

KASHMIR: Indian Folly, Pakistani Mischief

— *Inder Malhotra*

LANKA

GUARDIAN

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Thondaman's Move, Sinhala Backlash

— *Mervyn de Silva*

Privatisation:

— *Saman Kelegama*

— *G. P. de Silva*

Goiya: wise without a "Potha"

— *Manik Sandrasagara*

THE PEACE APPEAL

Press and Polls — *Izeth Hussain*

D.S. : Rebel to Conformist — *Jeyaratnam Wilson*



Goodbye

to

GORBY

- *Reggie Siriwardena*
- *Birty Gajameragedera*

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PEACE APPEAL INAUGURAL

Considering the catastrophic situation our country is in, a group of persons from different parts of the country, belonging to different religious and racial communities and including working people, professionals and those holding responsible positions in public life, intellectuals and clergy, have drawn up and signed a Peace Appeal to the peoples and Government of Sri Lanka, in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

Ven. Batapola Nanda Thero
 Ven. Pallewela Devarakkhitha Thero
 Ven. Madampagama Assagi Thero
 Ven. Kiranthidiya Pannasekera Thero
 Revd. Fr. Paul Caspersz. S. J.
 Revd. Yohan Devananda
 Revd. Lionel Peiris

D. W. Abayakoon
 Linus Jayatileke
 Tennyson Edirisuriya
 N. Kandasamy
 G. G. Ponnambalam
 Daya Ariyawathie
 Audrey Rebera
 Sunila Abeysekera
 Wasala Gunaratne
 Sarath Fernando
 Wimal Fernando

(On behalf of World Solidarity Forum, Sri Lanka Committee)

Briefly . . .

Food, not Eelam

"We don't want Eelam, we want food" said the latest poster in Jaffna. This was announced at a press conference by the Army's chief media spokesman Colonel Sarath Munesinghe. Of the 800,000 people in Jaffna 99 per cent want food and peace, the colonel said.

Some Sinhalese in Colombo too were responsible for increasing the LTTE numbers; in 1983 there were only a couple of dozens, the Colonel said. The increase had now stopped, he said.

Two more go to courts

Two more MPs expelled from the UNP for signing the impeachment motion against President Premadasa have gone to courts challenging their expulsion from the party. If the courts do not hold with them they too will lose their seats in parliament. Eight expelled UNPers lost their seats earlier.

More for FTZ workers

About 81,000 workers in Free Trade Zones and allied areas will get a pay rise of Rs 150 per month (trainees and unskilled workers) and Rs 200 per month (semi-skilled workers). The basic wages will thereafter be Rs 1250 and Rs 1750 respectively.

Church fights Aids

The Catholic Church is on the war path against AIDS, in Negombo and the neighbouring fishing villages. Posters have been put up in the vicinity of tourist hotels advising youths to keep away from homosexuals.

The police are also discouraging contacts between local youths and foreigners. →

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Bodies identified

The bodies of two women found killed and burnt near Marawila have been identified as those of Therese Fernando (42) and Seelawathi (30). They are alleged to have been abducted by people who came in a Pajero jeep.

Anti-UNP campaign

Opposition parties are continuing discussions on a common campaign against the ruling UNP. They are planning a series of meetings and seminars to inform the people about the state of the nation.

The Opposition is also organising a protest march to Kataragama.

Don't talk till war ends

Kelaniya University's Chancellor, the Ven. Walpola Rahula said in a press

release that there should be no talks with the Tigers till the war in the North ended. There should also be no more tamashas, Rahula Thera said.

Clarify, says Dinesh

MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardena MP has asked fellow MP Mangala Moonesinghe (SLFP), chairman of the parliamentary Select Committee appointed to find ways and means of ending the ethnic conflict, whether Rural Industries Minister and CWC leader S. Thondaman has been delegated powers by the committee to discuss with the LTTE proposals which are before the committee. Mr Gunawardena has asked the question in writing, as a member of the Select Committee.

"As a member of this committee I vehemently pro-

test against this action", the MEP leader has said.

Edmund Dies

Veteran Samasamajist Edmund Samarakkody died at the Colombo General Hospital on January 5. He was 80.

Comrade Edmund was one of those jailed by the British in the nineteen-forties with fellow Trotskyites N. M. Perera, Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Goonewardene. He entered parliament as a member of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party in 1952 and retained the seat (Dehiowita) in 1956. In July 1960 he was elected to the Bulathsinhala seat.

Edmund Samarakkody left the LSSP when three of his Marxist colleagues joined the SLFP government as ministers, in the 1960s.

LETTERS

ROMANTICISING PEOPLE

While I agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Piyal Gamage's incisive critique of both the Bandaranaike and the Jayewardene regimes and with his argument that free and fair elections don't necessarily ensure a free and just society, I can't concur with him when he says: 'What is wrong with politics is politicians. All our problems were caused by them and their greed for power.' This is to romanticise ordinary people in the same way that some others do when they believe there would be no ethnic problems but for politicians. There is more truth in W. H. Auden's two-line epigram, 'The politicians we condemn/Are nothing but our LCM.' Unfortunately, even the common man is capable of misusing power

when he has it in his own small way in his home, neighbourhood or workplace. The tyrannical politician is only the domineering father, husband, overseer or village thug writ large because the politician has more space in which to wield power.

To suppose that we can get rid of politicians is as utopian as the original Marxist dream of the withering away of the state in which I used to believe in my salad days. The problem is not in the special perversity of politicians but in the nature of power itself. Let us occupy ourselves therefore with the devising of as many checks and restraints on the exercise of power as we can think of and pressurising our rulers to accept them. It's a long and hard way, but there is no other.

Reggie Siriwardena

Colombo 4.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

One finds that the cry for peace, harmony and restraint echoing in many places in the world, the UN, EC, SAARC, Russia and Commonwealth, Cambodia, South Africa, Ireland etc. In our country religious dignitaries have spoken in the same theme, particularly at Christmas.

It is sad to note that a reputed academician/religious dignitary should — in a country where many follow the teachings of Gautama the Buddha — describe certain peace proposals, as 'vicious and destructive' and urge 'all patriotic clerics and laymen to totally reject' such peace proposals.

For the record, the Church of England in UK does not strike a similar note. The constitution of the USA precludes mixing religion with education. Why, oh why?

B. Mahinda

Colombo 7

The Rise of the New Right

Mervyn de Silva

History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce.

Not in Sri Lanka. It is almost always tragic, with the farcical reduced to occasional, fleeting interventions. In any case, one rule has been firmly established — communalism is not the last, but the first refuge, of the frustrated and the opportunist. Clown and scoundrel take their turns. It is for this reason, we publish without an introductory note or comment an editorial in the *Times of Ceylon* of 21/8/1957. It was called 'Record of an Opportunist'.

Opportunism is very much alive but it is re-assuring to note that the New Year Message of the Opposition Leader, Mrs. Bandaranaike, did not conform to the set pattern. Far from it. In the simplest words, the SLFP leader appealed to fellow Sri Lankans, and Sri Lankan politicians and all opinion leaders in particular not to "promote militarism" or "rouse racism".

Only a few months ago, during "the impeachment crisis" when the fate of President Premadasa's regime seemed utterly unpredictable, the rallying cry was the 'right to dissent', to oppose freely, to a truly robust democracy, kept alive by freedom of expression, by a lively parliament and a independent judiciary. But today? What's the issue? What's the target? The issue is a "negotiated political settlement" of the ethnic conflict, and therefore the Thondaman proposals. One would expect, that responsible political parties and personalities in a country, ravaged by endless, wasting wars, would at least wait until Mr. Thondaman went north and returned home and reported to the All-

Party Parliamentary Committee, chaired by Mr. Mangala Moonesinghe MP, of the SLFP, on whose private member's motion the Committee was set up. That Mr Thondaman went public with his proposals is a matter for inquiry, and if necessary disciplinary action by the Moonesinghe Committee.

But these proprieties are not the basis of the near hysterical reactions to an issue that needs to be debated calmly.

But no. Even the champion of democracy and dissent, the former President of the Oxford Union, a President's Counsel and a prominent Cabinet personality for 14 years, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali was more concerned with the authorship of the document, not its contents. Was it Thondaman's or the President's? In short, the Thondaman mission to Jaffna was pounced upon as another ready opportunity to 'shoot' the President. One would have expected sensible leaders and leading opinion-makers to greet the exercise (not necessarily the content of the 'package') as a useful opportunity to test the Tamil pulse — first of the LTTE, and of Tamil opinion in Sri Lanka and the influential expatriate community, the Tamil lobby overseas as well as its important foreign patrons and activist supporters. Having tested it, the Sinhala parties and the non-political Sinhala organisations could have framed their own strategy, their response.

In that way the Sinhala Political Establishment could have projected a positive image to two crucially important audiences — the western (donor) community and to other key sources of aid (Japan) and of course India. While keeping the dia-

logue going, and therefore gaining time, the Sinhala Establishment could have once more demonstrated to the world the sheer intransigence of the LTTE. (A spin-off benefit would have been the isolation of the LTTE and the strengthening of the anti-LTTE groups).

What is wrong in Mr. Thondaman holding talks in Jaffna and bringing back the LTTE's counter-proposals (or criticisms, reservations, suggestions) asked the head of a European mission here when Mr. Bradman Weerakoon briefed members of the Aid Sri Lanka consortium. Surely commonsense would dictate a positive attitude to the Thondaman initiative, whatever one's studied response to the Thondaman agenda. In other words, the Sinhala Establishment could have seized the moral high ground, precisely the image to project in the run-up to the World Bank-sponsored donor meeting in Paris of Feb. 7.

Instead what did we have? Outpourings in the press reflecting atavistic fears of a carving out of Sri Lanka. While 'autonomy' to the North-East will ultimately lead, said one critic, to a Sinhala nation confined to the deep South (Galle and Matara districts), there was a new school of opinion which spotted the spectre of Malayanadu — a state of Indian Tamil plantation labour in the Central highlands, with Thondaman as President (or King).

Interestingly, Prof. M. B. Ariyapala, President of All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC), a key figure in the Sinhala Defence League (SAS) pointed out in an ACBC statement that the CWC proposals would lead to

NEWS
BACKGROUND

"a series of separate states" based on "linguistic, religious and communal grounds". The ACBC accused Thondaman of "slowly working for a Malayanadu" in the hill country. In that connection, he drew attention to the fact that the "Ceylon Indian Congress" has changed its name to "Ceylon Workers Congress".

