

LANKA

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NEW WORLD ORDER

Princy Dharmaratne

ARMS AND THE EELAM MAN

D. P. Sivaram

RIO SUMMIT

Martin Khor

PRESS

SRI LANKAN JOURNALISM: Sounds of Silence

— *Ashwani Talwar*

MEDIA IN MADRAS: Jayalalitha's Cold War

— *N. Kalyanasundaram*

REGION

INDIA'S SECURITY CONCERNS

Gamini Keerawella

TAMIL CONFLICT AND INDIA'S ROLE

Mervyn de Silva

INDIA-CHINA: Slow March to Amity

Inder Malhotra

• De Silva vs Roberts • Kandalama



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TRENDS

Duty dodger sent to front

The Supreme Court sent an army officer to the battle front, rejecting his plea that he was medically unfit for frontline duty. Major M. R. Wijesundera of the Sri Lanka Light Infantry filed a fundamental rights case when he was posted to the Palaly army camp effective June 11. A three judge SC bench decided that he was attempting to avoid frontline duty.

LTTE trains Tamil Nadu youth

Hundreds of Tamil Nadu youths had been trained by the LTTE in Jaffna, a South Indian magazine 'Junior Vikatan' claimed. They were trained to assassinate foes of the LTTE and to create a pro-LTTE climate in the South Indian state, the magazine article said. These trainees formed an underground military organisation known as the 'Tamil National Force', the story said.

International observers at murder trial

International observers came to Anuradhapura, capital of Sri Lanka's North Central Province and better known as the first capital of ancient Lanka, to watch a murder trial. At the magistrate's court two policemen were being tried for the abduction and murder of a local beauty.

The observers were Miss Marilyn Kritzer, Miss Frances Calman and Mr Peter Michaelson.

As we go to press, we have received a telegram from Dr. Gamini Keerawella requesting strongly that his paper should not be published. We regret any embarrassment caused to him or the Institute.

— Editor

Briefly . . .

FOUR POINT FORMULA

A four point formula presented by seven political parties and Tourism Minister Thondaman on behalf of the CWC was before the Parliamentary Select Committee on the North-East issue at its June 29 meeting. The four points are: 1. Permanent merger of the North and East; 2. Meaningful devolution which signifies autonomy; 3. Institutional arrangements to safeguard rights of the Muslims in the North and East; and 4. Necessary arrangements to ensure that the Sinhalese minority in the North and the East enjoy the same rights as the minorities in Sinhala majority provinces.

The Government itself has made no definite proposals to the Committee because it wants the other parties to make their views known and try and reach some agreement on them so that the Government can consider reaching and implementing a consensus, the Government controlled Daily News said.

SL's HUMANITARIANISM

UNICEF Executive Director James Grant told a meeting of the UN Children's Fund's executive board in New York that he had been amazed on a recent visit to Sri Lanka to find state hospitals treating youths and children engaged in a separatist war. In this respect Sri Lanka was perhaps the only country in the world, he said, according to a despatch from the Daily News UN Correspondent Thalif Dean.

If only Yugoslavia would follow Sri Lanka's humanitarian example it would be much easier for UNICEF to function under conditions of war, Grant is reported to have said.

ASTRONOMICAL C-o-L

Government policies and taxes had sent the cost of living up to astronomical heights, Jaffna District MP Kandiah Navaratnam (TULF) told parliament. The MP said that in Jaffna there was a shortage of food and vital drugs, particularly after the recent military exercises. An egg, for instance, cost ten rupees. And lakhs of people were in camps due to the war, the MP said.

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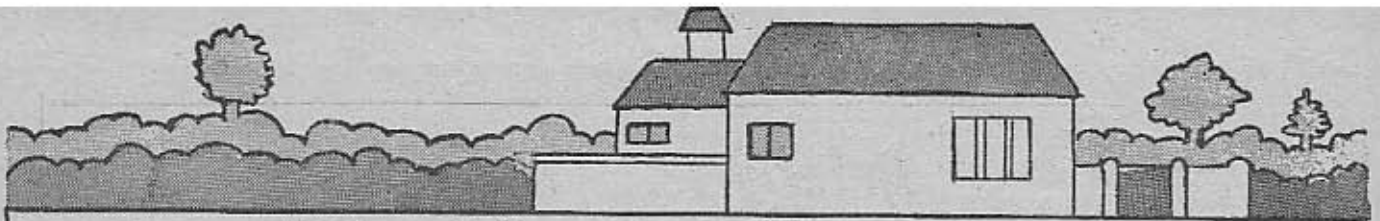
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Cold Winds over Palk Straits

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

A new tension in Indo-Sri Lankan relations is the fortnight's most politically significant development. And the tension is likely to rise than subside.

High Commissioner Nagendra-nath Jha hopped across to Madras last weekend but it had little to do with official business. The reason was strictly personel. But if the Sri Lankan press or the watchful Colombo-based foreign correspondents were alerted to "important developments", there were good reasons for such reactions too. The SUNDAY TIMES broke the story on its frontpage. VISIT IS OFF said the headline.

The Indian team of legal pundits who were scheduled to visit the island to exchange views with Justice Ministry officials and the newly appointed Attorney-General, had cancelled their trip at the very last moment. "High Commissioner Jha will not say why" the news item added. "The team definitely won't come now".

The issue, it is no secret, is the extradition of Prabhakaran if the Indian authorities request it. And that (however theoretical) would depend on how the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial goes. Among the accused are the LTTE supremo and his "intelligence chief" Pottu Amman. They have not been arrested. Even a first-year student of law knows that extradition requires (1) legal obligations of State 'A' to respond to a formal request by State 'B', and (2) proceedings in a court of Law in State 'A' (a High Court) and an order by that Court permitting the government to extradite the offender.

Why Delhi's legal pundits required a formal visit to the island to discuss this matter is not quite clear, particularly because the SAARC convention on joint action on counter-terrorism is public knowledge.

As the pressure from across the Palk Straits mounted, Delhi expected Colombo to yield — for one strong reason. The Premadasa regime had only recovered from the impeachment crisis (an internal UNP affair in the main) when the SLFP-led Opposition launched the second attack on a host of public issues, from Human Rights to Cost of Living, from the IMF-IBRD to the privatisation of plantations; from Udugampola to Kandalama, from the Election Commissioner's report to the Election Petition challenging the Presidential poll, from corruption to foreign policy.

On some at least of these issues, the Opposition had a pretty strong case but the sheer ferocity of the onslaught and the accompanying impression of an ill-planned campaign, robbed the Opposition of the political gains it deserved. Each issue had merit. Yet the Opposition could not maximise the advantage of its extra-parliamentary campaign and propagandist effort. The reasons include the following:

ANTI-IMF?

(a) Lack of coordination between disparate groups within the broad alliance, even when the agitation was a single-issue campaign e.g the plantations. Was the SLFP and its allies against the IMF-World Bank strategy? If so, did it want the SPC and JEDB to run the plantations which had lost billions? The plantations represent a major sector of the Sri Lankan economy. The donor

group in Paris pledged nearly 800 million dollars ONLY because the two agencies, and the ADB, gave the green light. The estates together with the two banks were crucial issues, the foundation of IMF "conditionality".

What was the Opposition's studied view on this central issue? Did it have such a view? Had it bothered to study it at all?

In fact, the character of the campaign, the tone of the main propagandist thrust — THONDA. ! THONDA. ! — exposed a crass **communalism**. Thonda was target; economic policy was secondary, if it mattered at all. The main donors — US, Japan and EC — noted this, and drew their own conclusions, just as they did on KANDALAMA, a month later.

The SLFP-led Opposition's "knee-jerk reaction" a senior western diplomat told this writer is almost always "communal". And increasingly so when the HELA URAMAYA cauces sets the tone of the SLFP agitational campaign, and the so-called non-communal moderates of the "New Left" (and the old) must perforce toe the line. The only difference between "H.U." and the Sinhala Arakshaka Sansividanaya (SAS or Sinhala Defence League) said a Scandinavian NGO rep. on a recent visit to South Asia "is that the SAS and Mr. Jayasuriya are not interested in office and power".

(b) The SLFP-led agitation has a frenzy which is in marked contrast to the D.U.N.F. for instance, at least in the past few months. The reason is plain enough. Mrs. Bandaranaike has not of course recovered fully

from her recent illness. And she fears that if the SLFP under her leadership cannot force another election soon, President Premadasa would be strongly placed for a second term. Thus, the SLFP (and its allies) are forcing the pace. But "pace" is one thing, direction and a clear goal another.

Unifying Symbol

To sum up, Mrs. B. is the unifying symbol but on account of the leader's physical disability, there is pressure on time, and the time-table has had to be re-written. Thus pack everything to a single blow. And so, all eyes turned towards Hultsdorp, with the astrophysicists deciding the deadline — September. And there matters stand. Meanwhile, a dramatic shift by the DUNF. Since May Day when the Gamini-Lalith dissident group had to join the SLFP-led May Day parade, and the DUNF demo was by no means impressive, the DUNF decision-makers, principally Gamini and Lalith, have had second thoughts about their participation in the broad front. They are worried about two things — their close association with the SLFP-led alliance has not only damaged their movement's image but alienated their main patrons, local and foreign — the western-educated professional class, and the influential, and more active section of the donor community; in short, a modernist, west-oriented elite, free from what the aid-group regards as a coarse runaway populism.

