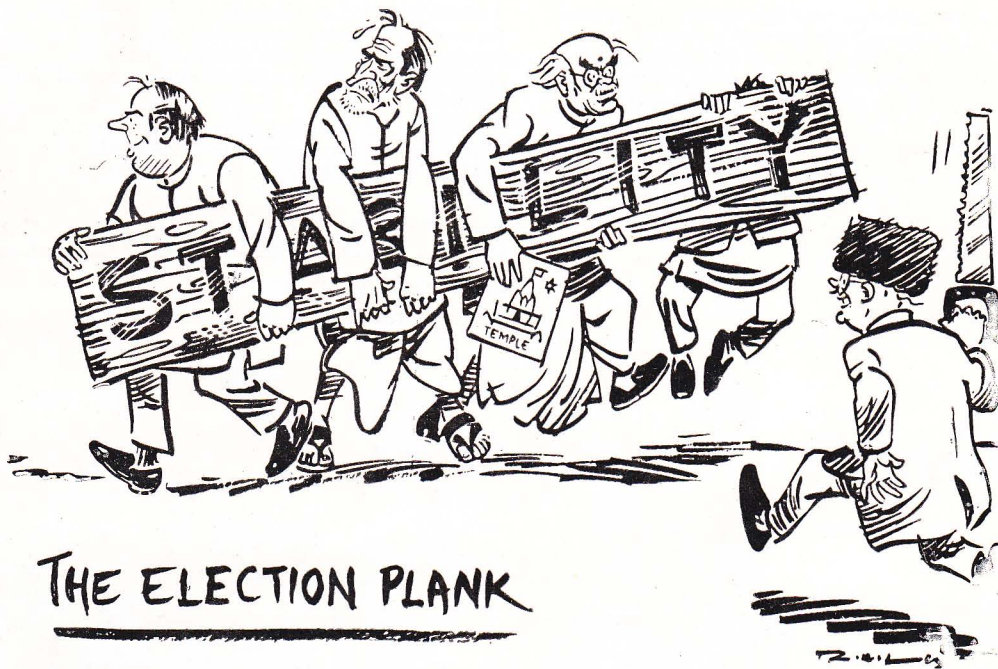


● *Reggie Siriwardena* on *Virginia Woolf* ●
Rajiva Wijesingha on *Anne Ranasingha*

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 14 No. 1 May 1, 1991 Price Rs. 7.50 Registered at the GPO, Sri Lanka QD/06/NEWS/91



THE ELECTION PLANK

INDIAN POLLS

A MILLION MUTINIES — *James Glad*

NON-ALIGNMENT, NEIGHBOURS — *K. Katyal*

RELIGION, CASTE AND GUNS — *G. Krishnan*

DELHI, MADRAS, COLOMBO — *Mervyn de Silva*

J.R. — A MUCH — MISQUOTED MAN? — *Piyal Gamage*

NEW WORLD ORDER : *Tarzie Varindra Vittachi,*
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TRENDS

BOYCOTT

Opposition members, SLFP, MEP and USA, boycotted the ceremonial opening of the Third Session of the Second Parliament by President Premadasa on April 19. Other Opposition members, SLMC, TULF and EDF attended. The boycott was to protest soaring living costs and repression, and other issues. Government spokesman said these reasons were nothing new, and too frivolous for such an extreme step as a boycott of parliament.

TO BE ARMED

After two lots of Sinhala peasants were hacked to death by 'Tigers', seventeen in Athimale and twenty two in Maligawila, both in the Moneragala district, the authorities announced that inhabitants of border villages in the Ampara and Moneragala districts will be armed.

EXTERNAL FORCES?

"External powers" could be working with the LTTE to destabilise Sri Lanka, President Premadasa told an election rally in Divulapitiya. There were also others who did not like wounds to heal, so that they could display the sore and bag votes.

But the UNP, he said, could not be defeated, after 1977.

Briefly . . .

● President Premadasa told a rally at Aranayake that the Opposition was resorting to boycotts and withdrawals because it had no alternative to the Government to offer. They were in such a sorry state that they were too ashamed even to participate in festivities organised (by the government) in connection with the Sinhala and Hindu New Year.

The people of this country still remembered the dark SLFP era of queues and shortages, the president said; an era of progress and prosperity had been ushered in by the UNP.

● Opposition Leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike told a rally at Kuliypitiya that the forthcoming local government elections should be an opportunity to damage the UNP's support base. It was time for the suffering masses to protest against the obstinacy and undemocratic policies of the Government.

The press was muzzled, and those who dared resist were abducted and seen no more, the Opposition Leader said.

● A special GCE (Advanced Level) examination began in the Northern and Eastern provinces on April 22. This was in place of the normal examination held in the rest of the island in August last year, which could not be held in the North and East because of the warring in those provinces. The examination authorities were hopeful that the government security forces and the LTTE would avoid confrontations in areas where the students were sitting this special examination. It will go on till May 18 at 144 centres, seven of which are in the Jaffna peninsula.

(Continued on Page 2)

LETTER

INSPIRING

We of all communities and religions must be thankful to Minister Festus Perera on his illuminating inspiring, Avurudda message.

He with lucidity and clarity lauds the values embedded in the traditions of the 'Sinhala' and 'Hindu New Year'.

He traces the migration of the ancient Aryans to Europe Africa and Asia. 'Sri Lankans' he states 'are descendants of the great Aryans known to be great thinkers, philosophers and true sportsmen.' He exhorts that we be proudly inspired by the noble qualities in our blood stream. . .

Let us, now at least, forget the minor ethnic, social, cultural and economic problems we face.

Let us not forget that we are Aryans.

Sri Lankan

LANKA

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Briefly . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

● 'Swiftly sliding rupee pushes drug prices up' was how the *Sunday Times* headlined its feature on escalating drug prices. The cost of living is harrowing enough; the cost of ailing is worse. And only a few can afford the cost of dying.

A pharmacist's bill these days could bring on a cardiac arrest. Some patients buy only a part of the pills prescribed, believing vaguely that at least a part of their illness would be cured.

Most drugs are imported. In 1979 a US dollar stood at less than 16 rupees. Today it is valued at over Rs 40; and it is climbing. In 1989 the government controlled drug importers' profits at 165

per cent of c. i. f. value. But little has been done to control the price at the retail outlet.

Another cause that helps the murderous escalation of drug prices is the unregulated availability of a variety of brand names, which confuses the patient often compelling him to pay many times more than he needs to. For instance: "A cancer-fighting drug named Tamixifel is sold under two brand names. The drug branded Nolvodex is priced at Rs 18.40 a capsule while the other, Tamofel is only Rs 5.25" (F. D. C. Wijesinghe, former chief economist of the Fair Trading Commission quoted in the *Sunday Times*). Another example: Volmax, a European brand name, sells at Rs 6.35 per 4 mg tablet; the same drug

made in Sri Lanka, named Salbutamol, is available at 10 cents per 2 mg tablet.

Many years ago a previous government attempted to do away with brand names, to make available the generic drug at very little cost. Big names in the medical profession howled; the international pharmaceuticals lobby beat the war drums.

Something else is also happening now. Multinational drug manufacturers are exporting dangerous products banned in their home countries to the Third World. "They manipulate rules and falsify 'scientific studies'. They buy testimonials and seek local allies who compromise in favour of their products or technologies", a Mexican study has revealed.

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Indian Polls and Sri Lanka

Mervyn de Silva

Two elections, the nationwide parliamentary polls in India and a mini-general election in Sri Lanka, and the respective results will probably provide a broad framework not only for Indo-Sri Lanka relations in the foreseeable future but for Colombo's policy on the LTTE-led Tamil insurgency, today's main challenge to State, regime and society, after the JVP revolt was crushed. If the Indian result is indecisive, there may be once more a period of dangerous drift... dangerous, that is, to Sri Lanka.

However, the Tamilnadu voter is more likely to be more clear-headed in deciding between the AIDMK-Congress alliance and the DMK-National Front coalition. A weak Centre in Delhi, busy forming uneasy alliances in order to have a stable Lok Sabha majority or counting the days to call for fresh polls, will have to be far more receptive to pressures from Madras than say, a new Rajiv Gandhi administration with a secure majority.

The fact that the local elections this month exclude the war-torn North and East does not really make the outcome less important to President Premadasa and the UNP. On the contrary, the result would be a much clearer test of what counts most — Sinhala opinion. Both the President and the Opposition Leader Mrs. Bandaranaike know that. True, economic issues have been raised, especially by the SLFP with an eye on the rural poor. Mrs. Bandaranaike has also focused on democracy and human rights. But the cutting edge of the SLFP propaganda has been the Tamil question, specifically the way the war is being waged in the North and East, and lately the LTTE's murderous attacks on Sinhala villages, plainly a cold-

bloodedly calculated tactical move. Mrs. Bandaranaike's attack is aimed at the Government's apparent lack of concern in the way the 'war' is going. More money and time are spent by the Government on other matters, including 'tamashas' accuses the Opposition Leader. In short, she demands that the war effort should be Colombo's topmost priority. It is an essentially militarist or pro-military solution approach with the Sinhala electorate in mind. And why not? The north and east won't vote.

President Premadasa on the other hand continues to argue the case for a "political settlement" blaming the LTTE squarely for taking up arms when high-level negotiations were being conducted in Colombo throughout 1990. However, his offer of negotiations this time round is NOT unconditional. Having been cleverly deceived the first time round to invite the wrath of hardline Sinhala opinion, fierce attacks from the SLFP, and disappointment of the National Security Establishment, he is not taking any chances the second time. He simply cannot afford that.

There is a poorly concealed time-table implicit in the President's current approach. The army has been given what it has always pressed for — more men, more sophisticated weapons, and a systematic program of improving the contribution of the Air Force and the Navy to the war effort. All this is part of the conscious restructuring and modernisation undertaken by Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne, in response to the insistent demands of the High Command.

The Army has not satisfied the high expectations of an over-eager and simple-minded Sinhala middle class which believed the

war could be won in one month, if not in one week! **But the Army has made things far more difficult for the LTTE, precisely because** the High Command in Colombo, under Lt. General Hamilton Wanasingha, and the Northern Commander, Major-General Denzil Kobbekaduwe, have lowered their sights, and mapped out a far more realistic strategy, putting professionalism before public relations. In the north, the 'Tigers' have the run of the peninsula, the 'Eelam' heartland, but they cannot claim total "liberation". The carefully located and defensible camps or fixed positions, with a cluster of supportive camps, plus access from the sea and total command of the skies, constitute what can be described as a 'strategy of denial' in an unconventional war. "Eelam" has not been "liberated", despite the fact that the LTTE has full command of the land area, mobility, and complete command of a rudimentary administrative system, including the issue of visas, imposing taxes, and police functions.

LTTE RESPONSE

With these power and administrative responsibilities have come problems. Given its authoritarian regimen, the LTTE has employed day-to-day practices which have made life exceedingly uncomfortable and oppressive to the Tamil middle-class, particularly the intelligentsia. Rapid cadre recruitment has lowered the standard of its 'army' and 'police'. These changes largely account for the highly critical "Human Rights" report recently issued by the University Teachers' group. This report has made quite an impact on international opinion too; most crucially, the foreign NGO's and some governments, especially in Europe and the Commonwealth.

The LTTE has relied on a dual response: (a) a new campaign overseas to project the image of a responsible spokesman of an oppressed minority always ready to talk and negotiate if "a reasonable offer was forthcoming. The "sole spokesman" role however is underlined.

(b) It has launched attacks in the East, deep in Sinhala areas. The attacks are not only savage but indiscriminate. Both help to unsettle the government, inflame Sinhala opinion. It also sharpens the UNP-SLFP (i. e. Sinhala) conflict, all the more easily because there is an election campaign on.

But that is not the only election the LTTE has in mind. Its principal concern is the Indian election — both the nation-wide and the Tamilnadu. The LTTE would of course prefer a DMK-National Front victory in Madras and a non-Congress government in Delhi. But it realises that NO government in Delhi can ignore Tamil opinion. And Tamilnadu is not merely a large state, it is the most important in the south. ALL ruling parties in India have their main power-base in the north.

The MGR mantle is now Jayalalitha's — the mistress of the charismatic MGR not Janaki's, the widow. When the (AIDMK) MGR vote was divided in 1989 between the two ladies, the DMK under Karunanidhi won 151 seats in the state though collecting only 34% of the total poll. Now Janaki is out of the picture and Jayalalitha has had her way in negotiating terms with Gandhi's Congress on Lok Sabha Seat sharing for this month's elections. But who will win the battle for the Tamilnadu state assembly?

INDIAN VIEWS

The Congress manifesto defined Indian interests in Sri Lanka thus: (i) securing the rights of the Tamils (b) Indian national security interests and (c) safeguarding Sri Lanka's territorial integrity.

Mr. Gandhi has a score to settle with the LTTE, which humiliated IPKF, cocked a snook at the regional 'superpower' and spurned the Gandhi-Jayawardena 'Accord' and clobbered the India-backed Tamil groups, particularly Padmanabha's EPRLF to which Mr. Gandhi had a special respect. At the same time, Delhi's leverage would be much less if there were no full-blown Tamil insurgency, and that 'war' is the LTTE's. Delhi cannot ignore the LTTE. Besides, India cannot play negotiating role without recognising the LTTE when the LTTE is the sole "army" fighting the Sri Lankan state. Appreciating all that the LTTE has already insisted on what is a pre-condition it is the **sole** spokesman of the Tamil people. India will not accept that.

After despatching Major-General Cecil Waidyaratne, the toughest of the generals to the politically sensitive East, President Premadasa has once more argued that the conflict requires a negotiated political settlement. This may imply that the President, having given the army 6 months more to win the war or at least contain the LTTE, is preparing the public for a situation where he can say "I told you that this conflict requires a negotiated settlement. So isn't it better for me, your elected President, to talk to the (Sri Lankan) Tamil 'Tigers' than a foreign government which has its own interests in our country, its small neighbour?".

On his way to Delhi, Sri Lanka's new High Commissioner Mr. Neville Kanakarathne, told the Madras press that India had a "role" to play. But what is that role? It remains ill-defined. As for the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. N. N. Jha, Delhi is clear on one particular "role".

"I don't think "he said" the LTTE or anybody else can define this role for us. . . . The LTTE should make up its mind. Mr. Jha also questioned the LTTE's claim as 'sole representative'.

It should contest elections and prove its popularity to the world. It is also inconsistent to argue that it is the most popular Tamil group and then deny other groups the right to contest.

The local elections will demonstrate to the President what kind of mandate he will be given in the event of negotiations with the Tamils, LTTE and others. If the Opposition does well, he would be more sensitive to hardline Sinhala opinion, and the gap between the government and the LTTE, already quite large, may become unbridgeable.

