

BHABANI SEN GUPTA on Indian, South Asian Politics

LANKA

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SEX AND THE SINHALA SCREEN

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Prabhakaran



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AID AND BUDGET

WHILE all eyes are on the northern, and now the eastern front, there tends to be "benign neglect" of the most vital theatre of Sri Lanka's protracted war: the economic. Our national revenue is only half our total expenditure. Not only does the rest come from foreign financing but more and more does it reach us through high-interest commercial borrowings. Our debt service ratio expands, and foreign bankers begin to worry about our capacity to pay.

'Kindly gods' (the tea prices, mainly) kept us afloat in 1983-84 and we ended the year with a balance of payments surplus, well over 200 million US dollars. The old tripod economy (tea, rubber, coconut) has been replaced by two other legs to support the traditional tea. They are remittances from migrant workers, and tourism. Both have taken a beating.

Mr. Tyrone Fernando, Deputy Foreign Minister, is right when he says that the Gulf's needs for semi-skilled and skilled labour are not as large as before. Construction work in the smaller countries is almost over. Even Saudi Arabia is planning a gradual cut-back of more than 500,000 in the next few years. But he is only half right when he says that Arab displeasure over the Israeli issue has had no impact on Sri Lankan labour. There is an 'unofficial' restriction on Sri Lankans.

Anyway, whatever happened to the Saudi loan for the Mahaveli, Mr. Mohamed?

U. S. NOTE

THE other leg is even more shaky. After July 1983, there was a sharp drop of tourist arrivals and income. In the January-June 1984 period there was a 30% drop in arrivals and just over 20% in earnings. According to the latest figures that trend has continued. And tourism, a high investment sector, was our "great white hope". As for the Bird Of Paradise, the SUN reported that Air Lanka's losses

have soared so high that the figure is about 2 billion rupees.

No wonder the State Ministry reacted so angrily to a note by the State Dept. The US Dept. of State has warned US travel agencies that Sri Lanka is "unsafe" for travel in 2 provinces.

Finance Minister de Mel's current trip abroad has to be seen against this background. Tea prices have dropped; remittances show a decline, and the tourism picture is bleak. What is more, his crucial political pledge to the Aid Group in July — a negotiated settlement of the ethnic issue — has not been kept. The

CENSORSHIP

LIKE the poor, censorship is always with us. Only a few days after Major Monty Jayawickrema, the *de facto* leader of the House told Parliament that censorship was limited to troop movements the regular gazette notice was issued by the Competent Authority. Soldiering on, Mr. Jayawickrema says that it is only the eruption of communal violence in the E. P. which provoked this action. Let us see.

Exclusive to the L. G.

"I was delighted to receive several copies of the LANKA GUARDIAN. I read through several issues and was immediately impressed by the quality of the articles and the freshness of the authors' visions" writes Dr. Bhabani Sen Gupta, Research Professor of the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi.

With the letter came an offer to write on Indian and South Asian politics exclusively to the L. G. — an offer which we have gladly accepted. The first in his series appears with this issue.

One of India's leading foreign and strategic affairs analysts, Dr. Sen Gupta did his post-graduate studies at Columbia Univ. under Prof. Zbigniew Brzezinski. He is the author of "The Fulcrum of Asia".

TRENDS + LETTERS

Theoretical Work

I want to congratulate you for the splendid scientific and educational job you are doing through the journal. Scientific work is very difficult, especially when the society is undergoing such emotional turmoil. In spite of all my work on the Caribbean and Grenada, Black America, Palestine, Namibia and Southern Africa, events in Sri Lanka have left me paralyzed. I suppose this is because it was the smashing of a boyhood dream of hoping for a non-racist and humane national society. The recent theoretical and empirical work coming out of the country convinces me

(Continued on page 36)

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From ethnic strife to cold war

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

A land mine explosion and a rebel ambush led to the death of at least nine police commandos, members of the elite Task Force, our own 'green berets'. That was near Akkaraipattu in the Eastern province. Then, on the day of Mrs. Thatcher's arrival, the main police station in Jaffna itself was successfully attacked by a large band of Eelam militants.

These two dramatic 'strikes' the prolonged lull in armed rebel activities in the North and East. All serious observers have identified this fairly prolonged lull as the most significant event of this year, and tried to seek its exact causes and examine the development which accompanied both the abatement of violence and the sudden resumption of armed activities. Was the lull a diplomatic signal from Delhi? If so, what was the message? And how did Sri Lanka respond to the signal? These questions and the likely answers to them will help frame the internal-external factors which determine the Sri Lankan crisis at the present moment and in the immediate future.

Public and media attention last month was also focused on three visits — Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari's whirlwind fact-finding trip to this country, President Jayewardene's week-long visit (his first state visit) to Pakistan, India's most important neighbour and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's brief visit here. This somewhat inordinate interest in such high-level comings-and-goings is perfectly understandable. Since 'black July' 1983, the avarage Sri Lanka has been rudely and then steadily awakened to the external aspects of an ethnic conflict that has been rapidly transformed into an all-pervasive national-political crisis, and to the important impli-

cations of Sri Lanka's immediate environment (India, in particular) and to the world in general.

No serious student of the Sri Lankan situation, least of all this journal which may even be charged with being overemphatic in its attention to foreign policy dimensions, will fail to appreciate the significance of these general opinion trends. It should be noted nevertheless that the problem is fundamentally internal and will remain unalterably domestic. The domestic scene should be the starting point, though the inter-action between the internal and the external should be borne in mind all the time.

Turning Tide?

What did the sudden break in insurgent operations signify? "The tide is running against the terrorists" proclaimed National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali, who is certainly the best informed Cabinet minister and possibly the UNP politician with the best grasp of the politico-military aspects of the situation. Had the guerrilla offensive peaked late last year? Were the separatist combatants drained of all material resources? Had they reached a point of exhaustion and now face manpower problems? Was the tide really turning?

A second theory holds that the coincidence between the Delhi-Colombo diplomatic activity and the rather dramatic abatement of guerrilla activities was purely fortuitous.

Contesting this view that sees no connection whatsoever between the two is another school of opinion which argues it was all part of Delhi's exercise in diplomatic signalling.

With the collapse of the APC, the UNP's official, and now freely

Mr. A. Balasingham, spokesman for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil, Eelam said yesterday: "The Government wants a ceasefire to let it rebuild its demoralised army. Now is the time for us to hit back after a lull in our activities. Our aim is to shift the balance of military power in our favour so we can negotiate with the Government on our own terms." The Liberation Tigers are the Tamil's main guerrilla group and one of the four that combined yesterday into the new alliance.

— (Financial Times)

declared, position saw a basic shift from the political to the military. Minus the argumentative frills, this view could be stated in the following terms: **violence must subside, if not altogether cease, before there can be any fresh initiative on political negotiations, and India, if it is seriously and genuinely concerned about a resumption of talks should actively assist in lowering the level of violence.**

Colombo's message

Did the marked lull in the north and east then mean that Delhi had received Colombo's message and was responding positively? Air and naval surveillance had been strengthened on the Palk Straits and Sri Lanka officials were openly noting the greatly restricted traffic across the straits of armed separatists. Indian Customs were also cracking down hard and arms supplies obviously intended for the northern militants were being seized or interdicted. At Geneva, India pulled its pundies.

These developments were also accompanied by a visible reduction in Indo-Lanka friction especially in the Sri Lankan media and in pro-UNP circles. Anti-Indian sentiment had reached its most crudely shrill note in February

when the UNP Working Committee issued that lunatic communique accusing India of mounting a 'de facto Bangladesh type invasion'. (A sensible Cabinet spokesman, Dr. Ananda Tissa de Alwis withdrew that patently absurd statement after the government, quickly recovering its senses, disowned the party's war whoop!

Most political observers noticed a definite cooling of Indo-Sri Lankan tensions. Top UNP'ers were even breaking out in smiles, and saying nice things about the big neighbour.

Bhandari visit

Mr. Romesh Bhandari arrived in Colombo in this new climate of noticeably relaxed tensions. But perhaps the significance of the Bhandari visit should be assessed more in terms of symbolic value than in terms of political substance. Its primary importance lies in the fact that it was a gesture by the Rajiv Gandhi government, now settling down to serious business after both the parliamentary and the State elections, that India was keen on de-fusing tensions with all her neighbours.

"Concentrate on the neighbourhood" Premier Gandhi is reported to have told his newly appointed Foreign Secretary. How better to start the job and follow that directive than by visiting the neighbours, all members of SARC, the world's latest regional organisation which has itself got off to a rather fitful start. SARC's first summit is in Nov-December in Dhaka, the Bangladesh capital.

When Mr. Athulathmudali visited Delhi for talks with Premier Gandhi, the local anti-Parathasarathy campaign had already reached a crescendo. So much so, G. K. Reddy Delhi correspondent of the Madras-based HINDU spoke of a "sly attempt" by Sri Lanka to by-pass Parathasarathy and deal directly with Mr. Bhandari. The Sri Lankan position, officials took a special effort to explain, was not "an anti-Tamil" or racist. It was simply that Mr. Parathasarathy, however detached and dispassionate

in his approach to the ethnic issue would be perceived by Sinhala opinion as an envoy or negotiator who was understandably "biased" in favour of the Tamils. Thus, the fact that he was a Tamil became, unfortunately, an obstacle to Indo-Sri Lankan understanding on account of the pressure of Sinhala sentiment on the UNP administration.

While relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh are far more important to India than relations with Sri Lanka, the problems with those two countries are not that urgent. Besides, they are of a different character, and less easily managed or resolvable. Certainly, India's problems with Pakistan are more long-standing, more complex and more intractable. To put it bluntly, the deep US involvement in Pakistan and the Red Army's presence in Afghanistan make it 'strategic'.

So we have the Bhandari visit to Colombo. Since it is part of a general exercise — and protocol-wise, it is perfectly natural for the new Foreign Secretary to undertake such visits — nobody can say he is a substitute for Mr. Parathasarathy and therefore a diplomatic appeasement of Sri Lanka, a wilting under Colombo's pressure, a step that no major power would like to take.

Talking to this writer and others just before his departure, Mr. Bhandari was keen to impress on his Sri Lankan audience that he was on a factfinding mission only, and not as a new negotiator. The meetings he crammed into his unusually crowded program confirmed that. He covered the entire spectrum of Sri Lankan political opinion, including the Maha Sangha. His purpose was to prepare a report for Mr. Gandhi, a fresh look at the possibilities for Indian diplomatic efforts. This would help Mr. Gandhi and other policy planners to see whether it was necessary to re-draw the parameters of India's Sri Lankan policy at this critical juncture.

Consensus Politics

The improvement of relations should be understood as part and parcel of Mr. Gandhi's general attempt to de-fuse tensions in the major domestic trouble-spots, notably Punjab. Indian foreign policy planners and analysts now recognise what Mr. Jagath Mehta, former foreign secretary called 'the extra internal dimension to our relations with neighbours'. He was speaking at a seminar of South Asian scholars who were discussing regional cooperation (SARC) and political and security issues of this area. India's multi-ethnic composition, the history of migration and ethnic overflows war and partition had established integral links between Pakistan, Punjab and Kashmir; Bangladesh, Assam and West Bengal; Nepal and Bihar; Sri Lanka and Tamilnadu. The dual exercise, domestic and the neighbourhood, is an expression of Mr. Gandhi's "consensual politics"

The Sri Lankan issue has acquired a new urgency and sharpness because the Congress suffered severe set-backs in the State polls in March. Tamilnadu a state of 50 million, is the only state in the South which is firmly controlled by a Congress ally — MGR's AIDMK. The Centre in Delhi, especially in view of MGR's state of health, must pre-empt any oppositional moves in Tamilnadu to make the Sri Lankan Tamil issue a unifying slogan. If that slogan's emotional appeal is strong enough, the anti-MGR forces (i.e. anti-Congress) will team up with other anti-Centre forces in India's opposition-dominated South. (See Bhabani Sen Gupta's article in this issue).

If in fact the lull in rebel operations in the north and east was Delhi's diplomatic signal to Colombo, Sri Lanka's response could hardly have given comfort to the Indian government.

Back to Cold War

"Free Afghanistan Zindabad" said President J R, who was flanked by General Zia, when he spoke to Afghan refugees at the frontier. While Sri Lanka's anti-Soviet, anti-

Indian stand on Afghanistan was nothing new, the demonstrative gesture of support for Pakistan was followed by a joint communique where Sri Lanka supported the principle of "self-determination" in disputed Kashmir, the single question on which every Indian government has been hypersensitive. Speaking to the Sri Lankan press, General Zia said that President J. R. and he were on the same wavelength on the Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposal. Though Sri Lanka is the author of the IOPZ proposal, Sri Lankan and Pakistani views have drifted away from the Indian position, towards the stand taken by Singapore which holds a 'more-the-merrier' view i.e. more big power navies in the Indian ocean, better the balance, and less likely the chances of Indian naval dominance.

Growing Gap

Indian reactions to the VOA agreement and to statements made during the Thatcher visit (the PTI apologised for what was obviously a "misinterpretation" of President J R's banquet speech) point to a growing gap between Indian and Sri Lankan thinking on major foreign policy issues and regional relations. Esmond Wickremasinghe's articles on Bandung 1955 and his nomination as a special envoy to the 30th anniversary celebrations also indicate a new "cold war" orientation in current foreign policy making.

The argument that the military lull was the direct result of a deliberate Delhi decision to clamp down on armed Eelam groups in Madras presupposes a switch-on, switch-off" capability on the part of the Central government. Is there total control of that kind?

In answering this last question, attention should be paid to highly significant developments in Tamilnadu, and a very interesting interview given by Dr. A. S. Balasingham, the theoretician of the LTTE (Tigers) to John Elliott of the *Financial Times*.

In general, a three-tiered "unity move" can be observed: (a) within the expatriate Tamils,

the moderates and the militants, the assorted guerrilla groups and the TULF and the in-between groups and personalities (b) at the second level, there is a trend towards coordination, if not unity, between political forces in Tamilnadu, led by the opposition DMK, but not excluding MGR's AIDMK and (c) the attempted in-gathering of southern regional political forces in a broad move to confront the Delhi Centre on all the more crucial issues involving future Centre-State relations in India.

Unity Moves

Talking to John Elliott, Dr. Balasingham said that the "lull" was caused by the urgent need for "coordination" between previously warring expatriate groups. Lack of coordination in the field was also resulting in heavy casua-

ties, mainly civilian, he claimed. There was nobody to "defend the people" he said because there was no proper division of labour among the operational groups. So, operations had to cease in order to give themselves time to form a broad front — four groups, LTTE, EPRLF, EROS, TELO. (The TULF has moved meanwhile towards PLOTE)

But was there yet another reason that remained undisclosed. Did the armed expatriate groups fear that they would be caught in a diplomatic crunch or squeezed in a Centre-Tamilnadu political deal? In short, would they lose their autonomy of action? Unity means collective strength and therefore greater leverage vis-a-vis both Madras and Delhi. The big question is what does this mean in politico-military terms in the coming months?

New battles on the Eastern Front

A NEW dimension has been added to Sri Lanka's ethnic strife with the outbreak of Tamil-Moslem violence in the racially mixed eastern province. It has resulted in a murderous head-on clash between the Tamil minority and the island's next minority, the Moslems, in a highly largest sensitive area. In the Eelamist catechism, the Eastern province is part of 'the traditional homelands' but even those Sinhalese who readily concede that the northern province is the authentic home of the Tamils, contest this claim fiercely.