DUNF's Move

As a result of these trends the donor community has distanced itself from the main opposition, except on the central issue of democracy and human rights. After a Premadasa regime with a far greater sensitivity to the need for a much-improved H.R. performance, the donors will now look more hopefully on a DUNF that has accepted the constitution, respects human rights, commits itself to market economics and seeks a negotiated settlement on the ethnic

issue, with or without India's intervention.

In three months time Mr. Premadasa would not be the chairman of SAARC. Time is a major consideration for both Delhi and the SLFP-led coalition. High Commissioner Jha's firm reminder to the Sri Lankans that India "cannot be ignored" and "political realities" should not be forgotten, has produced reactions he should have expected but did not anticipate. He has been the object of two blistering attacks by novelist Amarasekera, the foremost Sinhala writer, and ex-Ambassador Stanley Jayaweera, convenor of the India-

The Kandalama controversy

There was no end in sight to the controversy over the projected Rs 400 million, 150-room tourist hotel at Kandalama, a remote hamlet under suzerainty of the historic Dambulla Raja Maha Vihara, as it has been from feudal times. As the Sunday Island had it, the issue has continued to be "on the boil". The issue is no longer that of a rather important Buddhist temple objecting to an unspoilt village, one of the few left being turned into a tourist stamping ground; nor even that of an impoverished local peasantry fearing that 100-foot tube wells sunk by the hotel would upset the water table and drive them into total starvation. The issue has now become politicised. The government is backing the hotel company, Aitken Spence, fully; the opposition, chiefly the SLFP, stands at the barricades with the Raja Maha Vihara and its Chief Incumbant, the Venerable Inamaluwe Sumangala Thera, and sundry peasant organisation and lay Sinhala Buddhist action groups including Mr Gamai Jayasuriya's Sinhala Arakshaka Sanvidanaya. Mr Thondaman, the Tourism Minister who is also boss of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) which is largely a trade union of Indian Tamil estate workers, stands on the sidelines occasionally throwing in a statement in support of the pro-hotel faction. The Sinhala

Sri Lanka forum! In an editorial, the independent SUNDAY TIMES told High Commissioner Jha where he got off.

"Despite all efforts to mend Indo-Lanka ties and lift them to the hallowed Panchaseela level, a big-brother attitude among some sections of South Block is casting a shadow. India's downgrading of next month's SAARC meetings in Colombo is seen by most analysts as a subtle move linked to the dispute over the visit of the Indian legal team for talks on modalities of the Prabhakaran extradition".

sanvidanayas find this element very sinister.

The hotel company says that tube wells drawing out 45,000 gallons of water per day for the hotel will in no way deprive the peasants of water; but peasant organisation say that siting a huge hotel on the Kandalama irrigation tank's catchment area will most definitely affect the water level in the tank, in addition to the tube wells upsetting the water table, and their cultivation will be seriously jeopardised. They say that it is for that reason that no government before this has permitted even cultivation in the tank's catchment area.

Buddhist organisations make another point. They say that when a tourist complex was to be sited at Iranwila, a Catholic fishing village near Chilaw, the Catholic Church objected on the grounds that the influx of foreign tourists would corrupt the morals of the fisherfolk and disrupt their life style, and the government bowed to the Catholic clergy and backed down; but when Buddhist monks and Buddhist and peasant organisations protest against this threat to the life style of the Sinhala-Buddhist peasantry in this yet unsullied part of Lanka, the government pays no heed at all.

So, it is no longer a matter for environmentalists and ecologists, or even economists; historic grievances have got embroiled in it. Also politics.

Letter from I. A.

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to inform you that Kumar Rupesinghe of Sri Lanka has been appointed as Secretary General of International Alert. He succeeds the late Martin Ennals, our founding Secretary General, whose work for International Alert and whose outstanding achievements in the field of human rights are well known.

Kumar Rupesinghe has served as Deputy Director and as Programme Director of the Ethnic Conflict Programme at the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo. He is currently Chair of the Human Rights Information and Documentation System, International (HURIDOCS); and Coordinator of the programme on Governance and Conflict Resolution of the United Nations University. During his ten years in Oslo, he has worked to establish conflict resolution as a crucial field for research and professional action, particularly within the non-Western world.

Kumar Rupesinghe served as the Director of the National Youth Council under the Ministry of Planning in Sri Lanka from 1973—1977. Between 1978 and 1982 he worked as a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy.

In 1982 he joined the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo, where he has served as Deputy Director and as Director of the Programme on Ethnic Conflict and Conflict Resolution. In Oslo, his main research interest has been the development of new conceptual approaches to ethnic conflict. During his ten years in Oslo, he has worked to establish conflict resolution as a crucial field for research and professional action. This has been combined with an effort to build international networks of conflict scholars, with a particular emphasis on the non-Western World.

He has also been engaged in academic work on development theory and on early warning systems for conflict prevention. He has participated in missions and carried out field work in many regions of conflict, and participated in several major non-governmental initiatives to promote conflict resolution.

Kumar Rupesinghe has served as a member of the Board of International Alert from its inception in 1985 and has been actively involved with most of its programmes including Uganda, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

He is currently Chair of the commission on Internal Conflicts and their Resolution (ICON) of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA); Co-ordinator of the United Nations Univer-

sity Programme on Governance and Conflict Resolution; and Chair of the Human Rights Information and Documentation System, International (HURIDOCS).

Kumar Rupesinghe has written and edited numerous books and articles in the fields of development and conflict. The most recent are *Conflict Resolution in Uganda*, James Curry Ltd, London 1989; *Ethnic Conflicts and Human Rights: a Comparative Perspective*, United Nations University, Japan, 1989. Currently he is editing, in collaboration with others, a three volume work on Internal Conflicts and Governance to be published by MacMillan.

Rodolfo Stavenhagen
Chair, International Alert

Major assault in North

Shamindra Ferdinando

The government has ordered one of the biggest combined security forces offensives against Tigers in the North probably in the Jaffna Peninsula itself, reliable sources said.

The combined security forces were to commence operations against key Tiger concentrations, sources revealed. Air strikes and heavy naval action against Tiger positions were most likely to resume they explained.

Fearing an escalation of hostilities thousands of Tamils have sought refuge in religious places in the peninsula and neighbouring districts.

Informed sources disclosed reports of heavy troops movements and Tiger attempts to intercept security forces communications to ascertain the intentions of the forces.

Senior officers from the three services were to join commanders

in the North before air and naval action begin, sources said. Troops in the front have been reinforced with additional men and material sent from other areas, they said.

All security forces stationed in the North-East region have been placed on high alert in view of the impending military action, they said.

Sources explained that both the political and military leaderships have identified the need to defeat the Tigers' military before seeking any political solution to the North-East issue. Sources said the forces were determined to secure some convincing victories against the Tigers this week to bolster their chances of conducting the war to a successful conclusion before the year's end as the political leadership wants,

Fall in value of arms trade

Robert Taylor in Stockholm

THE WORLD arms trade in large conventional weapons dropped by 25 per cent in value last year to \$22.114bn, according to the annual survey of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute published recently. The break-up of the Soviet Union was the main reason, Sipri argues.

During the 1980s that country was responsible for around 40 per cent of the global trade, but that figure had shrunk to less than 20 per cent by last year. The value of Soviet weapons exports last year was roughly 22 per cent of that recorded in 1987, says Sipri.

The US is now by far the largest exporter of large conventional weapons, accounting

for 51 per cent of deliveries last year to a value of \$11.195bn. The dissolving Soviet Union accounted for \$3.93bn worth of arms exports. But Sipri reveals that Germany is now the third largest conventional arms supplier in the world with sales last year valued at \$2.015bn — far more than China (\$1.127bn), Britain (\$999m) and France (\$804m).

Last year there was a marked reduction in arms imports to the developing world — \$12.336bn from \$16.720bn in 1990. However India was the largest arms importer (\$2.009bn), followed by Israel (\$1.676bn), Turkey (\$1.559bn) and Afghanistan (\$1.220bn). Thailand increase its arms imports substantially.

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The Cult of Universal Liberalism

Princy Dharmaratne

Stephen Gill of the University of York, Toronto in an article titled "Reflections on Global Order and Socio-historical Time"*1 aptly describes what is in fact taking place under the guise of democratic transformation in the New World Order.

"At the heart of the problem is the way in which the social basics of political participation in the emerging world order system appears to be narrowing largely because of the tendency for the pure logic of the capitalist market relations to intensify social inequality and to empower the strong at the expense of the weak, vulnerable or disorganized" "A harsher, perhaps less democratic and legitimate order seems to be emerging with a re-construction in favour of capital".*1

Whilst supporting Gill's concept of the New World Order, I would like to add a few comments on the cult of Universal Liberalism.

Under the changed political framework brought about of universal liberalism under the New World Order is really a blanket term to denote a world out of the authoritarian Soviet Camp, and by extension, a world that must hence inevitably be liberal democratic.

The democratic revolution hypothesis put forward by the West to describe the political changes taking place in the East does not fit the data under 'actually existing capitalism'. These post-Communist democracies manipulate political symbols cur-

rently in vogue — elective politics, multi-party democracy, and the primacy of elected legislative assemblies—propagating the myth of universal liberalism whilst in fact favouring anti-democratic political structures, policy formulations, and hegemonic linkages which define its real strategy.

