

● **SRI LANKA – CRISIS OF THE STATE**

– *Urmila Phadnis*

LANKA

GUARDIAN

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AFTER V. P. SINGH WHAT ?



INDIAN CRISIS

- **CHANDRA SHEKHAR SPEAKS** — *Anikendra Nath Sen*
- **No light at tunnel's end** — *Nikhil Chakravartty*
- **Hindu Extremism, Muslim Fears** — *David Housego*
- **Going the Mexican way ?** — *Steve Coll*
- **Rajiv calls the shots** — *Mervyn de Silva*

● **Moor identity**

● **Dissent**

● **Trotsky**

● **Althusser**



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Concern for Muslims

Muslim representatives from 80 countries met in Libya to discuss the Gulf crisis and also the position of Muslim minorities in other countries. It was an extraordinary meeting of the World Islamic Peoples Leadership. Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader M. H. M. Ashraff said after the meeting that one of the resolutions called on the Sri Lanka government to provide protection for the Muslims here.

It was also reported that Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi had offered to do "anything" to help Muslims in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile the Sri Lanka government took several steps to assist Muslims fleeing Tiger (LTTE) attacks in the North.

Passport turnover

Same-day passports earned the government Rs 33.8 million in the five months since this scheme was introduced on June 1. To get their passports over

the counter in one day 26,850 people paid an additional fee of Rs 500 (normal all-countries passport charge: Rs 1,300). In addition to the same-day issues about a thousand people collect passports through normal applications each day, after a wait of several days.

LALITH'S FRIENDS

I wonder how the Minister of Education Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali reacted when he learnt that the Israeli military contacts and secret services his party used in trying to liquidate the LTTE had double-crossed the UNP. Ostrovsky has claimed in his recently released book, *By Way of Deception* that Sri Lankan commandos and their Tamil rivals were trained on different sides of the same base (by the MOSSAD) with Israel selling arms to both sides

Sachi Sri Kantha

Medical College,
Philadelphia, USA.

Briefly . . .

● Government forces secured Mannar town after landing from air and sea clearing the way for about 40,000 Muslim refugees to return, according to a senior military source. Muslim inhabitants of the area had earlier been chased away by the LTTE.

Many fatalities and much suffering accompanied this mass exodus of Muslims often by boat across the sea from Mannar to Kalpitiya. In one instance a child had fallen into the sea from the frozen arms of its mother in the night; the mother was unaware of her loss till the boat landed at Kalpitiya.

When the soldiers landed in Mannar the Tigers had put up no resistance and had withdrawn rapidly into the jungles. The terrorists appeared to avoid contact, a military source said.

In Colombo President Premadasa issued special directives for the accommodation of Muslim refugees, including the setting up of makeshift class rooms for Muslim children to continue their education. The President also visited Mannar and refugee camps where Muslims were accommodated.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Assemblies of Muslim Youths in Sri Lanka (FAMYS) called a press conference to warn of rising Muslim militancy and announce preparedness to raise an army of 15,000 youths to defend Muslim villages against Tamil terrorist attacks.

(To next page)

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GCEC OVERHAUL

● President Premadasa ordered an overhaul of operations of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC) to attract more foreign investors, after he inspected the GCEC headquarters in Colombo. Though much benefit had accrued to the country through the GCEC there was also much room for improvement; the President said and called for a reorientation of approach to meet modern-day requirements.

The GCEC headquarters should be geared to provide a prospective investor all required data within 24 hours, the President noted.

PAY HIKE

● State employees and pensioners will get a pay increase

from November 1. The increases are as follows: An additional allowance of Rs 300 for those whose initial salary is less than Rs 2000 per month; an additional allowance of Rs 200 for those whose initial salary is between Rs 2000 to Rs 3000. These extra payments will cost the state Rs 2700 million per year.

The government's revenue next year will be Rs 72 billion, according to estimate presented in parliament. Expenditure estimated for next year is Rs 139 billion.

BROKEN PROMISE ?

● Chief Opposition Whip Richard Pathirana said in Parliament that the Government had gone back on its word to permit a debate on

the motion seeking the appointment of a commission of inquiry into the death of Richard de Zoysa. The motion had been withdrawn from the Order Paper the Opposition Whip said, and the leaders of opposition parties had therefore decided to refrain from honouring other agreements reached with the Government.

KKS ATTACK

● Twelve soldiers were killed and 19 wounded when 'Tigers' attacked an army post at Mawiddapuram, south of the Kankasanturai cement factory, on November 3. The attack came two weeks after operation 'Jayasakti' in which the security forces recaptured an area around the Palaly and Kankasanturai camps to serve as a buffer zone.

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Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar

By the grace of Gandhi

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

From the Muslims and Man' nar, the attention of the major political parties as well as the interest, of the Sri Lankan intelligentsia have quickly moved to India, its governmental and national-political crisis. Understandably, the immediate focus is on Delhi where Mr. Chandra Shekhar has been chosen as the 8th Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy. Can he survive? By the time this journal is in print, the answer to that question would be known but even at this writing it is clear to anybody acquainted with the parliamentary balance and the relative party strengths in the Lok Sabha that Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar lives by the grace of Mr. Gandhi, leader of the biggest parliamentary group, the Congress.

It is often forgotten even by better informed Sri Lankan students that the Janata Dal which took office earlier this year was only the third largest group — after the Hindu extremist B. J. P. from which came Mr. L. K. Advani, the organiser and "hero" of the *Ram Yatra*.

The change of scene in India has not gone unnoticed by the two major parties or party "blocs" in this country. Nor is it a secret to Sri Lankans that a marked improvement in Indo-Sri Lankan relations followed the assumption of prime ministerial office by Mr. V. P. Singh. Indeed, the acrimonious issue of the IPKF's withdrawal, President Premadasa's insistent demand, was amicably resolved, with a slightly modified timetable or the pull-out. Mr. V. P. Singh made a special effort to accommodate Sri Lanka.

President Premadasa made it a point to allude to that matter when he spoke at the BCIS Convocation (9/11). He said:

"It was our insistence and persistence, that finally saw the departure of foreign troops from our soil earlier this year. It is our insistence and persistence, together with the understanding of our neighbours, that has improved our regional relations" (Mr. V. P. Singh was prime minister when the last batch of Indian troops pulled out).

"Whatever the cost, we will not succumb to any threats or intimidation from anyone however powerful or near they may be" he added.

While the Chandra Shekhar administration will survive until such time as the withdrawal of Congress support makes a General Election unavoidable, Sri Lankans and other neighbours are busy reading the current Indian situation and the new Prime Minister's mind, and his predilections. While it is unlikely that he would embark on any external forays (foreign policy will be completely overshadowed by domestic political and parliamentary manoeuvres) it should not be forgotten that unstable regimes do sometimes engage in diversionary moves. Kashmir, and therefore Pakistan, is one such possibility. Not Sri Lanka nor any other small neighbour.

Anyway what does Mr. Chandra Shekhar think of Sri Lanka's politics and immediate Indo-Sri Lankan issues? The only recorded opinion in recent times is a brief answer to an interviewer of the Indian Journal *SUNDAY*:

To have taken hasty decisions on matters concerning Sri Lanka without caring for consequences only for the purpose of undoing whatever the previous government had done was wrong.

Commenting further on the way the previous government

had handled the Sri Lankan issue he says. "It was not a wise decision, in my opinion. You can slowly change, steadily change the apparatus that is already there, but if you take sudden decisions only to spite the previous regime, then you are bound to face certain difficulties and even put the nation in jeopardy."

PRICE RISES

It is also interesting to note that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi didn't include foreign policy in his strictures on the short-lived V. P. Singh government, when he was interviewed by *INDIA TODAY* (Nov. 15). He identified three areas of evident failure: (a) Punjab, Kashmir and Assam (b) communal and caste tensions and (c) economic problems and the steady rise in prices.

MARG, the best known of Indian opinion pollsters did a test-run in the two electoral bastions of AMETHI (Gandhi) and FATEHPUR (Singh). In Amethi Rajiv Gandhi collected an impressive 79% to Singh's 21% while in Fatehpur, Gandhi beat V. P. Singh comfortably — 58% to 42%.

More interesting perhaps is the issue which the poll showed was the most crucial — spiralling prices.

While the Gandhis and the Bandaranaiques have had a 'social relationship', this did not prevent the Indian (Gandhi) government from using its not inconsiderable influence to the UNP's advantage at the last elections, conscious no doubt that the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was a government-to-government (Congress-to-U.N.P) agreement. Nonetheless, diplomats here did note that Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, a member of a multi-party parliamentary delegation to Delhi chose to spend 1½ hours with Mr. Gandhi at his home.

INDIA:**Shekhar, takes charge**Steve Coll (*Washington Post*)

DELHI

Few Indian commentators expect Mr. Shekhar's government to last long, some speculate that Mr. Gandhi's party will withdraw support and force elections in 6 to 18 months. Mr. Singh, exercising his last opportunity for official access to the state-run broadcasting system, appealed for tolerance in a broadcast address.

"Religion is the lamp of the soul" he said. Let it light your way. Do not use it to ignite the flames of hatred. If you do so, the temple of Mother India will be reduced to ashes".

For Mr. Shekhar, 63, an upper caste landlord's son who has devoted his life to socialist politics but has never held government office, the announcement marked the culmination of a yearlong campaign to replace Mr. Singh, who remains leader of the centrist Janata Dal. As Mr. Singh's problems worsened Mr. Shekhar engineered a split in the party and moved his breakaway faction, called the Janata Dal (Socialist), into position to lead a government.

Mr. Shekhar will inherit a host of problems, including an inflationary economy, violent secessionist movements in three states and heightened caste and Hindu-Muslim tensions.

It is expected that his cabinet will consist mainly of rural landlords, socialists and career politicians with little experience in government. The group will immediately have to tackle a balance-of-payments crisis that drew Mr Singh's government into negotiations for assistance from the International Monetary Fund.

Foreign exchange reserves have reached a 10-year low; external debt levels have climbed to record heights, and international rating agencies have downgraded the country's creditworthiness for the first time in years.

Inflation has grown in recent months to a 12 percent annual rate

higher than past levels. Price rises have been fueled by a government budget deficit that is three times bigger than the one in the United States, in relative terms.

"Shekhar has put himself into a very awkward position," said A. N. Prabhu, New Delhi bureau chief of the newspaper Economic Times. "We are at the verge of getting into the Mexican-Brazilian model of crisis."

In his past public pronouncement, Mr. Shekhar has blamed many of the country's economic problems on multinational corporations, and he has vowed to make it even more difficult than it is at present for foreign companies to do business in India. But it is not clear whether the prime minister will have the political strength to reverse the gradual economic liberalization begun several years ago by Mr. Gandhi and continued by Mr. Singh.

Speaking with reporters Mr. Shekhar said he would support liberalization of the economy as long as national resources were not allocated to the manufacture of what he called "luxury goods."

In foreign affairs, Mr. Shekhar would appear to face fewer immediate challenges. Border tensions with Pakistan, which were touched off by an uprising in the disputed state of Kashmir, threatened to set off war six months ago but have eased somewhat recently.

Pakistan's recently elected rightist prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, based his campaign partly on a more aggressive posture toward India. But Mr. Sharif has made conciliatory statements directed at India since his election. Reciprocating in a brief comment on Friday, Mr. Shekhar said he sought the "best possible relations with neighbours."

Political analysts said Indian-Pakistani relations were most likely to remain unchanged for at least a few months. "Both countries have been substantially

preoccupied with domestic issues," said Jajit Singh, director of the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in New Delhi.

Among India's political factions, the biggest beneficiary from Mr. Shekhar's ascent would appear to be Mr. Gandhi's party, which was repudiated in a national election 11 months ago and has done little since to improve its standing with voters. Now Congress is well positioned to organize itself for a midterm vote while rebuilding its identity among the electorate as a stable, centrist party.

The biggest immediate losers appear to be Mr. Singh's Janata Dal faction and the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party. Both stood to benefit if President Venkataraman had decided to call an election immediately, rather than turning to Mr. Shekhar to lead another minority government.

Rajiv vs Karunanidhi on "Tigers"

MADRAS

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi took exception to the observation of the Congress (I) leader, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, in parliament that the State was under the influence of the LTTE.

It is unbecoming of a former Prime Minister to speak in such a vein just to please someone. By uttering an unadulterated lie, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has brought discredit to the reputation of his grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru," he said.

