

• LUCKY BREAKS FOR SRI KOTHA •

— Mervyn de Silva

LANKA

# GUARDIAN

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**Marga Publications**

61 Isipathana Mawatha  
Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.

## Briefly. . .

● Debt servicing will cost the nation Rs 13 billion more in 1991 than it did this year. Budgetary provision of Rs 44.8 billion has been made for this purpose, the highest ever. The breakdown is as follows: Rs 22.4 billion for interest payments on short term, medium and long term rupee loans and foreign loans, loan management charges and loan floatation; and Rs 22.4 billion for amortisation payments on rupee and foreign loans and other Treasury obligations.

● The Gulf crisis is expected to cost Sri Lanka about 2.5 billion rupees this year in hard currency, in lost earnings and extra expenditure. About 1.5 billion of this amount will represent lost worker remittances. Tea export losses due to UN sanctions will amount to more than 750 million and increased oil prices will cost more than 200 million.

● Half a million "peoplised" United Motors shares were distributed free to 554 employees of United Motors Lanka Ltd at a ceremony in Colombo attended by Prime Minister D.B. Wijetunga. The highest allocations were to 32 employees with more than 30 years service with this motor trade firm; they received 1,659 shares each. United Motors is the first government owned business undertaking to be "peoplised". The distributed shares had a par value of Rs 10 and a stock exchange value of Rs 24.

United Motors contributed Rs 59.4 million to government revenue for a 10 month period ending March 31, 1990.

● A total of 4,483 forest offences were recorded in 1989, but only 14 offenders were jailed by courts. The 1989 total of detected of-

fences were 292 more than in the previous year.

Several state employees were also involved in illicit activities, the Conservator of Forests said in his Administration Report for 1989. Mr V. R. Nanayakkara, the Conservator, has recommended the setting up of a separate Forest Police.

● Power pirates cost the Ceylon Electricity Board Rs 500 million annually. The illicit tapping of electricity is done on a well organised scale by affluent consumers, according to Power and Energy Minister Chandra Bandara, quoted in the Daily News.

● The government has not decided to change the five day week, a Public Administration Ministry news release said, following speculative reports that the working week might become longer for public servants. The ministry release said that public servants working the five day week fully and efficiently would be more productive than an extension of the week.

● Posters came up in the city attacking foreign casino operators in five-star hotels. The local operators want the field to themselves. Casinos are not legal in this country, but they are permitted to operate.

*The Island* said in a leader: "In discussing the question of casinos operating in this country the first question to be posed is whether this country can benefit from casinos". The editorial went on to say that it would be hypocrisy of the highest order if Sri Lankans were prevented from gambling on moral grounds while running gambling joints to rake in the money of foreigners; it would be as hypocritical as having brothels for foreigners only.

As we go to press we have received the sad news of the death of Prof. Urmila Phadnis, of the J.N.U., a regular contributor to the L.G.

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## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Letters                                     | 2  |
| News Background                             | 3  |
| The Region                                  | 7  |
| Profile                                     | 8  |
| Political Conflict (3)                      | 9  |
| The "Self" as Obstacle<br>to Peace in Lanka | 11 |
| The Soviet Model                            | 15 |
| Pensioners (2)                              | 17 |
| Let the Herbal Flowers Bloom                | 19 |
| Conceptualising Ethnicity<br>and Identity   | 21 |
| Dissent (2)                                 | 24 |

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## Letters

### SWRD AND SINHALA

Mr. S. Pathiravitane says that lobby correspondents see and hear only what they want to see and hear, and that not being a saint, I can't claim to be free of this infirmity. Mr. Pathiravitane, no doubt being well on the way to beatification, is, of course, not circumscribed by the limitations of ordinary mortals; he can even consider himself the last word on what he didn't see and hear.

Reggie Siriwardena

Dehiwela.

### PLAIN WORDS

I see that Sri Kantha has failed to profit from my advice that he should take some reading lessons before engaging in further polemics. In reply to my detailed demonstration that he cannot understand what he reads, he writes (*L. G.* of October 1) that he was reading between the lines. I do not see how he can possibly succeed in metaphorically reading between the lines when in the first place he cannot grasp the plain literal meanings of plain words. Consequently I am certainly not going to waste *L. G.* space taking up his quibble about the term "distinct" in relation to ethnicity.

His problem is the same as Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, who said "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." I suggest therefore that he take to writing nonsense literature, a genre that has not been properly exploited since the great days of Carroll and Lear. He should make his mark, provided he remembers that there is a difference between nonsense literature and tommy rot.

Izeth Hussain

### IMPORTED WATER

It has been reported that at least one former VVIP in this poverty-stricken island is addicted to Eau de France. But, with a 67 billion rupees budget deficit staring us in the face, what earthly reason is there for local

shops to be flooded with this imported water? In a Nugegoda super-market last week I saw shelves of Eau de France at Rs. 66.25 a bottle. It is said that Nero tuned to his fiddle while Rome burned — it would appear that some portion of our society prefers to upgrade the quality of its piddle while Sri Lanka bleeds! I have survived for 69 years on Eau de Sri Lanka!!

H. A. I. G.

Nawinna.

### BACKWARD ASIA

All of us are grateful to Mr. S. Pathiravitane for pointing out to us that "we see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear simply because we are human. Western journalists are doing it all the time when they report 'backward' Asia to the 'civilised' West".

From family members who are working abroad, two in England and one in Barbados and another in Australia, I have received paper articles reporting last year that so many burning bodies were seen on the roadside. Two of the articles spoke about "majority Sinhalese, not Tamils". Why did they emphasise "not Tamils"?

Nobody in my house or living nearby saw such things. We all know that Buddhism is the chief religion and killing and taking of innocent lives is not allowed. But this is the "backward" Asia, as your reader has pointed out!

A. T. R. Ramanayake

Lunawa.

### THE "GOD" THAT FAILED

Today Stalinism has been so badly discredited, that few even dare come out in defence of what I would call "the ogre of the twentieth century" (just as Winston Churchill in his memoirs called Trotsky, "the ogre of Europe"). The backlash of Stalinism has had such a terrible effect that it can be likened to a horrible catastrophe such as an earthquake, of such great seismic proportions that everything around it

has been completely destroyed. The ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin are desperately struggling for survival, because of the misdeeds of one single man, Joseph Stalin. Today, the once proud appellation of "Communist" has become a dirty word. All the Communist Parties of Europe, U.K., U.S.A., Italy, France, etc. have jettisoned Stalinism, and are taking on innocuous names to give themselves an aura of bourgeois respectability. So far this has not taken place in the USSR, but soon there will be no USSR left. Only the rump of Greater Russia and Bylo — Russia, and that too thanks to the "Great Russian Bullies", as Lenin called, Ordzhonikidze, Dzerzhinsky and Stalin in criticism of the latter's treatment of the Georgians. Stalin's "Great Russian Chauvinism" was directly responsible for the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Thus in this context I am surprised to find there is a defender of the Dictator in the "Lanka Guardian" of Vol. 13 No. 11. (1.10.90). I refer to Tisseranee Gunasekera's article "Reform from Top". She says "All ills plaguing the Soviet Union are laid at Stalin's door. But it was none other than Stalin who first mentioned the possibility of a contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production under socialism, in his "Economic Problems of Socialism" 1950. Stalin wrote that "if the party did not handle the economic laws of socialism correctly, and if the objective economic problems are flouted, this would lead to a contradiction between the forces of production and the existing relations of production, resulting in a crisis". "But" says Tisseranee Gunasekera, "this warning went unheeded."

Stalin was the man who drew up the general lines of planning and he saw that they were unquestioningly carried out. Stalin was like God Himself — he was omnipotent and omniscient.

Amaradasa Fernando

# Early X'mas cheer for beseiged UNP

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

**T**he U.N.P. government's luck holds while the SLFP-led Opposition's optimistic calculations hang almost entirely on the hope that the last Presidential election will be declared null and void. In the past fortnight, we have seen "Operation Jaya Shakthi" achieve its important, if militarily limited, objective with impressive professionalism.

Hammered by the 'triple shocks' of the Gulf — oil prices, migrant remittances and the substantial Iraqi tea market — the government received a tremendous morale boost by the Aid Club meeting in Paris which pledged a billion dollars, 130 million more than requested.

The Opposition attention meanwhile is focussed almost exclusively on its internal conflicts, played up by the pro-UNP press as a mother-son dispute in the Bandaranaike-founded and dominated S.L.F.P., the UNP's only credible challenger.

Meanwhile, the LTTE, still a serious threat militarily, has committed some ruinous political mistakes that has drained its international sympathy, totally alienated the vitally important, Muslim community in the East, and undermined Tamilnadu and Indian support.

Finally, Indian diplomatic pressure, much less from the V. P. Singh government than from the previous Gandhi administration, is now minimal since Delhi is totally preoccupied with the most serious governmental-political

crisis in recent times. Mr. I. K. Gujral's on-off visit has been scheduled for Dec. 11.

While the MOSSAD Commission which has not yet held public sessions may or may not produce any definite results in terms of pinning blame on any particular minister of the past regime the sensational media disclosures about Israeli training for the Tamil 'Tigers' have had a shattering impact on the Political Establishment and the governing groups. It has been serious blow to what may be called the highly westernised, pro-U. S. coterie within the ruling UNP, popularly termed the 'J.R. clique' that held out Israel as a sincere friend and a shining example to the beleaguered Sinhala elite and masses. The repercussions of this sensational affair should be assessed in the perspective of the Premadasa project in "re-structuring" the U.N.P. (See excerpt from the Mick Moore interview).

Though scary stories of SAM-7's in LTTE hands remain strong rumours, the SLAF's freedom of access to the Jaffna peninsula and its unchallenged air-power make Palaly Airport a vital factor in EELAM War 2, and to the government's determined effort to demonstrate that the Peninsula, the Tamil heartland, is not "totally liberated" Tiger territory. The mid-October operation concentrated on "freeing" the Palaly Airport from LTTE mortar fire. That also meant destroying the heavily fortified bunkers that ringed the surrounding areas and clearing the road and pathways of mines, and finally the build-

ings in the area which gave LTTE snipers 'cover'. All this has been done. General Denzil Kobbekaduwe's men have cleared the whole area, a nice "bulge" as he called it.

