

From Fake Ceasefire and Undeclared War to. . . .  
— Mervyn de Silva

**LANKA**

**GUARDIAN**



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**Thondaman's Dec 31 deadline**

— Dayan Jayatilleka and S. Balakrishnan

**The English Department**

— Qadri Ismail replies to critics

**Sri Lankan Crisis — India's changing role**

— Marshall Singer

— Delhi's plans to help

— John Elliott

**Smearing the UN — A. W. Singham**

**Rajiv's visit diplomacy — Bhabani Sen Gupta**

- Also**
- Vittachi's fulminations and Carlo's Catch 22
  - A cat's eye view of MCPs in Jaffna
  - Poem — U. Karunatilleke

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## NATIONAL SERVICE

AN ORDER in Parliament to vest the government with the power to set up a National Defence Service is likely to be introduced soon. The ISLAND report states that such a need has arisen because of repeated warnings from the Armed services that they face an acute manpower shortage.

When the Manpower Mobilisation Bill was introduced on Oct. 10., the Opposition MP's walked out after the government refused to grant their request for time to debate the measure fully. Since then, the SLFP and the three-party (SLMP-LSSP-CP) alliance have issued statements condemning the move. There is little doubt that this step by the government will provoke heated controversy in the coming months, and may in fact become the unifying issue for a now badly divided opposition. (See "Mobilisation Law")

## ESTATE STRIKE

IS THERE trouble brewing in the thottam? The settled Colombo

view presents the image of the plantations and Indian Tamil estate labour as an enclave, a ghetto somehow separate from the rest of the country. The estate worker has an economic issue (wage and working conditions) and a political issue (citizenship, repatriation etc). If there is trouble, it is always a strike that has almost everything to do with the first issue. If there is a sudden stoppage of work, it has always to do with some "incident" a worker assaulted by some functionary which has triggered the community's instant collective response.

Recently, these sudden stoppages have been provoked by a new 'cause' — the arrest of estate youths mainly students, by the security forces. On Nov. 7 more than 25,000 went on strike in the Hatton district when four students were taken in by the police, and 100,000 were to join the protest campaign the next day if the students were not released. The ethnic conflict and the security problem are pulling down the walls of the plantation prison.

## TRENDS + LETTERS

### Vittachi & the Election Law

"DR CARLO FONSEKA knows nothing about my class just as I know nothing of his" fulminates retired civil servant, UNP adviser and enthusiastic Practitioner of currently implemented UNP economic policies, and glorious recipient of a Presidential award open to export-oriented, big profit-making business houses — Vijaya Perera Vittachi. Such is the class of the man who says brazen-facedly that he has nothing to gain from undue electioneering advantages a UNP President of Sri Lanka has arrogated to himself through a provision in the Constitution. Just because he knows nothing about the social class of an obscure don like me he confidently infers that I too must know nothing about his. That's perilously close to the logic of the insane!

Mr Vittachi obviously does not like the use of social class as a category of analysis of political behaviour. He suspects that 'class' is the "kokatath thailaya" that I rub on all those whose views I disagree with. His suspicion is totally unfounded. I have no "kokatath thailaya". Each case receives separate consideration and appropriate treatment. For example, "fraud" is the category I used to counter a phoney doctor — Dr Costain de Vos — with many of whose views I disagreed in the columns of the *Lanka Guardian*. He paraded a doctorate he didn't have to give a semblance of authority to his rantings and ravings against N. M. Perera, Ph. D., D. Sc.

Because I used the concept of social class as a category of analysis of political behaviour,

(Continued on page 24)

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## CONTENTS

News Background	2
Gandhi aims for Lankan deal	7
Thondaman's deadline	9
Cat's Eye	13
Poem	14
Gandhi's visit diplomacy	15
The blackening of the UN	17
Mobilisation Law	21
English Department	22
Letters	24

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# Ceasefire declaration and undeclared war

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

**T**HIS 'ceasefire' or "cessation of hostilities" is such a gross travesty of the truth that the ISLAND was absolutely right in posing an obvious question. Is there a ceasefire? It inquired editorially.

