

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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## **SOUTH ASIA**

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**India - Sri Lanka — Mervyn de Silva**  
**American Studies — Inder Malhotra**

### **ECONOMICS**

*Godfrey Gunatilleke*

*Saman Kelegama*

### **POLITICS**

**J. R.'s Ego - trip — Piyal Gamage**  
**The quest for democracy — Izeth Hussain**

### **SOVIET UNION**

**The price of Russification — Reggie Siriwardena**

**ALSO:**

**Paul Gasperz**  
**Douglas Kulatilleke**  
**S. Sathananthan**  
**A. Kandappah**



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## Briefly . . .

### NO VISAS

Sri Lankans are denied visas to visit most European countries and also some countries in Asia. This is a result of some Sri Lankans attempting to travel on forged visas and others overstaying their visas.

Foreign Ministry sources said that bona fide travellers too were being viewed with suspicion by the embassies of European and Asian countries because of the illegitimate activities of some.

### STRUGGLE TO CONTINUE

There will be more crises ahead, veteran LSSP leader Bernard Soysa told a public meeting in Kandy. There was no provision for a speaker to reject an impeachment motion once he had accepted it, the LSSP leader said.

To stay in office the President would compromise with the LTTE; he would also politically destroy any person who posed a challenge to his power, Mr Soysa said. The agitation for democratic freedom would however continue, he added.

### GIVEN TIME

The Supreme Court allowed time to Gamini Dissanayake, Lalith Athulathmudali and other sacked UNP dissidents to file counter affidavits to the objections to their petition filed by the respondents, the UNP office bearers.

### TAKING JAFFNA

As the war continued in the North the security forces were confident that Jaffna would soon be in government hands again. The army dropped leaflets in Jaffna telling the civilian population

that the town could have been taken earlier but that the army restrained itself to avoid hurting civilians in the cross fire.

Meanwhile, President Premadasa addressing meetings in Trincomalee said that the security forces were now ready to restore State rule and civilian administration in the North and East.

## TRENDS

### PRIVATISING FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT

In a bid to streamline the flow of foreign currency coming in from Lankans working abroad, the business of recruiting workers for foreign employment is to be entirely left to the private sector. The state will step aside, the state minister for Foreign Affairs Mr John Amararatunga told the concluding sessions of the convention of SAARC Region Licensed Foreign Employment Agency Associations in Colombo.

At present there is a state agency too recruiting workers for employment

### TO IGNORE THE SPEAKER

Opposition parties decided at a party leaders' meeting to ignore decisions taken by Speaker M H Mohamed at these meetings.

The reason: "a large number of members had expressed their lack of confidence in the Speaker Mr M H Mohamed by voting for the motion of no confidence on him".

*abroad, mostly in west Asian countries, and also monitoring workers' welfare in those countries.*

### MINORS IN VICE

A million children in this country are in prostitution, or in the grip of drug addiction, or are victimised as child slaves. Terrorism has also contributed to this number.

A Probation and Child Care Department official told the Island that half a million children were victims of labour exploitation, 20,000 were in prostitution to earn a living, 10,000 were begging on the streets, and nearly half a million were in refugee camps as a result of terrorism.

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## LETTER

### Udupiddy Electorate

I read with interest, D.B.S. Jeyaraj's investigative article entitled, "Who was 'Sivarajan'?" (LG, Sept.15). Though I am not sure about the accuracy of most of its contents, the information provided about the politics in the Udupiddy electorate seems incomplete and twisted a little. For sake of completeness, will you note the following?

1. Udupiddy electorate was constituted in 1960. M. Sivasithamparam (then belonging to the Tamil Congress) was returned in three general elections; March and July 1960 as well as 1965. K. Jeyakkody of the Federal Party became a winner only in the 1970 general election. Jeyaraj's observation that "the political star of Udupiddy in those days was a leftist called R. R. Dharmaratnam

of the LSSP" is somewhat exaggerated. This is like saying that turkey rather than peacock was the star attraction. In reality, Sivasithamparam was "the political star of Udupiddy" in the 1960s.

2. Though Jeyaraj has stated, "Chandrasekharam Pillai and his young son ('Sivarajan') defied the local current and supported the Tamil nationalist candidates, K. Jeyakkody of the Federal Party and T. Rasalingam of the TULF, against Dharmaratnam", according to the year of birth given in the article, Sivarajan (born in 1958) would have been only 12 years old when Jeyakkody of the Federal Party was elected to the parliament in 1970.
3. If I am not wrong, R. R. Dharmaratnam of the LSSP

did not contest the 1977 general election in Udupiddy in which T. Rasalingam of the TULF was elected with a majority of 14,747 votes. Rasalingam won that election by receiving 61.3% of the votes polled. Of the 8 other candidates who contested with Rasalingam, only one was able to save his deposit. In the neighboring Point Pedro electorate, the TULF nominee received only 56 percent of the votes polled. Even in the Jaffna electorate, the TULF nominee won the seat with 56.6 percent of the votes polled. This being the case, the statement that "Chandrasekharam Pillai and his young son... incurred the displeasure of the people of Udupiddy" seems not quite accurate to me.

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# SAARC: Rao's "message" to Colombo

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

**T**he Indian Prime Minister may arrive in Colombo on Nov. 9 for the SAARC summit and return the same day. But President Premadasa, according to the *HINDU*'s well-informed Delhi correspondent, K. K. Katyal, the Sri Lankan leader "has requested the Indian Prime Minister for an extended stay", meaning 7-9 Nov., and a chance to discuss "bilateral matters".

The obvious explanation for Mr. Rao's quick turnaround is the Indian by-elections the week after the Colombo conference. This was also the reason why he cut short his stay in Harare where the Commonwealth summit was held last month. After much agonising in the Congress hierarchy and Gandhi family circles, Sonia Gandhi has rejected the party's invitation to contest Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's safe seat. Apart from that major problem — the whole sensitive question of dynastic claims — Prime Minister Rao needs to think about his own place in the Lok Sabha. For a minority Congress administration, by no means free of political and personal conflicts, winning as many of the by-elections is a major concern.

As correspondent Katyal observes — and the *HINDU* correspondent is well briefed — "in the present none too warm relationship with Sri Lanka the brevity of Mr. Rao's stay would have conveyed a message to Colombo." The *TIMES OF INDIA* uses the same word "message" (to President Premadasa) in a report on the 21st.

The *ISLAND*'s special correspondent S. Venkat Narayan emphasises the "security" situation and the LTTE menace, and advice from Indian intelligence agencies.

Both newspapers have mentioned the expulsion of the AIR correspondent as another sign of deteriorating Indo-Sri Lankan relations. Meanwhile the High Commissioner of India, Mr. N. N. Jha has once more drawn attention to the Sri Lankan government's failure to honour the IPKF dead, brave men who sacrificed their lives to defend the unity and territorial integrity of the island.

Mr. Mani Dixit, who is junior to High Commissioner Jha in the Indian Foreign Service, and indeed to two others in his own batch, has been picked by Prime Minister Rao and the Cabinet to fill the important post of Foreign Secretary. Mr. Dixit has served in Kabul, Colombo and Islamabad, three sensitive posts. It suggests two considerations that would have weighed heavily with the decision-makers (a) the region as top priority and (b) the need to choose a man who can serve as Secretary for more than 2-3 years. Mr. Jha who doesn't have much time left to complete his career will doubtless be rewarded with a coveted posting — UN? London? Washington? These things are well ordered in Delhi, quite unlike Colombo.

## REGIONAL POWER

The greater concentration on South Asia is in my view a sensible response to the fast-changing world order, particularly the collapse of the Soviet Union with which India has a special 20-year treaty-based relationship. Although the Treaty was renewed last month for another 20 years, the inevitable weakening of the Indo-Soviet connection is paralleled by a remarkable improvement in Indo-US relations, including 'defence cooperation'.

A more explicit US acceptance of India as the major regional power is the immediate outcome of the new US-dominated international order. As a result, Indian perceptions of regional security must change. India sees no threat in Sri Lankan policies, though it does worry over the LTTE and its capacity to disturb or destabilise Tamilnadu, upsetting in the process, the ill-defined Congress-Jayalalitha relationship. Other pressure on the minority Congress regime so severe that the Government had to resort to a glaring opportunistic device in order to blunt the propagandist agitation of former Prime Minister, V. P. Singh's Janatha Dal on the tricky issue of what *INDIA TODAY* called "the Mandal monster" i.e. the caste question and preferential job quotas. The agitation petered out, reports the *I. T.*, because the "wily Narasimha Rao stole the thunder by announcing job reservations for the socially and educationally backward based on economic criteria".

Though Indo-Sri Lanka relations have deteriorated, especially in the context of the constitutional coup in Sri Lanka, and high-level suspicions here of covert Indian encouragement, if not active assistance to the local Opposition, there are no serious issues to justify Indian intervention of any kind.

## NO WILL

However, Professor S. D. Muni who visited Sri Lanka some weeks ago argues that there is no "sincere political will" to resolve the ethnic conflict, like *FRONTLINE* editor, N. Ram, who was in Colombo recently to deliver the Bandaranaike Memorial Lecture, Prof. Muni of the JNU is a seasoned Sri Lanka watcher to whom the

**FLASH: Mr. Rao is expected to spend 24 hours in Colombo**

Indian Foreign Policy-making agencies listen with considerable respect.

There are no indications, he notes, of a serious "political will" to find an honourable place for the Tamils in Sri Lankan society and polity.... This being so, the Select Committee looks like a "nonstarter". (He is referring to the Select Committee that was formed on a parliamentary proposal of SLFP MP, Mangala Moonesingha.

With the collapse of the Athulathmudali — Dissanayake led anti-Premadasa *putsch*, the spotlight has moved to Hultsdorp. The proceedings there are probably followed more closely by the middle-class, English-speaking, intelligentsia than by the crowds which gathered to hear the 'dissidents' in the first few weeks of their agitational campaign. The more the controversy is tied up in legal knots, the less the mass attention and curiosity, one can be certain.

Besides, the furious mother-son confrontation and the factional feud in the major Opposition formation, the SLFP, grabbed the headlines this fortnight. (See: Mrs. B. quits leadership not politics). Another interesting diversion, a direct consequence of the parliamentary confrontation over the impeachment motion, was the move by the Tamil and Muslim parties. While the House saw a series of early adjournment in the wake of persistent disturbances, five Opposition parties, Muslim and Tamil, SLMC, EROS, TULF, TELO and ENDLF, formed an independent group of 11 MP's. In a Parliament of 225, this new group commands more votes than the 'dissidents' now down to a meagre 8.

Before Mrs. Bandaranaike left for China, she said that Anura Bandaranaike, who has been chosen Acting Opposition Leader, will be party leader soon. She herself will concentrate on forming a United Front to fight President Premadasa and restore Democracy. But the first reactions to the idea strengthens the impression

## Mrs. B. quits leadership not politics

SLFP leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike will quit the party leadership soon in order to pave way for son Anura to lead the party, SLFP sources said. They said that the move did not mean that she would give up politics. She would play a more important role in bringing about a strong Opposition alliance. She had indicated this position to some of the senior party rankers, the sources said.

Mrs. Bandaranaike who left for China had indicated that once she returned, she would implement the decision, the sources said.

This decision has been taken by Mrs. Bandaranaike as a step that could help sort out differences that exist in the party, a senior SLFP member said.

— Sunday Island

of widening confusion and uncertainty, with political formations divided on the basis of ideology, community, and personality; a dis-united United National Party, and an opposition split five ways, the image of a fragmented polity.

Nothing illustrates this better than the painful trials of the Bandaranaike family, the last survivor among the wellknown families that have dominated post-independence politics. Mrs. Bandaranaike wants to lead

a 'united front' of all opposition parties so that she can then accommodate her daughter Chandrika whose own party the B. N. P. is no shining example of 'unity'. Mrs. B.'s characteristically determined bid to do so has caused rifts in family — for instance, Anura and cousin Anurudda — and the SLFP itself. It was to block this move on Chandrika and Anurudda, that Anura Bandaranaike mounted a counter-campaign.

## LTTE: bottled up

After the breaking the month long 'Tiger' siege of Elephant Pass and rescuing the 600 soldiers trapped there, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces have bottled up the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula, by cutting off the exits, one by one. "The peninsula is sealed off" said a top Army spokesman.

The Army's objective is to contain the LTTE in their home base and gradually restrict and control the movements of armed bands. The Army can also launch offensive operations,

retaining the element of surprise.

"Our final aim" said Colonel Sarath Munasingha "is to defeat the LTTE militarily and we believe we are pretty close to it"

The army is in full control of all the islands around Jaffna, and the ferry point at Pooneryn. The only access by land is the road from the coastal Chundikulam to Elephant Pass. This has been heavily mined. The heavy monsoon rains will make any movement from the peninsula to the rest of the Northern province and the East extremely difficult.