The nightmare of "mini states" is a political reality in the world today — not merely in the South (Third World) but in the North, certainly in what used to be the Soviet Union, and in Central and Eastern Europe, in Yugoslavia (Serbs vs. the others, particularly Croatia), and Czechs versus Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, to name just two states, both socialist. What makes a country a country? "One thing that doesn't matter for sure is size" notes Danilo Turk, Professor of International Law at the Univ. of Ljubljana, a specialist in ethnic conflict.

Max Kempelman who led the US delegation to a conference on 'National Minorities' in Geneva 3 months ago, observed "The anomaly of our world is that we are running into contradictory trends... western Europe has had 45 years to learn to live with each other. But central and eastern Europe have lived with a lid on. Now that lid is lifted".

In excluding western Europe, Mr. Kempelman was over-optimistic. There are no widespread demands for secession but the spectre of racism haunts some E. C. countries too. The recession, unemployment and inflation, a flood of brown-and-black refugees (and now white too) and illegal immigration have scared western societies so deeply that racist and neo-fascist tendencies are all too apparent. This is true of "the melting pot", the US, too. Unemployment is haunting the Bush administration — 400,000 jobs were lost in Oct-November. The Trotskyist journal *WORKERS VANGUARD* has published a series of commentaries on the rise of racism and racial bigotry in the US, and 'police terror' against non-White and recent

migrants. But it is in western Europe that "colour" has emerged as a major problem, along with growing hostility to poor white refugees from "socialist" Europe.

"We can't arrive at stability by armed instability" says Roger Linster a Luxemburg minister in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*. The same may be said of many countries in the South which seek to 'contain' these ethnic challenges with the use of the army. While this should be clear to most Sri Lankans, the "militarist" option, which Mrs. B. rejected, is favoured by many Sri Lankan "patriots". The Sinhala Defence League (SAS) has been accompanied by a BHUMIPUTRA movement, part of the "new" RIGHT.

Even if the option was real, it is not on. The World Bank-IMF has a cut-off point — 4.5% of GDP. Sri Lanka has gone beyond 5% while growth this year is not as impressive as 1990. The donors have also many questions to ask about 'Human Rights', particularly disappearances. The reconstruction of Europe is drying up western aid. Sri Lanka which was pledged a billion last would be happy with US 800 million this year but even this lower figure is perhaps far too optimistic; certainly, if the US is in a mood to punish Sri Lanka for its negative vote on "Zionism" resolution in the UN. If there is move to delay the VOA project, the US will be even more hostile.

Record of an opportunist

Mr J. R. Jayewardene, at the UNP rally on Sunday, offered to lead some people in a civil disobedience campaign against the Government's attempt to finalize its negotiated settlement of the language problem. But the question is — can these people rely on his offer? Can Mr. Jayewardene be trusted to lead, as he has promised "to the bitter end"? Our own view is that it would be foolish indeed to be too sure. After all, to judge from his record over the past eighteen months Mr. Jayewardene has been a man of many opinions — as many opinions in fact as there have been political situations. Thus in March, 1956, it was election time and Mr. Jayewardene was a prominent speaker at the fateful Kelaniya session of the UNP. He urged then that Sinhalese should be made the sole state language but without any saving provision for the reasonable use of Tamil. Three months later with the UNP defeated and demoralized and the Sinhala Only Bill before Parliament, Mr. Jayewardene took up a completely different tune. "No government," he declared at Bollegalla, Kelaniya, "should and could make Sinhalese the official language of the country by trampling down the language rights of over a million of the permanent residents of the country." A year later and with the Government proceeding to implement the second part of its election mandate by making suitable provision for the reasonable use of Tamil, Mr. Jayewardene's tune changed once again "Can any government elected by a majority of the Sinhalese people", he demanded to know, "ever think of granting concessions of this kind?"

That then, as the Prime Minister points out in a statement today, has been Mr. Jayewardene's record. It is a record of continuous shifts and expedients, of contradictory and inconsistent attitudes which quite obviously cannot be understood or judged in the light of any informing principle or standard. In a word it is an opportunist's record and Mr. Jayewardene's only consistency has been in this — that he has attempted to tack to every political breeze in his efforts at outwitting and out manoeuvring his opponents. It is also of course, a record of frustration. Every mischievous move to exploit the communal cry, every summons to majority or minority extremism has only served to take Mr. Jayewardene farther and farther into the political wilderness. That for the moment, however, is hardly the point. Even unsuccessful leadership seldom damns a man as completely does unprincipled leadership and now that Mr. Jayewardene has volunteered to lead a majority civil disobedience campaign the question, we repeat, is — can anybody afford to trust him not to change his mind? Our guess is that he will abandon his campaign roughly halfway through and offer to direct a minority satyagraha movement instead.

Times: 21/8/1957

OPINION

● "A particular Sinhala grievance is that whenever a Sinhalese speaks his grievances or harassments, he is called a racist but when other races speak out in their interest their spokesman are not branded as such."

— *Gamini Jayasuriya, founder S. A. S.*

● "The vast majority of Sinhala people — even well-to-do industrialist and businessmen who have benefitted from this government — were supporting the S. A. S."

(*Jayasuriya Interview, Sunday Island*)

● "The Sinhala people divided into several groups, could not unite to obtain their national rights. The one million Tamil people however, were rallying round one organisation, giving Mr. Thondaman so much of power"

(*SAS Speaker Island*)

● "If the sufferings of the people of the North and East are not comprehended and a solution which ensures their rights is not found, the division of this country could be inevitable"

— *President Premadasa, speech in Kandy*

● The package of proposals to the LTTE in respect of any agreement should be ratified at a referendum. The President should hold such a referendum without allowing Mr. Thondaman to have his own way in this most important and delicate issue affecting all ethnic groups and the sovereignty of their nation.

— *Lalith Athulathmudali, former UNP National Security Minister, now Leader of the DUNF.*

● "Thondaman's proposals, although claimed as emanating from his own bat, seem to coincide with the very demands of the LTTE. They are formulated on the basis of a 'traditional Tamil homeland' and self-determination for Tamils. They are nothing short of an embodiment of EELAM, though the term has been tactfully avoided".

Ven. Madihe Pannatissa, Maha Nayake Thera, (ISLAND)

● "We must accept that our people in the North and the South want peace, democracy and independence. We must resolve not to promote militarism or to rouse racism in the New Year..."

— *Mrs. Bandaranaike, SLFP President's New Year Message.*

● "The first priority is to conclude this dreadful war. . . . Peace talks and meaningless celebrations should be stopped till then. . ."

— *Ven. Prof. Walpola Rahula Thera, Vice-Chancellor, Kelaniya University.*

● "They (the proposals) are steeped in racism and geared to creating a separate state with a gossamer thin veneer of a United Sri Lanka which could be torn asunder at will".

— *S. L. Gunasekera, SLFP MP in Sunday Times.*

● "It is nonsense to say, as some alarmists, have done, that these proposals amount to EELAM. In fact they don't even amount to a full-fledged federation of the Swiss, Canadian or American kind".

— *Reggie Siriwardena, reputed commentator*

● "Substantial devolution" argued one monk would be "tantamount" to creating "two kingdoms".

Our Appeal to all those responsible and to all those concerned is:

- * Stop the War
- * Declare terms and negotiate for Peace
- * Declare terms of mediating and monitoring procedures
- * Ensure rights of Minorities as well as Majority and recognise reasonable apprehensions of both
- * Continue dialogue on disputed issues
- * Repeal repressive legislation, lift state of Emergency, return to normal law and restore democratic processes
- * Bring down cost of living
- * Search for alternative economic policies to bring justice to the under-privileged of all communities
- * Ensure rights of all working people
- * Ensure rights of women and children

We are publishing this appeal with some representative signatures. We are resolved to continue gaining support for this appeal and campaigning and working for Justice and Peace. Signing this appeal does not necessarily mean acceptance of all the positions adopted in it. It signifies understanding of the urgency of stopping the war and commitment to common dialogue and action for Justice and Peace in Sri Lanka. The Peace Appeal will be published in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

It has been signed by about 150 representative persons from different religious and

racial communities from different parts of the country — Colombo, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Mannar, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Moneragala, Hambantota, etc.

Among those who have signed are:

1. Ven. Navagamuwe Dhammaloka Thero, Chief Sangha Nayaka of Ihala Dolospaththuwe, Hiripitiya.
2. Ven. Moragalle Wimaladhamma Tissa Thero, Chief Sangha Nayaka of Eastern and Tamankaduwa Provinces, Trincomalee.
3. Rt. Revd. Jabez Gnanapragasam, Bishop of Colombo.
4. Rt. Revd. Andrew Kumarage, Bishop of Kurunegala.
5. M. K. Sellarajah, Attorney-at-Law, President, Konesar Temple, Trincomalee.
6. Professor B. E. S. J. Bastiampillai, Professor of History and Political Science, Colombo University.
7. S. M. Salakudeen Lebbe, Mohideen Jumma Mosque, Trincomalee.
8. K. P. Silva, General Secretary, Communist Party of Sri Lanka.
9. Athauda Seneviratne, M. P., Lanka Sama Samaja Party.
10. G. G. Ponnambalam, All Ceylon Congress, Colombo.
11. M. Senathiraja, M. P. TULF, Jaffna.
12. Prince Casinader, M. P. EPRLF, Batticaloa.
13. Jaya Pathirana, former Supreme Court Judge, Kurunegala.

AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA FOR DECISIVE CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION NOW FOR PEACE ON THE BASIS OF JUSTICE FOR ALL

We call on the Peoples and Government of Sri Lanka to consider seriously and urgently the catastrophic situation our country is in and to take decisive constructive action now for peace, on the basis of justice for all.

Stop the Ethnic Conflict

We feel that the most urgent problem facing us is the ethnic conflict. While recognising that there are many inter-connected problems affecting different communities and sections of the people in different parts of the country, we realise that the most urgent priority is to put a stop to the ethnic conflict.

This conflict has caused and is causing unutterably tragic death and destruction on both sides. This has been in the context of

a deteriorating economic situation and the break-down of normal legal and democratic processes.

Without a stop to the war there can be no demilitarisation of society and cutting down of military expenditure, repeal of repressive legislation, lifting of the state of Emergency and return to normal law, and restoration of democratic processes. Thus there can be no real progress towards development of the resources of this country which is so urgently needed by the people, especially the poor, who are undergoing so much hardship.

