

● BERLIN WITHOUT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE ●

LANKA

— *Rajiva Wijesingha*

GUARDIAN

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ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

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Briefly . . .

ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS TO TIGERS

● The Tigers had been given anti-aircraft guns, among other sophisticated weapons, by the Premadasa government, UNP dissident leader Gamini Dissanayake told a press briefing. He said that 17 such guns had been given and they had "definitely" been used during the Elephant Pass battle with the Sri Lanka Army. Another rebel, former Education Minister Lalith Athulathmudali said that the LTTE had been given such arms without the sanction of the Cabinet, "which is contrary to the Constitution". The Defence Ministry issued a flat contradiction of the first charge and explained why it had helped the LTTE to fight the India-equipped T.N.A.

WILL BARE ASSETS

● At a mass rally in Kandy UNP rebel leader Gamini Dissanayake proposed a permanent commission to probe the assets of all politicians. Such a commission would reveal who had amassed wealth after taking to politics; he himself had no objection to any probe into his assets, the former minister said.

HANDS ARE CLEAN

● Ex minister Athulathmudali showed his hands to the massive crowd at the Kandy rebel rally and said: "they are clean; they have not been stained by doing any dirty work for any maharajahs, nor have they been

stained with blood". He said that he had also not had anyone murdered and cremated on tyres.

CONSPIRACY BY VESTED INTERESTS

● The Gangarama high priest, the Ven. Galaboda Gnanissara told a gathering of monks at the Colombo Public Library auditorium that a group of people with vested interests, financed by foreign powers, was endeavouring to topple President Premadasa, a man who had risen from humble origins and who understood and always stood for the betterment of the have-nots.

NOT A CLASS STRUGGLE

● Opposition Leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike told a public meeting at Ja-ela that the campaign to remove the President was not a class struggle, and that the people know to which class the president belonged.

She said that if the Tigers had not been provided with arms by the government the country would not have experienced the blood bath in the north-east. One man had been able to do such things arbitrarily, and if such foolish and treacherous acts were to be avoided in the future the executive presidential system had to be abolished.

TWO MASSIVE LOANS

● The World Bank has given Sri Lanka a loan of US\$ 40 million, the balance half of a US\$ 80 million economic recovery loan. The first half was given in mid 1990. According to a Treasury source the World Bank loan was

followed by the IMF approving a US\$ 500 million credit facility.

GOVT. GROUP THANKS IMF

● The Government Parliamentary Group adopted a resolution thanking the IMF for "the generous assistance, which is the largest since Sri Lanka's membership in the IMF — August 1950".

An official communique said that "the Group was of the unanimous view that the decision of the IMF to make this facility available is an endorsement of the sound economic policies followed by Sri Lanka under the leadership of the President and expressed its fullest confidence in the leadership of the President".

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NEW FROM PRIO!

Sri Lanka: Towards a multi-ethnic democratic society?

Report of a fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka by Neville Jayaweera

What are the roots of the conflict in Sri Lanka? How has the ethnic issue influenced the evolution of the conflict? What hopes are there for the emergence of a multi-ethnic democratic society and how can the international community assist the process of peace?

These are some of the questions which this report attempts to answer. Commissioned by PRIO, sponsored by the Norwegian government, Diakonisches Werk-EKD and NOVIB and written by Neville Jayaweera, development consultant and former senior Civil Servant in Sri Lanka, it will be of interest to international donor agencies, foreign ministries, researchers and all those working in development in Sri Lanka.

It contains a review of the history and causes of the conflict and examines the role of political parties, ethnic and religious groups, the military, vigilante and guerrilla groups and non-governmental organisations in the conflict and in the pursuit of peace. It also looks at the impact of President Premadasa's presidency and contains a lengthy interview in which he not only explains his past and present policies but outlines his understanding of multi-ethnicity and his vision for the future of Sri Lanka.

The report makes recommendations for achieving peace and multi-ethnicity which are already being considered by the government.

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CONSTITUTIONAL COUP:

CAN THE UNP BE DISLODGED?

**NEWS
BACKGROUND**

Mervyn de Silva

The emergency was extended by Parliament with the customary ease — 131 to 72. The SLFP and its Left allies voted against the extension but the UNP and three smaller (Tamil and Moslem) parties teamed up to ensure a very comfortable majority. Prime Minister D. B. Wijetunge gave two reasons to justify the regular monthly extension — the war in the north and LTTE terrorists behind bars, and in the South the JVP terrorists held under emergency powers. 1,800 'Tigers' and "more than 5,000 JVP'ers" were the figures he gave Parliament.

Interestingly, the "dissidents" voted with the UNP. The Gamini/Lalith/Premachandra group, once a gang of 8' and now a 'gang of 11' does NOT intend to dissociate itself with the UNP. On the contrary, ex-Minister Lalith Athulathmudali's speech makes it abundantly clear that the conflict within the party has very much to do with personality, not policy. (See Lalith's critique) Indeed the basis of the critique is the party's re-structuring in relation to decision-making, the concentration of power and the overwhelming role of personality.

Why then the unprecedented step, the gravest possible, of impeachment? It is increasingly clear, in my view, that this was more of a tactical move than anything else. And a pre-emptive action too. President Premadasa, taken apparently by complete surprise, prorogued Parliament on Aug. 30 for a month. But for the impeachment motion, he could have dissolved Parliament.

Once the impeachment motion was "entertained" in line with

constitutional requirements, Mr. Speaker informed the President. Then came the letter to him signed by 116 government MP's. So now the Speaker must necessarily inquire into the "allegation" that the signatures have been obtained by other than lawful means. He will report to the House on this matter on his return from India where he will participate in a conference of Commonwealth Speakers.

What will happen if and when the impeachment motion is placed before Parliament? Will it receive 2/3rds support? That means 150 of 225. With the UNP almost certain of 10-15 votes from the smaller parties, half its parliamentary group would have to desert and team up with its long-standing "enemy", the SLFP, for the motion to top 150. Even the 'rebel' leaders would not entertain a situation that would be seen by the public as the virtual collapse of Sri Lanka's strongest political party, the voice of the ruling class and the Establishment.

If the impeachment motion is rejected by the Supreme Court or accepted by the S.C. but not passed by Parliament, the President continues to hold office. But what then of parliament which has to pass bills, including money bills most of all, to keep the wheels of government in motion? President Premadasa has to invite an MP who can win the confidence of the House and fill the post of Prime Minister. An SLFP Prime Minister would be the obvious choice. Mr. Premadasa as President and Mrs. Bandaranaike as Prime Minister? Is it conceivable? How long would such an arrangement last? Is the Sri

Lankan system likely to acquire what used to be a chronic feature of post-war French parliamentarism? And an Italian malady too.

If the impeachment motion does not see President Premadasa's exit, the Presidency will last at least till 1994.

L. T. T. E. FACTOR

For the first time in recent politics, the crisis seems to be exclusively 'Southern' as well as a crisis confined to the established political order i.e. the main parties and personalities in the Sinhala South, and the institutional structures, parliament, executive Presidency, and judiciary. And yet, the most contentious issue, the principal propagandist weapon which both contestants are so keen to wield, is the war in the north, and the LTTE. The Opposition evidently believes that the most damaging charge against the Presidency is the supply of arms by the government to the LTTE in the period before the departure of IPKF. Opposition uses the most emotionally charged word — treachery, or betrayal (of the armed forces). While the government has justified such supplies in situation where the IPKF had created a Tamil National Army (TNA) and liberally supplied the proxy force, the Defence Ministry has been prompt in dismissing the accusation about anti-aircraft weapons given to the LTTE.

It is simply impossible to exclude the war, the Tamils and the 'Tigers' from even this direct confrontation between Sinhala power contenders.

LALITH: deep-felt frustration

In the last 2½ years they all feel that they have been diminished in status, they have been neglected and ignored. They fought the elections risking their lives but today the question they ask themselves is: Is there a place for us in the party now? The ordinary member turns to the branch president and the branch president replies, "there is nothing I can do for you". The branch President turns to the Pradeshiya Sabha Member or the Provincial Council Member or the Member of Parliament for relief. But, the only answer they get from their elected representatives is "there is nothing I can do for you". There is a deep sense of frustration at all levels of the party. This is unacceptable.

"If we do not right this position now the party will face great electoral reversals in the years to come. Already this is evident in many parts of the country particularly in the Western Province, the Southern Province and the Ratnapura District. If we do not correct this situation our patient long-suffering party cadres will be driven to teach us a lesson. If we say we do not need them, soon they will say in return that they do not need us.

"I remember with poignancy two particular incidents — first the case of the Dehiwela/Mount

Lavinia MMC, Mr. Lakshman Perera. At the height of the terror he was one of the few to put up posters on behalf of our presidential candidate. So strong was his commitment that he insisted on putting up the posters wearing his one and only green shirt. He was poor but he was fearless. What happened to him? Soon after the new administration took over he lost his job. To eke out an existence he wrote a play. The purpose of the play was totally misunderstood. He was threatened not to stage it but before he could do so he disappeared. There has been no inquiry, investigation or commission to look into his case. His family including three little children wait for him in vain.

The second incident I recall is that of an Executive Committee Member from the Kandy district. He claimed that some members of his family died in the terror because they worked for the UNP. He complained to the party leader about his plight and as he said: "apith samajikayo. Ath dan apimaha parata watila" ("We are also members but we are on the streets now"). He was promptly told that if that was the case he could go to the Highways Department. 'You can have your Rs. 2/- membership fee back and leave'. Later, this young

man wept and told me his plight. His fate is the fate of the average party member.

"These complaints and stories I have heard in many parts of the country at party youth seminars, at local Government election meetings, at official functions and at many party discussions. The complaints were endless but the message was loud and clear — the UNP was on its way to forget its own party members. I have acted in the interest of these and others who have suffered and now I have to bear the burden of their defence. The party, instead of applauding my humanitarian defence of the weak, has penalised me in the utmost.