It is a strange concept of democracy which consolidates the power of an elite managerial class to the detriment of the workers, that sanctions rising price levels which erode mass living standards, adopts economic choices which leaves scores of workers in the throes of unemployment, polarizing income levels — substituting profit maximization as the sole criteria in decision-making. "The rationality of the market reproduces the irrationalities of the social system".*2

The intellectual as the new intermediary in Eastern Europe.

The democratic transformation said to take place in the East uses a new intermediary — the intellectual in a changed role for its political purpose. Vaclav Havel, Boris Yeltsin, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik — move to centre stage. These neo-liberal intellectuals who led the protest movements under the old order now preside over the process of change short circuiting the very grass roots structures that helped them to replace the old regime. Trade Unions and other mass organizations are pushed aside for a favoured elite which controls the levers of power in the post Communist social order. The roots of the transformation are populist in origin — but the outcome everywhere in Eastern Eu-

rope serves to consolidate the new authoritarianism. Lech Walasa — heading 'Solidarity' in Poland — Eastern Europe's first 'bottom-up' movement in the wave of liberal upheavals challenging communist orthodoxy in the 80s ended neglecting the very ideals early Solidarity stood for.

The new authoritarianism at the political level.

The new authoritarianism taking shape in the post Communist Eastern Europe assumes two forms. One operates at the political level. High levels of Western credit get funnelled through for the electoral campaigns of pro-western political parties competing for political clients under the new order.

The political line-up in the new East European state sees a conscious narrowing of political participation levels. The content of policy formulated under the new liberal democratic set-up contains no expressions of popular will.

Major policy decisions affecting the living standards of the masses are taken without popular debate in the context of mounting disaffection. Satalin's '500 days Plan' in Russia though not eventually adopted by the Soviet authorities, is a case in point. In the recent reform program instituted in Russia at the beginning of 1992 price increases for most goods barring essentials increased by over 300%. Poland's harsh austerity programs carried out under IMF dictates, caused untold hardship for the Polish masses. In all these societies with a professed democratic slant, reduction were made in the populace' share of the budget, and income levels without consultation and debate. There is no popular endorsement

*1 "Alternatives" — *Social Transformation and Humane Governance* Vol 16 No 3 Summer 1991.

The writer works for the Centre for Regional Development Studies.

*2 "The Future of Socialism" — Samir Amin. *Monthly Review* July/August 1990.

of state policy in these newly established liberal democratic regimes of the East.

In Russia under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, in Poland under Walesa, and in Czechoslovakia under Havel, Presidential power was consolidated as a means of political survival—rule by edict replacing the deliberations of the National Assembly.

If measures such as these can be explained in terms of the democratic alternative for Eastern Europe, there seems to be some confusion about the conceptualisation of the new democracy.

The New Authoritarianism at the Economic Level — The Access Points to Western Capital and the consolidation of the New Command Economy.

The other arm of emerging authoritarianism in Eastern Europe is the growth of the New Command Economy — the World Bank and the IMF shaping economic policy in these new capitalist economies of the East as commands issued by the World Bank. Structural adjustment policies formulated by the World Bank and the IMF determine economic policy in these states — limiting the scope of home governments.

A core elite of influential intermediaries assume dominance in the post 1989 political set up — plugging into lucrative international trade and investment circuits. This hierarchy of domination defines the patron—client politics of the new East/West relationship — providing the access points to Western capital and the necessary ideological slant that goes with Market dogma.

The new ideologues get the plums that go with the new relationship from the newly forged economic order acting as consultants and go-betweens enforcing market philosophy, locating lucrative national enterprises for sale, re-cycling earn-

ings into lucrative avenues of investment such as hard currency deals and in other ways thriving on the pro-Western economic policy formulations.

The West for its part uses the Eastern economic intermediary to plug its market philosophy — shaping the investment formula, trade, budgetary and wage policies of the East to fall in line with World Bank/IMF and other pro-Western criteria.

A confused liberal rhetoric is used to mask real issues — using Adam Smith's conclusions to confuse the conditions prevailing in actual practice under advanced Capitalism. A naive Free Trade theory is touted in a world where the, universal tendency of competition to turn into Monopoly with its periodic crises of over production to turn and mass unemployment, gets completely overlooked by market ideology.

Can these developments be equated with a democratic revolution? Or rather is it not a new authoritarianism which substitutes one hierarchy of domination in place of another — using the democratic label to fit the political changes that consolidate the new elite anchored to the market?

The Myth of Universal Liberalism and Global Power-sharing.

Interpretations of historical change taken on a new dimension with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. History is said to move in a new direction — towards a unilinear liberal transformation in the New World Order. Francis Fukayama talks of "the end of history". An international system defined by two rival Superpowers and their ideological confines — one authoritarian/Communist — the other liberal democratic has given way to a mass wave of crusadic conversion to universal liberalism.

I would like to examine this argument, commenting on emerging developments in the world

scene — testing the theory of universal liberalism with some recent examples drawn from international politics.

Dominant power blocs shaping global policy.

In international politics the global power structures gravitate towards a growing hegemonism. Global and regional policies — economic trade, agricultural and environmental are shaped by hegemonic power blocs dominated by the North. The G7 the EC, GATT and now the Earth Summit deliberations reflect agendas where the richer and powerful powers dictate to the poorer nations of the Third World and the former Eastern Bloc. Even the Uruguay round is a saga of deadlock between the US and the less powerful Europe over the question of farm subsidies.

Decades of dialogue in the North/South deliberations have resulted in no apparent power sharing. Does an ecology policy which perpetuates a system where 20% of the earth's population consumes 80% of its production, 80% of the earth's resources, and is responsible for 80% of the earth's pollution be justified in terms of a democratic World Order?

Political authority in this context is monopolised by the World's Super states — the US, and the major Western powers backed by their military alliances, supervised and controlled by the IMF/World Bank duo. The emerging global power structure provides little or no political space for the professed liberalism which is bandied as the key word in the political philosophy of the emerging world order.

Democracy is not a guiding principle in Centre-periphery relations.

In Centre-periphery relations on the international scene the Western concern for democracy does not guide its foreign policy

(Continued on page 12)

Militarism and Caste in Jaffna

D. P. Sivaram

Tamil secessionism and Tamil militarism are two sides of the same coin. Both are legacies of the attempt by the British to demilitarize Tamil society in the 19th century. Tamil militarism arose from the grievances of the disfranchised Tamil military castes. Tamil secession was the result of the political ambitions of the classes which were promoted by the British to consolidate the gains of demartialization. Therefore it is necessary to understand the colonial strategies which were aimed at depriving the traditional power and status of the Tamil martial castes in Tamil society.

In those regions of India where military service was confined to specific castes, other castes had no desire to abandon their traditional occupations for soldiering or for violence. Since the ability for violence was caste bound, disfranchising or removing a region's military caste could negate its potential for violence and rebellion. The earliest attempt to thus demilitarize Tamil society was made by the Portuguese in Jaffna. A brief examination of their effort and its impact on the subsequent evolution of society in Jaffna will help understand better the social and political consequences of demilitarization in Tamilnadu two centuries later under British rule.

The Maravar were the traditional soldier caste of Jaffna when the Portuguese arrived. Once they took control, they set about dismantling the feudal military system of the peninsula. Military titles such as *Rayer Athirayer* were banned. The traditional soldier castes were seen as a threat to Portuguese control. In 1627 Lancarote de Seixas, Captain Major of Jaffna put forward the idea that the peninsula's security lay in having none there but cultivators. Thus began the rise of the Vellalas

in Jaffna. The Portuguese seem to have also favoured another caste called the Madapalli. The Vellalas were not only cultivators but a section of them which had developed scribal skills, provided the local officials, interpreters and Karnams (accountants). Successive colonial powers found Vellala scribal groups useful where Brahmmins were not forthcoming. Histories of Jaffna were written and presented to the Portuguese, which showed the Vellala and the Madapalli as the original and dominant community of the peninsula.

The *Kailayamalai* and the *Vaiyapadal* the earliest works on the colonization of Jaffna, appear to be such histories. They name the chieftains of Tamilnadu who had brought Tamil colonists to the peninsula with them. All of them are described as Vellalas. But eleven of them have Kallar and Maravar caste titles. The Jaffna Maravar were able to resume their caste occupation under the Dutch who, met troop shortages through Jaffna's feudal military system which the Portuguese had attempted to dismantle. The Dutch Governor and Director of Ceylon Thomas Van Rhee informed his successor Gerrit De Heere in 1697 that in the Jaffna peninsula "the Marruas are bound to serve the Company as Lascoryns (native soldiers) and pay to Fanams a year without anything more". But 93 years later a Dutch census (1790) of all males between the ages 16-70 in Jaffna recorded that there were only 49 Maravar males in the peninsula as against 1570 Vellala males. This was due to a widespread process in Tamil society where military castes, finding their traditional status gone, simply adopted the Vellala caste title and returned themselves as peaceful Vellala cultivator to the colonial census; and in time became endogamous

subdivisions of that caste. In 1834 Simon Casie Chitty recorded in his Ceylon Gazetteer that Kallar, Maravar, Ahampadiyar and Palli (Vanniyar) were sub-divisions of the Vellala caste. It is clear that the Tamil martial castes of Jaffna had swelled the ranks of the Vellalas when faced with unfavourable conditions under colonial rule as they later did under the British in Tamilnadu. This gave rise to the saying in the peninsula "Kallar, Maravar and Ahampadiyar came slowly, slowly and became Vellalas". But unlike their counterparts in Tamilnad the Jaffna Vellalas didn't generally change their military caste titles. "In former days the Vellalas had the titles of Rayan, Thevan, Kizhan and Mazhavan."