However the separatist insurgency has gradually spread to the E. P. which has seen some major rebel operations from the spectacular November 1983 jail-break, one of the biggest in history, to the killing of 9 police commandos in early April, the first break in the prolonged lull in armed activities both in the north and east. The eastern province has given birth to some new armed groups and several organisations whose names are now in the Madras Big League have maintained quite a high profile, operationally.

"The most objectionable feature of creating any new battle front must be that we could be indirectly playing into the very hands of the terrorists. For, renewed violence can only damage the national image and lend colour to the ugly scenes they themselves conjure up; their false propaganda.

"People pursuing any private vendetta, or seeking to embarrass the Government under the one pretence or another must have their bluff called. Their intrigues must be dragged into open: especially if they appear to have any foreign connection.

"Apart from the damage to the nation's good name, the loss of lives, of property, and the dislocation of families — all put fresh burdens on the community.

"If anyone thinks that a Tamil Muslim clash will create a diversion that will be embarrassing to the Tigers, then surely such thinking is naive. It ignores the basic structure and strategy of any guerrilla campaign. Terrorists exploit every scene of carnage and destruction.

"Every additional demand on our Security Forces is a gain to armed gangsters.

"Again, it is important that no one be allowed to indulge in tactics that might result in our common war against terrorism spilling over into some sort of international conflict on our soil."

— Editorial 'DAILY NEWS'

How would the Tamil-speaking Moors of the east, culturally closer to the Tamils of the region in the same way as the Sinhala speaking Moslems of south-western seaboard are closer to the Sinhalese, react to the growing separatist threat and political violence in their area? Would the "politics of the gun" infect the Moslem youth, radicalised by ideological and political developments sweeping the Islamic and Arab worlds?

Even in the context of a negotiated settlement and devolution in the future, the Eastern province is extremely important. While the Sinhalese and the Moors would never agree to an institutional link-up between North and East, it was the E. P. dominated "Council of Muslim Elders" which advocated the compromise of 'Provincial Assemblies', going a step further than hardline Sinhala opinion

which is totally unprepared to go beyond District Councils.

"Yet when one looks more deeper into the crisis that has erupted between the Tamils Muslims it is apparent that something quite contrary to the obvious theories does exist. Among the latter is also the notion that the riots have been stage managed to win support of the Arab lobby at a time when it looked with suspicious eyes at Lanka's friendly ties with Israel.

"Judging by the pros and cons of the issue at hand most people in Lanka will also not hesitate to bid farewell to the Interest Section.

On May 27 last year soon after a decision was taken to allow the Israelis in this column under the headline "Don't let Interest Section be a Camel in the Diplomatic Tent expressed misgivings and reservations."

(Don Mithuna — WEEKEND)

Israeli factor

Any standard counter-insurgency approach would recommend 'the cauterization' of the E. P. before the wound grew worse and bigger.

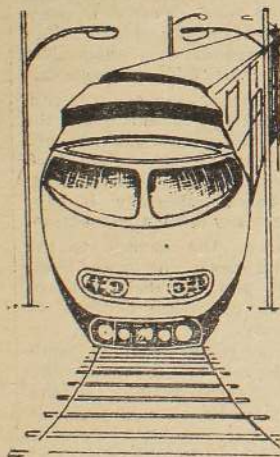
A host of varied and unrelated factors and events seems to have created a complicated situation until it attained the character of a localised communal conflict.

And once that happened, racial passions and intensely conflicting allegiances obviously moved according to their own logic. The killing of a Moslem postmaster and two youths in a mosque in Mannar on the other side of the island (Eelam radio has reportedly claimed that they were 'suspected informers'), robberies and raids, especially after the harvest, with rich moslem (and some Tamil) traders as the victims, and the land-mine explosion which killed 9 commandos provoking the wrath of this elite corps, and many other local quarrels have led to conflagration of tragic proportions. Only the most simple minded Sinhalese will derive any satisfaction from real or fancied gains, local or international, political, diplomatic or military.

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TAMING THE TIGERS ?

S. H. Venkatramani

HAVE the tigers been tamed? In Tamil Nadu, the shock-waves emanating from Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari's visit to Sri Lanka have stunned Tamil liberation groups into temporary immobility and helplessness, signifying as it does in their eyes, a dramatic shift in the Indian stand on the Tamil issue which bodes ill for their continuing struggle for Eelam.

What provoked their disquiet was the press release issued in Colombo after Bhandari's visit which stated: "It was agreed that cessation of all acts of violence is necessary in order to create an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of a political dialogue." Translation: not only must the Sri Lankan army stop its armed campaign against Tamil militants but the Tamils have to end their battle against Sri Lankan security forces as well. Says A. S. Balasingham, spokesman for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE): "We are not happy with the wording of the statement which has confused between senseless army violence against innocent Tamil civilians and the resistance we are putting up against army violence. Some people perceive it as a shift in India's policy as regards Sri Lanka."

Most liberation groups and their sympathisers view the visit as a deliberate betrayal by the Indian Government considering the support they have been receiving from New Delhi so far. Charged the DMK's V. Gopalaswamy: "Mr Bhandari has sold out our interests." Added Janata Party Rajya Sabha member M. S. Gurupadaswamy: "The Indian Government seems to have accepted Sri Lanka's position that violence must cease before political negotiations can begin."

That was, unfortunately, not the only bad news in store for the liberation groups. The same night that Bhandari flew back from Colombo, an Indian coast guard vessel patrolling the Palk Strait intercepted a speedboat heading

for Sri Lanka loaded with sub-machine-guns, 9mm rifles and two bags full of grenades. The two-man crew, Sivanandan, 27, and Alfred, 24, who were dressed in battle fatigues, were arrested. INDIA TODAY has learnt that the two are members of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), one of the more active Tamil militant groups. Significantly, this was the first time that an Indian vessel had intercepted a Tamil gunboat.

Even more sensational was the seizure last fortnight of a container at Madras port by customs authorities stocked with 1,400 bolt-action rifles, 300 Sten guns, five Japanese wireless sets, an electronic radio with amplifier and three photocopying machines. The container manifest declared the contents as waste paper meant for a paper mill in Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh. Sympathisers of the Tamil cause were quick to put the blame on Andhrabased Naxalites and even Punjab terrorists but the cargo was precisely the kind of equipment that Tamil liberation groups are in desperate need of. That was not all. Reliable sources have confirmed that Tamil Nadu police have also arrested two members of the National Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam (NLFT) one of the smaller liberation groups, for illegal possession of arms.

Coincidentally or otherwise, the sudden succession of setbacks for the liberation groups has resulted in one advantageous fall-out. Last fortnight, four of the five major groups finally managed to come together under the banner of the Eelam National Liberation Front. The Front embraces the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam headed by Prabhakaran, the Tamil Eelam liberation Organisation (TELO) headed by Srisabaratnam and the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers (EROS) of Balakumar. The fifth major group, the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil

Eelam (PLOT) under the leadership of Uma Maheswaran has been left out of the Front. The aberration is curious since it was with PLOT that the EPRLF, TELO and EROS were conducting unity talks and it appeared that LTTE was the odd man out. However, a EPRLF spokesman says that "our unity talks are continuing".

However, Front spokesman Balasingham says that the unity among the other four groups "will be both political and military. All four groups will be formulating our political approach and making political statements in future only after mutual discussions". On a military level, he says that "we are planning combined operations".

Clearly, the forging of unity among groups that have been at loggerheads with each other for years is the result of their suspicion of a change in the Indian Government's stand on Sri Lanka and the realisation that they will have to go it alone. Admits Balasingham: "Time is running out for us. We have to pool our resources and unless we change the balance of power in our favour, the Sri Lankan Government will not change its position".

The sudden panic in the ranks of the liberation groups could be a case of jumping the gun. While the groups and their sympathisers are convinced that the Indian Government has changed its stand on Sri Lanka, others view the latest events as merely a series of coincidences. The Foreign Ministry has assured members of Parliament that there has been no change in the Government's stand on the ethnic issue. Appapillai Amirthalingam, secretary-general of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), asserts: "I don't think that India has changed its policy on Sri Lanka".

Neutral observers say that the events are not being viewed in the proper perspective — as mere coincidence. Bhandari's visit, they

say, was part of his routine round of neighbouring countries and he did not go there to specifically discuss the ethnic issue with president Jayewardene. Neither was Bhandari an accomplice to the wording of the press release issued by the Sri Lankans at the end of his visit; the EPRLF gun-runners were intercepted because the Indian Government wanted to ensure that there were no major attacks by Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka during or immediately after the visit (last year the EPRLF kidnapped an American couple during the visit of US Vice-president George Bush). The customs crackdown and the arrest of the NLFT militants was to put the brakes on the intermittent armed clashes between different Eelam groups in Tamil Nadu.

They also say that local pressure and sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamils must necessarily be a consideration as far as the Indian Government is concerned. The Tamil Nadu chief minister convened an all-party meeting on the Sri Lankan issue where it was decided that a delegation would meet Rajiv Gandhi and present him with a memorandum. The opposition (DMK) leader Karunanidhi has been invited to be part of the delegation. The DMK had earlier announced its programme to picket Central Government offices and the Sri Lanka Deputy High Commission in Madras from April 29 if the Indian Government does not take any positive steps.

But a new twist to the Tamil issue has been given by the Sri Lankan Government itself. Having failed in its 18 month dialogue with the TULF, the Jayewardene Government is now trying to build bridges with the Tamil militants in Madras. The editor of the *Saturday Review* was in Madras recently for unofficial talks with leaders of the liberation groups and now a Quaker Peace and Service group is busy shuttling between Colombo and Madras on the same mission. Obviously, the situation has changed but precisely what will eventually emerge is still anybody's guess.

— Courtesy INDIA TODAY
April, 30, 1985.

Clearing the Air

India has finally launched its much debated offensive against its jittery neighbours. Not, of course, the type that was so vocally feared in close-by capitals. Instead of olive green, it is the olive branch that is spearheading the Indian invasion force under the command of its energetic, safari-suited general, Romesh Bhandari, India's new and upbeat foreign secretary.

Since his appointment barely two months ago, Bhandari has undertaken an 'if its Tuesday it must be Colombo' type swing of India's neighbours in a high profile bid to mend broken fences. Having bunny-hopped from Colombo to Kathmandu to Islamabad, Bhandari was off again last week to Kabul and Dacca to complete his South Asian itinerary. He had visited the Maldives for a South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) palaver immediately after taking over as foreign secretary and will set foot in Bhutan in May for the next high-level SARC session.

Bhandari's tour de force has been at the urging of his immediate Boss, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who also happens to hold the External Affairs portfolio. Rajiv had outlined his good-neighbour plan — the cornerstone of his initial foreign policy edifice — to the foreign secretary during the two-hour discussion they had en route to Moscow to attend president Chernenko's funeral and a receptive Bhandari lost no time in setting the machinery in motion, though not without some tricky diplomatic juggling. His scheduled visit to hyper-sensitive Nepal had to be postponed twice, once for a frantic — and futile — dash to Baghdad to mediate in the Iran-Iraq conflict, and again to ensure a meeting with Jayewardene before the Sri Lankan president met with his Pakistani counterpart, General Zia, in Islamabad.

At first blush, the Indian initiative seems to have yielded significantly positive results. For the first time in years, the constant crackle of vocal gunfire across India's

borders has been reduced to sporadic sniping, specially in Colombo and Islamabad — the two capitals that currently hold the key to the success or failure of the Bhandari bhangra.

That in itself is a minor miracle, however temporary its existence. In the neighbourhood, undoubtedly the most significant thaw in India's bilateral relations has been felt in Colombo in the immediate wake of Bhandari's visit. The confusion and consternation (see box) over the Press release issued at the tail end of Bhandari's visit apart, the dramatic change in the Sri Lankan Government's stand on the vexatious Tamil issue can hardly be mere coincidence. Bhandari's presence, in itself, was a major incentive for the Sri Lankans. Colombo has made it clear that the Indian Government's mediator on the ethnic problem, G. Parthasarathi, chairman of the (foreign) Policy Planning Committee, was no longer acceptable to them on the grounds that being a Tamil, his bona fides were suspect. "What we had to do was to convince them that the first step was for both sides to cool down and stop squabbling over minor issues like personalities. Only then could we tackle the real gut issues", says a foreign office source.

But even the the Indian delegation was surprised at the almost immediate climb down by the Jayewardene Government on various vital issues. These were:

- the announcement by Jayewardene the moment his talks with Bhandari ended, of a general amnesty to the Tamil guerrillas if they laid down their weapons
- a revision of the controversial sixth amendment to the Constitution which disqualified members of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) from parliament
- release of detenus jailed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act

- confinement of the Sri Lankan army to their barracks in the Tamil-dominated areas in the north and the east combined with a relaxation of emergency regulations in those areas
- a rethink on the prickly settlement policy undertaken by the Government to resettle Sinhalese in Tamil areas
- resumption of the stalled negotiations for a final settlement of the ethnic problem
- relaxation of fishing restrictions that is causing acute hardship to Tamils in the 'prohibited zone' from Mannar on the western coast to Mullativu district on the eastern coast
- significant changes in the District Development Councils (DDC) Scheme and District Ministers with the possibility of setting up provincial councils

All these are meant to be part of a package deal thrashed out in Colombo with a view to ending the ethnic strife and drawing the Tamils back into the mainstream of Sri Lankan life. The DDC's, for instance, now elected under the proportionate representation system, will be modified to include the individual popularity vote of candidates who will be considered elected even if their party gets a lower vote aggregate. The amendments also call for wider powers

for the DDC's. Elected district ministers will enjoy a status equal to cabinet ministers. The new changes, according to reports in Colombo, will come in force during the fresh elections to the DDC's (This year's elections were postponed).

The package proposals, however, will depend on the response from Tamil circles regarding the willingness of the TULF to contest elections in Tamil areas; their agreement to restart negotiations and a ceasefire by Tamil militants. The Jayewardene Government has meanwhile dispatched at least three unofficial representatives to Madras in order to start a direct dialogue with Tamil militant leaders, including a former TULF MP and the editor of the influential Jaffna weekly *Saturday Review*.

According to the *Saturday Review* report by its editor on his meeting with Jayewardene after Bhandari's visit, the Sri Lankan president stated that he was willing to meet Tamil militant leaders without any pre-conditions except that they agree to stop violence. Jayewardene, in a significant departure from his earlier stand, stated that he would not insist on their renouncing their demand for a separate state. The editor also quoted Tamil militants as saying: "Allow us to live in peace. We don't want power to suppress anyone".

According to External Affairs sources, the Bhandari mission retur-

ned convinced that there has been a marked change in the anti-Indian atmosphere in Colombo. "We had to convince them that what the Indian Government could do was limited to supplementing what the Sri Lankan Government did. We told them what we were doing on our part and that the rest was up to them".

Obviously, the recent events in Tamil Nadu — the eviction of Tamil militants from their bases along the Thanjavur coast and the capture of two separate arms consignments (see box) — has been seen in Colombo as a genuine attempt on the part of India to pave the way for an eventual settlement of the ethnic problem. Foreign office sources insist that the press note the militants are so upset about was release without the consent of the Indian delegation and that they will be issuing a clarification soon. They also say that traditional India-baiters like Prime Minister Premadasa have mellowed their earlier stand considerably and opposition leaders like Mrs Bandaranaike have come forward to actively support negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the problem and suspend inter-party strife till that happens. The sources stated: Jayewardene seems prepared to go the whole hog if it means restoration of peace in the island".

Courtesy INDIA TODAY
April 30, 1985

Tamil militant groups unite

MADRAS, March 24

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, one of the oldest and the most powerful among the guerrilla groups fighting for a separate State for Sri Lankan Tamils, has decided to join the Eelam National Liberation Front after protracted negotiation.