A new, far more intense aggressiveness on the part of the combatants and a callous disregard for innocent civilian lives, including children, marks the present stage of this undeclared war. Why this impression of a new ferocity? The military objective of both belligerents remains control of territory but the achievement of that objective seemingly inescapably involves the physical dislodging of civilian settlements and the killing of settlers. The area surrounding Trincomalee, the strategic target, is being "cleared", and the same operation covers the northern parts of the North Central Province, which includes dozens of 100% Sinhalese villages in the Madawachchiya, Horowapotana electorates chiefly. All this, argues National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali is part of "Operation Green Arrow". (Strange to say, it was the "boys" who first accused the government of launching a new operation code-named 'Operation Green Arrow',

If the official assessment is correct it means that the "cleaning up" operation mounted by the security forces in mid-September has been, at best, a temporary success. That combined operation by the services succeeded, it was reported by correspondents who were taken to the spot, in cleaning up the Nilaweli resort area, which has more than forty hotels.

But it is now obvious from the government's own accounts and by the on-the-spot stories and pictures published in the daily press that the "boys" are moving quite freely in the entire

stretch from Vavuniya to Trinco, and environs of Trinco, west, north and south.

The army, then, according to security planners, will not only have to beat back this serious military challenge and take complete control of Trinco and its environs but advance to Vavuniya to clear up that district where the Tamil insurgents seem to have established many strongholds. Only then can Northern-Eastern front link be broken and the insurgency contained physically in in one province — the North, or as the vast majority of Sinhalese would prefer in the Jaffna peninsula.

This would not only improve the security situation but it would accord neatly with what appears to be a growing belief among the Sinhalese that the 'north' being "theirs", a substantial devolution of power can be made in order sustain a "political settlement".

It is the North-East linkage which makes Trinco doubly important strategically. Firstly, the port itself — developed either as a naval base, or commercial harbour by the government or in the minds of the forward-planners of Eelam as a Singapore-style industrial zone, a back-up for South India.

In the current politico-military conflict, Trinco's other importance is of course its precise location, the meeting point of the north and the east. The government finds it politically impossible to sell the Sinhalese the idea of any merger of linkage between the two provinces under a nationwide scheme of devolution and de-centralization.

But does 'linkage' necessarily mean "merger"? Does linkage necessarily involve province-to-province coordination? Is it not possible to have linkage between

the Northern province and a 'district' (say, Batticaloa) in the eastern province since "district" rather than 'province' is after all your basic unit, the first building block of any structure of decentralised authority?

These are the questions being discussed in Delhi where Mr. Bhandari and others still feel fairly optimistic about a negotiated deal. They think that the ENLF is sticking firmly to its principled position on "self-determination" and "traditional homelands" only because the Sri Lankan government has not yet made that it regards as a serious offer of devolution. The optimists in Delhi think that if such an offer is made on the question of "powers" then Mr. Gandhi may be in a better position to persuade the TULF, PLOTE and at least one or two of the groups within the ENLF. In the broadest terms, the Indian thinking centres on the concept of 'union territories' in the Indian constitution, a devolution of power less than a full-fledged state in India but much more than the power that Colombo is offering. As far as the Tamils are concerned, the main questions within the general category of "power" (the other category in any scheme of devolution and de-centralisation being "territory") are no longer the Tamil grievances of language rights, jobs, economic projects, varsity admissions. The main issue is "security" (control over local police, with no army presence) and within this broad frame of 'security' an agreement on land distribution and settlements. Who will be settled? Are there to be ethnic ratios and if so on what basis? Hence, incidentally, the crucial importance of the Mahaveli project and the collapse of the pre-emptive effort by the now discarded and/or discredited Mathewite group



to place "forward settlements" in the areas that the Mahaveli water would irrigate. (The idea is a refurbished Israeli concept introduced by Jewish experts with access to top-level decision-makers here, particularly within the Mahaveli project).

Arms, manpower, training, discipline — how far have the security forces advanced in these four areas to improve their performance qualitatively? If the improvement is significantly different, then the government's hopes of a firmer control of the military situation

south of the peninsula will be realised. And that is what the government will be betting on, while both sides pay lip-service to a 'ceasefire'. Jaw-jaw will go on too until Colombo sees, one way or another, whether it can regain full military control or Delhi loses all patience and the mediator washes his hands off this neighbourhood mess.

Meanwhile, High Commissioner Bernard Tillekeratne, Mr. Bhandari's direct official Sri Lankan link, has arrived in Colombo to brief President J. R. Next week,

he will join Mr. Athulathmudali's team to Oman where the National Security Minister, the President's closest aide on this issue, will talk to both Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Bhandari and review the situation after the "ceasefire" and Mr. Bhandari's talks in Delhi with the Tamil representatives. Then President JR will meet Mr. Rajiv Gandhi when both attend the SARC summit in Dhakka on Dec. 7. JR-Rajiv can have their own Indo-Sri Lankan Mini-summit' separately.