Talking to reporters, Mr Karunanidhi said the whole world was aware that it was Mr. Gandhi who gave crores of rupees to the LTTE to buy arms and also gave them training in camps located in Tamil Nadu. Mr. Gandhi turned against the LTTE because the militants would not surrender and be a slave to him. It is a baseless allegation levelled against the DMK Government, he added.

Sri Lanka's boring war

Some wars last too long, becoming a meaningless series of battles of attrition. The civil war in Sri Lanka is one of them. On October 25th the defence minister said another "full-scale operation" would be launched soon against the Tamil Tigers holding the Jaffna peninsula. "Full-scale" merely seemed to mean that more young men would be killed than in a "small-scale" operation, not that the attack would bring the war nearer to a conclusion.

The northern town of Jaffna was the scene of a full-scale operation in September. Soldiers stormed into an army fort where their comrades had been besieged by the Tigers for nearly three months. It was claimed by the government as a famous victory, a kind of Sri Lankan relief of Mafeking. The government predicted that the strengthened garrison would gradually fan out to regain the whole of Jaffna. The army has since abandoned the fort as militarily useless.

The Tigers roared "After 400 years of foreign domination (the fort was built by the Dutch) Jaffna fort is finally in Tamil hands," they said. The "victory" has inspired more young Tigers to face the government's guns. Jaffna families are told "You give a son or two gold sovereigns. The Tigers will take the money, but it is the boys they want."

The army has been dispirited by the withdrawal. Worse, the generals are alarmed that support for the war among the Sinhalese majority is waning fast. The average Sinhalese villager is more concerned about the price of rice than where the Tigers' flag is flying. Indiscriminate bombing in the war zones has turned many Tamils against the government. In an unconvincing statement

to parliament recently the government denied that bombing was indiscriminate, but said that sometimes bombs were carried away "by the wind"

The government, which knows enough about the history of warfare to appreciate that civilian morale matters, is trying to kick the economy into shape. The war costs \$250,000 a day. Inflation is rising, there are few jobs for the 100,000 migrant workers returning from Kuwait, and Sri Lanka has lost more than 20% of its export market for tea as a result of the sanctions on Iraq.

For all that, Sri Lanka could have a bright future if the fighting stopped. The north-eastern city of Trincomalee, blessed with one of the largest natural harbours in the world, faces the expanding markets of East Asia. "Trinco" would be the obvious base for the high-technology export-based industries with which the government hopes to transform the economy when peace comes. Meanwhile, the armed forces are said to be getting new weapons and aircraft, mainly from China, for use in coming operations, small, large and medium. *(Economist)*

MOSSAD'S NOT RAW

*I'm Rinsky. No not Korsakoff
I'm a plain dagger man (with cloak off)
Even Wagner does not move me
Only my pay off
Really matters*

*But I have my hates
I need that Eye and Tooth
And the Fear that flatters
I hate the guys who sought us
As early as the Seventies
To topple inconvenient icons, batter barricades
Tear to tatters, those brave new Worlds.*

*We were called in to counter Commissions
(CJC by the Gazette, not One Man Ones)
Polyfingering probing.
Those fat, brown, corrupt felons smirking their plea
Defrauding the Exchequer? Foreign Exchange? Not guilty.
Not guilty of running guns for each infantile insurgency?
And killers on the lunatic fringe?*

*By Moses, still,
You may be a One Man Commission, but you count.
As one man Evidence, I'm no taker
So take up at Hultsdorf those old CJC facts
And those files on piles with the Repeal of the Act.*

U. Karunatilake

Background to Indian Crisis

No solution in sight

Nikhil Chakravartty

It all started on the Diwali Day. That was Friday, October 19, 1990 when three BJP leaders, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Rajasthan Chief Minister, and Mr. Jaswant Singh, MP, met National Front Chairman N.T. Rama Rao, convalescing at that time in the Ram Manohar Lohia Nursing Home, and informally conveyed a formula to sort out the Ram temple dispute.

The previous day, the BJP National Executive had a stormy session where the moderates represented by Vajpayee-Shekhawat and Jaswant Singh had been trounced by the militants whose line was being set by the VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal, and the Executive announced that the BJP would withdraw support from the National Front Government if the rath yatra was blocked and party President Advani arrested.

Talks

The formula next came to Mr. Advani who agreed to it but subject to its acceptance by the VHP — the point which marked that he had ceased to be the master of the campaign but was really riding the VHP tiger. On the other side, Mr. V.P. Singh held informal consultations which included some Muslim leaders whose attitude was that while they trusted him, they would fall in line provide the Prime Minister had got the commitment of the BJP-VHP side to the formula.

At this stage came the urgent importunity from Mr. Vajpayee for the three-point formula to be announced as an ordinance, he hoping thereby that it would clinch the issue reflecting the desperate position of the moderate wing of his party. But Mr. Vajpayee's gamble did not pay off because the VHP rejected it outright as soon as the ordinance was announced. Mr. Ad-

vani's rather meek remark from Dhanbad that the formula was positive was brushed aside and the tone was set by the VHP, which was by now openly calling the shots.

On the other side, the Muslim leaders finding that the Hindu side had rejected the formula, announced their rejection too, and even threatened a Bharat bundh over it. The Government finding that the formula had no taker on either side, withdrew it making it clear that it would not stand on prestige to stick to it.

What was the formula? (1) The Central Government to acquire the disputed land which includes the Babri mosque. (2) The land which is not under dispute, would be made available for building the temple. (3) The dispute now before the Allahabad High Court be referred to the Supreme Court by the President under Article 14.

The Muslim objection was that while the disputed land is under the jurisdiction of the Allahabad High Court, it would now pass on to the Government which at its sweet will or under pressure might hand it over to those bent on building the temple and this may become a precedent for other such sites. Secondly, the reference to the Supreme Court will be for advice and not for the disposal of the case.

This is the background of the Congress(1) Working Committee's charge of there having been a "conspiracy" between Mr. V.P. Singh and BJP to cheat the Muslims. As stated here, the exercise at devising the formula really reflected the anxiety of the BJP moderates; and the Government acted only to find out if it could be the basis for a settlement — one of the many such proposals suggested by well-meaning individuals.

The Congress(I)'s anxiety of course has been and still is that Mr. V. P. Singh has built a firm base among the Muslims, and so their aim is to undermine it, pick up any issue to confuse the Muslims and alienate them from Mr. Singh.

After the formula move was aborted, battle lines were drawn clear and sharp. The BJP had already served an ultimatum that it would withdraw support to the Government if Mr. Advani was arrested and/or his rath yatra was blocked.

Incidentally, the demand for the building of the Ram temple was never made a key issue in the BJP election manifesto, nor did the party raise it formally with the National Front subsequently as a condition precedent for its support to the Government.

The Bihar and UP Chief Ministers were on the alert, while at the Centre, the Prime Minister held a series of meetings with different party leaders, voluntary organisations and a cross-section of intellectuals who all reinforced the decision to halt the BJP's progress towards a frankly communal showdown.

TV Speech

Mr. V. P. Singh's broadcast that evening lifted the controversy to the basic issue that when differences over religious approaches could not be settled through negotiations, the order of the Court must be binding.

If the question of faith in God was invoked to defy the court in such circumstances then that would be laying the foundation of theocracy in our country. The Prime Minister's television address was a major turning-point as could be seen from the response from many who, otherwise, were getting disgusted with the squabble and intrigues at the political level. One felt that had such a persuasive broad-

(The writer is Editor of MAINSTREAM)

cast focussing on the basic issue of social justice has been made by Mr. V. P. Singh at the time of his announcement of job reservations for the Backward Classes, perhaps he could have mobilised a good section of middle class understanding over the measure.

In a vibrant democracy like ours, the question of communicating with the public is very essential for any leadership. Gandhiji understood this from the very beginning, and that tradition needs to be reinforced in an open government such as ours.

As soon as the BJP withdrew its support to the National Front Government and informed the President accordingly the Prime Minister saw the President and assured him of his readiness to face Parliament to test his support.

There are reports that the Prime Minister's initial urge was to offer his immediate resignation and go in for elections, but his Cabinet felt that it should go by the Presidential advice, and instead of waiting for the normal Winter session of the Lok Sabha in the third week of November, a special one-day session would now come on November 7.

Contingencies

Immediately this was announced, brisk consultations, calculations and speculations have been going on, and by present reckoning this threatens to continue even after the D-Day, that is November 7. Certain contingencies, which might arise after the motion of confidence in the National Front Government comes up on November 7, are being talked about.

The Government side would move a motion of confidence, while the Opposition would bring a no-confidence motion, and in accordance with parliamentary precedent the Government motion would get priority over that of the Opposition, and the rules do not permit the moving of a no-confidence motion against the Government within six

months of the adoption of a confidence motion. The first contingency under discussion was that the Government motion would express confidence endorsing its stand on the reservation decision as also the Babri mosque controversy.

Would the Congress(I) oppose such a motion in the company of the BJP and thereby forfeit the goodwill of the Backward Classes and the Muslims? Under the circumstances, if the Congress(I) preferred discretion and abstained or absented itself, then the Government motion would easily defeat that of the BJP. But this speculation was scotched in two days when the Congress(I) decided to vote against the confidence motion, in the company of the BJP if need be, as its entire strategy has been to oust Mr. V. P. Singh from the Prime Ministership, by any means.

The second possibility is that the BJP might decide to stay away or abstain and not vote against the confidence motion, since withdrawing support does not necessarily mean working for the ouster of the Government. In that event, the National Front commands a thin majority of seven over the total strength of the Congress(I) together with its supporters. Here is scope for horse-trading on a moderate scale by both sides

The third contingency is the split within the Janata Dal, but this would require that the dissidents led by Mr. Chandra Shekhar would have to muster about 48 members to defect and escape the mischifes of the Anti-Defection law, which by present reckoning appears to be a tough job and might not come through.

There is the fourth possibility of having new leader for the Janata Dal replacing Mr. V.P. Singh. This is precisely what Rajiv Gandhi's side has been feverishly working for, and as it has turned out, this is virtually in tandem with the move of the dissidents projecting Mr Chandra Shekhar for the post of Prime Minister.

Other names being floated about are the outcome of innocent speculation or deep-laid mischief to disrupt the Janata Dal, and these names range from Mr. Madhu Dandavate to Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav to Mr. Jyoti Basu — all with the consent of none and dismissed by them all. But the pressure to dislodge Mr. Singh will continue.

Mrs. Maneka Gandhi may be the first to leave what she might have been made to believe was a sinking ship. This drive for Mr. Singh's ouster will persist even after November 7 in the event of the possibility of the Government losing the confidence vote. It needs to be noted that certain powerful business interests, who regard Mr. Singh as their sworn enemy, are found to be working overtime through their agents and touts, freely moving about among the MPs and media circles.

Meanwhile, anxiety is growing fast and thick about the hazards of instability at the Centre, with disturbances and communal carnage spreading wide. The ghastly pogrom at Jaipur in which even a section of the state police force was affected has cast its ominous shadow in Delhi.

Common Stand

The urge for a common stand of all anti-communal forces from the Janata Dal, the left and right up to the Congress(I) is discernible, and it is possible that this may gain momentum for a national government consisting of these three components. But again the nagging question will come who should lead such a Government?

In this context, one can understand the urgency in Rajiv's camp to cross out Mr. V. P. Singh and hence the unprecedented virulence of attack against him personally. But such a campaign does not by any chance heighten Rajiv's own acceptability to them all: rather, it hampers sorting out differences without rancour.

No light at the end of the tunnel — not yet.

Hindu militancy leaves India's Moslems increasingly fearful

David Housego reports from Lucknow, a city which had prided itself on a history of communal peace

In the deserted streets of Old Lucknow, little moved apart from cows lumbering slowly across the road and an occasional police patrol.

Curfew has been imposed in Lucknow as in 15 other cities in Uttar Pradesh by a state administration nervous that Tuesday's storming of the mosque at Ayodhya by Hindu fundamentalists could provoke widespread Hindu-Moslem rioting. Shops remained closed all day and people were confined to their houses by precautionary measures across this northern state that are without precedent in recent history.

At Maulvi Gunge in the heart of the Moslem area, broken bricks lay scattered on the road — a sad testimony to clashes between Hindus and Moslems that occurred the day before Hindu militants planted their flags on the disputed mosque at Ayodhya.