## Thondaman-Quaker peace moves

The LTTE has still not responded to a request for concrete proposals from it to form the basis of negotiations with the government, Minister and CWC leader S. Thondaman told The Sunday Times.

Mr. Thondaman, who has been invited by the LTTE to

visit Jaffna for talks said he could not go to Jaffna without knowing exactly what the negotiations would be based on. Mr. Thondaman said he had asked the LTTE leadership to submit their proposals through a working paper about one month ago, but there had been no response.

(Continued on page 9)



## MARTIN ENNALS

If each man's death diminishes us (also DONNE, like 'no man is an island') greatly diminished is the ever-growing cause of Human Rights by the passing away of Martin Ennals, the Secretary-General of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. He was the pet hate of many a vicious Third World tyrant, or oppressive regime, and the favourite target of a wilfully blind or intolerant press. How persistently he was attacked by a media that put race, religion or country before humanity, Ennals won that debate because the beast, caring little for Tamil, Hindu, Sinhala, Christian or Buddhist, or Moslem came too close for comfort. So we are all Human Rights Champions, now.

Martin himself took it lightly. Over lunch at the Galle Face hotel or across the road at the German restaurant, his favourite, he would say that he was the man that every Defence or

National Security Minister loved to hate. Just a glance down the road or at the diners in a cafe, he would spot a cop or NIB chappie.

Although he used to shuffle around, a bit unkempt and poorly clothed, looking sometimes like a battered old prize fighter or prematurely retired football coach, Martin Ennals had the lively mind and wit of a talented writer. And the stern conscience of a priest. What I liked most about him was his sense of humour, and his extraordinarily racy tales of how he would dodge the "secret polizia" of some godforsaken Latin American country or small town in South-East Asia. In 1977, it was Martin Ennals who went to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize that A.I. had rightly earned.

Martin had many friends here — Suriya Wickremasinghe, Desmond Fernando, Neelan Tiruchelvam, Mahinda Rajapakse, Fr. Celestine Fernando, and in the recent

past, some Buddhist monks. The last occasion I had the pleasure of spending some times with him was the international conference on TIBET held in London, the work of his equally energetic brother Lord David Ennals, the Labour party veteran and former Cabinet Minister. Last week, Lord David Ennals said of Martin that "if he needs a memorial, it will be Amnesty International. He built it up from a very modest organisation to one of enormous stature which now commands great respect".

Before the 'beast' came south of course, any Sri Lankan who associated with men like Martin Ennals, was a "traitor" who had sold his country to the Christian "suddas". Life itself and men like Martin have given a crushing, if often cruel answer to such self-righteous stupidities.

Rest easy, brother Martin.

*M. de S.*

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# Economic Cooperation: Facts and Figures

Saman Kelegama

Discussion paper presented at a seminar organized by the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS) on "SAARC: Problems and Prospects", 6 October 1991, BMICH, Colombo.

The arguments for expanding intra-regional trade with the objective of achieving higher economic growth and structural change in a framework of collective self-reliance are important and persuasive. This is because, firstly, industrialized countries have been increasingly adopting protectionist policies against the exports of developing countries. Such restrictions are likely to become even more stringent in the future because they are hardly any signs of success of the current Uruguay Round of negotiations. Secondly, preferential trading arrangements within the existing regional groupings and the formation of new ones (e.g. East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC]) adversely affects the trade prospects of SAARC member states. Therefore, increasing trade within the SAARC member countries is not only desirable but it is also the need of the hour.

The prospects for trade expansion in the SAARC region will depend upon fuller utilization of the present potential for intra-SAARC trade based on the existing patterns of commodity trade and the extent of complementarity prevailing in the region, and that which could be created by deliberate policy measures. At present the products traded are, namely: foodstuffs, agro-based products, and a few manufactured goods. The import substitution strategy followed by most

SAARC countries (during the early years after independence) has made the production structure highly similar and competing in some cases. Moreover, because of similarities in climatic conditions and in the structure of the SAARC's economies, there is considerable degree of overlapping and competitiveness in the production of many commodities and in their trade. An examination of the trade structure of SAARC nation can reveal some of these features in an indirect way.

The importance of trade for the countries in the region is shown in Table 1. It shows that smaller countries rely heavily on trade vis-a-vis large countries. This is manifested in the fact that the share of smaller countries in trade exceeds substantially their share in GDP while the converse is true for the large countries. The intra-regional trade (import and export) varies widely among SAARC countries. The intra-regional imports and exports are shown in Table 2 and 3.

Table 1

Share of SAARC Member Countries in the GDP of the Region and the Total Trade of the Region: 1988

Country	% share in GDP of the region	% share in Exports of the region	% share in Imports of the region
Bangladesh	6.42	9.04	20.39
Bhutan	01.0	—	—
India	79.08	38.98	17.27
Maldives	0.02	0.88	1.29
Nepal	0.95	10.92	20.57
Pakistan	11.32	29.49	16.38
Sri Lanka	2.03	10.61	24.09

Source: Estimated from the World Development Report, 1990.

Table 2

Percentage of Imports of each Member Country from the Region in Relation to its World Imports

Year	Bangladesh	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
1980	3.7	1.0	23.4	47.9	2.3	5.2
1981	4.7	1.3	6.8	41.1	1.9	5.2
1982	2.9	0.8	30.1	33.0	1.9	5.2
1983	2.6	0.7	8.8	33.9	2.0	7.3
1984	3.1	0.7	9.2	42.4	2.1	7.1
1985	3.5	0.7	9.1	34.2	1.6	6.4
1986	3.6	0.5	8.3	34.4	1.8	7.9
1987	4.3	0.5	7.0	23.8	1.6	6.6
1988	5.3	1.3	9.1	28.9	1.8	8.0
1989	4.5	1.1	6.4	36.2	1.7	8.0

Source: Estimated from 'IMF' Direction of Trade Statistics, Yearbook, 1990'.

Note: Data for Bhutan were not available.

The writer is a Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies, Colombo.



Table 2 shows that, with the exception of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the reliance of SAARC countries to meet their import requirements from the region has been declining. Further, except in this case of Nepal, the dependence of SAARC countries on imports from the region is quite low. Nepal's share of SAARC imports is relatively large because the bulk of her imports comes from India under a preferential trade arrangement between the two countries. Even Nepal's dependence on the SAARC region for its imports has declined from 47.9 per cent in 1980 to 36.2 per cent in 1989. It is worth noting that India and Pakistan, the two largest economies of the region, received from the SAARC region 1.2 per cent and 1.8 per cent, respectively of their global imports in 1989.

Table 3 shows that, with the exception of Maldives and Nepal, the share of the SAARC member country exports to the region in total world exports remained less than 10 per cent (in 1984, Bangladesh exceeded this figure). Furthermore, these shares have declined significantly during the 1980-89 period. The SAARC region, in particular India, remained the largest market of Nepal, accounting for more than one-third of her export earnings. It is worth noting that in the case of exports too, India and Pakistan have the lowest figures for exports to SAARC countries. The low share of trade (import and export) of the SAARC member countries as compared with world trade, particularly for the larger economies of the region, is noteworthy. It indicates the country disparity that already prevails in the SAARC intra-regional trade.

Table 4 shows that intra-regional trade retains only a marginal character in the SAARC countries. Intra-regional imports declined from 2.8 per cent in 1980 to 1.8 per cent in 1987 (lowest but increased to 2.6 per cent in 1989). Similarly intra-regional exports declined

from 5.6 per cent in 1980 to 2.5 per cent in 1987 (lowest) but increased to 3.4 per cent in 1989. As the last column of Table 4 shows, intra-regional trade (imports and exports) among SAARC countries have been virtually stagnant during the eighties accounting roughly for an average of 2.7 per cent. (All these statistics do not take into account unofficial cross border trade and transshipment through third countries because by their very nature these transactions cannot be quantified.) Clearly, the region presents a picture of dismal performance

of intra-regional trade during the nineteen eighties.

The low intra-regional trade can be explained by the limited complementarities in South Asia. For example, (1) Pakistan needs tea from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (although she is now buying more tea from Kenya) than from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh; (2) Pakistan and Sri Lanka needs jute from Bangladesh; and (3) all South Asian countries need raw cotton from Pakistan. The major complementarities more or less end there at present because there are hardly

Table 3

Percentage of Exports of each Member Country to the Region in Relation to their World Exports

Year	Bangladesh	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
1980	8.7	3.6	26.6	37.8	6.3	7.1
1981	8.3	2.9	19.2	56.1	5.5	8.8
1982	8.2	1.9	12.3	53.4	5.9	8.1
1983	8.5	2.3	16.0	45.7	2.7	6.3
1984	11.4	2.4	20.3	47.6	3.3	4.5
1985	7.7	2.2	17.1	34.4	5.3	4.2
1986	6.1	2.2	18.2	39.9	3.2	5.0
1987	4.1	2.1	18.1	32.1	3.9	3.8
1988	5.0	2.9	7.0	25.0	5.0	6.2
1989	3.9	2.8	6.6	24.6	3.6	5.6

Source: Estimated from IMF, Direction of Trade Statistics, Year book, 1990.

Table 4

Intra-Regional Trade in the SAARC Countries

Year	Intra-Regional Imports as a % of Total world Imports	Intra-Regional Exports as a % of Total world Exports	Intra-Regional Trade as a percentage of World trade
1980	2.8	5.6	3.2
1981	2.8	4.5	3.2
1982	2.2	3.4	2.5
1983	2.6	3.4	2.4
1984	2.6	3.7	2.5
1985	2.7	3.6	2.5
1986	1.8	3.1	2.4
1987	1.8	2.5	2.3
1988	2.8	4.0	3.3
1989	2.6	3.4	2.9

Source: Estimated from IMF Direction of Trade Statistics, Year book, 1990.

any complementarities in manufacturing. But it is said that there is still a wide range of actual or potential complementarity in the region. It is argued that there exists a large potential, both in terms of trade diversion from traditional sources/destinations towards SAARC countries and trade expansion by easing import restrictions on products which are, in general, not being traded amongst the countries of the region but are their major exportables. It is worth examining this argument.

Trade cannot be built on existing complementarities in primary commodities. Mutual trade expansion in SAARC countries is possible only on a new division of labour based not on agriculture and similar complementarities, but complementarities based on manufactured goods. In fact, future of economic cooperation among SAARC countries lies in the area of manufacturing. Trade in manufactured items such as sarees, ornaments, capital goods, carpets, etc. is currently taking place on a small scale among these countries. But the contribution to economic growth from trade in such items is minimal. Moreover, there are many constraints on trade taking place on a large scale owing to a multitude of factors such as, for example, poor quality, lack of information, high freight charges, and so on.

All the South Asian countries have now liberalized their economies to some extent. Some of the trade impediments will be removed with such liberalization measures, but some others will remain. For example:

(1) Because of the long dependence on goods from outside the region, consumer taste had developed for such items and there is resistance to accepting goods from the region.

(2) The capacity to finance imports through export earnings is limited in SAARC countries. Consequently, 40-75 per cent of imports in the region are still financed through external

aid. Aid to finance imports is normally tied to the source and the borrowing SAARC country is not very free to import from a country or countries of its choice. Thus diversion of trade towards SAARC countries becomes difficult.

(3) India has maintained a persistent surplus in its balance of trade with all SAARC countries except Pakistan. This discourages further expansion of trade.

Even if we assume that all the constraints for trade expansion are removed with liberalization measures, will growth be then enhanced in the region? With the operation of market forces, some complementarities will emerge in the future. These complementarities will provide the base for greater economic cooperation. But this is a long-term process and will not contribute to rapid growth in the immediate future. This is because SAARC markets have limited absorption capacity and above all South Asian nations lack capital surpluses to invest in the region.

Given these facts, we have to seriously look at the existing potential for economic cooperation in South Asia from a different angle. The potential for South Asian regional cooperation should be viewed from a wider global context rather than from a subregional perspective. There seems to be an overemphasis on subregional cooperation among SAARC nations and it appears that this emphasis is misplaced. The important point to realize is that economic cooperation among any group of countries in the world would lead to economic development. Even cooperation among very poor countries will lead to some development and some degree of growth. But what is needed from economic cooperation is rapid and sustainable development. In this context, it is prudent to examine how certain regions in the world achieved

rapid and sustainable growth and development.

We shall examine the case of the four East Asian NICs (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong) and the ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, and Philippines). Now the rapid development of the four East Asian NICs is not a result of regional cooperation among these countries, but is due to investment by developed countries such as Japan, USA, and West European countries. Japan, for instance, found it advantageous to invest in the four NICs because of high production costs in Japan vis-a-vis the four NICs. The next fast growing group of countries is in the ASEAN. All these countries have shown very high growth rates except the Philippines. In fact, Malaysia and Thailand will become mini NICs very soon. Again, the growth in the ASEAN countries is not due to economic cooperation among themselves but, as in the case of the four NICs, is due to foreign direct investment from countries outside the region and the consequent expansion of their trade both in the region and the world at large. These outside countries were Japan, the USA, the West European countries, and the East Asian NICs, excluding Singapore.