Today, one of these military caste subdivisions of the Jaffna Vellala community, bearing the Kallar caste title *Mazhavarayar* is a dominant land owning clan in the peninsula. The *Mazhavarayar* clan is also connected with the history of Thambiluvil in the eastern province. The *Mattakkalappu Manmiyam*, a work which deals with the colonization of Batticaloa, mentions the *mazhavar* frequently among the groups which peopled the Eastern province. Although the vellalization of Jaffna's Tamil military castes predates the same process in South India, Vellala cultural hegemony was achieved in the peninsula only during the early decades of the twentieth century. The persistence of endogamous subdivision identities was one reason for this. The Vellalization of culture and religion in the peninsula began with Arumuga Navalars attempt to convert the Jaffanese from their folk religion which was dominated by the heros and godlings of the Tamil martial castes. The martial caste elements also figures in narratives related to the founding of Val-

vettithurari and Mailiddy — Karayar caste villages on the Jaffna coast which are key. Whereas the Srilankan Karave (Karayar) caste in general has claimed Kshatriya status — that they are descended from the Kuru Dynasty — a strong narrative is found among the Karayar of Myliddy which states that three Marava chieftans who were brothers came with their castemen from Tamilnadu, married among the karayar and founded the village. Its dominant clan known as *Thuraiyar* — the others are known as *Panivar* — was connected by marriage to Ramnad, the homecountry of the Maravar, until recent times. The martial arts of Maravar were popular among the Thuraiyar of Myliddy before their youth were introduced to modern methods of military training in the last decade. A narrative related to the founding of Valvettithurai, based on folk etymology states that the village arose on land given to a Marava chieftan called Valliathevan by the eponymous founder of the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna. But a strong tradition was prevalent among the Karayar of Valvettithurai that they had fought the Portugese as the soldiers of the last king of Jaffna *Sankili*. This tradition as we shall see later was greatly exploited by T.U.L.F propagandists to mobilise people in that part of Jaffna. The tradition seems to be related to the trade wars between the early colonial powers and the Maravar kings of Ramnad. The Portugese, Dutch, and the British tried to wrest control of the profitable rice and chank trade between Burma, Bengal and Ceylon which was in the hands of the Thevars (title of the Ramnad kings) and their Muslim and Tamil tradesmen, on either side of the Palk Strait, among whom were many karayar Schooner proprietors of Valvettithurai, Pt. Pedro and Thondamanar. The British found that one Vaithianathan of Jaffna was among the few confidantes of the Thevar, who were looking after his chank trade in Calcutta. Karayar families carried on with

the rice and chank trade in collaboration with Muslim, Chetties and military caste families on the south Indian coast from Ramnad to Tanjore even after the British finally wrested control of it from the Maravar kings of Ramnad. A large number of Thandayals (traditional navigators captains of ocean going craft) from Valvettithurai, Pt. Pedro were employed in the Thevar's domain of sea trade. This became the basis of a vast smuggling network between south India, Srilanka, and Southeast Asia after independence in 1949. **The powerful Vandayar family (Maravar) of Tanjore maintained very close relations with a leading business house of Valvettithurai until 1983.** Sometimes such connections between the coastal military castes of south Tamilnadu and the Karayar of Jaffna were cemented through marriage. Although Jaffna Tamil society was the earliest to have been demartialized, and was the only part of the south Indian Tamil region where traditional Tamil military castes were completely subsumed by Vellala identity, it has become the ground in which the most fierce manifestation of Tamil militarism has taken root in modern times. How was this possible? Three reasons can be identified.

(a) The pro-colonial politics of the Jaffna Vellala was not formulated as an attitude against traditional militarisms because the Tamil military castes having assumed the Vellala identity early, were not present as a social threat in the peninsula to the consolidation of colonial authority after the Portugese period. Furthermore the nature of the Vellala caste a composition in Jaffna was in itself not amenable to the scribal-agrarian conservatism of the pure Vellala elites which the British found useful in Tamilnadu. The pseudo-Vellala component of Jaffna was large. A fundamental distinction between the Vellala elite of Tamilnad and Jaffna would illustrate the point. Arumuga Navalar campaigned

against the activities of christian missionaries and his efforts received support from Ponnuchami Thevar, the chief Marava noble of Ramnad. In former days the Maravar had opposed the spread of christianity, by massacring missionaries. On the other hand in Tamilnad an ideologue of Vellala elitism — J. M. Nallasami-pillai who like Navalar worked for the propagation Saivasidhanthism among the Tamils was closely associated with and supported by Anglican missionaries in his efforts.

As we shall see later while Nallasami-pillai carefully and deliberately played down the martial component of Tamil culture and history, attempting to establish that Tamil civilization was constituted by the peace-loving Vellalas, his counterpart in Jaffna, Mootootambipillai lamented the decline of the peninsulas martial heritage. He wrote in 1912 'when Sankili — the last king of Jaffna — fought the Portugese most of his soldiers were warriors of Jaffna. Even the Portugese have praised their valour. The victory of the Portugese was not gained through their bravery but through Kakkavanniyans treachery. Wasn't it the warrior of Jaffna who conquered the whole of Ceylon? The people (of Jaffna) who are descended of those warriors have lost their martial traits and become a despicable race, having been subjugated long under the Portugese and the Dutch and as a result having become weak and losing their self-identity.' Mootootambipillai was reflecting a sentiment that had been expressed in the Madurai Tamil Sangam — established by the Marava noble Pandithurai Thevar (the son of the noble who had earlier helped Navalar) that the decline of the Tamil nation was caused by the deterioration of its ancient and unique martial heritage.

(b) The closure of the avenues by which Vellala up-

(Continued on page 14)

India, China and the Real World

Inder Malhotra

(Special to the L. G.)

SHANGHAI

In the essentially slow but steady process of improving India-China relations the visit to the northern neighbour by President R. Venkataraman has unquestionably been a "landmark", to borrow the apt expression from his Chinese opposite number, Mr Yang Shangkun.

It bears repetition that this was the first ever sojourn in China by an Indian head of state. The significance of this was not lost on the Chinese even though they knew that in this country the executive authority is exercised by the Prime Minister and the council of ministers, not by the President. They were also aware that Mr Venkataraman was visiting them virtually at the end of his tenure in Rashtrapati Bhavan. And yet there could be no mistaking the importance and seriousness the Chinese hosts attached to his presence among them.

For his part, Mr Venkataraman brought to bear his usual and well-known dignity and erudition on all his discussions, especially those in Beijing with the trio at the top, President Yang, the general secretary of the Chinese Communist party, Mr Jiang Zemin, and the prime minister, Mr Li Peng. (Mr Deng Xiaoping, China's real supremo though he holds no official position, has not received a foreign dignitary for nearly two years.)

Altogether, what could have been only a ceremonial and symbolic visit turned into a substantive one though with one important limitation. It was that, by convention, heads of state do not take up controversial issues in their talks with foreign interlocutors.

Thus it was that while the border question was discussed at the initiative of the President

and the Tibet issue at the instance of the Chinese side, there was absolutely no mention in Mr Venkataraman's talks with the Chinese leaders of the nuclear problem which understandably acquired immense importance in view of the subsequent Chinese Megaton nuclear test conducted while the President was still in China. This will be discussed presently. Here it should suffice to state that the foreign secretary, Mr J. N. Dixit, did take the opportunity to tell the Chinese vice-foreign minister Mr Xu Dunxin, that India would "never sign the NPT" nor accept any other proposal which might have the same effect as signing the discriminatory document. But this was for Mr Xu's information, not comment. However, this conversation, too, had taken place well before the Chinese Big Bang.

Since the President's China visit and his own summing up of it have been reported at great length, its three main achievements can be mentioned briefly without going into unnecessary details.

In the first place, the visit appears to have led to a resolve on both sides to make high level contacts and visits more frequent than before. This should hopefully speed up the progress on the road to rapprochement.

Secondly, and more importantly, the profoundly important idea of a reduction in force levels all along the line of control has at last been articulated at the highest level. This does not mean that what is desired would be translated into reality overnight. But it would now be on the agenda of the Joint Working Group, along with other confidence-building measures.

Thirdly, the President himself has declared that he was "struck"

by the Chinese keenness to give economic cooperation with India primacy in their relationship with this country, even by pushing political questions down to the secondary position. If so, this is also a development of the highest import.

The Chinese always stress — as they did repeatedly also during the President's travels across their country — that, between them, India and China account for 40 per cent of the world's population which makes peace and cooperation between them a factor for stability in not only Asia but the whole world. In view of this, it is surely regrettable that the total trade between the two most populous nations on the globe should add up to a measly 264 million and economic cooperation should be conspicuous by its absence. A rapid expansion of trade and establishment of promised joint ventures — in each other's country as well as elsewhere — would be worthy of hearty applause.

However, all this having been said one must hasten to warn against both exaggerated expectations and undue pessimism about India-China relations. Few things could have been more dangerous than either the euphoria generated by Mr Yang Shangkun's reference to the Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai era (1947-55) or the paroxysm of anger produced in some quarters by the Chinese nuclear test.

China is doubtless sincere about waning friendly relations with India. But there are clear limits to how far it will go to accommodate Indian interests and susceptibilities for this purpose. To fail to come to terms with this reality would be to repeat the folly of the fifties.

