

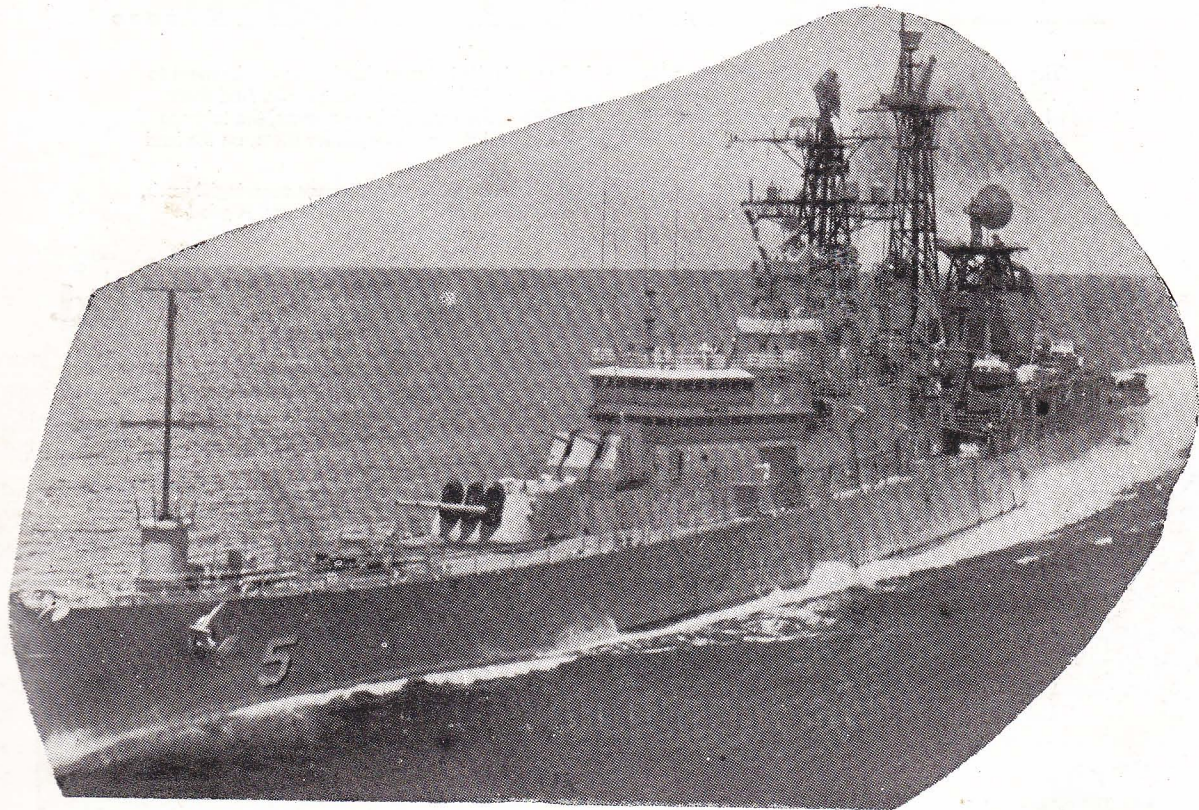
★ **Democracy and Development: The new debate**

— *Neelan Tiruchelvam*

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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## **INDIAN OCEAN**

**Bye, Bye Peace Zone !**

— *Mervyn de Silva*

**U. S. and Indian Foreign Policy**

— *Shelton Kodikara*

**Delhi's regional Strategy**

— *Gamini Keerawella*

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● **De Silva vs Roberts** ● **The Premadasa Presidency**

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## TRENDS

### RUPEE SLIDES

The Sri Lankan rupee has begun sliding against major international currencies, the Sunday Island reported. At the time of reporting last week the US dollar was Rs 43.98 and the pound sterling was Rs 80. Already most essential imports had gone up in price.

### 'NOISE PROTEST'

The Opposition, led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) decided to launch a noise protest, following such demonstrations in the West where lunch hour motorists toot horns in unison and housewives bang pots and pans. It was not known whether the people will be asked to contribute their lung power too with the traditional "hoo-oo-oo..." The Jana Goshawa (Noise of the People) is scheduled for July 1. The Opposition is protesting anti-people activities of the Government.

### CAMPUS RUMPUS

When the Minister of State for Textile Industries and his entourage sat down to dinner on the Katubedde Campus, the lights went out, and there were jeers instead of cheers and there was also the pelting of stones. The minister and other distinguished visitors were on the campus for a textile technology certificate awarding ceremony; the dinner was the highlight of the program.

The minister was escorted out in darkness, but safe.

### OFF THE HOOK

In an apparent change of heart the IMF is to release the \$ 75 million second tranche of a 450 million dollar Loan, earlier withheld because Sri Lanka was foot-dragging on agreed economic reforms. But recently the Government announced some tough revenue raising measures, including an increased Defence Levy and higher turn over taxes, resulting in steep price hikes in most essential commodities.

Among the IMF recommendations have been a privatisation of Air Lanka, the national carrier, or the leasing instead of purchasing the six multimillion dollar airbuses which the state owned airline has contracted to buy outright. This recommendation is not among those implemented.

### MILITARY SOLUTION UNLIKELY

While a fierce battle was reported to be raging in the North, a Colombo dated Reuter report said that Sri Lanka was unlikely to pursue a military solution to the nine-year war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"The Tigers are renowned for their ability to fight under duress and there is a likelihood of a bloodbath if they are attacked.... Their dominance (in Jaffna) is fairly well established. They have all the attributes of sovereignty and will fight to hold that", the report said.

### PRICE INCREASE

We regret that rising production costs, particularly after the one-to-three per cent **Defence Levy** increase, have compelled us to raise the price of the LANKA GUARDIAN from Rs. 7.50 to ten rupees.

An announcement about overseas subscription rates will be made soon.

D. P. Sivaram is on holiday. He will resume his series on "Tamil Militarism" on July 1st.  
— Ed.

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## **Briefly . . .**

### **To annihilate Tiger strength**

The Acting State Minister for Defence, John Amaratunge, is reported to have told army officers at the Palaly camp in the North, this: "The Government has worked out its solution to the North East problem. It has to be implemented in two stages. The Government would use maximum force for the total annihilation of the Tiger strength and that would constitute the first phase. After completely wiping out the menace in that manner, the Government would try to seek a political solution to the problem. The total annihilation of Tiger power is an essential prerequisite for this exercise".

### **Ranil blames Opposition**

House Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe told parliament, winding up the debate for the Government in the No Confidence motion on the Speaker, that the Opposition was to blame for the recent commotion in the House. The Opposition had been filibustering, and the Opposition had been trying to intimidate the Chair, he said.

### **Drugs meeting in Colombo**

The seventh meeting of the SAARC Technical Committee on the Prevention of Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse will be held at the Hotel Ceylon Inter-Continental from June 15 — 17.

### **Iran moves for new trade**

Sri Lanka's trade ties with Iran have so far been the traditional tea for oil. Now Iran wants to break out into commercial banking here and engage in other capital ventures, Trade Ministry sources disclosed.

In 1991 Iran bought 31.65 million kgs of tea, up 28 per cent from 25.76 million kgs in 1990. Also, Iran supplies the major portion of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation's crude oil imports. For 1992 Sri Lanka has contracted to buy one million metric tons from Iran, which is about 66 per cent of local requirements.

### **No-Confidence motion on Speaker**

The joint Opposition in parliament moved a No Confidence motion on Speaker M. H. Mohammed for:

Allegedly refusing to allow the Opposition parties to express their views on certain resolutions: declaring that certain resolutions had been put to the House and passed; and neglecting to take a vote by name when called for by the Opposition.

The Opposition accused the Speaker of depriving the Members of Parliament of the Opposition of their rights as Members of Parliament.

### **No leadership dispute**

Sri Lanka Freedom Party National Organiser Mr Anura Bandaranaike told a seminar for local government politicians in Kandy that there was no leadership dispute in the SLFP. "Mrs Sirimavo Bandarnaike is the undisputed leader of the party. I will contest the office whenever it falls vacant", he said. Others too will be free to contest and the election will be by secret ballot, he added.

The aspirations of the people had changed and the SLFP's policies must change accordingly, Mr Bandaranaike said. The SLFP must gain victory by the popular ballot unlike Wijeweera who tried to grab power by the bullet. That had cost 40,000 youths their lives, he said.

### **Fatal floods**

At least fourteen people died when floods drowned parts of Colombo and the suburbs following unprecedentedly heavy and continuous rain on the night of June 4. Some posh mansions in Colombo Three were also inundated for the first time in history but nobody was buried alive in these, although luxury limousines and hi-tech equipment were destroyed.

## INDO-US EXERCISES

# INSTALLING A REGIONAL HEGEMON?

Mervyn de Silva

Not impressed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold war, 71 countries re-asserted the "relevance" of nonalignment (NAM) at the meeting recently in Bali, Indonesia. Later in May, "non-alignment" was quietly buried at sea. Appropriately in the Indian ocean. Nehru, not Tito, was the authentic architect of NAM, although the first summit was held in Belgrade. NAM can still count on two-thirds of the UN General Assembly.

The Indian navy conducted joint military exercises with the US fleet. More such exercises are planned. Though the world press paid little attention to this sea-change, an unprecedented step in military cooperation between the sole super power and the founder of non-alignment. India's neighbours are talking. Has the US finally conceded to India what it has so zealously sought for so long? Is this formal US recognition of India's regional pre-eminence?

At South Asian academic exercises from Indira Gandhi's time participants from the region have learnt to mind their P's — pre-eminent, paramount preponderant, primacy pivotal. They have also been duly mindful of the fact that the Indian Ocean is the only ocean named after a country. For all this polite pooja, it is a quintessentially Chinese term that the neighbours bear in mind. Hegemonism.

The word turned up the other day in an unlikely place — the

Pentagon. A draft Defence Dept. paper spoke of India's "hegemonistic aspirations over states in South Asia and the Indian ocean". On the eve of the exercises, the Indian press announced that the offensive remark had been deleted.

It late 1980, some Sri Lankan editors and opposition politicians were surprised to receive by post (sender unknown) a document signed by General David Jones, chairman US joint Chiefs of the Staff. It mentioned in passing that the US navy was enjoying much freer access to Trincomalee, a harbour far finer than Subic Bay. Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene, nicknamed "Yankee Dicky" quite early in his political career, was pilloried in parliament. Had he betrayed nonalignment? Had the government abandoned the Indian Ocean "Peace Zone" policy? At the NAM summit in Lusaka in 1970, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mrs. Bandaranaike, had introduced a resolution to make the Indian Ocean "a zone of peace" free of big power rivalry. The UN endorsed it in 1971. At the time, western diplomats suspected that the voice was the voice of Mrs. Bandaranaike but the hand was the hand of "big sister" Indira Gandhi. (The same year, India signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the USSR).