"It has never happened here before. History was made here that day," says the officer commanding the patrol at the Maulvi Gunge crossroad. Lucknow, where a quarter of the population is Moslem and which was once the capital of a Moslem principality, has long prided itself that it has no record of the Hindu-Moslem violence that has scarred much of northern India since Pakistan broke away in the bloodshed of partition.

But on Monday, when Hindu militants marched in procession to demonstrate support for the construction of a new Hindu temple at Ayodhya, bricks began to fly — with nobody now certain how the trouble started. One person died and several were injured as clashes spread to other parts of the old city.

As Hindu militants voiced their triumph and elation at having symbolically begun the construction of the temple, Moslems expressed their fears. At nearby Aminabad, where Hindus looted Moslem shops on Monday, a young sales representative for a drugs company said: "Everybody is afraid here. Among the Moslem community nobody feels safe now."

Talking to Moslems, officials in the state government, and to Hindu militants at a camp outside the city where they are being detained, there is the sense that this week's events mark a milestone in India's post-independence history — and that beyond is unknown terrain.

"There have been many incidents (of tensions between Hindus and Moslems over religious sites), but this is the worst," says Dr Syed Kalbe Sabiq, the shia leader who has worked hard for a compromise over the disputed Ayodhya mosque. Never before has there been such a co-ordinated assault on what Moslems regard as their property.

Faced with conflicting accounts in the press and on the state-owned television, most Moslems remain confused about what happened at Ayodhya on Tuesday. Yesterday's papers in Lucknow carried front-page pictures of Hindu militants astride the mosque's and further pictures inside of the damage inflicted on the mosque's fabric. But under the curfew, few copies were distributed.

By contrast, the state-owned television broadcast old pictures of the mosque on Tuesday night that showed the domes untouched. The government claimed as well that the mosque had not been damaged.

If the reports of damage to the mosque are confirmed, there will be riots," said one shopkeeper at Aminabad. "Moslems will be very angry."

Few Moslems now see much hope of a compromise in the Ayodhya dispute. The fundamentalists "don't want a compromise," says Mr Mucktar Anis, a minister in the state government. "They want to demolish the mosque."

One Moslem who still holds out hope is Dr Kalbe Sabiq, who believes that Hindu and Moslem divines were close to finding a solution last month and should resume their negotiations.

At the camp outside Lucknow where some 850 Hindu militants are being held, there is also little sign of a readiness to compromise. The militants were arrested while trying to reach Ayodhya to participate in the ceremonies to mark the beginning of construction.

On Tuesday the police official in charge of the camp came himself to tell them that other militants had succeeded in reaching the site of the mosque. They celebrated what they described as a triumph.

Mr Sampat Somani, a Bombay businessman and spokesman for the fundamentalist Vishwa Hindu Parishad at the camp, says Moslems should "lie low at the present time" and gracefully accept the demolition of the mosque. "What does that mosque mean to them?" he says. "Nothing."

He believes that the Hindu radical BJP party could one day take power in India. He sees a place for Moslems in such a state and adds: "They will be very secure but they will not be allowed any mischief."

— Financial Times

'This leadership is immature'

(Janata Dal veteran Chandrasekhar tells Anikendra Nath Sen)

Does the recent unhappiness expressed by a section of Janata Dal MPs arise out of the Mandal issue or is it more general?

I do not think that people are unhappy only over the way in which the government has handled the issue of reservations. I think it is because of the general failure of the government to address itself to the major issues before the nation, be it Punjab or Kashmir or the north-east. The impression going around is that the government is unconcerned about these issues and that it has failed to tackle problems of law and order.

What are your views on the leadership qualities of the Prime Minister?

I would not like to comment on individuals and their style of functioning.

There are some reports to the effect that you are orchestrating the campaign to remove Mr V. P. Singh from the leadership.

These reports are wrong.

But it is no secret that dissident Janata Dal MPs like Mr Yashwant Sinha and Mr Harmohan Dhawan are close to you.

If Yashwant and Harmohan are doing something without my knowledge and if that is then attributed to me, I will not disown them. They are my friends after all.

There are reports to the effect that you have met some industrialists and that you are using contributions from them to induce legislators to change their minds about the party leadership.

This is the house of a politician. All sorts of people are welcome to come here. How can I turn people away? Industrialists are among the people who visit me. I have known

many of them for years. But to suggest that I am taking money from them and then using that money to buy up MPs is an insult to the political system of this country. Why would I need to do that in a situation in which many people are changing their minds without such incentives anyway?

What do you feel is at the root of the failure of government?

Discussion and dialogue is the essence of democracy. When you fail to take these into account there are chances of alienating large sections of the people. This is always possible when you resort to manipulative politics to come to power.

The situation today reminds one of what happened in 1978-79. It is once again being driven home to the people that the non-Congress parties are incapable of either ruling or sticking together. . .

I don't know why these comparisons are made all the time. In 1977, 1978, 1979 the Janata government was never unpopular among the people. The government was able to tackle all the problems to their satisfaction. People began to say that it was the best government they had had. There were some problems stemming from the incompatibility among the leaders. But it never lost the admiration, credibility and confidence of the people.

The situation is just the opposite today. The problem is not incompatibility among the leaders but that they have not been able to solve the serious problems before the nation. Not just solve, they have not been able to even begin tackling them. So, these two periods are not comparable. Also how does the opposition enter the picture in this case? Those who are in the government today were

in the Congress yesterday. They were ruling the country. So it is a question of individuals, of groups, of decision makers in the government which has to be decided. No blanket certificates should be given to persons in the opposition or the government on their ability to rule or otherwise.

The country is being polarised along religious and caste lines. Do you think this could get worse if Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav has to arrest Mr L. K. Advani?

Why should Mulayam Singh have to arrest Advani?

Well Mr Advani is taking part in a rathiyatra. . .

There is no prohibition on the rathiyatra. Advani is a responsible person and I am sure he will not allow things to go out of control.

Mr Yadav has already arrested around 30,000 BJP-VHP volunteers. Mr Advani plans to take part in the kar seva at Ayodhya on October 30, and Mr Yadav has imposed prohibitory orders all over the place against this. . .

What choice does Mulayam Singh have in the matter? I would appeal to Advani and Atal Behari (Vajpayee) to refrain from doing anything that disturbs peace and communal harmony.

What about the BJP chief ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh?

They, too, are going to be part of the BJP-VHP programme in Ayodhya. Do you think that they, as custodians of the law, should break the law in another state?

Both Atal Behari and Advani have assured me that none of the BJP chief ministers will take part in these programmes without first resigning from office.

I would prefer to believe them rather than any newspaper report.

What do you infer from the present situation in which the political class, as represented by the Janata Dal, the Congress and the like, is not expressing itself unambiguously on an issue like Mandal while the students and youth are out on the streets against it?

This is a sign of the growing failure of the political system. It is not a good augury for the country. It could lead to a general disillusionment with the system and to anarchy.

Why do you think the political class has failed to act?

I do not say that the political parties are not acting. The members of some are getting killed in Punjab, others are holding rathiyatras and some others sadbhavna yatras. They have probably never been as active as at present. They are all acting. The only question is, are they acting in the right direction?

In the past you have been quoted as saying that you were not in disagreement with the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations and that your only criticism was on the manner in which this was done. Is this correct?

No, it is not just that. What I said was that because of the obsolete caste system, there are certain castes which are backward and unfortunately, the same backward castes are also poor. In this situation, reservations on caste lines cannot be discarded altogether. But in the first commission, Kaka Kalelkar said every ten years there should be a revision on the basis of castes which have gone backward. Because of the lopsided economic development, certain people who were better off in society have become poor. That aspect of our economic and social life should also not be

lost sight of. So, I have said that the reservation policy should be a synthesis of caste and economic considerations. That has been my point of view since 1977-78. Something along the lines of the Karpoori Thakur formula should have been discussed among the people. Not only the people but different political parties and people in the Janata Dal should have been made aware of all the implications of the (Mandal Commission) recommendations and the fallout of their implementation. But nobody knows today how many jobs are going to be there, how many jobs are going to be created, how many jobs backwards will get and how many jobs forwards are going to lose. Nobody is getting any job, nobody is losing any job, but people are killing each other, people are hating each other. This is something which should not have been attempted, this is what I said.

Some people believe that the entire opposition to the move is confined to places like Delhi, that the entire south, for instance, is in favour of it...

Even if it is confined to five persons who are determined to die it is a bad thing. I tell you, if a determined group feels so agitated and so annoyed, it becomes very difficult to rule in this country. This was what was said about Punjab, that a handful of Sikhs were agitated. Even at that time I said do not be misled by this analysis. A determined group which is ready to die, whether rightly or wrongly, can be a serious threat for orderly governance. I do not wish to enter into discussion with such people who shut their eyes like an ostrich. I pity them when they try to rule this country through parliamentary methods and refuse to talk, because the essence of parliamentary democracy is dialogue, discussion, persuading people to come round to your views, give and take.

Are you suggesting that decisions are being taken without discussion?

sometimes people arrogate to themselves the role of originators of new theories. Now everybody seems to be a philosopher in this country and are giving (us) new philosophies about social justice, about democracy, about what the people's agitation means. I have seen that people are being compared with Mahatma Buddha, Mahavirswamy and Mahatma Gandhi and even above them. If that idea enters your head, you can go on committing folly after folly.

The present agitation against the Mandal commission reservations has tended to cover up various long-term problems, primarily economic. Don't you think that the leadership should start addressing itself to them

I only hope that the leaders in the government will realise their mistakes in not addressing themselves to the economic problems and will try to pursue a policy which will give us the capability to depend more on our own resources rather than go with a begging bowl to all the countries in the world. Nobody is going to help bail you out unless and until you show the strength of your own economy. It is not easy because in the last six months whatever pronouncements have been made on the economic front have indicated that we have no other option but to depend on foreign help and foreign resources.

Do you think the major problem with this ruling formation is that they never came to an agreement on major policy formulations before going into the elections?

That is one of the problems but not the major one. Even without that, this type of blunder could have been avoided. This has nothing to do with policy and programmes. This is an indication of total immaturity, not getting involved in anything which is of substantial nature and being encouraged by manipulative politics which by chance brought success.

Role of State in Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka

Urmila Phadnis

That the tensions and conflict between majority and minority communities have been a critical issue of political order and peace-maintenance in plural societies, more so, in the developing ones, is self-axiomatic. However, the nature of such patterns of interaction has varied, with one minority being cooperative and other conflictual. Besides, the cooperative — consensual — consociational — competitive — conflagrational relationships connote the components of accord as much as discord, harmony as much as cleavages. What is of salience in this context is the whys and whats of discord preempting harmony and *vice-versa*.

In this context the Sri Lankan experience of majority and minority relationships is revealing as well as instructive. Over the decades since independence, the cleavages between the majority community of the Sinhala and the major minority community of the Tamils has been under heavy strain has been somewhat latent, with occasional undercurrents among the 'Indian Tamils' with the Sri Lankan Tamils particularly in the North and East, it has assumed a virulence and ferocity unprecedented in its history.

Embedded in such a social rupture in the civil society of the island state has been the crisis of the structures and norms of the Sri Lankan state. Such crises highlight a conglomerate of contradictions underscoring the democratic and developmental processes in Sri Lanka. Thus, the contradictions of developmental experiments and experience have been such as to give way to maldevelopment. Democratic structures have shown similar aberrations. While the colonial legacies do

News of Prof. Urmila Phadnis' death reached us after the Nov. 1 issue was out. We now publish the last paper that she wrote. It was presented at Uppsala University, Sweden.

In the front rank of India's political scientists, Prof. Phadnis of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, had established herself as the foremost Indian specialist on Sri Lankan politics, and lately of the island's ethnic conflict and national crisis. Well known in academic circles, she had many friends in the major political parties and the media who were all impressed by her devotion to her work, and her simplicity, sincerity, and warmth.

provide a crucial context to them, there is no doubt that the majoritarian thrust of the post colonial Sri Lankan State coupled with the policies and perspectives of the state leadership on democracy and development has been equally significant. Moreover, the intended as much as the unintended consequences of such policies alongside the momentum of social change have contributed to the social turmoil, with ethnic conflict being one of its major manifestation. In the process, peace has been at siege and political stability its major casualty in the island-state.

II

Political stability *per se* may not be a precursor of peace. Who wants the peace of an authoritarian state where protest is muzzled and dissent is suppressed? In any case, such stability can at best be described as a seeming calm before the storm.