One illustration of this point is that China's feelings about

the Dalai Lama's activities from his "base" in India are really stronger than is assumed here. During the President's visit this message was delivered not directly but indirectly and with remarkable subtlety.

An application of the PTI's Beijing correspondent for an interview with the Chinese prime minister had been pending for months. Mr Li Peng chose to give this interview immediately after the completion of Mr Venkataraman's talks in the Chinese capital. In this, the Chinese premier said: "I must say that first of all India should not support the activities of the Dalai Lama aimed at splitting China" and then added: "But, however, since the President of India is now on his visit, so maybe you should not report this". The agency expunged the remark from the interview's text circulated by it.

A total misunderstanding of the Chinese position is implicit in the persistent illusion of many Indians that China is ready to join hands with India and other Third World countries to "counter the American bully". This notion was first encouraged by the use of the expression "international oligarchy" at the time of Mr Li Peng's visit to Delhi in December. However, at the end of the visit, reality had dawned on all concerned.

This time on both Mr Yang and Mr Jiang allowed themselves to say, during their private conversations with the President that if the Third World did not unite and India and China "lagged behind", they would be "bullied". But neither this sentiment nor the word "bullying" ever found a mention in the Chinese media's coverage of the President's visit. Nor was the US ever criticised by name either in private or in public. The most that the Chinese said publicly was that "no country should establish its domination or indulge in strong-arm politics". Significantly, the Chinese also declared that the world was "moving towards multipolarity".

Doubtless China has many problems with the US, as does this country. But to forge an anti-American united front with anybody is no part of China's policy. One of China's primary objectives is to go on getting from the US, every year the Most Favoured Nation trading status year after year. This should explain why on a whole range of issues — from trade-related intellectual property rights to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula — China has acted entirely to the satisfaction of the United States. Where problems persist, it feels confident of being able to deal with them on its own because in its view of itself, China is the only Asian country in the same league as the US.

If this message was not clear enough otherwise, it has been driven home now by the Chinese nuclear test. It should also be noted that in his interview with the Beijing-based PTI correspondent, Mr Li Peng spoke with great circumspection on the proposal for the five-power conference on nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia. But his basic purpose was to reaffirm China's broad support to the proposal first made by the Pakistani prime minister on June 6, 1991. In other words, in

(Continued on page 24)

The Cult of . . .

(Continued from page 8)

orientations. The tie-up of Aid programmes to democracy as a political priority makes little sense when one considers the motives that have inspired some of the military interventions carried out by US in the Middle East, Latin America, and South East Asia in recent years.

The Gulf War portrayed as one of the first post Cold War rescue operations for democracy is wisely known to have been a military intervention to safeguard Western Oil interests in the Middle East.

If the universal enforcement of democratic norms is one of

of the prime objectives of US and Western political strategy in the Third World, it is hard to see how the West permitted democratic traditions to be openly flouted in Burma without protest when the National League for Democracy won the Burmese elections, but were debarred from access to political power by Burma's military junta. Such a predicament would perhaps have provoked another Gulf style military intervention in the Middle East.

Distrusting Democracy in the Periphery.

Far from safeguarding democracy, the Western powers seem to distrust democracy, in the periphery. In fact autocratic regimes located in the Middle East are useful in suppressing protest movements which can wreck the stability of a strategically important region for US investment.

Iran in the 70s acted as a US surrogate—guarding American interests in the Gulf.

Iraq, one of the region's most autocratic regimes was built up as a foremost military power in the region in the 80s with US and European support—at a time when it posed no apparent military threat to Western interests.

Saudi Arabia continues to reject constitutional rules of governance but serves as an important ally of the US—having pledged substantial support for the Gulf War. Self interest rather than democratic priority becomes the guiding principle of US and Western policy in international politics. From the post—Communist democracies to the peripheral regions of the Third World, the democratic political label fits Western interests in its current strategy of drawing more adherents to the so-called liberal camp. There is nothing new about the New World Order constituted in the form of a harsher and more advanced brand of Capitalism. What is new in that the camp followers are drawn from a more diverse clientele.

Tamil conflict and external factors

Gamini Keerawella

The manner in which the Sri Lanka government dealt with the armed challenge of the Tamil militants caused additional defense concerns for India. As the conflict between the Government and the Tamil militants reached a level of highly intensified warfare, Sri Lanka sought military assistance from extra-regional powers to meet the challenge. India viewed Sri Lanka's military linkages with outside powers as a de-stabilizing factor affecting the regional security of South Asia. After 1983 Sri Lanka approached Israel for anti-guerrilla training and assistance. Israel readily made available services of experts from its counter-insurgency agency, Shin Beth. The involvement of Israel experts followed the setting up of an Israeli Interests Section in May 1984 in the premises of the U.S. embassy in Colombo. There were reports that Mossad, Israeli external intelligence agency, was also advising the government. In November 1986, the President of Israel, Chaim Herzog made a pre-arranged but unannounced stop-over in Sri Lanka. Two-hour working luncheon of President Jayewardene and Israeli President in Colombo revealed the growing significance of Sri Lanka's Israel connection. The Israel Defence Force Radio reported that President Herzog's visit had been planned in advance, but had not been made public at the request of the Sri Lankan government. Israel training and assistance were crucial in air operations involved with the war and Israeli made Fast Attack Craft, Dvoras, transferred first two in 1984 and next four in October 1986, enhanced the ability of Sri Lanka's naval patrolling. India charged that Israel was planning to get a foot-hold in South Asia making use of Sri Lanka's desperate position. Fur-

ther, Sri Lanka secured the services of a private British security agency, Keeny Meeny Services Ltd, on a commercial basis. These mercenaries that Sri Lanka hired were the Special Air Service (SAS) veterans of the Rhodesian war. India was constantly critical of involvement of external elements in the crisis. In early 1987, the Indian Foreign Secretary brought this issue up during his meeting with high officials of the U.S. State Department in Washington. Sri Lanka charged that India was critical of the Sri Lankan effort to combat terrorism but supported terrorists by providing sanctuary and training facilities on its soil. But when it comes to inter-state relations the deciding factor is not logic but the nature of the equation of power at the particular political juncture. What is significant here is the fact that India entertained the Perception that the involvement of external factors other than India in the Sri Lankan crisis is a security threat. After the Peace Accord in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi vividly expressed this concern when he stated that forces which do not stand for non-alignment, forces which are not in India's interests were showing their presence in Sri Lanka. The hostilities had opened up opportunities for others to fish in troubled waters and to cause problems in our part of the world".

According to the second line of argument of the defense school, the Indian policy was governed by the offensive, not reactive, defense concerns. The defense and security concerns that India entertained in relation to Sri Lanka should be viewed in the context of India's rapid growth of military capability and its search for regional hegemony. With the rapid growth of mili-

tary capability in the 1970s, India extended its security framework and defense parameters. What is important in the Indian military growth is the possession of an indigenous military industrial complex, wider power-projection capability and greater strategic mobility. Alongside with this newly-acquired military strength, there is in India a political will for a highly assertive role in the region. Further, expansion of power projection capability has given a wider area of manoeuvrability to the Indian policy-makers. India utilised the internal crisis to impose on Sri Lanka geo-political rules set forth by India which India applied to its Himalayan neighbors with the same dose of coercive power sometime back. In order to understand Indian behavior, it is necessary to grasp the totality of Indian policy towards Sri Lanka rather than analyzing each Indian policy and action independently. The Indian policy towards Sri Lanka as a whole was based on the Indian perception of regional security, and, therefore, was an integral part in its South Asian policy.

Some Indian writers argued that Indian policy towards Sri Lanka after 1980 was based on certain wrong assumptions based on Indian perception of regional security. They argued that Sri Lanka committed many foreign policy blunders by ignoring geo-political realities, its South Asian location. By the same token, India also committed more formidable blunders in its policy towards the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis by using coercive power to impose geo-political rules based on Indian perception of regional security. This was an inevitable outcome of becoming prisoners of the strategic con-

cepts inherited from their colonial past. As Bharat Wariavwalla explains:

Regional primacy has been, in fact, our unstated but clearly pursued objective since we freed our selves from British rule, but not from the British conception of security. That the Indian subcontinent is one strategic entity is a concept the ruling elite proudly claimed from the British. By primacy we mean what Britain meant: management of security affairs of South Asia, or the Indian subcontinent as the British called it, from Delhi. Since 1947, it was our clear policy to insist on our neighbors shun security ties with powers outside the region.

In the early years after the independence, India did not possess the necessary power capability to put these strategic concepts into practice. However, in the 1950s and 1960s India contracted Treaties with the Himalayan States and got them into the Indian security orbit. With the growth of India's power capability in the 1970s and 80s India was more assertive and ready to impose its geo-political rules based on Indian perception of regional security. In this context, the foreign policy behavior of Sri Lanka after 1980 prompted India to get Sri Lanka within its security orbit and Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis presented the opportunity.