"With a new portfolio being assigned to me in February 1989, it was with enthusiasm that I looked forward to serving with the same freedom of action that I had been used to. We had hitherto worked in an atmosphere where 'the mind is without fear and the head is held high'. However, before long it became increasingly clear that the style was changing and that we had to adapt ourselves to it. Intelligent mental processes were not to function. The cold hand of authority was tightening its deadly grip, stifling and finally snuffing out whatever hopes there were of achieving those standards of excellence we were aspiring to. It was apparent that we are following some policies inimical to our country's interests. Contrary views are not tolerated. Academic and other attainments are ridiculed and the educated are humiliated, may be due to folly and perversity born of power. By a series of administrative acts purporting to be Constitutional, the status of Ministers are being diminished. Politicians are neglected for officials. Secretaries report on Ministers. Indeed, the entire government

Second Important Success

While the UNP 'rebels' and the Opposition try their utmost to capitalise on the government's supply of arms in 1989-90 to the LTTE to fight the IPKF-organised T.N.A, the Sri Lankan army has destroyed the LTTE's major 'Michael Base' in Welioya. This is the second important military success after 6,000 troops rescued several hundred soldiers in the Elephant Pass garrison, under 'Tiger' siege for 25 days.

Meanwhile, the LTTE has invited Minister S. Thondaman who recently returned to the island from a visit to India, for "talks" in Jaffna that could lead to formal negotiations on a political settlement.

group had to act as mere cyphers. A patronage system hostile and dangerous to liberty has been thriving. When a Government rests upon purchased support true political liberty becomes a dead letter. Those who never felt before feel now and are awakened out of their lethargy to see to what a dreadful situation we are reduced to.

When taking this decision to resign I was fully aware that the total might of the Government machinery would be arraigned against me. The radio and the TV can find no time for us. Can one expect anything more from them when up to now they have not even carried the news of my resignation and that of my colleagues who followed me? The state controlled newspapers have sunk to such miserable depths that their servility have made uncommitted readers lose whatever credibillity they may have had. Though I have made it very clear on several occasions that our struggle is not against any particular individual, but against an institution, that it is a crusade to restore the dignity and powers of Parliament, the servile new-sheets of the state controlled press have thought it fit to unleash personal attacks on me and my colleagues, displaying not only their perversity but also their total bankruptcy of arguments to meet ours.

"Such puerile attempts shall not hurt me nor discourage me. You will recall that it was in the precincts of this very House that I was critically injured in 1987, as a result of a grenade thrown at us. My miraculous recovery was largely due to the blessings received from the members of the Maha Sangha, the clergy of other

denominations and the thousands of good people from all walks of life, in this country to whom I shall always be grateful.

"I am confident that these very same blessings are with me when I am being flayed by an unprincipled group of newspapers, as I struggle along with my colleagues to ensure the speedy recovery of the body politic of Sri Lanka, now morbid and riddled with the ills usually associated with the concentration of power in one person, to guarantee thereby the true sovereignty of Parliament and of the people as whose representatives we sit here.

The events that are unfolding in Sri Lanka today have a close parallel to the struggle between King Charles I and the House of Commons in British History.

Lord Macaulay in his monumental history of England stated that the King was faced with a decision to govern in harmony with the House of Commons or in defiance of the Law. He resorted to several systematic unconstitutional acts and made himself a despot. All the Kings acts of treachery and violence eventually ricocheted. Due to the courage, prudence and sense of duty of Speaker Lenthall, who with his now famous words "I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak" caused the triumph of Parliament, it was a great day for the Commons, a disastrous one for the king because the Speaker upheld the right of Parliament. Nobody was closer to the struggle between the Crown and the Commons than the Speaker.

TRICOLOUR IN THE SUMMER SOLSHENITZE

*Ninety one. Clear the Court. Such silence speaks
Of many things unsaid. Press Barons take
Their places. Such venerable spectres
Who feigned wondrous surprise in thirty six
That the State didnt wither but gently swept away
The withered laurels on complacent brows.*

*Now the wheel turns full circle. They are back
In Moscow for the Trials. But passing strange
The Telstars twinkle as thin reports flash
No mercy for the old Guard. Cry Treason shrill
And trundle up, in haste, each grey tumbril*

U. Karunatilake

Bonapartism: the cause of the crises

Radhika Coomarasamy

The question of impeachment has become intricately linked with the political survival of three of Sri Lanka's leading political personalities. In this clash of Titans, as emotions begin to ebb and flow, both sides have begun to make propositions which serve the political exigencies of the moment but which will only fuel anti-democratic aspects of our political life. Those of us who are committed to the democratic process must resist the threat that is often thrown in our direction 'you are either with us or against us', and try and separate the wheat from the chaff. What aspects of this process need strengthening and what need revision?

Let us begin with the president. It may be said that the root cause of the present crisis is the perceived Bonapartist style of the present executive President. Bonapartism is the term used for a head of state who cultivates a separate and personal political base independent of the party. The Bonapartist leader is usually driven by a populist vision of a special destiny to uplift 'the people'. Bonapartism also implies a style of government which does not fully respect the autonomy of intermediary institutional forms, whether it be the cabinet, parliament, the bureaucracy etc., which are accepted to conform and not hinder the 'vision'. The personality of the individual president triumphs over other interests in these institutions as a matter of fiat. It could be argued that the last president also exercised this style of government — witness the referendum of 1982 — but because of his age and his personal style, he appears to have gotten away with it.

The revolt of the parliamentarians is therefore a challenge to this perceived bonapartist style of the President. His response to the crisis, however,

has not been one of generosity — instead, he has become even more Bonapartist — proroguing parliament, the UNP expelling dissident members, conveying the Attorney-General's opinion on dissolution to the speaker etc. There was an alternate approach available to the President where he would take stock of the revolt and set in motion an internal conciliation process — perhaps setting a committee within his own party to look into grievances and honestly confronting some of the problems faced by his legislators. In the last few days there have been attempts to remedy this situation especially at the group meeting of the 18th. It remains to be seen whether this will result in success.

A Bonapartist style alone is not enough for impeachment. The style of the President must be tested either at a general election or a presidential election — that is the more appropriate and democratic way of removing an elected President. But it is alleged that the President has also committed some acts which violate section 70 of the Constitution and therefore he is subject to impeachment. The case has yet to be heard for any final judgement, but in the present rush to impeach the President and strengthen parliamentary democracy, it is necessary that we do not become accessories to certain anti-democratic motivations and practices which will create unhealthy precedents. It may be a plea that will fall on deaf ears but for the first-time in our post-colonial history, let us try and do things the correct way.

Though the general call for strengthening the institution of Parliament is a healthy one, there are certain aspects of the rebel conspiracy which are very disturbing. Let me enumerate a few:-

a. Impeachment as a means of avoiding general elections

In many newspaper articles and in press conference, the rebels have argued that they had to move this motion because the President was contemplating dissolving parliament. If this is true then it is an unhealthy way to approach impeachment. It is also said that if a 2/3 majority is not received, the rebels and the opposition will move a no-confidence motion on the government, let the government fall and then replace the government with a coalition majority.

Impeachment is a personal accusation levelled at the President. It is not a substitute for the will of the people. It cannot and should not be used either to avoid general elections or to change governments without consulting the people. To do so is to make impeachment an anti-democratic device.

Secret Ballots — The New Unaccountable Parliament

The rebels and the joint opposition are calling for a secret ballot when the impeachment motion comes before parliament. Their argument is that the special circumstances of intimidation require such an action. They also argue that if the public can vote in secret, why can't their representatives also vote in secret. Parliamentarians having to choose among themselves to replace a vacancy such as the Speaker is very different to parliamentarians acting in the public interest. To ask for a secret ballot in this context is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and role of the elected representative.

In Sri Lanka where MPs have long been associated with chits, jobs, and patronage, it may be easy to forget that the legislator's main task is to

(Continued on page 24)

Speaker and Supreme Court

Desmond Fernando P. C.

The procedure for the removal of the President is contained in Article 38 (2) of the constitution. It provides that any MP may by a writing addressed to the Speaker give notice of a resolution alleging that President is permanently incapable of discharging the function of his office by means of mental or physical incapacity. Alternatively or in addition he may allege that the President is guilty of:

- (i) Intentional Violation of the constitution
- (ii) Treason
- (iii) Bribery
- (iv) Misconduct or corruption involving the abuse of the powers of his office.

(v) Any offence under any law involving moral turpitude.

The writing must set out full particulars of the allegation or allegations.

The resolution should ask for an inquiry and report by the Supreme Court. It may be noted that three of the grounds viz (i) treason; (iii) bribery and (v) any offences under any law involving moral turpitude constitute criminal offences.

The first ground is intentional violation of the constitution. The Indian constitution (article 63) provides that proof of violation of the constitution is a sufficient ground for removing the President of India. In Sri Lanka the violation must be intentional.

S 38: 2 (b) provides that no notice of such resolution shall be entertained by The Speaker or placed on the Order Paper of Parliament unless it complies with the Section I have referred to earlier and further conforms with either S 38: 2 (b) (i) or S 31:2 (b) (ii). S 38:2 (b) (i) specifies that it shall be signed by 2/3rds

of the whole number of members of Parliament; S 38:2 (b) (iii) specifies two conditions viz that firstly the notice should be signed by not less than one-half of the whole number of members of Parliament; and secondly that the Speaker is satisfied that such allegation or allegations merit inquiry and report by the Supreme Court.

I should emphasise that the whole scheme of removal is to impose a number of safeguards.

Stage

At the first stage before the Speaker entertains the notice where not less than half the members have signed he must firstly be satisfied that the grounds are those set out in S 38:2 (a). Secondly he must be satisfied that not less than half the number of members of Parliament have signed.

Clearly a forged signature or a signature proved to have been obtained by fraud duress or misrepresentation would not in law be a signature. Thirdly he must be satisfied that one or more of the allegations merit inquiry and report by Supreme the Court.

The second stage (which is specified in S 38:2 (c) is in Parliament. If not less than 2/3rds of the whole number of MPs vote in its favour the resolution is sent by the Speaker for inquiry and report the to Supreme Court.