"The change in mood is palpable. Gone for the most part, is the stale rhetoric of national "self-reliance" and "foreign dependence" that spewed from past socialist regimes. The *Lanka Guardian* and the *Economic Review*, leftist journals long favoured by prominent Marxists, now run approving pieces on the "open economy."

(Ramesh Venkataraman — Sri Lanka beyond the politics of race
ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL)

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Human Rights

SRI LANKA : STARK PARADOX - U. S.

For Sri Lanka In fiscal year 1992, the Administration is requesting 19.3 million dollars in Development Assistance, 21.6 million dollars in P. L. 480, and 200,000 dollars in International Military Education and Training funds.

Sri Lanka embodies one of South Asia's starkest paradoxes. On the one hand, it takes pride in a strong, democratic tradition and dynamic economic policies which brought a five percent annual growth rate for 1990. At the same time, Sri Lanka has suffered two brutal insurgencies. Although the JVP, which has a brutal record, was crushed by early 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam continue to wage a bloody separatist war against the government. Deputy Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne, who was assassinated on March 3, was the latest victim of Sri Lanka's tragic cycle of violence. **We have consistently urged dialogue, not bloodshed, as the means to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic differences. While the ceasefire in early January did not last, we are encouraged that the Government left the door open to future talks.**

We are also troubled by the human rights abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including government forces. The Government's establishment of a human rights task force was a welcome development. We commend its efforts to maintain communal harmony and to promote military discipline while fighting a violent insurgency. Plainly, democratically-elected government has the right to protect itself from those who would overthrow it by force. Yet those charged with enforcing the law — including the Sri Lankan military and police — have a special obligation to obey it. On human rights matters, the Government of Sri Lanka's primary responsibility is to vigorously investigate all extrajudicial killings and disappearances credibly linked to security forces and bring those responsible to justice. Beyond that, there must be greater effort to investigate officials linked to serious abuses. Discipline in the security forces must be strengthened. We have underscored this point on many occasions, including at the donor Consultative Group meeting in Paris on October 25. Other delegations, including the European Community, expressed similar concerns in their statements.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by noting again our encouragement by the improved climate for democratic institutions in several South Asian nations. U. S. assistance programs, supported by the Congress, have made a real contribution to this development. But working for greater democratic government and widened opportunities for free enterprise in South Asia, as anywhere else, is a means to an end: an improved life for the people of the region. We will continue our diplomatic efforts in South Asia on behalf of non-proliferation, increased security, and improved human rights. We also must continue our programs to help build the political, economic, and social foundations required for South Asian nations to adequately address themselves the tremendous problems they face.

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Strengthening Human Rights Realization at the Grassroots in South Asia through Regional Co-operation

South Asian Human Rights Programme of Action

The Participants at the Workshop on "Strengthening Human Rights Realization at Grassroots In South Asia through Regional Co-operation" held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 17-19 March 1991 passed several resolutions and made several recommendations for the realization of human rights at grassroots in the countries of the region.

Representatives from several human rights organizations in SAARC countries, India, Bangladesh Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as representatives of several regional networks in Asia attended the meeting. Due to flight problems representatives from Nepal and Bhutan could not participate in it.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations were made regarding four areas. They are:

- (1) Human Rights research, education, dissemination, promotion and training;
- (2) Monitoring, fact finding and reporting;
- (3) Human Rights groups working in exceptionally difficult circumstances;
- (4) Action campaigns.

The participants decided that the recommendations should be followed by concrete action programmes. To give effect to these recommendations the following action programmes were created, these we hope will give strength to human rights NGOs working in the region and will effectively campaign against specific issues in the region.

Action Programme - 1

Human Rights Education & Promotion

- (i) To develop a framework of regional training programme for human rights activists;

(Continued on page 7)

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1 Mr. Joseph Gathia, Co-ordinator, Centre of Concern for Child Labour, New Delhi, INDIA, 2 Mr. Lawrence, Surendra, Centre for Research in New International, Madras, INDIA, 3 Mr. Mohamed Fazlul Huq, Secretary, Madaripur Legal Aid Association, Madaripur BANGLADESH, 4 Ms. Angela Gomes, Director, Banche Shekha, Jessore, BANGLADESH, 5 Mr. Akram H. Chowdhury, Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, Dhaka 1000, BANGLADESH, 6 Mr. Benedict D'Rozario, Asst. Director, CARITAS Development Institute Dhaka, BANGLADESH, 7 Ms. Rosaline Costa, Commission for Justice and Peace, Dhaka, BANGLADESH, 8 Ms. Zebunnessa Rahman, Vice President, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, Dhaka, BANGLADESH, 9 Mr. D. J. Ravindran, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, SWITZERLAND, 10 Mr. Rafiq Safi Munshay, Advocate, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Karachchi, PAKISTAN, 11 Mr. Sabihuddin Ahmed, Vice Chairman, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Karachchi, PAKISTAN, 12 Mr. M. Abdul Sabur, Coordinator, Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) Bangkok, THAILAND, 13 Dr. Clarence J. Dias, President, International Centre for Law in Development, New York, U. S. A. 14 Mr. James Tan, Coordinator, Hotline Asia, Kowloon, HONG KONG, 15 Mr. Wong Kai Shing, Programme Officer, Asian Human Rights Commission, Kowloon, HONG KONG, 16 Mr. J. B. Jayaratnam, President, Regional Council on Human Rights in Asia, SINGAPORE, 17 Mr. Zia Ahmed Awan, Lawyers for Human Rights & Legal Aid, Karachchi, PAKISTAN, 18 Prof. Savitri Goonesekera, Open University of Sri Lanka, Nugegoda, SRI LANKA, 19 Ms. Manel Tiranagama, President, Rural Women's Organizations Network, Galle, SRI LANKA, 20 Ms. Tamara Wimalasooriya, Human Rights Commission, Colombo-7, SRI LANKA, 21 Mr. Kalyananda Tiranagama, Lawyers for Human Rights & Development, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 22 Ms. Lakmali Cabral, Lawyers for Human Rights & Development, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 23 Mr. Prins Rajasooriya, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 24 Mr. Upali Ponnampereuma, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 25 Ms. Pathma Nagendran, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 26 Mr. K. H. Amarasena, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 27 Mr. Wilson Fernando, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 28 Mr. A. Jauffer Hassan, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 29 Ms. Monica Ruwanpathirana, Participatory Institute for Development Alternatives, Colombo-8, SRI LANKA, 30 Mr. Upali Magedera Gamage, National Development Foundation, Nugegoda, SRI LANKA, 31 Mr. S. Balakrishnan, Ceylon Social Institute, Kandy, SRI LANKA, 32 Ms. D. A. Nandani, Centre for Women's Development, Wanchawala, SRI LANKA, 33 Ms. Kamala Seneviratne, Centre for Women's Development, Wanchawala, SRI LANKA, 34 Mr. D. W. Appuhamy, General Secretary, All Lanka Peasants Congress, Nuwara Eliya, SRI LANKA, 35 Mr. W. Gamini Yapa, Regional Coordinator, Peasant Development Programme, Kumburegama, SRI LANKA.

- (ii) To organize at least one regional training programme within a year;
- (iii) To organize a training programme on fact finding, documentation, reporting and skill development;
- (iv) To organize parallel meetings to make representations during international events and SAARC meetings;
- (v) To set up a means of communication — a newsletter or news-sheet for sharing of information and experiences at regional level;
- (iv) To prepare a resources directory of organizations and institutions involved in human rights work at national and regional levels.

Action Programme - 2

Special Task Forces

Four categories of problems were identified with demand priority and early action to deal with them. They are :

- (i) Trafficking of women and children
- (ii) Multinational Corporations and Human Rights violations
- (iii) Deforestation
- (iv) Drugs and Aids.

It was decided to set up four Task Forces to tackle these issues Each of these "Task Force" would comprise at least one Human Rights Organization from each of South Asian countries already working on such issues. Individual participants and NGOs different countries were identified to constitute such Task Forces.

The "Task Forces" would exchange information and meet periodically to enhance closer cooperation in dealing with such problem. The groups should formulate target actions and strategies aimed at solving the specific problems.

Action Programme - 3

Expert Groups

It was also decided to organize an Expert Group to help human rights organizations working under exceptionally difficult circumstances. States under emergency and martial law and situations of ethnic conflict were considered as examples of exceptionally difficult circumstances. For the moment Expert Group would attend to particular areas, namely :

- (i) To address the issue of disappearances and help human rights organizations to deal with the issue.
- (ii) To constitute or supplement fact-finding, monitoring and reporting groups at regional level.

Action Programme - 4

Common Action

Some common action campaigns were also proposed in relation to :

- (i) Burma issue (This was spelt out as an issue calling for immediate action campaign)
- (ii) Promotion of democratization and accountability of governments of the countries in the region
- (iii) Solidarity and support to the human rights organizations and people's movements.

Action Programme - 5

Action Campaigns to Promote Regional Co-operation

- (i) To organize seminars to identify regional and common issues and plan out action programmes to promote regional cooperation and solidarity;
- (ii) Education and exchange of information on regional or inter-country issues;
- (iii) Calling together national NGOs capable of organizing programmes in their countries to promote regional solidarity and cooperation.

MODALITIES

The participants also decided on the modalities for the implementation of action programmes.

Caritas Training Institute of Bangladesh volunteered to undertake the implementation of regional training programmes. The Lawyers for Human Rights and Development (LHRD) in Sri Lanka was assigned the task of communications.

Four Task Forces comprising at least one Human Rights Organization from each SAARC country already working on such issues were constituted for dealing with each of the four issues.

Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) undertook to organize Expert Groups. The overall general co-ordination of all action programmes was entrusted to the Lawyers for Human Rights and Development (LHRD) in Sri Lanka for a period of two years.

LHRD is saddled with a heavy responsibility. In the next two years LHRD will have to see that all possible and practical steps are taken for the implementation of the above decisions. Jointly with the other South Asian participants LHRD is committed to give effect to these action programmes.

LHRD seeks the support of all South Asian Human Rights NGOs and People's Movements, Regional Human Rights Networks, UN bodies and other concerned organizations in translating this commitment of ours to a meaningful contribution for the realization of human rights and justice in our societies.

STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

We are individuals and organizations from Asian region, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh involved and working for the promotion of Human Rights and Social Justice. We

met in Colombo, Sri Lanka from March 17-19 for 'Strengthening Human Rights Realization at the Grassroots in South Asia through Regional Co-operation'. We resolved at the end of our deliberations to share this statement with people and NGOs working for the realization of human rights and achieving social justice in our societies.

We received reports of human rights situations of the different countries in the region and examined the kind of problems and difficulties created by both state and non-state groups using terror and violence, to thwart the realization of human rights.

We are appalled by the increasing violation of human rights, economic, political, social and cultural, the growing intensity of these violations and rising number of categories of victims and violations. We also noted with deep concern that despite the heroic efforts by people and NGOs to resist these violations and their unceasing work for realization of human rights at the grassroot level, these violations continue unabated and increase in ferocity. We lament the fact that these valiant efforts to realise the human rights of our people is met with grotesque repression and moreover this is being achieved through the manipulation of law and ever growing number of repressive legislations. These acts also frustrate the efforts of the sympathetic members of the judiciary and bureaucracy who try hard to stem the increasing tide of human rights violations and the corresponding slide of our societies into a morass of violence and destruction.

We discussed some priority actions that needs to be undertaken and strengthened at

the National and South Asian level to improve the human rights climate in our societies. These actions that address certain priority issues are not only important in themselves but that we feel, will certainly improve the human rights situation.

Through our deliberations, the actions we propose and this statement that we share we express our profound admiration and appreciation of the people, the organizations and individuals fighting at great odds to protect and promote the human rights. We extend our solidarity to those struggling for the realization of human rights and achievement of social justice. We pledge our commitment to these struggles. With this pledge of ours, we also seek your support in a spirit of growing unity and working together to enable us to translate this commitment of ours to a meaningful contribution for the realization of the struggles for human rights and justice in our societies.

We express our grave concern over the grim situation emanating from blatant violations of human rights such as the large scale "disappearances" of citizens from the Southern part of Sri Lanka, the genocide and displacement caused by the armed ethnic conflict in the North-East province of Sri Lanka, the communal tension in India and the defiance of all human rights norms by State-Agencies in Punjab and Kashmir, the terrorization of people caused by the Government and other armed groups in the Sindh Province in Pakistan, the trafficking of women from Bangladesh, the drug menace throughout the region and the bombing of civilians in Iraq and the plight of women and children arising therefrom.

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Uncertainties cloud poll horizon

G. Krishnan in Delhi

Some 521 million voters will cast their ballots this month in what many people consider one of the most lacklustre election in recent times, barely 16 months after they elected 523 candidates to the ninth Lok Sabha.

The 1989 elections raised a lot of hopes with Mr. V. P. Singh being projected as an alternative to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the opposition closing ranks to form a common anti-Congress (I) front. The issues too were explosive — Bofors and Ramjanm-abhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute.

But this time most voters seem to be lukewarm about the elections, mainly because of their disenchantment with politicians of every hue, who have proved incapable of holding a government together for five years.

More worrisome is a fear of large-scale violence, especially in the large northern States and Punjab and Assam, where the Union Government has decided to hold simultaneous polls to the Assembly and Lok Sabha.

At this writing the Election Commission had not announced the poll dates for these States, probably on the Government's recommendation. The Chief Election Commissioner has said that special security measures must be taken to ensure free and fair elections in these States. It is possible that the Government may leave the final decision to the new Lok Sabha which has to be constituted before June 5.

The last elections were significant in that the Congress (I) was rejected though it polled 39.33 per cent of total votes and in that it saw the reemergence of a distinct North-South divide.

At the national level, the Congress (I) managed to get

only 194 seats despite winning more than two-thirds of the votes. The Janata Dal, on the other hand, got 142 seats though it secured only 17.73 per cent of the total votes. In fact the Congress (I) Opposition together polled about 1 per cent less votes than the Congress (I) but won 76 seats more.

The Congress (I) fared very well in the South in the November 1989 poll by winning 109 of the total 132 seats. The near total victory of Congress (I) candidates from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in particular seemed to indicate that the electorate had rejected that Janata / Janata Dal and the Telugu Desam regimes which had failed to make good their promises. The rift between Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde and Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda in Karnataka resulted in their fighting for the same votes, thus helping the Congress (I) emerge victorious.

The last elections saw the Opposition realising that it had to sink its differences and come together if it was to defeat the Congress (I). The result was the National Front, comprising the Janata Dal (which itself was born of a merger between the Jan Morcha and the Lok Dal-Ajit Singh), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Telugu Desam, the Congress (S) and the Asom Gana Parishad. This combine fought the Congress (I) head on with the support of the left parties and the Bharatiya Janata Party. There were also seat adjustment agreements in most constituencies to ensure straight contests so that the non-Congress (I) vote would not be divided.