## Liberal International calls for Sri Lanka election

**A**t its recent congress in Spain, the Liberal International, which includes the Democratic party of the U.S., and the Liberal parties of Britain, Canada and West Germany urged that a general election be held in Sri Lanka to "restore the authority essential for a just settlement (of the ethnic conflict) acceptable to all parties". It also calls for the "removal of all political disabilities imposed on individuals and groups". Present at the conference were Giscard d'Estaing former President of France, David Steel leader of Liberal party in UK, Martin Hungenberg, West German Economics Minister and Simone Veil, famed author and ex-President of the European parliament. The resolution reads:

At the Congress of the Liberal International held in Spain last month, the following motion proposed by the Swiss Party was passed without opposition —

This Congress —

1. deplores the erosion of human rights, the violation of liberal democratic principles and the escalation of violence in Sri Lanka;
2. notes that these developments constitute an impediment to the peaceful solution of the ethnic conflict;
3. notes that this escalating violence and social instability has led to a decline of economic development and so threatens the survival of Liberal values;
4. believes that the postponement of a General Election for six years has reduced the possibility for the participation of the Sri Lankan people in the political process and thereby undermined their confidence in it;

5. believes that the increasing concentration of power in the state has produced a climate of authoritarianism which jeopardises the prospects of a durable solution to the current problem;
6. believes that only an island-wide devolution of power will realise this objective;
7. calls on the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil groups to agree upon a prolongation of the ceasefire and renewed negotiations in order to settle the conflict peacefully;
8. urges the governments of Sri Lanka, India and the High Commissioner for Refugees of the United Nations to develop plans for good and secured facilities for Tamil refugees, primarily in the region (i. e., in Sri Lanka or Tamil Nadu)
9. calls on the member states of the United Nations to contribute financially to those facilities and to take all diplomatic steps needed in order to promote a peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict and the restoration of liberal values in Sri Lanka;
10. calls for an immediate General Election so as to legitimise the government process in Sri Lanka and thus restore the authority essential for a just settlement acceptable to all parties;
11. calls for the removal of all political disabilities imposed on individuals and groups so as to ensure the widest possible participation in a General Election;
12. calls on all member parties and groups of the Liberal International to extend their fullest support for the restoration of peace and liberal values in Sri Lanka, by the adoption of the above means, and to urge their respective governments to do likewise.

Amongst members of the Liberal International who supported this motion were the Democratic Party of the United

States, the Free Democratic Party of Germany, the Liberal Party of Britain, the Union for French Democracy of France and the Liberal party of Canada. The Sri Lankan members of the Liberal International are the Sri Lankan Liberal Group (formerly led by Chandra Zoaysa and now by Mars Mohideen, both of the Margal Institute), and the Council for Liberal Democracy (Joint Secretaries Chanaka Amaratunga and Asitha Perera). Amongst prominent Liberals who participated at the Congress were Giscard d'Estaing, former President of France, Martin Bungeemann, Minister of Economics of West Germany, Simone Veil, former President of the European Parliament and David Steel, leader of the British Liberal Party. The Liberal International Prize for Freedom was awarded to Raul Alfonsin, President of Argentina.

## Cancellation of Lankan team's visit to Iran

**A**spokesman for the Foreign Ministry yesterday said he had no comment to make upon the cancellation of a visit by an official Sri Lanka delegation to Iran.

"The Island" yesterday exclusively reported that the visit had been called off.

The reasons given by the Islamic Republic Newspaper and confirmed by the Iranian Foreign Ministry was that this was in protest against Sri Lanka's contacts with Israel.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Iranian Embassy confirmed the story yesterday.

When asked as to why the visit was cancelled, he said, "Your paper had the story."

"The Island" understands that the Sri Lankan delegation was to have consisted of Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tyrone Fernando, chairman UNP, SLFP Mr. Harsha Abeywardena and M. P., Mr. Halim Ishak.

— Island



# Only "partly free" says U. S. State Dept.

In its latest report to the US Senate and House of Representatives the State Department has used the "Freedom House" classification of "partly free" to describe Sri Lanka. The two categories "partly free" and "free" include the following countries respectively:

## Partly free

Iran, Taiwan, South Korea, South Africa, Chile, Grenada, Uganda, Malaysia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Jordan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Bahrain, Bhutan, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Kuwait,

Qatar Turkish portion of Cyprus, Hungary, Lebanon, Morocco, Malta, Poland, Israel's occupied territories Nepal, Tunisia, U. A. E., Kenya.