Finally, to what extent did economic factors influence the Indian policy towards Sri Lanka? Those who trace an economic linkage to Indian policy, base their arguments on two rather flimsy premises. First, in view of India's industrial growth and development of the military-industrial sector, India wanted to get Sri Lanka into its economic orbit. The political assertion of India in South Asia therefore was an outcome of Indian economic development, i. e., political manifestation of economic imperialism. Second, as a result of the introduction of a new economic policy package commonly known as the 'open economy' after 1977, Sri Lankan economy linked up closer to the

western industrial centers, Japan, and newly industrialized countries in South-east Asia and the Pacific-rim which annoyed India. This argument can not be substantiated because in Indo-Sri Lanka trade relations, balance of trade always remained in favour of India. As a result of trade liberalization after 1977, this trade gap widened further in favour of India.

economic policy contributed India to adopt a more hostile policy towards Colombo. Further, Indian economic relations and investments are confined to the south. As far as Indian economic interests in terms of trade and investments are concerned, Colombo-link and undivided Sri Lanka would really be at India's advantage. In other words, if the main elements of economic im-

SRI LANKA'S TRADE WITH INDIA (Value in Rs. millions)

Year	1975	1980	1985	1986
Exports to India	2.6	571.3	183.4	330.7
	17			
Imports from India	129.9	1,594.2	2,027.9	2,221.9

Source: *Economic Review*, April 1987.

Although countries like Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan expanded their trade with Sri Lanka and exploited the avenues opened up by the new economic package at a faster rate India also benefited from the same. Under the privatisation policy of the Jayewardena regime, some stateowned industrial ventures, such as the Thulhiriya Textile Mill to cite an example, were given over to Indian firms for management. After 1977, the trade liberalization policy and the establishment of export promotion zones opened up new avenues of investment for Indian financial and industrial capital. Indian entrepreneurs were ready to make use of the opportunity. In 1977, an Indian delegation led by Hari Shanker Singhania, Vice President of Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and industry visited Sri Lanka to explore the possibility of setting up joint-ventures in the Free Trade zone (FTZ). The delegation earmarked some areas where the scope for Indian investment in Sri Lanka was promising. Birlas were among the first to invest in the FTZ. Therefore, there is no ground to argue that the new eco-

perialism are unequal-trade and investment, Sri Lanka fulfilled them quite adequately after 1977. Therefore, economic consideration did not play a significant role in deciding Indian policy towards Sri Lanka.

Militarism . . .

(Continued from page 10)

ward mobility and conservatism under successive Sinhala governments in Sri Lanka. The colonial powers opened these avenues to promote the class and culture of Vellala conservatism as a bulwark and guarantee against the turbulence of Tamil feudal militarism. The restrictions placed on university admissions and on government jobs seriously undermined the class and culture of Vellala conservatism and its politics of non-violence and compromise. The other narrative that was contending at this juncture, for Tamilian identity—Tamil militarism—began to assert itself as the bulwark built by colonial powers against it crumbled.

(c) Non-vellala pockets in the peninsula where the values of Vellala conservatism had made little impact.

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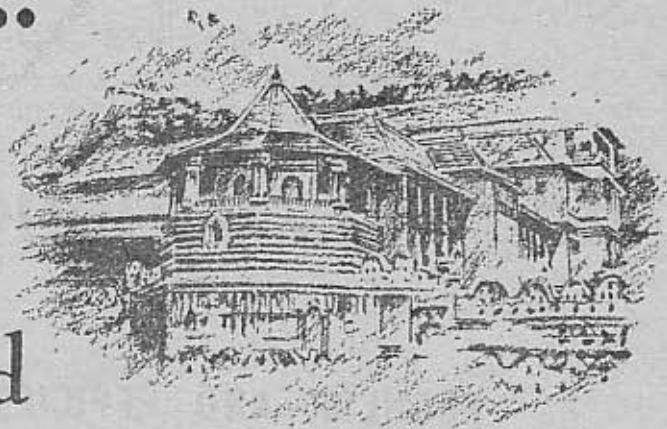
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NORTH – South Encounter

NORTH: No Commitment

Martin Khor

The absence of actual commitments for action from industrialised countries at the Earth Summit will make it difficult to tackle the causes of environment or development problems. (First of a two-part article)

RIO DE JANEIRO

The two-week 'Earth Summit' drew to a close on 14 June with most participants having strangely mixed feelings of euphoria, deep disappointment, concern about the future, and stirrings of hope.

The euphoria arose from having participated in a laborious two-year process haggling over such a broad range of environment and development issues, capped with a Summit meeting involving more heads of government/state than ever before.

As a learning process for government officials and political leaders on the imperative for social change to prevent an ecological catastrophe, this United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has been very fruitful. As UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong put it in his speech at the final session, 'This process has been a profoundly human experience from which we cannot emerge unchanged. The world will not be the same, international diplomacy and the United Nations will not be the same and the prospects for the Earth's future cannot be the same.'

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros - Ghali, in a closing

speech, waxed lyrical about the 'spirit of Rio, that emerged during the Summit: 'It is no longer enough for man to love his neighbour, he must now also love the world. Beyond man's covenant with God and his social contract with his fellow men, we now need an ethical contract with nature and the Earth...The Earth has a soul. To restore it is the essence of Rio.'

The euphoria of having participated in what is regarded as a historic conference that will change, if not save, the world, is balanced by a nagging sense that not much in substance and political commitment for action had been achieved.

On the positive side, a Rio Declaration with 27 finely balanced principles on environmental obligations and development rights was approved and will serve as guidelines for relations between states (especially North and South) as well as for national economic and environment policies.

A 700-page 40-chapter 'Agenda 21' action programme for environment issues (including soil erosion, deforestation, atmospheric change and toxic waste) and development issues (such as

poverty, consumption patterns, habitat and health) was passed.

Within this massive volume are some weaknesses (for instance the chapter on biotechnology exaggerates the potential benefits, whilst downplaying the need for safety measures and the chapter on deforestation is strong on planting new trees but says little about conserving forests). But there are also many positive sections, for instance on combating desertification, promoting sustainable agriculture, improving health and habitat conditions.

Many of the proposals have been made before, in previous fora. But it is still useful to collate together such a comprehensive range of environment and development issues, put action programmes to them, and attach cost estimates for their implementation. By signing this document, government leaders morally committed themselves at least to the intention of implementing the measures proposed.

As for actual implementation, the UNCED secretariat estimated that US\$600 billion was required by the South countries alone, of which the external aid component was \$125 billion. The South had regained for foreign aid and technology transfer a high-profile place on the international agenda.

The actual commitments from the North were not adequately

forthcoming, and this is the reason for the deep disappointment during and at the end of the Summit meeting. Without the commitment of the industrialised countries, which hold the important levers of world economic and political power, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tackle the cause of environment or development problems.

Firstly, some Northern countries (the US in particular) were adamant in refusing to commit themselves to change their unsustainable patterns of consumption, production and resource use. The US reluctance to address the link between consumption patterns and environmental stress ('Our lifestyle is not up for negotiation,' said President Bush) and its success in single-handedly deleting targets and timetables for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the Climate Change Convention exposed the Northern refusal to accept the need for significant changes in its economic policies and lifestyles.

The Southern response in UNCED was that if the rich North was not willing to cut its excess consumption, what right could it have to ask the South to make sacrifices when many of its people are too poor to further tighten the belt.

Secondly, the North as a whole was not prepared to seriously commit itself to helping the South carry out the transition to sustainable development. Southern countries facing an estimated transfer of resources of some US\$200 billion annually to the North argue they need external aid to offset their terms-of-trade losses and huge debt servicing outflows.

The quantum of new foreign aid became a test of how committed the North would be to helping the South implement its obligations in Agenda 21. The UNCED estimate of US\$125 billion needed annually was seen as unrealistic; Maurice Strong asked for only US\$10 billion as an

initial commitment to be pledged at the Summit.

After days and nights of continuous negotiation (some lasting to four or six in the morning), little in firm figures or in general principle emerged at the end of the Summit.

According to an estimate in the Summit's official newspaper *Earth Summit Times*: It appears that roughly US\$2 billion of what can be loosely described as new and additional resources has been placed on the table. That amount is embarrassingly miniscule in relation to expectations and to the total requirements.

On the principle of future aid flows, Northern countries could not reach agreement among themselves to be committed on meeting the long-promised target of aid equivalent to 0.7% of their Gross National Product, by a scheduled year 2000. Thus there is only a reaffirmation of the old promise, which few countries have fulfilled, and with little indication that the 'reaffirmation' will be honoured either.

There is thus despondency among developing country delegates and political leaders who feel that the North really does not care about the needs of the South (despite the oft-quoted rhetoric about the 'new global partnership) and worse, that in a unipolar new world order, the South is too weak at present to do anything about it.

Southern countries, gathered under the Group of 77 and China, had to suffer the humiliation of long hours of negotiation on getting crumbs in aid since the hopes of even seriously discussing the much needed reforms in international economic relations and institutions had already faded long ago in UNCED's preparatory meetings. The main energies of political leaders and officials at the Rio Summit were thus spent skirring on the margins since the real economic issues (the South's need for better terms of trade, higher export prices, debt relief,

reforms in global economic and financial institutions) were not on the agenda anymore.

A number of senior officials and experts from the South are also apprehensive that the position of the South will worsen further after the Summit. Gamani Corea, a Sri Lankan who was for many years secretary general of UNCTAD (the UN Conference on Trade and Development), said the Earth Summit held little or no promise for success. 'These days it is a great achievement to agree on what to say, not on what to do,' he wryly commented.

At a public forum in Rio, Corea said the current exercise to restructure the UN seemed designed to reduce the role of the UN in global economic issues. That role would be transferred to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which are all Northern-controlled.