We would emphasise that even if a victory is won by either side on the battlefield, the problem of a just settlement would still remain. And how practica-

ble is winning the war and at what cost? Even government military experts are not agreed on this. A state of total war with frightful consequences will be necessary if the objective is to achieve a military victory in the North. Even in the East, after so much death and destruction, the war is far from over. In the South, too, there is continuing unrest.

Desperate Plight

We wish to emphasise that a special effort must be made by the majority community to understand the desperate plight of the people living in the areas of conflict, especially in the North. Normal civilised life is severely disrupted. In the North, the transport system is completely paralyzed. There has been no electricity for over a year,

telephones have not been operating for over five years, food and medicines are extremely scarce and prices have risen several-fold. Most of all, there, the people are alienated and neglected.

Mutual Understanding and Common Action

There is a great need for mutual understanding which can lead to mutual help and mutual building of confidence. All communities need to understand the serious threats, common to all, that they face today with the daily deterioration of economic situation and erosion of democratic rights. It is of the utmost importance that fighting should be stopped so that they could get together for action on these common issues. Ordinary suffering people of all communities involved in the conflict should have the chance to express their deep desire for peace, understanding and co-existence. The positive achievements of ordinary people through the traumatic experience of war could then give rise to meaningful expressions of justice and peace.

Different communities and sectors should be able to preserve their own proper identities and reserve their right to work for long-term social and political goals and yet be prepared to make real and sincere sacrifices and concessions in the present, in order to put a stop to the seemingly endless slaughter and destruction and enable progress towards peace.

We also believe that the different communities and sectors should, at the same time, given the necessary determination, be able to come together with the Government takes the necessary constructive initiative, to set up the necessary monitoring bodies and processes, composed of recognised and respected individuals and accredited representatives of organisations within the country as well as from the international community, to ensure the effective implementation of whatever arrangements are made to move towards peace.

Devolution and Autonomy

1. The principles of devolution and autonomy have come to be widely accepted as a result of the struggles for justice of both majorities and minorities. There has to be continuous pressure from people and development of public opinion to devise suitable forms of devolution and effective means of implementation. There has to be the political will to make the devolution of power and autonomy a reality to enable the development of the people, especially the poor and under-privileged, in the areas concerned.

The major communities in this country, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim have, over a considerable period of time, especially through the conflicts of recent years, become conscious of their separate identities and nationalities. We believe that the time has come for all communities to frankly face the reality of each other's identity and nationality.

Arrangements for devolution and autonomy should enable independent development, while at the same time enable co-existence and inter-dependence for mutual security, help and wider common aims.

The right of all those who have been displaced from their homes to return to their homes should be ensured and people of all communities should have the right to live in any part of the country. When all recognise each other's rights there should be no difficulty in ensuring this.

The Sri Lankan Constitution needs revision to make devolution and autonomy central features of it. Two other important aspects may be mentioned here: 1. The character of Sri Lankan society — democratic and pluralistic — should be recognised and core values, both religious and secular, should be enshrined in the Constitution. There should also be a Bill of Rights that is justiciable.

It should be mentioned here that secular values should not be understood as being in any way against or exclusive of true dharma or religion. In the con-

text of pluralism in modern political life, they stand against inequality and discrimination.

2. There should be suitable constitutional restraints on the powers of the Executive Presidency which is now practically above the law and threatens a proper division and balance of powers between the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislature. The question of the reversion to a parliamentary system can be seriously considered.

Effective constitutional arrangements have to be made to ensure the rights and security of Muslim and Sinhala minorities in the North-East and of the Plantation Tamils in the Central Provinces.

(To be continued)

HINDU APPEAL

- The government of Sri Lanka:-
- 1) To announce an immediate cessation of hostilities. The LTTE to respond positively;
 - 2) To ensure that sufficient supplies of food, fuel and medicines are sent regularly to the International committee of the Red Cross, who in co-ordination with the Government Agent will distribute them;
 - 3) To announce that it would fully implement without delay the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 29th, 1987;
 - 4) To nominate an interim council for the North-East province in consultation with the parties who were elected to the North-East Provincial Council. The interim council should proportionately comprise representatives of parties elected at the Provincial Council elections. LTTE would be invited to join. The interim council should function till the Provincial Council comes into being after a free and fair election;
 - 5) To initiate negotiations with the LTTE after the cessation of hostilities takes effect. This should lead to laying down of arms and reciprocal measures by the government. A practical approach is necessary in this regard.

The Government of Sri Lanka is the other party to this conflict and cannot expect to supervise or monitor the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms. A neutral organisation is therefore, necessary for this purpose. An Indian presence could be invited for this operation as India guaranteed the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. If India is unable to participate, then a friendly country like Canada, Australia, Sweden or Norway could be approached. — Hindu Council

Church Launches Campaign

The street walls in Negombo, the town nearest the Airport, are plastered with posters. One such poster boldly proclaims "girls in Thailand, boys in Sri Lanka". The slogan has been reproduced from a European travel journal. The Catholic Church has now launched a new campaign to add to the Island's many wars — the targets of the Church campaign are, aids, pollution, child prostitution and drugs. Its broadside is aimed specifically at a large Australian-financed tourist complex and a "Voice of America" relay station. Both will be located in the Chilaw district.

The campaign was launched at Christmas in the village of Iranawila. Some 7000 devotees clad in white, and led by scores of young priests marched in a demonstration they called a *padanamaskara* ("way of the cross").

"Their real target is the hotel project, not the VOA. But we are in the cross-fire" said a US embassy official. The vast hotel complex, which is likely to cost over 40 million US dollars will boast a race track, a golf course, casinos and

a long stretch of the finest beaches. The Australian financiers and the local collaborators are sure they can attract the golf-crazy Japanese for weekend trips. Charter flights and weekend golf in Sri Lanka will cost less than in Japan, where membership in a club is not only expensive but a long, long wait.

The VOA has been in Sri Lanka for forty years. Plans for a modernisation program with new 500 kilowatt transmitters were approved by president J R Jayewardena in 1985. But India, increasingly involved in the Island's ethnic conflict accused the US of trying to use strategically located Sri Lanka to gather "sensitive information" on all naval traffic in the Indian Ocean. Privately Indian officials complained that the VOA facility could monitor Indian communications and send signals to US nuclear submarines. A Catholic journal in Colombo said it was part of the "star wars" program. The new project will cost (60) million dollars.

In the 1987 India-Sri Lanka "peace accord" which India virtually imposed on an embat-

led Jayewardena regime, there was an explicit reference to the VOA project. India demanded that broadcasting facilities granted to the US be regularly reviewed to ensure that these facilities were "not used for military or intelligence purposes" at that time, the Soviet press also attacked S. L. for permitting the US such facilities. With the marked improvement recently in Indo-US relations, officials here were surprised when the Indian High Commissioner Mr. N. N. Jha, called at Foreign Ministry to express his "concern".

The strident Church campaign has puzzled diplomats here. In this predominantly Buddhist Island, the Catholic community is only five percent (5%). The Vatican is worried about its position in the Third World, says the *Sunday Island*. The Pope's visit to Brazil revealed this concern, especially about the steady loss of ground to both "liberation theology" as well new cults and rival religions. His Holiness urged the clergy to take up new social issues that agitate large communities — environmental pollution, aids, drugs, child prostitution.

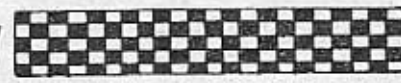
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Privatization in Sri Lanka: An Overview

Saman Kelegama

Privatization is a major economic exercise in Sri Lanka today. Two years have passed since the completion of the first full-scale privatization of a public corporation. It is time for us to look back and assess what has happened in the sphere of privatization so far, for there is little information about its progress in the prevailing literature.

It is well known that, over the last twenty years, public enterprises in Sri Lanka functioned without any fear of bankruptcy or liquidation. Many were noted for their inefficiency, poor quality of their products, and consequent losses. By the late eighties, most of them needed restructuring; they also found it very difficult to survive in a liberalized economy without substantial tariff protection and state subsidies. Tariff protection went contrary to further liberalization attempts which is now the norm in economic policy. Subsidizing became a burden to the state at a time when not only defence expenditure was escalating but also when there were imperatives to reduce public expenditure. Given the problems of public enterprises and the current world trends, the policy-makers were of the view that the only way out of the dilemma was a privatization programme.

There are four major steps in the Sri Lankan privatization programme. In short, they are: (1) assets and liabilities valuation, (2) debt/capital restructuring, (3) conversion of a public corporation into a company, and (4) divestiture of state ownership. With the blessings of the international financial institutions, privatization has been pursued with much enthusiasm and vigour since its commence-

A summary of a lecture delivered at the Sri Lanka Association of Advancement of Science, Annual Session, December 1991.

ment in mid-1989. As Table 1 shows, privatization has taken

place in 14 public corporations and, as Table 2 indicates, about 33 corporations are in the pipeline for privatization in the near future. The main objectives of the privatization programme in Sri Lanka are:

Table 1
Privatization in Sri Lanka: The Story So Far
(31 December 1991)

Public Enterprise	% Shares	Date of sale	Amount (Rs. Mn.)
United Motors			
Mitsubishi Corporation (Japan)	5	Dec. '89	5.0
Employees	5		
Public	90	Dec. '89	90.0
Tulhiriya Textile			
Kabool Lanka Ltd. (South Korea)	100	Feb. '90	200.0
Pugoda Textile			
Lakshmi (India)	60	June '90	*60.0
Employees	10		
Public	30	June '91	30.0
Ceylon Oxygen			
Norske Hydro (Norway)	60	Nov. '90	60.0
Employees	10		
Public	30	Apr. '91	27.0
Dankotuwa Porcelain			
International Ceramics Incorporated (Japan)	50	Dec. '90	102.0
Employees	10		
Public	40	NC	
Buhari Hotel			
Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (JSS)	80	Dec. '90	6.3
Employees	10		
Treasury	10		
Ceylon Leather Products			
S. A. Perera & Co. Ltd.	90	July '91	40.0
Employees	10		
Hunas Falls Ltd.			
Hayleys Co. Ltd.	60	Aug. '91	12.0
Employees	10		
Public	30	NC	
Total Revenue			632.3

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(i) to improve management, induce efficiency, reduce costs, and; thereby provide a better consumer service;

(ii) to induce technology transfer and modernization to increase productivity and growth, by encouraging foreign participation in equity,

(iii) to relieve the state from the burden of subsidizing and and keeping afloat loss-making public enterprises, and thereby

induce better budgetary management; and

(iv) to promote wide-spread share-ownership so that "peoplication" becomes a reality and eventually make it difficult for future governments to reverse the privatizations that have taken place;

Given the short experience with privatization, it is too premature to make conclusive statements about the positive

and negative achievements of the Sri Lankan programme. However, impressionistic evidence and some published and unpublished data are available to make some tentative observations. As can be seen, the first two objectives of the privatization programme are somewhat inter-related and thus can be considered together. In regard to them it appears that privatization has shown some positive results. A few case studies would be worthwhile to examine.

