky cannot be so used. While he supported Lenin's NEP policy, he saw it, as Lenin did, as an unavoidable compromise forced upon the USSR by weakness, not as a long-term perspective on how to move towards a more socialist economy. Secondly, Trotsky and Trotskyism were not simply a devastating critique of Stalin but of Stalinism which was seen as reflecting the interests of a whole bureaucratic layer. That is to say, Trotsky's was a critique of Stalinism from the left, of not just Stalin but of bureaucratic elitism and bureaucratic rule as well as of capitalist class rule. As such it has nothing to offer, except indictment, of the present economic perspectives of the Gorbachov reformers, let alone the conservatives within the bureaucracy.

Furthermore, in its political perspectives, the principal legatee of Trotskyism, the Fourth International, has always endorsed a democratic socialism whose revolutionary emphasis on more direct forms of democratic mandate, control and representation are well in advance of the pluralisms of liberal democracy, let alone the reform perspectives of Mr Gorbachov and supporters.

Fourthly, the intransigent internationalism of this current stands as a living reproof of those aspects of Mr Gorbachov's foreign policy (especially in the

third world) where he has objectively abandoned efforts to obstruct the expansion of western imperialism in the name of peaceful coexistence and systemic collaboration.

Fifthly, Trotsky and Trotskyism lay powerful claim to be the principal inheritor of the Leninist tradition. It is one thing for Mr Gorbachov to accept that Leninism and Stalinism are incompatible but how can Trotskyism as heir to Leninism be accepted without undermining Gorbachovism's own legitimacy as the rightful legatee of the October Revolution? Only at a time when Soviet reformers are prepared to repudiate the validity of the October Revolution itself, i. e. repudiate Leninism in word as well as deed (as some are demanding) might they concede the fundamental continuity of Trotskyism with Leninism.

What then can be expected in the near future? At some time probably within the next five years, Trotsky as an individual, his historical role and career will be officially rehabilitated. His stature as principal opponent of Stalin, will be confirmed. This much cannot be avoided. His writings should become more freely available. But, alongside this, there will also be an 'unofficial' message. For so long, Trotsky and Trotskyism were considered by the CPSU to be essentially synonymous and both were considered fundamentally objectionable. Now in an ironic twist, a separation will be made between the two. Trotsky the individual might be conceded enormous stature, but Trotskyism will be presented as (a) deviating from Leninism (b) the obverse side in many, if not all, respects of Stalinism, and therefore something to be shunned in the reform wing's current project of establishing a 'new, more humane socialism'. In its own way even such an outcome will represent a remarkable tribute to the legacy of the 'Old Man', to the power of his thoughts and ideas and to the dismay these still arouse to the powerful everywhere.

BRIEFLY...

(Continued from page 1)

● In Parliament, state minister for defence Ranjan Wijeratne pledged that "the LTTE criminals responsible for the cold blooded murder of innocent people in the Eastern Province would be destroyed."

"They are criminals and do not deserve to live. We shall destroy them", he said. The Minister was replying a matter of urgent public importance raised by Opposition Leader Sirima Bandaranaike and Muslim Congress leader M. H. M. Ashroff.

● Two former MPs of the Eelavar Democratic Front (EDF), a close ally of the LTTE were reported to have left for Jaffna for "urgent consultations" with their leader Velupillai Balakumar to determine the political future of their party, amidst reports that EDF activists were preparing to flee the country.

● The Budget deficit this year was expected to rise to Rs 53,198 million from the earlier 51,000 million, Dr Wimal Wickremasinghe, Minister of Environment and State Minister for Policy Planning and Implementation told parliament. The increase was due to the unexpected rise in government expenditure due to the war, the school midday meal and the payment of compensation to SLTB employees, the minister said.

● An amendment to the Appropriation Bill to increase the borrowing limit for 1990 by Rs 11,000 million was presented in parliament. The increase is from Rs 42,198 million to Rs 53,198 million.

● Sri Lankans working in Kuwait were safe, Sri Lanka's Ambassador L. Sheriffdeen said in a telex to the Foreign Ministry. There were 80,000 to 85,000 Sri Lankans working in Kuwait at the time of the Iraqi invasion.

● Central Bank Governor Neville Karunatilake is increasingly worried about the educational breadth of today's

academics. He said so at school prize giving. "The spectrum and quality of knowledge isn't there any more", he said.

Economic...

(Continued from page 22)

There can be little doubt that a disappointing national economic performance helped structure and exacerbate patterns of political disaffection. Because of very rapid population growth and, worse, almost continuous deterioration in the terms of trade, the economy had to run hard simply to stay still. A continuous growth of national production was in these circumstances no mean achievement. But the rate of economic growth was low in relation to other parts of Asia to what many people saw to be the inherent growth potential of the economy, and to the obligation to finance major public welfare commitments in the face of the drying up the milch cow — the plantation export surplus.

From the end of the 1950s the economy was almost continuously hamstrung by inability to finance an adequate level of imports. The currency and import controls which this necessitated formed the springboards from which successive governments, especially those led by the SLFP, launched restrictive, redistributive, and statist initiative in economic policy. This, alone with the increasing politicization of public life generally, gave rise to considerable frustration, especially among wealthier and more Westernized groups. The overseas 'brain drain' of professional expertise did not stop at the non-Sinhalese minorities. At the same time, there was a steady expansion of the queue of young people seeking the white-collar jobs to which they believed their educational certificates entitled them. If Sri Lanka was still in many respects a model, it was not, in terms of economic policy, material living standards and certain 'bourgeois' conceptions of political and administrative rectitude, quite the model it had been in the 1940s.

NEXT: Economic Liberalization



ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

Why there's sound of laughter in this rustic tobacco barn....

There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

Here, with careful nurturing, tobacco grows as a lucrative cash crop and the green leaves turn to gold... to the value of over Rs. 250 million or more annually, for perhaps 143,000 rural folk.

Tobacco is the industry that brings employment to the second highest number of people. And these people are the tobacco barn owners, the tobacco growers and those who work for them, on the land and in the barns.

For them, the tobacco leaf means meaningful work, a comfortable life and a secure future. A good enough reason for laughter.



Ceylon Tobacco Co. Ltd.

*Sharing and caring
for our land and her people.*



PRAJA NAYA NIYAMAKA SCHEME

Bank of Ceylon has pioneered in the Praja Naya Niyamaka Scheme linking the formal sector with the informal sector.

A Praja Naya Niyamaka

- He lends money (provides credit) to the members of his community using Bank finance.
- He works round the clock.
- He is well known in his community and lends with or without collateral as decided by him.
- He decides on the repayment period.
- Finance is easily obtainable from him and repayments are made on mutually agreed terms.

Bank of Ceylon Praja Naya Niyamaka Scheme is a step in the right direction.



BANK OF CEYLON

Bankers to the Nation.