Malaysian envoy to the UN in New York Tan Sri Razali Ismail said that Rio would not mark any watershed. After the Earth Summit, there would be more of the existing power structures being perpetuated. 'It is the Group of 7 countries, the OECD and the rich and not the South or the poor who will inherit the world.'

Mr C Raghavan, editor of the *SUNS* bulletin, predicted that the Uruguay Round negotiations under GATT would, if agreement is reached, contradict some of the critical elements of UNCED's Agenda 21. For example, the agreement on technology transfer (where the South would enjoy some concessions over transfer terms) could be superseded by the GATT Uruguay Round in which the North is strongly arguing for intellectual property rights regimes to be universally introduced. Developing countries would then have to pay for patents as well as face difficult obstacles to their own technological development.

— *Third World Network Features*

The writing of history

Jane Russell

Lin Yutang, the modern Chinese philosopher has coined a little rhyme which he claims encapsulates the Tao philosophy: it runs like this —

"The wisdom of the foolish
The gracefulness of the slow
The subtlety of stupidity
And the advantage of living low".

As the English put it — "Damn clever, these Chinese!". Equally, damn clever of the Sinhalese to fool such hard-boiled rationalists into believing that their mask of stupidity belied nothing more. But let us ask ourselves — is it likely that a people who had produced the tank civilisations of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, who had gone through several hundred years of horrendous civil war, who had traded pearls, gems and elephants with the Persians and the Chinese, who had iron smelting foundries capable of producing high quality sword steel, had been practising the *cire perdue* method of casting for 2500 years and valued most highly Ming porcelain ware were so smitten with wonder at this 'exotic' race of beings that their normal sensibilities left them and they mistook bread for stone and wine for blood? This is what empiricists would argue.

Now let us see what Roberts maintains: "that this has something to do with the innate racism of the Sinhalese reacting in horror at the ultimate pollution — the eating of meat and the drinking of blood". Perhaps Roberts has something here, for how did racism express itself among 16th century Sinhalese? Along with all other mediaeval communities of the sub-continent (except the Mohammedan), racism fell intrinsically along caste lines: that is racism expressed itself as an apartheid social system based on dietary, sexual and work-related taboos. In

a caste — based worldview, the Portuguese would have certainly gained plus points for their "varna" or fairskinnedness, but their dietary habits, particularly the eating of beef, would have nauseated the average Sinhalese vegetarian Buddhist. Such carnivorous beings would most definitely have been considered polluted or 'sinful' and contact with them would have been avoided except where absolutely necessary.

Let us take this re-interpretation one step further and look at the exact symbols chosen by the Rajavaliya: bread and wine. The partaking of bread and the drinking of wine form the basis of the ritual for the communicant in a catholic mass. The communicant not only partakes of these symbols representing Christ's flesh and blood but he is taught by his celebrant that because of the miracle of transubstantiation, this bread and wine actually becomes flesh and blood of Christ. Imagine the reaction of the 16th century Sinhalese Buddhist when the full significance of this ritual was spelt out to him: his immediate response would surely have been that these cannibals had elevated their revolting habits to a religious demesne? His horror could not have been more pronounced.

Culture shock, as a concept, had not been invented in the 16th century — the world had still not taken on board the "global village" dimension — but it is an indication of the general level of tolerance prevailing in Sri Lanka at that time that there was less apparent hostility to the Portuguese than might have been expected in the circumstances. If a galleon had appeared off the shores of Lisboa in 1503 full of Sinhalese Buddhist adventurers one can imagine what their reception might have been.

To take Roberts' re-interpretation again however, de Silva further castigated Roberts for his novel explanation of the Rajavaliya reference to the Portuguese' search for limes. To cite de Silva again:

"One of the elements in the story — the Portuguese sailors' quest for limes—is next elaborated into a long discourse of the significance of limes in sorcery and the importance of the latter in the life of the Sinhalese. The fact is that any sailor in those days would have looked for citrus fruits and lime in particular landfall — as a prophylactic against scurvy...

A common sense view would have it that lime has a whole lot of uses: first of all, in seasoning food: secondly, in providing, a refreshing drink: and thirdly — and only marginally important — its use in sorcery. Michael Roberts, the anthropologist, siezes on the last of these and indulges in several paragraphs of surpassing whimsicality in elaborating his theory". (CDN April '91)

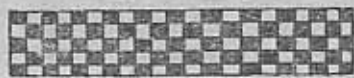
But if we enter into the mind of our average 16th century Sinhalese Buddhist when confronted with these tall, fair, bearded Mediterraneans clamped into their iron suits, cutlasses sparkling in the sunlight, muskets and blunderbusses at the ready, whose religious rituals involved disgustingly cannibalistic practices, and who kept asking for limes, limes and yet more limes, is it not perfectly possible that this would confirmed the view, already being whispered in the market-place, that these devils in human disguise were either sorcerers themselves or else conjured images of terrible sorcerers across the seas? And

(Continued on page 24)

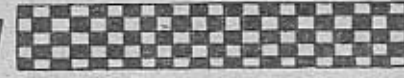
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Cold war with the Press in Tamil Nadu

N. Kalyanasundaram

A storm is brewing in Tamil Nadu engulfing the State Government and the print media at the national level over the rights and privileges of the legislature vis-a-vis the Fourth Estate.

What sparked the bitter row between the two is a rather stiff punishment pronounced by the Legislative Assembly against two correspondents and three newspaper editors on charges of breach of privilege and contempt of the House. With the affected journalists taking the issue to the Supreme Court, and the Legislature as of now unwilling to accept the pleas for leniency, there is the prospect of the issue being fought to the bitter end.

Apart from the serious concern expressed by leading newspapers and organisations of editors and journalists across the country over the aggressive stand of the Assembly or for that matter, the Chief Minister, the chain of events has only exposed the high degree of intolerance on the part of politicians and public figures to any kind of adverse observation in the press.

Outbursts against the Press and attempts to muzzle newspapers to prevent expression of views critical of these in power are not new to Tamil Nadu. During the previous regimes also widely-circulated weeklies and dailies such as *Thuglak*, *Kumudam*, and *Dinamalar* were set upon by the henchmen of powerful politicians. The Tamil daily *Alai Osai* once fell a victim for holding views opposed to the power centres. And there have been several instances of harassment of varying degrees of non-partisan national English dailies.

In April 1987, the State Assembly sentenced Mr. S. Balasubramaniam, Editor of *Ananda Vikatan*, an influential Tamil weekly, to undergo rigorous imprisonment for three months on a charge of breach of privilege of the House in respect of a cartoon (relating to MLAs and Ministers) published in the cover page of the magazine.

Now, in the case of *Illustrated Weekly*, Mr. S. R. Balasubramaniam, Leader of the Opposition (and leader of the Congress -I, an electoral ally of the ruling AIADMK) moved the motion of privilege and that has given a leverage to the Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha to argue that she is not involved in the issue at all. And there was no perceptible protest from the few who belong to the Opposition parties other than the Congress (I), either when the House accepted the Privileges Committee's recommendations for a stiff punishment or when the Speaker decided to issue the summons.

When the *Ananda Vikatan* Editor was sent to prison, there was a chorus of protest from the votaries of freedom of expression from all over the country and a boycott of the House proceedings by the press corps. That made the then Speaker, Mr. P. H. Pandian, who had arrogated to himself 'skyhigh power', relent and order the release of Mr. Balasubramaniam on the third day, of course 'in deference to the wishes of the Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran'.

Another occasion when the Tamil Nadu Government was forced to bow before popular pressure was when the MGR regime chose to have legislation to make "scurrilous writing" a cognisable and non-bailable offence with provision for enhancement of penalty in the second

and subsequent conviction. When the measure, dubbed a black bill got the Presidential assent in 1984, the entire journalistic fraternity rose as one man to fight it tooth and nail and the Act was withdrawn.

The latest bout of attack on press freedom in Tamil Nadu has highlighted the urgent need for the press to seek a lasting solution to the problem. In fact four journalists organisations in Madras have sought a discussion with the Chief Minister on the issue.

Almost all the journalists organisations reacted sharply to the punishment handed out to the Editor of the *Illustrated Weekly* as also the Editor of *Murasoli* (DMK organ) and *Kovai Malai-murasu* (with DMK leanings). The protest intensified with the Speaker issuing an arrest warrant against Mr. Sunil on his failure to appear before the Bar of the House to receive a reprimand. The hurt feeling among journalists is more because the directive to arrest Mr. Sunil (no more in the employ of the *Illustrated Weekly*) has come in spite of his having expressed regret for any offence caused to any member or the House by his writing the article in question.

Sensing the snowballing effect of the opposition to the happenings in the Assembly on the privileges issue the Chief Minister granted an interview to representatives of two journalist bodies which has attempted to sort out the various problems getting in the way of the normal functioning of the press in Tamil Nadu.

At the meeting which took place on April 18 (the arrest warrant was issued on April 20), among other things, the matter relating to the breach of privilege came up for discussion.

The Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha, was forthright in her assertion that a campaign of vilification was being carried on against her by some newspapers and magazines for some years now, and it was because she was tolerant that she had chosen to ignore even the very wicked attacks.

In saying that, perhaps, Ms. Jayalalitha was not trying to exaggerate. She had been subjected to the wildest form of attack in the yellow press and some newspapers and magazines which were opposed to her politically. Even after she became Chief Minister with an unprecedented people's mandate, the vilification campaign has continued in a section of the press, controlled by and sympathetic to the beaten enemies of Ms. Jayalalitha. It has been her grouse that even some renowned dailies put up stories based on tendentious reports published in yellow journals.