The Congress (I)'s campaign high-lighted contradictions in the Opposition — combine which, it said, was opportunistic and lacked any clear policy. The Nation-

al Front and its allies, on the other hand, lambasted the ruling party for its alleged involvement in the Bofors scandal and for its effort to tarnish Mr. V. P. Singh's image invoking the St. Kitts affair. It also exploited the Government's inept handling of the sensitive Ayodhya issue.

This time, the issues seem as numerous as the parties contesting the elections.

The Janata Dal-led National Front is banking on its promise of reservations for the backward classes to bring home the votes of the underprivileged, who constitute a sizeable section of the electorate.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which supported the V. P. Singh Government from outside, has decided to go it alone. It feels the agitation to build a Ram temple on the disputed site at Ayodhya has won it the support of large sections among the Hindus and believes that it will be able to cut into the Congress (I)'s vote-banks in a big way. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad rally in Delhi early this month, it hopes, has lent additional momentum to its campaign.

The Congress (I)'s main plank is a simple slogan — stability. It feels that the people, fed up with the inability of both the Janata Dal Governments to stay united for at least one term, will vote it back to power.

However, poll experts are of the opinion that it is too early for prediction. A clearer indication of the electorate's mood will emerge only about a fortnight before the poll, they say.

Yet, politicians believe that the urban voter is by and large likely to vote for the Congress (I) or the BJP while rural voter will favour either the Janata Dal or the Congress (I). In

essence, they feel, the Congress (I) and the BJP will cut into one another's vote banks.

But such simple arithmetic does not always hold good, if past elections are any indication. The first-past-the-post system has sometimes helped and sometimes confounded all political parties.

For instance, in 1984, the Congress (I) bagged 415 seats securing 48.12 per cent of the total votes. In the next election, it won only 194 seats though it polled 39.33 per cent of the votes. Mr. Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party polled 1.95 per cent of the votes and secured three seats. But the Communist Party of India, which gathered only 2.67 per cent of the votes, won 11 seats.

In Tamil Nadu, the All-India Anna DMK won 11 seats with 1.5 per cent of the votes, but the DMK's tally was nil though it polled 2.25 per cent of the votes.

There is also much discussion about the impact the 120 reserved constituencies could have on the poll outcome. There is no data on how different communities have voted in past elections but reports indicate that the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are now not as much on the side of the Congress (I) as earlier. The party's share of winners from reserved constituencies has steadily come down over the years with the people turning to alternatives like the left or regional parties.

The BJP too did well in several reserved constituencies in 1989, winning by narrow margins over parties such as the Jharkhad Mukthi Morcha and the BJB. However, these parties are said to have considerably consolidated their support base in the last year and a half.

This could partly be because the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, most of whom continue to be below the poverty level, have for years been targets of violence during election time and therefore tend to prefer parties who they see as their defenders.

Poll violence has been a major worry of not only the

political parties, but also the Election Commission. In the 1988 Assembly polls in Tripura more than 100 people were massacred by the Tribal National Volunteers. And during the 1989 elections, peaceful polling was an exception rather than the rule.

There were 20 deaths and a repoll had to be ordered in as many as 500 booths in Andhra Pradesh. But the most shocking instance of booth-capturing and rigging was in Amethi in Uttar Pradesh from where Mr. Rajiv Gandhi contested against Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi.

In Harayana, Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala was blamed for unprecedented violence in the Mehana constituency, where armed gangs moved from booth to booth and stamped ballot papers, while the police kept observers and opponents away.

And Bihar, of course continued to have its customary large share of election violence. The Election Commission had to order a repoll in about 1,000 booths in 132 constituencies. The Bihar Government has now requested the Centre to despatch 200 companies of paramilitary personnel and 60,000 rifles to the State before the elections. State officials say that they will not be able to handle law and order problems on their own during the elections.

Initial reports suggest that the number of "sensitive" booths in Bihar could be as high as 40 per cent this time against 25 per cent during the last election. Former Inspector-General of Police Rajeshwar Lal believes that hoodlums in the State possess about a million firearms. In an electorate of 526 million, that is one weapon for about every 52 voters.

The Patna Collectorate receives between 20 and 30 applications every day for arms licences. But barely a fourth of the arms in the State are licensed. The police estimate that there are about 600 gun factories in the State, all of them unlicensed. Pistols sell for about Rs. 200 each, doubled barrelled guns for Rs. 2,000 and crude bombs for Rs. 6 kilogram. And politicians in the State estimate that

each candidate must spend at least Rs. 75,000 for hiring lumpen elements to do the dirty work for them.

A new phenomenon, politicians say, has been the creation of caste *senas* or body guards. Most of these groups have their own arms-making units. In addition there are about 100,000 "arms contractors" who supply weapons and criminal gangs for a price.

But guns alone do not win elections. Money too matters. Politicians say they have to spend between Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 25 lakh in each parliamentary constituency.

About a third of this is spent on paying off local ganglords; providing gifts to the voters — sarees, dhotis, and towels being perennial favourites — hiring volunteers to paint slogans and man party offices, and printing posters, banners and leaflets. Even though the statutory limit on campaign expenses is Rs. 1.5 lakh per candidate, in practice, everybody spends much more.

The Government too spends a huge amount to conduct the elections. According to the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. T. N. Seshan, the Government spent Rs. 110 crore last time on ballot papers and boxes, indelible ink and transport for the field staff etc. This does not include the expenditure on security and the law and order machinery. This year, the Commission reckons that the elections will cost the Government about Rs. 130 crore. Contrast this with the Rs. 10.45 crore spent on holding the first general elections in 1952.

Deputy Prime Minister Dev Lai estimates that the total cost to the nation could be around Rs. 12,000 crore this time, an increase of Rs. 2,000 crore over the figure cited for the 1989 elections.

Apart from the usual poll-related violence, politicians fear large-scale communal clashes this time. The number of observers in "sensitive" constituencies was 10 in 1984. This increased ten-fold in 1989 and is expected to be considerably more this time.

Cong(I) defines foreign policy aims

K. K. Katyal

“Isn't it significant — this reference to the nuclear policy in the Congress(I) manifesto?” commented a senior diplomat a day after the party president, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, released the document. Three other diplomats, participants in the animated discussion on the coming poll at a cocktail party, nodded approval.

They had in mind a sentence under the sub-head “atomic energy”, which said, “In case Pakistan persists in the development of nuclear weapons, India will be constrained to review her policy to meet the threat”. One of them had already done a bit of research — “the Congress(I) manifesto last time did not go that far”.

Manifestos, it is clear, are taken seriously by others even when the reaction within the country borders on cynicism. The stand taken by different parties, especially those perceived as future rulers, is scanned carefully and attempts are made to find hidden meanings in vague formulations. Special attention is paid to foreign policy. This is dealt with at length in the Congress(I) manifesto while other parties have been content with scanty treatment of this subject, important though it is doubtlessly. But as in the past, foreign affairs are unlikely to be a major issue in the campaign.

Opportunity and challenge

Some of the points made by the Congress(I) are valid, others smack of partisan polemical approach. Yes, this is a critical juncture in world history and for the non-aligned movement and the dramatic change in the superpower relationship is not merely a major opportunity, but also a major challenge. “It is for us to ensure that the ending of the Cold War does not mean domination by any one power centre. It is for us to ensure that the emer-

gence of new economic powers such as Germany and Japan works for the betterment of the people and not only for the enrichment of the rich”. Most of this is axiomatic but the rub comes when the manifesto touches specifics.

What type of self-image is projected by the Congress(I) in the field of foreign policy? Proceeding from the premise that India lost its relevance in the last 15 months it promises a new assertiveness in global affairs if it comes to power. Translated in simple language, it means an active role for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi — which he relished during his tenure as Prime Minister. After the change of Government last year, Mr. Gandhi found the situation congenial for personal initiatives. His moves took varied forms. He wrote to the Prime Minister Mr. Chandra Shekhar, on how to handle the problems and situations thrown up by the Gulf imbroglio. He nudged the Government into trying to activate the non-alignment movement. He undertook a trip abroad — to the Soviet Union and some West Asian countries in the belief that his acquaintance with world leaders could help to defuse the crisis.

His aides — including former foreign office mandarins — had grandiose ideas for projecting the boss on the centre-stage of global diplomacy. If they had had their way, he along with others like the former West German Chancellor, Mr. Willy Brandt would have shuttled from one world capital to another as part of an “Eminent Persons Group”. Mr. Gandhi firmly believes that the Gulf war could have been averted had he been at the helm in India. He is certain he could have convinced the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, into giving up the suicidal course to which he was being led as part of well-planned conspiracies.

The manifesto does not reflect the tilt against the U. S. evident from Mr. Gandhi's utterances on the Gulf and related issues or from his campaign against the refuelling of U. S. military planes at the time of the fighting in the Gulf. Its various formulations are certainly not in tune with what some among the party rank and file, in their over-enthusiasm, ascribed to him. Didn't the placards carried by some party members at the time of Mr. Gandhi's departure for the “peace” trip abroad proclaim — duniya mein hain do hi nam — Rajiv Gandhi aur Saddam (only two names matter in the world — Rajiv Gandhi and Saddam Hussein).

“We will enlarge”, says the manifesto, “the area of mutual understanding and cooperation with the U. S. and achieve a further improvement in relations”. This may be a routine statement but the fact remains that Indo-U.S. ties acquired a new dimension in various fields, including defence, during Mr. Gandhi's years in office. He built upon the foundations laid by his mother.

A party in office tends to moderate the extremism adopted by it while in the Opposition. The Congress(I) may not be an exception — assuming that it is lucky at the hustings. This much is evident from its agenda for action in external affairs.

Extreme Caution

At times, the caution is carried to the extreme limit. Take the case of neighbourhood diplomacy. Our neighbours, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh (Pakistan falls in a different category for one reason and Bhutan and the Maldives in another) are keen to know the deal they will get from New Delhi in case the Congress(I) returns to power. Will it continue the line taken by the National Front Government which did not undergo a

material change at the hands of its successor or switch back to its old approach? The manifesto does not provide the answer — it merely says. "The Congress will pursue the objective of friendly relations with our neighbours and other Asian countries, based on well-accepted principles, including sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs."

MORE SPECIFIC ON SRI LANKA

What it says of Sri Lanka is slightly more specific — reiteration of the commitment to the India-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 as the basis for the settlement of outstanding issues relating to the Tamil population of the island and to "continue its endeavour to find solutions to problems in a manner that will secure the rights of the Sri Lankan Tamils safeguard our national security interests and ensure territorial integrity of Sri Lanka".

Some of the statements on the performance of the National Front Government are open to question. Witness this one: "Owing to neglect by the National Front Government and its successor", the time-tested friendship with the Soviet Union has stagnated in the last 15 months. Only recently, Mr. Gandhi met the Soviet President, Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, and would certainly have been briefed on the problems, economic and political faced by the latter. What happened in the Soviet Union lately is no secret even otherwise. Stagnation — if that is the right word — is the outcome of the momentous change in the Soviet Union and not of the lack of efforts on India's part. If India's economic and defence relations with Moscow have been affected the reasons are to be found in the domestic problems of the Soviet Union. Last year's visit to the Soviet Union of Mr. V. P. Singh was a success given the new constraints in bilateral dealings. At the political level the two

sides have maintained contact and shown appreciation of each other's situation and compulsions.

Relations with China

The manifesto blames the National Front Government leadership for failure to establish "the personal rapport with the Chinese leadership required to take forward the breakthrough achieved by the Congress Government in our relations with China." True the scheduled visit of Mr. I. K. Gural External Affairs Minister, in the National Front set-up, did not materialise owing to political uncertainties, but otherwise there was no slackening in bilateral relations what with the Chinese Foreign and the Deputy Prime Minister visiting India, the Joint Group on boundary setting up a military mechanism to ensure against tension along the border and Mr. V. C. Shukla finally making to Beijing during his brief stint with the Foreign Office as a member of the Chandra Shekhar Government.

It is only towards the end of the chapter that a note of moderation is struck — on specific foreign policy issues, the Congress will seek to evolve a common approach so that, to the maximum extent possible, India speaks in one voice".

Less importance by NF

Surprisingly, the National Front document dismisses foreign policy in 33 lines — sharp contrast to the detailed enunciation last time. If it is a deliberate downgrading of external affairs, it will only confirm its critics charge of neglect of this all important field. The party mentions with some pride its Government's success in normalising relations with the neighbours, except Pakistan (while promising to take, if it comes to power, two steps forward if Pakistan takes one), its resolve to "maintain its traditional friendly relations with the Soviet Union" and to "improve its fruitful relations with the U. S., the countries of the Commonwealth, Europe and Japan".

At the instance of the CPI (M), the Front included a reference to China in its revised draft — "the National Front Government has succeeded in improving Sino-Indian relations. The National Front believes that these two big neighbours must pursue a course of friendship and cooperation". Then there are promises to strengthen friendship with South Asian and Arab countries and Iran. The Janata Dal(S) has confined itself to a few inanities.

CPI(M)'s word of caution

The CPI(M) too has been frugal in its foreign policy references. It reaffirms its priority for better ties with neighbours and China. But what stands out are the words of caution against the "U. S. blackmail". The following words vividly portray its concern "in its drive for global domination, U. S. imperialism, has been constantly striving to draw India into its orbit. Towards this end it has been using various methods such as the pressure of our external borrowings and economic difficulties, aiding and abetting secessionist movements and attempting political subversion.

"The Chandra Shekhar Government succumbed to such U. S. pressures and allowed the refuelling of U.S. military planes. Experience shows that those countries which have become subservient to the U.S. have virtually lost their independence and citizens democratic rights. India has been able to face such pressures because its people firmly stood for world peace and anti-imperialist nonaligned foreign policy.

"This foreign policy has to be protected from succumbing to U.S. blackmail. It should be strengthened in the new world situation, when after the Gulf War, the U.S. is attempting to create its own new world order. India as a major Third World and nonaligned country must take the lead to champion the interests of the Third World in the political economic and diplomatic sphere."

India — Crisis In The System

By James Clad

WASHINGTON

India, the planet's second most populous nation, has stumbled into the most serious crisis in its 45 years since independence from Britain. The slide toward chaos has occurred largely unnoticed by the West, preoccupied by months of fastpaced events in the Persian Gulf and central Europe. Yet the upheaval in India is every bit as profound as the Soviet Union's disintegration, and seems certain to alter the future course of events in the country in unsettling ways.

The gathering political and economic crisis is composed of a comparatively sudden, simultaneous avalanche of troubles: caste unrest, religious rioting, rising inflation, an economic slump, incipient government bankruptcy and tenacious regional revolts. In the past, the system dealt with successive crises. Now, the crisis is the system itself.