Indian goals Henry Kissinger has said, will "be analogous to those of Britain in the 19th century—a policy essentially shap-

ed by the Viceroy's office" in Delhi. Yes, the viceregal legacy is the "burden" that Indian policy planners seem to bear so manfully. The "mare nostrum" or "British lake" ideas have inspired Indian scholars and strategists long before that burden had passed in 1947.

The Indian scholar (later Ambassador) K. M. Panikkar made a strong case (1945) for "the strategic unity" of India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Burma, a precondition for a "realistic" Indian defence policy. The President of the ruling Congress party could say in 1949: "It cannot be that Ceylon is in friendship with a group with which India is not in friendship". Yet another strategist K. B. Vaidya (1949) argued that Burma and Ceylon should be part of Indian defence policy "whether they will it or not". The identification with Britain is clear most of all in Vice Admiral Ravi Kaul's parallel: "Sri Lanka is as important strategically to India as Eire is to the U. K. or Taiwan to China. . . ."

While the goals do parallel imperial Britain's, it is the methods and the manners that are so suggestive of British practice. Delhi's relations with Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and finally Sri Lanka have been founded on "treaties or "accord", all painstakingly proper and legal; right from the start, 1949-50 to the 1987, India-Sri Lanka "peace accord", Nehru (Cambridge)

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

was even apologetic before being patronising. "As much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong to Nepal or permit that barrier to be crossed or weakened because that would also be a risk to our security". (Too bad, chaps).

Having signed on the dotted line in 1950, Nepal lifted a leaf from the Indian book and produced a "peace zone" proposal of its own in 1975. Implicit in this resolution, supported by 115 states, including China, was a negation of India's unspoken extra-territorial, security-related claims over the central Himalaya guaranteed by the 1950 treaty, with Nepal, says the Nepali scholar Chaitanya Mishra. Coercive diplomacy, intervention, and annexation have been the familiar instruments of strategy.

Indira Gandhi feared that the staunchly pro-US Jayewardene's policies, economic and foreign, would lead inevitably to Sri Lanka being sucked into a pro-western "alliance". The way it was going in the first few years of the Jayewardene's administration, Sri Lanka would become a Singapore in the middle of the Indian ocean.

Mrs. Gandhi ordered R. A. W., India's C. I. A., to train and arm the separatist Tamil "Tigers" in special camps in India. Delhi did have a legitimate reason to support its argument that the ethnic conflict in the island's north was a "security threat". Only the narrow Palk straits separated Sri Lanka's Tamil north from the large southern Indian state of Tamilnadu, a state with a pre-independence past of secessionist agitation.

Instinctively, "Yankee Dicky" Jayewardene turned to the US, only to be told by President Regan to "settle it with India". Was regional hegemony, implicitly conceded? Mrs Gandhi perhaps understood it as a US endorsement of her own "Indira Doctrine", a neo-Brezhnevite "limited sovereignty", and not

a "Monroe Doctrine" as some other critics argued.

Reagan sent Vernon Walters on a secret mission to Colombo. As a result, an Israeli interests section was opened in the US Embassy.

The Monroe doctrine did legitimise American hegemonism in Latin America but that in turn created the conditions for a US monopoly in the capitalist exploitation of the continent, and the extraction of its vast resource — a process for which Eduardo Galleano found the graphic expression 'the open veins of Latin America'. The Indian intentions and the Indian enterprise were quite distinctive. The preoccupation is "security". Just as Brezhnev was worried about the possible de-stabilising impact on his Central Asian (Moslem) southern flank and the US-Pak-Iran alliance. Mrs. Gandhi was deeply troubled by separatist Tamil militancy in northern Sri Lanka, so dangerously close to Tamilnadu. Of course, the other cause for Indian anger and anxiety was JRJ's pro-US, pro-Pakistan policies.

"Regional primacy has been our unstated but clearly pursued objective since we freed ourselves from British rule, but **not** from the British conception of security. That Indian subcontinent is one strategic entity is a concept the ruling elite proudly claimed from the British..."

This is a candid account of Indian security doctrine and its British roots. Coercive diplomacy is its essence; where it fails other means such as de-stabilisation, different forms of intervention and lastly invasion, are adopted. The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord is one striking illustration. Another milder essay in the imposition of a hegemonistic will was the "sabotage" of last year's SAARC summit which had to be postponed in the absence of King of Bhutan and Delhi's non-acceptance of His Majesty's nominee as a substitute.

Supported by the strong evidence of diplomatic "sabotage" presented by many reputed Indian journalists who had arrived in Colombo to cover the conference and had refused to "buy" the simple and innocent explanation put out here, this journal was inclined to see an "Indian hand". An eminent Indian who should know the ways of Indian diplomacy, is similarly inclined. K. Shankar Bajpai has been Indian Ambassador in Pakistan, China and the U. S., and is now a visiting professor at Berkeley, California. He writes: "the hostility between President Premadasa and Indian leaders was widely blamed as the reason for India refusing to attend the SAARC summit in December on the pretext that since the Bhutan King could not come another date should be fixed..."

There was a time when US policy was broadly founded on the assumption that its regional interests could be best served through active cooperation with "regional influentials". Does the new military cooperation, dramatised by the joint exercises, mean a return to that strategy — Delhi as the sole superpower's regional rep? (Of course, I exaggerate to make a point.) For the West in general, the litmus test is the ethnic conflict and its negotiated settlement. in the sage of S. L.

It is the meeting point of all the basic concerns of the western alliance, and now Japan, the main donor. On this or that particular question, or in this or that situation, differences emerge. Yet that does not affect the fundamental approach to the Sri Lankan situation. The ethnic conflict is the point of intersection of three principal concerns:

(a) Democracy and fundamental rights, with a stress on national minorities who require special protection.

(b) Economic development based on free-market policies, that leads to capitalist growth.

(c) the political stability which is a pre-condition for such

growth, assisted by foreign investment.

An important consideration which is a direct consequence of this approach is "disarmament" a steady reduction in defence budgets. This is an important US platform, and policy priority.

Even percentages are now fixed for heavy arms spenders — the McNamara thesis which has influenced World Bank and IMF thinking. It is in any case, common sense — development or defence. (What the IBRD-IMF don't quite grasp or comprehend fully is that some of its policies too rigidly or ruthlessly applied, lead to sharp price increases which in turn causes economic-social unrest, and thus undermines the regime's popularity and authority i. e. instability. Either the regime is toppled or it survives by a steady restriction of democratic rights. Like most of us, the IMF itself is caught in a vicious circle).

The Mangala Moonesingha Committee is the high point of

the western diplomatic effort: an all-party Parliamentary Select Committee chaired by a MP of the main Opposition party, and a committee inspired by the SLFP MP's own resolution. In short, an almost ideal forum, vigorously supported by President Premadasa himself — for his own partisan purposes, the Opposition would intervene in a necessary amendment to the foregoing proposition. The diplomatic community, which is not wholly bereft of brains, is willing to consider that proposition but the progress of the Committee outweighs other considerations, whether UNP motivation or any other.

Comes the Indian ban on the LTTE, and High Commissioner Jha firing away, both guns blazing in the weekend papers, to signal, apparently, a new Indian diplomatic high pressure offensive. "Go for the Tigers" "Get Prabhakaran" "Ban the LTTE" "Extradite the bastard" etc. is the Opposition's choric cry.

And then, that impulsive, thoughtless and disastrous step.

mangle the Mangala Moonesingha committee!

The "sole superpower" and its powerful allies part company with Regional Influentials Inc. branches in Kathmandu, Dhaka, Colombo, Thimpu etc.

Saner counsel prevails after the minorities and their representative organisations make their views very clear. The Tamils, Muslims, Christians and the US-led alliance were far too powerful a "lobby" for the opposition to ignore. Besides some of the Left parties were deeply disturbed too.

The SLFP particularly Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, decides enough's enough. The Opposition's return and High Commissioner Jha's markedly low-key speech at Rotary announce the most significant event of June.

Of course, it would be foolish not to recognise that this may not have happened but for President Premadasa's exceptionally clever counter-move. Or one-two punch — military offensive in the peninsula, peace offensive in Vavuniya.

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## Domestic Politics & Foreign Policy Dimensions

Shelton Kodikara

Linkages between foreign policy and domestic politics have become an important focus of attention in the recent literature of international relations. In discussing new trends in India's foreign policy, this paper will attempt to highlight the changing Indo-US relationship against the background of these linkages.

The end of Cold war in the West, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the effect this had on India's external trade combined with India's economic crash in 1990, impelled the Government of India to undertake an "agonizing reappraisal" of its foreign policy. To put the economy back on course, it became necessary for India to ask for massive credits from international lending institutions, and agree to the inevitable "conditionalities" to which such credits are linked. India has already received \$ 2.2 billion from the IMF/World Bank, and needs at least \$ 3 billion more to tide over its current economic difficulties. India has undertaken a market-oriented package of economic reforms, with public sector spending reduced to a bare minimum in the Eighth Five Year Plan, and delicensing and deregulation being undertaken across the board in the economy. The parliamentary Opposition, especially the Communists, have charged the government with caving in to IMF/World Bank pressures, a charge that is denied by the Prime Minister.

But it is all too clear that the Indian government, over the past two years, has been all too

predisposed to accommodate US policy and interests in important areas such as relations with Israel, Libya, the issue of the Gulf war, and India's willingness to have joint naval exercises with the US in the Indian Ocean was a major reversal of its earlier insistence that the Indian Ocean should be a Peace Zone.