At her meeting with press representatives, the Chief Minister stoutly denied rumours about her bringing in legislation to put an end to scurrilous writings. "When and where did I make this suggestion", she asked.

In fact, when she started off as Chief Minister she made a statement in the Assembly expressing the view that since the opposition minus the ruling party ally, the Congress(1) is meagre, the press would have to assume the role of the real and effective opposition to maintain the checks and balance. However, within a few days after the declaration the ire of the rulers turned on the press and a cold war started.

The strained relationship between the press and the rulers is traced to the administration having distanced itself from the press, making access to official information difficult. The excuse, of course, is found in "security",

and thus the suffocating restrictions on journalists. While one appreciates the threat Ms. Jayalalitha is facing, one cannot really understand how that should prevent her or her Cabinet colleagues meeting representatives of the press periodically to remove misgivings and irritants. Now, the press has no access even to the Chief Secretary, head of the executive, which was never the case in the past. If misreporting occurs in the mainstream press often the authorities are to blame for it.

In the assessment of senior journalists, unbridled sycophancy prevails. In such a situation, the leaders succumb to the temptation of pressuring newspapers for their political ends. Also, the over reaction of politicians to criticism which should be generally ignored, often has the effect of bringing obscure magazines to prominence and lends credence to fiction.

Media

Lankan Press: An Eloquent Silence

Ashwani Talwar

It is not that Sri Lankan mediamen are not alive to the issue of press freedom. Every once in a while, the debate surfaces in newspaper editorials, magazine articles and seminars. But the discussion mostly remains an intellectual exercise. When it comes to actually probing the limits of the freedom of expression available within the existing political environment, mainstream Colombo journalists develop cold feet.

Whenever controversy breaks out, Sri Lankan journalists are conspicuous by their silence.

Recently when a former police officer, Mr Premadasa Udugampola, went on record with startling allegations on extra-judicial killings two years ago, most newspapers reacted by imposing self-censorship. References to the president, Mr Ranasinghe Premadasa, in the ex-policeman's statement were deleted. English language papers did not pick up a single line from the several signed affidavits Mr Udugampola released to the Press and editorials remained absolutely silent on the issue.

Same Timidity

The same timidity was in evidence last August when an impeachment resolution was suddenly sprung on the president by over half the members of parliament. The event was big news, it kept Sri Lankan politics in ferment for several weeks. Yet the independently owned *Island* broke it with extreme caution. It was crammed into a single column on the front page and most of the copy was attributed to an international news agency. Editorials hesitated from taking a

clear position on the issue. Writing later on the media's handling of the impeachment crisis, a senior journalist, Mr Ajith Samaranayake, noted, "All newspapers were reduced to taking refuge in vague generalities, nebulous phraseology and high-sounding expositions of basic constitutional theory."

Journalists from big papers point to the consequences of ignoring "caution". Smaller Sinhalese publications, which get few marks for objectivity but score high on gumption, often tell all—and pay for it. *Aththe* got indicted over reporting the Udugampola statement. *Yukthiya* had to close down during the impeachment controversy. Mass-circulation papers are usually only too ready to learn from the experiences of the small press. Some of the caution displayed by the *Island* group of papers is also because the owners have other business interests, ranging from chocolates to a helicopter service, and are believed to be vulnerable to government pressure.

Past encounters with the state keep the individual journalist in check. Two years ago, a television personality, Richard de Zoysa's body was found on a beach near Colombo, after his abduction by a squad alleged to be from the police. Another broadcaster has been missing for months. A few weeks ago, two journalists from a government paper were detained by the police in a hospital room when they tried to interview people injured in a prison riot. An officer allegedly asked them whether they wanted to end up with burning tyres around their necks. Not often, but regularly enough to serve as an example to the locals, foreign correspondents are booted out for unfriendly coverage.

Much of what the government does to journalists is legal. Emergency regulations, in force in the island for years, allow closing down of presses and pre-censorship if law and order

and hard-to-define "national security" are threatened. Section 26 of the regulations provides punishment from three months to 20 years for anyone who "by words, whether spoken or written" tries to bring the President, the government constitution or the administration of justice "into hatred or contempt." Provision also exists for banning unauthorised reports of cabinet meetings, all party conferences and "any matter pertaining to the defence and security of Sri Lanka." Some of the regulations are rarely used, but like in many other countries mere threat works.

Lankan journalists lack a powerful independent enough organisation to campaign against the regulations. Cases of harassment of individual journalists often go unprotested. In English language journalism in particular, there are too few jobs around to risk stepping out of the bounds and losing the one in hand. Part of the problem is the government monopoly which straddles the media scene. The largest publishing house, Associated Newspapers of Ceylon—the Lake House group—which owns a chain of papers in English, Sinhalese and Tamil was nationalised by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) government of Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1973. The now ruling United National Party (UNP), which protested against the take-over, has only consolidated its hold on the group. The government and state-controlled boards now own about 95 per cent of its shares.

And the Lake House group never forgets who its owners are. Better produced and often with a larger circulation than their rivals, its publication come into their own whenever the government runs into a crisis.

The day *Island* ran its hesitant little story on the impeachment resolution, *Daily News* struck out with a banner headline, announcing the move as a "conspiracy". It remained on the offensive for weeks, battering the opposition. Government-owned radio and television backed the propaganda thrust, even blacking out the news of the protest-resignations of senior ministers from the Premadasa cabinet.

Media Shortcomings

The media shortcomings show up particularly in the coverage of the seemingly endless ethnic conflict. Newspapers do carry a lot on the "national question"—from perceptive, scholarly analyses to outbursts of the Sinhalese-were-first-on-the-island type. But most of the writing is not from practising journalists, University dons, retired diplomats, human rights activists and other experts fill the columns. And there is little coverage from the ground. Since the war re-started two years ago, only a couple of local journalists have made the trip north to LTTE-controlled territory to report the "other side" of the conflict. Once in a while, journalists go to the "boundary" coming back with glowing pieces about "our boys on the front". For life across the frontier, the readers generally rely on often inaccurate military-inspired information.

A weekly reminder about the malaise is available at the government news briefing. The issues are local, but all questions on them seem to be asked by foreigners and Sri Lankans working for newspapers published abroad. Most weeks the press conference comes to an end without a single question from the rows of local journalists. Like the editorial-writers back at the office, the men and women in the field too maintain a none-too-dignified silence.

The writing. . .

(Continued from page 19)

isn't this also true? Were not these first Portuguese just such conjured projections of sorcerers so powerful that they would inspire a European sweep across the Asian, American and African worlds which would destroy those worlds, in the name of science, for centuries to come?

The little lime was as powerful a magnet to the Portuguese adventurer as it was to the Sinhalese sorcerer: As one of the most concentrated sources of Vitamin C, the only antidote to the long-distance sailor's killer disease scurvy, the lime represented the (medical) technological breakthrough which along with the sextant gave the Portuguese the necessary edge to be the first European nation to dominate these "New Worlds". The novel western philosophy of scientific materialism, ushered in by Galileo and Copernicus, would subsequently enable Europeans to enforce their will upon the rest of the globe for the next four to five centuries. In this context, the innocent little lime is far from innocent: it was just as integral an item in the western sorcerer's box of tricks as it was of his Sinhalese counterpart.

In this light, the empiricists' objections to Roberts, theories appear very different. Empiricism is a doctrine descended directly from scientific materialism. It is

therefore highly suspect in this type of controversy. Rather than the neutral or quasi-scientific observers they pretend to be, empiricists are just as caught up in value-judgements as the hermeneutists. In essence, their historical claims are equally tendentious, equally relative. There is no justification whatsoever for empiricists to pour scorn on even wildly imaginative social anthropologists because empiricism's own claims to objectivity are specious.

Representing as they do the status quo, however, de Silva et al can take refuge in their large numbers. But Roberts' imaginative anthropological approach is certain to gain ground in the future as being the more fruitful. All power then to Roberts' elbow.

However, to go back to my beginnings — if it seems that Roberts has worsted the empiricists in the areas of historical research and interpretation, he has not been so successful in the art of communication. Where the craft of writing is concerned, Professor Kingsley de Silva downs all comers. Any author who can turn a phrase as scornfully elegant as "surpassing whimsicality" is a master of English prose. Professor de Silva's effortless augustan style has drawn admiration from fellow historians everywhere and no more so than among that elite tribe, the 'Readers' of the world's most prestigious university publishers.

A literary minded scholar, as his quotation from Goldsmith suggests, he has dedicated himself to giving a precise and elegant form, through the medium of the English language, to the morass of fact and opinion that makes up modern Sri Lankan history. Ironically enough, he represents one of the finest examples of that group of persons, heirs to the cultural dischotomy resulting from a mingling of indigenous with foreign traditions, who are the "People in Between".

India, China. . .

(Continued from page 11)

the international nuclear power-play, China will continue to be a player of the front rank. Non-proliferation is for others.

Those who have compared the Chinese nuclear explosion during the Presidential visit to the Chinese invasion of Vietnam in 1979 when the then Indian foreign minister was on Chinese soil are overstating their case. The two events are not on par. At the same time it cannot be said that the Chinese have shown any great regard for Indian sensitivities. The test may have been in the works for a long time. But had they so wanted, they could have delayed it by a couple of days.

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