The decision, coinciding as it does with Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari's three-day visit to Colombo from today, is intended not only to broadbase the front and give it the necessary military teeth

but also to signal to the Sri Lankan Government that it cannot seek a lasting political settlement behind the back of the militants.

The Tigers' decision to join the front is a shot in the arm for the ENLF which was formed about a year ago by the Eelam Research Organisation (EROS), its splinter the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Organisation (ERPLF), and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO). The EROS and the ERPLF comprise mostly left-wing political activists engaged in mobilising the people and have

only small armies of their own. Only the TELO can match the LTTE in military structure.

Since the formation of the front, EROS leader Balakumaran and EPRLF chief Padmanabha had been wooing the LTTE of Prabhakaran and the other equally well-organised group, the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) of Uma Maheswaran, but the moves of rope these two into the front failed to bear fruit for so long because of the rivalry between Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran.

PUBLIC CLASHES; Uma Maheswaran, chairman of the LTTE for a year from 1978 broke away and formed the PLOTE after what he called ideological differences with Prabhakaran. Since then, there have been periodic clashes between boys of the two groups, the most serious being the shoot-out outside the Eelam Information Centre in Madras about ten days ago. This incident, played up by the Lankan radio, caused a serious setback to the unity moves then underway between the two groups.

Even now, the Tigers acknowledge that the PLOTE is an important group which cannot be left out of any front. At the same time, they say Uma Maheswaran has lost his credibility with the other groups by "hobnobbing with the TULF" which had failed to fulfil the overwhelming mandate it had secured in 1977 for a Tamil Eelam. By isolating the PLOTE for a while, Uma Maheswaran can be made to agree to sever links with TULF, give a commitment that he will not accept any settlement short of self-determination for the people of "Eelam" and deploy his forces in the struggle. The group pressure will also make the PLOTE discipline its trigger happy "commanders" who often harass boys of the other groups.

The immediate reason for the Tigers, decision to join the front and strengthen it is the realisation that time is running out for militants and that they must consolidate their forces. As Dr. A. S. Balasingham, political adviser of Prabhakaran put it, "protracted guerilla warfare in the face of accelerating State terrorism" is leading to terrible loss of innocent civilian lives. Over 60,000 have come to India as refugees."

By forging a united front, the militant organisations hope to get official recognition from India sooner or later. This they are optimistic of securing once they are able to convince India that their is not just a separatist movement on the lines of the ones in Punjab or Nagaland but a struggle against genocide and violation of basic human rights.

JAYEWARDENE'S MOVE: The militants also feel that a consolidat-

ed front stands a better chance of getting invited to the talks should they be resumed at India's initiative. President Jayewardene, even while seeking to crush the movement, has realised that he cannot seek a permanent settlement with the TULF, ignoring the militants. That was why he sent Gamini Navaratne, Editor of the Jaffna based Saturday Review and a Sinhala moderate who had been campaigning against a military solution, to Madras last December to talk to the militants. The groups told him that the Government should first prove its bona fides by pulling out the army from Tamil areas, withdrawing the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act and the emergency regulations and releasing all political prisoners. The talks could then be preceded by mutual cease-fire.

Nothing came out of the mission because India, caught in the turmoil of elections so soon after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, was not in a position to exert enough pressure on Sri Lanka to seek a negotiated settlement. This train-situation period in India also saw increasing Lankan army attacks on Tamil civilians, declaration of the 320-km long coast from Mannar in the west along the Jaffna peninsula to Mullaithivu in the east as prohibited zone stepped up naval surveillance to choke guerilla movement

across the Palk Strait, attacks on Rameswaram fishermen and the influx of another 15,000 refugees to India.

Now that there is a stable Government both at the Centre and in Tamil Nadu from where these groups operate, it is felt that President Jayewardene may be amenable to Indian suggestions for reopening the talks. Indicative of the softening of the Lankan attitude is the decision to release 200 Tamil youths from army camps. There are also reports that Mr. Bhandari's visit might pave the way for a summit meeting between Mr. Jayewardene and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. One report says that Mr. Jayewardene might stop over in Delhi on his way back after visiting Pakistan.

It was these development which gave a fresh impetus to the moves among the militant groups to present a united front. It is too early to say how enduring the unit will be, considering the inherent contradictions in the approach of various groups. Basically all groups are committed to achieving a separate Eelam through armed struggle. All groups are left-oriented and committed to establishing a socialist society if and when Eelam becomes a reality.

Deccan Herald

UK MPs on Human Rights

Two British MP's, one from the ruling Conservative party and the other from the Opposition Labour party, who visited Sri Lanka in February have reported to the British parliament on the human rights situation here. During their 2-week visit they were guests of the government which they say "could not have done more to help us in our investigation". They are particularly grateful to President Jayewardene for his "long and frank discussion" and for "facilitating several visits we wished to make". "They could not go to Mannar or Jaffna and had no alternative but to accept the official ruling" on the dangers involved in such visits.

The 20-page report devotes one page to 'atrocities by the Tigers' one-and-half pages to 'atrocities by the army', ten pages to "restrictions in the North", the Emergency Regulations and the PTA and a couple of pages to press censorship and Parliamentary Democracy. It says that the "manner in which Mrs. Bandaranaike, leader of the Indian (sic) Opposition party was stripped of her civic rights by the present government did little credit" and hopes that the action would be "reconsidered". Commenting on the SLFP's performance as an Opposition party (vis-a-vis human rights) the report says "as a

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE BATTLEFRONT

"It is a war, and if we don't occupy the border, the border will come to us", said the Sri Lanka President, J. R. Jayewardene, in his address to Parliament on February 20. He added: "Some think that a solution will make terrorism wither away. Others think any solution will be impossible unless terrorism is first eliminated. I think the last sentence is correct."

Although implied during the preceding months in policies implemented in the North, and in statements made by other members of his Cabinet, this was the first clear articulation by the President of his Government's choice of an all-out military solution — and the relegation of talks to second place.

With the escalation of the armed conflict from last December and the collapse of the All Party Conference (APC), the Sri Lankan security forces find that a long and brutal campaign stretches before them — provided external political factors operate within present margins. As it is, they have been in Jaffna on a combat footing from 1979, which is by far the longest continuous troop deployment in the post-Independence era. About 3,500 troops are on station in Jaffna. Quite apart from material limitations, serious inadequacies in the discipline and training of rank and file soldiers have been revealed during the course of the fighting.

Unlike Thai, Filipino and Indonesian armies, which have seen combat in high-intensity guerilla wars for extended periods of time, the Sri Lankan Army is ill-equipped and inadequately-trained to face up to a similar challenge. Coming from peasant and provincial town backgrounds, those in the rank and file perceived the Army as merely an alternative to unemployment and as a useful stepping stone to a security service job in civilian life. Fighting in a counter-insurgency war against opponents as formidable as the Tamil separatist guerillas was farthest from their minds — as well as of their families.

The Army is allegedly facing a serious morale problem. The promotion of Nalin Seneviratne, the former overall commanding officer in Jaffna to the post of Army Commander, is seen as an effort to counter this trend. Maj-Gen. Seneviratne is reputed to be popular and to have a real rapport with his men so much so that he is fondly called 'aiya' (elder brother) by the men.

Former Army Commander Maj-Gen. Tissa Weeraratne has been promoted to Lt-Gen. and appointed Director of Combined Operations — a new organisational/operational arrangement which brings together under one command the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the police. Col. H. Wanasinha from the Army headquarters has been promoted Brigadier and put in charge of the Jaffna command. All three officers are graduates from the Sandhurst Military Academy in England, and underwent advanced training at the National Defence College in New Delhi.

Communications Disrupted

Five bridges linking various parts of the peninsula with each other were destroyed by guerillas in mid-January. After that, rail transport (which had been operating only up to points south of the peninsula) was affected seriously when the Yal-Devi was blown up, killing, according to official figures, 29 military personnel. Directly as a result of these developments and the escalation of guerilla operations, the Air Force was called upon to provide transport facilities.

The Sri Lanka Air Force's transport squadron is composed of a strange medley of aircraft ranging from a venerable old Douglas DC-3 'Dakota' of World War II vintage to one ex-Air Ceylon Hawker Siddeley HS 748 and a few De Havilland Herons and Doves of 1950s vintage. These were mainly used as executive transport for top politicians, while after the acquisition of helicopters they were relegated to training, transport and high priority inter-service liaison duties.

Unexpected Development

The very heavy demands made on the transport wing subsequent to the disruption of communications was a totally unexpected development for the Air Force. While heavy material and bulk supplies can be ferried by ship, men and stores which have to reach Jaffna within a reasonable period of time must go by air. A former World War II airstrip in Anuradhapura is currently being used as a staging depot, with regular shuttle flights to and from Jaffna — road and rail transport to Anuradhapura from Colombo is not secure from guerilla attack. It is not surprising, under

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NON-DISCRIMINATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Nihal Jayawickrama

UNTIL very recently, how a State treated its nationals was a matter entirely and exclusively within its own concern. For instance, it was possible for Adolf Hitler to conceive of an Aryan Germany freed of semitic influence. It was also possible for him to proceed, with very little obstruction and consequently with remarkable success, to implement his policy of physically liquidating persons of Jewish origin, not only in Germany, but also in those European countries which he rapidly brought under German domination. He had found the final solution to an ethnic problem, and he had been able to implement it successfully. But from the revulsion which grew when the world regained its sanity, there emerged certain norms and standards which were designed to ensure that there would never be a repetition of Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen. These norms and standards now form part of a growing body of international law for the enforcement of which the international community has assumed responsibility. A government's behaviour towards its own nationals is now regulated by international treaties. And, in 1981, the Government of Sri Lanka voluntarily declared to the international community that, in the matter of the treatment of its nationals, it would honour, respect, and abide by these norms and standards. In other words, the Government of Sri Lanka brought itself within the jurisdiction of international human rights law when it subscribed to, and ratified, the two international human rights covenants. Consequently, two principles of international human rights law which now regulate the relationship between different ethnic groups living in the same country are those of non-discrimination and self-determination.

The principle of non-discrimination means that as between persons similarly circumstanced, or of comparable capacity, neither law nor executive action may discriminate on the basis of race, language or religion. This principle may perhaps be better understood if it is applied to some of the areas which, in the Sri Lankan context, are regarded as particularly sensitive. For instance, in the academic year 1983/84, 530 students from schools in Colombo, Jaffna, Galle, Matara and Kandy, who had qualified, on their raw marks, for admission into the faculties of medicine, science and engineering, were excluded from the universities of Sri Lanka in order to accommodate 519 other students from so-called "under-privileged districts" who had obtained lesser marks. Of these 530 excluded students, 198 were from Jaffna and 224 from Colombo. If we assume that approximately one third of those excluded from Colombo Schools were also Tamils, the total number of excluded Tamil students would be 273 or 51.6 per cent: a result which leads irresistibly to the conclusion that, in the matter of university admissions, the principle of non-discrimination had been violated. On the other hand, if while giving effect to the under-privileged district quota system, it had been possible, by increasing the intake into the universities, to accommodate these 530 students as well, Sri Lanka would probably have been acting in accordance with international norms and standards, and, what is more important, healing a festering sore in our multi-ethnic society. So it is in the matter of public employment. The government clerical service was once a popular outlet for the educated Tamil youth who did not aspire to a university education, but sought a habitation and a source of income

away from the arid soil of his northern home. But according to the Department of Census and Statistics, between the years 1977 and 1981; of 9965 persons recruited into the clerical service, 9326 (or 93.6 per cent) were Sinhalese and 492 (or 4.9 per cent) were Tamils.

What is the remedy available to a citizen who believes that he is being discriminated against because he belongs to a particular ethnic group? If a Government lacks the will or the capacity to prevent such discrimination by executive action, the only remedy perhaps is an enforceable Bill of Rights. Indeed, in many countries of the Commonwealth, from the Caribbean to the Pacific, a Bill of Rights has been regarded for many years as a viable safeguard against discrimination. Unfortunately, in this respect too, we fall far short of international norms and standards. We have a caricature of a Bill of Rights. I use that term advisedly because our Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution is: **firstly**, not comprehensive; **secondly**, subject to derogation in a wide variety of circumstances; **thirdly**, a substantial part of it can be rendered inoperative by executive fiat under the Public Security Ordinance; **fourthly**, it is not enforceable in respect of that enormous body of existing law enacted over a period of 187 years, from 1798 to the present; **fifthly**, it is not enforceable even in respect of proposed legislation if such legislation is certified by the Cabinet, as it has often been done, to be urgent in the national interest; **sixthly**, it is not enforceable in respect of executive or administrative action initiated by the President; and **seventhly**, it is not enforceable even in respect of any other executive or administrative action if such is taken in

pursuance of a power conferred by law.

The principle of self-determination is contained in Article 1 of the UN Charter and in Article 1 of each of the Human Rights Covenants, to all of which the Government of Sri Lanka now subscribes. It means that cohesive ethnic groups have the right to choose for themselves a form of political organisation, and through such organisation to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. It is important to note that the right to choose a particular political organisation is that of the ethnic group concerned. That choice cannot be usurped by a group of militant activists, or by other ethnic groups; nor can it be foisted by an All-Party or Round Table Conference.

Under international law, that choice may take one of several forms: it could be independence as a separate state; or association with other ethnic groups in a federal state; or autonomy or assimilation in a unitary state. However, if the ethnic group concerned already has a home within the territorial boundaries of a sovereign and independent state; and if that state has a government which is representative of all the people irrespective of race; and if that government respects the twin principles of non-discrimination and self-determination; then, the choice of that ethnic group does not extend to the creation of a separate state.

Accordingly, if the law as I have described is applied to the Sri Lankan situation, some may feel that, having regard to recent measures adopted in the Northern Province in particular, and to others which have been proposed, we are indeed skating on very thin ice. Therefore, it appears to me that, we are to get back to the good earth, certain very positive and urgent steps require to be taken:

1. The Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, which has had the effect of preventing the Tamil speaking people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces from being represented in Parliament, must be repealed.

2. The Prevention of Terrorism Act and any other statutory provision which deny to the Tamil speaking people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces the benefit of the general law of the country, must be repealed.

3. The existing Bill of Rights must be enlarged to make it an effective weapon against racial discrimination.

4. The Tamil speaking people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces must be given an opportunity of determining, by plebiscite or by referendum, the degree and form of autonomy they desire to have. This is a decision which they alone have the right to make. However, if their decision is not regional autonomy or assimilation in the existing unitary state, but association in a federal state, then, naturally; that decision will become effective only if it receives the concurrence of those with whom they seek to federate.

In this connection, it is interesting to reflect on the experience of a country which we often seek to emulate. I refer to the Swiss Confederation of 6 million people, less emotional and more disciplined than us, of whom 75 per cent speak German and 20 per cent speak French. In the predominantly German-speaking Protestant Canton of Berne, one of the 23 Cantons that make up the Swiss Confederation, the French speaking Catholic minority that lived in the Jura mountain regions decided that it was time to separate. The separatist struggle of the Jura minority followed the traditional and familiar pattern: separatist demonstrations to draw world attention to Bernese oppression; an army presence in the Jura pasture-lands; bomb attacks on military barracks and railway lines; unpleasant and awkward questions to Jura refugees seeking asylum in Latin America; a drop in tourism. It was time for the pragmatic Swiss, who have always had a distaste for the politics of confrontation, to take stock of the situation. In 1967, a commis-

sion of inquiry was appointed to investigate and report on all aspects of the problem, a task which that commission performed within an year after extensive consultations with the relevant interest groups. The next step was the appointment of a federal mediation commission, on whose recommendation a series of plebiscites were held. At the first plebiscite, the people of the Jura region were asked "Do you want to establish a new Canton?". 50.7 voted in favour, while 46.9 voted against. At the second plebiscite, which was held at a district level, three border Jura districts voted to remain in the Canton of Berne. At the third plebiscite, ten communes changed their district and with it the Canton. Finally, in 1978, 82 per cent of the Swiss voters and all the Swiss Cantons approved of the admission of the new Canton of Jura into the Swiss Confederation. By the application of the politics of consensus, the Swiss people had preserved the territorial integrity and the political unity of their federal state. It is a lesson in pragmatism which our political leadership would do well to understand.