The subtitle of V. S. Naipaul's recent book on India, "A Million Mutinies Now," could not be more apt: The collapse on March 7 of India's third government in 16 months simply caps a wave of disarray. Another election promises only further paralysis in which no one party wins a majority.

Yet elections and parliamentary instability only hint at India's torn fabric. Topping the list are rebellions, convulsing the Punjab and Kashmir. During recent visits to these states I found evidence of abuses by security forces too numerous to doubt; in Kashmir, especially, the degree of alienation between the 4 million Kashmiris and the several hundred security forces positioned in the beautiful valley is profound.

I detected no shred of common ground between the populace and what has become an occupying force. Yet the retention of Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, re-

mains an article of faith for all Indian parties and politicians: Kashmir sustains India's now vulnerable view of itself as a secular, democratic country, something different from and better than Pakistan, the religiously defined part of British India that went its separate way in 1947. Nothing unites Indians more than the determination to "hold" Kashmir; nothing unites Kashmiris more than a desire to be rid of India, a tragic impasse that results mostly, but not entirely, from India's manipulation of Kashmiri politics during the last three decades.

When I interviewed former Prime Minister V. P. Singh, he compared himself to Abraham Lincoln without a trace of self-consciousness. He too would defend his Union.

In the Punjab, a different logic yields the same grim result. Especially in the districts near Amritsar, site of the Golden Temple, an original demand for a separate state for the majority Sikhs has now become a fratricidal rebellion in which Sikhs belonging to a score or more groups butcher each other.

Predominantly Sikh policemen create new groups to fight the older groups. As Kashmir, the Punjab and another revolt in the north-east state of Assam vividly show, abuses by security forces are not the prerogative of Arab dictatorships alone. The Sikhs' most likely electoral leader, a former police commander named S. S. Mann, showed me his toenail-less feet, a result — he said — of interrogation by former comrades.

Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told me of these worsening revolts, "India always gets through its troubles." His remark reflects a type of dynastic calm borne of the fact that Gandhi's grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, and mother, Indra Gandhi, ran the Congress Party, and the country, for decades. Much of India's harvest of troubles results from Rajiv Gandhi's era,

from 1984-89, which came after his mother's assassination in November 1984.

The Congress Party long ago lost its prestige as the winner of Indian independence. Its last internal party elections occurred two decades ago. Indra Gandhi transformed the Congress into a party of chamchas, Hindi for "yes-man." Her son continued her habit of arbitrarily dismissing elected officials. This had dismal consequences in Kashmir and the Punjab evident to all, but the habit continues: Recently, New Delhi dismissed state governments of Assam and Tamil Nadu, resulting in direct rule.

The last faction to try its hand at governing the country, until March 7, was a tiny grouping of just 54 of the 524 MPs in India's rowdy parliament. Led by political maverick Chandra Shekhar, it gave up after only four months. One reason Shekhar abandoned the effort was bitter controversy over his decision to allow U. S. and allied transport planes to stop and refuel in India on their way to the Persian Gulf.

Under pressure from Rajiv Gandhi (who had quietly allowed periodic U. S. Air force overflights during his term), Shekhar rescinded the permission in February. Shekhar had little choice: His premiership rested entirely on Gandhi's whim, because the defeated Congress party still has the largest tally of legislators.

The steady breakdown of national cohesion is strikingly reflected in the political parties' campaign plans in the next elections. The bigger faction of the splintered Janata Dal party will contest the election using blatant appeals to caste identity. Shekhar's group will promise socialism.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, India's Hindu revivalists, want to revive "Hindu-ness," a glorious time before the Muslim and Christian invaders, but the prospect frightens the country's 110 million Muslims (after Indonesia, India is the most populous Muslim nation).

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Introducing Disorder Worldwide

Varindra Tarzie Vittachi

George Bush likes to formulate his thoughts in the form of catchlines which his speech-writers and image-makers have assured him would grab the hearts and minds of Middle America, in the same way that Ronald Reagan's masterful inanities did. During his election campaign he kept talking about "A Thousand Points of Light" to persuade people to believe that voluntary groups, with the light of charity in their hearts, should take over the burden of looking after the poor and old and homeless, so that the government's public assistance programmes could be reduced, if not eliminated. The phrase didn't fly far. The President's devotees have established a group which call itself the "Points of Light Foundation" but there isn't much energy or money there.

Ever since the Soviets went out of the Cold War business, Bush has been trying out another catch phrase: A New World Order (NWO). Ho hum. Many leaders of nations have announced various sorts of New Orders on assuming office. President Suharto of Indonesia promised an Order Baru, a New Order, when he took over from President Sukarno in the mid-sixties; President Marcos promised a New Society when he declared Martial Law in Philippines; Rajiv Gandhi, flush from his popular election victory in 1984, promised a Modern India, free of public corruption, free from rampant poverty — all this to be achieved through resort to the miracles of modern technology and management. Familiar stuff.

That sort of political nostrum should not evoke our irascibility, but our risibility. It deserves no more than a sceptical snicker, just as the "Thousand Points of Light" did. But Bush's New World Order is something else. It is of a very different order of magnitude, its ramifications

and implications are intricate and, despite its sound of benign concern for humanity as a whole, it is ominous rather than auspicious. Its scope is global, not national, as Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society were. It's very glibness and the absence of any explanation of what it entails, hides many likely implications which could be dangerous for the whole world.

What could it mean? Any approach to answering that question must take into account the basic fact that it refers to a new American "order" as perceived by George Bush. For 45 years the two superpowers carried on as though the world was composed of themselves, and the rest of us. People like Pandit Nehru who promoted a Non-Aligned Movement tried to point out that they represented most of the people of this world, and that the two superpowers were getting in the way of the rest of the world. But power is deaf in one ear and superpower is deaf in both. So neither heard this message, and wasted the Earth's treasure in an arms race which endangered the entire planet, diverting to it the material and human resources which could have resolved many of the dire problems that humanity confronts.

Now that the Cold War is over, bar the barking of the hyper-conservative columnists who still want to see Mikhail Gorbachev as a dictator rather than as a liberator, does the New Order offered by George Bush propose joint action by the global community to invest in a global programme of alleviating poverty and its wretched fall-out of disease and illiteracy rather than engaging in military spending in increasingly expensive and deadly weaponry?

It is important to recognise that the coexistence of two superpowers restrained each other from careening off into global adventures which may have endangered everyone. This balance has now been upset and new power alignments are being forged and a new world map of friends and enemies is being charted. With the war in the Gulf ending in an American victory, it will not be the end of the old world order of guns and international power politics, but the beginning of a new world disorder, in which the United States will continue to have the whip hand, but without the restraining influence of an equally powerful opponent.

* * *

FIFTEEN years ago the nations of the South proposed a New World Order intended to bridge the yawning gap between the rich and the poor worlds by instituting fairer international trading practices and increasing the order of magnitude of international assistance for rapid development of the South. A few Western countries, notably the Dutch and the Scandinavians, supported this case strongly. But then came the Lost Decade of Reaganism and Thatcherism which pooh-pooed the New Economic Order and put in its place new reactionary ideas such as "structural adjustment" which simply meant that the governments of the poor world should remove all measures such as free education, free health services and other programmes for most vulnerable people and throw their economic process, unhampered by any "socialist" device, into the rough and tumble of the bazaar. The result of those policies is that absolute poverty has increased and the gap between the rich and poor within countries as well as across the equator has widened immeasurably.

(Continued on page 16)

“New World Order”

Sumanasiri Liyanage

When we confront new situations, our first attempt to understand them involves the deployment of old categories. The new emerging structures are usually looked at in terms of old decaying structures. It takes some time for us to grasp that we have been living in a transitional phase in which every thing undergoes change and transformation. And as Marx reminded us that in a phase of rapid transformation, ‘(a) 11 fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their faith of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.’ The emerging structures and situations invariably produce new ideas and theoretical framework. However, we all, atleast to a certain extent, are conservative. As Keynes once remarked, ‘the difficulty lies, not in new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones.’

There are certain similarities between the Gulf conflict and the other post world war 2 conflicts. Like the events in Korean peninsula in the early 1950s, the theatre of war was confined to a very limited geographical terrain — Iraq, Kuwait and some parts of Saudi Arabia. But the forces actually engaged in direct fighting have come from a large number of countries. There are non-military participants in the conflict; Japan and West Germany as financiers of the war; The USSR and China giving their consent for the attack; countries like Sri Lanka offering logistic support to the allied forces. Thus, the analogy

with the Korean and Vietnam conflicts are clearly marked. However, the Gulf conflict differs from the earlier conflicts because it does not assume a clash between the USA and the USSR. The significance of the event has been that the war broke out in a qualitatively different international context. The Gulf war can be considered as a microcosm in which all the essential features of the present international situation are reflected and represented.

This note focuses on the possible developments which could take place in the aftermath of the Gulf war. In part 1, I shall examine the character of the international system as it has evolved after the end of the cold war and to look at its possible future scenarios. The second part of the essay will look at the possible Middle Eastern developments. I admit that my conclusions would essentially be tentative.

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1. Post-War Developments

The international situation which emerged after the second world war was characterized by the continuous presence of cold war tension between two super powers. This tension was particularly high immediately after the second world war and between 1979 and 1985. Fred Halliday has identified four broad explanations of why the two super-powers have entered into continuous confrontations.

For one school, associated with conventional ‘realist’ and strategic thinking, East-West rivalry is but another version of traditional great power conflict, to be explained by balance of power and other considerations. Ideology is seen as only an expression of this strategic interaction, and differences in internal

composition of these societies as an analytic irrelevance. A second school, common amongst liberal writers, locates the conflict at the level of policy mistakes, missed opportunities and misperceptions on both sides; in this view, the conflict is avoidable — better communication in the period after 1945 or in the late 1970s could have avoided both Cold War 1 and Cold War 2. A third school argues that what appear to be international rivalries are the product of factors within these societies, i. e. of political and economic factors that push the states in question to compete with each other, many analyses of Cold War 2, in particular, stressed the extent to which political factors within the USA and USSR, and the control dynamic of the arms race itself, caused this more recent confrontation to mature. The appearance of interbloc or inter-systemic conflict masked a homology, with both sides using and benefiting from the contest within their own domain of domination. (New Left Review, 180, p. 7.)

The fourth school to which Halliday claims that he belongs emphasizes the inter-systemic character of the conflict and envisions the cold war as a necessary outcome of ‘the rivalry of two different social, economic and political systems’. Whatever the causes which gave rise to cold war tension and its constant presence throughout the post-world War 2 period, most commentators now agree that the late 1980s marked the end of the cold war between East and West.

The international order characterized by bipolarity and the constant conflict between two super-powers, is over. So let

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me identify the recent trends in the International field in order to see what kind of international order is emerging.

(1) The economic decline of the US: By the 1970s, Japan and West Germany had emerged as economic super powers and challenged the US economic leadership. After the second world war, the US, as the sole global economic power, accounted for 44% of world trade. This proportion was reduced to 20% in the late 1970s and is expected to decline further in the 1990s. American industry has lost its competitive edge in the 1970s and the American balance of trade has recorded a huge deficit as imports exceeded exports. The US has become the highest indebted nation in the world with accumulated debt amounting to about \$1000 billion. Thus, the world was becoming economically tri-polar with power distributed among the US, the EEC and Japan.

(2) The changes in USSR domestic and foreign policies: Gorberchevian perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) triggered revolutionary changes not only in the USSR but also in the Eastern Europe. The foreign policy formulated by Sherevendze has been a complete break from the policies of the USSR in the previous period and emphasized the point that the USSR had no intention of intervening in international affairs in support of undemocratic regimes in its own bloc or in the third world. I believe that it is not accurate to interpret these changes in Soviet foreign policy as a withdrawal (either permanent or temporary) from world affairs. I see it as conscious policy change.

(3) The process of democratization: Charles Jencks has identified a 'long term trend towards democratization and its acceleration'.

He notes;

According to surveys, the number of democracies and quasidemocracies has more than doubled since 1945 — from 47 to 108 of some 167 nations — and more than fifth of the world population — USSR, Eastern Europe and parts of Africa is trying to become democratic. We intuitively recognize that 1989 was a good year for democracy because change was so visible. (Charles Jencks, *Maxism Today*, 1991, p. (18).

The process of democratization in Eastern Europe has contributed significantly for the people in advanced capitalist countries to re-think about incompleteness of the democratic structures in their own countries.

(4) The weakening of the nation state: The post-world war 2 period has marked the proliferation of multinational enterprises, intergovernmental organizations, economic blocs and international NGOs. These organizations and institutions have assumed some of the functions initially performed by the nation states. David Held shows that inter-governmental organizations have grown from 123 in 1951 to 365 in 1984 and international NGOs have multiplied over the same period from 832 to 4615. These organizations 'check, dampen and tie down the nation in a web of commitments' (Charles Jencks, *Marxism Today*, 1991, p. (17)).

(5) The new confidence in the role of the UN: After the Soviet withdrawal from Afganistan, the role of UN in solving conflicts through negotiations have been stressed. The near unanimity in the UN decision making process has immensely contributed to generate new confidence in its ability in the mediation of conflicts.

Next: NWO and its Structure.

Introducing . . .

(Continued from page 14)

Is that the sort of international reality which the New World Order of Bush wants to address itself to? He has shown absolutely no indication that he is even remotely concerned with abject poverty even within his country, leave alone the rest of the world. He would leave all such mis-ericordia stuff to his points of light. Does his New Order concern itself with rejecting war as a means of solving human disputes? The disarmament process initiated by Gorbachev gave promise of the new millennium being able to beat swords into Ploughshares. People hoped, for a while, that the United Nations would be allowed by the big power to play its essential peacekeeping role. Instead, what has happened is that the United States has found it a convenient instrument to legitimise its own foreign policy as it did in Korea 43 years ago, so that American generals can pursue American policy under the United Nations flag. A peace-keeping organisation going to war is an irony bordering on the lunatic.

Bush's New World Order needs a new enemy. Saddam has already served the purpose of arousing the latent jingoism in the United States. It was easy to present him as the new bogeyman. But when the present unpleasantness in the sands of Arabia is over, who will turn out to be the new enemy? I would not be surprised if Bush and his buddies are already dusting off an old script and rehearsing a new production in which a united and larger Germany and a powerfully resurrected Japan return to play the role of villains.

It is all very frightening and very disheartening to people like me who had begun to believe that a new world order guided by values appropriate to the new millennium to which we are heading was already waiting in the wings for new players to enact its humane message. Alas, Bush's New World Order is not likely to be what we hoped for.

(Courtesy: Mainstream)

UNDERSTANDING J. R.