## REAL ESTATE

Is Jaffna town his next target, the big one? "Right now, we are not interested in real estate". His strict professionalism was also evident in another reply to the pressmen who were taken to Jaffna: "About ten percent of the peninsula" . . . That's as far as the army has advanced. . . a measured response to the challenge.

This has of course a political aspect. 90% of the peninsula has to be administered by the LTTE. As much as the average Tamil may identify himself with the guerrilla vanguard, the day-to-day burden of administration — the basics — has proved too exacting a responsibility for a movement so intensely and incurably militaristic as the LTTE.

The LTTE meanwhile has reopened the Eastern front, trying to use the Muslim factor as a military weapon in a theatre of the conflict where the political, or more accurately the communal "mix" (Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala) is the dominant feature of this political-military struggle for power. Neither the Sinhala Army nor the (Tamil) LTTE can think in exclusively military terms. Communities are involved and the Muslims, third of the provincial population, hold the balance.



For both combatants, Muslim support, neutrality or hostility, is a factor of serious military consequence. For the same reason, the Muslim community is caught in the cross-fire, and the Muslim political parties, some of them more Colombo-based, torn by political differences and divergent approaches to the main political question: Devolution. It raises the particular problem of sharing power with the Tamils in the East (minus Sinhala-dominated Ampara) and making a deal with the governing party in Colombo.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Amnesty International used a peculiar expression in its latest Sept. 19 report:

"Sri Lanka's government appears (LG's emphasis) to be backing the terror tactics used by its security forces to suppress armed opposition." That was the opening sentence. The rest was more or less a summary.

The "softening" of international criticism of the regime's human rights record is largely due to the LTTE's brutal and indiscriminate targeting of Muslim and Sinhala farmer settlements in isolated hamlets. So, the EEC statement before the Aid Group meeting focuses on "massacres by the LTTE" and on "the indiscriminate bombing of civilians by the air force" (See EEC STATEMENT).

While the World Bank and the donors would have borne in mind both the fact of unutilised 1989 aid, and the "triple shocks" of the Gulf crisis, the one billion dollar aid package (130 million dollars more than the Sri Lankan request) buoyed up UNP morale, injecting a self-confidence into an administration that was more or less enjoying the only comfort of a divided, squabbling and confused opposition.

Considering the island's grim situation and the despondency of a once cock-a-hoop UNP, October has brought very welcome, X'mas gifts.

## H.P.T. : No need for panic ?

The collapse of the H. P. T., one of the leaders of the 'medium' range Finance Companies, has created what the state-run *Daily News* feared would be a 'crisis of confidence'. In an editorial, the D.N. called for "full and frank disclosures of the real situation" to avoid the total collapse of public confidence. If there is a tendency to hit the 'panic button', it is because the public is now aware that the Central Bank had pumped in 200 million rupees to H. P. T. in a "holding operation". Evidently it didn't work. And now the city is thick with rumours as several other companies appear to have run into serious trouble.

The "boom-time" mood of the early 80's saw a mushrooming of finance companies offering high interest, often up to 30-35%. Though the trouble may have started as early as the '83 riots, the north-eastern violence gradually took its own toll of assets — buses, lorries, housing, commercial buildings etc. But the Central Bank apparently kept a vigilant, supervisory eye. Then came the JVP violence of 1988-89.

Few know what is really going on now, and the *Daily News* was right to urge the government to let the depositors, particularly the "small man" who has put his life's savings into these finance companies, know the full facts. The paper said:

The Minister of State for Finance, Mr. Harold Herat, made a statement in Parliament last week about the HPT suspension. But a fuller statement is desirable. Depositors must know whether the company is facing just a liquidity crisis and its assets are good enough to take care of its liabilities. Or is it something more serious?

When a company is in trouble, there is a run on deposits adding to its woes. Right now, depositors in other finance companies — many of them stable — are also fearing for the safety of their money. A crisis of confidence can very easily result if full and frank disclosures of the real situation is not quickly made.

The minister has referred to HPT's "cosmetic management practices" to conceal the real picture. If that was possible with Central Bank funds in the company and a bank nominee on the board, the efficacy of the supervision can be called into question.

The Control of Finance Companies Act No. 78 of 1988 was enacted to safeguard depositors' interests after the earlier failures. It had many teeth including forfeiture of directors' personal assets to make good wasted or fiddled funds. The public are unaware of any such seizures although they are well aware of the rackets.

Hopefully the Central Bank examiners and independent auditors will speedily finish their task at HPT so that depositors and the general public can be told the exact situation. The quicker that is done, the better.

## Army expansion 100,000 more

— Ranjan

Even after this war with the Tigers is over, the army will be supplemented with an additional 100,000 recruits, State Minister for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne said when he addressed the soldiers stationed at the strategic Palaly Air Base, Rupavahini reported.

# The New Regime and the Old Regime

**Q:** Recently you shot into the limelight by talking of a "new regime" that is now in power. Can you identify the significant difference in the "new regime" and the "old regime"?

**Prof. Moore:** There are, perhaps, two important changes of the new regime compared to the old one. First, there is the distribution of political power which is substantially different now than before. Under the previous President, a considerable amount of power was effectively devolved to many other politicians, senior ministers etc. which has many advantages and disadvantages.

Under the new regime power has to a very high degree centralised under the Presidency. But I think it is fair to say that there is probably no one holding a significant power position, either as a politician or as an administrative bureaucrat who does not hold office except at the will of the President. There may be one or two exceptions but they are few. Consequently, one associates the fact that there has been some degree of depoliticisation of certain kind of economic decisions, by which I mean, in particular, that the whole cast of government ministers and MPs have less day-to-day influence on government decisions than they have had not only in the previous government but even governments before that.

So there is depoliticisation and there is possibility of more.

The key issue of Sri Lanka now is, as it were, how his capacity to depoliticise society is used. I mean here is more possibility now of making rational decisions in the national interests — decisions that will be made on the grounds of expertise, technological evaluations etc. I think it is not yet clear how far this potential will be exploited.

So that is one important change — the change in the distribution of power.

The other significant change is that for the first time, in quite a long time, there is a ruling group in Sri Lanka which is not in any substantial sense communal in the very broad sense of that term. That is to say there is a large number of people from all societies or ethnic or linguistic groups who hold quite powerful positions — often not positions as politicians — but important positions in

the government and there is no doubt that this had a significant effect on the attitude of many of the ethnic minorities towards the government. And it seems to me that in Colombo, in particular, the climate of ethnic relations has improved quite significantly. Of course, it hasn't improved in other areas, particularly in the North and East. But there are a whole range of other reasons for that.

*(Dr. Mick Moore interviewed by the Editor of the Sunday Observer H. L. D. Mahindapala)*

## ECC reminds Lanka about human rights

**T**he European Community and its Member States have followed closely the uncertain situation in Sri Lanka. They deplore the resurgence of hostilities initiated by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in June and the misery this has caused to the civilian population in the affected parts of the country. They have noted reports of massacres by the LTTE and of indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas by the Sri Lankan Air force. The Twelve recognise the serious difficulties faced by the Sri Lankan Government but urge that only minimum necessary force should be used in restoring peace and maintaining order in the country.

"The Twelve have regularly conveyed to the Sri Lankan government their serious concern about continuing threats to human rights. They have particularly urged the Government to act against the so-called death squads, and to make every effort to bring the perpetrators of illegal killings to justice. In this context, the Twelve note with regret that the enquiry into the killing in February of Mr. Richard de Zoysa has made such little

progress. They also hope that the sub-commission on disappearances of the UN Commission on Human Rights will visit Sri Lanka soon. Meanwhile, the Twelve note that obstruction of citizens intending to testify to the said subcommission is contrary to Resolution 1990/76 of the UN Commission for Human Rights, which calls on all governments to allow unhindered contact between private individuals and UN Human Rights Bodies, and condemns all acts of intimidation and reprisal.

The Twelve strongly support the efforts of the democratically elected Sri Lankan Government to overcome the challenge posed by terrorist activities, but in doing so, the Twelve urge the Government to observe its international obligations in the field of human rights.

"The Twelve wish to draw attention to the fact that Member States will be considering their future assistance for the development of Sri Lanka's economy with reference, among other factors, to the Government's performance in regard to human rights."



## Despite disturbed political situation . . . Sri Lanka's economy has shown a remarkable resilience: *World Bank*

**T**he World Bank has said that despite the troubled political situation in Sri Lanka, the country's economy has shown "a remarkable resilience".

On the eve of the Aid Consortium meeting currently underway in Paris, the Bank has declared: If the civil conflict does not worsen, the Middle-East crisis is not prolonged, and the government is able to maintain sound macroeconomic management, sustained growth of 4.0 to 5.0 percent is possible".

The Sri Lankan economy, which had a growth rate of about 8.2 percent in 1977, was virtually beaten to a standstill by continued domestic uprisings and ethnic violence in the late 1980's.

Beginning 1985, the growth rate has declined from 5.0 percent to 4.5 percent in 1986,

1.5 percent in 1987, 2.7 percent in 1988 and 2.3 percent in 1989.

In an assessment of the war-ravaged Sri Lankan economy, the Bank points out that future growth is likely to come from the private sector, including industry, since rapid gains from paddy production and or high levels of public investment which were the sources of growth in the early 1980's are unlikely to be repeated in the next few years.

Sri Lanka's external aid requirements for 1990 and 1991 have been estimated at over \$1.8 billion.

However, if the Gulf crisis persists and oil prices remain high, additional quick-disbursing aid will be required even if the government takes action to protect the soundness of its macroeconomic condition" the Bank adds.

The members of the Aid Consortium include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Also invited are representatives of the Asian Development Bank, the European Economic Community (EEC), the International Monetary Fund, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the government of Switzerland.

(Daily News)

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# Shadows cast a pall over India's festival of light

**David Housego** on how the holiday mood has been shattered by religious and caste violence

The coming days are traditionally the most festive period in the Indian calendar with people celebrating the Diwali holiday by illuminating their houses with candles and colouring the night sky with fireworks.

But with the violence of caste and religious conflict throwing a shadow over the country, perhaps more threateningly than at any time since independence, many people feel that there is little to celebrate. Few fireworks are on sale in the shops; the bazaars are still sparsely decorated.

In Delhi, the most poignant reminder of the tensions are the continuing suicides by young students setting fire to themselves in protest against the Prime Minister V. P. Singh's programme for reserving 27 per cent of jobs in central government service for the lower castes.