I have made no reference to the subject of terrorism, because terrorism is not the real issue that should confront the Government. To describe the real issue, I can do no better than quote the words of the UNP Manifesto of 1977:

"The United National Party accepts the position that there are numerous problems confronting the Tamil-speaking people. The lack of a solution to their problems has made the Tamil-speaking people support even a movement for the creation of a separate State. In the interest of national integration and unity so necessary for the economic development of the whole country, the Party feels such problems should be solved without loss of time. The Party, when it comes to power, will take all possible steps to remedy their grievances in such fields as education, colonisation, use of the Tamil language and employ-

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PERCEPTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Newton Gunasinghe

THE American sociologist W. I. Thomas once remarked that irrespective of a social situation being real or unreal, if people define it to be real, the social consequences of that definition are likely to be real. At the height of the anti-Tamil riots in Colombo in July, 1983, a cry went out: "The Tigers are coming". The masses, the rioters as well as the ordinary people at large — in the initial phase — responded by taking to their heels in a frenzied attempt to run away from the scene. The second phase resulted in a severe backlash of mass rioting reaching unprecedented levels of murderous mob action. Of course, not even a kitten was sighted, not to mention the "Tigers", the collective term applied by the Sinhala masses to the Tamil militant youth.

This however did not matter at all, as the social definition or more accurately, the collective perception constructed an imaginary reality, which anticipated a retaliatory assault from the "Tigers". Hence, although the "Tigers" were absent on the scene of action, they were present in the mass consciousness, leading to real social consequences, frenzied flight at first and murderous mob violence later.

Constellations of perception, therefore, are of utmost importance which are not devoid of linkages with various social strata, factions and forces. Collective perceptions, especially in an emotionally tense and ideologically charged social

atmosphere, tend to reconstruct social reality adding substance, colour and tonality obtained from the deeply-ingrained mytho-ideological currents associated with discourses running parallel to various social interests.

Hardening Perception

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka which has now almost reached an impasse, with the maximum degree of devolution the Government is ready to grant not even approximating the minimum the Tamil moderates would be willing to accept, has contributed to the crystallisation and hardening of these ideological constellations of perception. President J. R. Jayewardene who, even in early January, had been toying with the idea of enhanced powers for the district councils and limited amalgamation of these bodies within the provinces, has apparently taken a step back and has gone on record as rejecting the concept of traditional ethnic homelands which after all provides the *raison d'être* for devolution of power to the areas mainly inhabited by the Tamils. TULF leaders took time to comment on the Government proposals on district councils and possible provincial councils, but when these comments appeared in Sri Lankan newspapers, it seemed as if the leaders were determined to reject them, in spite of the somewhat ambiguous and belated statements appearing in the Indian press. The President goes around saying he withdrew the proposals because they were not acceptable to TULF, which ironically fails to please the Sinhala extremists who would like to claim that the proposals were withdrawn not because of TULF, but because of the pressure that

they (the Sinhalese) mobilised and mounted. But to those sections of Sri Lankans, both Sinhala and Tamil, who expected a transitional phase of deescalation of violence, if not a lasting solution, from the proposals emanating from the political conference, the withdrawal of the proposals and hardening of attitudes on both sides seem an unfortunate deadlock leading possibly to noting but an undeclared state of civil war.

It is in this context that different constellations of perception, the social strata and layers associated with these, and the real or imaginary solutions that necessarily accompany these terrains of discourses should be investigated. The contours of a particular social structure are laid bare most lucidly not when its constituent elements are in smooth articulation, but when it is in a crisis, when disarticulation pervades the entire social fabric. Although the following constellations of perception on the surface may appear to be those limited to the domain of the ethnic issue they are not really so; these in addition constitute indices to the texture of the social fabric in Sri Lanka.

1. The "nation besieged" perspective: This is a fairly prevalent constellation of perception among different social strata of the Sinhalese. But its most articulate exponents are the middle level mercantile elements engaged in trade competition, sections of the Buddhist monkhood, fractions within the traditional intelligentsia who generally derive from a rural propertied background and cohorts of urban professionals who are generally self-employed and placed in highly competitive situations. Large sec-

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tions of the urban poor, including the lumpenproletariat whose perceptions are generally in a state of flux, gravitate towards this constellation of perception whenever ethnic tension mounts. The Sinhala mass media, whether State-controlled or not, have basically been active in propagating this perspective, although allowances have every now and then been made to alternative perspectives, especially in the State-controlled media, when it suits the regime. It is of interest to note that the privately-owned Sinhala press, of course with the exception of the Communist Party-controlled *Aththa*, has always taken a pronounced Sinhala chauvinist position far beyond the positions adopted by the Government media.

Reality

This constellation of perception in mytho-ideological terms constructs a reality which has become real enough for the carriers of this "worldview". In a crystallised form it is articulated basically as follows: "Sri Lanka is the country of the Sinhala, the descendants of the North Indian 'Aryans', who are the original settlers of the island. Historically, they built a civilisation not second to any in the world, under the influence of Buddhism. The Buddha himself visited Sri Lanka, drove away the demon hordes and made it suitable for later Sinhala colonisation. The preservation of Buddhism is integrally connected with the preservation of the Sinhala nation. The country, although invaded frequently by the South Indians, was always a unitary State governed by an unbroken line of Sinhala kings. Today, the whole future of the Sinhala nation, the custodians of Buddhism, is in danger. The only solution to this problem is a military one, the Government should mobilise the armed forces and

defeat the armed Tamil youth in battle. If necessary, military help should be obtained from whatever available international sources. No further concessions should be granted to the Tamils or other minorities and the Sri Lankan State should continue as a unitary State with a pre-eminent position for Sinhala-Buddhists".

This constellation of perception, in spite of the sacking of its most vocal exponent, Cyril Mathew, still finds its strong adherents in Government circles; it is this social force that has become the principal obstacle to any rational negotiation leading to a political solution.

2. "It is individuals, not ethnicity that matters" perspective:

The mythoideological crystallisation of this perspective is not as clearly concrete as that of the former. It manifests itself as different but overlapping condensations and hence has a number of imaginary solutions attached to it. But the constellation as a whole could be outlined as follows. "Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. Sinhala, Tamil and various other communities have lived in Sri Lanka harmoniously for centuries. Every citizen should enjoy equality of opportunity in every field — education, employment and obtaining land. Every citizen should be able to live and work anywhere he chooses to. But it is incorrect to consider certain areas as traditional Sinhala areas or traditional Tamil areas; the demand for devolution of power to the North and the East violates the unitary character of the republic and upholds the incorrect concept of ethnic homelands".

This perception too cuts across the different layers of Sinhala society, but finds its articulate exponents among certain sections of the top entrepreneurs and westernised business executives who are attempting to associate themselves with a cosmopolitan ethos; it is also by and large shared by the urban oriented, educated young monk-

who come from a very different social background to the executives. The wide strata of the urban lower middle-classes may give expression of this perspective, if this layer, at times of ethnic tension, does not succumb to the "nation besieged" perspective. The peasantry, especially those not residing in tension-ridden areas, may agree with this view, even if they may not give clear expression to this view.

Imagined Solutions

This constellation of perception is linked up with three parallel but distinct imagined solutions:

- (a) The presence of the armed forces, and combat, should continue in the North and the East, while political negotiations with TULF proceed. If TULF gives up the demand for a separate State, accepts district councils, and perhaps a little more, and returns to Parliament, civil administrative organs can be restored, the armed youth groups could be socially isolated and a situation can be created where they will eventually be defeated.
- (b) No political negotiations should be held with TULF or any other Tamil organisation until armed violence of the Tamil militants is wiped out. On the strength of a military victory, a political atmosphere will be created, where parliamentary-oriented and peace-loving Tamil people can be persuaded to accept a solution close to the district council set-up.
- (c) There is a "socialist-populist" version of an imagined solution which too runs parallel to this perspective. The real problem, the advocates of this line would argue, is the conflict between the rich and the poor; the ethnic problem is a red herring, largely created by the rulers to mislead the masses. The masses, whether Sinhala or Tamil, are equally oppressed by the ruling stratum; they should forget their ethnic differences and unite to overthrow the rulers.

Then the questions of separatism or devolution will be automatically resolved.

Although the imagined solution (c) is specifically associated with political forces such as the proscribed JVP, whose membership is largely composed of small town and rural lower middle-class Sinhala youth, it is not possible to associate perspectives (a) and (b) with any specific and enduring social strata; generally the bulk of those who support perspective No. 2 tend to vacillate between these two imagined solutions as the political situation changes.

3. "Recognition of nationalities and devolution of power" perspective: The third constellation, of perception, the one that I take to be the least mytho-ideological one, proceeds from a concrete analysis of the concrete conditions. Although this perspective too commences with the recognition of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious character of Sri Lankan society, in common with the second perspective, it sharply differs from the former in a number of ways, and above all, in the recognition of the concept of *ethnic homelands*.

To sum up: "Sri Lanka is the home of a number of ethnic and religious communities which have lived harmoniously for centuries as communities in spite of the dynastic wars among various ruling houses; during British rule however, ethnic consciousness acquired pronounced expression and the major ethnic communities in Sri Lanka drifted apart from one another through the competitive economic and political process. There was a widespread perception among educated middle-class Sinhala elements, that the Tamils were being disproportionately recruited to the expanding government service under British rule. Ever since Independence, within this context, amidst scarcity of economic resources and deepening underdevelopment, the overwhelming Sinhala majority in the State legislature was used to divert resources primarily to the Sinhala community. This was reflected in the State-sponsored Sinhala colo-

nisation projects in traditional Tamil areas, standardisation of university admissions, discrimination against Tamils in recruitment to the public service etc. The relations between the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic communities deteriorated, first with the enactment of the Sinhala Only Act, in 1956, eventually leading to the communal riots of 1958, then to a demand for a federal State by the major Tamil party and the total rejection of it by the Government and finally to the open advocacy of a separate State by TULF at the general elections of 1977, the last election held in the country. The formation and the violent activities of the Tamil militant groups to create a separate State with the force of arms has also contributed significantly to the further worsening of relations between the two communities. All these processes culminated in the infamous anti-Tamil program of July 1983, which has made a return to the previous relative equilibrium virtually impossible. The increasing armed militancy of the Tamil youth is being confronted by the armed forces, who in the absence of any serious battle experience, have degenerated to the level of an indisciplined armed band, ready to run riot against the civilians. The only way out is a substantial devolution of power amounting to regional autonomy, which runs against the 1978 Constitution, designed to concentrate power in the presidential executive. A dialogue with the militants is needed as well as amnesty to those willing to accept a political solution. The entire political structure will have to be overhauled to democratise the system on an enduring basis, within the context of a united Sri Lanka."

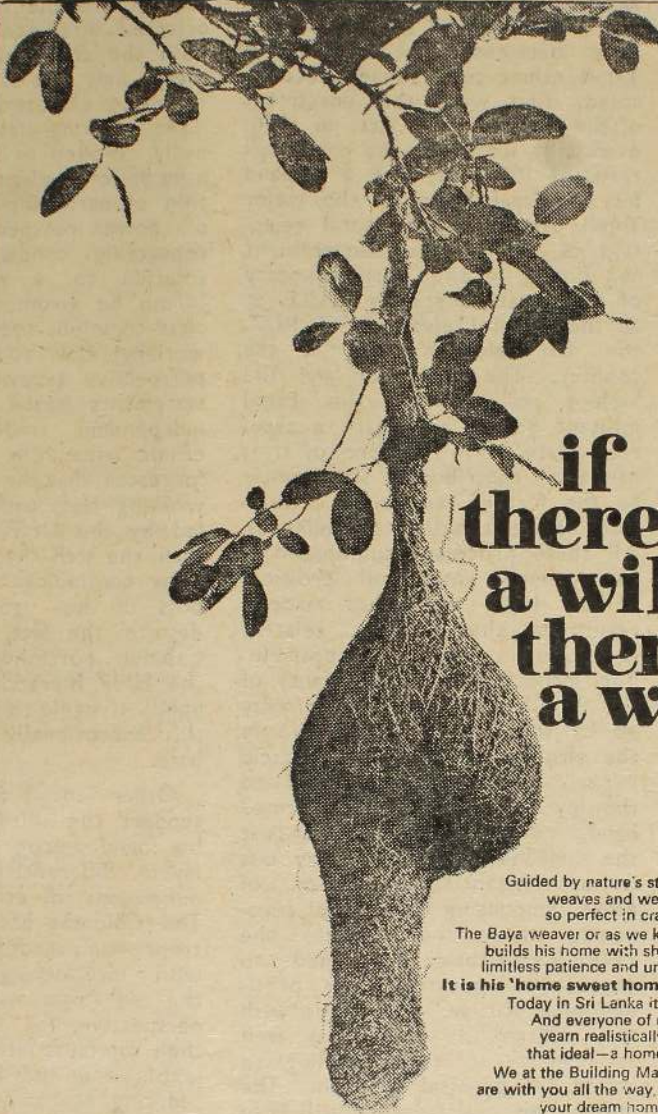
A most perceptive and lucid presentation of the third perspective was worked out collectively by the participants of the United Nations University's workshop on "Ethnic Relations and Nation building in Sri Lanka", the full text of which was published in the *Lanka Guardian* of July 15, 1984.

Limited

Unlike the first and second perspectives, the third perspective,


unfortunately does not cut across the different social strata of the Sinhala people. Its most vocal exponents are the radical and Left-oriented intelligentsia drawn from both the communities. The mainstream Left parties — LSSP and CP — whose electoral, as well as organised working-class base has seriously eroded in the recent past, have basically adopted the "recognition of nationalities and devolution of power perspective" and have repeatedly condemned a military solution to a political problem. It can be assumed that the more class-conscious sections of the urban working class too adhere to this perspective as evidenced by various statements issued by the Left and independent trade unions on the ethnic issue. But it should not be forgotten that the bulk of the urban working class today is in the unions led by the UNP, with none other than the arch-chauvinist Cyril Mathew continuing to be the supreme boss of the "government union" despite the fact that he lost his Cabinet portfolio, with factions of the UNP hierarchy involved in an uphill struggle to dislodge him from this exceptionally important power base.

Other social forces which may support the third perspective may be found among the diverse social layers, differentially located in the dimensions of ethnicity and class. The Colombo-based top Tamil entrepreneurs and senior executives with interlocking directorships in the old firms may favour the third perspective, as it would ensure their capitalist interests in Colombo within a united Sri Lanka, while reducing ethnic tension. The plantation workers of Indian Tamil origin, located mainly in the central hill country too are likely to prove to be another numerically large support group; the leader of their largest trade union, Thondaman, although continuing to hold a Cabinet portfolio in the Jayewardene Government, has always come out with an independent position on the ethnic question, emphasising a political solution through devolution of power. Some section of the Christian hierarchy and more enlightened sections of Muslim opinion have indicated a preference close to that of the third perspective.