A discordant note in the Indo-US relationship, even in the post-Cold war period when interactions between the two countries were increasing sharply, was always present in India's determination to develop her nuclear capabilities, and in the US objective of containing the nuclear capabilities of both India and Pakistan. India has, with good reason, refused to sign the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and Pakistan's recent admission of a nuclear weapons capability has justified the Indian stand. The US adoption of the Pakistani proposal that the nuclear issue concerning India and Pakistan be addressed on a multilateral basis, with Five Powers—US, Russia, China, besides India and Pakistan—jointly guaranteeing that South Asia would remain nuclear-free, has also not met with India's approval. When Prime Minister Narasimha Rao met President Bush early in February 1992, he said he was willing to enter into a constructive dialogue with the US on the nuclear issue, but he could not agree to a five-power conference until its scope and the role in it of China, the US, and Russia, were defined to Indian satisfaction. The questions India had in mind pertained to doubts whether these three powers were going to act like monitors in

respect of India and Pakistan, whether they themselves would be subject to the same restrictions and prohibitions as applied to India and Pakistan, whether it would be adequate to meet the open-ended threat of the spread of ex-Soviet nuclear weapons, and so on. The US Ambassador to India, William Clark, has himself apparently recognized India's many susceptibilities on the subject, because he is on record as saying, late in February (1992), that India could evolve an alternate proposal to ensure a "workable nuclear non-proliferation regime" instead of signing NPT. He said:

As other nations progress towards a saner and more secure non-proliferation environment, India can continue to stand in the wings. Or India can lead, as it has in the past, by bringing forward proposals to help make a workable non-proliferation regime—whether on a regional basis or on a wider scale—a reality. (*Times of India* (NewDelhi), 25/2/92)

In the context of the Indo-US divergence on the nuclear issue, and in the context of a controversial Pentagon policy document which advocated the use of force by the US to bring into line recalcitrant would-be nuclear powers such as North Korea, Iraq, India and Pakistan, the American opposition to the transfer of Russian rocket technology to India provided the latest domestic political flare-up affecting relations between the two countries. The history of the rocket deal goes back to November 1990, when Russia/USSR signed an agreement to provide one cryogenic engine to India in



1994, and a second in 1995. A third was to be developed in India itself. The cryogenic engine, which is a secondary stage rocket, was to be used to place a satellite in geostationary orbit. Only three or four countries possessed this sophisticated liquid hydrogen booster technology, and India's launching facilities at Sri Harikota were considered to be among the best in the world. India's contention was that the satellite was intended to be used only for educational and meteorological purposes. The US objected to the deal in May 1992, just at the time when the Russian Secretary of state, Genady Burbulis, was visiting India to discuss the validity of agreements signed between India and the Soviet Union. While confirming the validity of 67 of the 148 agreements signed between the two countries, Burbulis also confirmed the rocket deal. The US objections were made on the basis that the rocket had dual use, and could be used to make a ballistic missile also, and that it therefore within the prescriptions laid down by the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). The American stance came as a considerable embarrassment to both India and Russia, both of which were charting anew course in foreign policy with the US. The American announcement that going through with the deal would mean the invoking of penalties against the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Russian space agency *Glavkosmos* put both the Russians and the Indians into a quandary just at the time of the Russian State Secretary's visit to India. Statements were made on both Russian and Indian sides that the deal would be gone through, and American penalties were duly announced—these being applicable only to technology transfers to ISRO and *Glavkosmos*, and being limited to two years. The Indian parliamentary Opposition and media came out strongly against the American action. The *Indian Express* (7

May 1992) commented editorially:

Long before the West Asian crisis last year, the US had taken the lead in getting most of the Western developed countries to strengthen the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). After the war precipitated by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the US administration showed signs of a growing obsession with the enlargement of MTCR. The reason obviously was its bitter experience of dealing with Saddam Hussein. That the US administration had approved substantial transfers of dual-use technology to Iraq became an open secret soon after the Gulf war. This must have weighed heavily on the Americans' minds. It is difficult to see Washington's over-sensitivity to the Russian-Indian deal in isolation from this psychological factor.

India's former Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey, wrote in the *Times of India*, New Delhi (11 May 1992);

The US actions have given rise to widespread resentment in the country. Parliament has been unanimous in demanding that India should not succumb to US pressure and accept any threat or demand which amounts to an abridgement of our sovereignty. The suggestion has also been made that we should cancel the planned joint naval exercise.

Statements made subsequently by the President of the Russian Parliament seem to indicate that there are second thoughts on the Russian side about the deal. Russia would certainly not prejudice its burgeoning new rela-

tionship with the US just for the sake of providing India with dual-use technology. On the Indian side, too, more important issues than the rocket deal are at stake in the Indo-US relationship. Development assistance is one of these, but there is also the developing new issue-area of defence cooperation. It is significant that Indo-US joint naval exercises *did* take place, involving two front-ranking warships on each side, in the Arabian sea off Cochin and Goa at the end of May.

The Chairman of ISRO has averred that the American ban on the rocket deal was intended to prevent India from occupying an important place in the multi-billion dollar space market, taking account of the fact that the Indian side at Sriharikota is ideally located and "is only the second best launch pad in the world next to Kourou (in French Guinea)" It was his view, however, that India could overcome the effects of the ban though there would be delays and cost overruns in completing the project. (*Daily News*, 15 May 1992)

Among differences of opinion between the US and India, the issue of India's development of its *Agni* and *Prithvi* missiles also looms largely. *Prithvi* is a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 150 kilometres. It went through its second test successfully early in May (1992) and, together with *Trishul*, a surface-to-air missile with a 9km range, is expected to be produced in 1992-93, after the completion of user trials. *Agni*, which is a ballistic missile with a 2,500 km range was successfully test-fired on 22 May 1990, but its second test-flight, on 29 May 1992, was reported not to have been on target.

Most important for India than these differences is the changed US stand on Kashmir. Sharad Pawar, Indian Defence Minister told the Indian Parliament that the US had informed Pakistan in unequivocal terms that the Kashmir issue could only be solved bilaterally by the two neighbouring countries, and that the US had warned Pakistan about its involvement in aiding and abetting terrorism in Kashmir and Punjab. (*Indian Express*, 7 May 1992) From supporting the Pakistanis on their demand for a plebiscite, this is a big change of attitude on the part of the U. S. And so, the crisis in Indo US relations caused by the rocket deal, if it could be called a crisis, has passed off without any apparent serious damage to the improving Indo-US relationship.

At the same time, there are signs that India and Russia are reconstituting their relationship on the foundations laid by the erstwhile Soviet Union. During his May visit, Secretary of State Burbulis said that the articles of a new treaty, which will replace the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 (renewed 1991) were finalised at talks with Indian leaders, and that it could be signed when Russian President Boris Yeltsin visited New Delhi in the second half of 1992.

With Russia's decision to make the rouble convertible as from next July, there would also be a massive devaluation of Russian currency in terms of the US dollar, and this might have beneficial effects for India. It has been anticipated that India might be able to sharply reduce, if not cancel altogether, its outstanding debt to the legal heir to the Soviet Union. Its

entire rouble debt can be cleared by India with US \$ 130 million, or even less. At the Burbulis talks, Russia agreed to regularise crude oil supplies to India and to sort out differences regarding the problem of debts. Russia agreed to resume defence supplies to India opened a Rs 2.5 billion credit to Russia for the export of tea, coffee, tobacco, and spices. (*Times of India* (New Delhi), 6 May 1992).

A sign of the changing Indian foreign policy orientation, however, was that India was also opening out a new chapter of defence cooperation with the USA. A new Indo-US Army Steering Committee has been set up, the role of which is not very clear at this stage. But much significance is attached to the visit, early in 1992 of Indian Army Chief of Staff, General Rodriguez to the Pentagon, and to the later visit of General Jimmy V. Adams, Commander-in-Chief of the USAF in the Pacific, who had what were called "wide-ranging discussions" with India's Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal N. C. Suri (see *The Statesman* (Delhi), 4/3/92).

The Indian Air Force, in particular, has been on the look-out for control systems, and is the service arm which has been least affected by recent defence budgetary cuts in India. Some assistance from the US has already been received by India in its attempt to develop a light combat aircraft. Present trends seem to indicate that Indian attempts to indigenise the production of the light combat aircraft may not be realised in the immediate future, and India may have to rely on co-production with the US. Similarly India

might become dependent on the US for Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACs) and mid-air refuelling capabilities. India has a choice between US French and British versions of the advanced jet trainer, but buying aircraft from the US may not materialise in the immediate future because of foreign exchange constraints. India may eventually opt, as China did, for the modernization of its Mig-21 fleet, which forms the backbone of the IAF, in the present state of its economy. India also decided, in March 1992, to purchase on deferred payment, between 315 and 450 M109 self-propelled guns from the US to strengthen Army strike formation. Indo-Israeli joint ventures in the field of defence technology and purchase by India of Israeli radar systems, which are also projected, supplement Indian plans to modernise its defence system. The new ties which are developing between India and Russia envisage the continuance of the supply spares for the former Soviet weaponry in use in India, as well as deals for the supply of Mig-31s and SU-28 fighter-bombers. The difference from the old arrangements are that these supplies will now have to be paid for partly in hard currency and partly on deferred payment. What Russia appears to be most interested in at the moment is the sale of a (Charlie class) nuclear submarine, similar to the one which India returned to the Soviets after the expiry of its four-year lease period. The indications are, however that India may not be so interested in this deal because India itself is close to developing its own nuclear propulsion system for submarines, and might already have acquired the hull and system design for building an indigenous nuclear submarine, (see *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 9 March 1992)

# Indian Ocean and Delhi's Strategy

Gamini Keerawella

The Indian policy-makers were aware of the adverse implications of nurturing Tamil militants; but they hoped, at least at the beginning, that they could control the Tamil militants when they want. They were confident, in the light of post-1963 political developments in Tamil Nadu, that the ability of Sri Lankan Tamil militants to revive secessionism in Tamil Nadu is limited and that the problems would be settled before the situations became out of control. The Indian policy-makers realized that Sri Lankan ethnic crisis and the activities of Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups gave them an opportunity to influence Sri Lankan foreign policy. They were very quick to exploit it. As such, it is necessary to analyze the Indian strategy regarding the ethnic crisis in the broader context of Indian foreign policy objectives. India used this convenient leverage to exert pressure on Sri Lanka, specially after 1980, to change the foreign policy direction which India considered as contradictory to its foreign policy interests.

The change of governments in both countries in 1977 and their common political orientation brought the regimes of the Janatha Coalition of India and the UNP of Sri Lanka more closer and personal relations between the two heads of governments were excellent between 1977-1980. This personal factor that led to cordial Indo-Sri Lanka relations began to change after Indira Gandhi came to power again in 1980. Jayaratnam Wilson recalls that "(I)n conversation with Tamil Leaders, she (Indira Gandhi) referred to President Jayewardene and Morarji Desai as the two old foxes". As Shelton Kodikara points out "Mrs. Gandhi reacted harshly against the Jayewardene government's vindictiveness in depriving Mrs. Bandaranaike of her civic rights on grounds which she regarded as spurious and which seemed to

be highly politically motivated. There was no love lost between Indira Gandhi and J. R. Jayewardene. It was in this context that India became more than usually sensitive foreign policy trends in Sri Lanka". The personal factors do have a considerable impact on the climate of interstate relations, but it is not possible to scale down the entire process to such subjective lines. The pro-American tilt in the foreign policy of Jayewardene regime which became apparent after 1980 was more important. In this context, after 1980, India suspected that Sri Lanka was gradually moving away from its traditional non-aligned plank. Further, India feared that Sri Lanka's close relationship and possible alliance with the United States would open up the relatively calm Southern flank to a new form of security threat. Some foreign policy initiatives of Sri Lanka made India think that Colombo is entering into the Karachchi-Washington axis. The refusal of Sri Lanka under the Jayewardene regime to denounce the existence of superpower bases in the Indian Ocean at meetings of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) was cited as a matter for Indian apprehensions.