Studies of their deaths show that most of them come from poor urban families with the suicide prompted by a mixture of despair and glory in martyrdom. Delhi's universities are the main magnet for upper caste students seeking to enter government service.

The shadow of potential Hindu-Moslem conflict also looms heavily over Delhi these days with the arrival in the capital of the Rath Yatra (pilgrim chariot) of Mr L.K. Advani, the leader of the radical Hindu BJP party. Mr Advani is on a national crusade to mobilise support for the building of a Hindu temple on the site of a mosque at Ayodhya in northern India.

It is probably the first time since independence that a senior

politician has embarked on such a widespread campaign to accentuate differences between Hindus and India's 140m-strong Moslem minority.

Huge emotive Hindu crowds have been following Mr Advani's "chariot" — a truck decorated as the heavenly vehicle of a Hindu deity — through the streets of Delhi. Mr Advani will end his journey at Ayodhya on October 30, when Hindu fundamentalists plan to begin construction of the temple.

In recent days there have also been reminders of the gravity of the economic crisis. Long queues formed at petrol stations after the government announced a 15 per cent cut in oil consumption on Friday night. The 25 per cent price increase imposed on Sunday night is enough to unleash popular anger against the government, which has done little to prepare the Indian public for the impact of the Gulf crisis.

Inflation will now inevitably climb into double digits — a level traditionally seen in a democracy dominated by the poor as jeopardising the life of a government.

The main difference between this crisis and others in the 1960s and 1970s is that it coincides with social changes that have been 20 years in the making and have now come to a head. Above all Mr V.P. Singh's job reservation programme is seen as unleashing a final assault by the "have-nots" — the poor and the often-quite-prosperous lower castes — on the positions of power and patronage in government which they claim have been monopolised by an upper caste elite.

For the latter — who account for 20 per cent of the population in the north and who are often poor themselves — entrance by merit to government service is a cherished principle. A former minister even raised in conversation the other day the possibility of a military takeover if reservations were extended to the armed forces. India is still far from that — but the speculation is indicative of the mood.

The fragility of Mr Singh's coalition government reflects the current turbulence. Decisions are being shelved on all but the most pressing issues and the small liberalisation of industrial and foreign investment policy announced in June has not been implemented because of disagreements over which industries would benefit.

The weakness of Mr Singh's own position has been underlined by demands for him to step down from 29 parliamentarians from his own minority Janata Dal party. But Mr Singh's strong card is that no party wants the responsibility of bringing him down. If he should fall, there are likely to be attempts to form a new coalition with elections possible in the spring.

The event that poses the most immediate test to the survival of his administration is the march on Ayodhya on October 30. The risk for Mr Singh is that if he sticks to his decision to prevent the construction of the temple then the BJP could withdraw its support from the government. At that moment Mr Singh would have to resign.

Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the former prime minister, believes that the BJP will withdraw support in the first week of November, and that the government will fall. He has been holding rallies in the north to test the ground for an election he believes could come in February.

(Continued on page 13)

# Nobel prize for giving up Soviet empire

Gorbachev has been honoured for what he did not do, reports **Quentin Peel**

**F**rom one point of view, president Mikhail Gorbachev has won the Nobel peace prize for what he did not do, not for what he did.

Of course that is only part of the story. His positive achievements are clear: in promoting an international dialogue, turning Cold War summits from confrontation and point-scoring into exercises in co-operation, his unilateral arms cuts to relaunch the disarmament process, and his vision of a new world order centred on man, not ideology, are all thoroughly constructive.

And yet the one exercise which really made people in the west believe in him, which cut the ground away from underneath the Cold War sceptics, was the fact that he did nothing to stop democracy happening in eastern Europe. He did not send in the tanks.

Indeed, his responsibility was even greater. His very presence in Berlin one year ago, much like his presence in Peking not long before, proved the catalyst for localised demonstrations to explode into a national movement for democracy. The fact that the outcome in Berlin was not another Tiananmen Square massacre was a direct tribute to Soviet restraint.

He is the first Communist leader to win the Nobel Prize, and a major factor behind it is that he allowed communism to collapse in eastern Europe.

President Gorbachev has so far presided over an extraordinarily peaceful disintegration of his empire. There have been localised explosions of bloodshed, but they have been remarkably few, and contained, given the trauma of the process.

Now, however, the fact that he has not been ready to use

military might to preserve the unity of his empire, even within the borders of the Soviet Union itself, may be coming to haunt him. More and more reformist supporters are urging the Soviet leader to use force to keep the country from disintegration, and to prevent the democratic debate descending into anarchy.

In some ways, the award of the Nobel prize could scarcely come at a more embarrassing moment, domestically. Mr Gorbachev's popularity is at an all-time low, somewhere around 20 per cent according to the latest opinion polls.

More seriously, both his moral and practical authority appear to have collapsed. His ability to ensure the enactment of presidential decrees — on disarming militia groups, protecting communist monuments, and enforcing economic contracts — is in doubt.

Yesterday the Soviet leader was forced yet again to postpone presentation of his plan for radical economic reform, as he sought to rewrite it to accommodate the objections of the country's republican leaders. Many radical reformers fear that his prevarication now means the moment for decisive action has passed.

The immediate popular reaction in Moscow yesterday to news of the Nobel prize award was profoundly sceptical. "It is scarcely an appropriate moment," said Natasha, a university student. "I don't know what people will think. With all the queues and shortages, they won't be very impressed when they hear of the \$700,000 he has won. I only hope he gives it to a good cause."

"I think it is diabolical," said Ruslan, a dissident and former political prisoner. "They must be crazy. He does not begin to

be in the same league as Dr Andrei Sakharov."

Even Gennady Gerasimov, the official spokesman for the foreign ministry, could not resist a crack: "We must remember this certainly was not the Nobel prize for economics," he told a press briefing.

In the Supreme Soviet one industrial worker deputy pointedly refused to take part in the otherwise universal applause. "I am not clapping because the economy is bad, and the people are living badly," he said.

Seldom has the gap between domestic and international perceptions of President Gorbachev seemed so wide.

"The Nobel committee just does not know what it's like here," a young teacher told Reuters news agency. "Let them spend a couple of months living like Russians and see how they feel. Is peace only for foreigners?"

Thanks to its economic plight, the Soviet Union has become ever more introverted, unconcerned with what may or may not be the impressive achievements of Soviet foreign policy.

The conservatives are bothered at the loss of empire. The rest are just concerned with daily survival.

All of which cannot change the extraordinary international impact of Mr Gorbachev's policies, but simply underline the gulf between domestic and international reality. The watershed in the Soviet leader's foreign policy remains his dramatic United Nations speech of December 1988, when he outlined both his intention to go ahead with a major unilateral disarmament initiative, and a rethink of the

(Continued on page 10)



## **Tertiary Costs: 3 Mahavelis**

**John M. Richardson**

**S**ince '83 the emerging political opposition to the open economy programme has forced the government to slow its reform. Privatisation has slowed and a new consumption subsidy programme has been introduced. There are 118 non-financial state enterprises many of which have been described as poorly managed, overmanned and unprofitable. But with serious unemployment in the country, the government is reluctant to take remedial measures.

The liberalized export-oriented growth strategy appears to offer Sri Lanka the best economic prospects. The country's domestic market is small. It has an educated labour force with a high proportion of young. It lacks major natural resources like oil. If Sri Lanka wishes to develop its economy liberalisation combined with efficient integration to the world economy is the only feasible option. The adverse social and political impact of violent conflicts has jeopardised that strategy.

Violent political conflicts has also reduced the prospect for South Asian regional economic co-operation that will benefit Sri Lanka.

We take tertiary costs into account with a scenario that assumes full implementations of the open economy programme and higher level of regional economic co-operation during the 80's. We use the moderate growth scenario as the base. Since tertiary costs address longer term impacts of conflict, we assume no difference between the moderate growth and a no tertiary cost scenario until '83 and '84. With no tertiary cost we assume that the growth rate would have been 5% greater in 1985 and 1% greater in '86 and '88 projected by the moderate growth scenario.

Summing annual differences between the projections revised estimated tertiary costs 16.3 billion rupees — about 500 million US\$.

Summing estimates for primary, secondary and tertiary costs provides estimates of the total economic costs of conflict in Sri Lanka from '83 — '87. It's a conservative estimate for some costs for example private and unbudgeted costs of security have not been taken into account.

The total estimate is about **144.3 billion Rupees — 4.4 billion US\$**. This is roughly equivalent to 3 Mahaweli Development projects.

### **Opportunity Costs**

Hear it is useful to distinguish between cost primarily attributable to what might be called the ethnic conflict in the North-East and those primarily attributable to what might be called class conflict in the South. This is easy to do for physical destruction of infrastructure but more difficult for other primary costs and for secondary and tertiary costs. To estimate those latter costs we have made assumptions about the relative economic impact of the North-Eastern and Southern insurrection.

In '83 — '84 we assume that rioting had the greatest impact. Beginning at the end of '84 till the middle of '87 we assume that the preponderant impact was from the ethnic violence in the North. After mid '87 we assume that the contribution to secondary and tertiary cost was more evenly divided with the Southern conflict having a somewhat greater impact in '88. Cost of the IPKF was solely attributed to the North Eastern conflict.

Based on these assumptions we attribute costs of about 96 billion rupees to the North-Eastern conflict and about 47 billion rupees to the Southern conflict. An average cost of violent conflict per year 1/6th of the total cost has also been calculated. This is not intended to be an accurate estimated yearly costs which was certainly greater in later years than earlier.

The purpose of calculating average cost estimates is to have a number that can be more meaningfully compared with annual budget estimates when discussing opportunity cost.

For both conflicts cost per year average is 24 billion rupees i.e. 720 million US\$.

North — 15.9 billion rupees — 484 million US\$ per year

South — 8.1 billion rupees — 246 million US\$ per year

Young men between the ages of 15 — 24 has been the principal actors in Sri Lanka's political conflict. For that reason it will be useful to focus on the cost of violence in relation to this segment of society more closely.

In '88 Sri Lanka's population included 1.75 million men of this age group. About 220,000 were Sri Lankan Tamils about 1.3 million were Sinhalese. Poor prospects for employment, underemployment, unemployment are prime factors creating a sense of deprivation. When individuals feel discriminated against because of race, language or religion deprivation is more likely to produce frustration and anger. When a young man feels that he has no future in the existing socio-economic order, the simplistic appeals of militant groups has a lot of attraction.