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PHOENIX

But it is undeniable that the majority of the Sinhala masses are currently not oriented towards this perspective, and probably it will require a major political transformation to provide the material conditions and the ideological atmosphere for them to move in this direction.

4. The "Eelam" perspectives:

This constellation of perception, if anything, is even less precise and concise than perspective No. 2; to complicate the matter further, it has distinct condensations within it. A non-violent struggle to attain independent statehood, while negotiating with Sri Lanka Government to achieve less than that, seems to be the TULF orientation. Even among the militant youth groups, there are two discernible condensations; a view that primarily emphasises nationalist aspirations with socialist undercurrents, and a view that primarily emphasises socialist aspirations with nationalist undercurrents which naturally leads to two distinct lines on strategy and tactics.

Be that as it may, it is still possible to grasp the obvious contours of this constellation, which is at least common to the armed militant groups. "Although the Sinhala and Tamil people have lived harmoniously for centuries, especially after Independence, the Tamil people have been discriminated against systematically by the Sinhala majority which has monopolised political power. All attempts to obtain a degree of devolution of power through nonviolent and peaceful methods by the parliamentary Tamil leadership have utterly failed. The only way out for the Tamil people is to wage an armed struggle for independence, where the right of self-determination, amounting to the right of separation and sovereignty could be exercised. This cannot be attained through peaceful means, but through armed struggle where the twin objectives of national liberation and socialism may be combined."

In terms of social origins, the Tamil militants are not very different from the Sinhala youth who waged the unsuccessful insurrection of 1971; but since an element of

national oppression was absent in the areas where the 1971 insurgency broke out, the level of spontaneous mass empathy, that is definitely present in the North and the East today for the Tamil militants, way by and large absent for the Sinhala youth insurgents. Some people in the Opposition, who boast today about how they would have crushed the "Tigers" easily if they had been in power, should keep this crucial difference in mind.

Alienation

The Tamil militants are young, basically in the 18 to 35 years age cohort, educated and mainly coming from non-propertied lower middle-class backgrounds; traditionally, secure employment in the public sector kept them gainfully employed; the discriminative practices in the recruitment to the universities and the public sector closed the gates for many of them, compelling them to migrate abroad or to organise political protests. The open economic policy which removed the ban on essential agricultural products, flooding the market with cheap chillies, onions, and potatoes ruined the Jaffna middle-peasantry, one of the most productive sections of the Lankan agricultural population. Military and police repression has brought the economy to a grinding halt; the fisherfolk cannot go to the sea, the shopkeeper cannot keep his shop regularly open, the banks, are closed, the government servant cannot go regularly to his office. As Prof. K. Sivathamby, who led a delegation of Citizen Committees of the Northern province, emphasised to the Colombo press, owing to the frequent and consecutive imposition of curfew, people had to go hungry for a number of days. With the blowing up of the culverts and a Jaffna-bound train, the peninsula became unreachable by road and rail transport. All this has resulted in a massive alienation of the people from the regime in Colombo, and has strengthened the position of the militants.

But does it mean that the right to self-determination, an inalienable right of any community that has consolidated itself as a nation,

should always be realised within the territorial boundaries of a sovereign independent State? Are there not many occasions in contemporary history in the socialist countries as well as in India, where organisation forms were evolved to ensure the right of self-determination, in a federated State, a cannot system, autonomous regions and so on? Sri Lanka should be able to learn from these international experiences in arriving at a political solution to the national problem which, however, cannot be done in an atmosphere polluted with gunpowder and bomb smoke; a progressive de-escalation of violence from both sides in a *sine que non* for a sane, democratic and humane solution.

— Frontline, March 23-April 5, 1985

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IMPORTANCE OF SOUTH IN INDIAN POLITICS

Bhabani Sen Gupta

The Congress-I has a four-fifths majority in the Lok Sabha, but it does not rule a single state in the South on its own strength. This is one of the most significant of the political changes brought about by the parliamentary election of December and the state elections of March. The short and long-term impact of this change on Indian politics will be visible with the march of the months.

At present, the ruling party as well as prime minister Rajiv Gandhi are trying their best to defuse the possibility of a North-South cleavage in Indian politics. The non-Congress-I chief ministers of the South, too, are carefully avoiding the language of confrontation and polarisation. However, if the prime minister fails to come out with clear-cut architectural plans to remould Centre-state relations, he will be inviting clashes with the chief ministers of the South as well as of West Bengal and Tripura. And clashes will rapidly snowball into conflict in the present distemper of Indian politics.

The opposition benches in the Lok Sabha are occupied overwhelmingly by MPs from the South. The largest opposition group consists of the 38 MPs of the Telugu party, followed by 30 CPI-M members elected from West Bengal and Tripura. Though the Telugu Desam group cannot claim the official status of Opposition Party (for which it needs at least 50 MPs), P. Uppendra is virtually leader of the opposition. Of the 10 Janata members in the House, four come from Karnataka. The other large group of Southern MPs are from Tamil Nadu, and all of them belong to the AIADMK, which is an ally of the Congress-I.

The Telugu Desam members of parliament are yet to equip themselves to play a politically significant role in national affairs. Since political change under Rajiv Gandhi is

likely to chart the economic route to begin with — if the budget is an indication and a warning — Southern MPs must learn economics in which they are now inadequately conversed. Whether they are from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka or Tamil Nadu, their perspectives are generally more regional than national. Now they have to project their regional perspectives to the canvas of national politics, look at national affairs from regional angles and regional affairs from a national angle.

There are several regional issues on which the MPs coming from the South would probably like to work together. The development of the Telugu Ganga project, for example. They have a common interest in safeguarding and improving the interests of paddy farmers, and in this they would get cooperation from MPs from the eastern states. So far, Punjab and Haryana have been the main source of the Central Government's procurement of rice. On the other hand, it is the farmers of the South who have mounted partially successful struggles for higher minimum prices for rice procurement. In the Seventh Plan, it is proposed to help the eastern rather than the Southern states increase their rice output.

However, only the Southern states now have welfare programmes worth their names for the poor, apart from Maharashtra. The Rs 2 per kilo rice distribution programme of the Telugu Desam regime in Andhra Pradesh is now the single largest welfare project anywhere in the country serving the rural poor. In neighbouring Karnataka, chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde found during his election campaign that the vast majority of the rural poor wanted a similar scheme to be introduced in his state. He has sent a team to Andhra Pradesh to study the dynamics of the two-rupees-a-kilo rice scheme for the rural poor. The idea may catch on

quickly in all the rice-eating states in India.

It is up to the MPs from Andhra Pradesh to persuade the Centre, in cooperation with MPs from other rice-eating states, to generously share the costs of a national rice distribution scheme for the rural poor in the rice-producing states, who are worse off than the rural poor in the wheat producing regions.

Since the states are helplessly dependent on the Centre for development resource, the states ruled by the opposition parties will find it difficult to wrest adequate resources from Delhi unless they can work together to bring pressure on it from within parliament and without. Hegde's budget speech was essentially a warning to the Centre that if it were not in a mood to change the Indira Gandhi style of dealing with the states on financial and economic issues, conflict and confrontation between the Centre and the states would be unavoidable. This has also been the burden of the statement of NTR and Jyoti Basu since the completion of the March elections.

Hegde has now gone a step forward to suggest to the prime minister that he convene a conference of the chief ministers to discuss the Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka. With 60,000 Tamil refugees already assembled in Tamil Nadu, and more coming in every day, the Tamil-Sinhala conflict becomes more than a diplomatic issue between New Delhi and Colombo. Hegde has suggested that all the Southern states give a hand in providing the refugees shelter and relief, and, if necessary, rehabilitation in India. This is an excellent suggestion, which should evoke an immediate appreciative gesture from the Central government. Mr. Gandhi will lose nothing and gain a lot if he took the chief ministers to consultation in evolving a truly national consensus on the Lankan issue.

Mr Gandhi and his party will be inclined not to defer to the opposition chief ministers more than is absolutely necessary. He would

rather consult with the spent opposition leaders like Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram, the dwarfed BJP leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and leaders of opposition groups in parliament who are yet to grow in political stature and acumen. Mr Gandhi has so far not given any indication of his structural thinking on the future of Indian politics. One does not even know if he would be willing to allow the necessary structural changes to happen to, say, Centre-state relations. He has not reversed Mr Gandhi's decision to declare a year's holiday to the recommendations of the Finance Commission. As Hagde pointed out in his budget speech, and Dr Ashoke Mitra, finance minister of West Bengal, in his own, the Union budget hasn't enlarged the resource base of the states in any significant manner. On the contrary, the steep hike in the prices of petrol and petroleum products and in railway freight would deplete further the states' already heavily strained resource kitties. The plight of the poor from the all-round increase in prices subsequent to the Central Budget will increase the discontent and protest load the state regimes have to bear.

It is up to the Southern state governments and their leaders to bring all these and many other issues of current and future moment to the attention of the public all over the country. The Left-front government of West Bengal is on the defensive, licking the wounds it has suffered in the December election, and unable, so far, to design a strategy that would protect its rural support base in the elections due in 1987. The initiative for the rectification of the gross imbalances and distortions that have occurred to the Indian political process in the last decade must therefore come from the South. Some people will of course try to accuse the South of building up a confrontation with the North. Even the centuries-old skeleton of the Aryavarta-vs-Dakshinaty syndrome would be revived. The issue has therefore to be handled with a great deal of sophistication.

The South has become of the utmost importance for the future

shape and structure of Indian polity. Change in the South comes slowly, and when it comes, it stays. The South is far less volatile than the North. Several political winds have now begun to blow from the South to states above the Vindhyas. In the recent poll, the Congress-I almost lost Maharashtra because the charismatic leader of the opposition National Democratic Front, Sharad Pawar made a strong impression on the Maratha middle class with his own version of NTR's slogan of "Pride of the Telugu People". History has cast a new political role on the South. It is for the South to play that role effectively and well for the strength, unity, welfare and development of the whole country.

Aspects of ...

(Continued from page 11)

the circumstances, that soldiers going on leave run on to the tarmac and cram themselves into the shuttle flight. They even travel seated on crowded aircraft floors. The confirmed acquisition of SA-7 shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles by the guerillas is causing grave concern to Air Force commanders — especially so in the light of still unconfirmed reports of missiles having actually been fired at aircraft from the vicinity of the Jaffna airport.

In the meantime, there have been numerous unconfirmed reports that helicopter gunships are to be delivered shortly, to be used by the Air Force in the North against Tamil guerillas. This seems likely, as the Air Force's lack of offensive capability limits its operational support of the Army to mere reconnaissance duties. Knowing this, the guerillas are in the habit of mining the approach roads leading to an Army base when attacking it, so as to slow down (or destroy) reinforcement units rushing to the scene. It is alleged there have been situations where helicopters have circled outside small arm range, calling on Army units to approach and engage the guerillas. In most cases, they had melted into the jungle before the Army's arrival.

A Special Correspondent in Sri Lanka
— Frontline, March 23-April 5, 1985

Pre-requisites. . .

(Continued from page 14)

ment in the public and semi-public corporation sectors".

We all now know that these grievances have not been remedied. That was the rationale for the All Party Conference. But problems cannot be solved by All Party Conferences. They have to be met fairly and squarely by a Government and then resolved with the advice and consent of a Parliament. It is in Parliament that problems are examined and alternative solutions discussed, because Parliament reflects the balance of power that prevails and the forces that operate within a country at any given time. But if Parliament has become sterile, because a general election which alone can give it vitality and authority has not been duly held, then, the remedy is not an All Party Conference, in the hope that it could be a substitute for Parliament, but a general election which will determine the contemporary balance of power and identify the forces which have a relevance in society at the present time.

Whether or not a general election is held in the foreseeable future, the answer to the rapidly deteriorating ethnic problem appears to be not in attempting to change the population pattern of the north, or in creating a new frontier breed of gun-toting Sinhala Buddhists, or in making a sacrificial offering, from the relative comfort and security of the south into the war zones of the north, of young Sinhala men in the prime of their life, in the confident hope that before they lay down their own lives, they would kill a few equally idealistic young Tamil men, and thereby make this thrice blessed isle a safer, happier and more righteous place for all of us to live in. It seems to me that the only answer can be expressed in two very simple, but pregnant, words: non-discrimination and self-determination.

Namibia — the long wait for freedom

FOREIGN NEWS

The black revolt in South Africa has overshadowed other issues involving the policies of the racist Pretoria regime — especially its intransigence on the question of Namibian independence and its success so far in thwarting, with direct US support, the implementation of U. N. Resolution 435 of 1978. No doubt, it was partly for this reason that the Coordinating Bureau of the NAM at its recent meeting in Delhi focussed the attention of both the international community and the nonaligned

movement on Namibia. The NAM's Coordinating Bureau acted in accordance with the resolution of the Delhi summit (1983) which called for U. N. action, not excluding the use of UN forces, in implementing the UN's own resolution of 1978.

In an interview he gave the *Rand Daily Mail*, a fairly independent South African newspaper which has now, not surprisingly, folded up the *Zambian President* Mr. Kenneth Kaunda, chairman of the 3rd NAM

summit attacked the Pretoria government for its stubborn defiance of the UN. "Nothing has moved" Mr. Kaunda complained bitterly, while pointing out how South Africa has blocked every attempt at a UN-supervised peaceful transfer of power to a sovereign Namibia.

It is important to realise, first of all, that Namibia is "not just another colonial territory". As the Commonwealth's Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Azim Hussain wrote "it has been the responsibility of the international community for the last sixty two years" i.e. from the Versailles Peace Conference, from the League of Nations to the UN.

What explains South African obduracy? The short answer is 'economic and strategic interests'. Fortunately we have in South Africa's defence minister General Magnus Malan a soldier who speaks his mind freely and fearlessly exposing the real concerns of the Pretoria regime with total frankness.

Speaking to the **F.T.**, he defended the presence of the South African army in Namibia. He said: "The presence of the S. A. D. F. in South West Africa is not only to the advantage of the people of South West Africa (Namibia) but also serves South Africa's security and material interests. The struggle in South West Africa is a revolutionary one which is an integral part of the onslaught on South Africa".

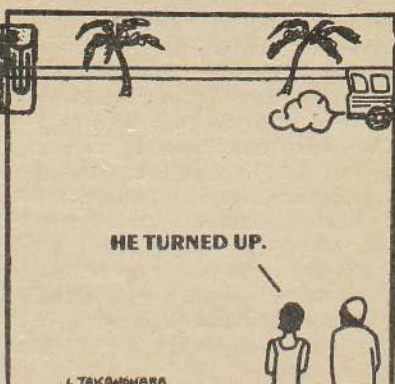
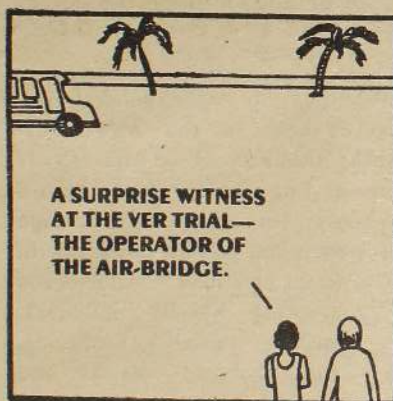
Whether General Malan is in a position to express the feelings of the Namibian people on the presence of South African forces is of course open to question. But there's little doubt that he does reflect clearly the views of the South African government on its own "material and security interests".

And it is precisely because those self-same strategic and economic

(Continued on page 23)

MANILA SIDELINE

BY HUNG MO GWAI



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'VOICES' OF DISCORD

On a brief stop-over in Delhi, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher would have learnt once more this time at the highest level what remains the biggest impediment to the expansion of economic ties with

Namibia...