Alongside, in democratic states too movements of protest and change, leading at times to a state of turmoil and flux may impart a certain degree of political instability and yet not be dysfunctional to the long drawn pursuit of peace for a simple reason; closely related to the pursuit of peace are also the objectives of justice and equity.

I am underscoring these values alongside peace because any discourse on the obstacles of peace in Sri Lanka or elsewhere has to be placed in such a wider context. Otherwise it becomes sterile. Stability gets equated to status quo and peace — an empty shell, without the questions as to peace for what? And for whom?

As such, the identification of the obstacles to peace in Sri Lanka has its normative — as much as real-politic dimensions. Closely related to this are the issues of scope as well as intensity of such obstacles.

Such obstacles have been anti-systemic and/or have had to take to extra-systemic strategies. While the former has as its major manifestation in the 1980s in the movement of People's Liberation Front (popularly described by its acronym JVP which stands for Janatha Vimukti Peramuna), the latter has been epitomised by the movement

for Eelam—a separate state—for the Tamils in the northern and eastern areas of the country. With the Sri Lankan state's inability to come to terms with them through political measures, its increasingly 'National Security' orientation marked by violence zigzagging between low-high intensity conflict. Consequently, the Sri Lankan society has been increasingly brutalised and its polity more and more militarised. In the process, not only has there been the Sinhalese qua Sinhalese tensions (JVP vs. the ruling Sinhalese elite) but equally significantly the Sinhalese-Tamil, majority-minority susceptibilities becoming sharpened and the relationship marked by mistrust, doubt and uncertainty regarding inter-group relationship on the one hand and the issues of the 'survival' of the one time most forward community—the Sri Lankan Tamils—on the other. There is no doubt that different perspectives can be discerned regarding the bases for the explosion of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. However, irrespective of the perspective' the role of the state therein remains very much in the fore in such political discourses. Any discussion on the means and modalities for the pursuit of peace in Sri Lanka thus has to take note of the linkages and dichotomies between the state and society in Sri Lanka as they have evolved over decades.

While making ethnic conflict as the focal point in the subsequent sections, I have related it to the wider gamut of forces—external as well as internal—which have resulted in Sri Lanka becoming an increasingly militarised state operatives in a manner as to erode its legitimacy as well as integrative capabilities.

III

Though I do not propose to get into the somewhat tangled discussion of the 'return to the

state' in political theory, it is pertinent to provide a workable definition of the state. State is not merely an arena in which socio-economic battles are waged but has a certain autonomy of its own. As a macro-structure, it incorporates a set of administrative, policing and military organisations headed by more or less coordinated by an executive political authority. These state institutions of power and authority are built up and operate within the context of national and international dynamics. However, in multi-ethnic states the 'ethnic' nature of the state as perceived and projected by the power elite of its various ethnic communities has also been of critical significance in the power structure and alignment patterns of society and state. It is here again that not only the policy avocations but also, the performance of the power-wielders underscore the extent and manner to which the various ethnic groups are represented in the power-structure. Equally significantly it is not merely their representation and participation but their claim to do so on behalf of their respective community which is pertinent. And so is the perception of the justiceability of their relative share in the power cake as well as the accountability of the state towards them. It is in such a general context that the nature of Sri Lankan state and its role in ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka needs to be focussed.

Broadly speaking, the Sri Lankan political system, as it has evolved has not been that of the 'ethnically centralised' system. Briefly stated, this connotes: (1) the presence of two or more large groups in constant interaction in the structures of power and authority; (2) the nature of such an interaction even when cooperative, having a competitive edge with often the premise being that of a zero-sum game and not otherwise; (3) the pattern of interaction implying the majority-minority relationship perceived and/

or projected as that of dominant-subordinate relationship. The effectivity of such a perception and projection is heavily contingent on the level of the minority group's consciousness, the nature of its expectations vis-a-vis the state and its actual as well as expected share in the institutions of power and authority of the state.

In the Sri Lankan case, the Tamils have been a numerical minority but regionally, they are a majority. Coupled with this has been the factor of their proximity and cultural-linguistic affinity with the Tamils of Tamilnadu across the Palk Straits which has induced a sense of self-perceived minority complex among the Sinhalese community. Such a minority complex, nurtured through select historical memories of Tamil invasion from the Tamil north (South Indian states) during the pre-western colonial period had occasional outbursts during the British colonial rule. This was partly due to the nature of the colonial state and partly due to the political exigencies as managed and manipulated by the leadership of the various political groups—communal as well as non-communal.

Briefly stated, the major attributes of the colonial state in Sri Lanka were: (a) its highly unitary character which however did not disurb the pattern of traditional power structure at the local level. (b) development of a dual economic structure marked by the export oriented plantation sector (with all its colonial concomitants) on the one hand and rural sector on the other. Though having a small number of families as owner of big land holding, the nature of plantation culture in the colony was such as to marginalise agriculture, create non-self-sufficiency in major food commodities and thereby lead to dependency on the vagaries of international markets; (c) strong all-island communication network which facilitated movement of those who could afford

it. Though connoting the pre-eminence of a highly westernised class of 'Brown sahibs', such a communication network existed side by side with the indigenous patterns of networking in education, religion, medicine etc.

During the British period, the indigenous power elite—both Sinhala, Tamil, Muslims and Burghers—shared part of the colonial spoils. In fact, till the early 20s the Sinhalese and the Tamil elite had joined hands in demanding greater autonomy from their colonial masters. It is not without significant that in 1912 the first Ceylonese to be elected to the legislative council was a Tamil, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. His brother, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was the first President of Ceylon Reform League (1917 as also of Ceylon National Congress (1919) which was founded jointly by the Sinhalese and the Tamil elite. During this period, the Tamils did not "regard themselves as a minority but aspired to equality with Sinhalese as one of the two majority groups as indeed their enfranchised segment was under the restricted franchise then prevailing". With English education being the major qualification for enfranchisement and the Tamils in the north having an early start in English education, it was not surprising that at this stage they had accounted for more than half of the educated Ceylonese. However, in democratic politics where numbers mattered, such concept of "two majority communities" was bound to be fragile as much as artificial.

The rupture of the Ceylon National Congress in 1922 along ethnic lines, the formation of Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic parties (e. g. Tamil Mahajana Sabha, Sinhala Mahasabha, Tamil Congress etc.) had the submerision/incorporation of one community by the other being the underlying assumption of both. Though the left parties did challenge such ethnicity based

fear syndrome as contrived and politically manipulative, yet they were too weak to make a dent particularly in the countryside.

The introduction of universal adult franchise in 1931—a gift of the colonial masters to its then unwilling recipients—provided a greater impetus to the projection and propagation of such apprehension. If the Tamil minority felt vulnerable due to its numerical weakness, the Sinhalese, among other factors had opposed it because of the grant of franchise rights to the 'Indian Tamils'. However, not only did the colonial state go ahead with the universal adult franchise but also let it have an open field in the political arena

Unlike India, where the imperial policy of 'divide et impera' was a political exigency for colonial survival and sustenance on many occasions, the British Raj did not need to resort to it in the island-colony because of the moderate and pliable character of the majority community leadership (except the left parties) itself. The formation of an all Sinhalese ministry after the 1936 elections was an indication of such an orientation. And so was the rejection of the Tamil Congress demand of 50-50 i. e., parity of representation of all minorities groups with the majority community which in any case would have implied not parity but weightage in view of the numerical proportion of all the minority communities being less than one-third of the total population.

As such, the policies and strategies of the British colonial state evolved in a manner as to maintain a certain equilibrium between the various communities. Though somewhat shaky it not only served imperial interest but what is more, did not let the majority-minority coexistence go beyond the competitive point. Here again, a

certain pattern in power sharing can be discerned with the minority elite having a pre-eminence in bureaucracy, business as well as certain professions like law and medicine and the majority community elite having a political ascendancy as the junior partners of the Raj.

In the post-independence period, ethnic politics acquired a sharper edge as the ethnic equilibrium in terms of power sharing and its management was disturbed. While the colonial antecedents did have their input in such a process particularly due to the contradictions embedded therein, it was in the main a concomitant of the pressures and pulls ensconced in the perspectives, policies and performance of the state leadership vis-a-vis the accommodation of minority community's demand in a society marked by mass politics and a pace of rapid social change.

As in the other post colonial states, in the Sri Lankan context too, irrespective of the structural differences in the form of governance, there has been an increasing expansion of the activities of the state. In the process, in addition to its role as a protector, the state was perceived, for historical reasons, as assuming the role of a provider for its citizenry. The welfarist orientation of the state had already made a beginning at the fag end of the colonial period when education was made free from K. G. to University level and compulsory to those upto 14 years of age: health services were available at highly subsidized rates, communication facilities were speedy and cheap and last but not the least, subsidized prices for rice—the staple food as well as a few other essential items like sugar—were provided for.

Not surprisingly, therefore, in the early decades of inde-

pendence, the island-state was internationally acclaimed a model of welfarist democracy among the third world countries. The PQL (Physical Quality of Life indicators, e. g., literacy, low rate of infant mortality and high rate of longevity) in Sri Lanka has turned out to be one of the highest in Asia. Elections based on universal adult franchise (introduced as early as 1931) were held at fairly regular intervals since independence in 1948 till 1977 with one of the two major parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) coming alternately to power. Electoral participation, reflecting its participant political culture, was as high as 87% in 1977 elections with less than half per cent of the invalid polled. With voting age being reduced to 18 years since 1960 and the 'new voters' accounting for more than 10% voters in virtually every election, the political awareness and volatility of a highly youthful civil society did determine the electoral verdict to some extent.

As regards economy, going by its growth rate it did not seem to have done too badly with the rate of growth averaging about 3 per cent annually during the 50s and 60s, and with the introduction of the open economy and massive dose of foreign aid, rising to 6 per cent per annum towards the end of 70s and in the early 80s after the UNP had assumed power. Finally, though, somewhat limited, measures were also taken towards land distribution through land reforms including nationalisation of British owned plantation companies.

However, embedded in such impressive politico-economic indicators were a number of contradictions with new contradictions finding expression as a consequence of the nature of power alignments in the state

structure as well as some of its policies and measures in socio-economic spheres.

To begin with, in the economic sphere, in terms of the dominant modes of production and relations of production Sri Lanka has continued to be a classical case of dependent capitalist system. Notwithstanding the frequent rhetoric of self-reliance, its domestic bourgeoisie and other elite groups had failed to extricate themselves from the dominant colonial mode of economy. If at all, the economic arena has been morked by diverse mix of state capital and private capital—both domestic and external. If the SLFP regime for instance moved to greater state control in a number of sectors and thereby expanded the role of state capital, the UNP regime, particularly since 1977, emphasised on 'open economy' which still left considerable leeway for state intervention and control in various economic sectors.

However, with the population explosion, rising expectation of its youth were such as to lead to a mismatch between an overheated polity and a virtually stagnant economy resulting in political dissent on the one hand and higher inflation, increasing unemployment coupled with stringent, controls during the SLFP regime (1970-77) on the other. After coming to power in 1977 the UNP replaced it by a domestic version of monetarist-supply side economic policies. For a brief while this yielded dramatic results such a buoyant investment climate, a fall in unemployment and an apparent end to a situation of scarcity. However, it also curtailed indiscriminate open import policy (affecting some of the nascent indigenous industries as well as food crops) coupled with fostering an elitist oriented consumerist culture. There was, thus, a mismatch between 'redistribution with growth' and a gap between the expectations and perceived capabilities vis-a-

vis the economic situation of its growing lower middle strata created a potentially explosive situation.

This was accentuated because of the social status of the power wielders. Though the electoral politics, in theoretical terms, opened the avenues for all, in effect, a considerably large number of power wielders—whether in government or in opposition, continued to be drawn from the upper strata of the Sri Lankan society. This is reflected in the socio-economic profile of the Sri Lankan society. This is reflected in the socio-economic profile of the legislators as well as those in bureaucracy. Though, over the decades, the number of English educated MPs decreased and there was an increase in Sinhala educated in 1970 elections, hardly a handful had a humble socio-economic background. The number of landowners, businessmen and other professionals continued to be significant—a phenomena which continued in the 1977 elections.

During this period the state response to the political dissent and protest appeared to have become increasingly tyrannical. There was a perceptible trend towards increasing concentration of power at the top particularly since the 70s—(with the Prime-Ministerial government of the SLFP paving the way to the Executive Presidency during the UNP regime). This was marked by scant regard for the traditional adherence to the separation of powers between the major organs of the government, dilution of the 'uncommitted' character of the bureaucracy, stringent measures on the freedom of the press through legislative fiats or take-overs. The extension of parliament through a legislative fiat in 1972 and the recourse to a referendum in 1982 instead of holding general elections as scheduled were perceived as acts of political manipulation by the ruling regime and further alienated those on the periphery.