Piyal Gamage

Of all public figures in this or any other country J. R. is, in several ways, surely unique. In this article I wish to examine one particular facet of his uniqueness, namely, the near-incomprehensibility of his public utterances. This was most recently illustrated by his telephone message to the press in which he contradicted a rumour that he was dead. Having said that he was very much alive he went on to add: "Cowards die many times before their death." Now, if this quotation from Julius Caesar can have any relevance at all it can only mean that J. R. was saying that he was a coward — which is unthinkable. On the other hand it has no other possible meaning in the context. It is not possible to imagine that J. R. was misquoted because he said the same thing both to the Daily News and to the Island. Actually, the feeling that he has been wrongly reported is the standard response of many whenever a statement of J. R.'s is reported in the media. Take the famous "Nirvana" interview. Having said that he was determined to "achieve Nirvana in this birth itself" (thereby implying that there are other births) he goes on to say "I don't believe in rebirth." Again that suspicion — is he being misquoted? Buddhist exegetists define nirvana as the cessation of rebirth when one's karmic destiny has worked itself out. Is then J. R. saying that death automatically results in the achievement of nirvana? Do then all living beings achieve nirvana after death? This cannot be right but it seems to be what he is saying. Later in the interview J. R. says he has "gifted the house in which he was living to the government and that he no longer owned an inch of land." Immediately after this he contradicts himself: "I don't have land because I didn't earn for myself. This

house belonged to my wife and she decided to give it to the government." It is all very confusing. Was he misquoted?

The Lanka Guardian of July 1 1990 reports an interview with J. R. in which he is asked to justify his calling for India's help to deal with the L. T. T. E. J. R. cites the case of Britain seeking U. S. help to fight Hitler and India (in 1962) seeking U. S. help to fight China. Then the question is asked: Those were foreign foes. The threat here was internal, domestic. J. R. replies: "This was an equally deadly foe seeking to destroy the same freedoms and impose a fascist dictatorship." So far so good. But then J. R. proceeds: "The elected government must safeguard its position, its power. That is the essence of politics — to acquire power democratically, to retain it and if lost, to regain it. It was wisest to retain (sic) with the help of the devil if necessary rather than to lose and then seek to regain it." Here J. R. is saying that he sought Indian help (the devil?) to safeguard, not the country, but "the elected government, its power." He calls this the "essence of politics". Surely this is the veriest tomfoolery? Where in the world has one heard of an elected government inviting the intervention of foreign troops to help it to remain in office? Was he misreported?

Shortly before the last presidential election J. R. was reported to have said that it was necessary to ensure a U. N. P. victory using "violent or non-violent means". Since thousands of people were present on the occasion and heard him it is not possible to think he was misquoted. But soon after, J. R. was guest of honour at the French Embassy celebrations of the bicentenary of the French Revolution and in his address was reported to have deprecated the use of violence in the French Revolution and to have

claimed he was totally opposed to violence in any form. Was he misreported?

Sometime prior to that, J. R. wrote a letter to the Sunday Times in which he stated that it was not possible for a head of state to practise Ahimsa. Within weeks of this communication, J. R. addressed the Commonwealth heads of State in London and was reported to have exhorted them to practise Ahimsa in the exercise of their duties. Was he misreported?

The Daily News of 4 March 1982 carried a quotation from J. R.: "About 8 to 10 years ago the U. N. P. was faced with the consequences of the nationalisation policies of a set of people who thought that socialism was good". While this comment was no doubt in accord with the economic policies J. R. followed, one remembers that it was J. R. who named this country "The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka". Again that suspicion of misquotation.

Let us now look at J. R.'s famous statement justifying his decision to extend the life of parliament by six years: "I had information on 21 October 1982 (i.e. the day after the presidential election) that the group of the S. L. F. P. which led the presidential election campaign and were in a majority in the executive committee had decided to assassinate me and a few other ministers, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, the chiefs of the armed services and others, and to imprison Mrs. Bandaranaike. In other words, *on the strength of their victory* (my italics), establish a military government, tearing up constitutional procedures, as they announced at their election meetings." That, says J. R. was what the bad-dies had planned to do had they won the presidential election, which they had not. J. R. then goes on to say: "I had to decide whether to allow this to happen (Query: Allow *what* to happen?) or to ask the people whether, in addition to my being allowed to govern the country with a democratic parliament ensuring peace and pro-

(Continued on page 18)

IS RESEARCH A RACKET ?

Some Arguments Concerning the Payment of High Wages to Researchers, Local & Foreign

Arguments for

1. It is impossible to get high quality researchers unless you pay well.
2. International organizations pay minimum of US\$ 1000 (Rs 40,000) for a 20-30 page paper and above Rs 1000 per day plus food and drink for field research. So we just have to keep abreast of the Joneses of research.
3. Foreign researchers are paid very high wages. Why should local researchers settle for less?
4. Research is difficult and much midnight oil has to be burnt.
5. Research is expensive: you need paper, some books, photocopies, and electronic typewriter and a word processor is now an absolute necessity.

Arguments against

1. A wage for researchers — especially researchers in the

Third World social sciences or researchers in the area of people-oriented subjects — far above national income per capita averages is unjustifiable.

2. If researchers work to eliminate poverty, the gap between their wages and the wages of the people they work for is to be kept as small as reasonably possible. Credibility is at stake. Credibility is at stake when the researcher sets out each morning by taxi from a 5-star hotel in the City for research in a poor village or an estate line or an urban slum.
3. High wages for researchers is a part of a racket run by prestigious organizations of western capitalist society. The racket must be exposed and resisted. Research has become a high wage industry for the elite.
4. Payment to foreign researchers and their local hench-

persons must be exposed; they must be shown up to be the mercenaries of research and their radicalism must be ridiculed.

5. Does a researcher work harder than a honest bank clerk or a municipal minor employee?
6. There is no objective justification for wage differentials between mental and manual work.
7. Transnational research organizations pay local researchers well (though much less than they pay foreigners) in order ultimately to buy, tame and de-radicalize local researchers, despite the radical jargon sometimes used in research. The presence of local researchers also helps them to answer the charge of academic colonialism.

Paul Caspersz

Understanding . . .

(Continued from page 17)

gress or to permit a set of political hooligans to enter parliament in large numbers and while wrecking democratic procedures to strengthen themselves to form their Naxalite government at the next general election." Syntactically that's all wrong. It is not even a proper sentence. Nor proper logic. J. R. is saying he wished to extend the life of parliament to prevent the Naxalites from doing what they had already been effectively prevented from doing by J. R. winning the election! Was he misquoted?

Let us go back in time. In June 1981 the Daily News reported a speech J. R. made at the headquarters of the Sucharita Movement: "If any action (presumably he means any improper action) of my ministers or a member of the government's parliamentary party is brought to my attention, I will inquire

first before I accept the allegation. Any denial or explanation I will accept forthwith." Was he misreported? J. R. went on to say that this was in accordance with the principle of British justice that "one is presumed innocent until found guilty".

With this kind of approach the law's delays can be eradicated overnight. All accused persons in the magistrates' courts and the high courts who plead not guilty to the charges made against them will be acquitted forthwith without trial on the principle that they are presumed innocent! Was J. R. misquoted? We now come to the famous speech J. R. made when parliament fined two editors of the Ceylon Observer in connection with an incorrect caption to a photograph which appeared in that paper. He said, *inter alia*: "We do not know what crime the two suspects have committed because we did not go into the details of it and merits

of the defence. . . The reasons why we have decided to impose a fine are that, firstly, we want to give a donation to the Deaf and Blind School; secondly, we want to show that this bill is now law with teeth in it and, in future, anybody who comes before this house may not escape with a fine; thirdly, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, of which I am a shareholder, is not an indigent organisation. It has enough money to pay the fines of these two editors."

J. R. was prime minister of Sri Lanka when he spoke those words. Was he misquoted?

No, it is all there in Hansard.

Well, there you have him — J. R. the Incomprehensible;

As Aldous Huxley put it in *The Second Philosopher's Song*:
We bow the head and do not understand.

PEACE — A GENERAL APPEAL

The crisis in Sri Lanka which now faces the Tamils, and ultimately all the people of this country with an uncertain future is one that appears to defy definition. The Tamils have largely lost their spiritual and intellectual bearings and their physical existence hangs in the balance. The manner in which the Muslims are being uprooted, robbed and driven out en masse from the North, and the attitudes towards them that are being promoted, puts the dominant Tamil ideology in a very disreputable company. In losing any sensitivity to what it means to be a minority, they have forgotten their own history. The Muslims who were making steady gains as a community have suffered setbacks as the result of the brutal intolerance of the Tigers and the manoeuvrings of the government. They are now being inducted into a culture of violence while sober and reflective Muslim voices are being pushed aside. Apart from the Sinhalese peasants being killed in border areas, the devastating potential for the Sinhalese contained in the general degeneration of the political culture is seen in the continuing phenomenon of burning corpses in the South.

It is evident that those who wish for peace on this island are at a loss to identify the problem, leave alone find a solution. A recent press release by the Canadian Foreign Secretary Joe Clark illustrates the point. In a 'balanced' statement expressing concern over human rights violations in this country, Mr Clark called on both sides to go for negotiations as the most appropriate means of resolving the dispute and ensuring the safety of civilians in the North and East. Similar sentiments had been reflected in a recent statement by the British Prime Minister and in a call made by the Indian High Commissioner.

On the other hand when speaking privately, there is general agreement that everyone feels a sense of loss. Most people feel instinctively that a negotiated settlement is a very remote prospect. Since the outbreak of war, the natural, if unspoken, thrust of the government's military and administrative machinery has been to speed up the obliteration of historic Tamil associations and presence in the Eastern province. Its callousness has brought death to over 6000 Tamil civilians — not in combat but in massacres and bombings.

We commence the serialisation of the report by the University Teachers for Human Rights. (Jaffna)

The Tigers on the other hand, by their brutal massacres of hundreds of policemen taken prisoner, and of 700 or so Muslim civilians helped the process of dehumanisation by destroying the possibility of human communication and understanding.

Events over the last four months have left us with two main obstacles to a negotiated settlement. One is the government's attempt to deny Tamil claims in the East by bringing about a fait accompli through decimation and displacement of the Tamil population. Although influential sections of the government and the press have supported such moves, the result will never be acceptable to Tamil opinion or help to build confidence among them.

The other is the character of the LTTE, the natural articulation of which not just helped to precipitate the war, but calculatedly left the Tamils at the mercy of enraged Sri Lankan forces whose nature was well known, without the will or the capacity to protect them. More

importantly negotiations would mean talk of constitutional arrangements, elections, settled conditions and some airing of dissenting opinion. Such would mean questioning the legacy of the Tigers — a legacy marked by the tragic demise of hundreds and thousands of young with a feeling and dedication towards the well being of Tamils, TNA conscripts, ordinary civilians and intellectuals. Any hint of openness would make the Tigers immediately nervous, and not without reason. Between the months of January and June this year, there was a precipitous decline in the purely emotional feeling that is called support for the Tigers. Like in October 1987, this consideration must have weighed heavily in the outbreak of hostilities.

We have to examine the peculiar phenomenon referred to and how the government's attitudes have its strength, durability and according to LTTE sympathisers who leave the concerns of the people out of their emotions, a necessity. It is important to understand this phenomenon because in seeking a solution we have to go beyond feelings that seem very reasonable at a subjective human level, beyond ethnic considerations and see the process as a national malaise threatening all of us — not just in this country, but the fall out from the success of this phenomenon will influence movements in the Indian sub-continent as well.

We spoke of feelings that appear reasonable at a subjective human level, because in the present state of political culture, many ordinary Sinhalese, soldiers and officers feel that the government was very reasonable with the LTTE and that gestures of trust and restraint were rudely and obscenely spurned. The government had provided the Tigers during the

14 months of the LTTE-Prameda honeymoon, with military, material and diplomatic help to replace the Indian army and its allies as the dominant power in the North-East. The Sri Lankan army had also observed unaccustomed restraint during several provocations by the Tigers in the months leading up to June. The other side was not talked about. It is hard to maintain that in helping the Tigers the government was helping the Tamils. During the honeymoon the government had actually connived with the Tigers, directly and indirectly, in the killing of hundreds of Tamils including TNA conscripts, individuals and refugees with dissident associations. Further, the North-East was brought under regime with an apparatus of repression that was unprecedented. Not knowing this side, but only the government's much publicised generosity to the Tigers which it identified with the Tamils, anger against Tamils came naturally with the massacre of policemen. To those who saw things this way, the punishment of Tamils through bombing and atrocities seemed justified.

We spoke of this phenomenon as a common malaise because of its self-reinforcing character and its ability to look larger than life in the general drift of subcontinental politics. Whether, it is the grievances of the Tamils in Sri Lanka or of the Sikhs, Kashmiris or Assamese in India, governments have lacked the capacity to take a principled and rational outlook, and instead tend to react with repression combined with a lack of clarity. The ensuing process of alienation gives credibility and strength to extremist violence and totalitarian forms of organisation.

In Sri Lanka the results obtained by the LTTE and JVP have convinced many people exasperated with the government, to believe that only their methods work. Tamil leaders and parliamentarians had talked about discrimination and federa-

lism and had protested peacefully for decades only to earn contempt, ridicule and organised violence. Peasant organisations and trade unions in the South who protested against the impoverishment and the decline in the quality of life resulting from economic policies of the government heavily linked to the dictates of Western capital and giving multinationals direct control over large tracts of agricultural land, met with the violence of goon squads and large scale dismissals. The government appeared immovable. This was in 1980. Less than a decade later, the government desperately invited the JVP for negotiations after it demonstrated its capacity to kill, paralyse the nation and strike terror in the very corridors of power. The LTTE after it responded to a similar invitation was feted in the manner of visiting royalty, in sharp contrast to the abject fate meted out by the government to its Sinhalese and Tamil detractors of a milder sort. The government's capitulation to what it had earlier termed criminal groups was even hailed as fine statemanship by tired intellectuals, only too ready to gloss over the lack of it in the past. The end result was to pour scorn over the values of moderation, reason and decency, which were now consigned to homilies over state television.

The High Cost of Anarchy

In habitually abandoning interests of the people for transient tactical political advantage, a heavy price has been paid in terms of the dignity of the nation and consequently of the people.

The country is paying heavily for what lies behind those sentiments coming with less subtlety from senior ministers and not repudiated by the President or other cabinet colleagues. The Amnesty International has been called a terrorist organisation and there is little sensitivity to the process of the law which determines the character of the state.

The Independent Surrender Commission was set up by the President to facilitate the surrender of those having real or suspected JVP links without the fear of meeting the scandalous fate of many other youths. This worked well for a time and the commission's work was wound up by the President in August. It has subsequently become well known that a significant number of those who had surrendered has been killed after they were released — something that may not have happened to them if the commission had not existed at all. Answering questions in parliament, the Minister of Defence has maintained that these persons were killed not by the forces, but by villagers angry with the JVP.