It is true that there is preferential trade arrangements among ASEAN countries, but various studies have shown that this has not contributed much to expansion of mutual trade or development. Further, apart from Singapore, the others do not have a capital surplus to invest in the region. Thus there is heavy dependence on Japan and the three NICs: Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea for investment and trade. Taiwan, for instance, has now become the largest investor in Malaysia displacing Japan to second place in 1990, and in all probability the three NICs



will be the leading investors in the region in the near future. Also, it needs to be mentioned, that the largest market for ASEAN products is not within the group but the USA and Japan. And the greater part of ASEAN trade is not in primary commodities but in manufactured goods, the leading item being electronic products.

Drawing from the experience of the ASEAN, it appears that the real impetus for whatever economic cooperation in the SAARC region will come not from the region itself but from cooperation with countries outside the region. The primary aim of recent liberalization in South Asia should be to attract more and more foreign direct investment, because it is through foreign investment that complementarities in the manufacturing sector can be created in the immediate future for economic cooperation in the SAARC region. Thus, SAARC must devise a strategy to make Japan and the four NICs take an immediate direct interest in the region in the same way that Japan and the four NICs did with ASEAN.

The importance of the above-mentioned countries for South Asian development and growth can be seen from the Sri Lankan post-liberalization experience. For example, Gunatilleke (1991) notes that Sri Lanka's share of trade in world trade with East Asia and Japan increased from 13 per cent in 1978 to 29 per cent in 1990 (see Gunatilleke, G, 1991, 'Prospects for South Asian Regional Cooperation and Trade', BCIS, Seminar Paper, 6/10/1991). He goes on to say that: "If Sri Lanka's case is any indication of the shifts that can be brought about by liberalization then the relationship between South Asia and the rest of Asia is likely to become a major factor in rapid growth and transformation of South Asian economies. These possible developments have to be given central

place in future strategies of South Asian cooperation," (p.11). In fact, India, with its recent liberalization policies, has already taken the step to attract massive investment from Japan to develop its manufacturing base. The South Asian region has a cheaper labour force vis-a-vis ASEAN, thus the region still commands a comparative advantage in labour-intensive products. The region may only lack the skills and the infrastructure for attracting more foreign investors. This is an area where the region should cooperate to develop and strengthen in order to attract more foreign investment from Japan and the four NICs.

Japan and the four NICs for foreign direct investment is particularly important. This is because of the recent developments in the world. Western Europe is no longer interested in South Asia, they are now keen in investing in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The USA, Canada, and Mexico have formed the North American Free Trade Zone, thus US investment will go to Mexico which has a cheap labour force, in addition to being its neighbour. (It should be mentioned here that in any case US investment in LDCs was prompted by their interest in selling their petroleum and oil, or looking for sources of supply for the same, rather than developing the indigenous industries.) It is because of these factors that Japan and the four NICs are important. Simply, let us pose the question: who are the biggest foreign investors in Sri Lanka's FTZ? It is not the USA or Western Europe but the four East Asian NICs. Thus, greater cooperation is essential with these countries which not only have a capital surplus, modern technology, and the know-how but also have the potential to absorb the goods produced by South Asia.

Thus from the economic perspective, what is needed is to strengthen the relationship bet-

ween the SAARC countries and the East Asian NICs and Japan. The economic growth that South Asia acquires from such a relationship can then lead to the harnessing of the potential that exists for economic cooperation among South Asian countries. Once SAARC economic cooperation gathers momentum, the small South Asian countries will, of course, be wary of India as they are now. It is sometimes said that India's position in SAARC is similar to Indonesia in ASEAN, United Germany in the European Community, and the USSR in COMICON. It can be easily argued that India's position in SAARC is far different to these cases. We shall not go into this issue here. However, the genuine fear that the countries of the region have of India's overwhelming economic power cannot be denied or overlooked and it is India's actions in the future vis-a-vis these nations that could help reduce or exacerbate this fear. Therefore, along with the other factors mentioned above for the success of economic cooperation among SAARC member countries, India's future role is also of vital importance.

## Thondaman-

(Continued from page 4)

Mr Thondaman has refused to divulge to the public details of his own proposals to the LTTE. "These are CWC proposals and they are only meant for the LTTE at this moment", he said. It is reported that his peace initiative is being assisted by the US-based Quaker religious movement, which had occasionally promoted attempts to negotiate in the early 1980's.

In a speech on the ethnic crisis on October 15, Mr. Thondaman suggested the formation of a distinct administrative apparatus within the merged North-East Provincial Council as a solution to the problem.

# SAARC and World Economy

Godfrey Gunatilleke

These changes that are taking place in the South Asian economies have to be placed in the context of the new developments that are dramatically changing the configuration of the World economy and the relationships within it. First, the change taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is perhaps the most far-reaching in its impact on the flows of world trade, investment and aid. The South Asian economies with their large public sector, particularly India, had forged many economic links with the Soviet Union and other centrally planned economies. These can easily be among the early casualties of the changes.

Next, the 1980's have witnessed some profound changes in the trading pattern of the Asian region as a whole. The recent "Asian Development Outlook, 1991" issued by the Asian Development Bank points out that Asian incomes grew more than twice as fast as those of the rest of the world and exports expanded at about twice the rate of America and Europe. In the first half of the 1980's North America was the principal market for Asian exports. "Beginning with 1986" the re-

port goes on to say "a dramatic change is taking place in the geographical pattern of Asian exports with Asia becoming its most important and most rapidly expanding market. In 1989 intra-Asian exports totalled US\$ 270 billion compared with exports of US\$ 206 billion to North America and US\$ 182 million to Europe". The NIES and South East Asia played a major role in this boom of Intra-Asian trade.

While Japan continued to play a major role, the trade shares are well distributed between Japan and the other developing member countries of the the Asian Development Bank (DMC's) as is seen in the matrix given below. However, the trade share of South Asia in this Intra-Asian trade boom is as yet extremely small-US\$ 3 billion.

It is important for South Asia to place itself in this dynamic context of a fast expanding Asia. Liberalisation can bring about major shifts in the trading patterns and the trading partners in alignment with internationally competitive prices and costs of imports and exports. The Sri Lankan case

illustrates some of the shifts and diversification that can take place in the South Asian trade along with liberalisation. The trade flow which grew fastest in the case of Sri Lanka in the 1980's has been that with South East Asia, East Asia and Japan. In 1978 the share of Sri Lanka's trade with these parts of Asia was 13% of her total world trade. In 1990 it amounted to approximately 29% of her world trade. In 1990, Sri Lanka's exports to these countries totalled Rs. 8441 million 11.5% of the total. Exports to Thailand at Rs. 867 million exceeded our exports to India - Rs.825 million. The exports to Singapore were very much higher - Rs. 1982 million, nearly two and a half times the exports to India. Out of a total of imports valued at Rs. 105 billion, nearly half (Rs 51 billion) was from South East Asia, East Asia and Japan. From this the countries other than Japan had the major share.

The preponderant share of Sri Lanka's trade deficit (a net deficit of approximately Rs. 32 billion) is with these regions. The trade deficit we had with the industrial countries exclud-

MATRIX OF INTRA-ASIAN EXPORTS: 1989

TO FROM	South Asia	SouthEast Asia	NIEs	Pacific Islands	China	17 DMCs	Japan
South Asia	821	625	1,255	17	349	3,067	1,998
Southeast Asia	1,43	3,093	15,083	43	1,641	21,291	18,164
NIEs	3,528	17,751	28,209	297	20,016	69,801	30,893
Pacific Islands	6	101	118	3	8	236	534
China	980	1,376	23,645	19	—	26,020	8,180
17 DMCs	6,767	22,945	68,310	379	22,014	120,416	59,769
Japan	3,850	16,576	52,511	259	8,477	81,673	—
WORLD	39,658	71,149	224,700	1,930	52,754	390,191	197,225

Source: Asian Development Outlook 1991



ing Japan in the early 1980's had meanwhile changed into a substantial surplus in 1990. These are indeed major shifts in the trading pattern. The trade deficit is itself not a negative outcome. It has emerged with the increase in the share of exports to the region. The exports have largely been in the non traditional category. The expansion of imports had led to the growth of trade links which in turn will facilitate the further expansion of exports. If Sri Lanka's case is any indication of the shifts which can be brought about by liberalisation then the relationships between South Asia and the rest of Asia is likely to become a major factor in the rapid growth and transformation of South Asian economies. These possible developments have to be given a central place in the future strategies of South Asian co-operation.

A major concern that has been recently voiced at various fora by South Asian scholars and policy makers is the relation of South Asia amidst the changing regional relationships and links that are emerging in the rest of the world. Most parts of the developing world have evolved links with parts of the North which have imparted the character of a special relationship. This would apply in varying degrees to the relationships between Latin America and North America, Africa and the EEC and the rest of Europe, South East Asia and Japan with East Asia, the Pacific Islands with Australia and New Zealand. In most of these relationships the economic links are closely influenced by geopolitical considerations. In the North itself, the greater integration of the EEC envisaged by 1992 will have a wide-ranging impact on North-South economic relations. In this global order of economic and geopolitical "partnerships" South Asia remains almost an outsider. This might be partly due to India, her size and her geopolitical role.

While this relative exclusion has obvious negative effects on the integration of South Asia with the rest of the world it has also its opportunities and challenges. It underscores the need for South Asian regional co-operation. There is greater need than ever for the South Asian countries to examine together the global context in which they as region exist. They need to respond collectively to the dynamic changes and new configurations that are emerging in the rest of the world.

If the North will be more pre-occupied with the East-West relationship and the rehabilitation and transformation of the socialist economies to market economies, this is likely to reduce the resources that will be available to the Third World. In a situation in which resources will be contracting, the developing regions with special relationships with the North are likely to have precedence and South Asia is likely to go by default. In this context a collective South Asian voice and position can have greater weight. South Asia, located as it is between different regional blocks and with no special relationships with any, has many options and can forge a diversified set of links. The relationship it has had with the socialist bloc together with its geo-political setting enables it to take advantage of the new economic opportunities that are bound to emerge rapidly with the transformation of the Soviet and East European economies.

### **Key elements in a strategy of South Asian Economic Co-operation**

The discussion so far has attempted to describe the emerging economic scenario in the South Asian Region as well as the far reaching changes in the global order which have major implications for the possibilities and prospects of regional co-operation. Most of the assumptions and approaches to regional co-operation with which we may have started in the late

1970's and the first half of the 1980's are no longer valid. These assumptions were made in a regime of regulated, state-dominated economies prevalent in the preponderant part of South Asia and in a world order in which two opposing economic systems were each playing a major role in the global economy. It is therefore necessary to re-examine the possibilities for regional co-operation in the new context and directions.

This paper cannot go into the details of a strategy of regional co-operation within its terms of reference and the time available. It will therefore limit itself to outlining briefly some of the approaches to the emerging situation and flagging the key elements in a feasible strategy. It does not propose to go over familiar ground and enumerate all the main areas of potential regional co-operation. This has already been done on numerous occasions and in various publications. The Committee for South Asian Co-operation for Development at the commencement of its work formulated a comprehensive programme which identified the areas which held high potential for regional co-operation categorising them in two groups. One dealt with the sharing and exchange of development experience. There is obvious scope for co-operation of this type in the South Asian situation where there are countries at different levels of development and income and where the experience gained in one country would have relevance for the other. The second group of studies dealt with more substantive issues of co-operation in the economic, sociocultural and political fields. They included areas of critical importance such as the management and co-operation in the utilisation of shared natural resources such as the Himalayan resources and the Indian Ocean, co-operation in improving transportation and communication links, industrial co-operation, co-operation in

regional tourism, collective efforts at manpower development, mechanisms for co-operation in the field of money and finance. Scholarly efforts of this type have the great advantage in that they can explore and uncover the full potential for regional co-operation as well as analyse the prevailing obstacles without being inhibited by any political constraints that would normally restrict the inter-governmental efforts. The initial work that has been done by scholars provides a base for identifying the agenda of economic Co-operation in the harder areas into which the inter-governmental SAARC effort has not yet ventured. But the work done has to be taken much further and recast in relation to the new economic order that is emerging both in the South Asian region as well as globally. It has to be more purposeful and point to specific policy initiatives.

As has been stated repeatedly the inter-governmental effort in the field of economic or development co-operation has appropriately begun by selecting the areas which are not likely to rouse any national apprehensions and hesitations. As yet the areas in which the countries have become active are closer to the concept of Technical Co-operation among developing countries than substantive economic co-operation. They include the exchange of development experience, information technology, all of which have great value and can initiate processes which can be taken further in stages. It is only recently that efforts have commenced to identify an agenda of co-operation in the substantive economic sphere.

Against this background it is possible to point to some key elements in a future strategy of regional co-operation.