(Continued from page 22)

interests are integrally linked to the financial and economic interests of the US and the West, and to the global strategy of the US that the Reagan administration has adopted what it calls a policy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa. The author of this policy is Asst. Secretary of State for African Affairs, Mr. Chester Crocker. In a memo to Secretary of State Al Haig, Crocker spoke of the need to "end South Africa's polecat status in the world and seek to restore its place as a legitimate and important regional factor with whom we can cooperate pragmatically, including normalisation of our military attaché relationship". Crocker's plan, while proposing "safeguards" for the white minority, makes the withdrawal of Cuban forces in Angola a pre-condition for a 'settlement' of the Namibian independence issue, forgetting both historical fact and current developments. Cuban assistance was invited by the Angolan government only when a South African armoured column, supporting anti-government rebel fronts, was already deep in Angolan territory, and advancing steadily towards Luanda, the capital. And recently, Cuba has repeated its statement that Cuban forces will start withdrawing the moment the government of Angola says it does not any longer need Cuban military help.

The Carter administration, writes General Obasanjo, former head of State of Nigeria, seemed willing to join some other western countries in applying 'pressure' on South Africa to implement Resolution 435. But the Reagan administration, he argues in an article in FOREIGN POLICY has tilted towards Pretoria through its new policy of "constructive engagement".

India. Such an expansion is what Britain seeks most eagerly, especially now when Mr. Gandhi's first budget and its general policy of 'liberalisation' have multiplied opportunities for western business. The obstacle is 'Khalistan', the independent state which separatist Sikhs have proclaimed as their ultimate objective.

In the opinion of Mrs. Gandhi, "the headquarters of Sikh extremism" was in the U. S. But Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and his own new team of close advisers are equally suspicious of the manner in which Sikh extremists operate in Britain, with overt or covert support from official agencies Mr. Gandhi and leading figures in the Congress party were indignant over the publicity that was so freely given by US and British TV and other media to "champagne" celebrations in the streets of London by Sikh extremists on hearing that Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated and the prominence given to statements by separatist leaders like Chauhan (UK) and H. S. Azad (US).

The multi-ethnic character of Indian society makes the Indian political leadership and elite highly sensitive to the ever-present danger of divisive forces and the menace of separatist threats to India's national cohesion. As a result, they believe that any western strategy aimed at weakening India or pushing its foreign policy in a different direction would be founded on the premise that cultural diversities and conflicts constituted "the soft under-belly of India".

Encouraging exiled dissidents, particularly separatist activists and armed groups would then become a prime need of such a strategy of 'de-stabilisation'. Propaganda would be a high priority instrument of this strategy, and radio would be the most effective. Hence Indian hypersensitivity to the 'Voice of Khalistan', and to the radio time and other support given to Sikh expatriate

(Continued on page 31)

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WHY PERU LIGHTS THE PATH

N. Sanmugathasan

The armed guerrilla struggle being carried on in Peru by the Communist party of Peru (PCP), often referred to as **Sendero Luminoso** or the Shining Path, recently received international publicity. As the Pope's plane landed at a military airport in Lima, capital of Peru, on the return flight from Ayacucho, amid the tightest security, the lights there and in the whole city suddenly went dark, while a lighted hammer and sickle formed by lanterns appeared on a hill overlooking Lima. This was the reply of the Maoist Shining Path to the appeal of the Pope to them earlier in Ayacucho to, "in the name of God, change roads!" He had asked them to advance their goals "by means of understanding, dialogue, useful and generous work, co-existence, excluding solutions along the paths of hate and death"... in other words, to conciliate with and capitulate to imperialism and reaction. As he made this speech against violence, he was flanked by 20 thousand armed thugs against a crowd only 15 thousand — poor by any standards.

There were two main reasons, which made the Pope's visit to Peru assume great significance. The first was that the most significant armed revolutionary struggle being waged in the world today is taking place in Peru and the Pope was sent there as a high-powered fire engine to put out the flames of revolution. Secondly, Peru was the birthplace of what has come to be known as 'liberation theology' and which has been condemned by the Vatican as subversive.

Who are these Shining Path guerrillas who merited a personal visit by the Pope and who have now leapt into international prominence? Peru is a country in Latin America, lying on the wes-

tern sea board and washed by the Pacific Ocean. It is to the north of Chile and to the West of Bolivia and Brazil. The mighty Andes mountain runs from north to south. It was the seat of the famous Inca Civilisation which flourished there about 400 years ago.

Many Inca Indians still survive. Peru has a population of 18 million of which 49 percent are Quechua and other Amer-Indians.

The Communist party of Peru was founded in 1928 by Jose Carlos Mariategui. After studying Peruvian reality and the great revolutionary events then shaking the world, Mariategui had come to the conclusion that Marxism represented the "Shining Path" to emancipation. Although the party was affiliated to the third International, revolutionary struggle was set aside for over a generation after the death of Mariategui. It was only in the early 1960's that Mao's Polomics led to a rebirth of the Marxist spirit and a rediscovery of Mariategui. Later, the influence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution pushed this tendency further forward. Pre-Cuban forces who had refused to make a break with revisionism took up the armed struggle but were crushed. It was at this stage that the Marxist Leninists in the PCP decided that, it is not enough to criticise revisionism, we must assume over own responsibilities.

It took 15 years to rebuild the party along revolutionary lines under the leadership of Comrade Gonzalo. There were difficult twists and turns and several major splits. But the process clarified the party's strategy of building up revolutionary strength by waging people's war, essentially a peasants war led by the proletarian party, surrounding the cities from the country side

until eventually the cities too could be taken and a New Democratic Republic established, clearing the way for socialism. The party would forge and lead a United Front in the course of and for the purpose of waging war against the regime of feudalism and comprador and bureaucratic capital which was linked to the landlords and subordinated to imperialism. This United Front would include the working class and the peasants, as well as the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie and, to a certain degree and under certain conditions, the small scale national bourgeoisie as well, when the revolution acquired sufficient strength. In this way the proletariat and its party could lead the revolution in Peru as part of the world proletarian revolution with the final aim of eliminating classes and class society every where in the world.

Before armed struggle was launched the PCP carried out concentrated preparation for an year during which they not only made a survey of the conditions and sentiments of the people along with a study of geographical conditions in order to determine where to launch armed struggle. It also studied previous experiences of armed struggle in Peru and else where in the world, with particular reference to the military line developed by Mao in China.

The first campaign was called "initiate the armed struggle". The type of action that took place, mainly in the country side, were focused on the land question. Crops were seized. Landlords' fields were invaded by the peasants who planted their crops and returned later to collect their harvest at gunpoint. Local elections were boycotted and everywhere armed agitation and propaganda was carried out e.g. a large hacienda would be seized and a mass meeting called to

distribute the contents of the hacienda's warehouses among the peasants. The landlord's buildings would be burnt down and the landlords' bullies who had terrorised the peasants would be punished.

Soon, the party's armed detachments grew in size. It also organised units in the cities, based especially in the shanty towns but also among other strata. They learned how to mobilise hundreds or even thousands of people on the streets in a matter of minutes for a lightening rally and to surround and destroy a government building or other target and then scatter again. Lima and other cities were repeatedly blacked out both to facilitate military attacks and to demonstrate the weakness of the government and the growing power of the guerrillas.

In order to seize arms, build up larger revolutionary armed units and create the conditions for building base areas, the PCP launched a campaign called "Dealing blows". Police outposts in the country side were attacked and wiped out, effectively wiping out old political

power in much of the country side in the five northern Provinces of the department of Ayacucho. In 1982, a small guerrilla force entered the city of Ayacucho, blew up power lines, surrounded and pinned down the police and the troops in their barracks, entered the prison, released the prisoners and escaped after hoisting the red flag at the prison court yard and singing the International. In January 1983, they carried out the successful famous general strike in the city.

First people committees were formed in the end of 1982. These committees arose out of the first committees established by the peasants to divide up the harvest which they had seized by force of arms. These committees soon took on the additional task of organising the collective planting of future harvests and also exercising other functions of political rule. Decisions were made to ban gambling, drugs, fortune telling, continual drunkenness, beating woman, or other family members, robbery, bullying, collaborating with the Police. An organising committee of the People's New Democratic Republic has been

set up on the basis of these People's Committees and will form the nucleus of future state power. By June 1984 about hundred thousand people were living under and participating in the new political power led by the party in its base area.

In the face of this nation-wide revolutionary offensive the authorities have exacted a costly revenge. The official death toll between May 1980 and September 1984 has reached 3,300. But the actual figure is supposed to have exceeded 5,000.

The PCP has always been conscious of its international responsibilities and considers the revolution in its country as part of the world revolution. In consequent of this conviction, the PCP is a participating organisation of the recently formed Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and was represented at the conference that gave birth to this movement in early 1984.

(Much of the information in this article has been taken from two journals "World to Win" and the "American Worker".)

LETTER TO A POET IN THE WEST

*You may be thinking of holidays
Abroad in the Sun, on a lonely beach
In my country next winter,
But Sam, I am worried
Not because I am too poor
To buy you a drink, take you to places
That others like you, normally see,
But you may come to the wrong country.
We have neither the innocence of savages
Nor the guile of fully civilized men
We have savagery without innocence
And guile without the redeeming smile.*

*Sadly my own blood is divided
And in two bodies, all the same,
And now they cannot get close to each other
Without guns coming in between.
If houses were burnt down, we can rebuild
But I am afraid, it is more than that,
I hate to say we were civilized once
Because we have forgotten we were that once
We are like the figures on an ancient temple wall
With parts missing, and unable to move,
Frozen in gesture, and whose meaning is lost.*

Tilak A. Gunawardhana

The need to institutionalise opposition to racism

Jan Pittman

WE NEED to work up a list of do's and don'ts in handling controversial issues, and tackling racism. Again, these will vary depending on our own views; whether the issues are officially on the agenda, or part of our job, or not. Over the years, we all work out do's and don'ts through experience, including talking with others in the same field. My list includes.

Begin gently. If we react too strongly, or make people feel threatened or guilty first off, they will retreat. Open up the issues. Get racism on the agenda. Get things out into the open, where we can contest them. Encourage participation, communication, as a general rule, so they can be activated on these issues, as well.

Recognise that people have real doubts and fears, which may or may not be racist. It doesn't help if we start by saying racism is bad and you're a racist, and so prevent the airing of doubts or objections, which can then be dealt with.

Don't just say 'You're Wrong'. Don't ask questions eliciting information and then say no. Feed counter information and other perspectives into the discussion. Encourage other people to find the information for themselves: it's much more convincing.

Don't legitimize prejudice. While encouraging people to express

their views, don't simply let them stand, or you may reinforce prejudice. One opinion isn't as good as another; it isn't just a matter of opinion. Encourage everyone (ourselves including) to analyse their views, ask for reasons, work out criteria for judging, suggest other possible explanations.

Take a clear stand against racism. While remaining open, negotiating, also be forceful about your opposition to racism, and explain why. Say: racism is wrong because... Practice the arguments; the same old ones tend to recur. Say, that sounds like a stereo-type. Explain why racist language and jokes are offensive. Ask what there evidence is. Give yours.

Work up a file. Include practical examples, suggestions for action, lists, e.g. we are racist when... Have handy facts, figures, available. Develop an inventory of racism, a list of questions about e.g. staffing or admissions policies, selection or recruitment criteria, to test out for institutional racism.

Make it relevant. Adapt examples, case studies, to suit the audience. Draw out what people want to get out of it, show that they can contribute.

Make it worth there while. Show others that tackling prejudice and racism can help them, too. They can do their job better. They can put names on problems. They can plug into a network, get support; don't have to keep reinventing the wheel.

Get a dynamic going. Identify contradictions, use the space between what people say ought to happen, and what's actually happening. You believe in equality; what's actually happening to Aborigines, ethnic groups, where you work, or play. Deal with feelings. Prejudice and racism are highly emotional issues. People get angry, get hurt, reject your views, and may be you; or they feel guilty or powerless. We can feel these things too. Don't try to suppress these feelings, or pretend that they're not there.

Personalize and depersonalize. Encourage people to examine their own personal experiences, and views; to empathise, imagine how they might feel in other's shoes. But don't stay with personal anecdote alone. Encourage people to look for connections, patterns. E.g. if a drunk Aborigine threatened them, and confirmed their prejudice against Aborigines; yet a drunk white Anglo Australian doing the same, would merely confirm their prejudices against drunks.

Don't reinforce stereotypes. Don't lump together all Aborigines, or all Italians, or all Muslim schoolgirls. Remind people there are other divisions and processes at work, for example, poverty, or experience with police, hospitals or unions in another country. Don't act above it all. It's an ongoing process, none of us ever solve all the problems, even in our heads.

Don't get too depressed or depressing. Racism is an anathema, it does terrible damage, it's very hard to fight. But some good things are happening, and good people trying. We can feel better if we know what's going on. We can make a difference. Find a friend. Don't try to do it alone. Make alliances. Join others who have similar or mutually reinforcing concerns. Having someone to talk with about it helps.

Accept that you can't please everyone. Nor can you work with everyone. Choose your own space. Don't waste energy needlessly when there's no chance of success. If you're neutralized at work, try tackling the church, the club, the school council. Take a holiday.

Don't just talk about it. Find ways to act, encourage others to act against racism, in their individual and social dealings with people, and in their workplace? Ask what are you doing about it.

The list could go on, and your list might be quite different from mine. One reason for making such a list is that it makes explicit the assumptions we're working on, and what we are doing about them; it also helps to compare lists, because friends or colleagues can raise questions, and point out things we're doing that we're not aware of.

We need to institutionalize opposition to racism and its effects. We need to get racism, and human rights, up on the agenda. Many Australians don't realize that we do have problems, or that their everyday practice, how they do the job, have an unequal effect on others.

Here, an invaluable beginning is an explicit commitment on the

part of departments, associations, or other bodies, to oppose racism, be it a general statement of principle or a policy objective. Even if meant only for rhetorical or public relations purposes, it can be used as a base, a justification for further questioning or action. However, commitment at the top, or where there is a capacity to gather or release information, or mobilize resources, or reward changes, really helps. In tackling racism, the experiences of E. E. O. officers can be used. We are concerned with the politics of change, and some knowledge of administrative procedures and decision making mechanisms are essential. Many an excellent program has failed through lack of innovative or administrative knowhow. In any particular case, we need to know what the situation actually is... just gathering information about what is happening, and how it affects different categories of people, is important. We also need to know the most effective points of intervention... there's no point in spending huge amounts of effort and energy convincing a committee which, in the end, doesn't count; nor going through endless procedures if a single request to do something can suffice.

For these reasons, it's far preferable to have a change agent or contact person who is an insider. It's very difficult for an outsider to go in and try to change things. As always, change is more likely, more effective, and more longlasting, if it's done with people, rather than to them. Participatory research or information-gathering is an excellent strategy here — as with educators who work together to research what is happening to certain groups of students; or to do interac-

tional analysis on their own teaching. Simply gathering the information may shock people into realising there is a problem, and wanting to do something about it.

If action against racism is to make a difference, it doesn't only involve changes in attitudes, but also leads to action. Part of the program should be action-orientated; not only providing people with ideas and strategies, but following up both the willing and the unwilling with requests for information... what have you done? what is happening in your department, your community centre? What additional support or resources do you need now? These questions can also be addressed from outside the organisation. Embarrassment, or fear of adverse publicity, may prod the reluctant or unconvinced into doing something. Anti-discrimination legislation can also be used: what does the law say? Tell people it's not just a matter of choice: they are breaking the law. Evaluation of strategies, and reformulation of tactics and goals, are part of the process. We need to assess where we are going. If there is a formal program, there should be a follow-up and evaluation session, preferably providing a recharging, as well. Otherwise, initial enthusiasm seeps away or is knocked out of people... especially if they came to an off-work course or session, and went back to cynics and opponents.