In early November 'the Island' reported the appearance of about 30 headless bodies in Thirukovil and Akkaraipattu — well known fact in that locality. A Defence Ministry statement published in the Sunday Observer of 4th November described the claim as mischievous, following an 'inquiry'. Leading citizens of the area were quoted having denied the appearance of the bodies. The plight of these citizens who try to keep life going in an isolated area full of refugees, in an atmosphere of terror, is not hard to imagine.

These are two among a host of instances showing that the workings of civil society have ceased to exist in a large category of instances. A generation is growing up without knowing that there used to be such things such as post mortems, magistrate's inquires and accountability before the law.

In this respect the government has utterly degraded itself. As a liberation group the Tigers have not shown themselves in any way superior to the government. The Tigers to have the last word by simply denying everything. They deny the killings of Muslims and the regular disappearances and ill-treatment of so

called traitors that mark their rule. **Humanity in this country has been devalued and what increased the sense of loss is the state's incapacity to assume responsible role.**

But the state is itself a promoter of our value system, and all secular and religious institutions must share the responsibility for this hopeless state of affairs. The parliamentary opposition too shows no signs of trying to understand the seriousness of the whole issue. The cause of human rights in this country has been made weaker by the Opposition using it as means to embarrass the government rather than address the issue in depth. Even from some of the more intelligent and articulate Opposition MP's their contribution to the debate on the Tamil crisis stops mainly at opposing the North-East merger. **The main issue of trying to restore a sense of confidence to the Tamil minority who have suffered from years of state violence is hardly addressed.** The government, whatever its motives, can give legitimate reasons for seeking a solution outside parliament, effectively devaluing the latter as the institution presiding over the nation's destiny. It is high time that in the interests of democracy the Opposition showed a greater sense of responsibility.

The thinking of the Sinhalese intelligentsia as reflected in the media has shown a general sense of complacency in the face of a very dangerous situation facing the country. Many are advocating going back to square one as if the Indian intervention did not happen. The growing disenchantment in the South itself is lost sight of. Economic conditions continue to worsen. It is a serious reflection on the state of the Sinhalese people if thousands of youth join the army, not through patriotism but through hopelessness and fatalism. What sort of a country is it where youth have to think along the lines that it is better to join the army

and be pensioned off with loss of life or limb, than to be physically wholesome and unemployed?

What if after all this repression and frustration, there is a mass swing of Tamil opinion towards a lobby calling for an annexation of the North-East to the Indian federation? To be ignorant or complacent of the many dangerous directions which the situation could drift is a mark of decadence.

The destructive course of Tamil politics cannot be defeated militarily. A change can come about only by creating space for a new independent Tamil politics that has digested the lessons of the past, to emerge. Though temporarily eclipsed in the North, pluralism in the South is not entirely dead. The government may yet find in its interests to adopt tactically a radically new approach to the Tamil problem, because of repeated tragedies as well as the sheer dictates of its survival, and to sustain its present economic policies.

This is best done not by discussing issues such as Federalism and the North-East merger at the outset, but by taking responsibility for restoring confidence amongst Tamils. This also means taking responsibility for all the young Tamils, boys and girls, who are faced with a stark choice between a well founded fear of the Sri Lankan army and the Tigers who will use them as tools in their power game. An impartial inquiry into all civilian deaths during this war, particularly into the role of the state forces, is an absolutely necessary part of such confidence building. Without such, accompanied by preventive measures, the dominant Tamil politics will reinforce its claims, steadily destroying the community. The state will go on killing with no tangible restraint, confused about its objectives and denying the ugly things that everyone else knows about, until the nation itself drowns in blood.

Responsibility also means trying to understand why the Tamils were alienated, why they were mortally afraid of state

aided Sinhalese colonisation and how the state machinery silently and decisively worked to their detriment. It is no good dodging the issue by saying that the law operates equally, when in fact the power to act and to decide is in the hands of Sinhalese steeped in chauvinist sentiment. The Tamil militant phenomenon was itself a chauvinistic reaction to this powerlessness. Without trying to understand and do away with the cause, there is no solution.

01. **The Role of International Organizations & Expatriates**

Some Practical Issues

1.1 **Rationale for an International Initiative**

In recent times some doubts as well as vital questions have been raised about the practical viability of human rights. When, within the last two years, persons with strong liberal convictions fell within the attentions of the JVP's terror, they were pushed into thinking that the state's counter terror was at least a transient necessity. The LTTE's erratic behaviour came at a time when the state's forces has tasted blood and the liberal establishment was tired and wrapped in doubt. On top of this, human rights organisation have been castigated as villains and even terrorists by official circles, in a show of bravado.

Those of us believing in human rights hold, on the basis of historical experience, that its values are fundamental and cannot be overridden by tactical considerations without destroying everything we hold dear. When South Asian governments, for instance cast rhetorical aspersions on human rights organisations, is it simply satisfactory to dismiss this as a reaction of someone culpable? To be effective, we need to go deeper into this phenomenon and understand the state of mind of those voicing such unjust sentiments. We also need to understand the socio-historic context in which all rationality is thrown to the winds and state powers indulge in frenzied callousness.

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Developing the N. W. P.

H. P. T. Samarasekera, D. T. Weerasekera and S. N. de S. Seneviratne

An adequate supply of water is essential for successful crop production. The dry zone, where our ancient civilization flourished, received rain for only about three months of the year—from the north-east monsoon. Nevertheless, in those older times, this dry zone was gradually covered with an elaborate system of tanks and canals to conserve water, plentifully received during the brief rains, making it available throughout the year for continued agricultural activity, and the dry zone became the home of the rich and cultured civilization of ancient Sri Lanka.

Many of the ancient tanks fell into ruin. Some have now been renovated, yet many of these are no longer able to irrigate the extensive areas they once did. Their full restoration can make an important contribution to increased agricultural production and economic development. The Nalanda Oya reservoir is one such, which can be restored to provide much needed water for the North Western Province.

Nalanda Oya is situated to the north-west of Matale. Some half a dozen streams flow into it—Ambokka Ganga, Akuramboda Oya, Alakola Oya, Demada Oya, Polwatta Oye and Devilla Oya. Of these, the Ambokka Ganga originating from the 4300 foot Ambokka mountain, 10 miles north-west of Matale town and capturing rain in all seasons, is the principal tributary.

Nalanda Oya was recognised as a stream of great potential over 1500 years ago and it was impounded by King Dhatu Sena in 450 A. D. At that time, the ancient irrigation engineers conceived an ingenious multipurpose trans-basin diversion project. The Nalanda Oya was dammed at the narrowest point in the rock gorge above Demadaoya village, the original dam being 460 feet in length, 125 feet in height, and impounding 91,000 acre-feet of water. These waters

were then diverted both northwards to feed the Kala Wewa complex, the Anuradhapura city tanks and the Aruvi Aru and westwards through a sluice at Millewana village to supply today's North Western Province by diversion into the Deduru Oya and Mee Oya basins extending as far as Tabbowa Wewa in the Puttalam District where today some of the finest soils in the country are not cultivated for lack of adequate water.

This magnificent irrigation works fell into decline and decay. The Nalanda Oya reservoir was restored in 1952 but regrettably not to its original dimensions. With a depth of 70 feet the restored reservoir held back only 12,400 acre feet of water, a mere one-seventh of the capacity of the ancient reservoir. Much of the flow goes over the spillway and is lost for irrigation purposes. The reduced capacity does not permit diversion of water into the North Western Province at all.

Data relating to the reservoir may be summarised as follows:

Catchment area	
at dam site	— 30,720 acres
Annual water yield at dam	— 59,336 acre feet
Mean flow rate at dam	— 81½ cubic feet per second
Length of original dam	— 460 feet
Height of original dam	— 125 feet
Full supply level of original dam	— 1263 feet
Capacity of original reservoir	— 91,000 acre feet
Length of present dam	— 402 feet
Height of present dam	— 102 feet
Full supply level of present dam	— 1220 feet
Capacity of present reservoir	— 12,400 acre feet

The restored dam sprung a leak and all efforts to seal it have failed. Less than half the reservoir can now be filled and possible diversions cannot be effected.

Considering the present state of the dam, the great potential of the Nalanda Oya now largely lost, and the dire need for irrigation water for the North Western Province, an effort to harness the full potential of the Nalanda Oya deserves high priority. A large part of the North Western Province, including the Puttalam District and a major portion of the Chilaw and Krunegala Districts which lie in the dry zone, does not receive rain from the south-west monsoon. Hence water storage is essential to tide over the long period of drought. Yet, this Province has the largest number of tanks and channels for water distribution while the Kurunegala District has the largest acreage of paddy in the island. Soils of the North Western Province are in general of very good quality. Its one great deficiency is the inadequacy of water, especially when the monsoons fail. The kings of old made good this deficiency over 1500 years ago by diverting some of the waters from the Nalanda Oya into this region. Most of the Nalanda Oya flow was impounded in a reservoir and then conveyed northwards into the Kala Wewa complex and the Anuradhapura city tanks while the balance was transferred across the watershed at Millawana village into the Deduru Oya catchment of the North Western Province from where a further diversion took water into the Mee Oya basin and the Puttalam area. Unfortunately, the diversion into the North Western Province ceased as this irrigation works fell into decay. The restoration in the early 1950s regrettably did not raise the dam to its former full supply level of 1963 feet but fell 43 feet short of it and

thereby denied the North Western Province of waters from the Nalanda Oya because the level of the restored reservoir did not reach up to the Millawana sluice for diversion. With the completion of the Mahaweli Diversion Project and its water supplying the Kala Wewa complex and Anuradhapura which were formerly supplied from the Nalanda Oya reservoir, practically all the water from this reservoir can now be utilised for diversion into the North Western Province.

Two options may be explored in diverting waters from the Nalanda Oya into the North Western Province, either the construction of a new dam or by resorting to hydraulic rams, an old technology of great relevance to Sri Lanka at the present time.

In the first alternative, the existing defective dam could be replaced by a new double-curvature concrete arched structure, 552 feet in length and 125 feet in height. Such a dam will make available $76\frac{1}{2}$ cusecs for diversion into the North Western Province, allowing 5 cusecs for diversion into the Dewahuwa reservoir which also is in dire need of supplementary irrigation water. Apart from water for irrigation purposes, hydro-power can also be generated. The 450 foot drop from the Nalanda Oya reservoir into the North Western Province could be effected either by a channel or by a siphon system at Millewana village. An installation for power generation could generate about $1\frac{1}{2}$ megawatts of firm power. The water conserved in the reservoir could irrigate about 7500 acres in the Deduru Oya and Mee Oya basins. It is thought that a double-curvature arched dam will secure a saving of about 15% of construction materials while a further saving of about 5% can be effected by salvaging steel and rubble from the old dam which is to be demolished. An enlarged reservoir as proposed to fully utilise the potential of the Nalanda Oya will submerge 23 villages and the main road and

compensatory measures will have to be worked out with respect to these aspects.

The second option, employing hydraulic rams, commends itself as a low cost technology ideally suited for a Third World country like Sri Lanka. The hydraulic ram is a device by means of which the energy of a quantity of water with a small head is used to elevate a proportionate quantity to a higher level. The water impounded in the small Nalanda Oya reservoir restored in 1952 could serve as the supply for a series of hydraulic rams which could elevate water to the full supply level of the original dam, 1263 feet, 43 feet higher than that of the existing dam. The required head is available, so is a continuous flow of water essential for successful operation. A $3\frac{1}{2}$ -mile long pipeline of adequate capacity will be needed for westward conveyance of water from the Nalanda Oya reservoir into the Deduru Oya catchment in the North Western Province. Once water in the pipeline overtops the ridge and reaches the 1125 foot elevation along the North Western Province slope, gravity flow will take over and no pumping will be required. Hydraulic rams, though less efficient than normal pumps, consume no power at all, being self-actuating. Maintenance costs are extremely low, replacement of parts being virtually limited to some washers annually. Suitable hydraulic rams could be designed and turned out by local engineering firms which would conserve foreign exchange. Once the capital costs of the scheme are covered, maintenance costs will be negligible. Hydraulic rams were used in the island earlier in the century but with the introduction of diesel engines, with relatively low operational costs in former times, they fell from favour. However, there are some hydraulic rams in use today, including one at Bibile in quite trouble-free operation after 90 years!

The overall benefits from the diversion scheme, both in terms of irrigation water and hydro-

power generation are attractive. It is suggested that the feasibility of the project and its cost be worked out by competent personnel and decisions made taking into account long term benefits and the advantages of increasing self-reliance and the prospects of gainful occupational opportunities, not always readily quantified.

A word of caution is in order. The decision making process regarding the proposal to divert waters from the Nalanda Oya to the North Western Province and the options discussed will be influenced by political considerations and technical advice on the feasibility of the venture. And here, a plea must be made for an objective assessment of the facts, an honest evaluation of the feasibility of the options by competent technical personnel, and a public debate on the decisions arrived at so that what is eventually embarked upon will have been guided by all available pertinent opinion concerned with the issues involved. Many crimes have been committed in Sri Lanka in the name of development, opportunities missed and grave errors made because 'other views' were not given adequate consideration — in the launching of the Gal Oya Project, in the implementation of the Mahaweli Diversion Scheme, in the abortion of the national capability to produce nitrogenous fertilizer using local raw materials and in the devastation of potato cultivation by the distribution of seed potatoes infected with potato-cyst nematode against the considered advice of specialist officers, to mention just a few examples. It requires only one or a few 'powerful' individuals, be they politicians, policy makers, bureaucrats, technocrats, engineers or others motivated by various unworthy considerations to obstruct, mislead and even sabotage the most advisable course, in this instance, to the detriment of the North Western Province who could greatly benefit from the waters of the Nalanda Oya. **Let there not be one more treacherous blow dealt to the nation's interests, this time at Nalanda.**

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Reserves	257,680	202,510	190,871	Mrs. Y. N. Perera (Deputy Chairman)	
Capital and Reserves	272,730	217,560	205,921	K. Viknarah (Consultant Director)	
Deposits	1,802,867	1,559,835	1,436,236	A. M. Moragoda (Executive Director)	
Borrowings	341,497	274,823	143,530	T. N. Jayasinghe (Executive Director)	
Gross Assets	2,783,830	2,368,045	2,130,026	K. Selvanathan	
	1989/90	1988/89	1987/88	Alternate: M. Selvanathan	
Profit before tax	17,314	20,229	20,262	R. D. C. de Silva	
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Virginia Woolf: A fresh look

by Reggie Siriwardena

The English novelist Virginia Woolf, whose 50th death anniversary fell in March this year, was the wife of Leonard Woolf, British civil servant and author of "The Village in the Jungle". She herself was never in Ceylon; Leonard Woolf fell in love with her when he was on home leave in England, and resigned from the Civil Service when his leave ran out while he was still uncertain whether she would marry him. This article is based on a presentation made at a British Council commemoration of the death anniversary.