The third stage is the inquiry before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court after inquiry will then make a report of its determination to Parliament. The procedure to be followed is set out in S 129 (2) of the constitution. The inquiry has to be

conducted by at least five judges of The Supreme Court, presided over by The Chief Justice. The sitting shall be held in camera unless the court for special reasons directs otherwise.

The report has to be made within two months. If the Supreme Court holds that the President is not incapable of discharging his functions by reason of physical or mental infirmity or that he is not guilty of the allegations contained in the resolution that is the end of the matter. —→

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However, on the other hand if it finds that he is incapable of discharging his functions by reason of mental or physical infirmity or that he is guilty of any of the allegations then we come to the fourth stage.

The matter then comes up before Parliament and he can be removed from office by a two-thirds majority. S 70 (1) (c) provides that the President shall not dissolve Parliament after the Speaker has entertained a resolution complying with sub paragraphs (a) and (b) of S: 38.

Question

In his interesting and well-phrased letter to the President published in papers, the Speaker raises an important constitutional question. He refers to S: 3 of Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act, No. 21 of 1953

which states "that freedom of speech, debate or proceedings shall not be liable to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of the House"

Subsequently the Republican Constitution of 1978 came into force providing for a number of matters relating to Parliamentary procedure in chapter X.

That constitution also states in S 125 that the Supreme Court shall have sole and exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine any question relating to the constitution, S 129 also enables the President to consult the Supreme Court on any question of law or fact of public importance.

Notwithstanding these provisions of the 1978 constitution the Speaker in his letter goes on to interpret Articles 4 (C), 38 (2) (a) and (b), Article 70

(1) (c), 70 (3) and 70 (4) of the constitution.

What if the Supreme Court in the exercise of its consultative Jurisdiction gives another interpretation? He then goes on to say that he will use his Residuary powers under the standing orders. Why he has sought to make reference to S:3 of The Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act in this context is not clear.

Surely the Speaker must act according to law even if his contention that he cannot be questioned in any court of Law is correct. Again after the 1978 constitution was enacted are the Speaker's interpretations of the Constitution relating to procedure binding? The Speaker seems to relish confrontation with the Executive and Judiciary and should have been born in 17th Century England.

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China's No-Nonsense Approach

Inder Malhotra (Special to the L. G.)

NEW YORK

All attention here is understandably focused on the Soviet Union. But the Americans do keep a wary eye also on China. And what they have been perceiving of late is not calculated to add to the sum-total of their happiness. On the contrary, they have reason to be unhappy and embarrassed.

In the first place, the Chinese are completely out of line with the rest of the world in reacting to the climacteric goings-on in what is sometimes called the "Soviet Dis-Union" and at other times "the Non-Soviet Union". With the United States in the lead, most other countries are applauding the Soviet Union's march towards democracy and the devolution of power from the virtually collapsed Soviet centre to the republics. But the Chinese are unimpressed.

Beijing's view is that what has happened in the Soviet Union is wrong. Indeed, the Chinese leadership is reported to have said that the retreat from Marxist and revolutionary orthodoxy and the introduction of capitalism in the USSR would never have taken place, had the Russians not chosen "wrong" leaders in the first place.

This is clearly an indication that Mr Deng Xiaoping and his cohorts are determined to so manage the succession in China as to make good their boast that events in Russia would in no way affect their country.

The point could be made that the Chinese have a right to manage their affairs as they like without any interference by anyone else. But that, unfortunately, is not the governing philosophy in the United States which sometimes sees itself as the country in charge of the "unipolar world" and wants to

use this vantage position to promote the cause of democracy and human rights across the globe.

The truth of the matter is even before some very sharp statements against democracy started coming out of Beijing, President Bush had come under fire for being "soft" on Chinese hard-liners even while insisting on "solid progress" towards democracy in the Soviet Union before loosening the purse-strings to the embattled Mr Mikhail Gorbachov. Some had even used the vivid expression "kowtowing" to describe Mr Bush's China policy.

After all, hadn't the US president overruled the Congress and extended to China the Most Favoured Nation (MNF) status despite its poor record on human rights? And, in any case, what had the Chinese done even after receiving the MNF status they needed so badly?

The only apologia the Bush administration could offer, apart from stressing the importance of the Sino-US trade and America's investment in China totalling nearly four billion dollars, used to be that the Chinese had become more receptive to American concerns on human rights. Previously, they used to refuse to countenance any discussion on China's record on human rights. But, of late, they had started giving US officials and diplomats a patient hearing on this vital subject.

Moreover, said the Bush administration, China had allowed a delegation of Amnesty to investigate into complaints of violation of human rights, something which India "stubbornly" refused to do still. But the Chinese have now shattered these comforting beliefs in two separate and revealing incidents on two successive days.

The first incident took place at a banquet given by the Chinese prime minister, Mr Li Peng, in honour of his British opposite number, Mr John Major, the first western head of government to visit China after the Tiananmen Square outrage over two years ago. Mr Major chose to use the banquet to raise the issue of violation of human rights in China. Presumably to lend greater weight to his concern over this subject, he stated that he had received a letter from the opposition Labour Party demanding that the human rights question must be taken up.

"I have also received a letter," shot back Mr Li Peng. "From a Chinese historian. He has reminded me that at the start of the present century, western powers had bullied China in utter disregard of the rights of the Chinese people. That bullying cannot continue at the end of the century".

The Chinese rebuff could not have been clearer, especially after Mr Major was compelled to make substantial concessions to China over the issues connected with Hongkong's future. But the blunt exchange between the two prime ministers was followed by a more brutal episode, significantly, at the Tiananmen Square and involving three members of the US Congress.

The threesome — two democrats and a republican — had gone to China on official business and had been received courteously. On the penultimate day of their stay they decided to pay homage to those Chinese who had laid down their lives at Tiananmen Square in June 1989. For this purpose, the American legislators went to the famous square carrying a flower each which they placed

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Fundamental Shift in Focus

As India enters an era of unprecedented economic change, **David Housego** finds the ruling Congress party's traditional monopoly on power coming under challenge and questions whether the scope of the new measures is broad enough to pull the country out of its troubles.

India during the past 12 months has passed through what has probably been its most momentous period since independence. The economic reforms introduced by the new Congress administration of prime minister P V Narasimha Rao go further than any previous deregulation measures towards integrating into the world economy what has been a highly protectionist country.

Reforms were precipitated by India's coming close to default earlier this year on repayments of its foreign debt — a shock to national pride that itself reflected the failure of the doctrines of self reliance and central planning that have guided economic management over the past 40 years.

The Congress party, which has had an almost uninterrupted monopoly of power since independence, has come under challenge as the natural party of government from a Hindu militant movement, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The BJP now controls three north Indian states — including Uttar Pradesh, the largest — and is the main Opposition party in the Parliament. Its success in the June general elections — riding on the back of several months of Hindu-Moslem violence in north India — reflects widespread disillusion with Congress rule and the appeal of its alternative vision of India as a Hindu state.

The assassination of Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the former prime minister and leader of the Congress

party by extremist Tamils from Sri Lanka, brought at least a temporary end to the domination of the India by the Nehru family.

It has left the Congress party without a national symbol around which to rally, divided over the long term leadership of the party, and uncertain over which direction to follow. Its confusion reflects the fragmentation of the centre ground of Indian politics.

The collapse of Soviet Union — India's leading ally — has removed a cornerstone of Indian foreign policy which has traditionally looked to the Soviet Union as a counterweight to US influence in the world. It is also bound to give an impetus to India's own separatist and regional movements which see in the example of the Russian Republics a model for their own campaigns for independence or autonomy.

Many of the ideas and institutions that have moulded India since independence — the Nehru framework of self-reliance, socialism, central planning, secularism and the Congress party — seem under attack or no longer relevant.

Political parties are still unwilling to espouse the alternatives of market economics, and of an Indian union reformulated to make a virtue out of giving more autonomy to the states. But these are likely to be the fundamental tenets of a successful centrist party seeking to achieve higher rates of economic growth.

By comparison with the economic reforms in East Europe — or the more ambitious restructuring undertaken by Indonesia — the policies adopted in India seem modest. They include a programme of fiscal and balance of payments stabilisation; the removal of most industrial licensing, the lifting of restrictions on the further growth of large companies; trade deregulation; and further encouragement to foreign investment.

The measures mark a fundamental shift in direction — away from an environment where the main focus of business strategy was on obtaining licences to one where increasingly competition will determine which firms succeed.

The measures give companies a new freedom to expand capacity to achieve high volume production, to diversify into other products and to grow through mergers and acquisitions. For aggressive, well managed or financially strong groups, they provide tremendous opportunities.

More vulnerable ones fear they will not survive. In this sense the reforms mark a turning point in a country where capitalism and profit have long been regarded as distasteful.

The shift in direction was announced against the background of a virtual halt to commercial lending to India by international banks because of fears that India might default on debt repayments. The external situation still remains fragile. Foreign exchange reserves are low — although India should soon start drawing on a new \$2.3bn standby credit from the International Monetary Fund which is due for approval by the board of the Fund.

India still is not able to count on automatically rolling over its short term debts. It will need over \$9bn this finan-

cial year in fresh funds from the multilateral institutions, donor nations and commercial banks in order to finance its current account deficit as well as loan repayments on its outstanding \$70bn foreign debt.

However, the institutions and the banks believe that far more radical measures are needed to improve export performance in an economy that generally suffers from high costs, low productivity and poor quality. Mr Michel Camdessus, the managing director of the IMF, recently told an Indian newspaper that "the support of the international community is quite dependent on the boldness and determination of your national efforts".

The type of measures they are pressing for include a substantial reduction in high domestic tariff rates which make it more profitable for industry to produce for the domestic market than for exports; cuts in the labour force in the heavily overmanned public sector, the phasing out of government directed and increased autonomy for public sector companies and nationalised banks as a prelude to privatisation.

It is hard to see how sectors such as telecommunications, banking, steel, cars and electronics will be made internationally competitive without substantial inflows of foreign capital and technology. But suspicions of foreign multinationals still remain.

The confidence of the international financial markets in India will not fully return until the government is heading further down the path of reform. The best guarantee of maintaining the momentum would be for India to seek — and Dr Manmohan Singh, the finance minister, has said that this is his intention — a further three year loan from the IMF under the extended fund facility. This would provide \$5.7bn over the period and closer monitoring of the Indian economy.