Though Sri Lanka's soft-pedaling of its earlier more articulated position regarding the superpower naval presence became more visible under the Jayewardene regime, the gradual shift in this direction dated back to 1975, before Jayewardene assumed office. The more critical attitude *vis-a-vis* the West held in the early 1970s gradually began to mellow during the last phase of Sirima Bandaranaike's Premiership, and was clearly apparent during the Colombo NAM Summit. In October 1975, U. S. warships attached to the Seventh Fleet (two missile carrying destroyers — the USS *Warden*, and the USS *Turner Joy* and the US Fleet replace vessel, USS *Mispil*,

*lion*) visited Colombo. When the opposition asked the Prime Minister how the granting of port visits to the naval vessels of the U. S. Seventh Fleet could be reconciled with her professed policy on the Indian Ocean Peace Zone, Mrs. Bandaranaike replied:

(T)here is nothing incompatible with the IOPZ Declaration and a foreign warship, including that of Great Powers, visiting Sri Lanka port for any purpose not associated with a threat or use of force against any coastal or hinterland state of the Indian Ocean provided also that the visits are not associated with any base facilities for these vessels in Sri Lanka.

There is no fundamental difference between this statement and President Jayewardene's explanation for granting port visits to the U. S. Navy. As far as the IOPZ is concerned, Sri Lanka strongly registered its reluctance to direct IOPZ only against the Superpowers by mid 1970s at the deliberations of the U. N. Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. India's concern about port visits of the U. S. Navy after 1980 must be viewed in the context of the changed politico-strategic map of the Indian Ocean following the Iranian revolution and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The U. S. response to the political developments to 'the Arc of Crisis' unleashed a new wave of militarization of the Indian Ocean began after 1979. The post-1977 U.N.P. regime was heavily dependent on the United States and other western powers for economic assistance in the form of loans and grants. The success of the main elements of their development strategy, namely the export promotion zone, the accelerated Mahaweli development scheme and the integrated rural development programmes, were conditional to the injection of western capital. In this context, India feared that Sri Lanka under Jayewardene was a easy

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bid for Americans in their base strategy linked with the RDF and Sri Lanka would offer military-logistic facilities in exchange for American military assistance to suppress the Tamil militancy.

Especially after 1983, Sri Lanka's foreign policy behavior generated an impression in India that it was trying to develop relations with Powers unfriendly to India in South Asia and outside. In this respect, Sri Lankan relations with Pakistan caused much concern in New Delhi. Pakistan readily extended its assistance to train officers of the Special Task Force (STF). President Jayewardene's visit to Pakistan in April 1985 was interpreted as an attempt to forge the Karachchi link which was believed to be anti-Indian in content. Answering a question at a news conference in Karachchi on April 4th, 1985 Jayewardene said that "we wish the people of Kashmir should be allowed to decide about their future themselves". Thus, Jayewardene touched a very sensitive nerve in the Indo-Pakistani rivalry. His remark on Kashmir provoked strong criticism in India and Indian Minister of State of External Affairs Alam Khan described the remarks as 'deplorable' in the Lok Sabha. However, the important issue here is whether the post-1983 foreign policy actions of Sri Lanka cited as anti-Indian, were the reasons for or the outcome of Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan affairs because many foreign policy initiatives were desperate and defensive moves on the part of Sri Lanka to the Indian involvement in the crisis.

Many foreign policy concerns of India vis-a-vis Sri Lanka that provided the inputs to the Indian policy regarding the crisis were ultimately linked to the defense concerns of India. The argument that the Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan crisis could sufficiently be explained in terms of Indian defense concerns is based on the assumption that the ethnic issue was not the policy target in itself but a means of achieving other ends. These 'other ends' must be

understood in relation to defense concerns and threat perceptions. The arguments presented by the 'defense school' could be divided into two broad categories: first, India perceived that some actions of the Jayewardene regime posed a security threat to India, and, in acting basically defensively India exploited the crisis to force Sri Lanka to change these actions; second, India used the crisis to establish her hegemony in the region, warranted by its military growth, which was basically offensive in nature.

According to the first line of argument, India's threat perceptions are centered around three issues: the alleged offer of base facilities to the U. S. Navy in Trincomalee, the handling of oil-tank farm project contract, and the agreement with the Voice of America Broadcasting Service. The noticeable increase of port-call visits of the U. S. Navy to Trincomalee for 'Rest & Recreation' after 1980 sustained Indian apprehensions of the possibility of Trincomalee becoming an U. S. naval staging post. This issue was raised by the Sri Lankan opposition at the National State Assembly and the President Jayewardene explained his position as 'we are doing nothing of that kind (base facilities). Of course, we are allowing warships of all countries, not necessarily the United States, to call at our ports' However, leaking of a secret document in which Gen. David Jones, then Chairman of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, referred to such a possibility provided substance to Indian speculations. In no time Sri Lanka declared that reference was an error and subsequently U. S. Government also rectified the error. In 1981, the U. S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Donald Toussant in a public statement affirmed that there was no U. S. design on Trincomalee.

In this context, the way the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm project was handled in 1982 revealed the geo-political realities of the south Asian security framework. After international

call for tenders to recondition and lease out 99 fuel storage tanks used during the World War II, overlooking the tender forwarded by the Indian Natural Gas and Oil Corporation, the Sri Lankan government selected the coastal Corporation of Bermuda which enjoyed contracts with the U. S. Navy. It is important to note that the deal involved modernization of jetty and mooring facilities. The Indian expression of its discomfiture made Sri Lanka to call for fresh contracts with condition that no fuel should be supplied for foreign military use and the contract was awarded to the Oroleum (Pvt) Ltd. of Singapore a consortium consisting of Oil Tanking of West Germany and Tradinaft of Switzerland. It was charged that the hastily-formed Oroleum consortium was a front for the U. S. Coastal Corporation engineered by D.H. Miller who was a manager of the Coastal Corporation of Singapore. In that context, Sri Lanka had to cancel the offer and postpone the project. This entire episode heightened the Indian fears that the U. S. was eyeing Trincomalee. This is well reflected in the writings of Indian analysts. For instance, K. Subrahmanyam remarked:

The U. S. appears to have accorded in the recent period a greater priority to Sri Lanka and its maritime facilities than was the case in the past. This is understandable in view of (a) the greater need for facilities in Indian Ocean, because of the increased level of US naval presence, and (b) to develop Sri Lanka or other similar alternatives as back-up options in the event of the denial of Subic Bay in the Philippines to the U. S. Navy at some future date.

The news that Sri Lanka agreed to grant permission to the Voice of America to upgrade its facilities in the island was in the air even before the routine five-year renewal of an agreement, first concluded in 1952 with the VOA, came in 1983. India expressed its concern right away and, in December 1981, Indian External Affairs Minister Narasimha Rao remarked that India hoped that these facilities given by Sri Lanka

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## Fact and Fiction:

# The De Silva vs. Roberts Debate

Jane Russell

“History” it is said, “repeats itself: historians each other.” Though witty, this euphorism is rarely true. Historians are for the main part much too self-opinionated to stoop to parrot-like copying of each other’s ideas. No, the borrowing of a plum fact or even plummier quote with which to buttress a pet theory while woefully misreading or wilfully ignoring arguments which don’t tie in with their own has been the practice of historians since the first intellectually curious man looked backward in the hope of gaining some pointers to posterity.

History is not an exact science, and I would suspect as a mountebank anyone who argues that it is, because history relies on the subjective discrimination and skills of the historian for the selection, interpretation and communication of historical facts.

Facts may be sacred but for the historian the first question is always “which facts?” (the actual sub-conscious question is probably closer to “Whose history is this anyway?”). The second question, “Why these facts in particular — what do they mean?”, which may even preface the first, necessarily entails as objective response. Selection and interpretation are the bread and butter of the historian. The jam is communication. Churchill was a rotten historian but he wrote like a crime reporter. His histories had the gripping quality of the good whodunnit and his idiosyncratic view of history drew a far wider readership than the equivalent scholarly texts. These may have become the university textbooks

but by comparison with Churchill’s they were dull as ditch-water and promptly ditched by all but the most earnest.

However, well-documented, unless a history is well-written, it is the driest dust that blows. Facts by themselves convey nothing. They must be woven into a coherent, thought-provoking argument which, when unfolded, stirs the imagination of the reader. In the hands of a master, history can be as memorable and vivid as the finest literature. Indeed, at the highest level, where Plutarch meets Shakespeare for example, great history and great literature feed off each other.

About a year ago, a grittily acerbic debate took place in the feature pages of the Lake House Press between Kingsley de Silva, Professor of Sri Lanka History at Peradeniya University, and his erstwhile colleague and collaborator, Michael Roberts, presently lecturing in Social Anthropology at the University of Adelaide, Australia. The controversy was prompted by de Silva’s none-too-favourable review of Roberts’ book (written in collaboration with Percy Colin-Thome and Ismeth Raheem) about the Portuguese and Dutch Burghers, “People In-Between”. Roberts took advantage of a research trip to Sri Lanka to pen a couple of rejoinders to de Silva’s criticism which opened the way for de Silva to take up cudgels again and the debate ping-ponged with rollicking fury for several issues of the Daily News and Observer — if in answer to the feature editor’s prayer for good material.

The arguments ranged over aspects of racism, casteism and

xenophobia manifest in Sri Lanka’s history since the 16th century, but the core issue was whether or not there exists an objective standard of historical research and interpretation. De Silva maintained that there was such a norm or standard, which could be approached by use of the empirical method, which he claimed was “based solidly on evidence”. Although he did not state baldly, the underlying suggestion was that this so-called ‘empirical approach’ led to conclusions that were virtually irrefutable. As Roberts had patently deviated from this empiricism in his book by adopting what Roberts himself termed the “hermeneutic” approach, Roberts’ conclusions were therefore mere “fanciful theorising”, whereas de Silva’s were robustly correct and true.

It was unfortunate that Roberts should have called his non-empirical approach to history by such a high-falutin name: “hermeneutic” simply means to use the imagination creatively. Perhaps Roberts, still a little unsure of this new approach, has dressed it up, as academics tend to, in classically derived jargon. It’s a well known marketing ploy that a touch of latin or greek adds “an air of respectability”, but here it only served to cloud the issue (the academic might say ‘obfuscate’) which improved the credibility of de Silva’s case. Lucky de Silva! His case was in actuality so poor that it needed all the obfuscation it could muster.

It is silly to maintain, as de Silva tried to do, that there is one and only one “correct” historical perspective. There are

as many views of history as there are historians.

The reconstruction of the past by an historian can never be the same as the individual or collective experience of that past, although it can represent it in some relational way. The actual past, as it was lived, is an absentee from history as it is recorded and recalled. The historian must take a leap of imagination from the present into the past in order to "see" it at all. The facts he reproduces to give solidity to his particular picture are but a tiny fraction of the multitude available to him. His image, his thesis may well be solidly based on evidence, but a wholly different picture or thesis could be built on identical historical sources. "Whose history is this anyway?" is always the pertinent question. As Roberts argued last year, it is "the delusion of diehard empiricists that enables them to believe in the definitiveness of their conclusions". One credible historian's speculation is as valid as the next one; the point is who is to be the judge of credibility?

It would be instructive at this point to compare, say, the histories written by Dutch Afrikaners about the Boer War and its consequences with those of British and Black African historians. The variance of viewpoint about the same set of facts would make startling reading.