First the process of liberation that has begun and which is opening the economics of the region to each other has to be speeded up and the economic

environment and macro-economic systems strengthened and rendered conducive to regional co-operation. There is scope here for a collective effort at examining how liberalisation is affecting regional trade and regional co-operation. Macro-economic policies have to be aligned and co-ordinated for this purpose even before any specific initiatives for regional co-operation are undertaken. For example there is wide variation in the levels of protection in the countries. In the recent past the average tariffs have been in the range of 41.2% for India 74.7% for Bangladesh and 80.6% for Pakistan. It would be premature to think of a common tariff structure or a customs union at this stage but we should be considering the problems of our tariff structures and their impact on the region as whole and moving in a direction which will lead us eventually to some type of Customs Union and a system of preferential tariffs for South Asian goods leading in stages to a South Asian Common Market. We could perhaps with a simple device—a preferential tariff of a modest scale across the board for South Asian goods somewhat on the lines of the Commonwealth Preferential tariff that was in the operation in the past. This can be a means of setting the process in motion and assessing the efficacy of such measures as well as identifying the problems involved.

These issues are linked with the relations which South Asia has with the rest of the world. There are many issues here which the countries of the region need to examine together. These have been discussed in the preceding section—the emerging relations with a dynamic South East and East Asia. Our relative isolation in the context of evolving regional partnerships, the opportunities that may lie in the transformation of East European and Soviet economics, and more specifically the special South Asian concerns in major international

negotiations such as the Uruguay Round, the Multi-Fibre Agreement, the World Environment Conference, the co-operation possible in the field of commodities where South Asia has a decisive role in the international market such as tea and jute.

The external resource situation in South Asia calls for a special effort. Here the possibilities of attracting direct investment flows from the surplus countries of East Asia, as well as from countries such as South Korea which have begun investing abroad, can be examined together. This may include regional joint ventures and incentive systems which cover the regional market. Another meaningful initiative in this same area might be a regional partnership of development assistance with Japan which provides the framework of priorities and creates the mechanisms for facilitating the identification of programmes and the flow of assistance. The rapid changes in the South East and East Asian economies will result in continuous and dynamic advances to progressively more advanced levels of technology and production where the pattern of comparative advantage and the division of international labour will change. One important element in this process will be the shift of comparative advantage in labour intensive manufacturing from South East and East Asia to the South Asian region which will probably continue to have the largest low cost labour force in the global economy. In relation to international competitiveness it should be possible for the South Asian countries to work towards their long term advantage by developing and protecting their comparative advantage on a regional basis. This would indeed require a major collective effort in which countries would have to be ready to balance the short term national advantages with the medium and long

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# US academia, India and South Asia

Inder Malhotra

SAN FRANCISCO

Anyone who has taken sustained interest in Indo-U.S. relations over the years has noticed regretfully an almost steady decline in American interest in not just India but in South Asia as a whole. This, alas, is even truer of the groves of academe than of the bureaucratic labyrinth in Washington D.C.

The sixties was a period of immense interest in South Asia in general and India in particular. To the centres of South Asian studies already in existence several new ones were added. And although some of them are still doing useful work, there is no mistaking the downgrading of South Asian studies in American universities. Whenever a distinguished professor specialising in our part of the world has retired in recent years, his post has either been abolished or filled by someone with expertise in an entirely different area. The region in the highest favour these days is East Asia — both Japan and China taking a pride of place and the Koreans only a few steps behind. All of a sudden interest in the Soviet Union has shot up almost in direct proportion to the speed with which the once mighty and monolithic power has started disintegrating.

This dismal backdrop has made it all the more remarkable that earlier this month Berkley inaugurated not one but two chairs for Indian studies in addition to a reasonably elaborate centre of South Asian studies that has been functioning for many years. What made the occasion even more heartwarming than it might have been is that funds for the introduction of the two chairs were contributed by the Indian community settled in California. However, this having been said, one must hasten to add that the generosity of Berkley should not be underestimated.

Almost all American universities demand a donation of one and a half million dollars before agreeing to start a chair. Evidently this much corpus is needed to finance the recurring expenditure on a professor. This should explain why, despite sporadic efforts in the past, it has not been possible to collect money for a university chair for Indian studies. Pakistan, during the Zia regime, solved the problem by investing government funds to start Iqbal and Jinnah chairs in several universities in the U.S. and Britain. But New Delhi has wisely decided not to spend the government money for this purpose and has left the matter to the initiative of the Indians settled in the country concerned.

Thus when the Indians living in California and evidently doing rather well for themselves collected \$450,000 for setting up an Indo-American Community Chair for Indian Studies at Berkley, the university also rose to the occasion and agreed to contribute no less than \$1,300,000 to maintain the professorial chair in perpetuity.

It is no secret that no group of Indians anywhere in the world agrees on anything. Along America's west coast, however, there is striking unanimity that the unprecedented fund collection for a university chair was the result almost entirely of the tireless efforts of the Indian consul-general in San Francisco, Mr S. K. Lambah. Dr Pratapditya Pal, curator of the South Asia section of the Los Angeles museum, has indeed called it a "minor miracle" on Mr Lambah's part. And this verdict is endorsed by Mr K. S. Bajpai, a former ambassador to the U.S. and now a visiting professor at Berkley.

The other side of the same coin was underscored by Mr Abid Husain, Indian ambassador to the United States, at

the glittering function at Berkley. The Indians overseas, he said, usually spent huge amounts on building temples, mosques and gurdwaras. Happily, some of them had now started thinking of building temples of learning and hopefully this would prove contagious.

His hope might yet be vindicated if the manner in which efforts to start one chair led to the establishment of the second one is any guide. The second chair is, in fact, a tribute to the success of Mr Lambah's fund-collection drive. Dr Thomas Kailath, a Kerala-born professor of engineering at Stanford, Berkley's neighbour and traditional rival, was so moved that he put down \$400,000 for another chair to be named after his wife, Sarath, as some kind of a 50th birthday gift to her. Berkley took up this offer, too, which explains the rather high contribution by it.

In addition to the two chairs, a series of special lectures has also been introduced. The first lecture will be delivered in February by the Nobel Laureate Professor S Chandrasekhar.

Berkley showed imagination also in choosing the keynote speaker at the inaugural function, Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, the distinguished Harvard economist and a former ambassador to India. He spoke with his characteristic wit and brilliance on his involvement with India's economic development on both his capacities.

He started with the disclosure that initially, at the advice of Eisenhower administration, New Delhi had thought of requesting Dr Milton Friedman to counsel the Indian Planning Commission. Purely fortuitously Prof Galbraith met Dr P. C. Mahalanobis, the brain behind the second five-year Plan, and said to him that to expect Dr Friedman to advise on planning was like asking the Holy Father

to give advice on birth control. Dr Mahalanobis immediately requested Prof Galbraith to take Dr Friedman's place.

The content of Prof Galbraith's speech was both pertinent and noteworthy, especially because everyone these days runs down planning and sings praises of the magic of the market. For he pointed out, quoting chapter and verse, that the Nehruvian model of a mixed economy, indeed of capitalism with a human face, was extremely relevant and useful in Indian conditions of those days. Nobody should underestimate its achievements. At the same time, he was equally forthright in pointing out the main cause of what went wrong with the Indian experiment of combining economic growth with social justice through the mechanism of state intervention.

In all societies, said Prof Galbraith, the most hurting scarcity was that of trained

and skilled human beings who were both competent and honest. In India the scarcity of such a human resource had turned catastrophic while the number of those determined to enrich themselves at the cost of society rose enormously. While welcoming India's new economic policy, Prof Galbraith warned that those who had used controls to great personal advantage would not give up easily and are bound to try to subvert the reforms.

Satisfaction over what has come to pass at Berkley is doubtless justified. But this ought not to make us oblivious of some less than pleasant facts of life. In India, there is a strange lack of awareness of the importance of the academia in U.S. policy making and in America's life in general. Many professors, analysts and scholars flit between universities and think tanks on the one hand and the govern-

ment on the other. Even those who stay away from officialdom are listened to with respect at the Capitol Hill where India and many Third World countries encounter great and often wholly unexpected problems.

And yet the Indian government, especially the ministry for home affairs, shows inexplicable sensitivity in responding to requests by American academics and researchers for visas for stay in India. It is not the refusal to permit research on sensitive subjects or in sensitive areas which hurts the American academic community. It is the infuriating delay in saying yes or no that drives American scholars round the bend. Ambassador Abid Husain, who makes it a point to visit universities and keep in touch with influential academics, has tried hard to mitigate the problem. But it would be wrong to claim that he has succeeded in eliminating this avoidable irritant.

## SAARC . . .

*(Continued from page 12)*

term regional strength and advantage.

All these issues discussed above can form a continuing agenda of economic co-operation. After some preparatory work it could be appropriately launched with a South Asian economic summit of Finance and Planning Ministers.

Liberalisation means another major shift in our approach to regional co-operation. In the past we have tinkered with initiatives which have had limited capacity-bi-lateral agreements negotiated by governments making few adjustments in the import controls and tariffs; exploring the possibilities of co-operation through state trading. Scholars have spent much time considering a wide variety of institutional arrangements ranging from clearing arrangements, reserve pools, preferential tariff systems, a common market and so on. Some of these are too ambitious in the present context. Most of them are conceived in terms of state interventions. In the present

context what is most important is to enable the private sector to play a major role in trade expansion and economic exchange in the South Asian region. Liberalisation sets the stage for such a role. It would be necessary for the governments to facilitate this process and work closely in consultation with each other to create both the policy framework and the institutional base for such private sector co-operation in the region. Chambers of Commerce have to work together. Systems of market information would have to be developed for the region. South Asian Trade and Industrial exhibitions should be held. The private sector would be in the best position to identify areas for trade expansion and point out existing obstacles. The first task would be to identify commodities that could immediately benefit from liberalisation. For commodities such as rubber and vegetable oils Sri Lanka would be the obvious source of supply in terms of proximity and availability. But the bulk of Indian supplies come from Malaysia and Indo-

nesia. It is necessary to investigate the reasons and inquire whether there is any mutual advantage in promoting intra-regional trade in these commodities. A whole range of commodities fall into this category. These commodities could be selected for a first initial effort as it would reveal many aspects of the prevailing system which militate against regional co-operation. Tasks of this nature would be quite productive in clearing the stage for co-operation.

Another area which needs to be explored is the framework of incentives for movement of capital and regional joint ventures by the private sector. A beginning can be made by facilitating entry into other's capital markets and stock exchanges. In the initial stages what would be most effective would be to concentrate on a few strategic initiatives which can have a far reaching impact. Two areas which come to mind readily are the tea sector and tourism. Tea can offer major scope for regional co-operation.

*(Continued on page 26)*



# 1977 and Sri Lanka's Democracy

Izeth Hussain

**T**he problem of reviving democracy in Sri Lanka, more precisely the problem of proceeding from today's quasi-democracy to the kind of full-fledged democracy we had in the 'fifties, requires that we try to understand what democracy really means. We must first contextualize this problem by taking a look at recent political developments.

The impeachment move and the constitutional crisis might be best understood as a stage in the ongoing revolt against the 1977 regime and all that it stood for. The period from 1977 to 1988 brought to maturity, or rather pushed to a point of rotteness, all that was unsatisfactory in our political life in the preceding decades. As this might sound polemical, we might clarify that the 1977 Government did have some achievements to its credit, but the 1977 regime was rotten at the core.

We are here making a distinction between government and regime, meaning by the latter term the prevailing system of things and its ethos. The 1977 UNP Government, like all our previous governments, did have some good men and true, and so did the UNP parliamentarians and party cadres. But they were for the most part innocuous, they could not make any significant impact, and that had only to be expected because the 1977 regime, the prevailing system of things, was, according to widespread perceptions, overwhelmingly an affair of paga, pajero and the fascist jackboot. It would be superfluous to substantiate this charge, because the 1977 regime has come to be almost universally execrated, both in Sri Lanka and abroad. It should suffice to make the incontrovertible point, something that cannot be seriously disputed, that so much of what happened under the 1977 regime would have been simply un-

imaginable under any previous one.

What we have been witnessing since 1988 is an ongoing revolt not against the UNP, but only against the 1977 regime, regarded as *sui generis* and atypical of the UNP, an aberration that has to be quarantined and cast aside. That is why it is not at all paradoxical that the revolt should have been initiated by Premadasa of the UNP. He based his Presidential campaign on a dissociation of himself from the 1977 regime, asking to be judged on his performance over the limited functions assigned to him, and not on his role as the nominal Prime Minister. He knew that if not for that dissociation he wouldn't have had the ghost of a chance of getting elected. It was obvious that the people were looking for a catharsis to purge 1977 from the Sri Lankan body politic.