Table 1 (continued) :
The Most Recent Cases of Privatization

	% Shares	Date of Sale
Lanka Milk Foods		
Stassen Exports Ltd./Dubai Co.	51	Nov. '91
Public	39	
Employees	10	NC
Asian Hotels Corporation (Lanka Oberoi)		
Asia Investment Management Services Ltd. (Hong Kong)	51	Dec. '91
Public	49	NC
Ceylon State Hardware Corporation		
ABC Management Services Ltd.	90	Dec. '91
Employees	10	NC
Sri Lanka Tyre Corporation		
Nova Lanka Ltd.	60	Dec. '91
Public	30	NC
Employees	10	NC
Mattegama Textiles		
Leomarc Textile Management (Singapore)/Free Lanka Trading Ltd.	60	Dec. '91
Public	30	NC
Employees	10	NC
Cases which are pending handover to the new owners due to various problems		
Oils and Fats Corporation		
Prima Ltd./Free Lanka Trading Ltd.	60	Aug. '91
Public	30	NC
Employees	10	NC
Awaiting decision of the Fair Trading Commission on a petition claiming that a private monopoly is being created in the livestock industry.		

Notes : NC=Not Completed; * — Initial Payment.

Source : Compiled by the author using various documents of the Ministry of Finance.

The Pugoda Textile Mill, for instance, has invested Rs. 140 million in modernization, expansion, and a diversification programme after it was privatized. This amount is very significant compared with Rs. 150 million invested over the last ten years by Pugoda under public ownership and the private management of Lakshmi Textiles, India. Moreover, among other innovations, a new rotary screen printing machine with twelve colours, costing Rs. 35 million, has been added. Profits too have increased from Rs. 863 million in 1990/91 to Rs. 925 million in 1991/92. Similarly, in United Motors, the turnover doubled from Rs. 219.6 million in 1989/90 to Rs. 443.2 million in 1990/91. The pre-tax profit increased by 15 per cent during these years and the company continues to fund its operations internally without resorting to any long-term bank borrowing. During 1990/91 the company concentrated, *inter alia*, on marketing, customer relations, productivity improvements, computerization, training of personnel and diversification.

In the case of the Leather Corporation, production has increased by 50 per cent after privatization. The salaries of employees have also increased by 50 per cent. Moreover, some of the retrenched labourers from the corporation are now engaged in subcontracting activities to the company, and some others are similarly engaged for other leather enterprises like Bata. Thus, in overall terms, it ap-

pears that modernization and growth have already taken place in some privatized corporations.

In regard to the third objective, the picture appears negative in the short run. Although privatization relieves the state of its fiscal burden in the long-run, there is no evidence to show that it does the same in the short-run. This is because the state has to settle with banks many of the liabilities of these public corporations accumulated over several years before privatization, restructure

debt, and compensate displaced workers. Sometimes the funds obtained by selling these corporations are inadequate revenue gains come into direct conflict with the government's tax reduction policies for general private sector initiatives. Thus there are conflicts in the government's short-run objective of accumulating more revenue with the privatization programme.

Finally, in regard to the fourth objective, the attempts have not been very satisfactory. Sri Lanka's privatization pro-

gramme, with the ongoing private sector development programmes, have contributed to increase the share owning population in the country from about 9,000 in 1989 to about 40,000 by 1991. In a country where the sharemarket was in the doldrums for many years this increase could be considered as a progress. However, the share-owning population appears to be concentrated in urban areas and the same group of investors seem to have been involved in purchasing shares of the recently privatized companies. The number of share application forms in the country was around 280,000 by 1991 compared with the 40,000 share-owners; a possible interpretation to this is that, on average, a person holds shares in seven companies. These are probably expected in an environment where share-trading has been relatively unknown. Although the Securities and Exchange Commission undertook various measures to educate the public on the virtues of owning shares, these efforts seem to have had only a limited impact in spreading ownership to a wider spectrum of the population.

While the above discussion has shed some light on the positive achievements and slow progress in certain areas, it may be useful to examine the problems of privatization in its early phase of implementation. Although the privatization programme was pursued with vigour, since of late it has faced several setbacks and various problems. Firstly, and most importantly, the lack of transparency in the implementation of the programme has led to rumours of corruption and favouritism. For, instance, the Ceylon Textile Manufacturers' Association has alleged that unduly favoured market access for textile products was accorded to Kabool Lanka — the purchaser of the Thulhiriya Textile Mill ("Textiles Today", Vol. 1, Nos. 1 & 2). These allegations have yet to be denied officially.

Table 2

Public Enterprises to be Privatized

1. Veyangoda Textile Mills Ltd.
2. Distilleries Company of Sri Lanka Ltd.
3. Independent Television Network (ITN)
4. Acland Insurance Services Ltd.
5. Ceylon Manufacturers & Merchants Ltd.
6. Hevyquip Ltd.
7. Colombo Commercial Company (Engineering) Ltd.
8. Colombo Commercial Company (Fertiliser) Ltd.
9. Colombo Commercial Company (Teas)
10. MILCO Ltd.
11. Sathosa Motors Co.
12. Sathosa Computers Co.
13. Sathosa Printers Co.
14. Trans Asia Hotels Ltd.
15. Ceylon Fertiliser Corporation
16. State Trading (Tractor) Corporation
17. Nylon 6 Plant of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation
18. Building Materials Corporation
19. Building Materials Manufacturing Corporation
20. Ceylon Steel Corporation
21. Sri Lanka Cement Corporation (Ruhunu Cement Works)
22. State Trading (Textile) Corporation (Salu Sala)
23. Lubricant Plant of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation
24. Sevanagala Sugar Industries
25. Hingurana Sugar Industries
26. Kantalai Sugar Industries
27. Sri Lanka State Trading (General) Corporation
28. Consolidated Exports & Trading Co. Ltd.
29. Lanka Canneries Ltd.
30. Ceylon Shipping Lines
31. Cey-Nor Foundation Ltd.
32. Lanka Plywood Corporation
33. Kahatagaha Graphite Lanka Ltd.

Source : Ministry of Policy Planning & Implementation.

(Continued on page 14)

Privatization (2)

C. P. de Silva

What is privatisation? :

It is the transfer of management of state owned enterprises from the public sector to the private sector. There are 4 principal types of privatisation. They are: divesting, contracting out, leasing & deregulation (allowing private sector competition).

Why has it become popular? :

It is due to the pragmatic realisation that the state owned sector cannot provide goods and services as efficiently as the private sector and enormous subsidies are required to maintain loss making state owned enterprises (SOEs). The pressure has mounted from lending agencies, donor countries and Finance Ministries.

Submotivations for privatisation:

- i. The need for immediate cash income. In order to close budgetary deficits sale of SOEs would be better than increasing taxes or raising loans. This is the primary motivation of Thatcher's Government according to some.
- ii. The need for foreign exchange to settle foreign debts.
- iii. The desire to encourage industrial development.
- iv. The desire to encourage foreign investment.
- v. The desire to ensure future cash income. Privatisation leads to higher profits and higher tax revenue.
- vi. The desire to develop capital markets. Many workers have bought the shares of privatised SOEs.

Some governments have come to the conclusion that there is no reason to compete with the private sector in areas where

A leading businessman, the writer was Chairman, Aitken Spence.

the private sector can satisfactorily perform. The rule of the government sector should be limited to areas where the private sector does not have the capital or the motivation.

In health, education, transport, electricity, it has been found that the private sector can provide cheaper and better services.

The private sector excels in efficiency due to the fact that owners are interested in greater profits and managers are interested in the long run survival of the firm as losses would lead to bankruptcy and loss of jobs. The careers of managers would depend on efficiency.

SOEs are owned indirectly by the people. Individuals cannot buy or sell public enterprise assets nor do they have a residual claim on the profits. It is mainly the tax payers that are affected by the profits and losses of SOEs and the effect neither direct nor immediate. Thus, there is no strong incentive for citizens to monitor the performance of public sector employees which is in any case a practical impossibility.

The employees themselves are not directly affected by the financial results of the SOEs. Remuneration in the public sector is not tied to performance. Losses in SOEs do not result in inevitable loss of employment. The consequence is that most public sector employees tend to pursue pre-requisites rather than efficiency. All this is recognized the world over, but still there is a lingering belief in some quarters, that in practice the public sector has not been shown to be necessarily less efficient than the private sector.

Studies in USA have shown that administrative functions cost more in the public sector. Maintaining and pursuing accounts receivables cost 60% less in the

private sector than for the federal government. The federal government takes a year or more to obtain judgments against a debtor as compared to 5 months in the private sector. The cost of processing a payroll cheque in the US army is \$4.20 as compared to \$1 in a large private sector enterprise. When custodial services were transferred from US Department of Defence to the private sector it resulted in 5 to 25 per cent reduction. A comparison of 97 state owned hydro electric plants with 47 privately owned plants showed that the cost per Kilowatt hours was 21% higher in the public sector. Similar studies in banking, hospitals, air lines and postal services have shown that the public sector was less efficient in providing goods and services.

The relative decline of Britain over the last 2 decades has coincided with a decline in the proportion of UK equity held by individuals from 54% in 1963 to 28% in 1981. During the same period the proportion in America has remained roughly at a level of about 60%. Mrs. Thatcher has realised more than 20 billion by diversitures of Aerospace, Telecoms, Road Haulage, Britoil, Sea Ports, Ferri, Jaguar (cars). The flow of tax income has increased as the divested companies made profits or reduced making losses. The American Government owns only a few business enterprises and even the running of prisons is done by private sector (the secret of its success.)

Obstacles to Privatisation:

The main obstacle to privatisation comes from resistance from politicians and bureaucrats. Any time a SOE is privatised it results in loss of power and influence and monetary benefits to the bureaucrats and the politicians who have influence over it.

There are some of the arguments against privatisation:

a) A private monopoly will be created. Only a handful of companies will take over the shares and a monopoly will be created. Hence the assumption is that permanent public monopoly is better than temporary

private monopoly. There is a belief that entrepreneurs are altruistic and bureaucrats are enlightened.

b) Many public services are natural monopolies so they should be operated by the public sector.

c) The services must be provided by the state to ensure

that the poor will have access to it. But heavy subsidizing of SOEs can harm the poor. Government monopolists are not concerned with quality of service as there is no competition. d) Public Service should be organised for services and not for profit.