Official figures place the unemployment rate at about 12% in '82 and 18% in '88. Estimates for the 15-25 age group was higher — 25% in '82 and — 30% in '88. Using these pessimistic estimates we have calculated the total number of unemployed young men in '82 and '88. The figures respectively are 407,000 and 525,000.

Suppose an education programme or a business development programme has been initiated directed at improving the prospects of those who were potentially most likely to become militant group members and supporters — that is unemployed youth.

Assume the funds available would have been the funds we estimate as costs incurred due to violent conflicts. The total funds available for each unemployed youth per year for this programme would have been about Rs. 46,000/- or 1400 US \$. About 4 times Sri Lanka's annual G.D.P. per capita.

Consider one final indicator of opportunity cost which might be called the **economic cost per militant**. Estimates of core militant group members are even more hazardous than employment statistics. This is specially true in the case of the JVP. However, I have rarely seen estimates that place the core membership at greater than 5000. Here we will assume that the core membership of LTTE and its allies and the JVP was about 5000 respectively. Given this assumption the total annual impact per militant can easily be calculated. If one accepts such calculation as possible they suggest the potential power of a relatively small number of militants to impose costs on a third world society. Each tamil militant on the average has cost Sri Lanka a staggering sum of more than 580,000 US \$. Each Sinhala militant during a much shorter period of time has been responsible for cost of about 300,000 US \$. Moreover LTTE is still a powerful force. And

funds which are still being expected in 1989 and 1990 are not incorporated in these figures.

Proposals for massive youth training programmes may initially seem prohibitively costly or even fanciful. But a realistic assessment of the costs and benefits of the policies that were actually implemented might make this seem more attractive.

Violent political conflicts may resolve issues, restore order or effect changes. Sometimes Government or revolutionary forces destroy their opponents or force them to capitulate. Sometimes the costs of protracted conflicts become intolerable. These costs automatically affect all ethnic groups and social classes of a society, even the most rich and powerful. There comes a point when the economic costs of conflict can act as a powerful force promoting conflict resolution. On the other hand the potentially high costs of violent conflict make a strong case for conflict avoidance. Protracted conflict is not inevitable. It's the consequence of decisions for which individuals, militant groups and government leaders are responsible. In this talk I have proposed taking into account potential economic costs of inter ethnic, inter class, inter generational violent conflict into the decision making processes. I also favour co-operative cost-benefit analysis of options with less potential for violence. To cite one specific example more resources might have to be invested in a given region to promote ethnic harmony even though such spending might not be convincing on narrow cost benefit criteria. A given group or segment of society might be given special opportunities simply because of its members potential to create disruption. I do not minimise the political, institutional or even moral issues that such proposals raise. I only suggest that they be considered as alternatives to the *status quo*. The probable causes for decisions likely to precipitate violent con-

flict or produce a high potential for conflict should be fully assessed. Social change and development strategies should be sought that are less violent, costly and tragic.

## Nobel prize . . .

(Continued from page 8)

whole philosophical basis of external relations.

The former meant the demobilisation of 500,000 Soviet troops — a process which has only added to the extraordinary domestic upheaval within the Soviet Union.

Those troops have to be found jobs within a shrinking domestic economy. In addition, the thousands more being withdrawn from eastern Europe have no decent housing to return to in their home country — another key factor behind recent discontent amongst military commanders.

Mr Gorbachev's initiative in abandoning the class struggle as the basis of Soviet foreign policy, and inserting there, as in the rest of his policy, the primacy of the individual, was the real revolution in Soviet thinking. In its turn, that abandonment of ideology also helped many in the West do the same — although all the while no doubt quietly congratulating themselves on the real victory of their ideology.

The Soviet leader's achievement, with the unstinting support of both Mr Eduard Shevardnadze, his foreign minister, and Mr Alexander Yakovlev, his closest political adviser, has been to stick to the whole process of detente, disarmament and in essence, retreat, when the domestic backlash began to get serious.

Thus far, at least, he has succeeded in facing down the doubters.

His fate will now be decided, however, not by the success or failure of foreign policy, but by the economic fruits of his reforms.

— Financial Times

# The "Self" as Obstacle to Peace in Lanka

## (a Surrealist Essay)

G. Ramesh

To philosophise on a such a multidimensional tragedy will be futile some would say. Nevertheless it is true thought exists as a discipline, sometimes according to the discursive needs of institutions and at other times as something which undercuts these very needs. This irony of thought is a joke, pure and simple. Hence to philosophise in the face of such a tragedy is also a joke, a cruel one at that.

What if I divide the tragedy as cruelty, brutality or inhumanity on the one hand and retain the sensibility of joking to myself on the other? If I leave it at that, it would only mean that I would be absolved of all responsibility of participation in the tragedy. And since joking is an inevitable part of all culture, including Tamil just as it forms part of the unconscious of a person, I take it then this paper can be read out.

This paper is necessarily meant to be a strategic diversion while thinking on the condition of the Tamils of Lanka. Strategic, because any exercise of this kind has to contend with the militarist self as a phenomenon amongst the Sinhalese and then amongst the Tamils. Diversionary, because apart from offering narratological analyses, it may yet fail in doing its bit in terms of contributing towards the sedimentation of a political solution to the problems which have been faced by the Tamils of Lanka.

Then, is all that being said here only a reality on paper? This is a question that everyone here, including myself, would be tempted to ask. While waiting for your answers, I

must steal the magical words of Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, who said eight years ago at Stockholm, that the prize he was about to receive was more for the monstrous reality of Latin America, and not just for its expression in literature of which he is an acknowledged master. Such a reality lives within him he said, while declaring himself as but one cipher more, singled out by fortune.

My own position can be no different. Rebels and renegades intellectuals and criminals, ideologues and butchers, diplomats and prostitutes, warriors and scoundrels, chauvinists and peddlars, singers and destitutes, deserters and betrayers, all creatures of an unbridled reality, have been part of what I have been exposed about Lanka. Yet these lives have so far been rendered all too human and believable. I have not yet found an imagination which can freeze this monstrous reality in a narrative. If imagination has not helped me exactly, it is because I have also played out the role of a watcher despite my veneer of activism in support of Tamils. This has only meant that I was being then absolved of the responsibility which have talked of here.

At least now, it must be declared that there are only participants in the tragedy that is Lanka. There are no watchers. There cannot be, period.

Thus no one can approach Lanka in a way similar to the one explicated in *Stalker*, made by the Soviet filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, no stranger to Sweden. The film talks of a person approaching a strange geographical problem-zone somewhere in Siberia. Something similar to the situation of a

journalist, a photographer, a diplomat, an intellectual going to Lanka. The zone is a crisis which needs to be resolved, and the watching starts. A cold objectivity towards their object of analyses is maintained at least till the project is executed. Tarkovsky lets his hero approach the zone every-time after sleep, to ensure that the metaphor of unconscious gets through. As far as the visitor to Lanka is concerned the unconscious slowly comes to the fore and he/she gets fast dissatisfied with his/her narrative profession. Just as in *Stalker*, this is faced by taking recourse to an aesthetics or poetics of the zone. Either the final product, which is quite apart from the professional project, is a novel, written in times far removed from ours. Or it becomes a question of life and death as it did happen to a close friend. In order to give vent to the guilt and resentment about her role as the watcher, a belated realisation of the involvement in the tragedy.

The zone does not ultimately allow the hero of *Stalker* any space. The perfect modernist that he is, the hero is rejected by it. Once a watcher, the hero is unable to take the position of a storyteller of a bizarre encounter — someone who is willing to acknowledge his role as a participant in several possible ways in the tragedy, of having worked through the logics of various narratives contributing to the tragedy, of living through the metaphors which work their way out through the tragedy to its very finale.

The position, I am urging you to adopt is that of the storyteller in *Roshomon*, one



of the films of Japanese veteran Akira Kurasawa, in which a murder is retold as a multi-tued of possibilities, each outsmarting the other. Here, murder is sought to be made more and more logical, but suddenly a ghost in the form of a medium brings home the fact that murder can be irrational and the phenomenon is everyone's responsibility. That is murder, as a phenomenon, once again brings home the fact that the human subject eternally faces the threat of closure. There are only tales and tales of murders. Death, even as an induced phenomenon, becomes opened up as a battleground for newer and newer interpretations.

Yet, even in *Roshomon*, only a ghost, in the form of a medium, narrates the murder which has taken place. There is no narrative voice, in the form of a mad gypsy, which can be found in Garcia-Marquez *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, or that of the madman in his master William Faulkner's *Sound and the Fury*, or that of the mad other, in the Tamil novel *Naalai Matrumoru Naale* (*Tomorrow is yet another day*) by G. Nagarajan.

To put the question in the right tone, let me ask: what would be the language of a madman, say, in Jaffna, or Trincomalee, or Colombo to describe the ongoing madness of war? We simply have no clue. Or let us ask a more question more acceptable. How would a person going mad amongst the Tamils view the slow degeneration of a liberation struggle onto a seemingly endless spiral of war and its agony? We simply have no clue to his language, either of memory or expectancy, of the past or the future.

We may have an answer in the form of persons in the Jaffna peninsula who had lost their balance of time and space, at least temporarily, in the face of an unexpected offensive by the Indian troops beginning October 1987. With their hopes,

however naive, of the Indian good having collapsed, they had no language to fall back upon and simply went mad. The fact it was not confined to the naive must be recorded in the person of yet another close friend who teaches in the University of Jaffna.

I would say that their madness was proportionate to their unconscious beliefs fashioned on the innate goodness of India. Their academic and political education, if any, which may have rubbed their beliefs only on the surface, had not been of much worth here. The madness of the Indian offensive and the atrocities of Indian troops things which were beyond question in India. If it was questioned, "you must be mad, are you joking?" retorted D. Jayakanthan, the most progressivist, didactic and popular realist writer of late 20th Century Tamil. He went to the extent of declaring in a public meeting at Madras that persons be sent to sexually assault women companions of those in Tamil Nadu who were charging the Indian troops of committing atrocities.