A man's identity in the civic sense is founded upon his view of history. The line where mythology meets fact in history is very hazy. In the end it depends (as the physical sciences are now coming to realise) on the point of observation. History is neither fact nor fiction: it is imaginatively selected and presented facts creating a story that is not just plausible but exciting enough to stimulate the imagination and the emotions. It is in fact "faction", that literary form beloved of autobiographical novelists which combines fictional facts with factual fiction.

Though unintentional, the pun is significant. Written history is indeed the view of a "faction" a political or social interest sufficiently solidified to want to leave its impress on generations yet to come. The Mahawamsa is the oldest known example of a historiography used to perpetuate a particular state, the Sinhalese-Buddhist. Originally it was a secret document, meant only for the eyes of kings, the highest officers of state and the guardians of the religion. In its translation from venerated state secret to historical treatise open to public scrutiny, it has lost much of its mystique, but only when the Sinhalese Buddhist state feels secure enough to spawn parody of the Mahawamsa along the lines of "1066 and All That" will it lose its powerful hold on the imagination of the majority of Sri Lankans.

However, to return to de Silva & Roberts: the particular bone over which they were contending was the alleged racism (monoculturalism is a more neutral term) shown by the Sinhalese towards the Burghers from the time of the first Portuguese landing onwards. De Silva challenged what he termed "the validity of the basic message of his (Roberts.) book that the Burghers were looked down upon by the Sinhalese. My contention is that they were never the object of Sinhalese hostility". De Silva contends with great style but where is the "solid empirical evidence" for his contention as against that of Roberts? This is merely de Silva's view. But surely, it is absurd for de Silva to maintain that the Sinhalese were not hostile to the Burghers: the Portuguese came to 16th century Sri Lanka in much the same way as space invaders might come to planet Earth today. Is it not obvious that the Sinhalese would have had the most marked feelings of hostility towards these unwanted and well-armed strangers who had dropped from nowhere into their midst to cast avaricious

eyes upon their green and pleasant land? And would not their sense of alienation and resentment have increased with every atrocity made by the Portuguese upon their religion? And when the Portuguese were replaced by the Dutch, whose tongue twisting language must have resounded in their ears like the donkey's bray to the "kuruminiha", their xenophobia would have markedly grown and reached its apotheosis in naked hatred of the snobbishly racist and class-conscious Britisher. Given their historical experience, would it not have been astounding if the Sinhalese had not felt racially and culturally under threat?

That is not to deny that there were individuals even in large numbers amongst the Sinhalese as well as the European communities who sought and gave respect, friendship and even love to their fellow human beings from such a different cultural background. Out of the entire crew of the S. S. Ann, the only one who did not settle down and live happily ever after was the misanthrope Robert Knox. But as a political group, the Sinhalese had been powerless to resist the incursion of these outsiders, and impotence breeds resentment.

If de Silva objects so strongly to Robert's, "purposeful attempt to link it (his study of the Burghers) inextricably with — here I quote his (Robert's) own words — the essentials of Sinhala history, of Sinhala thought processes, it can only be because de Silva, as one of the stoutest defenders of the status quo, prefers a communal compartmentalisation of the island's recent history which thereby enables him to portray the past forty years of Sinhalese Buddhist majority rule in something other than racist (or monoculturalist) terms. It is to Robert's credit that he has had the courage to call a 'mammoth' a 'mammoth' (or would it be 'udella?') by emphasising in his 'outline "the racist sub-

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# Human Rights, Democracy and Development

Neelan Tiruchelvam

Since your class entered High School in 1988, until this day of your graduation, the world has witnessed momentous changes. Perhaps there is no comparable period in this century which has so dramatically changed the course of human destiny. During these years, we witnessed the liberal democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, the collapse and subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union into sovereign, equal and independent Republics, somewhat loosely linked together as the commonwealth of Independent States. These changes had important consequences for the developing world for with the collapse of an ideology there was similar loss of certainty with regard to the efficacy of an alternative development vision. In South Africa, equally dramatic changes have taken place which have captured the political imagination of those engaged in the struggle throughout the world for the dismantling of apartheid. Constitutional negotiations are now taking place which are likely to bring about black majority rule, while safeguarding the rights and freedoms of all regardless of colour or ethnicity. Even if a constitution acceptable to all is drafted the larger challenge would be to overcome the extensive brutalisation, and to restore respect for the rule of law. Even within our sub-continent, we have witnessed during the past four years, changes which were beyond our most optimistic expectations. In the landlocked Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, sovereignty has been vested in the people of Nepal, who are

now governed by an elected government. In Pakistan, and Bangladesh, both of which countries emerged out of a bloody partition or equally brutal civil war, multi-party democracy has taken the place of military regimes. These were moments of triumph in the struggle for democracy and human rights.

We also had our moments of tragedy, of anguish and of despair. In June of 1989, in Tiananmen Square many dreams were shattered when the students democracy movement was brutally crushed. In Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi and other political dissidents languish in incarceration, while the military junta refuses to transfer power to the National League for Democracy which won a colossal electoral victory in May 1990. In our society, the quest for peace remains elusive, despite each cycle of brutality reminding us of the futility of violence and of destruction.

Class of 1992, you are on the threshold of moving out of the relatively sheltered environment of O. C. S. to face the problems and challenges of adulthood in a rapidly changing world. It is therefore appropriate that we reflect for a few moments on moral and social issues which many countries confront in seeking human rights, democracy and development.

Paul Sieghart, the renowned human rights scholar and activist, has stated that one of the most cynical propositions in politics is that "you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs". In the field of economic development, it has meant that you cannot create the benefits of growth, without violating at least temporarily the human rights of a subs-

tantial number of citizens. This thesis has led many countries in South-East Asia to argue that human rights and democracy must be subordinated to the imperatives of development. The newly industrialised countries — which are sometimes described as the four tigers — are cited as inspiring examples of this dubious proposition. But of these countries, two, Singapore and Hong Kong are small city-states, and it would be difficult to draw broad generalisations from their very particular experiences. In the absence of empirical evidence the proposition seems no more than an assertion of ideology. It became further discredited with the collapse of the Marcos regime, as it became clear that the proposition was no more than a justification for authoritarianism and for the naked abuse of political power. It is one of the singular achievements of this development decade that it is now widely accepted that human rights is integral to development. This means that respect for individual human rights promotes and does not hinder economic development.

The question does arise as to what we mean by human rights in this regard. Does it mean civil and political rights such as the right to life, the freedom from torture or arbitrary arrest, and the freedom of speech? Or should our definition of human rights also include social, economic and cultural rights such as the right to food, the right to health, education and a livelihood. This is an issue which in the past divided the East and the West. The countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union tended to accord primacy to social and economic rights,

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while the West emphasised the centrality of civil and political rights. With the collapse of the cold war, there is apprehension that social-economic rights would be further downgraded. Although it is frequently asserted that civil-political and social-economic rights are interdependent, this appears to be no more than empty rhetoric. There are no effective mechanisms to monitor socio-economic rights, and they tend to be viewed negatively as policy aspirations rather than giving rise to rights which are legally enforceable against a state. Central to any process of development is the elimination of poverty. Poverty is associated with widespread denial of human rights as the poor are powerless, unable to organise and defend themselves. As more developing countries pursue developmental models which emphasise economic liberalization, there is apprehension that this could lead to the dismantling of social welfare measure and further decline in the physical quality of life of the poor and the disadvantaged. Even within industrialised countries, there is a realisation that they can no longer ignore the social needs of the urban underclass and that the continuing neglect of these issues could place in jeopardy, the egalitarian ideals which are central to the democratic order.

A question which has become central to the relationship between human rights and development is the issue of political conditionalities. This means that the industrialised countries which provide developmental assistance, now insist that the continuance of such assistance, would be dependent on the observance of political conditions such as good governance and the observance of civil and political rights. Developing countries, by and large, have resisted the link between the human rights records and aid on the ground that such conditions infringe on their national sovereignty. Human rights groups on the other hand, have welcomed such initiatives as they believe that

they are likely to result in improved compliance with international human rights standards. They also argue that there are no issues of national sovereignty which would serve as a barrier to international concern on human rights and humanitarian issues. They further argue that developing countries by becoming signatories to international human rights instruments, voluntarily accept international scrutiny of their domestic human rights records. Even the World Bank which had in the past, refused to take account of non-economic factors in defining its policies on assistance, has increasingly recognised the importance of the 'good governance'.

But the link between human rights and development threatens to further polarise the international community along North-South lines.

In East Timor in November 91, Indonesian soldiers fired at a funeral procession killing and injuring dozens of civilians. In response to international protest against the incident, Indonesia appointed an inquiry tribunal. In consequence of the report, the Government expressed regret and suspended two senior military officials who were in charge of the soldiers. Many observers mistakenly interpreted the Indonesian response as an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of international human rights concerns. However, the Indonesian Government within a few weeks terminated its aid relationship with the Netherlands which had been one of the most severe critics of the East Timor incident. There was similar retaliatory action by Kenya when it severed diplomatic relations with Norway in response to Norwegian criticism of Kenya's treatment of political dissidents. China has been one of the leading opponents of any attempt to link human rights records to aid, trade or multilateral assistance. China was subject to continuing criticism of its suppression of the pro-democracy movement, and of political dissidents. U. S. re-

presentatives of multilateral development banks are required to oppose loans to governments engaged in the gross violations of international human rights. After the Tienanmen square massacre, the U. S. opposed loans to China from June 89 until Feb. 90.

If the donor community is to be effective in maintaining this policy, there is a need for both credibility and consistency. Credibility is related to the ability of the North to ensure that in the South within its national borders categories such as refugees, migrant workers and its own under-class, are not subject to discriminatory and arbitrary treatment. There can be no such credibility if there is conspicuous disparity between domestic practices and international policies on human rights. The issue of consistency arises when there is selectivity with regard to the countries who are subject to punitive measures. Is the decision to suspend or terminate developmental assistance based solely on human rights considerations or is it more likely that factors such as geo-political importance, the economic model pursued by the recipient country and domestic politics are likely to influence such decisions?

The whole question of political conditionalities has also resulted in criticism that developed countries are seeking to impose western values and institutions on non-western societies under the guise of promoting good governance and human rights. The universal character of human rights is now being challenged by many nations in the South, Aung San Suu Kyi recently argued that it is a puzzle to the Burmese on how concepts which recognise "inherent dignity, equal and inalienable rights of human beings, and which accept that all men are endowed with reason and conscience, and which recommend the universal spirit of brotherhood **can be** inimical to indigenous values. It is also difficult for them to understand



how any of the rights contained in the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be seen as anything but wholesome and good. If ideas and beliefs are to be denied validity outside geographical and cultural bounds of their origins, Buddhism would be confined to North India, Christianity to a narrow tract in the Middle East and Islam to Arabia. However traditional conceptions of justice and governance have been imaginatively invoked to support the struggle for democracy.