Substantial

a) Misleading cost Accounting Private Sector prices are higher than Government Sector prices. Costs must not be confused with price. State cost is subsidised and often depreciation is not included and capital costs are, too, not included.

b) Fear of unemployment

c) Fear of corruptions

d) Legal prohibitions

e) Regulatory problems—Govt. Regulations may make privatisation impossible or unattractive.

f) Inadequate legal structure

g) Undeveloped capital markets.

Courtesy: "The Journal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants."

Privatization...

(Continued from page 12)

It is also alleged that there have been partial or full privatization attempts by negotiation with "interested parties", without inviting open offers. For example, Thulhiriya and Pugoda Textile Mills. In such cases, there is no evidence up to date that the best terms have been obtained by the country.

Similarly, rumours of sales of assets at less than market value have been afloat with regard to the attempts to privatize several corporations. For example, allegations of "insider arrangements" have been made

in regard to the Oils and Fats Corporation (see The Sunday Times, 1. 12. 1991 and The Island, 11. 12. 1991). Of course, the given market value of an enterprise can be subject to many different estimations. If the process of privatization was done openly, with full information provided to the public, these rumours of "crony capitalism" could have been avoided. It is said that certain guidelines have been approved by the cabinet relating to the manner in which enterprises should be privatized. These guidelines have so far not been made public.

(To be continued)

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From rebel to collaborator

A. Jeyaratnam Wilson

The period prior to 1931 leaves room to wonder what his ambitions were. D. S. had his secondary education at Saint Thomas's where he did not shine. He did not proceed to any institution of higher learning. Instead he took to managing the family business. We have no available information on the influence that his father, Mudaliyar Don Spater Senanayake had on him, leave alone his mother. Nor did D. S. make any reference in his public utterances to his parents or even to his well respected brother, F. R. We know that D. S. grew up in the rural background of Botale and he therefore had to be conservative and traditional in his thinking. Nor was his wife helpful given that she was ailing. As for religion, he did not politicise his Buddhism but took it as a fact of life. And indeed he spoke respectfully of the benefits of missionary education because of his pleasant days at Saint Thomas's.

D. S.'s political experience reached a milestone when the British colonial authorities gaoled him for a short while during the Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1915. But it was not the road to a nationalist Damascus. His performance in the Legislative Council during 1921-31 was not conspicuous though he became a senior spokesman for the Unofficial Members in the early twenties after Sir P. Ramanathan began voicing the concerns of only the Ceylon Tamils. D. S. was not a good speechmaker but could articulate his ideas in his own homespun English.

In 1931, D. S. was elected Minister of Agriculture and Lands and this led him to launch the various irrigation schemes in the dry zone. He did not count this as a political plus. His

own experience as an agriculturist in managing the family estate and the possibilities of carving for himself a niche in restoring the ancient irrigation works of Sinhala kings could possibly have been motivating factors. However his *Agriculture and Patriotism* (1935) commonly attributed to the civil servant who functioned as his Commissioner of Lands (A. G. Ranasingha) indicated an interest in populating these areas with Sinhala colonists.

The years after 1931 provide evidence of the unfolding of D. S.'s political aspirations. D. S. was a big "bonhomous" man whose personality could overpower rivals or charm people. He was fortunate in having the backing of the press baron, D. R. Wijewardene. He had the cooperation of able civil servants including the deft Oliver Goonetilleke, a distant family connection. In the second half of the thirties, D. S., the rebel against Britain had transformed himself to a willing collaborator, the reason being that self-government was more achievable in this way than by following the path of the Indian National Congress. But he did not toe the British line altogether as was for example witnessed when he resigned over the Mooloya incident (1940).

By the late thirties D. S. had achieved three major objectives: (1) the senior statesman, the ageing Baron Jayatilaka was got out of the way and D. S. succeeded him as Leader of the State Council (2) prime ministerial material such as G. C. S. Corea and S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was edged out; as early as after the elections to the second State Council in 1936, D. S. had told D. R. Wijewardene that "Claude Corea (g. c. s) had to be wat-

ched". Dr. N. M. Perera thought that G. C. S. Corea was a possible prime minister. And Dr. Perera stated that Claude Corea "was shunted off" by being appointed, after independence, as High Commissioner in London. As for S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, J. L. Fernando attributed to D. S. "a type of cunning" in that "he used to make occasional suggestions to Kotelawala to ask embarrassing questions from S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike . . . Bandaranaike flared up and used his vitriolic tongue to good effect, sending Kotelawala in turn to a rage. . . ." and (3) the pan-Sinhalese Board of Ministers had its composition altered with the election of a Ceylon Tamil as Minister of Home Affairs, Arunachalam Mahadeva (1943), in place of Baron Jayatilaka; thus Britain was made to realize that the Sinhala majority was willing to share power with the Ceylon Tamils. This feat of political engineering was accomplished by D. S. and his friends. These successes can again be interpreted in terms of a native cunning acquired in the hurly burly of the business and political world.

But now we come to the more important questions:

- (1) what were the main themes of D. S. Senanayake's Prime Ministership (1947-52)?
- (2) to what extent was he influenced in his character, his worldview and style in terms of his experience before he entered the high office?
- (3) where does he fit into Barber's paradigm?

D. S. was pro-West, in particular pro-British in foreign policy. He was suspicious of an aggressive India. But shrewd as he was, he did not lay all his

(Continued on page 17)

In a Goiya's Mirror

Manik Sandrasagara

Do we barter our environment for the greed of a few or do we plan for our real needs? This question must be settled first. Foreign aid agencies influencing our people in choosing what's best is interference in our internal affairs. This 'NIC' versus 'ESD' question is of utmost importance to all those who live in Lanka. Before any decision is made by a Centralised Government on what we do with our motherland it must be a subject of an open debate. This problem is more important than as to what system of government prevails.

Industrialisation

The industrialised world must protect the South Asia from industrialisation. It is in her interests to keep her 'green'. If South-Asia were to follow the West, by the time the West wakes up, South Asia would have turned half the planet into one giant slum. Let's keep industry in the developed nations. They are used to that way of life. Let South-Asia retain its culture as an agrarian base. There is also money in this. We know that we are custodians not owners of the elements. How then can we pollute this region with politics, world trade and labour unions replacing a priesthood of farmers who venerated the land as a mother?

Consensus

First the people must be told the truth. No one person should hold the reins with divide and rule as a principle. Individuals must disappear and consensus must rule. Only if the Sinhalese speak with one voice can we start a dialogue with the Tamils. If we are divided now can we insist that the Tamils be united? Already in every village tradition is getting stronger. People are going to temples and shrines

and pleading with the gods for justice. In Jaffna, the people have got used to living without petrol, electricity or kerosene, but they are managing — why because of a cause they believe in. We don't have a cause that unites us, except perhaps capturing Jaffna. After that what? When we have destroyed most of Lanka what will we do with Jaffna? The youth are not stupid — after 44 years if the present is the result, there must be something wrong with the system not with individuals. J. R. tried, Premadasa tried, but they have all failed that is why we have the present problem. How can anyone else succeed unless they understand the problem — the system.

The Future

In 1971, I opposed Wijeyweera's fifth lesson — armed conflict. I said that this was not necessary since the system will destroy itself. This is now happening. The electorate is fast losing its confidence in its leadership. A politician cannot walk on the streets without thugs and policemen guarding him. They are so busy slandering each other so that the whole country knows who the real criminals are. Parliament, the Presidency and the Law are all becoming irrelevant. The media is also suspect since it is also playing the middleman's role and it is a business. Where do we go from here? Anarchy... but anarchy is not all bad, out of it will arise a new mind and a new era, devoid of hypocrisy and lies. Wijeyweera and Prabakaran are only symptoms. Destroying them will not solve the problem.

Conflict

Traditionally there was no Sinhala — Tamil divide. After the introduction of the 'Potha' — one in Sinhala, one in Tamil,

people started fighting over what was in the 'Potha'. Even today the fight is over land. Land ownership starts with the Portuguese thombus, Dutch deeds and English law. Land grabbing is the cause of this conflict and lawyers have been the only regular beneficiaries. Instead of boundaries being watersheds and working towards common goals and ideals, we are now fighting over a land that is dying fast. Provincial boundaries were first 5, then 7, then 9. People were first asked to vote for colour, then a symbol and finally for a person. Division was bred and party politics was the method.

Jambudweepa

To us in the village, there is but one land mass. From Kailas to Kataragama there was only Jambudweepa. This region was culturally related. For centuries pilgrims walked from North to South and although they spoke a thousand languages they were united by patterns of behaviour. This cultural pattern was destroyed by nations, boundaries and governments coming into being.

Consider the story of Dharmashoka: Dharmashoka killed every small King. He became Emperor of Jambudweepa. Then he became a 'good man' and started preaching and sending missions abroad. Chanda-Ashoka become Dharma-Ashoka. This is what is in our history books — but the clever man sees through this story. The 'Mahawamsa' is a secret text — a labyrinth or a wankagiri. Fools will fight over it and wise men will laugh over it. It is a story of Kings, bloodlines and Guna Dharma, not just a modern history book.

Constitutions

These are also 'Potha's. We villagers do not have any 'potha'. Our culture is based on living 'sirit'. This has existed for centuries. This has been tried and tested hence its sustainability. The present constitution we are arguing about was decided in 17 days, experimented over 13 years and has 16 amendments. Why argue over this 'potha'? Why don't we realise that this 'Potha'

is based on our ignorance and seek alternatives based on wisdom. What unites us is much greater than that which divides us. Let us first study what we have in common. If Lawyers are to decide our future we can rest assured that we will only see division: that is their training.

Co-Existence

Bats come to a tree with fruit. If you don't give, you don't get. A King must always be magnanimous. He cannot be bankrupt. He must understand people's love for novelty, for money, for change, for power, in fact for more of everything. These desires naturally lead to slander and competition. Everybody attacks each other. A false purity emerges.

Leaders are mostly merchants. A villager fears the ocean. The wewa is the only ocean we know. Crossing an ocean is not our heritage. Traders, evangelists and reformers belong to another mentality. As long as they kept travelling, we had nothing to fear from them. When they settle down, they don't know how to use and

protect the land. They are only used to harvesting and trading, not sowing and protecting.