Thus, the two logics, one not being able to question within the rationale of the Indian occupation, and the other, well on its way towards justifying the same, reciprocate each other in several ways. It must be noted here that such logics, which are of course sentimentally opposed to each other, can co-exist, reciprocate and even perpetuate each other. These are the logics of reaction not only in Tamil society but elsewhere, which have killed any possible residue of genuineness in action in resolving what could have existed just a political issue.

I had stated that we simply have no clue as to what a madman would have to say about the logic leading to the present state-of-affairs. This is surely because, during the last few years, all deaths and murders have become too rational. Murder or death, this way or the

other, of a militant or a soldier, of a Tamil or a Sinhala, of a dissenter or a moderate, operates as sheer cold logic, set out to make a point, illustrate a strategy, legitimise a language, fulfil the terms of an illusion of an agreement. So much so that it now hardly matters as to which player is making the current move and why. It is simply an unendgame of chess, with the players in need of a new language, a face-saving formula called the draw, or at least an adjournment of a ceasefire, to give relief to the weary pieces made to tumble out of the board into the Palk Straits and elsewhere.

But, is the fascination of the play of death something that easy to resist? Is it the justifiable feeling that someone else is always making sly moves, to jump to the centre stage?

I may be cautioned here, rightly so, of giving much less importance to the logic of repression of a chauvinist majority of Sinhala and the logic of revolt of a tormented minority of Tamils. I am aware of the fact that this narrative of distinction, having its own space and time, nevertheless has its validity if and only if the logic of revolt has an element of universality, of all minorities, here and elsewhere. In the language of mathematics, it is a necessary and sufficient condition, an apriori cognitive structure for the narrative of any revolt to assume an universal tone.

From what I had stated, it should not be hard to grasp that even such a logic may exclude the speech of such marginal characters integral to any culture as the madman, the joker, the wanderer etc. Yet, logics of revolt has been and can be sensitive enough to sustain to find one within the other — a plurality of narratives and maintain the ever-tenuous balance between sanity and madness, life and death, realms of private and the public etc, and not compress one into the other or establish clearcut distinctions between them.



For instance, it is necessary to retain and not suppress the inclusive voice of moderation despite the severest of provocations to do so. Moderation tells us when a struggle, which had graduated to the level of force, can degenerate into a fullscale war excluding the very people by whom the struggle was once launched. Moderation tells us when to arrest a revolt when it degenerates into an irredeemable chessgame. Moderation tells us what language must be spoken and what must be avoided in particular contexts. Moderation tells us that the heterogeneity and plurality of the culture, on whose behalf the struggle is launched, are strengths and not weaknesses to be exploited and domesticated.

Thus, the logic of revolt has to be inclusive if it has to be universal and not the other way. It has to respect all minorities, within and without, if it still wants to stake its claim to universality.

I must also mention here that the inclusion I have spoken of is not in the realm of articulation, but in the realm of action, because it is sheer indignity not to let the concerned minorities speak and to insist on speaking on their behalf.

But what is obtained today is not a narrative of inclusions, but a moral geography vis-a-vis the narratives on Lanka. This kind of moral geography has taken over long ago, but has also let itself pass away behind the screen of militant revolt. That is there are different sets of morals working for the North, the East and the South (and possibly one for the plantation areas). This moral geography can also be extended to India (and Tamil Nadu).

As has already been stated, moral geography by exclusions and media, as an apparatus most easily available for all the players in the game, whether they are in Jaffna, Colombo, New Delhi or London, offers itself as the vehicle of this moral geography.

It is one thing to accuse the media, both Lankan and Indian, of lying in the face of truth as evidenced in the countless militless campaigns against the Tamils, including the present war. The media certainly aspires to erect opaque narratives — of lies, as some would say. However, it must be noted that just as the cold logic of militancy perpetuates the reciprocity of murders, the media's narratives are sustained. Their sustenance is not because of their veracity or truth content, but due to their everydayness, newsmess, in the face of a history that is mute.

In other words, the media, especially the electronic ones, lie: they are lying and they know it, and they know, that we know, and we know they know that we know, and nothing changes, because of this everydayness involved. Thus media narrative is the history that keeps forgiving, perpetually so.

I have seen this happen time and again. When the Lankan and Indian media went ahead to celebrate the July 1987 agreement between the two governments as a "solution to the Tamil problem". Or when Prabhakaran's death and his resurrection were announced in quick succession by them in July 1989. Or later when the Lankan media declared the mystery of the capture and killing of Rohana Wijeweera in one epiphanic tone of revenge. Or when during the pullout of Indian troops in late 1989 when Chief Minister Varadaraja Perumal obliquely referred to the deaths of scores of Tamils at the hands of Indian troops "as a sacrifice made by us to win our rights" — something which he would not comment upon during the Indian occupation of Lanka. Or when Rajiv Gandhi wanted to usurp the hero's role by signing an agreement (a unique act not because of its destined failure due to circumstantial reasons, but because of its very indignity of speaking for someone else). Or when he declared in north India

after losing the 1989 elections that the new government in Delhi had delayed the pullout of Indian troops and was wasting Indian lives in Lanka, and at the same breath, said at Madras that the new government was not interested in saving Tamils since it was pulling out too fast.

Hence, the very presence of media underscores an impulse to redeem the past, forgive history, in a nostalgic and flippant manner. That is the media is able to present history as the listener would be able to have it according to the prevalent moral geography, creating an epistemology and ethics of its own.

(To be continued)

## Shadows...

(Continued from page 7)

Ticking away like a potential time-bomb beneath these social and political upheavals lies the worsening economy. Apart from inflation climbing into double digits, the current account deficit is likely to exceed \$10bn this financial year, making it almost inevitable that the government will have to borrow from the IMF's structural adjustment facility.

The conditions attached to this include measures such as pegging domestic oil prices to international levels, cuts in public spending and subsidies, tighter monetary policy and a greater opening of the economy to foreign investment and competition, both of which the government has been resisting.

Since the full impact of the Gulf crisis on the economy became apparent, the government's approach has been to carry through some of these measures in a limited and piecemeal fashion to avoid what it considers the political humiliation of IMF conditionality. But with time running out all fronts, Mr Singh could find that all his political and economic woes could come to a head at the same time.

*Financial Times*

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## N.E.P and Totalitarian Rule

Sumanasiri Liyanage

War Communism may have achieved what was expected of it, but brought the development of productive forces to a standstill. These experiences have revealed that extended nationalizations and the introduction of centralized system of management was premature in the context of a backward economy. This led Lenin to adopt his original programme of economic reconstruction. As Lenin puts it:

The New Economic Policy means substituting a tax for the requisitioning of food; it means reverting to capitalism to a considerable extent — to what extent we do not know. Concessions to foreign capitalists (true, only very few have been accepted, especially when compared with the number we have offered) and leasing enterprises to private capitalists *definitely mean restoring capitalism*, and this is part and parcel of the New Economic Policy; for the abolition of the surplus-food appropriation system means allowing the peasants to trade freely in their surplus agricultural produce, in whatever is left over after the tax is collected — and the tax takes only a small share of that produce. The peasants constitute a huge section of our population and of our entire economy, and that is why capitalism must grow out of this soil of free trading. (1966:64-5)

It was very clear to Lenin that this programme of reconstruction embodies not only contradictions but also certain dangers. No economic programme was free of them. The most important and at the same time, the most difficult task was to maintain and consolidate the power of the proletariat not by avoiding contradictions but by resolving them. He anticipated that the NEP would strengthen the capitalist class, differentiate

peasantry and create NEP men and kulaks. But that is only one side of the picture. What are the long term implications?

(If) capitalism gains by (the NEP), industrial production will grow, and the proletariat will grow too. The capitalists will gain from our policy and will create an industrial proletariat, which in our country, owing to the war and to the desperate poverty and ruin, has become declassed, i.e., dislodged from its class groove, and has ceased to exist as a proletariat. The proletariat is the class which is engaged in the production of material values in large-scale capitalist industry has been destroyed, since the factories are at a standstill, the proletariat has disappeared... It has not been held together economically. (Lenin 1966:65-6)

The above quotation suggests that as a pre-requisites of socialism, the system of an association of free producers, co-operative production on a large-scale, the development of a technique which ensures economy of time, the numerical strength of the working class and the growth of its consciousness should be established. When these conditions are absent, there is no doubt that any attempt to develop productive forces through the operation of the market forces encompasses, to a considerable extent, capitalist restoration. True, such a capitalist development may endanger the very existence of the proletarian regime but at the same time, since it increases the proportion of the working class in the population, the very foundation of the proletarian regime can also be strengthened in the long term.

It seems to me that Lenin based his ideas on a very important distinction between proletarian consciousness required for coming to power and that needed for the reconstruction

of the economy, society and polity. While the first arises in a short-term, instinctive and conjunctural manner, the second is based on long-term, conscious and organized perspective. Such a perspective could be realized only on the basis of a numerically strong, culturally advanced, administratively skilful class of proletariat which has been held together economically. This is definitely a long process but in a political economic sense, there is no room for 'skipping over' of stages in the development of productive forces. When Lenin was alive, major differences on the NEP had not emerged and differences were confined to the issue of whether the NEP should be extended to other areas by providing legal and administrative measures or whether it should be adopted with care as a very short-term measure thus looking at the possibilities of moving towards planned development.

In the late '20s, the political dangers of the NEP came to the surface and were, I believe, to a considerable extent exaggerated. The Communist leadership, except for the Bukharinist wing, had finally decided to give up the NEP perspective. Stalin who took an adventurist left stand moved to nationalize nearly all the means of production and distribution thus almost completely disintegrating the Left opposition which campaigned for a programme of rapid industrialization and gradual collectivization. Hence, there emerged a system backed and defended by the totalitarian rule.

The peasants did not join the *kolkhozy* because they were attracted by their superior efficiency or the virtues of cooperation: They were driven into them. Neither were the workers the masters of the nationalized factories. Planning had nothing to do with democratic control and a great deal with imposing discipline on uprooted peasants. The mechanism of command from above could not be equated



with Marx's conception of the associated producers attempting to gain mastery over their labour and their fate; but it was described as socialism. (Singer 1989:3)

The inherent weaknesses of the Russian model of over-centralized planning and extensive nationalization associated with the undemocratic system of management and control were revealed by the constant crisis of Soviet agriculture and the technological backwardness of its industries. On a number of occasions, the necessity for the introduction of market mechanism was initiated. Stalin (1952) was theoretically correct when he stressed the importance of the market in the period of transition, but he himself failed to introduce the necessary changes in this direction mainly because of the inherent rigidities of the system.