Since then he has continued his revolt through what has been called the "Premadasa phenomenon". This is a complex phenomenon which in some of its aspects seems to go against the UNP ethos itself, not just that of the 1977 regime. There is a very firm commitment, unlike the rather wobbly one of 1977, to the liberalizations of the economy and the dismantling of the parasitic and destructive state sector. There is an achievement-orientation which looks rather novel in Sri Lanka's basically anti-achievement culture, where status flows from ascription rather than from achievement. The claim to have established a merit system may be exaggerated, but at least some sort of beginning seems to have been made. All this may be consistent with the UNP ethos. But hardly the populist policies shown in the Janasaviya programme and "peoplisation", as what looks like a successful

co-option of the Sinhala Buddhist ethos of the SLFP. Together with this has gone a change in the elite-system of the UNP, which is no longer dominated by the Westernized and the type known as "Donoughmore Buddhists". Also contrary to the UNP ethos is the booting out of the Israeli Interests Section, which would have driven the traditional UNP types, notorious for their dog-like devotion to Israel, to apoplexy. The "Premadasa phenomenon" looks like a contradictory project to promote the bourgeois programme of the UNP together with the populist programme of 1956. It may be contradictory, but it may also be seen positively as a sensitive taking into account of the profound socio-economic changes which have been going on in Sri Lanka since the time of our independence. In any case it obviously has a potential for stirring rebellion from within the ranks of the UNP.

The recent rebellion has apparently been provoked not by the President's going against the ethos of the UNP, but by his attack on the very core of what was rotten in the 1977 regime. The core of that regime was power exercised arbitrarily over the people, and abused, a power that had a fascist character because it was naked, unprincipled and, as shown when the JSS or other UNP storm-troopers got going, brutal. It might be argued that too much should not be made of that abuse because the 1977 regime merely continued the abuse of power prevalent under the 1970 regime. Actually there was a qualitative difference and distinctions of fundamental importance have to be made. Under Mrs Bandaranaike appeal was possible against wrongdoing and abuse of power, and sometimes at least redress was provided. She was a lady and had some notion of standards, at least the notion that there are things no fellow can do. Consequently she held most of her ministers on a tight leash, and refused to allow them to-

tal latitude to abuse power. The difference in the case of the 1977 regime arose out of the former President's conceptions about the relationship between the President and his Ministers. He apparently believed that he should not intervene in the affairs of his Ministers as that would amount to interference, and furthermore make him responsible for their wrongdoings and abuse of power. What that meant in practice was that although he held absolute power over his Ministers, shown by their undated letters of resignation, he allowed them absolute power to abuse power. And some did, to a horrendous extent. His regime was one in which the politicians and their henchmen lorded it over the people.

President Premadasa would have none of that. He proceeded forthwith to cut the politicians down to size. No more global loafing, of the sort that made at least one Minister an international public nuisance. Corruption, and the privileges of which the Pajero jeep became the notorious symbol, are being curtailed. The "chit system" has been eliminated, and so has the power of Ministers to appoint relations, friends, supporters and whomever they liked to whatever post they liked. Some of these claims may be exaggerated, perhaps even greatly exaggerated, but it cannot be doubted that in the matter of allowing corruption, privileges, and abuse of power, the "Premadasa phenomenon" is significantly different from the 1977 regime. Obviously the President has wanted to bring about a situation in which Ministers, parliamentarians, and party cadres exercise no more than the powers legitimately exercised by their counterparts in countries where democracy is functioning properly.

It is apparently this aspect of the "Premadasa phenomenon" which has provoked the recent rebellion. A reaction

against the populism, the Sinhala Buddhist ethos, the change in the UNP elite system, and class and caste may be there in the background. But it has been a prominent leitmotif in the speeches and other statements of the dissidents that Ministers, parliamentarians, and party cadres have not been allowed the functions they had in the past. This has given the impression that the dissidents want nothing more really than a reversion to the practices of the 1977 regime.

Actually this reading may be less than fair to the dissidents. They may think it tactically advantageous, in order to spread their rebellion among the party ranks, to play on the politicians' yearnings for lost privileges. They may not want therefore to spell out that they are certainly not in favour of allowing latitude again for the 1977 malpractices. If pressed, they will probably agree that for a proper cleansing of the UNP, some at least of the 1977 miscreants should be brought to book and given condign punishment for their global loafing, corruption, and abuse of power. In other words, the dissidents are also part of the revolt against the 1977 regime. They certainly are to the very important extent that they want to jettison the 1978 Constitution.

## II

If the argument is valid that the rebellion is a new stage in the nation-wide revulsion against 1977, it may be that we have come to a turning-point which could conceivably lead to a fully functioning democracy. This need not depend on the success or failure of the dissidents. As we have already noted, it was President Premadasa himself who initiated the revolt against 1977, and we have to note further that his style in handling the rebellion would have been inconceivable under the 1977 regime. For instance, the dissidents have held mass meetings without untoward oc-

currences, whereas Sarathchandra and others were brutalized at a small in-door meeting under the last regime. This new style may mean that account will be taken of the significance of the mammoth crowds attracted by the dissidents' meetings, and also of the wave of the democratisation sweeping the world, including the SAARC countries, from which Sri Lanka can hardly expect to be totally immune.

The movement for the restoration of full democracy in Sri Lanka has to take account of an important desideratum, which is the need for a proper understanding of what democracy is all about. That there are widespread misconceptions about democracy in Sri Lanka is shown clearly by the inadequate presentation of the case made by the dissidents. They want to move from alleged dictatorship to democracy by a shift from the Presidential to a parliamentary system of government. But surely they themselves have alleged, together with the rest of the UNP, that the 1970 parliamentary government was far from democratic even though it had been democratically elected. The equation of a parliamentary system with democracy is too simplistic.

It can be argued, of course, that a Presidential system can be expected to encourage dictatorial tendencies, a point that has to be taken seriously in the context of what many would regard as Sri Lanka's pronouncedly authoritarian and hierarchical culture. In substantiation of this argument we can point to our Long Parliament from 1977 to 1988, under a Presidential system, when no General Elections were held, and characteristic malpractices showed a contempt for democracy. But that does not dispose of the point that a parliamentary system can also be authoritarian and undemocratic.



The important point to be taken into consideration in this connection is that there is a marked tendency in the contemporary world towards centralization and concentration of power at the top. Walter Bagehot pointed out in the last century that the supremacy of parliament was a myth because power had passed to the Cabinet. In this century, Richard Crossman argued that power had passed from the Cabinet to the Prime Minister, pointing out that Atlee's decision to make Britain a nuclear weapons power was made without the Cabinet even being informed about it. The mild and modest Atlee, it is relevant to mention, was nothing like the Iron Lady, Mrs Thatcher, a man described by Churchill as a sheep in wolf's clothing, a modest man as he had a great deal to be modest about. But power came to be concentrated in his hands all the same. This attests to the momentum of the trend towards centralization and concentration of power at the top, irrespective of whether the system is presidential or parliamentary.

The answer to the problem worked out in the West is de-concentration of power through devolution, which we in Sri Lanka have been resisting fiercely for decades. This is in addition to the traditional constraints on the power of democratically elected governments, such as the separation of powers, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression. Our dissidents have not been giving attention to these constraints which are of crucial importance, for without them there can be no democracy at all.

For instance, they have faulted Rupavahini for failing to publicize their case and praised the non-government newspapers for doing so. It appears then in their view all that is required for total freedom of expression is that Rupavahini and government newspapers should

not be exclusively organs of government propaganda. Certainly, the fact that the dissidents, attacks on the President have been published in the mass-circulation newspapers, something inconceivable under the 1977 regime, is most encouraging for showing that we may be able to proceed to full democracy even if the dissidents are politically destroyed. But obviously all sorts of constraints operate on the press, and we are still very far from the kind of free press that prevails in the Western countries or in India. If the dissidents want to proceed from the present quasi-democracy, which they regard as dictatorship, to full democracy they should give attention to the problem of freedom of expression, a really free media, without which we can have peculiar hybrids like fascist democracy or communist democracy, but no real democracy.

At the core of our misconceptions about democracy is our failure to understand the problematic nature of representation in what is called representative democracy. The dissidents seem to believe that all that is needed for full democracy is a shift from concentration of power in the hands of the President to its diffusion among the Ministers and UNP parliamentarians. Behind this is an assumption that if power is exercised by the representatives of the people, we will quite simply have representative democracy. This is to ignore the fact that the problematic nature of representation became a preoccupation after Rousseau, regarded as the father-figure of modern Western democracy, recognized the problem and wrote "The English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during

the election of members of Parliament; as soon as the Members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing." This not true of modern Western democracies, because the potential of representatives to become masters over the people was understood and the constraints to which we have already referred in this article were imposed on the representatives. Those constraints have been understood as an integral part of the democratic system, without which democracy is meaningless. But Rousseau's observation has been tragically true of Sri Lanka where the people have elected their representatives, when allowed to do so, after which there were hardly any or no constraints on the representatives, and therefore no democracy. The 1977 regime alleged that its predecessor had become master over the people. As for the 1977 regime itself, it brooked no constraints whatever on its own mastery over the people.

Nothing better shows the misconceptions about democracy prevalent at the highest political levels of our society than the prominence given in constitutional discourse to Cromwell's Puritan Revolution. In recent weeks there have been references to the authoritative position of the Speaker as representative of the Parliament. During the Puritan Revolution, the Speaker asserted the power of Parliament against the King, and here at least there is an analogy of sorts because the President was being portrayed as the King. But over whom was the supremacy of Parliament being asserted under the 1977 regime? Not over the former

*(Continued on page 28)*

# Nationalism and Soviet Dis-union

Reggie Siriwardena

The 17th century English Puritans who thought they were creating the rule of the saints are seen now to have cleared the roadblocks impeding capitalist development; Robespierre who wanted to enthrone reason in society paved the way for a Napoleonic empire. 'History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors/And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions....'

Let us consider the record of the Soviet bureaucracy since the industrial take-off of the late 1920s. By a combination of ideological fervour propagated by the state on the one hand and regimentation, coercion and repression on the other, it achieved what appeared to be a miraculous tempo of industrial progress in the first two decades of construction—miraculous particularly if one forgot the human cost it entailed.

However, by the time of Stalin (who was the chief architect of the Soviet industrial revolution) the system was already revealing its latent contradictions. The political structure with its ruthless suppression of dissent, its imposed intellectual uniformity and its primitive leader-cult that had been created for a society only recently emerged from medievalism were hopelessly inadequate to cope with the conditions of a modern, urbanised and educated one.

This was the problem with which Khrushchev strove to grapple in his half-hearted and shortlived endeavour at de-Stalinisation. With the reversal of that effort Soviet society settled again in the political deep-freeze of the Brezhnev years as far as the structure and ideology visible on the official surface were concerned.

But below the top of the iceberg the forces making for

change were still working in the consciousness of a new young and educated Soviet generation. Meanwhile there was another contradiction emerging that was to undermine the established order.

The centralised command economic system that had carried through the primary industrialisation of the Soviet Union and had raised it to the status of a military superpower (it was more than that) showed its inherent bureaucratic inflexibility and lack of dynamism once the Soviet Union had to move beyond the bounds of a largely autarchic economy and to contend with advanced capitalism in the world market.

It now seems almost incredible that in 1960 Khrushchev set Soviet society the task of catching up with and outstripping the United States in twenty years. Actually, by the beginning of the 'eighties the Soviet economy was reaching stagnation, and the gap between its levels of technology and productivity and those of the advanced capitalist countries had widened in those two decades. It was this combination of creakingly antiquated political and economic apparatuses that Gorbachev inherited and that he strove to recondition in the last five years.

I shall try to draw up a balance sheet of the Gorbachev years later in this lecture, but I must first complete my historical conspectus by looking at Soviet nationalities problems since the Revolution. This will bring me to the heart of my subject; it will also involve questioning the assumption so common among adherents of Leninism that the conflicts between central state and minority nationalities were the result en-

tirely of Stalin's errors and crimes.

At a time when statues and monuments of Lenin are being ravaged by Soviet citizens, when his name has been erased from the city where he took power and his face off the masthead of 'Pravda', when the monstrosity of his mummified body may soon disappear under ground, the least we can do is to look scarchingly and at his intellectual legacy. One of the fields in which this is most necessary is that of Leninist policy on the question of nationalities.

The Russian Tsarist empire was the archaic imperialism of a bureaucratic feudal state which, like that other 'prison of the peoples', the Austro-Hungarian empire, should have disintegrated at the First World War. That it didn't do so was due to the fact that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were able to renovate it in another form.

Lenin is renowned as the man who wrote into the Marxist political programme the slogan of 'self-determination of nations'. I shall soon be looking at the contradictions between his theory and his practice in this respect, but I must first state that his understanding of nationalism was very limited and superficial.

In his polemics against Rosa Luxemburg on the eve of the First World War, Lenin's interpretation of nationalism was crudely reductive and economic: nationalism was the product of the need of the rising bourgeoisie for a unified national market, and even the role of language in relation to nationalism was reduced by him to the necessity for a common language of commerce.