The King

A King has to be a murderer or how can he rule? In our villages there is an unseen King. He rules from behind a 'thira' (veil). All ritual functions associated with Kingship was carried out without the need for an individual King. With the rise of a city culture the unseen power was symbolised in the person of a King who played the role. His rule however could never be his personal whim and fancy. He was a servant of the Dharma. It was Dharma that ruled not the King. Every village had its own God-King. He resided by a wewa, in a tree, on a hill, a rock or in a cave. It was for this reason that the British encountered so many puppet Kings in 1848. Who was in the Pallanquin did not matter. It was never the person only the idea.

Nowadays, men want to be like Gods. They trust in their own purity and wisdom. Instead

of being like a pilgrim the modern ruler tries to be a missionary. He tries to impose his notion of Dharma on everybody. If he is not enlightened naturally there will be war. If he is enlightened, he will have nothing to fear because the Dharma will protect him. That is why there is a story that our King slept with a sword hanging over his heart. If he was just, he slept in peace.

Humility

Lampooning was part of our entertainment. 'Kolam' illustrated this best. Nobody and nothing was sacred. Today's media is a pale imitation. It is 'pandang karaya's' media. It only leads to false pride and belief in one's self importance. This is dangerous to both the rulers and the ruled. Everything becomes serious. Fun is removed and laughter prohibited. Why can't we laugh at ourselves? We are a culture that ridiculed even the King. This is best seen through ritual where we even use abuse to teach the King humility. What has happened to our sense of fun?

From rebel to...

(Continued from page 15)

cards on the table. In domestic affairs he was *laissez faire* (let sleeping dogs lie). In ethnic matters, he was opposed to the Indian Tamils, and was desirous of curbing excessive Ceylon Tamil ethnocentrism.

In relation therefore to the Ceylon Tamil and Muslim communities, D. S. went for inter-elite cooperation preferring to co-opt willing collaborators. Instinctively he disapproved of political controversies trickling down to the monks and the masses (and in this he was correct). He was decisively anti-Marxist, not for any serious ideological reasons but in the interests of the tradition-bound peasantry and the conventional middle class. But he did not pattern a coherent political philosophy either in regard to state or nation building nor in respect of political ideology.

There are more aspects of the "active-negative" than the

"active-positive" evidential in the four and a half years that D. S. held the office of Prime Minister. The active-negative combines intense effort and low emotional reward for that effort; he tends towards entrenched opinions. This was manifest in the way D. S. handled the question of the transfer of power from Britain.

D. S. obtained independence but with conditions attached such as the granting to Britain of naval and air bases in return for a mutual defence agreement under which Britain would come to Ceylon's assistance in the event of foreign attack. The agreement was devoid of meaning. The only potential aggressor was India against whom Britain would never have reacted. This was the lesson Pakistan's Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan learned when he sought assurances against an Indian attack from the Attlee government. On 24 June 1949, Ali Khan after failing to secure a

military alliance between his country and Britain "against Communism" proceeded in June 1949 to declare his concerns. He told the British High Commissioner in Pakistan, L. B. Graffey Smith: "what I fear is that Great Britain and the world would look on with folded arms if India attacked us" British policy then was not to offend India, rather to appease India so that India would remain in the Commonwealth and thereby enhance Britain's prestige as a global power. If this were the case with a major state such as Pakistan what hope could there be of Britain coming to Ceylon's assistance in the event of an Indian attack?

Furthermore the probabilities of Indian expansionism at this stage were remote, given India's problems resulting from the partition of the subcontinent, Nehru's foreign policy, and the emergence of the nonaligned movement.

(To be Continued)

Free Press and Polls

Izeth Hussain

The present Government might be described as quasi-democratic. If the alternative to democracy is dictatorship, the Government might be described with equal accuracy, as has been done by Lalith Athulathmudali, as a quasi-dictatorship. One reason among others is that freedom of the press, something regarded as a pre-requisite for democracy, has been so severely constricted in Sri Lanka that we really have no press freedom in any worthwhile sense. I want to pose the question whether for this reason the Government might be more appropriately described as not democratic at all.

This question does not mean that we are judging the Government's democratic credentials from impossibly high standards. It can be argued that democracy is an ideal which has probably not been realized anywhere in the world, not even in the West. One of the foremost contemporary theorists of democracy, Robert Dahl, uses the term "polyarchy" to designate the Western systems of government, not "democracy" which in its full and strict sense may never come to be realized by humanity. What the West has is imperfect democracy, and the question I am asking is whether we can claim to have even imperfect democracy while we are denied full press freedom.

Dahl stipulates seven institutions as necessary for polyarchy. Firstly the government must be elected, secondly the elections must be free and fair, thirdly there must be universal suffrage, fourthly all adults must have the right to run for office, fifthly there must be freedom of expression, sixthly the people must have access to alternative sources of information, and

seventhly there must be associational autonomy allowing people to form relatively independent associations such as political parties and interest groups.

It must be noted that Dahl is far from being demanding in his stipulations for polyarchy or imperfect democracy. For instance, he says nothing about separation of powers and independence of the judiciary. All that is required really are free and fair elections on the basis of universal suffrage, a free press and freedom of information, and associational autonomy. As we have no really free press in Sri Lanka, we cannot claim to have even an imperfect or quasi-democracy.

We in Sri Lanka have been even less demanding than Dahl about the requisites for imperfect democracy. All that has been required here, is that a government come to power through free and fair elections, the expression of the will of the majority, after which the government can ride roughshod over practically everything and everybody without losing its democratic credentials. A free press has been regarded as something like an ancillary benefit, which can be discarded without affecting the government's democratic pretensions because it still remains fundamentally democratic, expressing as it does the majority will determined through free and fair elections.

At this point I want to raise a further question. Can a government claim to be democratically elected while press freedom is suppressed? At General Elections we choose the government from among contending political parties. The choice is made on the basis of information available to the public about the policies and performance of the govern-

ment, and the alternative policies of the opposition parties. Should information be suppressed about the government's misgovernment, which certainly happens when the press is not really free, the people are denied the means to make a fully informed judgement on the government, and to vote accordingly. It becomes questionable whether elections can be really fair and free when the press is not fully free.

It can happen that a government which has suppressed press freedom loses at General Elections, which was the fate of the SLFP Government in 1977. The defeat might have been worse if the press had been free. An important question arises when a Leader and his Government get re-elected while press freedom is suppressed. At the very least the legitimacy of their election victories has to be questioned. The Sri Lankan notion that a government has democratic legitimacy through free and fair elections, a legitimacy which it does not lose thereafter however undemocratic its behaviour, certainly requires that the press be fully free at the time of the elections.

The President and the present Government certainly have achievements to their credit, which to be fairly judged have to be seen in the perspective of the gory mess left by the 1977 Jayawardena Government, which on its record was beyond doubt among the worst Third World Governments since the 1950's. It was among the worst because of its irresponsible and unconstrained anti-democratic power. We must get back to the kind of democracy we had in the 'fifties, and for that the absolute pre-requisite is press freedom. It is known that when a regime moves in an anti-democratic direction the first casualty is the free press. Its restoration should be our first priority.

A career diplomat, the writer was Sri Lanka Ambassador in Manila

Kashmir, Myths and Reality

Inder Malhotra

On few other issues is there so much misunderstanding, misrepresentation, obfuscation, distortion, disinformation and downright falsehood as on Kashmir. The problem is, of course, immensely complex and has a long and tortured history. Only the then Indian defence minister and chief delegate to the U.N., Krishna Menon, had the wit to sum it all up in a speech to the security council lasting no more than nine hours. But that was in 1957, a good 35 years ago. Since then much water has flowed down the Jehlum, to say nothing of other subcontinental rivers.

It may not be easy to do so but an attempt must be made to salvage a modicum of clarity from this awful mess of confusion as objectively and briefly as humanly possible. The story has to begin from the beginning but it might be useful to interpose here one significant contemporary fact.

For close to 20 years since the 1971 war for the liberation of Bangladesh and the subsequent Simla Agreement signed by India and Pakistan — which enjoined both countries to settle all disputes including Kashmir, peacefully and bilaterally and scrupulously to respect the Line of Control “without prejudice to their basic positions” — no one in the wide world bothered about Kashmir. It is understandable that the sudden spurt of terrorism and a secessionist movement in Kashmir since December 1989 should draw international attention to the valley. But how does the mixture of a virtual insurgency, a proxy war by Pakistan and widespread alienation of the Kashmiris suddenly validate and bring back to life long discarded and discredited U.N. resolutions, passed under totally different

circumstances? More importantly, how does a situation of this kind which is faced by, say, Sri Lanka and sundry other countries warrant the clamour for self-determination only in Kashmir? Furthermore, how does the question of independence for Kashmir arise today when this option was never mentioned, leave alone countenanced, even when the Kashmir issue was before the U.N.?

We will return to these questions presently after tracing the genesis of the problem and the complicated vicissitudes it has passed through over the years.

At the time of independence and partition of the British India, Kashmir was a princely state, among the larger few of a total of 562, the smallest of which was no bigger than the holding of a goatherd. The partition was not between Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The Muslim-majority areas in the north-west and north-east did opt out. But India was a continuance of the Eternal India, a secular state in which all religions, castes and creeds were equal before the law. A very large number of Muslims live in India even then. Today more Muslims live in India than in Pakistan.

A methodology for the British Indian provinces to exercise their choice of joining India or Pakistan existed. There was none in relation to the princely Indian states. The British position was both ambiguous and hypocritical. The British paramountcy having lapsed, the princes were free to make their own arrangements with the two successor dominions. But this was a myth or at best a technicality. The reality was, as the last British Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, who later became independent India's first governor-general, bluntly told the princes, that “certain

geographical compulsions” could not be evaded. He had added that the “communal character of the ruler's subjects was also a relevant consideration”.

The basic dichotomy between India and Pakistan became evident almost immediately. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and its first governor-general, insisted that in a state's accession to either India or Pakistan, the ruler's discretion was absolute. India said that this was nonsense and the people's will must prevail.

Kashmir had a Hindu ruler but a Muslim majority population. The Maharaja was unpopular and incompetent. He wavered about the future of his state for much too long. The popular leader of all Kashmiris, Muslim and Hindu, Sheikh Abdulla, was for the Maharaja's removal and was on cordial terms with Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders of the freedom movement. He and Jinnah detested each other. The average Kashmiri was also more fearful of the Punjabi Muslim dominant in Pakistan than of the government and the people of secular India.