(To be Continued)

Between Death and Utopia

G. Ramesh

Thus, when, Sinhalese are butchered in Anuradhapura (June 1985) or a bomb is set off at the busy Pettah area in Colombo (April 1987), it is to only make the government "see reason" in order to suspend its ongoing offensives and bring it to the negotiating table, at Thimpu and New Delhi. When Tamils of Valvettiturai are bombed and killed (May 1987, August 1989 and now) they are punished for being the neighbours of Prabhakaran, an insult of pure circumstance for the government. When Muslim congregations are massacred, it is only to convince them that they, as a minority, cannot go on collaborating with the Sinhala chauvinists. Any number of such instances can be cited.

Several such acts inevitably reach the level of a spectacle in their execution and justification, enacted for their utility value in the media. Each of them becomes an incident, as journalistic cliché would have it. Getting the better of a situation, however traumatic it may have been, lies in the player's ability to enact a spectacle of death and "get out of it" for a breather till the next situation. To that extent, the sense of a win is good media management, something lacked by the Indians, but found in abundance with the LTTE, and to a less extent with the Lankan government.

The question concerning media is not the documentation of facts or that of managerial ethics, but something totally different. In the recent Hollywood film *Batman*, journalist Wicky Wale, whose report about the "Maltese Revolution" has appeared in the *Time* magazine, is posed a question by Jack Nicholson playing the evil jockey. Just after he destroys a museum of avant-garde art with heavy metal rock, paint and caricatur-

ing. Producing a live model, he asks her. "Would you allow your disfiguration, just as the corpses shot by you?" She recoils in horror. This time for real.

Thus, total war realises a reverse of an utopia, that is, a dystopia. A dystopia is bewildering, numbing, mediocre and without hope, something that is recognizable as reality today. Moreover, an utopia, by definition, is an ideal state. Hence, even a democratic struggle, visualised diachronically, will not be able to achieve it. But a dystopia synchronically approachable. It has a sense of "here and now". A dystopia is an utopia realised in reverse.

The issue here is that while the Tamil homeland is posited as an utopia, what seem to have got realised is a dystopia. Yet, has this been asked even as a question? Would it now be asked whether Tamil as a language would exist, say, 100 years from now?

The tragedy of Tamils is equally shared by the Sinhalese in the tragedy of the militarism of the JVP and the militarism in society. At the same time, it must also be stated that homeland utopia of the Sinhalese is hegemonist and geographical in nature, as enunciated in the concept of the whole island. Such homeland myths are generally sustained by various narratives of grudging admission in their liberalist variants.

Aren't these myths fuelled in our times by their modern Orientalist versions? This is true to the extent that exclusion has been a practice, within and without, Tamil and Sinhala societies, primarily in the form of the caste system. But the paradigms of Sinhala Buddhism, as well as Saiva Siddhanta, in their modern incarnations, have not just aspired to be univer-

salist philosophies cast in the Western mould, but also totalist sciences constituted upon themselves. This constitution of the Self as a total objective entity, around the end of the 19th Century, has been the threshold which any modern historian of Lanka would not miss.

This is certainly not a place to have a full-fledged debate on the above issue, but it is suffice to state that chauvinism is not just the produce of "tradition". Perhaps it is a result of an inability to balance out two cultures of a long memory in the context of modern apparatuses of body, power and language, like the state, the prison, the army barracks, the school and the refugee camp. Perhaps it is an oblique admission of a new fact that modern apparatuses of power constitute a political technology of the self just as their traditional invariants were intolerant, full of condemnations and persecutions. At the same time, chauvinism acts as nostalgia and attempts to incorporate modernism into it.

Witness Rohana Wijeweera, whose JVP switched over from the revolutionary myth of Che Guevara in the 1970s to the militant myth of King Vijebahu of Ruhuna (who rooted out the Cholas of Polannaruwa in the 13th Century) in the late 1980s. Witness, as an evidence of militarism, however comical it looks, the challenge of 83-year-old J R Jayewardene to Wijeweera for a hand-to-hand combat at the Galle Face Green. Or his enthusiasm for Prabhakaran's pistol after the signing of the July 1987 agreement, and fixing a prize for his head after the start of the war between the LTTE and the Indian troops. It has been decided that chauvinist machoism is the only answer possible. And this is the simplistic version of graduation of Lankan history

(G. Ramesh is a young Indian journalist)

from the traditional to the modern.

From the two analytic axes of death and utopia, I would like to move onto travel, something already been touched upon by the travel to be made if Lanka is to be considered a zone. Travel existed and exists as a move away from institutions in the figure of the wanderer, who is in search for the mad other propelled and constrained by his shadow, if I may be allowed to take recourse to Friedrich Nietzsche. Tradition, both Tamil and Sinhala, shrewdly attempted to incorporate this as pilgrimage to be undertaken by every settled person. A pilgrimage sought to physically move the believer across and along with other bodies thereby offering a neutralisation of sorts, both of the wanderer and of himself/herself. Recall, for instance, the Katarama pilgrimage that every Tamil had to undertake.

In the modern world, the figure of the foreign and inland tourist replaced the enigma of the pilgrim. The first tourist to Lanka should have been Marco Polo himself, since he is quoted in every travel and survival kit on Lanka: "the finest island in world as one approaches from the Andamans." The figure of the tourist, who devoured the multifarious landscapes of the island, got institutionalised in the 20th Century, but it was preceded by the manufacture of these landscapes via the plantations by another kind of traveller: the plantation worker forced in from Tamil Nadu. the pilgrim quietly lost out in that it became a ritual without structural possibilities, as tea and tourism became the mainstay of foreign exchange in post-independent Lanka.

In the late 1960s, another kind of traveller got consolidated as an institution. I am referring to the Tamil professional who pursued his higher studies in the West, got settled there, but would remain securely bound to the genealogy of caste

and kinship structures. This kind traveller, too, had a colonial origin, but its diversification into something other than the legal and educational fields would come only much latter. It is sufficient to point out that this traveller intersects with his counterpart from the West who made it to see the East in the 1960s and later.

In the narrative of Eelam, for instance, death or murder is sought to be justified as travel to the utopia of homeland. Homeland is as much a possibility as the militant or rebel puts oneself onto the risk of death or murder. The foreign traveller, who went for greener pastures earlier, is now the forced-out-exile perpetually producing the guilt and resentment necessary to sustain the myth of the guerilla of militant. For the militant himself death appears as the moment his genealogical past catches up with the *nom de guerre* assumed by him. That is, man meeting his double in the Borgesian sense. This is true, I may be allowed to say for dissenters, betrayers and suppressors within the militants. In Tamil history, this problem has been treated as the question of assuming several titular roles. In recent Tamil history, I find it as the granting of titles to a person after his martyrdom at the hands of the enemy; second lieutenant, captain, major etc.

In a sense, the history of militantism is as much a history of rivalry between the militants themselves, both within and without. But this history has mute past which is not that usually discussed. I am referring to the flow of youths since 1972 to the militant groups, after all avenues towards testing one's instinct for competition and rivalry were closed by the Standardization rules of the Lankan government. More than that real decision-making rested with the youths, leading to the exclusion of other people, it is rivalry and role-modelling after the archetypal Tiger which has ensured that the history of desertion, betrayal and suppress-

sion. To blame, for instance the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Indian intelligence organisation, which fuelled this rivalry with the flow of arms and infrastructure, for the existence of rivalry itself, would be futile. And exclusion of the various strands of people necessarily leads to perpetual war, the impossibility of a struggle, and the manipulation of the people for status quo, whether issue involved is caste oppression or that of women or that the fleeing refugees.

Politically the genesis of this manipulation has come out of the frustrating experience of the futility of democratic struggles and mass campaigns in the period 1956-81. But the very concept of democracy in the context of Lanka to be elaborated in this period.

To start with, democracy just as in several other Third World countries, operated as elite democracy, despite the fact that modernism had entered the island through universal suffrage and granting of trade union rights. Independence arrived without a struggle. The well-known disenfranchisement of plantation Tamils in 1948, ensured the continued domination of elites, with the etiquette of democracy operating in the peer group like a club. The club, though official and open, operates by exclusion. It claimed to understand governance and diplomacy in a sense distilled from the disturbances of plebian affairs, except for the manipulable issue of chauvinism. In the course of time, this got translated as participation by Sinhala masses in the victors of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in the 1950s.

All this is too well known to be discussed here. Yet what I have attempted here is spatialization of the current narratives on Lanka, giving ourselves a new understanding of the self in the light of what we have come to know about power, body and language, whether it

(Continued on page 18)

ETHNICITY: Muslims and mobilisation

Neelan Tiruchelvam

I wish to thank Dr Fazly Nizar, President of the All Ceylon Moors Association, a childhood friend, for having invited me to participate at the 75th anniversary of this Association. It is significant that a celebration of this nature should not merely view the community which it represents in isolation but also to view the relationships, linkages that have been forged by the Moors of his country with other ethnic communities. During the period of the second State Council, there were many political formations. In addition to the Ceylon National Congress, we had the Sinhala Maha Saba, Tamil Maha Saba, Kandyan National Association organized primarily to protect and articulate the distinct interests and aspirations of different communities. It is not without significance that today only the All Ceylon Moors Association and the Sri Lanka Muslim League founded by Mr. H. M. Mackan Markar, continue to exist.

All Ceylon Moor Association does not view itself as a mere political formation. Its activities include education, social development, housing and other community needs. It has however not been indifferent, either in the past or today, to the explicit political needs of the Moor community in this country. Members of the Association have both in their institutional and individual capacity played an active and constructive role in searching for political solutions to the ethnic conflict. It was this concern of the Association which enabled Sir Razik Fareed, whose political career paralleled the history of the All Ceylon Moor Association, to confidently take political position on issues such as constitutional reform. In 1945,

he supported the Soulbury Constitutional Reforms in the State Council. He felt that his views were firmly grounded in the consensus of the association. The support of the association, and 400 thousand moors which it represented at that time enabled him to secure a legitimacy and an authenticity, which few subsequent leaders have been able to command. A decade later a schism appeared between the Muslim Members of Parliament from the South, and those that represented constituencies in the East. In 1956 when he voted for Sinhala only Bill, the Muslim members of Parliament representing the electorate of Kalkudah, Pottuvil and Muttur (A.A. Macan Markar, M. M. Mustapha and M.H. Mohamed Ali) stood in opposition to this legislation. Today the Muslim community, like other communities, has been further fragmented. There are about 30 socio-political and religious formations, and 2 Muslim political parties. The Chairman of the United National Party is Dr M.C.M. Kaleel and Muslims are represented in almost all of more than 20 political parties in this country.

The Chairman in his speech referred to the strong links between the majority community and the Moors of Sri Lanka. If we reflect on the relationship between, ethnic communities in this country, we realise that there has been alignment and re-alignment of the relationship between ethnic communities. Today, as we celebrate the year 1990, the 75th anniversary of All Ceylon Moor Association, we must also recall that it the 75th anniversary of the 1915 riots. During the terrible and sad period, Tamil-Sinhala political forces were united against the forces of the Moor political opinion in this country. However, in other important moments of the political history of the country such as when a

motion was introduced in the State Council with regard to Sinhala being the official language of the country in 1944; when Soulbury Constitution reforms were debated on 1945; and the Sinhala only Act was introduced by late S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in 1956; the leader of the Ceylon Moor Association Sri Razik Fareed, in particular, aligned himself with the position of the Sinhala community much to the dismay and disappointment of the then leadership of the Tamil community. It is a sad commentary on our history that when we forged unity between the major communities, we did so only to take a position against the third community

There is however one important difference in the basic approach of the Tamil community and the Moor community with regard to the political issues of the post-independent era. Tamil community in its quest for equality and the protection of its identity engaged in the process of struggle and confrontation. By and large, the approach of the Moor community was one constructive accommodation, and co-operation. There were benefits and costs in each of these strategies. It however resulted in great deal of distrust and suspicion between the Tamil and Muslims the cruel consequences of which are being felt today.