If we are to look at literary reputations like shares on the stock market, there is no doubt that Virginia Woolf's has boomed during the last two decades. Every scrap of paper she left behind has been edited and published — all her letters and diaries and every fragment of creative or critical writing. There has been a continuing spate of memoirs and critical studies, and now comes the announcement of a definitive collected edition of the novels by the Hogarth Press.

I can't help connecting this cult of her, and indeed of the whole Bloomsbury group, with the English nostalgia for the era between the two wars — the years when Britannia ruled the waves and Bloomsbury ruled British intellectual life. But what the literary critic has to ask is whether her work actually merits all this fuss.

I admit to having been fascinated by her novels in my youth, but when I look back on them now, what I find is a great personal intensity, but within a narrow range of experience. They seem to me the product of an isolated self locked away in a room of its own. In the most extreme example, "The Waves", what we have are a few centres of subjectivity — we can hardly call them people — quivering in a social void. But even in the novels which attempt to capture fuller human relationships, there is a damaging limitation of values. What is there in the heroines she

adores, and holds up for adoration by the reader — what is there in Mrs. Dalloway or Mrs. Ramsay except a refined emotional sensitivity that holds so much of life at arm's length?

Virginia Woolf has, of course, an undeniable place in literary history — in the emergence of what was then the new novel in the period around the First World War. Her enterprise was to develop a prose and a novel from that would enable the exploration of interior consciousness beyond the confines of the traditional realist novel. In her lesser way, she was moving in the same direction that Joyce and Proust were taking at the same time. But in comparison with the prodigious and original genius of Joyce, hers was a minor talent. Joyce is a continuing presence in the international novel, from Gabriel Garcia Marquez to Salman Rushdie, while the taste for Virginia Woolf seems to me an English and anglophile affair.

Virginia Woolf's own reactions to Joyce offer a test case. In 1916 she wrote an essay titled 'Modern Fiction' in which she expressed her dissatisfaction with the established novelists of the day — Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy. "Is life like this?" she asked, contemplating their work, and went on:

"Look within, and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms. . . Life is not a series of big-lamps, symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. . . Let us record the atoms as they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness."

Virginia Woolf then pointed to Joyce's work — to the "Portrait of the Artist" which had been published as a whole, and to the early chapters of "Ulysses", which were then being serialised in "The Little Review". She conjectured that a reader of these works would have "hazarded some theory of this nature as to Mr. Joyce's intention".

It is evident that Virginia Woolf was discerning enough to see one part of what was radically new in Joyce's writing, and this must have been helped by the affinity she shared with this aspect of it. Nevertheless, the representation of the fluidity of mental processes which she picked out for praise in Joyce's work is not, in my view, the most important thing in it — particularly in "Ulysses". I would put the emphasis rather on the creative vitality of language, the comic vigour and the ability to respond richly and joyously to life's diversities.

In the same essay Virginia Woolf went on to say that where Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy were "materialists", Joyce was "spiritual", and by this she meant that he was concerned with the inner mental life and not with the external reality which occupied the older novelists. The dichotomy she tried to imply between the "inner" and the "outer" realities is consistent with her way of representing life in her own novels. There indeed the interior life of the characters is often severed from their surroundings — physical or moral — and the outer world appears an alien intrusion on the autonomy of the character's consciousness. But she was wrong to project this dichotomy on to Joyce — certainly as far as "Ulysses" was concerned. While the interior monologues of Stephen or Bloom or Molly are the medium through which we engage with the world of "Ulysses", Dublin in all its multifariousness is fully present in the work, not only in its physical reality but also in the rich variety of its speech. To the sensitive character in Virginia Woolf everyday life often seems alien or repelling,

but while the aesthete Stephen may share something of this fastidious distaste, that isn't the response of Bloom or Molly, and the weight of the book falls on the final "yes" rather than on Stephen's "no". Joyce's spirit is that which is summed up in the pun in "Finnegans Wake", "joyicity" — a pun which brings together himself, the comic sense of life and Dublin.

When the manuscript of "Ulysses" was complete, Joyce's patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver, brought it to Virginia and Leonard Woolf to ask whether they would publish it as owners of the Hogarth Press. Reminiscing about this episode after Joyce's death, Virginia Woolf recalled in her diary, "The indecent pages looked so incongruous; she was spinsterly, buttoned up. And the pages reeled with indecency. I put it in the drawer of the inliad cabinet." An earlier portion of the diary records her first reactions to the book after it had been published — not, of course, by the Hogarth Press but by a Paris publisher:

"And Tom, great Tom, thinks this on a par with "War and Peace". (Note: "Tom" was T.S. Eliot. — R.S.) An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me: the book of a self-taught working man, and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating. When one can have the cooked flesh, why have the raw?" I am not sure what is more glaring in that judgment — the social snobbery (misplaced, for Joyce wasn't "a self-taught working man": he was better educated than Virginia Woolf) or the prudery, which suggests that the celebrated sexual emancipation of Bloomsbury had its boundaries.

There is another comparison I want to make for the purpose of placing Virginia Woolf, and that is with the great women novelists in English of the nineteenth century. I will approach this comparison through some discussion of Virginia Woolf's book on women and fiction — "A Room of One's Own".

Let me acknowledge that "A Room of One's Own" was in

its own time a landmark in the history of literary feminism. To have said in 1929 what she did about the barriers faced by the gifted woman was an important contribution. And yet, it seems to me that the way in which she argued the case is another revelation of her circumscribed experience.

There is an interesting contradiction in "A Room of One's Own". On the one hand Virginia Woolf says that what a woman needs in order to be a writer is 500 pounds a year and a room of her own. She herself had these things — if not quite 500 pounds, 400 (as I learn from Leonard Woolf's autobiography) — and she certainly had the privacy she wanted as well as the security and support offered by the most devoted of husbands. But while she rightly stresses a woman's need for economic independence, the ideal she imagines is that of a genteel and leisured life very far removed from what has been possible for the great majority of women down to the present day.

To quote: "A private income to release me from the daily grind; and the privacy and peace of a study to work in" — her norm was that of the modest affluence and cultivated comfort of Bloomsbury. When I read these lines of hers, I think of the Bronte sisters walking two hours every night round their cramped parlour at Haworth, "like restless wild animals", talking about their projected novels; I think of George Eliot, sitting down to write her first stories in the single room she shared with George Lewes after a lunch of plain bread and butter — and I wonder what they would have thought of Virginia Woolf's desiderata. Would "Wuthering Heights" and "Middlemarch" have been greater novels if their creators had enjoyed Virginia Woolf's gentility? Or, rather, wasn't it part of the very condition of their genius that they should have shared with many lesser women the problems of physical and emotional hunger, of congested living in small households and cramped lodgings, of collision with the

barriers of class and male superiority? There is behind her writing a whole world of work and want and aspiration and struggle that is quite beyond Virginia Woolf.

But not merely would Virginia Woolf have been out of her depth in such an experience; she even reacts with disapproval to any sign in the woman writer of struggling, through her art, against the very circumstances that she herself claims to be against. Talking of Charlotte Bronte, she says:

"One might say. . . that the woman who wrote those pages had more genius in her than Jane Austen; but if one reads them over and marks that jerk in her, that indignation, one sees that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire. Her books will be deformed and twisted. She will write in a rage where she should write calmly. She will write foolishly where she should write wisely. She will write of herself where she should write of her characters. She is at war with her lot. How could she help but die young, cramped and thwarted?"

What that recalls to me is Matthew Arnold's dismissal of Charlotte Bronte's "Villette" when he said that her mind contained "nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage". That was a characteristic piece of Victorian male complacency, but how incongruously a similar sentiment comes from a woman writer who claims to be concerned with the creative independence of her sex!

This is a pointer to Virginia Woolf's notion of what art is. It is very clearly articulated in a passage of her diary, written after she has been reading Aldous Huxley's edition of D. H. Lawrence's letters:

"And why does Aldous say he was an 'artist'? Art is being rid of all preaching; things in themselves: the sentence in itself beautiful: multitudinous seas: daffodils that come before the swallow dares: whereas Lawrence would only say what proved something."

I hold no brief for didactic

(Continued on page 31)

SOUTH ASIA VIOLENCE (2)

Challenging old categories

J. Uyangoda

(Continued from 15/3/91)

Let me quickly comment on some of these studies, though not necessarily according to the order that the chapters are arranged. Dipesh Chakrabarty writes on communal riots and labor in colonial Bengal in the 1890s (chapter six). There were frequent riots between Hindu and Muslim jute mill workers, and the riots took a communal form. The central problem Chakrabarty poses concerns the 'communalist' construction by urban workers of their own life situation, paradoxically in a context of socio-economic transformation which underlied capital-labor contradiction. Chakrabarty looks at how community-specific cultures grew in city centers and among working class communities crowded in shrinking urban space. There was no cultural room for a kind of working class group behaviour of the colonized 'other.'

This colonized 'other' in the colonialist discourse, as Pandey points out, was ultimately a history of the colonial state, the spring of law-and-order, 'civility' and controlled behaviour. The crowds and crowd behaviour were utterly problematic to the norms of colonial civility and public behaviour. The official response to this puzzlement found its juridical expression in codes of public behaviour, in various laws, rules and regulations. Rules to control noise, for instance were codified by British officials in Ceylon in the Police Ordinance no. 16 of 1865. The consequent standardization of group behaviour and the cultural tension generated by it is the subject matter of Michael Roberts' chapter entitled 'Noise as Cultural Struggle: Tom-Tom Beating, the British and Communal Disturbances in Sri Lanka, 1800s-1930s.'

Roberts' interpretation of Buddhist-Muslim and Buddhist-Catholic riots in colonial Ceylon

is a remarkably interesting one. To state briefly, Roberts argues that it is the arbitrary intervention of the colonial state in regulating and controlling drumming and music at religious ceremonies that led to tension between Buddhists and Catholics, and Buddhists and Muslims. To regulate the time and place of drumming and of playing religious music was also an intrusion into the sacred space. Roberts also points out that the application of these regulatory rules did not have a uniformity. This created more tension among religious groups. He also suggests that until the British introduced codes of noise control in public place, religious tension over ritual noise control in public places, religious tension over ritual noise was perhaps non-existent in Sri Lanka.

This genre of historical inquiry is indeed illuminating and refreshing, although it has certain unstated agenda of blaming colonialism for many, or even almost all, ills in contemporary South Asian societies. The new radicalism in interpretative history is fascinating in its deep concern with interrogating the received history of liberal, nationalist as traditional Marxist streams. However, to represent the beginnings of colonial rule as constituting the greatest destructive rupture in these societies can sometimes end up in reversing the discourse; that is, in ceating the 'colonialist other' as opposed to 'pre-colonial and indigenous self.'

This, then takes us to Ashis Nandi's chapter on 'Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance.' Nandi is an interrogator of categories, particularly the ones we use in our discourses concerning progress. As many of his writings illustrate, he also presents an outline of an interpretive paradigm grounded in a project of recovering our indigenous-

ness. In this chapter, he examines the category of secularism, so prominent in modern political debates in South Asia. He notes the emergence of a new meaning of secularism in India, particularly among political elites. It is a meaning that denies the existence of religions and minorities. According to Nandi, secularism mean, at least in India until recently, two different things: secular progress in economic and material terms and equal respect for all religions. The new secularism is linked with the imperatives of the modern state. Nandi identifies a small-group of de-ethnicized, middle-class politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals as purveyors of this state-centric secularism.

This is a useful critique of the modern South Asian state. It points to the increasing intolerance by the state of assertive ethnic and religious communities. Perhaps it is also a crucial dynamic in state-society relation today. Nandi thinks that this trend can be countered by a serious venture "to explore the philosophy, symbolism and the theology of tolerance" (p. 86) of various faiths in South Asian societies. He considers Mahatma Gandhi as having personified religious tolerance that is outside the boundaries of secularism. And this tolerance "squarely locates itself in traditions, outside the ideological grid of modernity" (p. 91).

Of course, interpreting traditions is no easy task and as the current experience in Sri Lanka, and of India too, illustrates, traditions could be interpreted to legitimize extreme forms of religious, ethnic and cultural intolerance. This is precisely where Nandi's project of interpreting traditions might pose serious problems. Our Indian counterparts of course have a Mahatma to invoke and we Sri Lankans have not yet produced a Sinhala-Buddhist, Gandhi. In this island, the critique of modernity comes primarily from ethno-cultural exclusivists in Sinhalese society who, wielding the 'tradi-

tion', deny equality to ethnic, religious and cultural minorities. They militantly oppose the state, precisely because the state is still unwilling to totally execute their homogenizing projects. To counterpose modernity with tradition in a framework of Cartesian duality and then to look for indigenous systems of knowledge without a comprehensive and thoroughgoing critique of what is viewed as native may have its own pitfalls. Such an enterprise requires a critically democratic referent. It also needs categories and concepts that are not grounded in a neo-nativist dichotomy of the West and the rest of us.

There are four chapters on contemporary ethnic riots and *tensoin* in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and another three on survivors of ethnic riots. These six chapters add considerable value to this volume. Akmal Hussain's essay on the Karachi riots of 1986 (chapter seven) is more a commentary on politics that provided the backdrop to the event than a recording of the origins and the spread of it. It has a certain conventionality in the sense that it looks at riots from the wider perspective of state-civil society conflict. Fareeda Shaheed in chapter eight presents a penetrating analysis of Pathan-Mahajir conflicts in Pakistan. An important point she makes is the social construction of enmity among religious communities. Violence could usually be intensified by social and economic conditions, yet the roots of the problem defies analysis based on socio-economic factors. The crucial question is how is it that communities are mobilized in religious programs. The explanation of this problem is indeed central to our understanding of ethnic and religious riots. Shaheed, notes how adherents of one religion would put those outside it as being 'beyond the pale.' This "reduces the 'humanity' of the 'infidels,' making it easier to perpetrate violence against them"

(p. 195). Certainly, the extermination of heretics (MITHYADRUSTIN) has not been alien to the Buddhist 'tradition' if Sri Lanka either, if one goes by the accounts in Pali and Sinhala chronicles. Violent action usually combines with the dehumanization of the adversary, and organized religions have categories to do exactly that. As Shaheed points out, these categories and symbols are easily manipulable. People are mobilized in violence for singulary secular needs of political control, economic power and domination.

The three chapters on survivors of violence constitute the most significant component of this anthology. Once ethnic riots carried news headlines and pricked the conscience of a few concerned, the forgotten become the survivors whose harrowing experiences in the hands of mobs and even agents of law and order would dissolve into unmemory. Three researchers—Amrit Sirinivasan, Valli Kanapathipillai and Veena Das—have produced three excellent chapters on the experience of survivors. Sirinivasan's material in chapter twelve are from the survivors of the "Delhi carnage" (p. 308) following Indira Gandhi's assassination in October 1984. Kanapathipillai (in chapter thirteen) analyses the accounts of Tamil survivors after the ethnic riots in Colombo in Summer 1983. The accounts of the survivors of the riots in Delhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi is the subject matter of Veena Dasa's chapter fourteen.