#### *Performances of the Soviet Growth Model*

The main attraction of the Soviet Model for the Third World countries is the rapid development process it unleashed in Soviet Russia. The centrally commanded economic planning and the regimented political structure were capable of increasing production at an absolutely high rate. Trotsky, a severe critic of Stalin's policies, had this to say in 1936:

Gigantic achievements in industry, enormously promising beginnings in agriculture, an extraordinary growth of the old industrial cities and a building of new ones, a rapid increase of the number of workers, a rise in cultural level cultural demands — such are the indubitable results of the October revolution, in which the prophets of the old world tried to see the grave of human civilization. (1967:8)

Writing in 1963, Dobb notes;

Despite the ravages of war and invasion... the output-capacity of standard products like coal and oil and electricity and steel stands today at between 10 and 20 times the level 30 odd years ago at the

Table 1. Production of selected items (1928-1972)

| Product                        | 1928 | 1972 | annual growth rate % |
|--------------------------------|------|------|----------------------|
| Steel (mn. tons)               | 4.3  | 126  | 64.3                 |
| Coal (mn. tons)                | 35.5 | 166  | 39.6                 |
| Oil (mn. tons)                 | 11.6 | 394  | 74.9                 |
| Electricity (kw. hrs)          | 5.0  | 858  | 387.7                |
| Mineral Fertilizers (mn. tons) | 0.13 | 66   | 1153.3               |
| Motor vehicles ( '000)         | .84  | 1379 | 3728.8               |
| Tractors ( '000)               | 1.3  | 478  | 833.4                |
| Cement (mn. tons)              | 1.8  | 104  | 129.0                |
| Leather Footwear (mn. mt)      | 58   | 645  | 23.0                 |
| Cotton cloth (mn mt)           | 2678 | 6419 | 3.2                  |
| Woolen fabrics (mn. mt)        | 86   | 681  | 15.7                 |
| Linen fabrics (mn. mt)         | 174  | 775  | 7.8                  |
| Silk fabrics (mn. mt)          | 9.6  | 1270 |                      |
| Grain (mn. tons)               | 73.3 | 168  | 2.9                  |

quoted from Dobb (1963:34)

time of the launching of the First Five Year Plan. Since, to get a true picture of the rate of growth, we have to exclude most of the war decade of the forties, this has to be regarded as the achievement of two and a half decade of peace-time construction. (1963 :33)

The available data support this observation.

These figures are undoubtedly impressive, but should be handled with care since they might have been, to a certain extent, inflated for propaganda purposes. The figures also indicate a substantial disparity between growth rates of capital goods sector and consumer goods sector. The growth rates of basic wage — goods have been relatively low. The other important factor is that rate of growth in itself is not an adequate index of economic development. Trotsky writes;

The dynamic coefficients of Soviet industry are unexampled. But they are still far from decisive. The Soviet Union is lifting itself from a terribly low level, while the capitalist countries are slipping from a very high one. The correlation of forces at the present moment is determined not by the rate of growth, but by contrasting the entire power of the two

camps as expressed in material accumulations, technique, culture and, above all, the productivity of human labour. When we approach the matter from this statistical point of view, the situation changes at once, and to the extreme disadvantage of the Soviet Union. (1967:9)

The last sentence holds true, even today, for the Soviet Union. This relative weakness of the Soviet economy is clearly revealed when the economic performances of the Western industrialized countries and Japan. The system designed for illiterate *muzhiks* became clearly obsolete and obstacle for further development' (Singer 1989:3). The system has developed an in-built mechanism which opposes creativity and rejects innovations.

The most important fact from the historical point of view is that socialism — as an alternative model of socialized production — has not been able to absorb, and even less to develop, new techniques in a natural way. Performances are so bad that all attempts at improving the mechanism are, in advance, doomed to failure for simple reason that, according to some views, socialism has not succeeded to create an economic mechanism. (Pjanic 1989:7)

# Helping the Poor Pensioner

**Christopher Sabaratnam**

**U**nder the caption "How pensions were revised in 1987-88" appearing in the *Sunday Times* of 16th October, 1988, it had been claimed that the disparity that existed between those who retired after 78 and before 78 had been removed by a monthly compensatory allowance from 1982". I have maintained that it was only a pretentious allowance for the reason that it amounted to a small fraction of the actual loss. In that press report it was also claimed (a) that a demand from the pensioners who retired prior to 88 to revise their pensions on the basis of the new salaries paid to public servants was considered and in the result the cabinet had ruled that the minimum increase should be limited to Rs. 200/- p.m. and the maximum to Rs. 1800/- p.m. and (b) that "the 1987 revision of pensions was intended to bring the pensions of those who retired before 1.1.85 and those who retired after that date on par". But the outcome was yet another bluff. For instance, the maximum salary of Rs. 815/- p.m. for class 1 that obtained in the year 1977 and referred to herein in the instance of the officer who retired at 55 in 1977 had been, on 1.1.88, raised to Rs. 2750/- p.m. entitling him to a pension of Rs. 2200/- computed at 80 percent in accordance with table A (quantum of pensions unreduced) of the department of pensions circular No. PH/3044/E of 19. 8. 1985 plus the C.L.A. of Rs. 504/- that was merged. But his pension after an increase of Rs. 110/- on 1.1.87 and another increase of Rs. 230/- on 1.1.88 remained at Rs. 1808/- (inclusive of the C.L.A. of Rs. 504/- merged) which was Rs. 896/- short of the actual quantum of Rs. 2704/- (2200+504) due to him. The range of increase Rs. 200/- to Rs. 1800/- p.m. stipulated in the

said ruling of the cabinet had only been scantily given effect to. Whilst the said retired officer's pension was increased by only Rs. 230/- on 1.1.88 I wonder to which category of pensioners then was the high side of the range Rs. 200/- to Rs. 1800/- applied.

Whilst admittedly the demand for revision of pensions on the basis of increased salaries had been met, though scantily, it was also stated in the said press report that 'no legislation yet existed to revise pensions on the basis of increased salaries' as if the absence of it, was a justification for the omission to revise the pensions adequately. Should the government blow hot and blow cold in the matter of the poor pensioners? On the other hand, it is the government and not the pensioners who should enact the legislation.

## Pensioners Immune to Consumers' Price Index?

The salaries of public servants had been increased with effect from 1.1.1988. The increase was inclusive of the merger of the C.L.A. which was frozen at Rs. 504/- about three years ago. The pensions of retired public servants too were increased inclusive of the merger of the said C.L.A. of Rs. 504/- as from 1.1.1988. But the new C.L.A. on the basis of the price index paid with effect from 1.1.88 to non-staff grade public servants, namely those in receipt of a consolidated salary of less than Rs. 2975/- p.m., is denied to even pensioners drawing less than Rs. 2975/- p.m. Does the trader sell his goods to the pensioners at the pre-increased price? Or have the pensioners who draw below Rs. 2975/- p.m. since been classified as staff grade pensioners for the purpose of this discrimination?

## Wretched Plight

About 90% of the near 200,000 pensioners, are languishing without adequate means of livelihood—adequate means which they did earn by serving the government through the best years of their lives.

## Strike can they

Why are the pensioners so neglected? Unlike public officers in service, the pensioners, old and feeble as most of them are, cannot strike or demonstrate to win their demands.

## Self-Service

All in a flash the top-level executives and legislators have stepped up their own allowances to five figures while the underpayment to the pensioners, some of them belatedly acknowledged and others remain unsettled. The directive principles of State Policy, in the Constitution are:

"27 (2) (b): the promotion of the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order, . . .";

"27 (2) (c): the realization by all citizens of an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families including adequate food, clothing and housing, the continuous improvement of living conditions, . . .";

"27 (2) (e): the equitable distribution among all citizens of the material resources of the community and the social product, . . .";

"27 (7) : The state shall eliminate economic and social privileges and disparity and the exploitation of man by man or by the state."

"27 (9) : The state shall ensure social security and welfare."

(Continued on page 20)



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# Let the herbal flowers bloom

V. I. S. Jayapalan

**R**ecently some of the National weeklies have published many articles on the complex ethnic question. Frank discussion between various ethnic groups in a free and healthy atmosphere has been absent in this country since independence. This led to the growth of narrow Sinhalese, Tamil and later Muslim nationalism. Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim "national identity" never developed progressively as a component of greater Sri Lankan nationalism. "Let the thousand herbal flowers of genuine inter-ethnic dialogue bloom to heal the ailment of our Motherland" should be our cry today.

All ethnic groups tend to unite. Ethnicity produces the strongest and largest social organization of a particular group, influenced by its socio-economic and cultural development. This historical process cannot be prevented, if a particular ethnic group has been fortified with geographic contiguity. It may then develop in the direction of Nationhood. This process of development in a Multi-Ethnic country leads to the demand for Regional autonomy. Some countries respond positively and make necessary Constitutional and institutional arrangements to accommodate these developments. A good example is the recent History of Canada. Any attempts to turn the wheel of history will lead to violence and ultimately to the division of the country. The Creation of Bangladesh in South Asia is a recent example for this phenomenon.

This process started in Europe during the 19th century when society was in ferment after the Industrial Revolution. With capitalist development, Europe started to shrink. Languages played a major role as the agents

of unity of the people, subdivided by feudal administrative boundaries of various kingdoms. The linguistic social groups which had geographic contiguity emerged as Nations. Since then the creation of nation-states or federal states became the formula to solve the ethnic problems in multi-ethnic countries. The German people scattered among various feudal kingdoms united and became one nation. The former kingdom of Sweden divided peacefully on ethnic grounds into Sweden and Norway. Switzerland became a Federal State. The experiences of the 19th century Europe is helpful to understand what is taking place in some Third-World countries with a multi-ethnic character, such as our own Island.

## ETHNIC STRUCTURE IN SRI-LANKA

In Sri Lanka two major languages are spoken by four major ethnic groups namely — Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and up-country Tamils (Indian Tamils). Among them Sinhalese and Tamils enjoy greater geographical contiguity. This is the secret of the emergence of strong Sinhala and Tamil nationalism and chauvinism here.