Although Dr Singh and some of his colleagues are aware that the new measures are the first step in a long haul, many in the government and the Congress party are half hearted in their support.

Experience elsewhere suggests that where an IMF restructuring programme is carried through with the full backing of an administration — as in Indonesia — it stands more chance of success. In India's case the main threat to macroeconomic management comes of an inflationary spiral getting out of control — with a devaluation fuelling inflation that leads to further depreciation of the currency.

China's No-Nonsense...

(Continued from page 9)

on the spot where blood had been shed. Then they unrolled a small black banner with white lettering in English honouring the victims of the Tiananmen tragedy.

No sooner had they done this than the Chinese police intervened and asked the American dignitaries to pack up their banner and depart. They quietly did so. But this was not the end of the affair. As they were about to leave Beijing for home, the Chinese government lodged a "strong protest" against their "flagrant interference in China's internal affairs". This, said the Chinese foreign office, had caused "great indignation" among the Chinese people.

The informed American opinion has been both saddened and angered by these events. But the Bush administration has maintained a thundering silence.

So much for the crusaders for human rights for whom Beijing at least has no use. But what about the Chinese leadership's assertion that the kind of upheaval that has shaken the Soviet Union to its roots would not take place in China?

Chinese leaders are nothing if not hard-headed realists.

At 70, Mr Narasimha Rao seems an elderly figure to be leading his country through a period of tumultuous change. He has proved a stronger and more clear-headed Prime Minister than many had expected. But as the head of a minority administration he remains politically vulnerable.

His own instincts for cautious change came through in comments he made immediately after the coup against Mr Mikhail Gorbachev — seemingly warning that it showed the risks of hasty reform. But the pressure of events may not allow the more leisurely timetable that he and many senior Indian officials would prefer.

They are therefore not oblivious of the impact the break-away of the Baltic and other Republics from the Soviet Union is bound to have on the people of Tibet and Xingjiang where separatist sentiment is strong and has been growing. Last year the Chinese had to crush an abortive uprising in Xingjiang (the name itself means New Territory) which was allegedly fomented by Afghan mujahideed operation from Pakistani soil. They are also aware of the dangers inherent in the situation where Kazhaks, Uzbek and Kirghiz people live on both sides of the Sino-Soviet border. Furthermore, the Chinese intellectuals in the vanguard of the movement for democracy have welcomed the Soviet developments.

But there are two factors in favour of maintenance of status quo in China on which the leadership is evidently banking. One is that a vast majority of Chinese is viscerally fearful of chaos, having suffered a decade-long anarchy during the Cultural Revolution. Secondly, as Mr. Wang Zhen, Chinese vice-president puts it, the People's Liberation Army "is a wall of steel to protect national unity and preserve social order".

Power rests on fragile base

K. K. Sharma

Mr P V Narasimha Rao, who heads the minority Congress government in India, is an apparently phlegmatic prime minister who has shown remarkably alacrity in initiating urgently needed economic reforms in the few weeks during which he has been in power.

He has done this without forming a coalition and with only occasional consultations with the opposition parties, which together outnumber the Congress members and their allies in parliament.

National elections earlier this year, the third in just over two years, have led to hung parliament. With Mr Rajiv Gandhi having been assassinated in the middle of the election, the Congress has emerged as the single largest party but with its leadership issue only temporarily resolved.

Political instability is inherent in the situation. This could be prolonged as rival parties contend for power at a time when no single party can hope for a majority.

For the present, the Congress is faced with a formidable, if divided, opposition which has strong segments that aspire to replace it in the next elections, whenever these might come.

The threat to the faction-ridden Congress — which Mr Rao has so far unsuccessfully tried to weld together after becoming the consensus choice of its leader as an elder statesman — comes mainly from the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

This now has as many as 117 members in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament, in contrast to the nominal two members it was represented by when Mr Gandhi was Prime Minister.

The BJP already forms the governments in four northern states, including the politically important Uttar Pradesh, and thus controls large segments of the Hindi heartland. Its rapid accretion of strength brings to the fore a new force with strong, publicly announced policies of Hindu nationalism that many Indians find attractive.

The BJP is now the official opposition, promoting itself as the alternative to the Congress, eager to gain respectability by playing an effective role both in parliament and outside. However, its performance in the states it controls has detracted from its image of a disciplined force and it still carries the stigma — its followers would say appeal — of leading a bloody mass movement on the issue of demolishing a Moslem shrine in Ayodhya.

But its fevered cadres have allowed the BJP to act as an effective opposition, at least in parliament. As the party has shown in the past, even the moderates within it will not find it easy to compromise on many issues on which it has taken extreme views publicly. The threat to Mr Rao is strongest from the BJP.

Mr Rao is weakened also by the fact that the Congress, as it has emerged in the post-Gandhi era, is still ridden with factions and continues a barely hidden tussle for the leadership.

Many of its members still yearn for the umbrella of the Gandhi family and there is considerable pressure on Mr Gandhi's widow, the Italian-born Sonia, to take her husband's place.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi has been meeting large numbers of Congress members of parliament and others in the party still

proclaiming loyalty to her family. Their immediate aim is to persuade her to contest the parliamentary by-election from Mr Gandhi's constituency of Amethi and, by implication, to lead the party.

Mrs Gandhi has maintained an enigmatic silence on this, although she has left for a trip to the US, suggesting that she has decided not to enter politics. However, while uncertainty over her role continues, Mr Rao's position as leader remains weakened. He is now in the position of having to deal both with the traditionally fractious factional politics within the Congress at the same time that he copes with the challenge from the opposition.

The Prime Minister has already been embarrassed by the revolt from the Karnataka state wing of the Congress on the issue of sharing of the waters of the Cauvery river with Tamil Nadu, a state ruled by his allies in the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) whose support to the government is vital in parliament.

The Cauvery waters issue is the first warning signal of trouble from within the Congress party. It is also indicative of the powerful pressures on Mr Rao from the states at a time when the Central government is weak. Many states are ruled by non-Congress parties wanting to dilute the powers of the centre; some want to secede from the Indian Union.

A wag has said that Mr Rao's is a minority government on daily wages, constantly at the mercy of the numerically stronger opposition parties and the Congress factions which he is in no position to control.

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Environmental degradation and southern violence

D. L. O. Mendis

Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has been given wide publicity abroad in recent times, as being between the 'Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority'. It is said that some Tamils are demanding a separate state, from the government which is allegedly partisan towards the Sinhalese, or actually controlled by the Sinhalese to the detriment of the Tamils. Such global publicity often originates from a widespread expatriate Sri Lankan Tamil community — the Tamil diaspora — who claim that the 'Sinhalese government' is bent on genocide of the 'Tamil minority' in their 'traditional Tamil homeland's. Attempts are then made to counteract such bad publicity by expatriate Sinhalese in different parts of the world, which often reduces to an effort to defend the human rights record of the government, which too has been criticised from time to time in the media.

Non-ethnic violent conflict in the southern areas of Sri Lanka has never been given such extensive publicity in the global media. Any conflict, however violent, without an ethnic element is less news-worthy than one which has, especially in the west where the average newspaper reader believes that 'tribal violence' is a characteristic of most developing countries. Thus the brutal suppression of the southern insurrection in the recent past went virtually unnoticed outside the country.

What were the causes of the violent conflict in the south?

In this paper an attempt is made to answer that question

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in terms of environmental degradation over a period of nearly twenty-five years, in the southern area of Sri Lanka, which has been under discussion amongst engineers in Sri Lanka since 1968.

The ancient irrigation works in Sri Lanka have long been known as one of the wonders of the ancient world, with a history dating from about the third century B.C. to about the twelfth century A.C. (e.g. Leach 1957). These ancient works consisted of river diversion systems and storage systems. The former consisted of temporary of seasonal diversion system, and permanent diversion system. The latter consisted of small, medium and large scale storage reservoirs, of which the small reservoirs were described as village tanks, because every village in the dry zone had one or more of such small reservoirs.

The dry zone is that area of that country that receives rainfall only during the northeast monsoon season, from about October to about March. The wet zone on the other hand receives some rainfall during the northeast monsoon, and all the rainfall of the southwest monsoon from about April till about September. The SW monsoon thus blows as a dry wind over the dry zone for about half the year. The ancient irrigation system had been built in the dry zone to support irrigated agriculture

throughout the year. The major benefits of these ancient works were irrigation, drainage and flood control. In contrast, the major benefits of the water conservancy works established in ancient China were transport, flood control, irrigation and defence. (Needham et al. 1971, Mendis, 1990).

A very large number of small village tanks, established at about 30,000, had been built in an area of about 15,000 square miles of the dry zone. The reason for this was not understood by engineers who thought that the small tank represented a stage in the evolution and development of irrigation works. (Brohier, 1956, Needham et al, 1971). Some social scientists on the other hand had rather different views. Leach, for example said

"...although the major irrigation works provided food for labourers as well as amenities of palaces, the hydraulic system was not of crucial importance for the society as a whole. When the central government was disrupted, and the major works fell into disrepair, village life could carry on quite adequately, for each village still possessed its own small-scale irrigation systems which were maintained by the villagers themselves. (Leach, 1959, 23)."