The recent conflict in Thailand between pro-democracy forces and the Thai military, provides us with an interesting example on the role of traditions in the political life of Thailand. The Thai King intervened in this conflict and the reverence for tradition was so strong that both the military and civilian groups engaged in the struggle for democracy unquestioningly accepted his resolution of the crisis. The King lent his weight in favour of constitutional amendment, to the effect that the Prime Minister should be elected by the Parliament, and this decision was unanimously endorsed. The explanation for this important example of the continuing relevance of Thailand's kingship's tradition is related to the importance that law and custom play in upholding notions of just governance. The Thai king is on the one hand, regarded as an embryo Buddha, and on the other hand, the embodiment of justice. In the struggle for democracy and human rights, there is a role for the selective appropriation of tradition.

The next issue that we need to consider relates to the protection of what is known as group rights. In the history of the human rights movement, the international covenants focused on the protection of the individual. It is clear that this is no longer adequate. There are indigenous groups, ethnic minorities, and religious minorities who seek protection, both of their group's identity and the

group's rights. One of the least understood concepts of group rights is the right of self-determination. This is the right of a group to freely determine its political status and to freely pursue its economic, social and cultural development. It is a principle that is frequently asserted in the course of political struggle, but its transformation into a legal right continues to be the subject of fierce debate. It is equally clear that there is no advantage to a ethnic group or minority to achieve political freedom and self rule, if individuals within that group do not have the freedom of speech, movement or of expression. The interdependence of group rights and individual rights become self-evident.

The challenge that your class, consisting of students from different countries, faces is that of ensuring the issues of human rights and development do not become polarized into north-south issues. The bonds and linkages that you have forged across cultures and across civilizations will enable you to resist these forces which seek to divide the global and human rights community in this manner. The issues of democracy and human rights are far too important to become further politicised. You have had the advantage of being somewhat insulated from the human misery that ordinary people experience in their struggle for daily existence. But you have also at the same time being sensitized to the havoc, destruction and destitution that bigotry and intolerance can wreak on any society. You can therefore build the bridges of understanding which are necessary to fashion a world which is united by people who are committed to a core of human values.

Aung San Suu Kyi once said that it should be our common endeavour to prove that the spirit of man can transcend the flaws of human nature. In the struggle for human values, it is immoral to be pessimistic. Your class must ensure that the

values of tolerance, pluralism and of accommodation will ultimately triumph against the forces of bigotry, and of domination.

## Indian Ocean...

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will not be used for "other purpose" According to the renewed agreement, a site of 180 acres at Ekala, north of Colombo was granted for the installation of a VOA transmitter of 600 kilowatts. The Indian concerns in this respect were well founded and the strategic implication of this agreement should be viewed in the light of the fact that India was modernizing and upgrading its military communication system warranted by the growth of Indian military capability, especially the advances in the air defence system, the blue-water naval capability and strategic naval mobility. As Mohan Ram explained:

India alleged that the renewed VOA agreement provided for facilities beyond normal relaying and covered electronic monitoring and the directing of nuclear missiles to their targets. It is said that now the USA, besides normal military communications in the Indian Ocean region, would be able to monitor all vital communication within India because the facility had an effective range of 3300 kilometers and covered even submarine communication.

The question that whether the threat perception of India vis-a-vis Sri Lanka was imaginary or actual is not really the issue. What is relevant here is that India perceived those actions of its southern neighbour as a security threat. As long as India entertained such perceptions its policy towards Sri Lanka became reactive to the perceived security threats. As such, Indian defense concern and perception that Sri Lanka was undermining Indian security provided the primary inputs for the Indian policy towards Sri Lanka.

**(To be Continued)**

# **Presidential Style: Accommodative, not Confrontational**

**Mick Moore**

**T**he circumstances in which R. Premadasa became president were briefly described. During the first two years of his presidency, democracy appeared to be almost a lost cause. It seems likely that his initial election at the end of 1988 was "stolen" from Mrs Bandaranaike of the SLFP. There are however considerable doubts whether, had she won the election, Mrs Bandaranaike would have been able to solve the pressing problems of political disintegration to anything like the extent that the Premadasa government has succeeded in in solving them. One of Premadasa's first moves was to enter into a *de facto* alliance with the main Tamil separatist group, the Tamil Tigers, who were already engaged in a vicious war with the Indian armed forces who had originally been sent into the Tamil areas in 1987 to protect the Tamils against the Sri Lankan army. Premadasa demanded that the Indians leave, thus stealing much of the thunder of the JVP, who were waging a campaign on a platform of 'patriotism' and defence of the Sinhalese against Indian invasion. Having failed in his sincere attempts to reach a political accommodation with the JVP, Premadasa presided over the crushing of the movement in mid and late 1989. This was achieved through improved military intelligence and the slaughter of most of those suspected of involvement. There are no accurate figures, but 40,000 is probably the right order of magnitude. This was followed by a period when open criticism of the government would sometimes evoke gruesome threats. In early 1990, a prominent journalist known to be

at odds with the government was abducted in broad daylight and killed. Allegations that this was on orders from the highest levels of government are believed by most Sri Lankans. 'Fear' was the term most commonly used to describe the political situation at this time.

Abductions continued, as they do today, on a small scale. Few are reported. Independent newspapers are permitted to publish very little on issues with security of military implications. After the withdrawal from the island of the Indian peacekeeping force in early 1990, The Tamil Tigers again turned on the Sri Lankan armed forces. That war resumed in June 1990. Little is published about it in the Sri Lankan media, and that which is reported is generally grossly misleading.

It was not only fear and intimidation that made it appear that Sri Lanka had achieved the political status of a 'banana republic'. Personalism in politics reached new peaks. The president is obsessively concerned about his own image and status, goes to great length to project himself everywhere dominates the media, shows great sensitivity to any suggestion of personal slight, and adopts attitudes and positions in public that are clearly intended to imply a regal status. At the more substantive level, the mode of governing is equally personalistic. Ministers are reduced to ciphers, regularly reminded in public that they hold office subject only to the president's satisfaction with their performance. Those who were prominent ministers in the previous Jayawardene government have been humiliated and either

excluded from government or admitted on terms that appear degrading. Overt loyalty to the president is the first and major requirement for holding political office. Very little power or responsibility is devolved to anyone; but ministers are less influential than a small group of advisers, most of them public servants who have served the president for many years. These advisers are, however, consulted and use by the president in a rather arbitrary fashion. He appears to have no real confidants. The system may be described as neopatrimonial in that it is these personal linkages between president and advisers, and further personal linkages at lower levels in the public service, which structure the flow of information, influence and responsibility. The formal bureaucratic hierarchy has been bypassed to a greater degree than before.

A number of factors help make this highly personalistic managerial system relatively effective: the president's capacity to identify and win the loyalty of able advisers; his own very considerable political talents; and his enormous energies. He works very long hours. However, much of this energy is spent in the direct supervision of major construction projects, especially those associated with the major public ceremonials that the president regularly organises at great expense to celebrate his own rule.

## **The End of Democracy?**

Had this paper been written in 1990, it would perhaps have ended at this point with very dire prognostications for the

future of democracy in Sri Lanka. As of late 1991, it is possible to be a little more optimistic. There are a number of encouraging trends, some of the most significant emanating from within the regime itself.

The most important is that the president's preferred political style is accommodative rather than confrontational. This style very much fits the 'mood of the country' after years of bloodshed and unrest. The president has shown much more sensitivity to the concerns of non-Sinhalese minorities — and appointed many more to important public positions — than any other government for several decades. He has similarly shown special concern for the non-Goigama castes among the Sinhalese, both appointing members to leading positions and in various ways giving them symbolic recognition. At this level in particular the Premadasa regime represents a major break with the past. All previous Sri Lankan governments have been dominated by Goigama Sinhalese; in some respects, the Premadasa regime is anti-Goigama. This non-Goigama ethos appears to have alleviated the problem of the alienation of low-status groups from the polity. Evidence of this comes from the local government elections held in June 1991, the first 'fair' elections that have been held in Sri Lanka for some years. The ruling UNP largely swept the board, receiving over half the total vote.

Another encouraging sign from within the regime is that fears about it becoming a 'crony capitalist' system along the lines of that established in the Philippines by Ferdinand Marcos seem unlikely to be realised. In the past, the president has been closely associated with a number of businessmen, both relatively reputable and rather disreputable. He has however shown a surprising capacity to distance himself from them once in power, and has embarked on (genuine) campaigns against smuggling and organised gamb-

ling which have affected some of them adversely.

Some progress has been made in recalling the guns that became essential tools for most politicians in 1988 and 1989; in re-establishing the state's monopoly of armed force; and in disciplining those elements in the armed forces and the police who had exploited political disorder for personal criminal purposes. While fears widely expressed in recent years about an imminent military coup were much exaggerated, they did have some valid basis in that the status and power of the armed forces increased considerably, especially because of their role in crushing the JVP. These fears have now abated; the president has so far managed to distance himself from the armed forces, especially in relation to the continuing brutality of the campaign against the Tamil Tigers, without coming into clear conflict with them or submitting to pressures from them. The supremacy of civilian political power over the army appears to have been largely re-established.

In respect of external checks on the regime, there has been only limited and fragile progress over the last year. The democratic opposition has not become any less incoherent and disorganised, and remains vulnerable to the president's ceaseless campaign to keep it fragmented and at war with itself. The SLFP, the main opposition party, remains crippled by personal rivalries within the Bandaranaike family. A Mother's Front of the relatives of 'the disappeared' was successfully established in late 1990 despite strong government disapproval, but has not been active. Foreign pressure in relation to civil rights and 'disappearances' has been successfully tied in as a condition of future foreign aid, obliging the government to pay more attention to this issue—partly symbolic, but also partly substantive. This has, however, generated a strong negative reaction from the president, and stimu-

lated both the expulsion of the British High Commissioner in mid-1991 on false charges and a series of speeches aggressively defending Sri Lanka's sovereignty against attempts to use aid to 'interfere in internal affairs'.

The most striking recent political event was a revolt by about a third of the ruling UNP's MPs at the end of August 1991, in the form of an attempt to impeach the president on a wide range of charges. It is likely that the immediate motivation for many of the dissidents was talk of another general election, and fears that the president was to deprive them of the UNP ticket. The deeper factor was, however, the extent to which the Premadasa autocracy had deprived MPs of both power and status. The system appears to have been constructed on the assumption that MPs would remain docile if given adequate material privileges. This is not the case, and the vulnerability of autocracy was revealed. Not only did the MPs dare to act this way, but they managed to achieve complete surprise. (Using his command of state resources, Premadasa appears to have re-asserted control, and may indeed be strengthened by having flushed out his opponents.)

While there is no reason to expect that the current president will ever himself relinquish power, it is now possible to envisage a democratically selected successor regime. While the social-class basis of liberal democracy has indeed disappeared, it has become clear that there remain strong forces supportive of some kind of democratic regime. The more overt among them include the following.