Sixty percent of Muslims and most of the up-country Tamils are spread out in the Sinhalese-dominated provinces. The rest of the Muslims and Up-country Tamils are spread over in the Tamil-dominated North and Eastern provinces.

Around 40 percent of the Muslims are in the Northern and Eastern provinces. In the coastal regions of the Amparai district and again the coastal region of the northern most, Puttalam district (Puttalam and Kalpitiya A. G. A. Divisions). Muslims have the social and geographic background to deve-

lop their own strongholds. Even in the coastal regions of Amparai district, Muslim regions are cut into two by the Tamil A.G.A. division of Thirukovil.

Co-ordinating and organising Muslims under "Common Fronts" to defend their common interest becomes a difficult task because of the geographic distribution, coupled with their "dependent" economic activities. This situation have made them compromised with the then growing Sinhala nationalism, after the Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1915.

The up-country Tamils are recent migrants to North-East Provinces. This migration started after 1970 and concentrated in the mainland regions of the Northern province. Where they are living mostly in their own enclaves with a much lower-level of integration with native Tamils. They are also unable to retain their Indian-Tamil identity in the context of a strong Tamil nationalism.

Up-country Tamils are both the most organized and most victimised ethnic group in Sri Lanka. The situation created by the implementation of the Srimala-Shastri pact of 1964, increasing physical attacks against the Estate Tamil population following the implementation of the Land Reform Act of 1972, major and minor communal riots which took place mainly in the isolated low-grown and mid-grown tea areas led to a three pronged migration of the up-country Tamils (1) towards high-grown tea areas centered around Hatton high-lands, (2) towards South India (3) towards Northern and Eastern provinces.

Because of these trends the upcountry Tamils concentrated mostly in the high-grown areas have developed better territorial contiguity.

Upcountry Tamils being the only wholly organized popula-

*(The writer is a well known Tamil poet and intellectual)*



tion in the island and because of its connection to a highly important plantation industry are fast developing into a powerful ethnic group.

The Sri Lankan ethnic question is always viewed as a problem between Sinhalese and Tamils only. To ignore the intensity of the problems faced by the Muslims and Upcountry-Tamils is short-sighted. Special arrangements to solve the ethnic problems of the Muslims and Upcountry-Tamils should be evolved. The provincial councils in such areas should be used to cope with this problem.

The real problem we face now is not this historical process itself. The real problem is the lack of understanding of this historical process even on the part of Sri Lankan intellectuals. Our political system and constitution are not elastic enough to accommodate this development. There are no socio-economic, cultural and political institutions and a national media to regulate this process as a component of a greater Sri Lankan nationalism.

Only a few countries in 19th and early 20th century Europe, escaped nation-state division, through a federal system or similar constitutional changes.

A Solution of the National Question is one of the primary needs of socio-economic development of a multi-ethnic country. The multi-ethnic societies of Europe "solved" this question by adopting federal structures or by separation.

Most of the newly industrialized countries are either mono-ethnic nation-states like Korea and Hong Kong or countries which adopted appropriate measures to ensure the equality of all ethnic groups, like Singapore is predominantly Chinese. None of the minority ethnic groups have regional strongholds and the possibilities of developing significant resistance against the Chinese majority are limited.

Though poor, the experience of India, a fast-growing industrial power is also important. Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress, controlled by growing national-

capitalist elements accepted the creation of linguistic States in India. Even though the Indian system is not a fullfledged federal system it was a wise and timely step to accommodate the development of various ethnic groups in the direction of nationhood within the framework of united India. The most important aspect of the Indian approach is that the Indian intellectuals and elite leadership took this decision even after the creation of Pakistan. They had the courage and foresight to read the lessons of history. But in some Third-World countries which have no similar experience of violent division the intelligentsia and the politicians belonging to the ethnic majority, panic when they hear even the word "federation". They try to take their countries away from History. This is what happened in Pakistan which led to division and Bangladesh. For us too these lessons from the South Asian historical experience are important.

The possibility of Sinhalese and Tamils getting together to exploit other ethnic groups also cannot be neglected. This took place in 1947 in Sri Lanka against the interests of Indian Tamils. History proves such attempts counter-productive.

Consider Yugoslavia. The ethnic groups of Yugoslavia got together and accepted the federal system as the basis of unity. But they left the Albanians at the mercy of the Serbians and they were subsequently oppressed. "Unity" with this type of double-standard arrangement is not the "Unity" built on firm foundations. The present problems of that country and growth of greater Serbian chauvinism are striking examples.

### Helping. . .

(Continued from page 17)

### Remedy

Should the government, be inclined to ameliorate the wretched conditions of the pensioners here are the measures that warrant immediate attention:

(I) Abolish with effect from say 1.1.91 all the different

methods of computation of pensions that were introduced from time to time, except the last method introduced on 1.1.85 under pension circular No. PH/3044/E of 19.8.1985.

(2) Effective from 1.1.90 apply the above said method introduced on 1.1.85 to all pensioners — sterling and W. and O. pensioners inclusive, further basing their pensions on their retiring salaries hypothetically equated to what they had been increased to on 1.1.88 as the case may be.

(3) Maintain a uniform method of computation of pensions for all pensioners without distinction of grade, retiring salary, date of retirement, sex and marital status in each instance of liberalisation of pension schemes in the future.

(4) Reckon 135% of the pension currently in receipt as the retiring salary for purposes of eligibility to attest signatures or stand surety in a generality of instances which require a particular minimum retiring salary for such a status.

(5) Pay compensation for the loss caused by:

(I) the omission to pay the sterling pensioners at the average exchange rate of the pound that obtained in each year.

(II) the failure to compute the pension on the consolidated salary to those who retired after 30.9.69 and before 1.1.1978.

(III) the failure to compute the pension on the retiring salary hypothetically equated to the amount to which it was increased in each instance of salary revision.

(IV) the failure to recompute the pension of those who retired prior to 1.1.1985 on the new formula introduced on 1.1.85 under pension circular No. PH/3044/E of 19.8.1985.

(V) the failure to pay Married allowance to the widows of pensioners from the date of their pensioner husbands' death to 31.12.1986.

(VI) Omission to pay the C.L.A. warranted by the price index as from January, 1988.

# Conceptualising Ethnicity and Identity

Laksiri Jayasuriya

What the notion of 'ethnic identity', derived from individual membership of 'ethnic groups', reveals is the conjunction of culture and ethnicity and is evident in the discourse of cultural pluralism where culture is virtually synonymous with ethnicity. Within this problematic, ethnicity is defined primarily in terms of cultural distinctiveness or, more briefly, normative life styles. This perspective of characterising 'ethnic identity' complements the 'cognitive-anthropology' tradition of culture theorising with an emphasis on ideational and affective value systems. In these accounts of ethnic identity, although the central element is the feeling of common descent, they incorporate as 'marker variables', other shared cultural characteristics such as common language, religion, nationality, historical origin etc.

As a rule theorists adopting this basically subjective approach to ethnicity rely on self-definition, i.e., people must perceive themselves as belonging to a distinct ethnic group, which in turn is recognised as a descent group, and also differentiated as such by significant others. In other words, individuals need to identify themselves and be identified as different by others (Isajiw 1974:115). By according pride of place to feelings of common descent, these defining features are seen as binding, inelastic and pervasive 'primordial roots'. The main criticism offered of the 'primordial' point of view is that it tends to reify the culture-ethnicity nexus, and misrepresent transitory, situationally determined phenomena as being immutable, genuine and 'authentic'. This involves a form of reductionism to the essentials of culture, to fixed cultural traits, (e.g., the stereotype of Asian culture as endowed with strong

family ties, overtly submissive etc.). As noted, this mode of analysis is vulnerable to the systematic objections previously made of culture theorising.

In contrast to these primordial and subjective definitions of ethnicity, there are others which are based more directly on discernible objective characteristics for differentiating between ethnic groups in terms of their 'interests' as a social category, e.g., in terms of their minority status, their gender, class etc. These definitions are based mainly on the shared possession of designated cultural characteristics such as a common race, religion, ancestry, national or geographic origin etc. The 'boundary markers,' i.e. the physical or cultural attributes used in defining an ethnic group, vary from group and hence these defining attributes may change over time as the nature of an ethnic group (e.g., form it takes, its ethnic content etc.) also undergoes important changes over time.

These interest-based approaches are, as a rule, more sociological than anthropological, and resort grounds of inclusion/exclusion in labelling social categories as 'ethnic groups'. With these definitions, ethnicity is not immutable; and its nature, content and form could change depending on the prevailing social and political situation of these groups. These 'interest' definitions of ethnicity being more flexible, adaptable and accommodating to social reality, are more consistent with dynamic cognitive-structural understanding of culture advanced by theorists like Williams. Here 'identity' is formed and constituted within the complex of social practices. To use Freudian terminology, identity may be 'over-determined' in that it is not closed and fixed, but is the outcome of complex and changing influences.

What needs to be highlighted here is that ethnic identity, as a facet

of the broader identity concept differs markedly depending on how one conceptualises ethnicity and ethnic group membership. In particular, it brings to the fore an ideal type distinction between notions of **primordial identity** and **situational identity**. One of the former is the relative permanence, greater centrality and salience attached to ethnic identity. On the other hand, as Yinger rightly observes, in the case of 'situational ethnicity', salience and dominance of ethnic attachments will vary as a function of attitudes and feelings because of different individual experiences' (1986:27).

Thus, for example, second and third generations of migrant origin sometimes referred to as 'hyphenated', Australians, may manifest their ethnicity in different ways because of their particular social, political and economic circumstances. Gans (1979) has depicted one such manifestation as 'symbolic ethnicity' where this is only an expression of nostalgia for their parents' and grandparents' ethnicity without any real sense of ethnic affiliation. Similarly, as de Vos (1975). Weinreich (1986) and others, maintain, because of mobility in open social systems like Australia, there occurs the phenomenon of 'passing'; i.e.,

when people cross social boundaries they are likely to experience disjunctions in the way in which they relate to other people (1986:304).

As a rule, people move from 'one bounded situation' to another, and because of their marginality in a membership group, they feel, experience and act differently and experience their identity concerns in different ways. Therefore, it is highly misleading to assume that there is fixed sense of 'ethnic identity' which always enters into the behavioural equation. To quote Olzak,

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Ethnicity emerges as a basis for collective action when there are clear advantages attached to ethnic identity (1986: 254).