It is important today to recognise the contribution that Sir Razik Fareed and All Ceylon Moor Association have made to the political life of this country. Firstly, with regard to an acknowledgement of the distinct cultural identity and needs of the Muslim community in spheres of education, maintenance of religious institutions owes its antecedes to the efforts of your Association. Many references been made to the establishment of teacher training colleges, the education of Muslim women, the

(A talk at All Ceylon Moors Association meeting to celebrate 75th anniversary of the ACMA)

development of a separate stream of education for Muslim schools. Razik Fareed recognised the need to aggressively assert a distinct identity to prevent attempts to submerge the Muslim community within a larger linguistic identity. Thirdly, the All Ceylon Moor Association has been in the fore-front of the struggle for political representation, equity in employment, and with improvement of the social conditions of the community.

Other communities need to also acknowledge that Moors of this country, through the All Ceylon Moor Association and other political formation, also helped to enrich our social life in many other respects. Firstly, we have learnt a great deal from the Muslim community of this country in your emphasis on social equality, and your commitment to social compassion in well being and prosperity, with the less advantaged members of your community. These are values that other communities have endeavoured to emulate with far less success. Secondly, your religiosity, your passionate commitment to religiosity, your passionate commitment to religious doctrines and Islamic values, your sense of humility before Almighty God, have been a source of inspiration to other religious groups. Your contributions to the evolution of Arabu Tamil, through the writings of your poets and short story writers and other literary figures, has been acknowledged not only in this country, but also by historians on literature abroad.

Finally, we live in a deeply traumatic period. Many fundamental issues with regard to ethnic identity are being debated and remain unresolved. Several Social Scientists have tried to evolve objective definitions of when a community could be categorised as a nationality, national minority or a cultural minority. Every nationality is entitled in this scheme to the right of self-determination. A national minority, which has a territorial

base, is entitled to some measure of political autonomy; while a cultural minority is only entitled to the recognition of definite cultural and linguistic rights. The question is being fiercely debated as to whether the Muslim community in this country, is a national minority or a cultural minority. I would merely like to point out that these are not issues to which there are objective scientific answers. These are questions which cannot be resolved by another community determining for the Muslim community what its political status and what its political aspiration should be. Ultimately, question of ethnic identity can only be subjectively resolved in terms of ethnic consciousness and the self definition and self perception of the community. This is not static phenomena. It is an identity which is fluid and which will evolve according to context, according to the demands and according to the aspirations of the dominant elements within that community.

Mr. Chairman, one must conclude that after the end of the long and turbulent history, Muslim community in this country has achieved a certain threshold of achievement from which it cannot be turned back. Firstly, this is an acknowledgement that it has an identity not merely in cultural and ethnic terms, but its political entity which is distinct from that of other communities and that is entitled to equal participation in decision making relating to the nature of Sri Lanka's polity. Secondly, this political entity entitled equal treatment, equal opportunities both in the nation as a whole but also in any devolved arrangement that would ultimately take place in any part of this country. Thirdly there is a growing sentiment that the Muslim community must directly exercise political power in areas in which they enjoy an ethnic preponderance.

The challenge that faces us as a plural society is how we

can accommodate and reconcile the evolving aspirations and identity of one community with the aspirations and identity of other communities. Such a reconciliation cannot be undertaken on the basis of power. It is only on the basis of justice, and not on the basis of power, that the future destiny of the respective communities can be firmly established.

Between Death. . .

(Continued from page 16)

is traditional or modern or an uncomfortable synthesis of the two, leading to exclusions. I understand that no narrative can be all encompassing.

In this context, I would like to cite the Thucydidean attempt by four authors, including Dr Thiranagama, to retell the current history without documentarist delusions. They understood that the narrative used by a journalist like Mohan Ram, howsoever committed he may have been, should be avoided. Yet, Dr Rajini's treatment of the trauma of women assaulted by Indian soldiers betrays the cold objectivity of an anatomist, as well as the grim face of someone waiting for martyrdom.

Politically, this means that is a North within the South, which is unable to come to grips with itself but ending up repressing the South culturally and otherwise. This is true whether it is the articulation of what the Bofors scandal means to us Indians, or what is good for us as the guise of development, or what we should read and view to "keep abreast". As those of you in the North are well aware of the existence of a South within the North in form of excluded people and minorities of all hues, it is my responsibility to state this truth and; in that, erase myself out.

(Concluded)

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Culture as Variable Factor

Laksiri Jayasuriya

How this complex identity structure is formed and functions in social interactions is critically important for understanding the process of cross-cultural communication; but this orientation still remains poorly developed as a usable conceptual schema. For the purposes of the present argument, the processes of identity formation are particularly relevant in settler societies where there are migrants and their offspring. In particular, we encounter the complexities of what has been referred to as 'dual socialisation' pointing to the vastly different and often conflicting socialisation influences on ethnic offspring.

The existence of 'dual socialisation', as Weinreich (1986) correctly observes, 'cautions against a simplistic view of ethnic identification'. What we find is that during the period of 'primary socialisation', ethnic children form identification with the family, and these will depend greatly on how the family perceives its own sense of ethnicity and ethnic attachments. However, these identifications are soon overlaid by 'secondary socialisation' influences coming from the school, from peer groups, church etc. These lead to encounters with significant others, often drawn from the dominant groups of society. As a result of these complex influences, the resultant sense of identity and, in particular, ethnic identity must be viewed as a product of a complex set of transactions governed by the varied social relationships that people form as a result of their lived experiences.

This process of identity formation has been portrayed recently by an Italo-Australian. Teresa Angelico (1989) describes vividly how, having come to Australia from Italy at the age of 8 years, she grew up and was socialised in a bi-cultural

context. She describes how she was exposed to conflicting dual socialisation processes through the family, school and work, and poses the question: How does a coherent set of meanings emerge from conflicting sources of reality? This, she suggests, is through a process of self reflection, leading to a sense of self identity, linking the present ideas with the past and integrating 'meanings from both contexts'. She concludes her account of this fascinating process of ethnic identity formation as follows:

integrating realities of past and present has clarified values into a coherent set of meanings which is important for future decisions. This clarification process occurs by identifying meanings, "letting go" of meanings which are no longer relevant, retaining meanings which are no longer relevant, retaining meanings which are considered to be of value, and incorporating new meanings in the cultural framework. While much of the discussion has been about the potential conflict and challenges to be faced by individuals in a bi-cultural context, there are many advantages that could be explored and an important example would be that exposure to a broader range of possibilities provides one with the options to choose. In addition, potentially conflicting situations can be a stimulus for self challenge and growth (Angelico 1989:9).

This revealing account confirms the observation of Weinreich (1986) and others that ethnic identity is not reified as a fixed entity, but has to be seen as taking different forms in specific concrete situations. We reveal ourselves in many ways, sometimes overriding or concealing some aspects of our identity, depending on the context. As Angelico's portrayal of identity formation illustrates, this process, though potentially conflict ridden, is not necessarily a liability and may even be an impetus for change. What is significant in this process for effective communication is to regard the way in which identity factors interact with personal, social

and contextual factors to determine outcomes in communication.

Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, it must be admitted that this Paper has adopted a distinctly theoretical approach for good reasons. Its main purpose has been to develop a defensible theoretical basis from which it is possible to employ the concept of cultural legitimately and meaningfully in policy strategies such as cross-cultural communication — the new genre of cultural pluralism in Australian public policy. One of its basic premises is that these new multicultural policies represented by cross-cultural communication, as with earlier policies promoting ethnic languages and ethnic media, continue to be locked into the problematic of 'cultural pluralism' — the idealisation of culture as an autonomous dimension. Consequently, these policies are especially vulnerable to the same contradictions and confusions of this policy paradigm. Given the reticence of theorists and policymakers to define and characterise the culture concept, the Paper has ventured to embark on the challenging, but much needed task of defining the cultural concept with a view to giving intellectual credibility to this fundamental concept in public policy.

It is against this background that the Paper has offered a critique of the culture concept on the grounds that such a theoretical analysis must logically precede any attempts at implementing a policy strategy promoting cross-cultural communication. In addition, this will also enable us to understand more fully the dynamics of the cross-cultural communication process. It is pointless asserting the truism that people from different cultures and social backgrounds employ different patterns of

communication unless we have a proper understanding of the true nature of these variables and a knowledge of how they operate. It is only by developing a valid conceptual framework that practitioners will be able to examine how culture, as a variable, enters and influences all aspects of the communication process. It is imperative, therefore, that we have a clear idea of what is understood by the concept before considering its impact and influence on human communication.

The exposition and analysis of culture theorising presented here has endeavoured to show how a particular viewpoint of culture, namely, an ideational-value orientation to culture has dominated much of the thinking in this area. This perspective, characteristic of orthodox anthropology, and identified as 'cultural anthropology', is imbued with the ideas and concepts characteristic of American theorising about culture. Not surprisingly, the practice of cross-cultural communication, which is largely an 'American export' is, as I have pointed out, closely associated with this particular approach to culture theorising. I have argued that this theoretical orientation is flawed because it presents a limited and erroneous view of culture as an autonomous dimension, which is highly prescriptive; and endowed with relatively fixed and distinctive attributes (e.g. unique patterning and uniformity etc.). Through an analysis of the intellectual foundations of this overall approach, we have been able to show its weaknesses in comparison with other more defensible theoretical perspectives. One such perspective is that of the British social theorist, Raymond Williams whose mode of theorising, along with cognate points of view, stands out as an exemplary and refreshing attempt to reconcile competing and conflicting points of view, especially the disjunction between the ideal and material factors in defining culture as a real element.

The merit and value of Williams' approach is neatly express-

ed by Ulin who states that 'the importance of Williams' contribution lies in bridging of the dichotomy between material existence and consciousness' (1988: 170). In this way, he suggests that this reformulation of the culture concept permits a proper specification of culture as a critical factor in social functioning, in particular, in communicative social interactions. In the context of the study of human communications, Williams' contribution is particularly significant because 'he treats human actions and events as intrinsically communicative' and acknowledges that these communicative actions have often to mediate their 'significations' with respect to power through the notion of 'selective tradition' and cultural hegemony — the latter referring to the impact of structures of power and power relations in the conduct of communications—a point of view also echoed by Giddens' notion of structuration.

The Paper rounds off this theoretical critique by advocating the adoption of the reformulated concept of culture as being consistent with social reality; more adaptable, flexible and accommodating of other influences, coming from society and individual behaviour. For these reasons, it is also seen to have greater practical utility, not yet fully explored by communication practitioners.

Having clarified the culture concept at a macro-level of analysis, I have shown how this reformulated culture concept may have some bearing on understanding the dynamics of communicative behaviour as a form of social functioning. It is acknowledged that in addressing this question, one encounters the exceedingly difficult task of translating the facts of culture into the realities of day-to-day individual and social behaviour.

This translation has been effected by invoking the concept of identity drawn from contemporary social psychological theory, especially that of the European tradition, to mediate between culture and individual behaviour. It is suggested that, if ethnic

identity, as a component of social identity, is to be the main vehicle through which culture operates on communicative behaviour, we need to formulate it more properly and locate it within the larger concept of identity as it has evolved in the recent work of Tajfel and others. In other words, like the identity concept itself, ethnic identity is viewed as a negotiated outcome in specific socio-cultural situations which involves conflict and hegemonic control.

Ethnic identity is neither fixed nor immutable; it is situationally revealed; and hence its impact on the communication process is always constrained by contingent factors. In coming to terms with ethnic identity social interaction includes communication. As de Vos (1984) observes, in his discussion of ethnic identity a 'psycho-cultural approach to social hegemony is necessary to understand social behaviour'; and he adds, in much the same manner that I have argued, that this has to be built on a conflict approach to society which is based 'on formal structural analysis'.

If this theory of identity and associated concepts are properly conceptualised, the identity concept still holds the best prospects for linking the cultural domain with the dynamics of individual behaviour. This, is essential for generating a theoretically defensible understanding of human communication generally and cross-cultural communication in particular. Practical measures directed at enhancing the effectiveness of cross-cultural communications should flow from a more defensible perspective of the culture concept. Training and educational programmes designed to improve the overall quality of communications in a multicultural society, require as one perceptive, 'ethnic Australian' puts it, an exploration of involving self-identity in a bi-cultural context'. And this endeavour must be responsive 'to cultural aspects of the person and individual identity as well as the multicultural aspects of the wider society' (Angelico, 1989).