While the Maharaja's procrastination caused uncertainty and suspense, Pakistan tried to clinch the issue and grab the coveted state — undoubtedly a beautiful piece of real estate of great strategic importance — by sending in hordes of tribal invaders led by Pakistani military officers quietly allowed to join this essay in fraud and violence. The raiders might have succeeded in their nefarious design. But they got bogged down in pillage, loot and rape.

The shaken Maharaja then acceded to India. The accession was accepted only after it was endorsed by Abdullah, the peo-

ple's leader who also became head of an interim government. Furthermore, India said unilaterally and clearly that after the state was cleared of the Pakistan-backed raiders, the wishes of the people of Kashmir would be ascertained. Nehru later elaborated, once again on his own, that any plebiscite in Kashmir to determine the people's wishes would be held under the auspices of the U. N. Indian troops were sent to Kashmir. Pakistan also stepped up its presence. The first Kashmir war had begun. After the war had gone on for nearly three months, Nehru took the issue to the U. N. security council to ask the world body to compel Pakistan to stop assisting those who had raided Kashmir and to withdraw them. In retrospect, this was a mistake. For at the U. N., Kashmir instantly became a plaything or international power politics.

Even so, the U. N. resolutions about which so much fuss is being made today clearly laid down that there would first have to be a cease-fire (which came into effect on January 1, 1949), then Pakistan must withdraw its armed forces and personnel from entire Jammu and Kashmir, then Indian troops should be thinned down and finally the plebiscite be held.

Pakistani scholar, Pravez Iqbal Cheema, has documented the various occasions when Pakistan could have had the plebiscite it is panting for now simply by doing its part to implement the U. N. resolutions. But it did not do so. Why?

After numerous mediatory efforts, the U. N. itself concluded that it was best to leave it to the two sides to settle the Kashmir issue through mutual discussions. These discussions came to naught and were virtually destroyed by the U. S.-Pakistan military alliance of 1954 after which Nehru stated that in the totally new context that impinged on Indian security, old assurances about Kashmir no longer held. It was only in 1957, however, that the offer of the plebiscite was formally withdrawn.

Fifteen months after Nehru's death, Pakistan launched the 1965 war in the hope of grabbing Kashmir by force. The attempt failed. But surely it destroyed any moral claim of Pakistan to talk of settling Kashmir peacefully.

And yet India did concede this right in the Simla agreement of July 1972 to which a reference has already been made. The 1971 war between India and Pakistan was primarily for the liberation of what was then East Pakistan and is now the Republic of Bangladesh. But intense fighting did take place also in the west including Kashmir.

As a result of this, the cease-fire line established in 1949 was altered, largely to India's advantage. Under the Simla agreement, the new line was named the Line of Control and full respect to it by both sides was the *sine qua non* of the whole accord. Of course, the agreement also provided that heads of government of the two countries would meet again for a "final settlement" of the Kashmir question. No such meeting was ever held or even asked for by Pakistan. Why? Possibly because the final settlement Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had visualized was the recognition of the Line of Control — with mutually acceptable changes in it — as an agreed and inviolable frontier.

It is India's own folly that has led to widespread disaffection in Kashmir. But Pakistan has been brazenly helping terrorism and secession in this sensitive state of India. So much so that its traditional friends, including the U. S., are remonstrating with it on this score. The U. S. has indeed threatened to put Pakistan on the list of the countries helping cross-border terrorism, headed by Libya.

Furthermore, America, China and many other countries have publicly urged that the Kashmir issue should be settled by India and Pakistan through bilateral discussions. There is hardly any support for Pakistan's cry for internationalising the problem

though some concern for alleged violations of human rights is voiced.

On both counts Pakistan would do well to heed friendly advice. For the alternative, the continuance of present Pakistani policy of training, arming, funding, indoctrinating and manipulating those in Kashmir who are fighting for independence or Kashmir's accession to Pakistan, cannot but spell disaster for all concerned.

Without beating about the bush, let us face some home truths. If anyone believes that bands of Kashmiris who have turned into Pakistan-backed merchants of hate, murder, terror, secession and smuggling of narcotics can defeat the Indian army, he or she must be living in a world of make-believe. That leaves the alternative of changing Kashmir's status through Pakistan's full-scale armed intervention. Many Pakistanis have in fact been saying that they must adopt this course if only to "avenge" Bangladesh circa 1971.

But the position in this respect is that if Pakistan was able to do in Kashmir today — in terms of both its military power and support of world opinion — what India could achieve in Bangladesh two decades ago, it would have done as by now. The situation in the valley is still very far from being satisfactory. But it is not as bad as it was, say, at the start of 1990.

Continuing Pakistani interference on the present scale certainly complicates the problem of pacifying and conciliating the alienated people of Kashmir. But this problem is not rendered impossible. In any case, it has to be resolved between New Delhi and people of the valley.

Once that situation is reached India and Pakistan can surely revert to what Simla asked them to do. And once the Line of Control is accepted as the frontier acceptable to both sides as inviolable a lot can be done to facilitate free movement of Kashmiris on both sides of the divide and eventually to extend

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The Challenge to Theory

Birly Gajameragedara

Prof. Fred Halliday of the L. S. E. notes.

The failure of the communist model to constitute a viable internationally distinct model, and the historical reversal of the process that began in 1917 do not appear in doubt.

And he goes on to add:

... There is paucity of ideas as to how contemporary society should or should not be organised on a different political and economic basis. Neither from social democratic parties in the West, nor from Gorbachevite reforms in the East, does a clear and credible critique of present-day capitalism emerge.

Jurgen Habermas quotes the *Communist Manifesto* as a theoretical guide to the understanding of Russia and Eastern Europe today:

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, that is, to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image. ... And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creation of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrowmindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.

This is a misleading proposition from the point of view on understanding socialism in crisis and, more importantly, the current global conjuncture. Gorbachev himself has rejected the idea of a reversal of history. Speaking at the plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee in September, 1989, he insisted the "perestroika is the renewal of socialism, not dismantling of

it. ... a revolutionary transformation, eliminating deformation of socialism, but not the restoration of capitalism". An attempt to democratise a bureaucratically oriented centralised state apparatus and an economic organisation by combining socialism with freedom on the one hand, and macro-economic planning with market mechanism on the other, seems to be what is at the core of Gorbachev's revolution. In this way, Perestroika touches the central problems pertaining to modern social organisation. It is totally historical to assume that Gorbachev's reforms will lead to a capitalistic restoration in the Soviet Union. They will eventually stabilize themselves somewhere in the middle of the line.

Since 1989, the problem has become profoundly complicated and compounded by the violent eruption of the nationality question. Zbigniew Brzezinski presents the problem forcibly in the overall East European context:

Henceforth, the ongoing crisis of communism within once homogenous Soviet bloc is likely to define itself through increased national assertiveness and even rising national turmoil. In fact, there is high probability that progressive self-emancipation of the East European nations and the growing sense of national distinctiveness among the non-Russian nations of the Soviet "Union" will soon make the existing Soviet bloc the arena for the globe's most acute national conflicts.

He adds: "It may thus be only a slight exaggeration to aver that the potential 'Balkanization' of Eastern Europe could be paralleled by the eventual 'Lebanonization' of the Soviet Union". Brzezinski, however, does not envisage the disintegration of the U. S. S. R. He visualises an 'open and voluntary' Soviet Confederation. The national issue has nevertheless emerged today as the most decisive internal issue of the Soviet Union challenging the very

foundation of Soviet integration. The continued adherence to the Soviet Union on the part of three Baltic republics, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is problematical, given the fact that they became part of the Soviet Union only prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. The ethnic nationalistic assertion by such important republics as Georgia, the Ukraine, Moldavia, Azerbaijan and Armenia has now merged with the general problem of democratisation and the decentralisation of the Soviet state and the economy. Ethnicity and ethnic consciousness are not constants; they are changeable, depending upon political and socio-economic conditions. In the final analysis, ethnic nationalism is a challenge to democracy. Decentralisation is a way of democratisation. Devolution of power will not lead to separation. But the absence of devolution and democracy can lead to separation.

* * *

The combination of the two crises — capitalist and socialist — defines the current world conjuncture. Capitalism is a world mode of production. But it has failed to facilitate the establishment of a basis of a stable world order. Its historical development has been always uneven and combined. And indeed it is this factor which explains the actuality of the socialist revolution. The interaction of the expanding capitalism with the semi-capitalist, semi-feudal and semi-colonial countries eventuated the socialist revolution. From this angle, the socialist revolution was a break in a social formation, determined by world capitalism. Furthermore, and more importantly, capitalism has yet to overcome its most formidable internal contradictions, namely, the contradiction between labour and capital and the one between the development at the capitalist "centre and the underdevelopment at the capitalist "periphery". The latter may be a manifestation of an uneven globalisation of the former. The end of the Cold War and prolonged recession in the world

economy can aggravate these contradictions. And so is the "inter-imperial" contradiction which has been maturing ever since the early seventies, with Japan and Germany challenging the U. S. hegemony in the world economy. The general crisis of world capitalism, which began in the second decade of this century, continues with its usual ups and downs. Contradictions of democracy, on the other side, also remain to be solved. The victorious bourgeois democratic revolution in the West carried in its womb the germ of the proletarian revolution. The victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the West led to the defeat of the same revolution in the South. Democracy in the West and the dictatorship in the Third World are two sides of the same coin. Democracy, in a sense, is the key global issue.

The socialist transformation was neither Eurocentric nor global as Marx had anticipated and Lenin continued to believe until 1923. The years between 1919 and 1921 were crucial. The defeat of the German revolution witnessed the shifting of the actuality of the socialist revolution from the advanced West to the under-developed and backward East and, from there, to the South. It consolidated itself within the nationalistic, bureaucratically centralised structures on the denial of freedom, leading to the current crisis. Today's global crisis that is determined by the specificity of the historical development of capitalism and socialism denotes our central problem: the actuality of the global revolution is not predicated upon the victory of socialism over capitalism or capitalism over socialism, but on the resolution of the contradiction between two. History bypasses us.