Lenin had no awareness of or sympathy for the cultural



dimensions of nationalism: when the Austrian Marxist, Otto Bauer, put forward the demand for cultural autonomy for the subject peoples of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Lenin strongly opposed it, saying that this was counter to the internationalism of the proletariat.

In fact, Lenin's entire approach to nationalism was instrumentalist: he didn't really endorse the strivings of the subject peoples of the Russian empire for independent existence, but he was quite willing to enlist them as an ally and tool of socialist revolution by putting forward the slogan of self-determination.

There was always a potential contradiction between his support of oppressed nations or nationalities and his socialist project, not only because he regarded the former only as a means towards the latter, but also because he was essentially a great centraliser, in matters of state as much as of party. He shared with Marx and Engels the belief that, other things being equal, the larger state was more progressive than the smaller.

The contradictions between Leninist nationalities policy and Leninist socialism would come to the forefront only after the revolution. However, the most serious obstacle in the way of any genuinely liberating policy towards the minority nationalities was Lenin's dedication to the role of the vanguard party as the only instrument of historical progress.

This theoretical position was consummated in practice in and after 1921 by the establishment of the political monopoly of the Bolshevik party through the banning of all other parties. It is a common fact of experience that in multi-ethnic and multinational states minority groups express and protect their interests through the creation of ethnic and regional parties. There was no place for this in the Leninist one-party state.

Indeed from the standpoint of internationalist Leninism such

a development would have seemed abhorrent, since particularist nationalisms were assumed to be a disappearing phenomenon which socialism would relegate to the dustheap of history. In reality, and against Lenin's subjective intentions, the Leninist state effected a very different outcome.

Given the fact that the revolution and the revolutionary party had been centred in the Russian heartland, which continued to be its main base of power, given the inequality in levels of economic development and education between Russia and the outlying republics, given too the deep-seated tradition of Great Russian dominance, it was inevitable that the one-party state would become the instrument for the reproduction of unequal relations between the Russian centre and the periphery.

Lenin, the cosmopolitan and internationalist, had, unlike his home-bred successor, no trace of Great Russian chauvinism, and he may be acquitted of any intention to preserve Russian hegemony over other nationalities. But he cannot be excused of the charge of adopting and pursuing a policy of political monopolism on behalf of his party which in effect made impossible any real pluralism or equality in the relations between majority and minority nationalities.

It is out of the question within the space of this lecture for me to pursue with any degree of comprehensiveness the fortunes of the doctrine of self-determination during the Lenin years. I shall therefore concentrate on the single case of Georgia, because it is the most patent example of the conflict between national self-determination and the interests of the revolution as the Bolsheviks saw them.

After the October Revolution Georgia had claimed independence, and except for brief periods of occupation by the Germans and then by the British during the Civil War, had set up a govern-

ment headed by Georgian Mensheviks which had been recognised by Moscow.

However, during the efforts of the Bolsheviks to bring the rest of the Transcaucasus under their control, the independence of Georgia became inconvenient. Stalin and Ordjonikidze, who as native Georgians were in command of operations in the region, sent the Red Army into Georgia in 1921 to occupy the country. To justify this action, the fiction of a popular proletarian insurrection in Georgia under Bolshevik leadership was invented.

The blatant contradiction between the invasion of Georgia and the doctrine of self-determination was glossed over by the claim that the right of self-determination should be exercised not by the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation but by its proletariat: in practice, this meant the party, who were the self-appointed spokesmen of the proletariat.

It is evident from the historical record that Lenin was troubled by the invasion but he didn't condemn it or call it off; he confined himself to counselling Ordjonikidze to respect the sentiments of the Georgian people and to deal with them in a restrained manner.

The invasion of Georgia had a sequel in 1922 in internal differences within the party leadership. In the interval Ordjonikidze had behaved like a provincial satrap and had dealt high-handedly with local Bolsheviks. The issue came to a head around the same time that a commission headed by Stalin was sitting to define the structure of constitutional relations between the Russian Federation and the republics.

Stalin proposed that the government of the Russian Federation should become the government of the whole group of republics; the Federation would incorporate the others as 'Autonomous Republics'. This issue, together with Stalin and Ordjonikidze's autocratic

behaviour in Georgia, became the occasion for Lenin's struggle during his final illness to curb Stalin's dictatorial tendencies.

The letter he dictated from his sickbed to the Twelfth Party Congress made a vehement attack on Great Russian chauvinism, mentioning Stalin and Ordjonikidze by name, and urged that the future Union should be built on a footing of complete equality among all republics.

In the Soviet Union during the years of perestroika much has been made of this document as a proof of Lenin's concern for the rights of minority nationalities and of the good fortune of his intervention to thwart Stalin's nefarious purposes towards them. But though Lenin had his way on the constitutional issue, what equality did it establish between the republics beyond a formal and legal one?

The trend towards centralisation was inherent in the one-party state that Lenin himself had erected. His successor brought to the task of consummating it not only ruthlessness and single mindedness but also an identification with Great Russian nationalism that was to grow more open with the years. Like Napoleon and Hitler, Stalin seems to have compensated for the misfortune of having been born outside the homeland of the majority nation by emphasising his oneness with it, even though we are told that he spoke the Russian language to the end of his days with a thick Georgian accent.

But it wasn't just Stalin's insecurity about his ethnic identity that led to the accentuation of Great Russian dominances in the Stalinist era. I have already indicated that this was a natural consequence of the centralised state; and that centralisation was to be made total during the years of massive economic construction through the imposition of monolithic unity on the party and the suppression of free debate even within its own ranks. In this process the party leaderships in the republics became merely

nominees of the centre docilely carrying out its orders.

There had been a practice from the early years of the revolution of appointing trusted party men from Moscow to head provincial republics; for instance, the first head of the Bolshevik government in the Ukraine, after the territory had been pacified by the Red Army, was Rakovsky, a Rumanian by birth. In the days when the party was proud of its proletarian internationalism, this may have seemed unexceptionable. But in time it facilitated the subordination of the local leaderships to the centre; and even when these leaderships were drawn from the provincial political elites, they became, with the lack of inner party democracy mere agents of the central government and not representatives of their own peoples.

Together with the subordination of the governments of these republics to the party centre in Moscow, Stalin infused State ideology with a strong element of Great Russian nationalism. This tendency became most overt during the Second World War, when the mobilisation of national resistance to the German invaders was promoted sometimes through Russian nationalist and sometimes through pan-Slavist appeals.

When the German armies were at the approaches to Moscow in 1941, Stalin at the end of his October Revolution anniversary speech made a startling invocation of the warriors and heroes of imperial Russia: 'Let the manly images of our great ancestors — Aleksandr Nevsky, Dmitri Don-skoy, Kuzma Minin, Dmitri Pozharsky, Aleksandr Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov — inspire you in this war.' When he added, 'May the victorious banner of the great Lenin guide you,' it seemed as if Lenin himself had been assimilated to the Great Russian pantheon.

Also in the middle of the war the Internationale was displaced as the Soviet national anthem by one which began, 'An indissoluble union of free republics

Great Russia has rallied for ever. It still remains the national anthem though many Soviet people now feel embarrassed by the words and only play the music; and of course 'indissoluble union' has acquired a new irony after August 1991.

Already before the War during Stalin's great purges there had been large-scale elimination of those elements in the republics who might be suspected of showing the slightest recalcitrance to central rule; 'bourgeois nationalist deviations' were a frequent charge against those accused during the purges.

During the War Stalin carried out mass deportations of several nationalities; the Crimean Tatars, the Volga Germans, the Chechens, the Meshketian Turks and others were forcibly evicted from their homes and transplanted in Central Asia, on the ground that some elements among these peoples had collaborated with the German invaders. Subsequent Soviet governments have acknowledged the injustice of these acts but the peoples concerned have not been returned to their original homelands to this day.

While the steel-frame of the monolithic central party and its grip over the republics was maintained in the half century from Stalin to Chernenko, there was room within this structure for fluctuations in certain matters of nationalities policy that did not affect the essential character of centralised power.

For instance, on Russification as against use of the local language in the administration of the republics, there were variations from time to time and from place to place, and so also in the matter of the encouragement of minority cultures in education and the arts. At all times, in fact — even under Stalin — there was a cosmetic display of the exotic cultures and folklore of minority nationalities, and gullible fellow-travellers from abroad could often be persuaded by watching Cossack dances or listening to Uzbek folk songs that the Soviet

*(Continued on page 22)*



# The evil that men do

Piyal Gamage

JR's innings was over several seasons ago but, instead of going back to the pavillion, he keeps hanging about at the crease. He should give us a chance of forgetting the great damage he has done to our country, instead of continuing to make provocative statements, from time to time, on matters and in areas in which he is vulnerable — such as democracy, freedom of the press, violence etc. JR's latest public appearance was at the Sausiripaya auditorium on 11 October where he addressed government engineers. He referred to several Asian countries which he said were not democratic while Sri Lanka was. But it was during JR's 11 year ego-trip that Sri Lanka came to be looked on by the world as an authoritarian state.

JR came to power in 1977 after one of the cleanest elections ever held in this country. The proof of this is that Mrs. Bandaranaike's party was soundly beaten. Though JR deprived her of her civic rights for seven years for abuse of power (mainly keeping the emergency going from April 1971 to February 1977) she ended the emergency five months before the general election so that not only the election itself but also the polls campaigning could be done by all parties without the threat of the government wielding emergency powers to intimidate them. In contrast to this JR had his emergency on for most of the 11 years he was in office, never held a parliamentary general election during that period and even such polls as were held were conducted under emergency rule during which state power was used against political opponents. Misquoting Pope JR says: 'For forms of government let fools contend'. This from the man who spent

most of his political life preparing a form of government that suited his own idiosyncracies and, in the evening of his life, had the great good fortune to be given the chance to set it up.

So what did he do? He first violated the mandate he had just been given by making a constitutional change that made him virtual dictator; as JR put it in his own words: "Parliament has given me the powers of a king" — the government-owned Daily Mirror of 17 October 1978.

JR then proceeded, step by step, not to set up the free and righteous society he had promised, but to victimise his real and imagined foes and to silence dissent. He gave priority to (1) taking over the pro-SLFP Times group of papers using the Business Takeover Act which he had condemned and promised to repeal; (2) removing from office 12 Supreme Court judges he did not approve of; and (3) depriving his most charismatic political rival of her civic rights for a period of seven years.

This is what the President of the Bar Association Mr. Desmond Fernando said in the Supreme Court on 28 September 1990: "The removal of eight Supreme Court judges because the executive felt they would be too independent was the most evil act in the history of our country. (Note: Actually a total of 12 Supreme Court judges were removed but 4 of them accepted demotion to the Appeal Court while eight went home.) It was the greatest blow ever struck at the independence of the judiciary by a totally unprincipled executive and legislature. A further blow was struck at the prestige of the judiciary by giving hand-picked judges offices in executive

agencies after retirement. These offices ranged from the governorship of a province to a directorship in a ceramic factory. . . . The use of three sitting judges by the ruling party to remove their principal political opponent Mrs. Bandaranaike from parliament in November 1980 was a shameless violation of the rule of law and Sri Lanka's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. That these sitting judges should have been parties to this scheme also reduced public confidence in the judiciary." (Report in The Island of 29 September 1990).

With such a track record behind him, that JR should now preach Sila (Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood) even adding "I know no other way" gives us an idea of the massiveness of his chutzpah.

In the otherwise sycophantic first volume of JR's biography written by K. M. de Silva there is a very revealing passage. (Note: The second volume which was to have been written by Howard Wiggins does not seem to be coming — may be Wiggins has had second thoughts;): "These games often got them into brushes with parental authority. When that happened and punishment was called for, Dick was quite unprepared emotionally to accept it with equanimity much less with good humour. On the contrary he often wept without even a parental beating, or he closed his eyes and hid his face under his arm in anticipation of punishment. Indeed the merest suggestion of it was enough to get him into a sulky mood."

What this passage clearly shows is that from his early youth JR found it totally impossible to accept that rules meant for other people could possibly apply to him. This psychological quirk may be the explanation for many of his

later actions. This may explain why JR saw nothing wrong in giving the executive president (in his new constitution) immunity from all suit — an immunity not normally available to executive heads of state but only to constitutional heads who are obliged to act on prime ministerial advice. Mrs. Bandaranaike in a statement in parliament on 3 August 1978 said: "It is a gross deception, reminiscent of the technique of Adolf Hitler, to combine in one person the powers of the president and prime minister and then argue that the head of state is always entitled to immunity."

It was also this same psychological quirk that determined JR's course of action when the Appeal Court declared that the Special Presidential Commission had no jurisdiction to inquire into Mrs. Bandaranaike's administration from 1970 to 1977 since that period was prior to the S. P. C. Law. JR rushed a bill through parliament declaring the judgement of the Appeal Court null and void.