In other words, ethnicity is a resource to be mobilised in defined circumstances (e.g., marginality, alienation, social discrimination, unemployment etc.), and the extent to which ethnicity gains in salience will determine the ethnic attachments and strength of the identity evoked. For this reason alone, 'cultural' analysis at the level of an ethnic or cultural group, exemplified in communication training strategies such as attribution training or those devoted to imparting knowledge and information about 'cultures' or ethnic groups, may be of little value as a way of influencing and changing the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions.

In developing a conceptual framework for understanding cross-cultural communication, it is important to distinguish analytically, influences occurring at a macro-level from those at a microlevel. This is of course the perennial problem of relating cultural and other social facts — the domain of anthropological and sociological theorising — to individual behaviour which is the province of psychology. In the present context, in considering macro-level influences, we need to understand how cultural and ethnic factors are manifested in every day behaviour such as in cross-cultural communication situations in settler societies like Australia.

Foremost among these considerations is how the political society responds to these newcomers and the groups to which they belong. Here, Smith pointedly reminds us that social categories such as race, ethnicity and culture depend for their significance in each society on 'their relation to prevailing structures of incorporation, and on the composition and alignments of groups' (1986: 198) in society. As far as Australia is concerned, this incorporation has shifted from one of assimilationism to a mild form of cultural pluralism, allowing ethnic groups to co-exist with the do-

minant groups of the host society.

As far as ethnicity is concerned, from a policy perspective, it is defined arbitrarily in terms of administrative categories such as religion, nationality, geographical area of origin language etc; and these categorizations are based on a complex intermix of differentiating criteria. Thus, for example, as in the United States, in discussing the so-called 'ethnic factor' we in Australia are usually able to identify eight broad 'ethnic' categories, viz. Native Australian Aborigines, British, Irish, Mediterraneans, North Europeans, Latin Americans, Middle and West Asians and other Asians. These arbitrary *ad hoc* groupings are based on mixed criteria and, in a strict sense, contain several ethnic groups as in the case of Asian (or when labelled as 'Ethnic Chinese'); or pan-cultural clusters (e.g., Middle and West Asians, even when labelled simply as Muslim Jews); or the case of the Jews and Muslims where the similarity is based on religion; and on language in relation to ethnic groupings such as Tamils or Hispanics.

These newly created 'ethnicities' as a result of administrative labelling (e.g., the newly established Asian Consultative Council) may or may not have any bearing on manifestations of ethnicity, or individual identity, but they serve to draw pointed attention to the fact that the boundaries delineating 'ethnic groups' differ markedly in nature and scope; and depending on how they are constructed, create different levels of awareness. This is, indeed, a perplexing dilemma for those engaged in cross-cultural training such as cultural awareness type training programmes, attribution training etc.

## VI. Identity and Communication

Turning to the micro-level of conceptual analysis, we confront the difficult, but nevertheless important, task of having to translate culture and ethnicity as public facts on to the

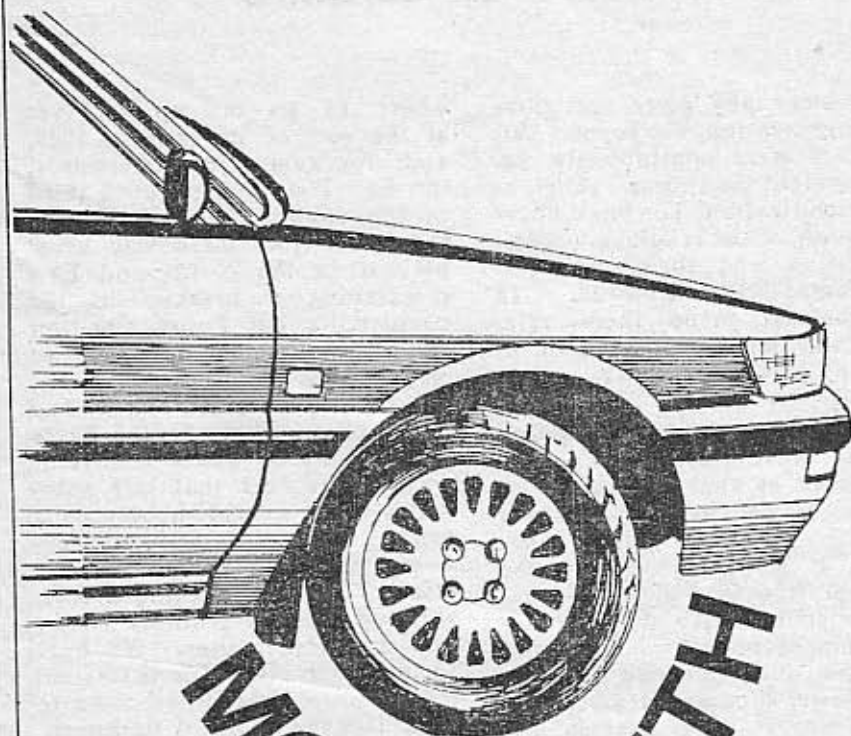
domain of individual behaviour as part of the interactive dynamics of the social psychology of communication. As far as behaviour in communication interactions is concerned, I have previously argued that this may be fruitfully explored by invoking the concept of identity. In the case of cross-cultural communication, 'social identity, may be a useful mediating concept to link the cultural and individual dimensions of social functioning.

Westen (1985) in a challenging review of the systematics of this issue, correctly argues, paraphrasing Erikson, that the concept of identity may be viewed as a 'process' at 'the core of personality as well as the core of culture' (1988: 377). Cultural influences on communication, therefore, may be conceptualised within an actor's internal frame of reference. Interestingly, this mode of thinking is also utilised by Lange & Westin (1984), where they employ the concept of identity strategically in their study of ethnic relations. The latter is developed within the broad framework of social identity theory, associated with Tajfel (1982) and others, and for our purposes provides a useful model to apply in the context of cross-cultural communication theory.

Briefly, social identity, from this viewpoint, refers to an individual's membership of various groups and the resultant experience of a self-image which in turn becomes a key determinant of social action. The concept of ethnic identity is by no means co-terminous with social identity, but forms a part of one's larger sense of identity which includes other identities such as gender, occupation, family, social class etc. As Weinreich notes, this approach avoids reifying a particular aspect of identity and recognises that 'the meaning and experience of "ethnic identity" will vary from one ethnic group to another (1986: 309), and also between individuals within a given ethnic group.

(Continued on page 24)

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## Dissent from paradise isle to heart of darkness

Izeth Hussain

It will not do to argue that Afro-Asian dictatorships have merely reverted to the traditions of "Oriental despotism", which itself is a Eurocentric misconception going as far back as Herodotus. For in the traditional Afro-Asian polities power was controlled or constrained in important ways. Otherwise the great Afro-Asian civilizations would never have arisen. In Africa the tribal governments were based on consensus. Perhaps Nyerere was right in saying that the West had nothing to teach the Africans about democracy but unfortunately, as far as I am aware, he did not explore the problem of why so many African governments today tyrannically deny consensus. Both in Africa and in Asia, Governments were constrained by tradition and custom, as well as by occasional rebellions and the threat of rebellion should abuse of power go too far. Above all, in Asia secular power was constrained by the religious order, as can be seen from just a glance at the Mahavamsa. Innumerable texts both ancient and modern can be listed in support of this thesis, including texts from our own Ananda Coomaraswamy who however became excessively philological in dealing with this subject. Let me quote instead from an authority on the subject, the Israeli scholar S. N. Eisenstadt who wrote in his book *Tradition, Change and Modernity*, that because of the ultimately religious character of certain societies,

"... the rulers of these societies were dependent on the religious organizations both for the maintenance of their traditional legitimation and for the provision of the more flexible resources. Hence they were in the long run to some extent less free in their manoeuvres towards the religious organizations. In the short run the rulers could

destroy any given religious organization, but beyond this they were continuously dependent on some religious organization. The basic autonomy of the religious organization and their transcendental orientations, in contrast, made them relatively more independent of any particular polity."

Until the coming of Western democracy, the traditional polity of the West, was fundamentally the same as that of Asia, with secular power being constrained by the religious order. That Asian polity as well as the African tradition of consensual government, broke down under the impact of colonialism, and for the most part we have in Afro-Asia supposed democracies which enjoy power that is not constrained on any regular basis, either by the dissent implied in consensual government or by the power of dissent formerly held by the religious order. The Afro-Asian governments which refuse to allow dissent are not being true to the traditions of Afro-Asian civilization, and they have to be regarded as the manifestations of a decadence. Their economic and other performance is poor, which I believe is the result of unconstrained power.

I will now make some observations on the peculiar case presented by Sri Lanka, which some might consider as the most peculiar of all the Third World countries for the reason that at the time of its independence in 1948 it was regarded as having the finest prospects for economic and other development, while in 1988 — 1989 it gave the impression of sinking into savagery. There are other dark places on earth, of course, but what makes Sri Lanka so peculiar is the contrast with the prospects offered at the time of its independence. When the 1977 Government assumed office, it appeared that Sri Lanka had no-

where to go but up, and yet at the end of its term in 1988, and for some time afterwards, we had lost control of a third of the country and almost half the coast-line, there was a rebellion in the North and East threatening a breakup of the country, a Pol Potist rebellion in the South from which we were saved only because the army held steadfast, and we had the soldiers of the Indian Peace Keeping Force whose behaviour was of the sort that one associates with a brutish occupying army. And, of course, the economy was in a shambles. The climax came in burning bodies, floating bodies, bodiless heads, and headless bodies. We have to ask ourselves how it was that the paradise island had come to look like the heart of darkness.

(To be continued)

## Conceptualising...

(Continued from page 22)

Following on the same lines as Tajfel (1982) Weinreich (1986) and others in the tradition of European social psychology, Lange & Westin (1984) interpret identity as a complex concept which basically has two main aspects. One is in terms of social identity, i.e., in terms of how one is defined by others, but also includes sub-identities as to how others regard the individual as a person or as a member of a social category such as an ethnic group. The other key aspect is personal identity regarded as one's definition of oneself, either as a member of a social category (e.g., as a member of an ethnic group). Ethnic identity can therefore be seen as it is externally defined. As each of these forms of identity and sub-identities can interact with individual and social circumstances there is a constant process of definition and redefinition which entails the possibility of identity conflicts.

(To be continued)

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