Thus Leach was of the opinion that the small tanks functioned independent of the large reservoirs and channels. However, Brohier in a historic paper to the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) on the the major irrigation works in and around the ancient capital

cities, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, titled *Inter-relation of Groups of Ancient Reservoirs and Channels*, had said:—

"The Jayaganga, indeed an ingenious memorial of ancient irrigation which was undoubtedly designed to serve as a combined irrigation and water supply canal, was not entirely dependent on its feeder reservoir, Kala weva, for the water it carried. The length of the bund between Kala weva and Anuradhapura intercepted all the drainage from the high ground to the east which otherwise would have run to waste. Thus the Jayaganga adapted itself to a wide field of irrigation by feeding the little village tanks in each subsidiary valley which lay below its bund. Not infrequently it fed a chain of village tanks down these valleys — the tank lower down receiving the overflow from the tank higher up on each chain. (Brohier, 1937, 70)"

Brohier a future Surveyor-General and the author of the first definitive documentation of the ancient irrigation works, *The Ancient Irrigation Works in Ceylon*, (Brohier, 1934, 3 volumes), was describing the inter-dependence of the small village tanks and the large inter-connected reservoirs and channels. Leach, however, has chosen to ignore this study when he (rather rashly) said:—

"The major hydraulic works are not created rationally and systematically but haphazard as pieces of self-advertisement by individual leaders. But once started; such constructions survive and can be enhanced by later adventurers of the same type. (Leach, 1959, 24)"

Brohier himself had apparently forgotten his classic study on the inter-relation of the major reservoirs and channels in the dry zone when, some twenty years later, he presented a four stage hypothesis for the

evolution and development of the irrigation systems in ancient Sri Lanka. Some time later, Joseph Needham, after a brief visit to some of the ancient irrigation works in Sri Lanka, in the company of Brohier and others, re-published Brohier's hypothesis in his monumental classic *Science and Civilization in China*. (Needham et al, 1971, 368).

It has been shown (Mendis, 1983 etc.) the Brohier was enunciating a wrong interpretation of a statement made by Kennedy, a well-recognized authority on irrigation, who referring to the small village tanks in the dry zone had said:—

the village tanks like the village cattle are too numerous for efficiency, (Kennedy, 1934)

The statement had later been assumed by irrigation engineers to mean that the small village tank was a stage in the evolution and development of irrigation reservoirs, and therefore that large reservoirs would and should later replace small village tanks. Brohier placed the seal of his own authority on this erroneous interpretation in his Presidential Address to the Engineering Association of Ceylon in its 50th Jubilee year. (Brohier, 1956)

The consequences of this wrong interpretation of Kennedy's statement by engineers, and its authoritative enunciation by Brohier in Sri Lanka, (to be repeated later by Needham in Cambridge,) were to be far-reaching. The Irrigation department prepared a Map of Water Resources Development of Ceylon, published by the Survey Department in 1957, based on this hypothesis. A number of suitable sites were identified using the 100 foot contours on the one mile to an inch topographical survey sheets, for large reservoirs in the major river basins in the island. A within-basin balance of water and land resources was used without consideration of any possibility for trans-

basin diversion. It has been pointed out that in effect this set the clock back more than 1500 years in water resources development planning in Sri Lanka, because the Jayaganga described in the reference from Brohier quoted above, was a trans-basin diversion channel built in the 5th century if not earlier (Mendis, 1989a). Criticism of this so-called Water Resources Development Map has been studiously ignored by the powers that be, and two major new reservoirs have been built in recent times in the southern area, based only on the 'authority' of this map.

When the first of these, the Uda Walawe reservoir was being built in 1967, it was pointed out that the correct location for this major reservoir was a site about 15 miles upstream of the present site (Mendis, 1968). It was also pointed out that this site did not fit into a proposal for long term development in the south described as the Southern Area Plan, which would ultimately depend on trans-basin diversion of excess water from the southwest wet zone to the southeast dry zone. The gigantic Uda Walawe reservoir built in record time, submerged an unknown number of small village tanks built in ancient times. This of course conformed to the Brohier hypothesis on which the 1957 Map was based, and by and large pleased some engineers too whom big is both beautiful and bountiful.

Land acquisition and new settlement under the new Uda Walawe reservoir soon ran into difficulties. One report has said:

In fact the official land distribution never occurred. Once the land had been levelled and prepared, purana villagers, infuriated by the coming of outsiders, forcefully and disorderly occupied the land (Devroey and Shanmugaratnam, 1984, 85).

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N. M.: The prophet armed

Ajith Samaranayake

The new Constitution has got itself into a tangle because the Presidential System has introduced a dichotomy in the supreme instrument of state power. The National State Assembly is no longer the Supreme instrument of state power. There is here a duality of power. A President elected directly by the people and therefore entitled also to be an instrument of the sovereignty of the people will exercise *pari passu*, or at least partly, the facets of power concentrated in the legislature as the supreme instrument.

This dichotomy is not merely a theoretical anomaly. It will be a source of continuous conflict leading to the breakdown of the Constitution itself.

(Dr. N. M. Perera — Critical analysis of the new constitution of Sri Lanka promulgated on 31-8-1978).

Caught by its forelocks by the most cataclysmically sudden political crisis of recent memory Sri Lanka desperately gropes for cover. Thirteen years after the adoption of the 1978 Constitution the pundits and the *purohitas* have departed thinking that there need not be any longer any room for prophets. The stage is bare and in the background has risen the sudden cry of impeachment. Only one figure has exploded through the circumambient darkness and cast any light on the undergrowth surrounding it. The personality of Dr. N. M. Perera stands solidly four square between the country and her crisis.

In a modest 112-page book entitled a 'Critical analysis of the new constitution of the Sri Lanka, Government promulgated on 31-8-1978' Dr. Perera then in the political wilderness cast a prophetic glow on events. The booklet long out of print is now the most sought after prize of

the political cognoscenti. When he wrote that book N. M. had for the first time lost his seat in Parliament since the first election in 1947. J. R. Jayewardene who became Prime Minister after that election publicly regretted that exit from Parliament of N. M. and the other left leaders. That year N. M. was defeated by Vincent Perera at Yatiyantota. Perera is now a member of the dissident UNP group.

Nanayakkara Pathirage Martin Perera PhD, DSc (London) was one of Sri Lanka's outstanding scholars and political leaders. He was also one of the country's most charismatic and flamboyant statesmen. Politician and economist, scholar and intellectual, sportsman and thinker he was a rare renaissance man who combined the humanity of a good man with leadership qualities of a rare stature. Eleven years after his death he belongs to a rare tribe of now extinct human beings.

N. M. Perera was born on June 6, 1905 as a seven month child. His mother Mrs. Johanna Perera had slipped and fallen on some steps and for long it was her overwhelming motherly love which kept the premature baby alive. Speaking long years after in the National State Assembly N. M. said: 'My father was Nanayakkara Pathirage Abraham Perera. Everybody at Thotalanga knew about him particularly as Abaran. I was born in a small hut. My father was a small man, an old-fashioned man. He started cent by cent and grew with great difficulty. He was no socialist. He grew his hair till he died. He also wore a comb...

'Thotalanga Martiya'

The boy who was born into his old-fashioned lower middle

class milieu of Colombo North (he was derided by political rivals as 'Thotalanga Martiya') became one of Sri Lanka's most suave and confident political leaders. At Ananda College he was already a first eleven cricketer. By the time he proceeded to Britain for higher studies he already had the good looks of a Greek God. Sitting at the feet of Professor Harold J. Laski at the London School of Economics he earned the BSc (Economics) and capped this with a PhD. He also submitted the thesis for his DSc on 'A comparative study of Parliamentary Government' but by an ironic twist of history he was conferred the degree only while he was enjoying the hospitality of the British Crown as a political prisoner during the years of the Second World War.

N. M.'s great contribution to the re-awakening of Sri Lanka as a left leader, trade unionist, parliamentarian and an intellectual is too well known to need any fresh chronicling. He was not only the first Leader of the Opposition but also the first Marxist Mayor of Colombo. He was twice the leader of the Opposition and twice the Finance Minister. Of him Sir Ivor Jennings, that hard-to-please mandarin of the British old guard, said that if he had lived in Britain he would have been an ideal Labour Party Prime Minister. His guru, Harold Laski, predicted that he would be Prime Minister of Ceylon.

N. M.'s great contribution to the evolution of parliamentary traditions in the infant Sri Lanka democracy as her first Opposition Leader is considerable. He was an impressive oppositionist and a formidable debator and his presence in

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white suit and red tie along the corridors of Parliament was a familiar one. He was no flamboyant speaker like his colleague Dr. Colvin R. de Silva but his arguments were characterised by close reasoning, cogency and sometimes a coruscating wit. Often he bordered on intellectual arrogance but in private he was a very endearing person living a surprisingly ascetic life in self-sufficient domesticity in his home off the Kotte Road at Borella.

For rightwing critics it has become a source of unlimited amusement that Sri Lanka's foremost Marxist should also have been such a correct constitutionalist but submitting to the noose of legality was a conscious decision the LSSP took at an early stage. Their vision of Parliament was that of a platform where in the full glare of public attention the great drama of politics could be played out. N.M. as Opposition Leader achieved some stunning feats such as on February 12, 1959 when 11 LSSP MPs beginning with N.M. had to be ejected from the chamber of Parliament when they opposed amendments to the Public Security Ordinance brought by the then Government of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. Parliament was suspended every 10 minutes and the following MPs were ejected from the House: N.M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Robert Gunawardene, Leslie Goonewardene, Edmund Samarakkody, Anil Moonesinghe, J. C. T. Kotalawela, Dr. Hector Fernando, M. P. Jothipala, Y. P. Jayasinghe, C. R. Beligammana (not a member of the LSSP).

It was as a committed parliamentarian that N.M. in 1978 opposed the new constitution of that year designed to impose an Executive Presidency on the country and it is not surprising that the forces seeking to restore the powers of Parliament 11 years later (prominent among the ranks of

which are many pillars of the old Presidential Establishment) should find in him the only prophet. Marxist and parliamentarian, radical and reformer N.M. Perera was a symbol of his times. He began as a revolutionary but tempered his radicalism with the realities of a situation in a semi-agrarian society characterised by a devotion to tradition. But he was a radical in politics in every sense and this is best symbolised in his commitment

Power rests. . . .

(Continued from page 12)

Such is the fragility of the government that it could fall on any snap vote if the Congress's notoriously inefficient floor management in parliament happens to fail.

Mr Rao is protected by the fact that no party wants another early election after the country has gone through two violent and traumatic national polls in less than two years. As a Communist member said: "The people will stone us if we ask for their votes again."

For the time being, Mr Rao is also protected by the consensus among all parties that concerted action is needed to tackle the economic crisis. Yet they have differed on some crucial issues—such as withdrawal of the fertiliser subsidy—and the government has been forced to compromise to save itself.