It was this quirk that enabled JR in May 1980 to proceed with equanimity on two mutually contradictory measures: (1) The government of Sri Lanka signed an international covenant undertaking not to create offences retroactively and not to impose retroactive penalties; (2) Mrs. Bandaranaike was summoned before the SPC to answer retroactive charges which earned retroactive penalties. It was this same quirk that enabled JR to rule with emergency powers for close on 11 years after having deprived Mrs. Bandaranaike of her civic rights on the ground that she had a six-year emergency.

It was this same quirk that made it possible for JR to reward with promotions two policemen who had been faulted by the Supreme Court and to order that the penalties and costs ordered against them should be met from public funds. As JR explained to Paul Sieghart of the ICJ such

steps were necessary "to maintain police morale." Sieghart's comment was: "But for the immunity from all suit which the president enjoys under Article 35 (1) of the constitution they might well have been criminal offences under Article 116 (2)."

On July 1 1990 the Lanka Guardian carried an interview with JR in which, in an unguarded moment, he made a very damaging confession:

"It is the essence of politics to acquire power democratically, to retain it and if lost to regain it. It was wisest to retain with the help of the devil if necessary than to lose and then seek to regain it."

Here then is the explanation of why he cooked up a Naxalite scare to extend the life of parliament and held a referendum instead of a parliamentary general election. The help of the devil! Of the manner in which this referendum was conducted by JR with undated letters of resignation from MPs in his pocket enough scathing comment has been made the world over. The Commissioner of Elections, in his official report on the referendum, called it shocking. There is no doubt that had he the legal power to do so the Commissioner would have declared the result of the referendum null and void. JR had a simple retort: he ensured that the report was not published!

JR regards himself as an "elder statesman". Elder, or rather elderly, he no doubt is. But with his track record who would call him statesman?

Lord Acton, in his famous letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in which he spoke of the corruptibility of power went on to make a further statement which is not so well known: "Almost all great men are bad men". Granted that by our Sri Lanka standards JR is a "great" man he is, in Acton's sense of the word a bad man.

## Nationalism...

(Continued from page 20)

Union was a multicultural paradise.

These illusions, as well as the corresponding political claim that in the Soviet Union the national question had been definitely solved, were blasted by the eruption of a multiplicity of nationalisms and ethnic identities once the lid of coerced conformity was removed by Gorbachev.

What was striking in the years of perestroika was the emergence not only of valid and democratic claims by minority nationalities for autonomy against the centre but also the recrudescence of tribal animosities of one ethnic group against another, expressing themselves sometimes in the most barbarous forms. Azeris killing Armenians, Uzbeks killing Meshketian Turks, Georgians killing Abkhazis, Ukrainians killing Jews, these and other manifestations of ethnic hatreds proved that seventy years of socialism had done nothing to change mass consciousness.

What the laboratory experiment of these decades in the Soviet Union demonstrates is that one simply cannot root out ethnic differences by a political uniformity and a state ideology imposed from above.

However, the revival of nationalism in the Soviet Union was not simply the explosion of primordial loyalties which had long been denied expression. Particularly in the republics of the Asian periphery, there was an important sense in which the emergence of nationalism was a product of Soviet development itself.

Recent scholars writing on nationalism in general such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson have focussed attention on modern nationalism as a distinctively new phenomenon, when contrasted with older collective identities.

(To be continued)



# A curse from the Gods at Magama, Ruhuna?

Douglas Kulatilleke

It is a fact known even to the layman that "Bunchy Top" (දඬු පිදෙනවා) of plantain-Banana (caused by a virus) has no remedy in plant pathology; and the only corrective action is to "cut and burn" and "remove and destroy" the affected plant, to prevent it from spreading to other plants. A very similar, but not so deadly disease, we now fear has begun to spread and affect the plant — the main sources of livelihood of man here — in the Magam Pattu, in the Kirindi Oya Valley, this last yala season.

Most of the skilled paddy cultivators here, have therefore, inspite of very good weather conditions for paddy — this last yala season — been unable to get the good, normal high yield of 70-80 bushels per acre. Those who have had this yield, are strangely those to whose fields, no, or not many insecticide chemicals had been applied that cultivation season.

The average yield this yala, here has therefore been varying from mere 20-30 bushels per acre (almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  the cost of production (C.D.P.) of paddy! could it be the beginning of a deadly virus disease among our paddy plants?

It may be that beneficial insect and other life, which surrounds our paddy plants in Tissa Magama, have apparently been gradually destroyed by very powerful systemic chemical insecticides, used so haphazardly for decades. To control pest, diseases, and even weeds in farming here. It may also be that the natural protective systems, and mechanisms of the paddy plant meant to fight these unhealthy virulent organisms may also have been harmed, or partly destroyed,

throughout the years. All this in my humble opinion, is due to some very harmful, short-sighted, agricultural practices of our innocent, simple, peasant paddy farmers, actively promoted by some not far seeing scientists, and "all knowing government and commercial interests, in our country. Will one of our good enlightened plant pathologist look deeply into this aspect of plant disease, in our paddy fields in Tissa, Magama, and advice us accordingly.

## Lunuganvehera

Now thanks to the endeavours of a group of dedicated, national conscious, engineers — since the early seventies, — we have had the good fortune of at least being made aware of a mess up by a similar "know all" attitude in the field of irrigation. Some of our irrigation engineers, and planners here, and in Colombo, have thereby by their hasty action, brought immense hardship, and suffering, to peasant paddy farmers here. The much boasted and very expensive Lunuganvehera irrigation scheme. Here, has been a total failure, and even accepted as such by the present government.

A reservoir like a huge saucer, with a water spread (of almost half the irrigable extent under its command), has been built just about 150 feet above sea level, causing severe drainage, and salinity problem, to all our old and new, paddy fields here. This siting of the bund accross the Kirindi Oya, at Lunuganvehera, due to political expediency was done in haste, without much thought of all aspects of water and soil management, as someone wanted the reservoir and all the irrigated lands under it, in the

Tissamaharamaya electorate itself!

The correct siting of this reservoir (now accepted by most engineers) should have been in the Uva Province, at Hurathgamuwa (above the Kuda Oya Village), at about 300-400 feet above sea level, where a cup like deep water reservoir could have been built. Valuable flat, well drained land, now used for storage of water, could then have been utilised for cultivation, without any salinity problems.

The irrigation engineers and planners in Colombo, too, may also have been in a hurry, or made to hurry, and been in indecent haste, to construct, without taking into consideration all aspects of planning, in such a big venture. They had also certainly forgotten, and ignored completely, the national master plan of the Planning Ministry, drawn up in 1972 to develop the south eastern dry zone (S.E.D.Z.), which sought to bring the waters from the Wet Zone Rivers — Kalu, Gin and Nilwala — to the SEDZ.

Now with the failure, and severe water shortage, due to the very hurriedly constructed Lunuganvehera scheme; a very hastily conceived scheme to build a permanent anicut, and channel costing billions to bring water from East to West, from a dry zone river (Manik ganga), to another dry zone valley of the Kirindi Oya basin, has now almost tragically been accepted, by the present government. Again the southern area development plan has been forgotten or ignored! Why?

Isn't it really time that the views of some of the far sighted and national minded, irrigation

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## Export Development & Investment Support Scheme

The Government has announced the withdrawal of the above Scheme with effect from 1/1/1992. The announcement has thrown the Non-Traditional Export Sector into a state of dismay uncertainty and confusion. An examination of the thinking behind the original and laudable reason for the introduction of this Scheme and its abrupt withdrawal announced recently is perhaps a good illustration of how different sections of the same Government sometimes work in contradiction.

H. E. the President recently declared year 1992 as "The year of Exports". The Non-Traditional Export Sector, which has now over-taken the traditional sector in terms of Export earnings, is the beneficiary of the EDISS Scheme. One would naturally expect a sector such as this, rapidly establishing itself as the country's foremost Foreign Exchange earner, to be assisted in every possible way by the Government to achieve still better results. Curiously, the very year the Government lays the greatest possible emphasis on the Export sector is the same year in which the Government decrees to withdraw a vital support scheme for the Export sector.

The EDISS Scheme was introduced years ago by the Government with the welcome objective of encouraging the rapid growth of the capital-short Non-Traditional Export Sector. Consequently, this Scheme was also responsible, in a significant way, to the phenomenal growth in the past few years, where earnings of this sector have exceeded the combined earnings of the 3 major traditional Export items. Successful Governments following divergent politico-economic philosophies since the 70's have enthusiastically backed Support-Schemes for the development of the Non-Traditional sector largely because recent history has shown, to the detriment of this country more than once, that depen-

dence on a single-group of items (such as our 3 primary products) is unwise. Therefore, this Scheme being withdrawn almost unilaterally should be reviewed, particularly because the Government has at no stage declared that it no longer supports the Non-Traditional Sector.

Strangely, other than mere vague presumptions, few seem to know the exact reason for the withdrawal of this useful Scheme. So far as I am aware, the Government has not made an announcement as to what prompted the en-bloc removal of the entire scheme. One is left to wonder, therefore, if the Government or sections within it feel that the scheme has served its purpose and therefore has outlived its usefulness. Many others seem to feel the Scheme is being withdrawn on the dictates of the World Bank.

The Administration, at its highest level, I suggest, should address itself more objectively and reexamine the Scheme and assess if the Scheme has:—

- (a) served a useful purpose from its inception to justify its coming into being.
- (b) if some or all of the items covered in the Scheme should still be supported, based on their growth, contribution to the economy and their potential.
- (c) if due to the Scheme additional Capital and entrepreneurial skill has come in from outside the Sector and helped Sri Lanka's Exports.

The Scheme embraces about 183 items. Instead of withdrawing the EDISS en-bloc the Scheme, I feel, should be stayed in respect of items requiring support to "get off their feet". Here one should offer priority to Export products bringing in a larger quantum of Foreign Exchange compared to items bringing in much less Foreign Exchange. For example, Agricultural Produce like Black

Gram, Sesame Seeds, Cloves etc. bring in about 95-98% Foreign Exchange. Comparatively, several Export items in this sector—involving sometimes very substantial Import inputs bring in much less net Foreign Exchange should engage better terms than one bringing in much less. The above is only an example of items which I am familiar. I believe there could be dozens of items such as these, some of which should receive support while others perhaps not so. The long list of items given by the EDB as qualifying for EDISS will illustrate this imbalance adequately.

It must also be mentioned that sophisticated markets like the E.E.C., North America and Japan are now demanding extremely high hygienic standards for their Commodity imports. This can only be realised via installation of expensive plant and Machinery for Cleaning/Processing. As matters stand today, the Sri Lankan Exporter of Non-Traditional Commodities is hardly able to meet competition from his counterparts in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Brazil and other origins who have the advantage of extremely low Interest rates for their Capital requirements, favourable rates for their Energy needs, Transportation Equipment, Tax benefits etc. The withdrawal of EDISS at this stage, therefore, will—I suspect—result in, inter alia, the indigenous Non-Traditional Exporter not being able to Export Commodities ordered by discriminating overseas buyers to satisfy the ever-increasing demands by their own Government's who insist on stringent health requirements in their food imports. His profit margins, as it stands, are too thin to upgrade his Cleaning/Processing facilities and if he cannot conform to the health standards of his buyers, Sri Lanka stands to lose valuable markets—perhaps not to re-

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# Population censuses of "Indian Tamils"

Paul Caspersz

Though immigration of South Indian persons into the workforce of Sri Lanka began in the second quarter of the last century, it was only with the decennial population census of 1911 that they were given separate classification in the ethnic distribution of population in the country. The censuses of 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 had lumped together as "Tamils" what the later censuses separately called "Ceylon Tamils" and Indian Tamils". By 1911 it was clear that the latest in a very long series of waves of immigration from South India into Ceylon was a new wave that would not be rolled back and so merited a special name and special slot in the census.

The figures are interesting and by themselves tell a story.

"Indian Tamils" in Population Censuses 1911 — 1981

Census Year	1911	1921	1931	1946	1953	1963	1971	1981
Total Population (in '000s)	4,106.4	4498.6	5306.4	6657.3	8097.9	10582.0	12689.9	14846.8
"Ceylon Tamils" (in '000s)	528.0	517.3	598.9	733.7	884.7	1164.7	1424.0	1886.3
"Indian Tamils" (in '000)	531.0	602.7	818.5	780.6	974.1	1123.0	1476.6	818.7
"Ceylon Tamils" as % of Total Population	12.8	11.5	11.3	11.0	10.9	11.0	11.2	12.7
"Indian Tamils" as % of Total Population	12.9	13.4	15.2	11.7	12.0	10.6	11.6	5.5

Source: *Statistical Abstract*, 1985, Table 17

Many things can be said or hazarded in interpretation of the significance of the figures of the population censuses. But for our present purposes it is important to consider the more than 50 percent fall in the percentage of "Indian Tamils" in the total population in the ten-year period, 1971 — 1981.