Michael Gorbachev, a product of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union — and not a manifestation of a Thermidorian reaction — being the central actor in the Soviet internal drama, revolutionises not only its

immediate national context but also its international context. The end of the Soviet dominance in East Europe and the resultant end of the Cold War, the erosion of the anti-communist rationale of the Western international policy, the German reunification, the end of the super power-geo-political rivalry in the Third World leading to, among other things, the recent war in the Gulf, and the atmosphere of relative calm and stability in the Asia-Pacific region are all manifestations of the reforms which Gorbachev has undertaken in the Soviet Union. Of all the international implications of his reforms the most important one was on the East-West military balance upon which the post war world balance had rested so far. The end of the Cold War has shattered the military foundations of both the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact. The end of the Cold War neutralises the independent nuclear deterrents of the United States of America and the Soviet Union. There are those who view arms control as a problem concerning the maintenance of a prudent balance on the basis of some particular mix of weapon systems devoid of cumbersome expensive old weapon systems. There are others who still regard arms and disarmament as problematic in spite of the end of the Cold War. History is not determined by subjective will but by objective conditions. The necessity for sound conventional wisdom cannot be replaced by technocratic manipulations. Michael Howard astutely observed:

Our object should be not directly any reciprocal withdrawal of forces — and any such withdrawal would have to be reciprocal, let there be no illusion — but the creation of a relationship which would gradually make the presence of such forces anachronistic and unnecessary . . .

As relations improve and as reciprocal threat perception diminish, both sides will somehow find it increasingly difficult, for domestic and economic reasons to maintain armed forces at their existing levels. The central problem about arms control and disarmament does not concern the technical elimination of given weapon systems;

at bottom, it touches the more fundamental question relating to the problem of a definition of order in a disarmed world. One feature distinguishes the post-war international conflict from the previous ones, namely, the conflict between the two opposing blocs had at its heart the determination of the shape of the world. The end of the Cold War has brought the problem of a definition of a global order to the forefront of the current conflict. The germs of a new global order could be found in the end of the Cold War. Theoretical articulation of it is the great challenge. This brings America to the forefront of the global drama. Japan and Europe are formidable factors in the world economy and the world balance. However, neither Japan nor Europe will be able to replace the United States in the world system in the foreseeable future. Japan is vulnerable to global pressures and lacks strategic depth. Europe has yet to overcome its nationalist predicament.

The United States of America does not have a theory to grapple with a fast changing world. Pseudo theoretical dogmas emanating from the socialist East were leading to dead-end and crisis until Gorbachev came to power. Pragmatism emanating from the capitalist West leads to blind alley and crisis. The domestic and the international contexts of United States foreign policy have undergone drastic changes since the late sixties. Yet the foreign policy making of America has stubbornly refused to undergo the necessary structural change. Henry Kissinger's innovations in the seventies were fundamentally tactical. He was preoccupied with combining a guardedly defined strategy of containment of communism with a tactical application of the classical balance of power policy. The failure of the foreign Policy strategy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger has plunged

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Gorbachev: Triumph and Tragedy

by Reggie Siriwardena

Several times during the last few years I have toyed with the idea of writing a play about a young man in his early 'twenties during the last days of Stalin. The young man has made up his mind that the Soviet system doesn't work, and he makes a personal decision — to dedicate his life to making his way up the political ladder to the very peak of power, so that he can then dismantle the system.

The young man in the play I imagined was to have been Mikhail Gorbachev. I still believe it would have made interesting drama, and today I can think of an effective *coup de theatre* on which to ring down the curtain. As Gorbachev leaves the Kremlin in December 1991, the hammer and sickle is being brought down, and he pauses on the threshold to whisper Raisa: 'Well, that's what I dreamed of forty years ago.'

Perhaps there are some people who will see in that version of history not a writer's fantasy but the hidden reality. The Chinese stigmatised Gorbachev after his fall as 'the greatest traitor in the history of socialism.' And I am sure that in Sri Lanka too there are orthodox Communists who, stunned by the collapse of the Soviet Union, can only explain it by supposing that Gorbachev was a surreptitious imperialist agent.

But the role of Gorbachev has been too complex to be explained by conspiracy theories or even by my imagined fantasy. There is no precedent for it, not only in the history of the Soviet Union but even in the rest of world history. To find a parallel one would have to imagine that in the sixteenth century Martin Luther had become Pope, and inaugurated from the Vatican a Reformation that ultimately led to the fall of the Catholic Church.

The manner of Gorbachev's exit from the Kremlin was a revelation both of his achievement and of his failure. He left with the very men who had ousted him paying tribute to him for what he had accomplished. Contrast that with the fortunes of other top-ranking Soviet leaders of the past when they fell from power: Trotsky deported and later murdered, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin executed, Malenkov and Khrushchev thrust into ignominious obscurity. That Gorbachev didn't share any of these fates was due to the more civilised norms of political conduct that he had done more than anybody else to establish in what was then the Soviet Union. The fact that he had the opportunity to abdicate from power honourably, reaffirming in his final public message his convictions and his disagreements with his successors, is a measure of what he had achieved with perestroika.

On the other hand, the fact that he was leaving with the Union, that he had striven to maintain, in ruins, and the Communist Party, that he had struggled to reform, discredited and moribund, was the sign of the failure — the inescapable failure — of one part of his vision. For — contrary to the indictment of him by the Chinese and others — what Gorbachev had attempted to create in his seven years of power was a Soviet Communism transformed and democratised, and a CPSU regenerated to play the leading role in that process. Incredibly, he clung to that purpose even in the first days after his return to Moscow in the wake of the abortive coup, and it was only the pressure of the social forces that had made this programme obsolete that compelled him to abandon it.

For a man who had spent his adult life in the party ap-

paratus and risen through it to its very summit, Gorbachev had shown in his years of power a degree of flexibility and pragmatism that nobody could have expected. But at the core of his thinking he remained a product of the Leninist tradition, and his fall — even while the monuments to his guru were being toppled around him — marks the end of that tradition in the country of its birth.

Since Gorbachev's exit, many commentators have, with the benefit of hindsight, attempted to identify where he went wrong whether there were any alternative paths that he failed to take. To my mind, the most misguided of these speculations is the argument that Gorbachev would have done better to follow the Chinese example and put economic reform before political liberalisation.

This supposition is unfounded — and not only for the reason that history has yet to deliver its verdict on the Chinese experiment, though we cannot yet say how long it will be before the regime faces the decisive test of political pressures that will be released by economic reform. But to draw an object-lesson in retrospect for Gorbachev from the Chinese experience is to ignore the vastly different context in which the process of perestroika was launched. The difference goes back to the distance between the social character of the Russian revolution and that of the Chinese from their very inception.

The Chinese revolution triumphed essentially through a peasant war, with the cities encircled by the countryside; the Russian revolution was made virtually in two capital cities by what was, in relation to the mass of the nation, an urban minority. The fact that the Bolshevik party and its successor, the CPSU,

unlike the Chinese Communists, never had any substantial peasant base was compounded by Stalin's ravaging of the peasantry.

In China, on the other hand, the peasant base which was the original motive force of the revolution remained strong enough to manifest its pressure in the concessions to private farming made after the receding of the Cultural Revolution. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand the maintenance of the bureaucratic collectivised structure of agriculture was one of the issues on which the party and managerial apparatus put up its most stubborn resistance to reform. So strong was this resistance that as late as 1991 Gorbachev was affirming that there could be no privatisation of land without a referendum.

Far from Gorbachev's failure being due to wrong priorities — putting political change before economic — I would contend that he was right in seeing that no effective economic reform could be achieved without breaking the strength of the conservative political apparatus. Where he can justly be faulted, in my view, is that he didn't go far enough in the latter direction.

The crucial turning point which doomed the Gorbachev programme, I would suggest, was in 1988 with the constitutional changes that opened the way for the executive presidency. The idea of the institutions was right: Gorbachev was insuring himself against the possibility of an inner party coup to displace him in the way that Khrushchev had been eliminated in 1964. His installation as President meant that he couldn't be removed constitutionally except by the Congress of People's Deputies.

But Gorbachev had still two options: was he to become President through direct election by the people or through indirect election by a legislature in which the Communist Party's monopoly of power and reserved seats were still maintained? Gorbachev chose the latter option and this

fatally circumscribed his independence and initiative.

Had he been elected by the people at that stage, he could have built for himself a prestige and a legitimacy independent of the Communist Party. Logically, then, the next step would have been to create a broad front for change, both within the Communist Party and outside it, isolating the conservative hard-core of the party.

But Gorbachev shrank from such a move because he was ultimately a man of the party, reared on Leninist doctrines of the guiding role of the party vanguard. Contrast that with the course taken by Boris Yeltsin, who broke with the party and won a popular election as President of the Russian Federation against the CPSU candidate, thus gaining the stature in the public eye that enabled him to become the leader of the resistance to the August 1991 coup.

Since the fall of Gorbachev was finally determined by the refusal of the republics to stay within the Union that he wanted to salvage, I would add that as a figure bred in the Marxist tradition, he was, in spite of his innovative and independent mind, too little sensitive to the force of nationalism. When he came to power in 1985, a revision of the relations between centre and republics was not one of his priorities. While pushing his campaign for democratisation, he failed in the beginning to see that in the multi-national state of the Soviet Union, there could be no real democratisation without the emancipation of the minority nationalities from central control.

Gorbachev came to address the nationalities question comparatively late — and only after the first outbursts of ethnic conflict had already shaken the Union. By the time the new Union treaty came to be formulated, the strength of the centrifugal forces of local nationalisms coupled with the discontent generated by economic decline made disintegration inevitable.

Yet Gorbachev, in spite of the partial nature of his achievement, remains one of the figures who have most decisively altered the course of world history. Perhaps in time to come, when the Russian and other peoples of the former Soviet empire look back on his era, they will say that his historic role was more to destroy the old than to create the new. But a space has been cleared; the future is open.

The article by Reggie Siriwardena titled "Democracy and the Personal Pronoun" which appeared in the LG of December 15 was the last part of a longer paper read at ICES and published in "The Thatched Patio" under the title, "Power, Personal Relations and Pronouns: A Sociolinguistic and Literary Inquiry".

The Challenge. . .

(Continued from page 22)

foreign policy decision making in America deep in crisis. Since the mid-seventies the formulation of the American foreign policy, in the main, has proceeded by way of reacting unforeseen events. America's victory in the war in the Gulf is a tactical gain for the military. How this could be translated into a political reality in the Middle East remains to be seen. Euphoria can give way to bewilderment. In any event, the war in the Gulf does not alter the structural problems of America's world strategy.

Kashmir . . .

(Continued from page 20)

this principle to the entire India-Pakistan border. But surely is an essential pre-requisite for this is that India should put its house in Kashmir in order, another is that Pakistan should cease its nefarious activities there. Another though all South Asians might bear in mind is that an disruption of Kashmir's membership of the Indian family would have catastrophic consequences for not just India but even more so for Pakistan where minority provinces are clamouring for an escape from Punjabi domination — and indeed for the region as a whole. For, nothing is more contagious than a bad example.

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