1. The norms of democracy and constitutionality have long commanded a following among the Sri Lankan electorate, even as the self-interests of the politically-involved have led to their routine violation. There is no reason to believe that the political vio-

lence and chaos of recent years has weakened this commitment: it is evident to most Sri Lankans that the violence has followed from the rejection or distortion of the electoral process by government and its opponents.

2. In somewhat classic style, the dense associational life of the (mainly Colombo) 'middle classes' has provided a strong reservoir of resistance against authoritarianism. It constitutes both a forum for continual critique of the regime and, more positively, a basis for a strong if relatively dispersed civil rights movement. The ethnic and religious heterogeneity of the Colombo middle class, along with its strong and continuing overseas links, constitute major obstacles to any attempt to suppress dissent.

3. Very many Sri Lankan professionals have received their higher qualifications and/or worked overseas. There is a long history of emigration from the professional classes, especially Sri Lankan Tamils and other minorities, to western Europe, North America and Australia. The country is highly dependent on foreign aid, and a very large number of foreign aid agencies are represented in Colombo. The conditions are there for the creation of a strong civil rights/democracy lobby using foreign aid as its point of leverage. These possibilities were not fully exploited in the early 1980s, in large part because the Sri Lankan government was very pro-Western, and, in that era of crusading Reaganism/Thatcherism, this was a sufficient protection against any major expression of international concern about domestic politics. The international environment has changed, and, for the present at least, international concerns about civil rights are being brought to bear on the government very directly. In addition, such foreign funding as goes directly to Sri Lankan political parties

is now targeted in more 'liberal' directions than previously.

In addition to these three relatively overt bases of support for democracy in Sri Lanka, there is further factor which becomes evident only in comparative cross-national perspective: the near-absence from Sri Lanka of any attempt to *institutionalise* state influence or control over 'private' associational life of the kind that one finds in regimes influenced by 'corporatist (or 'organic statist') theories or models of state-society relations." It has become a matter of routine in Sri Lanka that successive governments expect to exercise influence over 'private' associations. In the case of trades unions, intervention is relatively direct: strong inducements or threats are offered for joining unions sponsored by the party in power. These are however, given no privileged legal status, and the situation remains essentially competitive. It is 'all change, when the government changes. In the spheres of business and the professions, welfare, religion, and 'development' — intervention is less direct. The associations are expected to put on a face acceptable to the party in power. The onus is on them to adapt or face exclusion. They tend to adapt. In some cases, notably in business, there are parallel associations in the same sphere of activity, each loosely associated with a different party/bloc. Their influence and relative membership numbers then change as governments change.

The general point then is that state influence over private associations is non-cumulative. Each government is accommodated by reshuffling organisations or their leading personnel. Such arrangements lapse when governments change. There have been no substantial attempts to establish permanent state control over areas of associational life, to give permanent privileges over particular associations in preference to others in the same functional area, or to restrict the right to establish associations. To this degree, liberal practices reign almost unhindered.

Alternative, non-liberal ideas about state-society relations — that is, corporatist or organic-statist ideologies — have never been seriously propagated in Sri Lanka. They are simply not on the menu of ideas available to politicians.

In some respects, current political conditions in Sri Lanka would be propitious for the introduction of state corporatist arrangements into the relationship between the state and bote functional associations (business, labour, professionals) and the various ethnic communities. There is a sense of exhaustion with politics after several years of bloodshed, disorder and fear. Labour in particular has lost most of the autonomous organisational capacity it previously enjoyed. It can plausibly be argued that lingering concerns about political disorder are the only substantial constraint on a major inflow of foreign investment. Even if 'corporatist' ideologies are not effectively available, there are elements of quasi-corporatist practices from the economically more successful states of East and Southeast Asia which are in principle open to inspection and emulation from Sri Lanka. Yet there has been scarcely any movement in this direction. "With one exception — the attempt to accommodate all ethnic groups both symbolically and substantively in the state, and thus to some degree reverse the 'Sinhalisation' process Premadasa has not attempted to, institutionalise a stronger state along East and Southeast Asian lines. Even if he could muster the imagination and intellectual capacity to do so, he would lack the political and institutional capacity. He is struggling hard to keep things ticking over through a highly autocratic system of rule. While he has it within his power to cause or permit the polity to begin to fall apart again, he does not appear likely to reconstruct it in a way that would permanently strengthen the now-fragile state.

## BOOKS

H. A. I. Goonetilleke, **A Bibliography of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)**. Vol. I & II, 1970; Vol III, 1976; IV & V, 1983. Zug, Interdocumentation Company, Bibliotheca Asiatica, 5,14 & 16.

Passionate bibliographer, humanist in the full sense of the term, Ian Goonetilleke is building up stone by stone the monument of erudition which he inaugurated in 1970 with the publication of the first two volumes of his **Bibliography of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)**. This exhaustive Bibliography, with annotations, unique in its field for a country of the Third World, is not only an incomparable instrument of work. Here, the bibliographical work, far from being a minor art, leads to the heart of the process of research: he gives to those who practice it with awareness and intelligence, a knowledge of intellectual production as a whole, especially in the field of Human and Social Sciences. That enables him to pose basic questions of method and epistemology, particularly questions relating to the relevance of research in a country which is dependent as far as knowledge is concerned. And the work which is the product of that labour becomes, in its turn, an instrument which directs research, whose function and use are by no means neutral. Goonetilleke is fully aware of these implications: the long prefaces he has given in each of his volumes are the expressions of his preoccupations.

In the first, the author deals with the "loneliness of the long-distance bibliographer", and the demands of a task conceived and practised as a handicraft. Manually done without access to any bibliographical data-bank, and without the help of any assistant, this task has given birth to a masterpiece in the true sense of the term. An unaccomplished task, not only because of the nature of things which compel the bibliographer to be at the heels of a gallop-

ing production, but also because of the personal conditions which prompted the work to be left provisionally in abeyance after the publication of volume V, and still more because of the tragic conditions which prevail today in that country torn asunder, forcing into retirement or exile men whose intellectual integrity rejected any kind of compromise.

The familiarity of the bibliographer, who was a long-time Librarian, with the documents he quotes (more than 25,000), which he has personally consulted, and read for the most part, is communicative; the comments made on the most important of them are intellectually stimulating, and one can but subscribe to the choice made "to prefer passion to anonymity, and the arousing of curiosity to the promotion of make-believe". The plan of thematic classification that has been followed and refined in the course of the publication of the various volumes is well adapted to the needs of research in Social Sciences, in that the cross references from one section to the other help one who is doing research of a historical or geographical nature to take cognisance of publications which are of an ethnological, sociological, or economic bent, and vice-versa. All the technical and scientific publications are not inventoried, and the works in the vernacular languages (Sinhala and Tamil) are left out for another bibliographer; but the entirety of writings in European languages dealing with the country is reviewed: Goonetilleke, although he thinks that many minor or random publications may be omitted, endeavours to be exhaustive, due to the compelling demands

Having learnt during my recent visit in Sri Lanka that Ian Goonetilleke has been awarded a well deserved *Honoris Causa Doctorate* by the University of Peradeniya, I am sending the English translation of a review of his *Bibliography* given some time ago to a French historical journal.

I would appreciate very much if you could publish it as a tribute of scientific appreciation for his outstanding scholarship and of personal regard for his deeply human qualities.

E Meyer

Research Director, *Centre for Indian and South Asian Studies*, Paris.

of intellectual honesty and professional rigour.

The endeavour is all the more challenging, for Sri Lanka is probably one of the countries in Asia which, considering its size, has attracted the greatest variety of conquerors, colonisers, then investors, tourists, and the curious. And in the local production in European languages there is an index to the magnitude and the precocity of the education dispensed widely by the successive colonisers.

But the usefulness and the excellence of the instrument are such that they give rise to a series of problems of which the author is highly aware, and whose implications are not always recognised by the users. This inventory of writings clearly shows the degree of dependence of research in relation to an "Imperialism of knowledge" which tends to favour subjects of interest, fields of research of Western culture. How far will such a bibliographical instrument contribute to maintain, nay amplify, that tendency? Is it not that its objective function is to facilitate external research, whereas at the same time, the poli-

tical degradation (most of the universities have been closed for more than two years) and the brain drain have dried up the intellectual production of the country?

Besides the service that the bibliographer renders, the research worker should be compensated by a feedback of information by the research worker to the bibliographer: that is how a real community of research could be established: but the relation is very often a one way. In this respect, the situation of research in Sri Lanka is of the same nature as that of the socio-economic crisis: the inflation of external documentation corresponds to that of the foreign investments and often carries with it the same adverse effects: the devaluation of intellectual production. Goonetilleke describes it in the following terms: "In the interests of a spurious interdependence and a so-called North-South dialogue, the information systems of the Third World will be penetrated by the ubiquitous data-bank, packaged as a commodity, and pillaged for a fee, in the same way as its natural resources".

This radical criticism has led a certain number of intellectuals to positions oscillating between nihilism and isolationism. The popularity of ethnocentric militant movements like the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (J. V. P.) among the Sinhalese, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (L. T. T. E.) among the Tamils, is an expression of this phenomenon. This withdrawal into an intellectual insularity was felt early by Goonetilleke as a major risk; as early as 1975, he wrote in his preface to his volume III: "In avoiding the trap of academic imperialism one must always beware of falling backwards into the pit of academic insularity".

One cannot sum up better the dilemma faced by quite a number of progressive intellectuals of today in the countries of the South, a dilemma which their colleagues in the developed countries should do well to reflect upon.

## FOREIGN NEWS SCENE

### *Russian Dilemma*

# Should a Flaming Torch be Thrown into a Powder Keg?

This is the dilemma that the Constitutional Court of Russia (CCR) is confronted with when on the 26th of May, 1992, it said it intends to examine the lawfulness of the President's Decree "On the activities of the CPSU and of the Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic" of November 6, 1991.

Consideration by the CCR of the lawfulness of the Decree of November 6, 1991, which was requested of the Court by a group of the People's Deputies, would imminently reflect upon other presidential decrees on the same subject. First of all mention should be made of the Decree of July 20, 1991, on banning the activities of the Party bodies in the armed forces, law enforcing and other state organs of Russia. That was one of the first documents signed by President Boris Yeltsin to meet his obligations, supported by the people of Russia during the presidential elections of June 12, 1991.

I have an impression that that very decree and not the prospect of the Union Treaty has become the main reason for the last August putsch. The Party and the State apparatchiks scared by the ban on their activities in the army, internal forces and law enforcement agencies, attempted to restore their formerly undivided rule by staging the coup.

They were horrified by the fact, that the President's decision found a ready response in the administrative institutions where political organs were abolished and the CPSU was deserted enmass. In fact it meant that the real power was getting out of the hands of party structures. It should be added that sharp criticism against CPSU was voiced both in the

media and in the Parliament. Subsequent events disclosed legal, political, sociopsychological nature of this organization which was the backbone of the totalitarian regime.