One explanation of the drop is that some of those who had been classified as "Indian Tamils" in 1971 had acquired Sri Lankan citizenship and entered as "Ceylon Tamils" in 1981. Hence the absolute figure of 'Ceylon Tamils' in the total population rises from 1,424 m to 1,887 m and the percentage rises from 11.2 to 12.7.

The second explanation is "repatriation" under the Agreements of 1964 and 1974 between the Governments of Sri Lanka and India. In Parliament on 30 January 1986, Prime Minister Premadasa stated that out of the 600,000 persons — "the accountable number" — who had to receive Indian citizenship and be taken away to India 421,207 only, with "the natural increase" since 1964 of 170,582 persons, had in fact received citizenship. Of the 421,207 persons according to the Prime Minister's figure, 84,121 were still in Sri Lanka at the end of 1981. If this figure is correct, 337,086 persons — or about 80 per cent of the accountable number — had gone to India between the censuses of 1971 and 1981. To this number must be added 80 per cent of "the natural increase" of 170,582 persons or approximately 140,000 persons. Hence between the last two censuses a total of approximately 477,000 had gone to India. This figure tallies reasonably, though not exactly with the figure of 462,000 as given by the Statistical Abstract 1985 as being the total loss by migration from 1971 to 1981.

Two other explanations are offered for the drop in the number of Estate Tamils in recent years. One is family planning, the planned drive for which through a subtle mixture of financial incentive, persuasion and coercion, and the provision of woefully inadequate housing is probably more effective in the estate sector than elsewhere in the country. The other, probably of very minor influence, is that fact that when an Estate Tamil marries a person of another ethnic group, the children tend to take on the label of that ethnic group in the interest of safeguarding life and property. Hard documentation in support of these two explanation is, however, lacking.

The four factors, briefly described, therefore explain the sharp drop of 45 per cent in the absolute number of "Indian Tamils" between the population censuses of 1871 and 1981.

## A curse from...

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engineers and planners rather those of the short sighted, construction conscious, be heeded. Action must be taken soon to prevent "river of blood" being shed again.

In Ruhuna, with the growing aspirations of our young ones, and those of our impoverished farmers are being ignored again. Once the problems of the leaks on the right Bank of the Samanala wewa are solved, and water stored in it for developing Hydro Power, can't this water be then released to the mighty Walawe by the end of this year? Water from wet upper reaches of the Walwe could then be brought into the dry Kuda Oya (a major branch of the Kirindi Oya). All that is required in the view of a humble layman; is the construct-

ion of about a 15 mile long contour channel, on about the 500 ft. contour to bring Walawe waters from the already existing Ukgalkaltota anicut to the already functioning Balharuwa tank. Water will then be made to flow down and join the Kuda Oya, and flow down to solve the water shortage at Lunuganvhera. The most important aspect of this temporary solution, is that it will fit into and not run counter to the southern area development plan.

Diyabetma (දිය බෙන්ම) bifurcation — is the name of a jungle village in this area (almost on the boundary of the Uva Sabaragamuwa Provinces) and could be an indication of an ingenious structure of our irrigation engineers. Now buried deeply under good, virgin, soil, and now cast aside, forgotten in our collective, weak, national mem-

ory! yet these highly skillful, mighty feats of hydraulic engineering are today deeds only meant to proudly boast about!! It is such feats of engineering skill that made this now forgotten east aside area be referred to the Wellassa (lacs and lacs of paddy tracts) which was the solid basis of a Sri Lanka (Sinhala?) Mahayana buddhist. civilization as revealed now, by the ruins discovered in the Buduruwagala, Okkampitiya, and Maligawila area.

The refusal to learn from, and evacuate the skills of our ancients could certainly be a punishment, a curse cast on us all by the gods — to both peasants and engineers, for having forgotten this great cultural heritage of that civilization that existed here in the deep southern Ruhuna in the 6th and 7th century A.D.

## SAARC. . . .

(Continued from page 14)

It includes the global policy and the regional adjustments to global competition and changing markets, joint effort at blending and marketing, technological co-operation for improvement of the product and the development of new products, co-operation in auctions, the growth of the huge South Asian market. Tourism offers widely varying opportunities for co-operation in the development of the infrastructure travel, by land and air, concessional regional fares, regional tour packages which facilitate the routing of tourists from outside the region through a regional itinerary, internal tourism.

The first set of initiatives would have to be carefully selected. In the areas of trade and industry, they should facilitate the market to develop

the structures of production with complementarities which strengthen the linkages. But complementarities cannot be developed by artificially imposing various forms of specialisation of attempting to introduce regimes which seek to plan industrialisation and decide on specialisation from above. Restrictions of this type will not be acceptable to countries. The complementarities and forms of specialisation will have to emerge through the market and the operation of market forces. How governments can help is to develop the framework of policy, create the right incentives and provide the appropriate guidelines. In terms of more specific supportive measures it can help to develop the institutional capacity in the region to study and monitor regional trends, identify emerging capabilities and facilitate the growth of complementarities and forms of regional specialisation on the basis of competitiveness and comparative advantage.

## Export. . .

(Continued from page 24)

gain them again. It will be conceded that most Export efforts, particularly of Land and Resource-short Developing countries entering Export markets against established competitors with Land-Resource advantages, need at least some tangible support until they are sufficiently developed to be on their own against competing markets. Thus, it will be seen the EDISS Scheme helped the Sri Lankan Exporter to keep his "head above water" against heavy odds. The withdrawal of the Scheme can mean his absolute and untimely demise in today's competitive world of exports.

Let us hope, therefore, when we enter 1992 — rightly declared by the Government as "Our year of Exports" — we do so in a spirit of assurance and support to the Non-Traditional Export Sector and that we do not enter 1992 by strangling "the goose that lays the golden egg".

A. Kandappah

(Member Executive Committee National Chamber of Commerce)



## Environment and policy makers

S. Sathananthan

Policy deliberations in the National State Assembly were conspicuous in their neglect of environmental management; which is a reflection of the intensity of the food crisis facing the country at that time and the consequent need to boost agricultural output rapidly. However, environmental considerations were not ignored altogether. The minister of Agriculture and Lands explained that 'there (is) no scientific plan for agriculture' and indicated that the 'main aim' of State policy was that 'agriculture must move towards regional specialization' (Hansard, vol 2, 1972:43-46) on the basis of agro-climatic regions. Towards this end, the 1972 Law empowered the APCs 'to prepare and submit to the Minister for implementation... schemes for ensuring the efficient farming of agricultural lands and their management, maintenance and improvement' (S.24(2) (d)).

The initiative for regional specialization, complete with its 'scientific' content, was evidently held out to be a policy innovation in 1972. But it had already been proposed by the colonial State in 1936 (see above). In the event, regional specialization failed again; allegedly on account of shortage of data on environmental conditions.

But even if this technical problem was resolved, it is difficult to believe that environmentally sound agricultural practices could be enforced. Because the disinvestment in plantation agriculture over a decade by private ownership in anticipation of nationalization could hardly be reversed in the short run.

In peasant agriculture the reasons, rooted in agrarian

structure, for the failure of environmental management under the 1958 Act were never properly researched. Nevertheless almost identical provisions were included in the 1972 Law as regards Supervision Orders (S.6) and Orders of Dispossession (S.7); and they failed and not a single Order was ever issued.

In fact, some of the obstacles to enforcing standards of good management in peasant agriculture under the 1972 Law was anticipated before the enactment of the Law. A daily newspaper summarized the situation thus: 'any cultivator could adduce ten good reasons as to why he obtains low yields. It may be a problem connected with the soil... there could always be the problem of either inadequate water or excess water... No objective standard could be ever applied' (*Sun*, 1972:1). A member of the Opposition criticized the Bill as being 'based purely on theory' and 'totally devoid of practical experience of farming'. With reference to the requirement for efficient water management by the cultivator (S.3(2) (c)) he argued that this not only depended on irrigation infrastructure being provided but that efficient water management was often impossible since levelling operations were too expensive for the average cultivator (Hansard, vol 2, 1972:89-91).

In other words, attention was drawn to the structural (economic) constraints which are inherent in subsistence peasant agriculture and which undermine environmental management.

### 5.3. The Agrarian Services Act of 1979

The new UNP government dissolved the APCs and CCs in

1977 as part of a larger package of economic liberalism, in which State intervention was to be minimized and entrepreneurship was to be encouraged. However, within 2 years the need for continued State intervention in agriculture became evident and the Agrarian Services Act of 1979 was enacted.

In many respects, the provisions of the legislation represented a 'throwback' to the 1953 Act and those of environmental management were no exceptions. Powers to make rules which would ensure environmentally sound land use was once again vested in an administrator, the Commissioner of Agrarian Services Department (S.42(1)). As before, the provisions relating to environmental management were unenforceable.

### 6. Industrial Production

Questions of environmental management did not arise with regard to the embryonic industrial sector until the establishment of large-scale manufacturing industries by foreign capital in the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in the 1980s. The need to regulate industrial growth as part of a broader plan of environmental management was recognised by policy makers in the early 1980s.

### 7. Environmental Planning in the 1980s

The *National Conservation Strategy*, after its general statement of programmes and principles, outlined a plan of action. It specified measures which are to be taken at sectoral level in 18 sectors to conserve the environment and the natural resource base.

#### 7.1. Agriculture

In agriculture, the *Strategy* dealt with highland cultivation,

agro-chemicals and tobacco cultivation. However, most of the attention was directed to highland cultivation:

(a) The *Strategy* argued that because farmers engaged in rainfed highland cultivation 'lack... financial resources to invest in and practice conservation methods... (they) cause environmental degradation'. It requested the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research 'to remove environmental constraints caused by rainfed agriculture by developing an alternative package, though based on scientific research, should incorporate the practical knowledge of the farmers who are expected to implement the new methods'.

(b) The introduction of a subsidy scheme 'to encourage farmers to construct soil and water conservation earthworks'.

(c) Rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure.

(d) Creation of a germplasm bank for crops.

(e) Research to sustain productivity of High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) of sedes and on cost reduction technologies.

(f) Discourage cultivation of annual crops on hill slopes without soil conservation methods and prohibit cultivation on slopes greater than 40 degrees.

(g) Minimize pollution of surface and ground water through excessive and careless use of fertilizers and agro-chemicals supported by extension education.

(h) Ensure income generation and alleviation of poverty.

(i) Support production of minor export crops.

(j) Regulate tobacco cultivation.

(k) Extend State support for horticultural development (CEA, 1988:153-56).

What is remarkable about the measures proposed by the *Strategy* is that it shows hardly any awareness of the history

of environmental debate in the country. For instance, it ignores regressive land tenure and subsistence agriculture which are rooted in agrarian structure and are obstacles to environmental management; and which have been extensively debated under the different legislations discussed above. Nor does it examine the reasons for the failure of previous attempts at environmental management. The *Strategy* is perhaps best described as an *ad hoc* response without any grasp of the issues at stake.

This *ad hoc* approach permeates the *Action Plan*. Consider the following actions recommended to ensure environmental management in highland subsistence farming:

(a) Discourage pesticide use on slopes without conservation methods; prohibit agricultural practices on slopes greater than 40 degrees.

(b) Conduct a survey of highland farming to assess current level of environmental damage and mitigatory measures required.

(c) Design a training and environmental package for farmers on environmental management.

(d) Introduce a subsidy scheme for farmers to induce them to adopt environmental conservation measures (CEA, 1990:2-7).

The *Action Plan* has ignored tenurial reform in peasant agriculture, although major agrarian reform programmes under three legislations — the 1952 Act, 1958 Act and the 1972 Law — considered tenurial reform as an important precondition to environmental management. The environmental degradation resulting from the impoverishment generated by subsistence production is to be mitigated merely by providing a subsidy scheme without any recognition of its intimate relationship to the agrarian structure and of the need to change the latter.

The shopping list of measures enumerated in the *Strategy* and activities proposed under the *Action Plan* cannot even be dignified as a technocratic approach. As a planning exercise, it is hardly different from the discredited technique, of formulating a national agricultural plan made up of annual implementation programmes, which had been in vogue more than two decades ago. As a plan of action, it is a collection of environment-related activities which have little in common with environmental management.

### 1977 and Sri Lanka...

(Continued from page 17)

President. Over the people. The representatives of the people were regarded as supreme over the people.

The Puritan Revolution was certainly an important landmark in the history of constitutional government. The merchants and the gentry checked the royal absolutism which had triumphed on the Continent, and the ideological ferment of the time inspired further revolutions. But it failed, and Royalty returned. We must learn to give far more importance to another revolution, the English Revolution of 1688, which succeeded. It established the contractual basis of modern government, whereby a breach of contract forfeited the crown. It has been described as the greatest thing done by the English nation. It inspired the American Revolution and Jefferson's magnificent Declaration of Independence asserting the principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and, what follows logically, the right of the people to overthrow governments which go against that consent. If we are really serious about democracy in Sri Lanka we must try to restore the contractual basis of government, and the first desideratum for that is an assertion of the supremacy of the people over the representatives of the people.





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