(Concluded)

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The Limits of Power

Izeth Hussain

I suggest that the disastrous economic policies were themselves the expression of an obsession with power. Our welfare-policies, which many see as having retarded economic development for decades, were doubtless motivated to some extent at least by human concern for the poor, but they look somewhat ambiguous when we take into account what might be called the dialectics of 'the gift'. The relationship between donor and recipient is an essentially unequal one because they, the great one because they, the great ones in power, provide you, the miserable ones without power, the basic wherewithal for your very existence. That kind of relationship could have more than a little attraction for the power-obsessed. Far less ambiguous is the significance of the wreckage of the state sector under successive governments. The entirety of our government service and the state corporations became the preserve of our politicians for the appointment of relations, friends, and political supporters. The state sector malfunctioned inevitably as a consequence, and as so much of the economy had been grabbed by the state that malfunctioning meant a colossal draining away of our resources. It must be acknowledged that at least the wreckage of the economy under our 1970 Government had behind it certain illusions, in the case of our Marxists illusions backed by an ideological commitment as among their East European counterparts. But our 1977 Government, which came to power with a commitment to a liberalized economy, had no such illusions, no socialist objectives at all, and yet failed to privatize or place state sector enterprises under private sector management to anything like the extent that was possible. I suggest

that a huge state sector, which in the Sri Lankan case meant hordes of supplicants crowding the gate, continued to be necessary because the priority was the enjoyment of power, not economic development.

My hypothesis that the factor of virtually unconstrained power could explain the situation in which we found ourselves in 1988-1989 will obviously be challenged on the ground that Sri Lanka has been one of the few democracies in Afro-Asia. In fact ours has been a quasi-democracy, or perhaps democracy of an altogether peculiar sort. The 1970 Government awarded itself an extension of office, and had no democratic legitimacy whatever for two years. The 1977 Government held a referendum instead of the General Elections which were due, a referendum it must be said of rather dubious legitimacy, and the last presidential election is under challenge in the Supreme Court. It might be argued nevertheless that all our governments have had some sort of legitimacy, except for the period 1975-1977, unlike dictatorship under which supposed elections and referenda are blatantly farcical.

The important point, in my view, is that in between elections our Governments have behaved undemocratically. We have failed to understand that the proper functioning of democracy requires much more than the proper functioning of just one of its institutions, free and fair elections. Actually democracy involves much more than our having certain institutions, which is why it has been said that early nineteenth century British democracy, with its rotten boroughs and all the other shortcomings was vital and dynamic, the expression of

the English people, unlike the transplanted democracies which were later tried out elsewhere. Democracy is meaningless unless Governments behave democratically, and that means that the approach to problems should be consensual, due weight should be given to the opposition as the "alternative Government", and also institutions such as the free press should be respected. Our Governments have for the most part failed these elementary tests of democracy.

I will not go into details about the undemocratic actions of our governments as they are quite well known. I will merely remark, before proceeding further, it is surely significant that, that unlike in most other democracies, whatever parties happen to be in the opposition consider whatever government happens to be in power in Sri Lanka to be anti-democratic. Since this lecture is on the value of dissent, I will make some observations on the failure of dissent in Sri Lanka. It is a fact that none of our governments have silenced the opposition in parliament. It is also a fact that since the 'sixties our opposition parties have been renowned for their inertness. With conspicuous exceptions, such as the late Sarath Muttetuwagama, our opposition members have usually failed to shout over the grievances of the people, perhaps for a tactical reason: the Government corrects its mistakes and gets re-elected. Far better to allow the government to compound its mistakes and await their own turn, good souls, to come to power and enjoy power thoroughly. I personally believe that this is an uncharitable explanation, because there seems to be something about our culture which makes people look

on power as something that is virtually sacrosanct, so that there is on the one side the government's power and on the other the opposition's non-power, and there is no point in shouting about abuse of power. The opposition's failure to utilize the opportunities for dissent might be the expression of a society's failure to value dissent.

That might be the explanation for the ease with which press freedom was eroded in the 'sixties and then destroyed in the 'seventies in Sri Lanka. The contrast with the reactions to Mrs Gandhi's Emergency, and any attempt to muzzle the Indian press, is very striking. It has to be acknowledged that some latitude was allowed for the mini-press in Sri Lanka, and that there was even a slight extension of a latitude after 1977, but it was far from being adequate for a democracy. I say this because I had the opportunity of observing at first hand the last years of the Marcos Government in Philippines, where I was shocked to find that Manila press under the Marcos dictatorship was certainly freer than the Sri Lanka press under the Jayewardene democracy. There can be no democracy unless the right to dissent is fully respected and that requires a really free press, not just some latitude be allowed for the mini-press. We have not had democracy in Sri Lanka, in any worthwhile sense, since 1970, since our right to dissent has been severely constricted. It is even possible that we have been less democratic than some of the dictatorships.

The hypothesis that I have been arguing is that the belying of our hopes of 1948 shown in poor economic and other performance, and in the disastrous situation we faced in 1988-89, was the consequence of the unconstrained power exercised by our governments. I believe that this hypothesis is supported by the changes that have been taking place in recent times. There seems to be a new responsiveness to public opinion on the part of the Government — shown for

instance in what is taking place at the All-party Conference — which has not been an outstanding characteristic of our governments for a long time. There seems to be some willingness to narrow the gap between rhetoric and reality, to perform to some extent at least in terms of what is promised, which was hardly there under the last government. And talons of the State are being loosened from the economy. All this might have a deal to do with the personality of President Premadasa who has over the reputation of being pre-eminently the doer, not just another talker.

The more important reason for the change, I think, is that the government has been shown that its power is limited. This has been shown by the Tamil rebellion in the North and East; it was shown for some time by the J.V.P., and it was also shown by the I.P.K.F. There has been an awakening to reality through the dissent of the gun. It is better to allow dissent in speech and writing, rather than stamp it out and eventually face once again the dissent of the gun.

I will now address the question of the value of dissent. The observations I have made on the collapse of the Communist system in Eastern European countries, the break-down of the traditional politics of Afro-Asia, and the peculiar case of Sri Lanka, suggest that for countries outside the West the most important value of dissent is that it constrains governmental power. In the West, the power of governments has been tamed, which is not usually the case elsewhere.

Governmental power has to be constrained in some way as otherwise it can be made and destructive. Acton's dictum that power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely, should be adapted to read: Power tends to derange mentally, absolute power derange absolutely. The evidence is there in Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Ceausescu, Papa Doc Duvalier, Somoza, Idi Amin, Bokassa and others not to mention the great state-criminals of

earlier centuries. Apart from helping in constraining power, dissent has also an obvious constructive function in relation to government. Unless conflicting views can be expressed, the Government cannot always be expected to recognize its faults and correct them. This should be self-evident, but for some reason it is not evident at all to a great many governments.

My argument seems to be contradicted by undemocratic governments which allow little or no dissent, and yet have excellent socio-economic achievements to their credit. I am quite sure that empirical studies will show that in all such cases governmental power is in fact constrained in important ways. For instance the East Asian governments and some of the ASEAN ones, may not have democratic legitimacy or may be undemocratic in practice, and may show a pathological impatience with dissent as in the case of Singapore, but in allowing a very important place for the private sector those governments are in fact limiting their power to a far greater extent than the Afro-Asian socialist or Communist governments. There could be all sorts of constraints, religious or ideological ones, anxieties about being overthrown by the military, fears of dictators about provoking rebellion, operating in undemocratic governments which show achievement. The problem is that such governments may be overtaken by power-mania at any time, and the people may suddenly find themselves sinking. It is better to allow dissent.

I will not be able in this lecture to go into all aspects of the value of dissent. The great text on this subject is John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* which should be required reading for everyone responsible for our politics. Rather than recapitulate Mill's arguments whose text is easily available in Colombo, I will deal only with some aspects of the value of dissent from a Sri Lankan and Third World perspective. The *Index on Censorship*, a peri-

odical published by writers and Scholars International in London which is helping a Sri Lankan project to compile an anthology on the value of dissent, contains the following which should be regarded as self-evident: "Human progress depends on the free exchange of conflicting ideas. Not merely good government, but the development of civilization itself — cultural, economic scientific — centres on this".

The material affluence which today is available for the mass of mankind — from which many are held back by their governments — is the result of the scientific progress which would never have been possible if dissent had been disallowed earlier scientific orthodoxies. There would have been no Copernicus, Newton, or Einstein if not for dissent. In fact, mankind would not have made the great break-through to the neolithic stage if dissent had been disallowed against the orthodoxies of paleolithic man. We would still be cavemen if not for dissent, enjoying lives that are nasty, brutish, and short. Life is just that for a great many human beings in the Third World, where dictators will do well to reflect over the fact that the gadgets and other products of the industrial West that are so conspicuous in their life-style, and that of their supporting elites, would not have been available if not for the dissent allowed in the West. Some of the leaders of those East Asian and South East Asian economies which have done so splendidly — one of whom berates the West for its decadence and foresees those economies overtaking the West before too long — should be told that they and their economies are where they are today because of the dissent in the West, which they will not allow to their own people.

Many of us in Sri Lanka will not be particularly impressed by the argument that dissent has to be valued because without it there would have been no scientific and material progress. We practise four world religions in Sri Lanka and are inheritors of a great and ancient civiliz-

ation, and civilization has far more to it than mere material progress. We cannot admire a West which has acquired gadgets and lost its soul. We should reflect on the melancholy fact that the great Asian civilizations, have been decadent for centuries, and we should try to acquire an understanding of how civilizations renew themselves. It involves dissent. Civilizations stagnate or decay unless there is change, after which they become dynamic once again. Mill refers to the Reformation in Europe, the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and Germany's intellectual ferment during the time of Goethe, and writes:

"These periods differed widely in the particular opinions which they developed; but were alike in this, that during all three the yoke of authority was broken. In each an old mental despotism had been thrown off, and no new one had yet taken its place. The impulse given at these three periods has made Europe what it is now. Every single improvement which has taken place either in the human mind or in an institution, may be traced distinctly to one or the other of them."

We need not agree with Mill's every point, only that civilization renews itself by breaking the yoke of authority and throwing off old mental despotisms. The process means dissent.

I believe that in countries such as Sri Lanka where the process of secularisation has not gone as far as in the West, we should try to ground our case for dissent firmly on religion. The origins of Hinduism are not known, but Buddhism, Christianity and Islam could not have arisen if not for dissent: the Buddha challenged Brahmin orthodoxy, Christ challenged the Judaic order and was crucified, and the Prophet Mohammed fled to Medina as the Meccan merchant-aristocracy found their pagan practices too lucrative to be given up easily. All three began with just a few disciples before they swept the world. The adherents of these three religions, as well as of Hinduism which is ecumenical in essence, have to respect dissent without which their religions would not have come into being in the first place. They may

refuse to allow dissent on certain religious fundamentals, but they have to respect dissent in the secular realm.

All these four religions posit as the ultimate value on earth the individual, not the human group, in relation to the transcendental. Perhaps the right to dissent can be derived from that fact. More clearly, it can be derived from the religious position that the perfect is in the realm of the sacred, while the human is imperfect and man is fallible. Governments which refuse to allow dissent are in effect claiming infallibility: they know infallibly what is good for everyone, and therefore they silence dissent. It is no accident that some who have enjoyed absolute power have claimed to be gods, like those old Roman Emperors, or to be god-like or chockful of the charisma which Max Weber thought was one of the sources of authority. As soon as they are chased away, shot, or hanged, it becomes apparent that no one really thought they were infallible, god-like, or charismatic. I would argue that the Government which will not allow dissent is claiming infallibility, and is therefore irreligious to the bone. There have been many such governments in religious societies.

Some would argue that dissent should be allowed in religion as well, not just in the secular realm. In every great religion orthodoxy has been challenged and schism has followed as in the case of the Bhakti cults in Hinduism, Mahayana in Buddhism, Protestantism in Christianity, and Shi'ism in Islam. Mill thought that religious schism reinvigorates orthodoxy, but rather than quote him as he was a secular-minded Western liberal I will quote one of Emperor Asoka's rock edicts:

"One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn the religion of others, but one should honour others' religion for this or that reason. So doing one help one's own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too. In acting otherwise one digs the grave of one's own religion and also does harm to other religions"

The Emperor Asoka was of course speaking about tolerance towards other religions. It is difficult to see how one can tolerate other religions which deny the fundamentals of one's own religion, and at the same time be intolerant of schismatic developments which accept those fundamentals.

The predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Buddhism, seems to be pre-eminently the religion of dissent. The Buddhist is asked not to take anything on faith, not to follow a master blindly, and to come to the truth through his own experience. I will not quote the Buddha's well-known advice to the Kalamas, or any other Buddhist text, but refer only to the succinct and categorical statement of one of our authorities on Buddhism, the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula, who wrote in his book *What the Buddha Taught*: "The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions." Perhaps a Buddhist will hold that a Buddhist government which refuses to allow dissent is not being Buddhist.

Buddhism seems to give a rather unusual place to truth, which of course is a central value in all religions, because according to Buddhism everything else, including love, is in an ultimate sense bondage. I have already pointed to the integral connection between truth and dissent. When we dissent we do so except when we are deploying forensic skills at the debating society level, in terms of what we regard as the truth. I might mention parenthetically as it were, Michel Foucault's essay "Disciplinary Power and Subjection" which begins by discussing the triangular relationship between power always claims to be the discourse of truth, and the delimitation of power, and our rights, are also legitimated in terms of what is regarded as the truth.

Instead of becoming too theoretical, I must now point to the obvious practical value of truth. What we refuse to value the truth, our capacity to recognise reality, what is out

there in the world, is lessened and our grasp of reality is weakened. That is why governments which have contempt for the truth, which lie all the time and come to believe their own lies, which cannot allow the dissent that points to the truth, so often lead their countries to disaster.

Such governments also diminish the humanity of the people subjected to their power, for something about being properly human demands the truth, even though we find it socially expedient to lie frequently. Wyndham Lewis in *The Writer and the Absolute* claimed that he found himself paralysed the moment he tried to write something that he did not regard as true, which the thought as the consequence not so much of moral scruple as of what he called "Our nature's rootedness in fact". The artist, he thought cleaves to the true but the gravitational pull of the true is felt by everyone, in one degree or another, because "Truth is as necessary to everybody as the air we breathe". And Simone Weil, in her *The Need for Roots*, thought that the denial of total freedom of expression makes our intelligence ill at ease and, as she put it, "The whole soul is sick". When we are denied the right to dissent in terms of what we see as the truth, we become less than fully and properly human. I suppose that is the reason why the sub-human has been erupting in so many Afro-Asian countries.

In Sri-Lanka, during 1988-89 we saw the sub-human erupting with terrifying force. We must ask ourselves whether that was because we were denied the right to dissent in terms of what we saw as the truth, and were consequently less than fully and properly human. There was not press freedom worth talking about, and our opposition parties shockingly failed to express the dissent of the people after 1960. That led to the dissent of the gun. On the one hand we had the thesis of Sinhala extremism in the J.V.P., and on the other the antithesis of Tamil extremism in the militants, with no prospects whatever of a synthesis. But

we must note that both groups of extremists shared one dogma in common to which they were fiercely committed: their right to murder anyone who disagreed with them. The denial of dissent in speech and writing, except to a derisory extent, had led to the dissent of the gun which itself would not allow dissent. We saw the sub-human erupting and we now have a respite. We really must learn to respect truth and to value dissent.

In concluding this lecture I must revert to the late Kanthasamy's exceptional commitment to the truth. He wanted the *Saturday Review* to be published in Jaffna because out of 13 daily newspapers only one was being published there, which meant that developments in the North and East were seen inevitably from the perspective of Colombo. He wanted that information imbalance to be corrected because he thought it important for people to know the truth. In a letter written from London in 1986 he regretted that the *Saturday Review* had not published contrary views, and added "We should take extreme care to preserve the freedom of the press which is achieved more by publishing conflicting views rather than by suppressing any". Evidently he saw the truth as something that could be reached only through dissent. And for him the truth was not just the object of a lonely intellectual pursuit, but a supreme value that had to be put into practice. Insisting that the foreign donors of his Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organization be told the truth about the difficulties it was facing in the North, he wrote: "...and I am not willing to act on any basis other than the truth". With that kind of commitment to the truth, he had to dissent and he paid the price for his dissent. But we cannot be quite sane unless we have some respect for the truth and value dissent. His untimely death has therefore to be seen as a tragic event in which the mad erupted. I look on him as having been a fortress of sanity in a country wrecked by the mad.

(Concluded)

Trotsky and Gorbachevism

Patrick Jayasuriya

Following the shake-up of the Soviet system by Gorbachev many have come out with a self-created impression of precience. Some Trotskyites have been among those self-satisfied with "I told you so" triumph. How far is this correct?

First of all Gorbachev is no Trotsky. Trotsky was a great figure and an international communist. Gorbachev is a mediocre man with a nationalist capitalist bent.

Trotsky wanted an on-going international communist revolution while Gorbachev is now withdrawing from all relationship with the international movement for a communist society. Even already existing Marxist or socialist states are being left without Soviet assistance.

Trotsky did not want to dissolve the Soviet Marxist state. He only wanted to organize it better than he thought Stalin was doing. Also, his personal power tussle with Stalin, which was due to temperamental differences and conflict of personal ambition, made Trotsky adopt position that he would not have followed had he been in power. Gorbachev wants to change the whole socialist system in the U.S.S.R. He has even compared his efforts in that direction with the work of Lenin himself! But Lenin was a great idealist reformer and constructor while Gorbachev merely wants to re-establish a retrogressive system. What Gorbachev is now offering is a potpourri of capitalism, socialism and what not. Trotsky had a doctrinal clarity while Gorbachev is pragmatic and expedient.

Even if one grants that Gorbachev is right now, that does not prove that Trotsky was right over fifty years ago when political realities were different. So it is meaning less to either praise Trotsky or condemn Stalin in this context. What may be correct now was not necessarily correct in the circumstance of a previous time. At the beginning, everyone knows, the physical existence of the Soviet state

was of fundamental importance due to armed foreign intervention by many nations as well as by the retrogressive White Russian army. Some may venture to say that had Trotsky come to power rather than Stalin he would have been compelled to be as authoritarian as Stalin was. There does not seem to have been any congenital aversion to repression in Trotsky so long as it was he who did so. There may be some grounds for this belief when one takes into account Trotsky's repressive record in the brief period that he was in power. The repression of the Kronstadt sailors' uprising is a case in point. Also, Trotsky was the architect of the Soviet Army organization with its close political connection with the Party and which has been a main characteristic of the Soviet system inherited and condemned by Gorbachev. Trotsky however wanted openness to the incipient Chinese Revolution in his time while Gorbachev's openness is at present only to the West and not to the East.

In this context one has to take into account what the USSR achieved after the Revolution. From being a backward agricultural nation with no industry to speak of, the USSR developed into one of the big industrial nations of the world within forty years. Within forty years it achieved what it took the Western industrial nations two hundred years to do. In this period it actually outstripped the USA in many areas of industrial production. It is creditable for its system of production that it was the first nation to orbit a manned spacecraft. The USSR under the socialist system achieved full industrialism in forty years while the USA and Britain took an appreciably longer time under a free-market system of production. One has to take account of the human and material destruction the USSR suffered in defeating the Nazis (twenty million dead) while the USA was safe from damage due to distance.

We in the Third World must see the developments in the USSR and the other East European countries from our own point of view. Here are two

over-sized Caucasian nations getting together in their own national economic interests. This poses a threat to the economic and political interests of the rest of the world especially the historically exploited non-Caucasian Third World countries. If the two juggernauts get together to share the spoils of the rest of the world then woe de unto the Third World oil resources and to Japan's industrial success.

Those cosy intellectuals in our part of the world who see theoretical advances in Gorbachev's activities may be actually helping to create smokescreen for a world grab by the USA and the USSR. Remember the USA and the USSR are now both in serious economic difficulties. The intellectualism of these intellectuals is itself, in form and content,

PENSIONERS Playing Fair

Christopher Sebaratnam

The compensations shall range around Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 6000/- the lowest in respect of those who retired in and after January, 1988 and the highest in respect of sterling pensioners, whose pensions were computed on the basic hypothetical salaries. **LOGICAL ALTERNATIVE**

If the government does not have the means to pay the compensations it can very well raise loans from the Asian Development Bank, World Bank or International Monetary Fund or grants from the Consortium of Aid Countries. Surely these institutions which have funded grandiose schemes will be prepared to help this humanitarian project of relief. If, however, the government is not inclined towards this relief, high time it proceeds strip off, by amendment of the constitution, the attributed "democratic" "Socialist" and let it be naked as "Republic of Sri Lanka", whereupon the ball shall be on the court of render this relief as and when it seizes governing power. A large majority of the near 200000 pensioners is a force to reckon with as the commoners all over the country look up to them for their good counsel and guidance in their day-to-day lives. (Concluded)

Forward to Oblivion

Scott Sullivan

Once he was the world's leading exponent of philosophic Marxism, a pillar of the structuralist movement and a darling of the psychoanalytical school. But when Louis Althusser died at the age of 72, his passing came as an anticlimax, a footnote to a profounder death that had already occurred. His academic career came to a bizarre end one night just 10 years ago when, in a fit of psychotic rage, he strangled his wife to death. Judged unfit for trial by reason of insanity, Althusser spent his final decade mostly in asylums. He never wrote or taught again. And the Marxist vision of the world that he so brilliantly interpreted and defended has not only fallen out of academic fashion, it has been falsified by history.

In the early 1960s, everybody who was anybody in French intellectual life was a Marxist. Some major thinkers, like Jean-Paul Sartre, preferred the independent role of fellow traveler to the more constraining position of party member. Some preferred Trotsky's version of the faith to Lenin's. Others took their gospel from Mao Zedong's Little Red Book. A handful of eccentrics supported Raymond Aron, France's only first-rank advocate of anti-communist liberalism, but they were drowned out by the clamorous Marxist majority. And in this highly charged ambience, Louis Althusser was a kind of uncrowned king.

He held one of the most influential, if apparently obscure, posts in the French academic world: director of philosophical studies at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, then as now the country's most prestigious institution of higher learning in the arts and sciences. He directed the theses of scores of students who were to go on to key

positions in academia, the world of letters and, of course, the French Communist Party. Every new Althusser article, no matter how dense or technical, was an event in Paris, and indeed throughout Europe.

It is hard now to grasp quite what the fuss was all about. Althusser's special subject was the precise relationship between Marx's work and the dialectical philosophy of his conservative predecessor Friedrich Hegel. Althusser argued that "an epistemological break" occurred between the younger Karl Marx's (still Hegelian) writings and the work of the mature Marx, which was fully "Marxist." He even dated the break to the year 1844-45. In the 1960s and 1970s, this was heady stuff. Althusser's young fans credited him with "freeing Marx" from the taint of idealism, humanism and social democracy. The professor's brand of Marxism was rigorous and uncompromising. He dared to admit that it was "anti-humanist" as well.

Althusser's rigor often irked the French Communist Party, which the philosopher joined in 1948 and still belonged to when he died. In 1872, for example, he accused the party leadership of heresy because it dropped the concept of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" from its official platform. But Althusser was idolized by another important constituency: the so-called "structuralist" school. Structuralism grew out of the insights of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who had studied the structure of kinship relations in primitive societies. It sought to apply them to nearly every other branch of knowledge. Some of Althusser's terms—like Marxism as "a process without a subject"—resembled structuralist jargon, and he was quickly classified

as the movement's political philosopher.

In fact, Althusser's thinking had little in common with that of the other structuralists and poststructuralists, except for Jacques Lacan, the brilliant but cryptic guru of Freudian psychoanalysis. Plagued since young manhood by extreme manic-depression, Althusser spent years in analysis. Unlike most orthodox Marxists' he took Freudian thinking seriously and occasionally wrote about it. That was enough for him to be included on everyone's list of structuralist heavies—along with Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, the literary theorists Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, the philosopher Gaston Bachelard and the eccentric historian of ideas Michel Foucault.

Dimmed by time

The brilliant handful of original and quirky thinkers set European intellectual tastes throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Universities like Yale and Bologna marched to the structuralist drumbeat. Time has dimmed both their names and reputations. Lacan died in 1981 in the midst of a highly undignified battle with his followers. Barthes was run over by a pickup truck. Foucault was struck down by AIDS. Lévi-Strauss remains a towering figure in his own right. But the structuralism that he inspired is out of fashion now, its proponents neglected, its former attractions all but incomprehensible.

Of that once glittering circle, Althusser's fate has been the most pathetic. Beset throughout his life by the dementia that made him a murderer, he lived to see the doctrine he professed discredited. In recent years, many of Althusser's former disciples joined the "New Philosophers" in their condemnation of Marxism. At the Ecole Normale, where Althusser reigned supreme for almost three decades, most students interviewed the day after his death said they had no intention of reading his work.

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