There may be a place for developing a code of practice, or at least putting on staff seminars or other meetings for discussing what is happening, what is working. Again, this can be time wasted, unless someone works on it — puts together a file of incidents or common complaints,

builds up a resource file on possible responses, goes out and gets the information and spreads it around. E. E. O. guidelines suggest possibilities. Invite in people who are doing similar work elsewhere.

We need to develop formal arrangements for consultation with people from other racial and ethnic groups, who are affected by what we do, but may lack representation when we decide to do it.

One legacy of a history of racism, of exclusion and discrimination, of the cultural loading of our institutions, is that the people most likely to be victims of racism are least likely to be heard. The only real answer — get them in, too, as colleagues or workmates, as police, teachers, union officials, social workers — is something we are hopefully working towards. In the meantime, we need to devise ways of opening or improving communications, for all our sakes.

Yet consultation with Aboriginal and ethnic communities is thwarted with difficulties. Not everyone is an expert on their own group. Each group is also differentiated — people are older or younger, male or female, in authority or marginal; and, often, there are religious and ideological and class divisions as well. So — who is representative? and how do we contact them?

There are other questions, too. Why should they make the time and effort to help us? especially if they think we only want information so we can manage them better? We have to prove that we're willing to listen to learn. What if they come, and are asked offensive and hurtful questions (even if — or perhaps especially if — the questioners don't realize they are using stereotypes or language which causes offense?) Again, it depends on the program or work situation. It is preferable to invite community members in to talk, or join committees, after

some time has been spent debunking myths and examining stereotypes, which also mean that people should be more responsive to new perspectives

Some spokespeople for Aboriginal or ethnic groups are in high demand, and they get very tired of talking, especially if it's a one-off, and nothing flows from it. Again, we need to find ways to routinize these contacts, to include community representatives in planning, discussion, activities, as a matter of course. We can involve people in other contexts as well: don't wait until the police, or teachers, have trouble with youngsters and then invite the parents in. We should ask them along before there is a problem.

We can also support steps to build up community organizations, and work collaboratively with them in areas of shared concern. We may have to demonstrate that we're not trying to take them over, or tell them what to do — we've a long history to live down. Again, other associations or programs, even if not officially concerned about racism, may have the effect of undermining it. Thus any moves to improve access to facilities, or overcome language difficulties, helps. It may be better to have programs on the basis of needs, regardless of race or ethnic origin, to avoid a backlash. But there will still be particular needs of particular groups: often stemming directly from past discrimination or recent arrival.

Here we recognise that references to race or culture need not necessarily be racist. Taking cultural differences into account, accepting that both race and culture are important parts of our personal and social identity, are essential ingredients of any multicultural or community program. Racism implies negative valuing, subordination, or disadvantage. It is not racist to be proud of one's Irish or Indian ancestry, or Greek Orthodox affiliation, unless it is used to deny or

devalue other's belongingness. Nor is it racist to take special measures to compensate Aborigines for past dispossession, for this is righting a wrong, restoring a balance, opening up choice and opportunity. It is therefore directly opposed to racism, which has the effect of locking people out of particular kinds of rights or responsibilities. Thus we are again concerned to open up issues, and work towards a less tense, more fair, and more caring society.

Post Script

There are numerous references for multicultural education in schools; fewer on adult education, and fewer still from Australia. Those I found most useful for adult or community education are:

S. Hall 'Teaching About Race' in J. Tierney ed. *Race, Migration and Schooling* (London 1982)

J. Katz *White Awareness: A Handbook for Antiracism Training*. Oklahoma, 1978

J. Katz, 'Multicultural Education: Games Educators Play' *Multiracial Education* 10, 2, 1982, 17

Inter-racial Books for Children Bulletin 14, No. 7, 'Racism: Related Problems, Research and Strategies.'

National Education Association of the United States *Education and Racism* Michigan, 1973

D. Ruddell 'Racism Awareness' *Multiracial Education* 11, 1, 1983, 3-9

U. S. Commission on Civil Rights *Racism in America and How to Combat It*. Washington, 1970

J. Wright 'Suggestions for Handling Class Discussion on Immigration' *Contemporary Issues in Geography and Education* 1, 1, 1983, 16-19

For Australia, see especially CHOMI publications, including

M. Liffman 'The Education of Professionals in a Multicultural Society' *Migrant Action* V, 3, 1982

H. Moore 'Ivory Tower or Grass Roots: The Relation between theory and Practice in the Education of Professionals for the Multicultural Society' *M. A. P.* 14, 1981

R. Smart 'Intercultural Training for Australians?' *M. A. P.* 10, 1982

Developmental authoritarianism

Alexander R. Magno

THERE are two dimensions to this situation. On the one hand, there is the growing tension between 'reform-minded' elements of the finance bourgeoisie and the 'oligarchic' landowners rooted in 'inefficient' pre-capitalist forms of production and violative of the technocrat's sense of capitalist efficiency. On the other hand, there is the tension between an increasingly radicalized section of the population and all those benefitted by the neocolonial order. The latter is the more profound since it expresses the deep-seated antagonisms between oppressor and oppressed, although tactical alliances, sweeping slogans and nuclear political perspectives may diffuse the distinction between these two modes in the empirical world of live politics.

The martial law regime, in most general terms, represents the resolution of the first mode of antagonism: the preeminent role of monopoly capital-propelled industrialization over pre-capitalist modes of exploitation which stand dysfunctionally in the way of capitalist integration. In common language of Philippine politics, the regime has edged away the 'oligarchy' from the center stage of power. It thus represents a rising new class intimately linked to monopoly capital. Its specific class character provides both the logic and momentum to a 'new' line of development.

The resolution of the first mode of antagonism, however, further heightens the second mode of antagonism that persists between neocolonial production at large and the broadening sections of the people it inevitably marginalizes more intensively.

In the historical sense, the establishment of the regime represents simply a coup by one faction of the neocolonial ruling class over another. Its adherents and architects, however, see the regime as the resolution of all problems of backwardness.⁷ The regime then is perceived as the national resolution of the condition of underdevelopment, the only possible road to progress. It has consistently appropriated the various expressions of the second mode of antagonism and sees itself as the state of the people and the embodiment of the aspirations of the entire society. By failing to comprehend the persistence of the second, more crucial, mode of antagonism, the technocracy thus validates the employment of class violence against the anti-imperialist mass movement.

Since the mediative role of ideological systems in world politics can only be appreciated after its ideological character has been fully grasped, this exploratory paper may be seen as an initial step towards the full investigation of a sweeping historical phenomenon which the **New Society** regime is the most immediate expression of. Its specific 'Filipino' character may be explained not by some **weltanschauung** but by the concrete and historical infusion, dissemination and internalization of the bourgeois-liberal view.

"This Nation Can Be Great Again"

The distillation of bourgeois-liberal understanding of politics and government from nebulous pluralist theory to the more cogent statism of authoritarian self-justification occurs in the Philippine context not simply at the instance of the

declaration of **Presidential Decree (PD) 1081**. The process of distillation in the political consciousness of the ruling class — conditioned both by the necessities of crisis and the legitimation of specific political responses to necessity — has been in motion perhaps as early as Pres. Quirino's suspension of the writ of **habeas corpus** in the early 1950s when radicalized peasants rose against landlord rule.

The process is more evident, however, in the gradual reconstitution of political rule characterizing the Marcos presidency from 1965 to 1972 and culminating in the Marcos centered regime of martial law. Philippine society entered into a definite line of development. To contain the fundamental resistance to the condition of underdevelopment and to promote an ideological notion of 'development' without an anti-imperialist revolutionary work, it overdeveloped the state apparatus. The distillation of the political consciousness of the ruling class is best illustrated and personified in the expressed ideas of the central figure.

Even before the Marcos years, 'enlightened' economists and businessmen were beginning to clamor against the 'high cost of politics' and at the same time demanded a 'stable' political order that would provide a 'healthy climate' for capital. In his inaugural address on December 30, 1965, Ferdinand Marcos declared:

'... as your President, this mandate is clear --- it is mandate not merely for change. It is mandate for greatness... The nation shall be great again ...

xxx ... each nation writes its own history. Our forebears have written theirs. With fortitude and excellence we must write ours... Our forefathers built a democratic Republic on an extremely narrow social and economic base. The task of our generation is to broaden this base continuously. . . The government must act as guardian of the law's majesty, the source of justice to the weak and solace to the underprivileged, a ready friend and protector of the common man and a sensitive instrument for his advancement not his captivity'.

Contained here is the essential bourgeois-liberal view of the state as guarantor of the general good and as a 'sensitive instrument' of society as a whole. This is a restatement of the 'neutral arbiter' conception of the state that is the basis of the bourgeois-liberal theory of pluralist 'democracy'. In 1971, in his work **Today's Revolution: Democracy**, Marcos restated the same view when he noted that 'democracy and revolution are inseparable.' The work heralded what would be later referred to as a 'revolution' of the poor: martial law. In 1977, the point would be reasserted in the very definite conditions of dictatorship: There is no force in our society capable of protecting the poor other than government'.

The theory of a popular revolution emanating from the state institutions is the central theme of the regime's effort at self-justification. This ideological theme rests almost entirely on the assumption that the state is non-ideological.

The state is **popular** because it is the embodiment of the general interest. This means that the fundamental basis of society may not, the Rousseauian sense, be perceptible by all, or, in the Hobbesian sense, be made evident by necessity. Underlying this is the Aristotelian notion of 'constitutionalism', whose 'mean' is unaffected by the whole range of 'Passions' which is merely presumed in liberalism and becomes the expressed and cogent logic of authoritarian self-justification. The

logic as well as the rhetoric of liberalism in fact plays a crucial role in this justification. In a speech revealingly titled **The Ceaseless Struggle for Rationality**, Marcos notes:

'Authority unlimited by individual rights is tyranny, and individual rights unlimited by law or authority is anarchy. the striking of the balance needs to be more pragmatic than ideological, to the wisdom of law, we must add the probity of science.'

The use of the social contract framework to rationalize the authoritarian state is explicit in the discourses of the President. 'Society,' Marcos argues:

'...over and above anything is an agreement between peoples to establish a common government. Thus the government draws their authority upon the consent of the governed. It means that sometime past under the theory of social covenant or social agreement principle of society, when man realized that there were certain things he cannot do for himself, and that there must be made a superior authority over and above him to compel his neighbor not to burn too much wood in the communal forest or allow the smoke into the cave, it became necessary that there be a superior authority to demand obedience to a common regulation known as law.'

The state is then to be understood as a natural mechanism for social regulation and therefore an inherent component of society. While this myth of the social contract has been debunked as anthropologically baseless, the ideological attitude deriving from this

naturalist theory of the state continue to be pervasive especially as it is preserved in bourgeois legalism. A further refinement of the social contract framework is formulated thus:

'When we establish government, we establish what is known as the social contract. All the people enter into such a contract. Everyone who is born participates in the social contract. He agrees that there shall be a central authority which shall **administer** his rights, his properties and his relations with his fellow human beings. And in this agreement, he agrees that the central authority will be the government. He delegates to the government certain of his rights and his rights are therefore embodied not in the Bill of Rights alone but in the entire Constitution.'⁸

The scope of the social contract as here understood is more than just a procedural surrender of rights and acceptance of authority as in the classic formulation. It includes the **administration** of his relations with other in layman's terms, it portends regimentation or, in the cold language of technocrat 'social engineering' guided by some universal, one-dimensional Reason of science. Consciously or unconsciously, or maybe because his speeches are made for him by his technocrats — the faceless, personality-less 'brains' of the corporate state — the technocratic ethos has been processed out of nebulous liberalism in the very ideological and polemical formulations of Marcos.

The basic liberal-technocratic ideological premises mentioned therefore set the tone for the specific reconstruction of the bourgeois worldview into the compelling argument for the authoritarian rule of the State. Without the framework of class analysis, liberalism eventually distills into a 'classless' view of state and politics — already a central character of the American school of political science and economics. The state then exists for the 'authoritative allocation' of values and stands 'above politics' or must ideally do so. Along with the rhetoric on the 'end of ideology', a pure reason of science is held

aloft not for uncritical reverence. A political authority acting in the name of this scientific reason is therefore unquestionable — and fundamentally unopposable.

Superimposed on the social contract framework, this scientific delusion reduces the problem of political opposition into merely a problem of opposition to the state. Since the state is held to be the objectification of the general will, then opposition to the state then is historically, rationally, and politically invalid. Thus the 'antipolitics' attitude of technocrats is subsumed into the ideological fiber of authoritarianism. Their uncritical submission is assured sine it is beyond the technocratic wit to think past the logic of the present, constrained as they are by the logic of positivism. They are merely concerned with trying to make given circumstances 'workable.'

This type of ideological distillation was evident at the onset of the martial law regime. Although some have interpreted it merely as a paranoid reaction on the part of the Chief, Executive, the view that every mode of opposition is anti-government and therefore pitted against 'public welfare, strikes deep ideological roots. It is in fact a standard line pursued by other authoritarian regimes working upwards from the ideological assumptions of classical liberalism.

In the **politics of Transition** the necessity for martial law was presented in terms of the image of Rousseau's **Benevolent Dictator** battling 'particular wills' to achieve civil society:

'...On the eve of the proclamation of martial law, our nation was in the state of siege. There were many who held dim hope that our democratic political system could still survive.'

'A searching analysis of the situation which the nation faced revealed seven sources of threats to the Republic. ...first, the Communist revolutionary movement which was divided into the traditionalists and the Maoists; second, the rightists who sought power by means of a **coup d' etat**; third, the Muslim secessionist movement in Mindanao and Sulu; fourth, the private broker in Philippine society at the time; fifth, organized crime which had taken advantage of the situation to entrench itself; sixth, the oligarchy which sought by all means to maintain the status quo and effectively stymied government efforts at economic, social and political reform; and seventh, the foreign interventionists, evidence of whose funding of anti-government groups in the country were confirmed through banks in Hong-kong, Japan and the United States.'

Underlying these statements are several important ideological assumptions, from where a structure of arguments may be derived. Principally, the crisis confronting Philippine society is not viewed as a crisis of underdevelopment but rather as a crisis of the political order which therefore requires a political solution; although exclusively a political solution by the already existing institutional political authority. None of the competing groups represent the 'national' resolution of the crisis; they are all 'particular wills.' Even if these groups were admitted to be an 'accumulation of responses to the ills of society, which were rooted in social and economic imbalances and inequities, they were all categorized primarily as anti-government and thus as 'problems' rather than alternative solutions. Conversely, martial law was not an 'alternative' solution but the solution objectified. The regime represents the necessary political precondition marked by the systematic eradication of all particular wills which is at once the process of self-realization, a condition where:

'...(t) the political authority must therefore educate itself and our people to an awareness of our national identity...A consciousness

of our history as our people's continuing struggle for human freedom must inform the program of all government agencies and instrumentalities. Our national identity can only be as enriched by our present concern for the future. Our national experience must command our vision of the future and sustain the ethic of work and unity among our institutions and among our people.'

(To be continued)

'VOICES'...

(Continued from page 23)

groups in U. K., U. S., France etc. and the prominence given to extremist Sikh spokesmen by the Pakistani media.

It is in this context that an Indian participant at a recent seminar attended by South Asian analysts remarked "To be quite frank, Delhi is more worried about the powerful new Voice of America transmitter in Colombo than about naval facilities to the US in Trincomalee". It will be broadcasting in Indian and regional languages, free of Sri Lankan editorial control, he said. Sri Lankans who have tuned into "Voice of Eelam" must find the situation peculiarly ironic!