It is possible to visualise a situation when such a compromise would be difficult, when one or the other of the opposition groups or, worse, all the groups combined, might feel they could not give in on an issue on which they had taken a strong public position or on which they had given commitments they felt they could not withdraw.

The BJP has already had some confrontations with the government and it will be even more intractable when it acts

to the drama of parliamentary politics. Not for him the aloof philosopher statesman writing on his tablets in pontifical isolation. Dr. N. M. Perera believed in the theatre of Parliament as the most open public spectacle. That is why he is today's lone prophet.

(Note: Some biographical material appearing here has been culled from Malalgoda Bandhulleke's Sinhala biography 'NM' (1990).

on the Ayodhya issue. For the present, however, the BJP is holding itself back because of the common wish to avoid elections and because of disagreements with other opposition groups, notably the National Front-Left combine, whose members are openly critical of the party's communal politics.

Indeed, Mr Rao survives from day-to-day, hoping for an increase in his party's numerical strength by the not unlikely break up of such parties as Mr V P Singh's Janata Dal—the dominant partner in the National Front—which is torn by internal dissensions and personal rivalries. Clearly, this is a fragile basis for the kind of strong government that India now needs.

Environmental . . .

(Continued from page 14)

This comment by social scientists viewing the scene from a considerable distance in time and space, has a familiar ring. It smacks of the claim to 'exclusive occupation of traditional homelands' of the following type:

The Sinhalese governments, by a policy of aggressive state-financed Sinhalese colonisation and re-settlement of traditional Tamil areas, sought to end the Tamils' exclusive occupation of their homelands in the north and east. (Ponnambalam, 1983, 3)

A response to this long-distance pseudo-criticism has been given recently, in terms of irrigation ecosystems:

Another Perspective

P. Sahadevan

That the Sirimavo-Shastri pact of 1964 on the stateless problem of the people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka has been a subject for discussion (See, Prof. Shelton U. Kodikara's views which appeared in the correspondence column of *Lanka Guardian*, 15 July 1990) even after a quarter-century of its conclusion, is a *point d'appui* to the fact that it has inflicted severe injury in the lives of several lakhs of people who were repatriated, theoretically alone, voluntarily to India. This inference may not be acceptable to all those Sri Lankan researchers on the Indo-Lankan affairs who have ardently supported the pact unmindful of the agonising process which the repatriates had undergone. More than the Sri Lankan Government which, by denying them citizenship rights, to quote Hume Tinker, "imposed upon the Indian Tamil population a form of 'apartheid' which was just as severe" (*The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 20), India should bear the responsibility for the tragedy that occurred in the lives of the repatriates for two reasons: first, perceiving the problem as a major irritant in bilateral contexts, it accommodated the pressures from the Sri Lanka Government by acquiescing to take back a sizable number of Overseas Indians; second, it did not discharge its promised duty to the repatriates by undertaking effective measures for their rehabilitation in Tamil Nadu.

Whether or not the 1964 Pact was a horse deal, it is a fact

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that Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Lal Bahadur Shastri signed the agreement without ascertaining the views of the leaders of the people concerned. On the contrary, establishing his argument based on the statement reportedly made by the Indian External Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh in the Lok Sabha (reported in *the Hindu*, 26 November 1964) that about 300,000 stateless persons indicated to the Indian High Commission in Ceylon that they wished to come straight-away to India, Prof. Kodikara contended that the views of the people concerned formed the basis for the Indo-Lanka negotiation and settlement in 1964. His argument may be disputed on two grounds: First, Swaran Singh's original statement in the Lok Sabha did not mention that 300,000 stateless persons opted for repatriation to India, as is evident from the text of the debate (*Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 35, no. 6, 23 November 1964, Cols. 1225-6) given below:

N.G. Ranga: Is it (pact) acceptable to them (stateless people of Indian origin)?

Swaran Singh: When I went to Ceylon, I did have consultations with the leaders of persons of Indian origin there.

J. B. Kripalani: It is a fact that, whatever may be the reason, there is a *good percentage* amongst our people who are settled there, who want to return to India. It is a hard fact, may not be convenient or pleasant, but it is a fact (emphasis added).

Ranga: It is not a fact?

Nambiar: Do you mean to say that all the five lakh people want to come back?

Swaran Singh: I do not say.

Hem Barua: *For that we need not have an agreement; they can come without an agreement* (emphasis added).

Swaran Singh: I do not say that all the 525,000 people are willing to come, what I am saying is that there is a good percentage of these people...

Ranga: *What do you mean by a good percentage?* (emphasis added)

Swaran Singh: ...who want to come, whatever may be the consideration, and *their number runs into lakhs*, I may say. There is no doubt about it, and this is evident from the approaches that have been made to our High Commission for granting travel facilities for coming over to India and for arranging their repatriation. Let there be no doubt on that score (emphasis added).

The above text reveals the discrepancy in the *Hindu's* reportage. Even assuming that Swaran Singh's speech in the Lok Sabha contained information regarding the three lakh stateless people's wish to come back to India and therefore what the *Hindu* reported was correct, the questions arise here are: How did Swaran Singh reach that conclusion? Did really three lakh Indians Overseas in Sri Lanka write letters to the Indian High Commission in Colombo expressing their intention for repatriation to the country of their (or their ancestors') origin? Or, did the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka give the Government of India a false information? Or, did Swaran Singh cook up this story in the face of a scathing criticism made against the Indian Government by the opposition mem-

bers in the Lok Sabha? Swaran Singh alone knows the truth.

Even if three lakh Indians Overseas intended to "come back straight" (!) to India, was there any need to have a separate bilateral agreement on their repatriation? They could very well have acquired the Indian citizenry under Article 8 of the Constitution of India:

"Any person who or either of whose parents or any of whose grand-parents was born India defined in the Government of India Act, 1935 (as originally enacted), and who is ordinarily residing in any country outside India as so defined shall be deemed to be a citizen of India if he has been registered as a citizen of India by the diplomatic or Consular representative of India in the country where he is for the time being residing on an application made by him therefor to such diplomatic or consular representative, whether before or after the commencement of this Constitution, in the form and manner prescribed by the Government of the Dominion of India or the Government of India".

Of course, in that case, the repatriates would not have become eligible to receive certain facilities and concessions such as repatriation of their assets and their continuation in the employment until they were physically repatriated to India. For that, the Indian Government could have sought a negotiated settlement with the Government of Sri Lanka since the number of persons involved in the whole exercise was fairly large. In other words, if the assertion of Swaran Singh was true, India should have tried to arrive at a settlement with Sri Lanka on the facilities to be granted to the three lakh repatriates by the latter, instead of stipulating the number of persons for Indian and Sri Lankan citizenship.

Another question is why did India agree for the repatriation of 5.25 lakh persons when, ac-

cording to Swaran Singh as quoted in the *Hindu*, only three lakh stateless overseas Indians opted to come back to India?

Prof. Kodikara also contended that Swaran Singh's statement was in fact borne out in seventies when the citizenship registers were opened for application for Indian and Sri Lankan citizenship. True, more than half a million stateless people applied for Indian citizenship, while about 600,000 applied for Sri Lankan citizenship. Why did a sizable number of stateless persons opt for the Indian citizenship and thus repatriation to India? Was it their free choice? Or, did they apply for the Indian citizenship out of compulsion? Based on the survey conducted by Yvonne Fries and Thomas Bibin, *The Undesirables: The Expatriation of the Tamil People of Recent Indian Origin from the plantations in Sri Lanka to India* (Calcutta, K. P. Bagchi & Co, 1984,) one could arrive at the following conclusions: Most of the repatriates seemed to have preferred to seek Indian citizenship owing to the compulsion imposed upon them by the rejection of their applications for the Sri Lankan citizenship prior to the conclusion of the 1964 pact. Coupled with it was the incentive offered by the propaganda campaign carried out in the Sri Lankan plantations that the repatriates would be given, besides citizenship to remove the stigma of statelessness, a better settled life through an effective rehabilitation programme in India. It influenced them to think of a rosy life with regular and good salaried employment, land, a house of their own and governmental loans in India; to dream that they would no longer be considered not belonging and undesired but would become Indians among Indians. Also, many repatriate families confessed on their arrival in India that they opted for repatriation because they were told that they were stateless and therefore had to leave Sri Lanka. (See Coordinating Secretariat for plantation Area, *The Repa-*

trates from Sri Lanka, Kandy, 1976, pp.23-7).

All these proved false to the ignorant stateless Indian Tamils who were otherwise not keen to leave behind in Sri Lanka their kith and kin who happened to be Sri Lankan citizens; the place where they were born; the countryside where they toiled; the home where they married, where they gave birth to their children, ate, drank, danced and slept, performed their religious ceremonies and buried their dead. In this context, it should be borne in mind that a great many of the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka have lost their roots in the country of their ancestors — which means that, as a Sri Lankan author argued, the essential psycho-social pre-condition for Indian nationality, i. e, the social fact of a genuine connection of existence, the substantial connection with the country whose nationality these persons were to receive, did not exist (Roy Muthaya, *Repatriation of the Tamil people of Recent Indian Origin from the plantations of Sri Lanka to India* (Mimeo), pp.20-30). Such emotional linkages with their land of adoption i.e Sri Lanka, associated with the hardships the repatriates were to experience in the process of repatriation to India and resettlement in Tamil Nadu, enormously influenced the decision of the repatriates either to retract their earlier plan of repatriation or delay to the maximum extent their physical repatriation. The present case of about 80,000 Indian passport holders who do not wish to opt for physical repatriation to India should be viewed in the above perspective.

In the face of rejection of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact of 1964, one could ask, given the complexity of the stateless question which remained the subject for nearly two decades of aborted Indo-Lanka negotiations and correspondence prior to the conclusion of the 1964 Agreement, what was the alternate way to and the state of statelessness of the Indian Tamils?