Survival after ethnic riots is no easy business. It presents a complicated set of new problems to the victims who have not perished. Riots displace and break up networks of solidarity that are available under non-violent circumstances. Depending on the nature of the neighborhood—slums or upper class—the support available for victims to survive can vary. In long-drawn processes of conflict, and in instances where the victims belong to minority groups, the location and space for survival becomes

extremely shrank. Then comes the official process of institutionalizing the precarious act of survival. Bureaucratization of relief, accommodation and relocation etc., continues bringing about yet another pattern of victimization; Or rather a process of re-victimization. These are some of disturbing insights that these three researchers provide in their courageous essays.

There are a few more chapters that need at least brief mention. Sudir Karkar's essay on some unconscious aspects of ethnic violence in India looks the psychology of violence. Upendra Baxi in chapter nine provides a detailed and a rather comprehensive discussion on the reservation crisis in Gujarat. And Sunil Bastian presents in chapter eleven an analysis of political economy of the July 1983 riots in Sri Lanka.

MIRRORS OF VIOLENCE is undoubtedly a significant contribution to enriching our decidedly inadequate understanding of ethnic violence in South Asia.

Consciousness that E. P. Thompson describes in his work *THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH WORKING CLASS*. These were essentially migrant labor groups from the countryside who were subjected to tight labor control. Their work required very little skills and training, and their day-to-day secular culture was largely conditioned by squalid living standards. Their socialization was confined to interactions with their own ethno-religious communities. Ethno-cultural separation, segmentation, rivalry and hostility was than integral to the very process in which the working class formation occurred. What strongly comes out in Chakrabarty's account is the horizontal fragmentation, rather than vertical integration, of industrial working classes in their making.

Chakrabarty's essay may than be juxtaposed with Gyanendra Bandey's chapter on colonial construction of 'communalism' in Banaras. Pandey argues that communalism, so far as the term was deployed in relation to

social conflict in colonial India, was a descriptive category invented by British officials and commentators. Pandey indeed de-constructs the colonialist reading of nineteenth century Indian history through an examination of official and other British writings on riots. He identifies a specific communalist narrative that perhaps ruled the entire body of colonialist writings on group conflicts in Indian society. In this narrative, group conflicts were constructed as communal riots, participated by agitated and unruly crowds. Any group clash would subsequently find its readily available meaning in colonialist texts: 'communal' riots between Hindus and Muslims. How did this master narrative become a strategic code in the colonial discourse and what were its principal features? Pandey devotes the main body of his text to examine these two issues.

Pandey's essay is a fine piece of de-constructionist historiography. In the British official accounts on a 'riot' between two Hindu and Muslim groups occurred in Banaras in 1809, he finds a host of categories that informed subsequent British writings on group riots. The crowds in 1809 riots were 'religious fanatics'; they were 'excited crowds' and the clashes were 'violent.' And the riots were created, according to these initial accounts, by two fundamentally antagonistic groups of Hindus and Muslims. Here was a production of a particular reading by British officials who were perplexed by crowd behaviour in a subjugated society. Rival crowds engaged in violence were thus identified by them solely and exclusively in association with religious and ethnic signs and not with social characteristics. In this particular mode of narrative gazing of crowd behavior, events could easily be fitted into what Pandey calls a 'simple diachrony' — Hindu and Muslim. Consequently, description of violence through ethnic and religious categories became the means of narrative production and re-production of the native

character. And it froze the complexity of political conflict into ethnicity and religion. 'Riots' 'disturbances' and agitation' were deprived of their economic, social and class roots. Thus constructed and statically represented were the imposed characteristics and norms. □

India — Crisis . . .

(Continued from page 13)

The BJP also calls for equipping India's armed forces with nuclear weapons. It wants an absolute ban on cow slaughter and supports moves by a Hindu missionary group to demolish mosques built over Hindu sacred sites. The country's two communist parties, which command 56 MPs, will offer a Marxist program, proof if any is needed that India remains impervious to outside trends.

Meanwhile, India's once-praised economic liberalization program has stopped dead in its tracks. Both the trade account and government budget are in chronic deficit, and with the economy sliding into recession, prominent politicians seek to fan rural jealousies over faster economic growth in cities.

While the fracturing of national politics proceeds, so does the unraveling of civic peace. Riots between dominant Hindus and the big Muslim minority have ravaged communal harmony in recent months. Indian observers say the unrest is the worst since the 1947 Partition which split British India in two. Even in the safer south, Sri Lanka's Tamil rebels behave as if they own large chunks of India's Tamil Nadu state, where they find refuge from Sri Lanka's civil war.

Many longstanding social issues have resurfaced with new bitterness, such as ethnic quarreling over retention of the English language; and the vexed issue of caste, fanned by controversial plans last year for an affirmative action program giving many government jobs to "backward castes," a category distinct from caste "untouchables."

The weather is about the only thing going right for India. The last three monsoons have brought plentiful rain and record harvests. Some areas of the economy, including the small but growing export oriented sector, remain resilient.

Another plus is that India remains wedded to perhaps the best legacy of British rule — the ballot box. Although politics have become deeply criminalized in some Indian states, governments change in Delhi and in its states through elections, not (as in Pakistan) through overt or disguised military coups. When observing elections I have seen both a mixture of textbook civics and ballot-box hijacking reminiscent of the Philippines. Still, it beats periodic shows of bayonets in the capital city.

India has overcome many challenges in its short, post-independence history, including a 1962 war with China, linguistically based separatism in the 1960s, a dictatorial period of Indira Gandhi's "emergency" rule ended by ballot in 1977 and, not least, the abatement of drought and famine.

Peace — A General . . .

(Continued from page 21)

Many studies have found a strong link between the rise of the Sinhalese chauvinist ideology in national politics and Sri Lanka's weak, dependent economy imposing constraints on a ruling class limited in its outlook. The growth of Tamil narrow nationalism in the North and the rise of the JVP in the South, both of which became interlocked with the state in a spiral of terror and counter-terror, are instances of the growing authoritarianism of the system forcing everyone with a grievance into desperate actions. It is important to understand the weakness and insecurity of the ruling class which found in populist chauvinism against minorities, a refuge from its incapacity to meet the aspirations of the masses who were now better educated. When the limits were reached in attempts to satisfy the majority.

Not Even Shadows

Rajiva Wijesingha

Reviewing in 1985 Anne Ranasinghe's last major collection of poetry, 'Against Eternity and Darkness', I wrote in remarking of the importance of memory in her writing that its counterpart, 'what might be termed desire, the consideration of further aspects of life, does not play a particularly large part'. The present book, which adds three poems to expand an earlier loosely bound offset collection that appeared under the same name, suggests that statement needs to be modified. Of the poems in this collection a good many seem to deal clearly with desire as described above, the yearning for further experience that goes beyond what has been 'recorded and appreciated', to cite my last assessment again. Such poems are often personal in tone, not infrequently celebrating romantic associations.

At the same time, even such poems almost invariably convey a sense of loss. Where in her earlier work the affirmation of what had been was always forceful, even when her theme was its destruction here what comes across more forcefully is the sense of deprivation. That characteristic prevades too the manifestations here of what she had also dealt with often earlier, the theme of social or rather racial loss, the reiteration of the impact of the Holocaust. Though there are moments in which she celebrates her Jewish heritage, as she has done before, here the mood that comes across most strongly, for instance in poems like 'Rebekha', despite her becoming 'the mother of thousands and millions', is one of hollowness, the 'gnawing wind from the desert', the 'carcasses of dead things'.

At the same time, paradoxically it might seem given the negative nature of such impressions, underlying all this there seems to be what one had not previously noticed a layer of sentimentality. Before there had been celebration, refracted through harsh almost clinical analy-

sis, that conveyed forcefully the actuality of experience. Now feeling seems occasionally to decline even into mawkishness, as in the almost undergraduate description of an airport —

We are all wrapped in zero gravity
and neither eyes nor bodies touch.

This does not of course mean that there are no felicities such as one was used to, and as one would have expected from so accomplished a writer, no poem entirely misses its mark; but there is a sense in which it appears that the same high standards as obtained before are no longer absolute.

In effect, for the first time since her very early collections, we find Anne Ranasinghe becoming prosaic at times. Interestingly enough, the one poem written in the sixties that appears here makes clear the distinction between statements in verse and the poetry that informed the compendious collection 'Against Eternity and Darkness', selected at what might be termed the height, not of her power, for much of that is still present, but of discernment. That sense of judgment would not have permitted the dull rhetoric of lines such as —

You will have to carve
New landmarks as you hew
your way
Through stone and rock and
shifting sand
With your own pick and axe.
No salves
To spare your sweat, no pirth
prerogative
To ease your pain. You are so
small dear child,
And will be all alone of
the great plain.

Similarly, in a poem begun it seems in 1945 but finished only forty years later, we have what appears to be prose divided into lines.

Meanwhile the inn-keeper
had rolled big barrels of beer
and home-brewed cider into
the village square

and he dispensed this to all
who came. Then the band
struck up —

three fiddles, one drum and a
jangly old piano —

and everyone began to dance
under that promising spring
sky,

the whole village turned out
to dance: old men with snowy
beards

were partnering the prettiest
maidens in courtly waltzes

where the adjectives are reminiscent of the younger Kamala Wijeratne doing her best to compel a sentimental reaction from her reader. This does not mean that sort of prosaic tone cannot be used very successfully, as in 'You ask me why I write poems' (where one is haunted by Richard de Zoysa's beautifully matter of fact reading at the German Cultural Institute, which brought out the full value of a carefully thought out combination of words) —

Rarely, when everything
concur, I find the moment
that calibrates the edge of
joy and longing
and so I make a poem and
then am surprised
that what I write is hardly
what I pondered
yet somehow states a truth
I did not know I know.

More often that one would have expected however, judgment here is less than acute.

This is particularly true in the case of what might be termed the heritage poems, where for once it seems as though the poet is labouring a point in which she is no longer deeply interested —

We who still uphold the
traditions and inheritance
Twenty-five centuries of not
only the love
But understanding of you and
an indomitable will

Not to deny you during the
ages of our persecution.

and to a lesser extent, but still noticeably, in some of the personnel poems, where the feeling is doubtless real, but comes across occasionally as over strained —

My longing suffuses each
night and day

And the parched earth thirsts
for rain. The bush
In my garden is fragrant with
white gardenia blossoms—
For whom will they bloom
when I have gone away?

In such verses, and there are not a few of them, one wonders what has happened to the principle Anne Ranasinghe used to uphold so well, that poetry must communicate to the general reader too, not rest satisfied with sounds that evoke a private universe.

Fortunately, that principle has not been forgotten in general. In this collection too there are some remarkable poems, and enough to in the personal category to make clear that the poet has survived heightened emotion. The beautifully crafted poems, 'A kind of death' and 'Self-fulfilling', with the latter of which the collection appropriately ends, indicate the powerful impact of a talent that has decided to give priority to art. Even more remarkably, and significantly, there is 'Landscapes', where she takes a theme that had figured in the last section of the arguably self-indulgent 'Trilogy', and transforms it with the introduction of material that communicates the social realities and the general emotions of a particular period with enormous force —

And the voices that cried
out in agony
Are borne

Dispersed by the awful wind
Through the long grasses and
full-leaved trees
To the pitiless sky's infinity

And nothing remains but to
mourn

And nothing remains
But to mourn

The elegaic tone here is disciplined, and of obvious general significance. Such directness is not always essential: the intensely personal poem with which the collection opens, 'On finding the grave of my grandparents in Germany', also gets, a deal across to any reader; but what such poems have in common, it

seems to me, is the importance attached to the analytical quality imposed, the recollection in tranquility that takes precedence over the assertion of emotion.

And that is why perhaps the most powerful poems in the selection are the lyrics, where the poet evinces what seems a deliberate decision in the light of her preoccupations elsewhere to give precedence to artistry. The soaring images of the poem on Chagall, the powerful evocativeness of 'Autumn Berries', indicate a strong appreciation of the world around one—through which one then discerns, in the first a sudden sense of the sadder realities of life in the second a telling personal allegory that communicates universally. This last feature comes across forcefully too in 'Atteriya' to my mind possibly the best poem in the collection, with its extraordinarily skilful movement from lyric description to a personal tone of reflection, the objectivity of this reinforced as it seems by the introduction of the name of the sage who is quoted. This succeeds in making all the more keenly felt the personal element in the last lines, that thus comes across as a telling general principle. It is that quality, the capacity to draw a reader in and convey an understanding and an appreciation of universal reality, that had been Anne Ranasinghe's forte as a poet, and which it is heartening to see still surviving —

The scent flows from the
arched canopy, wave after
wave

flooding memory, awakening
desire. I raise my hand to
touch

the tracery of leaves, and
a shower of blossoms
rains upon me:

the ground is covered as with
snow;

and I remember the words of
Asclepiades

that the joys of the love
goddess are to be found only
among the living

and that we shall all lie as no
more that dust and bone
in the place of the dead.

Virginia . . .

(Continued from page 27)

art, nor do I wish to deny that Lawrence was sometimes guilty of preaching. But it is hardly a satisfactory alternative to hold up an ideal of pure aestheticism — "the sentence in itself beautiful" — and it is a very impoverishing response to Shakespeare to suppose that that is what Macbeth's "multitudinous seas" was there for. To read such a passage is to be reminded that Virginia Woolf belonged to the circle of Roger Fry and Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey for whom art was an elegant luxury. The ethos of Bloomsbury is very well summed up in four lines of a poem by one of its children, Julian Bell — the son of Clive Bell and Virginia's sister, Vanessa. This is how Julian Bell, who wasn't unsympathetic to his Bloomsbury elders, saw them:

"People intent

To follow mind' feeling and sense
Where they might lead, and
for the world, content
To let it run along its
toppling course."

That Virginia Woolf's conception of art is of a realm of cultivated sensibility held against the disorder of the outer world is confirmed by the quality of her writing. For all its fine style, its exquisite handling of phrase and rhythm and cadence, it is a prose of artifice, and therefore, so bloodless and ultimately to me so boring. Even in Charlotte Bronte, with all her sentimentality, there is a more genuine and a broader life; and when it comes to her greater sister and to George Eliot, there is no question for me that they are incomparably superior to Virginia Woolf. Mrs. Woolf couldn't have created the passion of Catherine Earnshaw beating against the cages of class and family, or the moral drama of the shallow Hetty Sorrel discovering unknown depths in herself with her infanticide, or Maggie Tulliver's struggle to assert herself in a society that has no use for an intelligent woman, or Gwendolen Harleth's compromises under the pressures of economic adversity. To do that she would have had to go beyond that room of her own.

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