UK MPs on...

(Continued from page 10)

consequence of this apparent cowardice and dereliction of duty on the part of the main opposition party still in parliament the onus for asking the awkward, but most important questions, seems to fall on the single Communist party member".

Mr. Robert-Kilroy-Silk MP and Mr. Roger Sims J. P. MP are both practising lawyers.



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Good Times, Hard Times

Samson Abeygunawardene

"Although we have become more conscious of the role played by the newspapermen in the policy-making process, with few exceptions their personalities remain shadowy, their motives obscure, and the methods of operation a mystery. These men who acted as the consciences, the partners and the antagonists of the politicians who guided public opinion and articulated it, surely have much to tell us about the dominant themes of a crucial period. And yet, as Max Beloff has concluded, the documentation of journalists and publicists is ... very uneven, and only now beginning to be explored."

Stephen Koss — Quoted from **FLEET STREET RADICAL: A. G. GARDINER AND THE DAILY NEWS**, Allen Lane, London, 1973, p. 7.

One of the mysteries of Sri Lankan press history is why Arumugam Sangarapillai bought *The Times of Ceylon* from its British owners in 1946.

Born to a poor family in Karainagar, a village in the Jaffna peninsula, he attended the local school for ten years of formal schooling before leaving for Colombo to find work. He was fifteen then. He had a few rupees, enough for a week or two of Spartan living in the big city, but more important, he had a remarkable head for business.

The story of the poor boy who becomes a millionaire is one that every journalist loves. But no journalist ever interviewed Sangarapillai who, though wealthy and the controlling shareholder of a prestigious newspaper publishing company, remained by choice one of the least publicised of Ceylon's successful entrepreneurs. When he died in September 1954 the *Times* reporter who was asked to write his obituary found that the newspaper library did not have any press clippings on file about the chairman of the *Times*.

The *Ceylon Times* was launched on 11 July 1846 and published twice a week in Colombo. Its owner-editor, Hew Stuart, had come to Ceylon from England to plant coffee, which he did for several years before turning to journalism. In the first issue of the *Times* he claimed that the paper comprised "within its columns extensive information relating to politics, commerce, literature and all subjects connected with the local and general topics of the day."

We get an official view of the *Ceylon Press* of that period from a despatch dated 14 April 1847 sent by the Governor, Sir Colin Campbell, to the Secretary of State:

"As 'The Observer' was for some time the only newspaper here and the merchants and planters found it an unsuitable representative of their interests or exponent of their opinion, a second paper, 'The Examiner' was established in 1846... about the same time, and for the same reason, a third paper, 'The Ceylon Times' was established by other mercantile parties..."

"Both papers, 'The Examiner' and 'The Times' are temperately and cleverly conducted, and so far as the press can represent the wants and wishes of the commercial and agricultural interests, their opinion may be taken as fairly expressive of the prevailing views of the planters and merchants, and the European community generally."

When Stuart, having failed to make *The Times* a financial success put the paper up for sale, John Capper bought it. Born in England in 1814, Capper had worked for two years as a sub-editor on *The Railway and Mining Gazette*, a weekly journal, before coming out to Ceylon in 1837 to take

up an appointment in a British merchant firm. When this firm crashed in 1848 Capper returned to England. In 1851 he joined the *London Globe*, then a three-penny bi-weekly as Sub-editor. He was introduced to Charles Dickens and contributed to *Household Words*, then edited by the famous novelist. In 1854 Murray published Capper's major work, *The Three Presidencies of India*. In 1856 he left London for Cutch, where he established the Steam Spinning and Weaving Mills at Serampore. Two years later he returned to Colombo. After buying the *Ceylon Times* he devoted himself exclusively to journalism and newspaper publishing.

From 16 December 1872 *The Times* was published daily. It became Ceylon's first daily news paper. On 1 August 1882 its name was changed to *The Times of Ceylon*.

Capper saw the need for a newspaper to articulate the interests of the coffee planters who had joined The Ceylon League formed in 1865 by British merchants and planters to agitate for political and economic reforms. The planters were especially concerned that the government was not spending enough money to construct roads in the coffee growing areas.

An anonymous journalist-historian who compiled a history of *The Times* in its centenary year (1846) claimed that in 1820s the paper had been a staunch advocate of a liberal measure of reforms and that allegations of being reactionary, made by Ceylonese nationalists in the 1930s (i. e. after the Donoughmore constitutional reforms) were unfair. The *Times* had been very critical of the Donoughmore reforms, especially the grant of universal adult franchise.

When D. R. Wijewardene launched *The Ceylon Daily News* in

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SUDDHI : WHOSE TYPE OF WOMAN ?

CINEMA

Sunila Abeysekera

Dark shapes. Breathing noiset It slowly becomes clear tha. it is two people making love. The man gets up — from the superior position, of course — and says 'I'll bring yon a pumpkin tomorrow'. Thus begins Dharmasiri Bandaranaike's new film, SUDDHI-LAAGE KATHAAWA. This is our introduction to Suddhi, touted in blurbs as 'a woman denuded by a man-dominated society'; and since the advertising blurbs make it seem that the film concentrates on a woman's struggle for survival in a male society, I would attempt to place my criticism of the film also within a woman's range of perception.

Whatever the problems with Simon Navagattegrma's novel, it did portray the dire straits which the landless Dry Zone peasants of Sri Lanka found themselves in the early years of this century; the characters of the Mudalali and the Arachchi Rala were juxtaposed as symbols of the new 'capitalist' structure that was being imposed on our society at the time, while the old 'feudal' system was being rapidly dismantled. The violence in the novel is seen as an inevitable by-product of poverty, degradation and exploitation and the peasants are seen as 'victims' of a cycle of violence which is beyond their real control. And, in the novel, Suddhi is a woman who makes a 'cholee' to barter her sexuality in return for survival.

Swarna Mallawarachchi is my favourite actress on the Sinhala screen. I was saddened, therefore, to find that images of her writhing in simulated ecstasy under one man or the other (and it's not really important which!) begin to pall. From the word 'go', Suddhi is shown to us as a 'loose' woman. The episode with the man who promises her a pumpkin sets the tone for what is to come. Suddhi enters the boutique, her jacket slipped wantonly off one shoulder. She makes eyes' at the Mudalali, is the 'atypical' woman — active, aggressive, taking the initiative. Why do I protest? Because her portrayal falls into all the traps of stereotyping — of a 'bad' woman. Her deliberate 'wantonness' is hard to accept; even a woman from Colombo Road, Kurunegala, living in the Dry Zone in the Sri Lanka of that day and age could hardly be imagined gliding along village footpaths as if she were a fashion model parading on a catwalk in a posh urban hotel. Yet, unfortunately, this is the image Swarna created in my mind's eye. And then, later on, when you see Suddhi as the woman full of avarice who urges her man on to commit murder for the sake of money, once again she is the archetype of a seductress, the one who tempts men on to the path of evil. Her desperation to get

herself out of an 'impossible' life situation is never shown to us clearly enough, so that her willingness to rob, murder, in fact do 'anything', is easily perceived as part of the 'bad woman' role.

And the pseudo-psychology of the film, with various images of Suddhi accompanied by voice-overs of the different men in her turbulent life — Romiel, the Mudalali, the Arachchi Rala — does nothing to show us what makes Suddhi act as she does. How does she see her future? What is her objective in stealing the money?

What do the various relationships with men mean to her? Is she a strong-willed, egoistic woman who dreams only of her own salvation, or does she see the money as a means to start a new life for herself and her chosen partner — whoever he may be?

These questions are never answered, and so, once more, you see one of the handful of strong female characters in Sinhala literature reduced to a mere seductress, an archetype of evil. Do men fear our strength so much that they cannot bear to envision a woman with certain power, and control, over men? Is 'strong = bad' the only equation possible?

The emergence of Suddhi' role as one of a 'bad' woman also

has disastrous consequences for women in general in Sri Lanka today. At a time when the increase of violence against woman is causing grave concern among us, it is a pity that the character of Suddhi is sensationalised, so that no clear links can be drawn between what happens to her and what the average woman of Sri Lanka falls prey to at least once in her lifetime. When, throughout the film, Suddhi is subject to sexual assault, harassment and abuse, it becomes 'justifiable'; She 'deserved' it. A woman who extends her relationship with more than one man into the sexual sphere, must cower defenceless before the epithet 'Vesi' (prostitute). And the injustice of having the very men who are her willing partners in their sexual adventures (I don't call them her sexual exploiters in case someone issues a challenge... 'But she's the one who drives them to it.') Hurl abuse and blows at her, as if they — the men — had nothing to do with it, goes unmarked. As a woman who breaks all the rules, Suddhi 'deserves' this type of treatment. And the final blood-bath at the end of the film is 'justifiable' too — the adultress, she who betrays her husband, gets her just deserts. It is a 'crime of passion'. Nothing more.

Looking back at the characters of women in Dharmasiri Bandaranayake's earlier films, I had noted the usual conflict between the dual image assigned to women in present society — what some people call the Madonna/Whore dichotomy. This tendency to see woman alternatively as Mother Goddess and Evil Temptress is not to be seen so clearly in Suddhilaage Kathaawa. Suddhi has almost no redeeming 'good'ness. Her sexuality is reduced to a mere 'animal

passion'. She tempts; she seduces; she is 'evil'. And the other two women in the film are as 'typical! The Mudalali's wife is the 'bossy' and domineering wife, the woman who wields power over her man by virtue of her wealth. The other, Peter's wife, is the docile wife who doesn't hesitate to succumb to Romiel's advances while her husband is not yet cold in his grave. (Her protests are all part of the game; Women say NO when they really mean YES!) And it is her tittle-tattle (another 'female' characteristic) which leads Romiel to slaughter Suddhi in the end.

When I asked a friend (an actor) about the film before seeing it myself, he grinned and said 'Blood & Sex'. More than in Dharmasiri Bandaranayake's earlier films, Sud-

dhilaage Kathaawa presents us with men and women caught up in a whirlpool of 'elemental' emotions, passions, sexual desires; unfortunately, and this is my major criticism, they are divorced from the socio-economic background against which their lives are acted out. It is this 'dehumanising' of the characters, particularly of Suddhi, that detracts from the film, making us wonder whether the director wants to project images of human beings as prey to certain innate and inherent ways of behaviour, irrespective of the conditions under which they live. And within the larger frame, the women are portrayed as weak, giving in to their sexual desires in a totally amoral manner, the ROOT OF ALL EVIL. Sorry, I just don't accept that.

Good Times . . .

(Continued from page 33)

January 1918 he had to compete on uneven terms with its main rival *The Times of Ceylon*. The *Times* was the only paper running at a profit at the time. The flourishing British mercantile sector preferred it as an advertising medium. It was read by British merchants, planters, government merchants and a considerable section of the wealthy Ceylonese. Because the *Times* was associated with the British colonial masters, many of the wealthy Ceylonese were in the habit of leaving a copy of the paper in the verandah to impress visitors.

A different situation prevailed in 1945, when Ceylon was on the verge of independence. The *Ceylon Daily News* had become a highly successful paper because of what Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in a message published in the first issue described as "the new forces at work in the country stirring the national consciousness." Twenty-five years later D. R. Wijewardene agreed that "one of the reasons for the rapid

growth of the *Daily News* was that it came to represent the new forces referred to by Sir Ponnambalam."

The most important of these new forces was economic nationalism the belief held by the Ceylonese elites that alien rule had made them economically backward and that steps should be taken to protect the interests of the people. The elite pressed, with considerable success, for changes in several areas.

In July 1946 *The Times* celebrated its centenary. A month later its British owners passed the word around business circles that their paper was for private sale. This decision was perhaps prompted by the realisation that a newspaper serving mainly the European planting and mercantile interests would not be successful in independent Ceylon.

Mr Samson Abeyagunawardena was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Letters by the University of New England (Australia) in 1982 for a thesis on Press and Politics in Ceylon.

HITLER AND THE HOLOCAUST

BOOK
REVIEW

Tom Bower

*HITLER AND THE FINAL
SOLUTION*, by Gerald Fleming
(Hamish Hamilton).

CRIMINALS rarely scatter clues which guarantee their certain conviction, and mass murderers are likely to be more careful than the rest. Yet one of the unique characteristics of Nazi Germany's production-line murder of European Jewry is the survival of scores of authentic telexes, memoranda and orders between SS officers spread over occupied Europe meticulously detailing their dispatch of millions of people to extermination camps in Eastern Europe.

From the SS-chief, Heinrich Himmler, downwards, thousands of named SS officers were incontrovertibly incriminated because of the Germans' obsession with bureaucratic rituals. Yet one document is missing — Adolf Hitler's personally signed command explicitly authorising the actual murders.

In 1977, the maverick historian David Irving claimed that the absence of the document proved that the devious Himmler had, at least until 1943, contrived and managed the vast murder machine without his Fuhrer's knowledge. In the ensuing uproar, historians plundered the world's archives to expose Irving's revisionism. Gerald Fleming tries harder than most and even he has failed to find the single piece of damaging testimony. Instead he has collected a mass of convincing circumstantial evidence which reaffirms what we already knew, but leaves the heretic Irving chuckling.

The conspirators' success depended on unprecedented duplicity. Until the moment of death, when their victims discovered that the shower rooms were gas chambers, the SS communicated in code about their "resettlement", "evacuation", "elimination" and "a Final Solution". Doubts about the legality of their operation were swept aside by Himmler, whose pep talks contained the sublime formula, "It is the Fuhrer's wish".

Until the moment of death, when their victims discovered that the shower rooms were gas chambers, the SS communicated in code about their "resettlement", "evacuation", "elimination", and "a Final Solution".

To explain why the "wish" is not recorded for posterity, Fleming claims that a keystone of the duplicity was that no report actually mentioning the killings could be submitted to Hitler, who was properly concerned about his image if his name was linked in print to the crime. Yet wartime diaries and memoranda written contemporaneously by Hitler's closest aides faithfully record his frenetic outbursts, asserting his lifelong pathological hatred of Jews and his awareness of their awful fate.

Nevertheless, academics are troubled because their "truth" depends on documents. "No historian today", asserts Fleming's introduc-

tion, "would believe that such an order was given in writing". Without one on this crucial issue, the honourable profession has self-servingly divided itself into "intentionalists" and "functionalists": those who believe Hitler masterminded the Holocaust, and those who, in the absence of "the document", conclude that it all happened without central planning. A new source of endless debate.

Apparently no one postulates the obvious. Forty years ago in Berlin, in anticipation of Russian occupation, the SS incinerated tons of incriminating government documents. Among them was the Fuhrer's personal file marked "Jews, Extermination of...".

Letters...

(Continued from Page 1)

that the anti-neo-colonial revolution will be much more profound than the anti-colonial revolution that we are products of!

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Prof. A. W. Singham
City Univ. of New York.



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INTER-RACIAL EQUITY AND NATIONAL UNITY IN SRI LANKA

(The document was produced by the Marga Institute¹ in October 1983, as part of a programme of work initiated by the Citizens' Committee for National Harmony, immediately after the communal violence in 1983 ...

Since the document was first released, more up-to-date information and data on some aspects of the problem have become available — for example the data from the socio-economic survey 1980/81

Nevertheless the document is being reproduced essentially in its original form, both because it reflects the state of the discussions at the time it was prepared, and also as the substance of the report including the factual analysis has not been rendered any less relevant or valid by what has taken place. There has also been a continuing demand for the original document locally as well as from abroad. A few clarifications have been included in the present version.)

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