And now the CCR has to decide: right or wrong was the President when he terminated activities of the CPSU and the Communist party of the RSFSR? From my point of view, the probability that the CCR will basically support the legal and political stand of the President amounts to 55 per cent. If the Court decides in favour of the lawfulness of Yeltsin's decrees including the decree about the party property, as a whole and not in details, they will be preserved in Russia, cautiously speaking, the possibility for comparatively painless movement towards civilization.

That means that we at long last had achieved the elimination of years-long slavery and serfdom.

Public opinion polls show that not less than 90 p. c. of the population are in favour of the above and in this case the CCR's award will be the people's will, embodied in law.

Nevertheless, another version is not ruled out: the Decree in its basis would be recognised as unconstitutional. Needless to say, that in this case not only Russia but the Commonwealth of Independent States and the world order itself will face the enormous danger of restoration of totalitarianism. And in such a form that history has never experienced yet. The level of civil self-consciousness of the people has considerably grown recently and the people, who had felt that they became free, would fiercely resist the oration of totalitarianism.

*Commentary — Russian Gazette.*

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**'George Keyt Drawings'**

Edited with an Introduction and Descriptive Catalogue

**H. A. I. Goonetilake**

Published by Colombo George Keyt Foundation 1990

By **Tilak A. Gunawardhana**

This is a third publication devoted to George Keyt's work, and the second introduced by his long time friend, and admirer, and well known art critic H.A.I. Goonetilake. The album is confined to the artists drawings which have not been exhibited unlike his celebrated paintings, nor been presented and discussed in their own right in the two books that have appeared earlier, or in any one of the numerous articles that have been published from time to time in various journals here and abroad. This covers a territory that would be largely new even to those who have some acquaintance with his paintings. Hence the *raison d'être* for Ian Goonetilake's lengthy introduction which discusses, again for the first time, their evolution and place within the artist's 'oeuvre complet'. To attempt this demanding task there is none more qualified. Apart from being the artist's 'alter ego' (as I characterised him in a previous review) Ian Goonetilake possesses to a remarkable degree a capacity to read 'between the lines' of Keyt's drawings, and to articulate his own deep response in language that is at once revealing and relevant. As in good literary criticism, art criticism must also be necessarily closely relevant to the creative work under discussion. Unfortunately most critics whose literary exercises in art criticism appear in the daily newspapers show a damaging inability to observe this vital relevance in their analyses or judgements.

Ian Goonetilake's other qualification I have mentioned before in the columns of this journal, but I feel it bears repetition. Art has to be viewed with close attention, contemplated on, and

more than anything else lived with. Art must be an integral part of ones day to day environment, and I do not know of anyone except Ian Goonetilake who can claim to live with more than a symbolic collection of Keyt's paintings and drawings. Readers of this publication would note the names 'Ian and Rosalin' on a few reproductions, but this is not all. Some of the drawings he possesses are about the best examples of their class.

In this review I do not propose to make another assessment even 'en passant', for enough has already been written by his contemporaries over a number of decades in journals here and abroad. As I mentioned earlier, even though some of them do not constitute viable criticism in the strict sense of the term, I consider enough has been written on the more obvious characteristics of the artist's work. What is needed is the analysis of the artist's attitudes towards (they have changed from time to time) life as revealed in his more important work. Since of late he is a respectable 'establishment' figure accosted by the rich and influential, and principally these 'connoisseurs' consider it sacrilegious even to question his excessive penchant for eroticism direct or a la Saivism.

Ian Goonetilake in his introduction notices the artist's 'innocence'. I feel this is a key concept on which an analysis of Keyt could be attempted, even though it has not been done yet. Ian mentioned it but refuses to elaborate on it. 'Innocence' could also be a failing in another sense. One could be innocent of sex or politics. Of course these kinds of 'innocence' many share, but one cannot live in a society

and pretend to be innocent of the workings of that society, innocent of the main problems, failings, and the motives of the key operators of such a society. One could be 'innocent' of the negative forces for some time, or even ignore them, and seek refuge in a romantic world where one's dream becomes one's reality' I have always felt that George Keyt's world is largely confined to the erogenous areas of the female anatomy. The 'yoni' and 'lingam' his central symbols are central in the act of procreation, and according to Freud their associated objects are key determinants in the creation of the 'unconscious'. Most of us are familiar with the concepts of 'libido' and 'id'. May be Keyt like the Khajurao sculptors (if that is the correct name) are trying to find personal salvation in the ecstasies of sexual union on canvas and paper. May be that is why so many of drawings; celebrate 'alingana', and the exhibition of obviously erotic poses of women.

Considering the selection of 236 drawings before us, I must say that Ian Goonetilake has chosen them with discrimination and care, and they span a sixty five year period from 1925 to 1990. Here one finds the artist's earliest work, and the most recent, along with the extensive violent, experimental ones of the middle period which enabled him to establish his reputation as a great artist here and abroad.

In the earliest examples Keyt develops a very delicate fine line drawing that in its representational and pictorial element is conventional. In 1931 he makes a sudden break with conventionality and verisimilitude and this is depicted in drawings numbered from 8 to 12. Here one notices for the first time juxtaposed perspectives which dominated part of his later work (especially in his paintings showing the direct influence of Braque and Picasso). Then Keyt evolves a fluid line drawing (earliest example in No. 14) in 'Dreaming in the sun' which must be the precursor of the Gothami Vihara mural style.

Even though he settled down to three major styles by 1940 he refused to be completely confined to them. He seems to have experimented with sub-species of the main ones. Drawing no. 23 is a good example entitled 'Head of a Woman, where there are echos of Polonnaruwa murals. One of his most fascinating drawings of the forties is No. 31 where light grey circular patches overlap circular and near straight lines depicting a 'Woman with a Sheaf'.

By 1942 he was using the three major styles to illustrate a wide variety of themes. Among them drawings from No. 51 to 60 had been inspired by 'Gita Govinda', a Sanskrit work translated into English by Harry Peiris and the artist. His subject matter from then onwards is predominantly drawn from Hindu myth and legend. The Buddhist phase is clearly over. There were of course the occasional lapses into the realities of the sensible contemporary world. Along with Hinduisation one finds the artist getting infatuated with the contours of the female form. They are at first only erotically suggestive, but later with the capitulation to Savism the artist goes in for the direct depiction of 'yoni' and 'lingam' along with the other erogenous areas of the female body outside the main organs. 'Alingana' or 'lovers, become the principal theme of a large number of drawings showing undoubtedly great inventiveness in conception. Some times the erotic possibilities of female poses and male-female union so dominate his mind that their realistic depiction takes the upper hand as in drawing no 133 entitled 'Maithuna', and in drawing No. 201 entitled 'Ganesh and Vigneswari'. In the latter the erotic overtures that Vigneswari the woman wakes in the intimate company of Ganesh (the Hindu god with the head of an elephant) is complemented by the equally provocative probes that God makes with the tip of his exploratory trunk. Keyt's preoccupation with the erotic possibilities of the female form and

the undisguised suggestions of sexual union continues up to his final phase.

I gather that Keyt has stopped drawing or painting. While it is sad to contemplate that the career of our most distinguished artist has come to an end, we should be happy that a man of his genius and of amazing creativity was born in this country and had put Sri Lanka on world map of contemporary art. Whether we find the artist's mores and predilections attractive or repugnant, his inventiveness and the integral realisation of his themes in his major work

### Fact and Fiction: . . .

*(Continued from page 12)*

structure embodied within the propoganda of Sinhalese zealots" (Robert — Sunday Obs. 31/3/91).

Leaving aside the specific issues of Burgher lawyers and their clients in the mid-19th century which formed a major portion of their debate, the next most contentious points was Roberts' re-interpretation of "the famous eating stone, drinking blood story of the first Portuguese to visit our shores", (Roberts: Daily News — 27/3/91). There was such a fundamental divergence of views between Roberts and de Silva over this that at risk of wearying the reader who may have followed the debate at the time, I should like to quote de Silva extract in full.

"Michael Roberts turns to the Sinhalese reaction to the arrival of the Portuguese (as depicted in the Rajavaliya) — in a sense the beginning of the history of the Burgher community in Sri Lanka — and proceeds to give us a convoluted explanation of its "symbolic" meaning. The Rajavaliya story is a well-known one, in which the Portuguese, strange newcomers to the Sri Lankan scene, are described as people who, ate stones (bread) and drank blood (Wine). To Michael Roberts, this has something to do with the innate racism of the Sinhalese reacting in

assures him of a permanent place in the history of art. With about three major stylistic innovations and a vast array of minor variations, he has created a corpus of drawings that could establish and define his contribution to world art, even if his paintings by which he is known, are ignored.

The present work, which according to Ian Goonatilake, has been 'a labour of love' for him, with the excellent reproductions of the artist's drawings, and the fine printing will remain a 'tour de force' in the field of art book production.

horror at the ultimate pollution — the eating of meat and the drinking of blood.

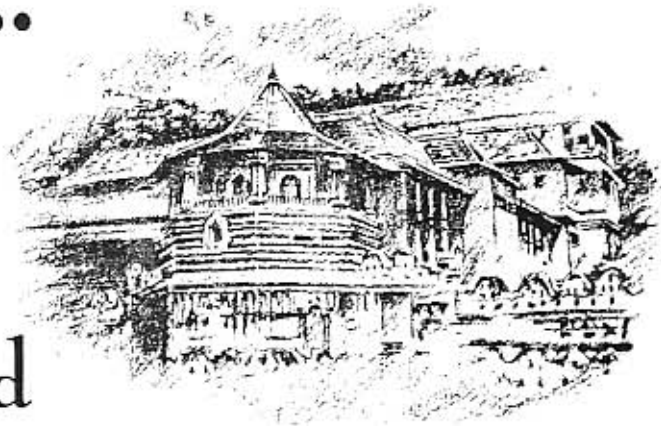
He tells us that his view was challenged by Professors C. R. de Silva and Shelton Kodikara, — who argued that it expressed a sense of wonderment at the first sight of an exotic people — when he originally outlined it in Perth at a Conference. Those critics are right; it is a fanciful theory. But like Goldsmith's Village Parson ("e'en though vanquished, he could argue still") he presents the same argument here". (CDN April 91)

Let us first look at the empiricists (i. e. De Silva, De Silva and Kodikara) explanation — that the Sinhalese description of the Portuguese as a people who ate stone and drank blood "expressed the sense of wonderment at the first sight of an exotic people". This explanation, which has been current for a century or so, is a legacy from colonial-based scholarship. It is founded firmly on the so-called "rational" norms of western scientific materialism according to which the medieval (pre-colonial) culture of Sri Lanka, depicted as technologically retarded, had produced a set of unsophisticated rustics who gaped in amazement at these wondrous strangers strutting about in metal suits, chewing on stones of unleavened bread (or possibly ships biscuits) and quaffing pints of "bull's blood" (a hungarian wine).

**(To be Continued)**

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