In our endeavour to answer this question we may emphasize the fact that there were two factors — declared and undeclared — responsible for shaping the decision of the United National Party Government under D. S. Senanayake to decitizenise nearly nine lakh persons of the Indian community by enacting citizenship laws soon after Ceylon's independence in 1948. The factor which was often declared public by the Ceylonese leaders was related to the Indian Tamils' intention of "permanent settlement" in the island and their integration with the indigenous population". They had all along maintained in their memoranda as well as in their speeches that the people of Indian origin in Ceylon did not come to "settle down permanently in the island, but primarily to seize the opportunities for employment". They pointed out that even after having lived in Ceylon for generations, they had not got absorbed into the indigenous population and had retained their exclusiveness in "religion, language, social tradition and occupation". Instead, it was alleged, they maintained close and continuous social as well as personal contacts with India by visiting it almost every year, and remitting part of their salary almost every month to their people in India. In the light of this, the Ceylonese Government maintained, there was "every indication that Indians in Ceylon had neither forgotten nor forsaken their home country", that most of them had no intention of making Ceylon their permanent home and as such were the "residents" but not "domicile" of the Island. Consequently, the Ceylonese leaders concluded, most of them had reasons to be loyal to India and were, therefore, its nationals. Under such circumstances, the Ceylonese government was prepared to confer its citizenship on these persons only after ensuring that they had "a genuine and abiding interest in Ceylon and an intention of permanent settlement". Mere residence for "ten,

even twenty, years or declaration of intention to be Ceylon's citizens was not adequate for the purpose. Ceylon, therefore, enacted its citizenship laws which stipulated *inter alia* qualifications to establish the *bona fides* of their intention of making Ceylon their "permanent home". (Quoted in Urmila Phadnis, "The problem of the people of Indian Origin in Ceylon, Issues and possible solutions": *International Studies* (New Delhi), Vol. 5 July 1963 — April 1964, pp. 405-6).

The underlying factor that influenced the Sri Lankan leadership to question the *bona fides* of the Indian Tamil Community as a basis for the enactment of citizenship laws, which were deliberately made rigid and restrictive so as to exclude from its ambit all those who were not indisputably indigenous, was primarily political. To make the point straight, the UNP leadership perceived that citizenisation and enfranchisement of the people of Indian Origin would mean dilution of the electoral strength of the Kandyan Sinhalese in most of constituencies in the Central province and the possibility of Indian Tamils being returned as representative of the Kandyan Sinhalese constituencies in the event of the splitting of Kandyan Sinhalese vote between rival candidates. In other words, the Indian Tamil votes formed a threat to the electoral prospects of the dominant Sinhalese political party, the UNP. Its fear got accentuated when the Indian Tamils won seven seats in the 1947 General elections and helped the election of several left candidates in areas which had a plantation population.

Before suggesting a possible solution in the place of the 1964 pact, it is necessary to highlight certain facts about the Indian Tamil estate population. Without involving ourselves in theoretical debate, we may state that no term has been so much abused as 'integration' in discussions of race relations in Third World countries. Indeed, its very vague-

ness is the source of its most explosive potential in verbal dialectics. The accusation that the Indian Tamils did not integrate with the indigenous population was undoubtedly an excuse for the Sri Lankan leadership to undertake drastic actions such as decitizenisation. Like several minority communities in different parts of the world, the Indian Tamils may be regarded as 'pluralistic minority community', who have desired peaceful coexistence with other minorities and the majority. They wish to maintain their identity and cherish certain distinctive characteristics which they consider important for preserving their identity.

Also, to call the Indian Tamils as 'floating' population who were too often visiting the country of their origin was not proved by the statistics provided by the Ceylonese government itself in the 1950s. Their abiding permanent interest in the island may be substantiated by the fact that while almost the entire estate population had applied for Ceylon citizenship under the Citizenship laws by the deadline i.e. 4 August 1951, the number of people registered at the Indian High Commission was rather small even though there was no deadline. During the period 1948-53, 182272 persons applied for Indian citizenship, while the Sri Lankan Government received 824480 applications for its citizenship. India had rejected 10,491 applications till the end of 1960 and Ceylon 691975 till August 1960. By October 1964, 134188 persons had been given citizenship by Ceylon and 234488 by India. All these figures suggest us to conclude that all those people who did not have, in the line of the Sri Lankan Government's argument, a permanent interest in the island had opted for Indian citizenship. By refusing to apply for Indian citizenship even after the rejection of their application for Ceylonese citizenship, the stateless Indian Tamils established their *bona fide* intention to

(Continued on page 21)

Land Colonization Schemes

S. Sathananthan

To control the rise in unemployment, which followed the mid-19th century slump in the coffee industry, the colonial State sponsored the settlement of landless farmers on Crown land in the Dry Zone under an instruction by Governor Ward in 1857. The economic aim was to boost paddy output so as to compensate for the decline in the import of rice (Mills, 1933:133), which was critical since labor on the plantations was paid in kind with rice (Bandarage, 1983:213). The colonial State provided irrigation infrastructure under the Irrigation Ordinance of 1856 and initiated land alienation schemes. The political aim was to avoid land reform necessary for employment creation in the Wet Zone by transferring the 'excess', unemployed population out to the Dry Zone. But land colonization was a temporary expedient, which was attempted intermittently and only when a shortage of rice or high level of unemployment demanded such demographic adjustments; as such, it remained a low priority until the 1920s.

The Government Agents (GA), Mr C V Brayne, for Batticaloa District drew attention in 1920 to the operation of the land-mortgage-foreclosure cycle in Batticaloa and the consequent rise in unemployment. As a remedy, he suggested the creation of a 'peasant proprietor system' (Brayne, 1920:4) to protect paddy cultivators in the Dry Zone. But in the 1930s, the concept of 'peasant proprietorship' intermeshed with a political goal of Sinhalese nationalism: namely, the colonization of the Dry Zone by the Sinhalese from the Wet Zone to recreate their ancient irrigated civilization (Moore, 1985:45); and official policy came to view inter-zonal colonization

as a long term and systematic demographic shift.

The environmental problem with regard to inter-zonal colonization schemes had been anticipated by Governor Clifford in 1927 when he remarked: 'the transfer of a low country Sinhalese or of a Kandyan peasant of the Central Province to any part of the dry zone entails as radical a change of his environment and of his condition of living as would the transfer of a Somersetshire yokel from the farm-lands below the Mendips to the sun-baked soil with which the Hausa peasant wrestles so industriously...in...Nigeria'; and he emphasized further that such colonization was 'foredoomed to failure' (Clifford, 1927:304) and recommended intra-zonal colonization. The relevance of this observation derives from the fact that the source of a farmer's knowledge of his environment is the accumulated wisdom handed down from father to son, supplemented by his own experience. Thus, the farmer's understanding of the environment tends to be geographically specific; and this is of particular significance in view of the climatic diversity between the Wet and Dry Zones.

However, colonization policy assumed that the farmers transplanted from one area to another, and especially from the Wet to Dry Zone, would be able to launch into successful cultivation almost from inception; although there is no indication that prospective colonists were tested to ascertain their familiarity with climatic patterns and cultivation requirements in the settlement area. It is not surprising that colonists frequently abandoned the settlements (Farmer, 1957:201).

This concern for soil erosion led to remedial provisions (S.33,

2nd Schedule) in the 1935 Land Development Ordinance (LDO) which represented in fact the first instance of State intervention in the area of environmental management in peasant agriculture.

A 1937 report again drew attention to 'soil erosion...in at least one of the "peasant proprietor" schemes' (SP, no VII, 1937:18); and to remedy deforestation and consequent soil erosion, the silting of rivers, malaria and floods, it was proposed in State Council in 1942 that 'the government should acquire these lands...for the purpose of reforestation and other soil conservation measures' (Debates of the State Council [DSC], 1942:2227). However, alienation of land continued because of the economic imperative of creating employment for unemployed Sinhalese which also discouraged long term programmes of environmentally sound land use.

The leader of the CP drew attention to the weakness in environmental assumptions underlying inter-zonal colonization: 'although our ancients (sic) had a most wonderful method of irrigation, most of the basic factors which were necessary for its success which existed at that time have now been removed. For example, the large scale cultivation... (and) deforestation of the hilly regions has fundamentally altered the possibilities of restoring the ancient system in the dry zone areas, particularly in the plains' (Hansard, vol 30, II, 1958:2927). He cited further the failure of the United States experts to heed protests against environmental degradation in the Gal Oya colonization scheme (Hansard, vol 29, 1957:824). As an alternative to colonization, he suggested that drainage facilities be provided for 'a large amount' of fertile but water-

logged Wet Zone lands, thereby making cultivable, so as to 'tackle the problem of landlessness without cutting down a single tree' (Ibid:826). In other words, he, too, recommended intra-zonal colonization. He was supported by the Secretary of the CP, who criticized colonization policy because it 'sought to tackle the problem of the cultivated areas... by transferring the problem elsewhere. It was... a temporary expedient designed to avoid the problem of (Wet Zone) land reform... this policy only aggravated existing problems and created new ones' (Hansard, vol 30, 1957:2105-06). The contribution of colonization to environmental degradation should be evident from the decline of forest cover, for example, from about 75% of the land area at the turn of the century to 25% today; and the forest areas in Vavuniya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Ampara are facing further destruction. Nevertheless land colonization, which Leach condemned as a 'solution... of staggering ineptitude' (Leach, 1962:13) and was referred to

disparagingly as the 'two acres and a cow' method of development (Hansard, vol 30, 1957:2020), remained the dominant theme of development policy.

One objective of the policy of inter-zonal colonization was to shift the demographic balance in favor of the Sinhalese (Peebles, 1990:37); which was effected despite protests from the Tamil Congress in 1944 (de Silva, 1986:213) and Tamil leaders (Hansard, vol 30, 1957:1272-73); and consequently undermined relations between Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic groups. This led a (Sinhalese) Member of the Opposition to argue that, by settling Sinhalese in Tamil-majority areas in the Dry Zone, the Government was 'adopting a deliberate policy of setting up one section of the people against another' (Hansard, vol 24, 1956:1358-59). The Secretary of CP also pointed out that this policy 'led to an intensification and aggravation of communal conflicts' (Hansard, vol 30, 1957).

(To be continued)

Faulty . . .

(Continued from page 19)

make Sri Lanka their 'permanent home' for whatever reasons.

Given this fact, the most appropriate solution would have been automatic conferment of citizenship on all the stateless Indian overseas population (with exclusion of illegal immigrants) in consonance with the internationally recognised principle of *jus soli* by amending the citizenship laws of the island. In other words, the Sri Lankan Parliament should have enacted the Grant of citizenship to stateless persons (Special Provisions) Act of 1988 long back in the 1960s.

To conclude, the conclusion of the 1964 Pact may be considered as a diplomatic triumph of Sirimavo Bandaranaike but a failure of Lal Bahadur Shastri. It may even be a landmark in the history of Indo-Lanka relations, but to the stateless Indian Tamil population, it is a document framed to promote bilateral relations between the two countries at the cost of their interest.

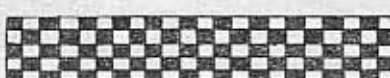
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Return to Berlin

Rajiva Wijesingha

I had first visited Berlin en route from Moscow, after six weeks hard travel, mainly in Yugoslavia, and then in the Soviet Union. There had however been a day or two each in various East European capitals, and Berlin too was like that, a hurried glimpse of the Pergamon Museum, a stroll down Unter der Linden bereft now of its mythic grandeur, an impressionistic awareness of of the stark contrast between drab East and blooming West; an then, exhausted as I was, and not taking much in, the hasty journey back.

Five years later I returned, to study the city more thoroughly, in a week snatched as all my holidays were that summer from the tedious and all consuming task of settling down to a thesis. I spent in fact only three days altogether in Berlin, sleeping whatever was left of the night in the railway station: it was enough then, in those heady days, given the energy I still possessed, to see all that I wanted to. One day had seemed enough then for the East, for its once grand now abandoned churches, the fantastic historical museums full of the products of German exploratory energies in the first flood of nationalism in the nineteenth century, and the marvellous opera too, where I saw a compelling 'Parsifal', one of the most memorable productions I have ever witnessed.

Equally important, at the time, was the phenomenally low cost of everything in the East. I was able to eat my fill, which had been impossible in the West, on my limited student budget. In crossing over at Checkpoint Charlie—a remarkable experience, for the borderguard insisted on looking

at the tops of my ears, an action I had hitherto thought belonged only in fiction—one was compelled to change 5 West German Deutschmarks into East German ones, at the highly artificial rate of one to one. The sum however which barely sufficed for a snack in the West, was more than enough to see all I wanted and eat enough for the whole day. Only the opera might have been difficult, but there another 5 mark note surreptitiously handed over got me a ticket for one of the best seats in the house.

Fourteen years afterwards, in the newly united Berlin, similar disparities obtained. The efficient West German train slowed down after we had crossed the border, and stopped for over an hour at Brandenburg. When we finally got to Berlin the contrast between the spruce stations of the West, and the dullness of the East, was marked.

The costs however reflected this. Despite the unified currency, despite the freedom of movement, it cost nearly ten times as much to make a journey in the Western sector as it did in the East. Though the disparity was not so great, the prices of food too showed differences; as did prices of opera tickets, the first thing I checked on at the Tourist office. It was possible I found even on my limited funds, provided I only had snacks outside the Conference itself, to still spend three evenings at the Opera House, to see a wonderfully energetic Swan Lake, the ballet of The Taming of the Shrew, which I had not seen before, and an exciting production of 'Sicilian Vespers' that was clearly intended to evoke the Russian occupation.

All striking performances; and paralleled, one recalled from other journeys, not only in the capitals of Communist countries, but even in the provinces, in Tbilisi for instance, or Odessa. How was it achieved, one wondered, given the stultifying effect the Communist system otherwise seemed to have on human endeavour?

I have heard the suggestion that what one saw was merely technical competence, albeit carried to a very advanced extent: creativity itself was lacking. There may be some substance in this charge, given some of the horrors perpetrated in the Visual Arts under the description of Socialist Realism. However, some achievements in literature, and in music too, suggest that the dichotomy is not so simple. The problem, one recognizes, does have something to do with the public suppression of personal initiative; but that cannot always be prevented from bursting out in private, as one sees in the entrepreneurship that marks South East Asia, and in the opportunities for interpretive excellence that the performing arts provide. It is true that what the statist approach contributes to is the technical skill. But that after all is a necessary basis for individual genius to build on; and that, even if not allowed free rein—so that, for instance, the best music became suspect, the best literature had to be written secretly—will not be crushed by any system.

But that unfortunately is all East Germany seemed to have been left with, at the moment of union: excellence as far as athletes went (begging, that is, the question of artificial hormones), and performing artistes. What had happened to the nation that, a couple of decades

earlier, seemed to be leading the Communist bloc, industrially and economically?

I do not know the answer. All I can suggest is based on speculation, my interest in the fact that whereas, while I was young, East Germany was near to being thought a developed nation, by the eighties it had slipped back into stultification, as compared with say Hungary or Czechoslovakia, or even Poland. Perhaps this was because the sort of fertilization that the strange position of Berlin in the fifties had permitted had vanished; perhaps it was because the grey and wholly outmoded men who took over in the Kremlin after Khrushchev's abortive efforts at reform clamped down hardest where they felt they were shown up most; perhaps it was very simply that awareness of the prosperity of the West made the rulers of the East themselves more conservative, more defensive, and in the end more callous. Whatever it was, in the two decades before reunification, disparities became worse and, far from the time when East Germany could present itself as an alternative model, it turned into a disaster area.

Hence the mad rush, not indeed towards reunification, but to the absorption of the East by the West: not what Gorbachev must have hoped for when he began the process of Glasnost, the development of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals as a social democratic paradise, but rather the frenetic embrace of Capitalism, even in its more extreme forms. Hence indeed, going along with this, the emergence too of fascism, of the sense of alienation the deprived feel in a consumerist society, the resentment, and the thrust towards the assertion of exclusive identities.

For that is what is happening now in East Germany, as the impact of unification hits hardest the areas least equip-

ped to deal with it. The removal of state support from enterprises that previously survived through holding monopolies has led to vast retrenchment; in addition, the unification of the currency on a one to one basis, and the acceptance of West German norms, has contributed to rapid inflation. Talent meanwhile moves Westward as fast as possible. The consequence is large-scale unemployment of unskilled labour and even if in a market economy this ought to mean more investment, there is a shortage of the requisite professional skills that are essential to aid development in the deprived areas.

The Free Democratic Party has understandably advocated tax incentives on a very large scale to get over this problem, but they are only the junior partners in a government that is more conservative than liberal, and subsidies are not being applied as widely as they have recommended. East Germany is clearly being expected to compete on its own. This large areas of it are unable to do; hence unrest, especially amongst the young, and the emergence even of Neo-Nazi elements.

Berlin of course does not as yet share in any of this. The decision, by a narrow margin, to move the capital there from Bonn has confirmed the initial euphoria of unification. Obviously, Berlin was recognized as being the best symbol of a united Germany, for far more perhaps than any other northern European city it is conceptually on a grand scale. Business was in any case bound to want to take advantage of this, and with the central government now going to move there soon, land values will rise, employment will flourish, and prosperity will doubtless increase immeasurably. The disparities one can still note, the ease with which one can recognize who belongs to which part of the city, will soon be part of

the past. It is Bonn indeed, most of all perhaps in the whole country, that will feel the negative effects of reunion, in that all the vast buildings put up recently to accommodate government offices will lie empty. Land values have already begun to drop. The impact will not in general be too drastic on individuals, for the Rhine valley can surely absorb a few setbacks. The city itself however will soon go back to being the small town in Germany it was before.

Berlin on the other hand is likely to be more than the capital just of Germany. It is uniquely placed to be the centre, not only of the new European Community, but even of a larger Europe that includes at least parts of the East too. Despite its decline in other respects, East Germany was after all still as much a centre of learning for the Socialist Bloc as Moscow was, if not indeed a more sophisticated one. If offered a great many scholarships to other Eastern Europeans, and doubtless those who are back in their own countries will still continue to look to it as a model in their various fields.

Some of course are still in East Germany, and given the opportunities reunification has opened up are loath to go back. One such whom I met was a Polish medical student called Paul. Later I realized that he was the only inhabitant of the place I had spoken to at any great length, apart from the hotel employees: the Conference programme had kept us busy and, though it was held in the Berliner Congress Centre in the East (no hot water — we have much to do here yet, said the West German Chairman), and though there were Hungarians and Yugoslavs and Bulgarians, there was no one from East Germany.

Paul's family was still in Poland, but he was clearly in no great hurry to go back. His place of study was elsewhere,

but he had come to Berlin because it was so much more alive than anywhere else he could get to easily. The urge to go further west doubtless cut deep. Certainly he would settle down in West Germany if he had the chance to, and so would anyone else in a similar position.

That then is the role Germany will find itself playing over the next few years as Europe staggers through its period of transition. Just as West Berlin was a point of contact, markedly so before the Wall came up, and even afterwards because in one direction at least access was free, so given the absorption of a country that must still even despite itself maintain its eastern connections, Germany as a whole is likely to be a conduit of

ideas across Europe. Berlin, the most cosmopolitan of cities once, is likely to play a great part in this process. The fear however is that, as in the thirties, the strain will cause the country to look inward again. If that happens, it would be a betrayal of what a long-suffering nation could achieve, and what a brave city could provide.

Bonapartism . . .

(Continued from page 6)

take a stand on pieces of legislation. His action with regard to these pieces of legislation is the basis on which he is judged, the basis for his re-election. The public has the right to know how its representatives vote on matters of public importance. It is argued by some that there is a climate

of fear and intimidation. That was the case in the Philippines and Bangladesh but no-one asked for secrecy. It seems that anonymous letters and secret ballots are a peculiarly Sri Lankan style of rebellion. It is not a healthy style for any democratic system. In honesty we must also ask ourselves, whether this call for a secret ballot is really a question of fear or a question of having your cake and eating it too. Governments may rise and governments may fall but the MP wants to have the same privileges. This is an extraordinary state of affairs. One finds it quite strange that many leading personalities are asking the Speaker and Supreme Court to pander to these instincts—some of the worse side-effects of our democratic practice.

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