## Free

Fiji, New Zealand, Belgium, France, FRG, Greece, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Iceland, Ireland, Solomon Islands, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, India.

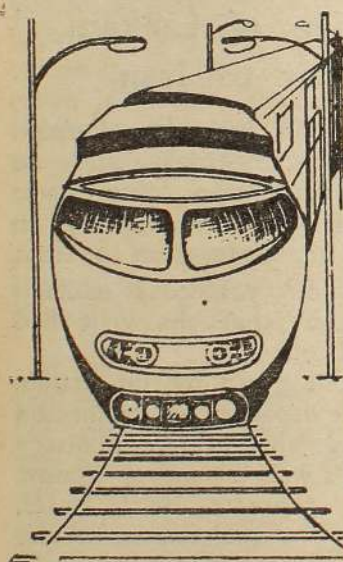
Meanwhile Amnesty International has issued a report on "Torture"

in Sri Lanka which will shock many Sri Lankans largely because it refers to suspects arrested for crimes not covered by the P. T. A. The "File on Torture" says A. I. has also received allegations that Sinhalese prisoners belonging to opposition parties, in particular the JVP and SLFP, have been tortured. The report gives the example of young W. A. Dayaratne who died in police custody on March 28 and the inquest report which said that he had died in custody as a result of assault.

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# The Ethnic Crisis : Delhi's changing role

Marshall Singer

**S**inhalese and Tamils tend to live in two almost totally distinct perceptual worlds. There is a vast spectrum of both Sinhalese and Tamil opinion to be sure, but I am not certain that they ever meet, even at the middle. The "moderate" Sinhalese and the "moderate" Tamil are both prepared to admit that "we" have made mistakes in the past and are "ourselves" partly responsible for the problem, but even then they tend to see very different pictures of reality. The extremists on both sides, of course, believe that the others are the cause of the problem and only "they" can solve it, by changing their ways. Many Sinhalese feel that the Sinhalese have been too lenient with the Tamils for too long, and that they should have clamped down on the Tamils much sooner and much harder than was done, to have avoided getting to the violent state Sri Lanka was in just prior to the cease-fire. Some believe — and these include some very high ranking and powerful Sinhalese — that the only solution would be to kill or jail all of the militants and drive the rest back to India "where they came from, as invaders, in the first place." According to those holding this perception, until the invasions (starting, most Sinhalese would say, in the latter part of the last millennium) all of Sri Lanka had always been a completely Sinhalese Buddhist country, and it had to be so again. Other, less extreme, Sinhalese are willing to let the Tamils stay, provided the Tamils learn the Sinhalese language and accept the fact that Sri Lanka is, and will remain, a Sinhalese Buddhist country. The extremist Sinhalese believe that "devolution" is only a first step. As soon as the Tamils have

that they will flood the North with millions of Tamils from South India, and then proceed to take over the South of Sri Lanka as well. Some think the Tamils want to make it a part of India, others that they want to use it as a first step toward building a united, independent "Greater Tamil Nadu," including South India, parts of Malaysia, and parts of South Africa. Still others see a Tamil plot to take over all of Sri Lanka and convert it into a Tamil dominated, marxist country, with the Sinhalese made the servants of the Tamils.

Tamil extremists, for their part, are convinced that the Tamils are foolish for having believed any of the promises the Sinhalese made before Independence or since. They believe that the Sinhalese want either to drive them out or kill them, and to make the entire island into a Sinhalese Buddhist theocratic state. The less extreme Tamils believe that Tamils will always be second class citizens — at best — in a united Sri Lanka. Most Tamils believe that they were only incorporated into a united country during the British period. Prior to that, they argue, there always existed independent South Indian kingdoms in the North and Eastern parts of the Island. The Tamil extremists believe there can be no peace until the Sinhalese are driven from the Northern and Eastern parts of the island and an independent Tamil state is established there.

The problem, in large part, seems to be that the extremists on both sides tend to listen to the extremists on the opposite side, and believe the rhetoric about what "they" want to do to the other. Neither extremist accepts the other's view of history. Each side points to differing

The author is Professor of International and Intercultural Affairs at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of *The Emerging Elite: A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylon* (M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1964); *Weak States in a World of Powers: The Dynamics of International Relationships* (Free Press, New York, 1972); *Intercultural Communication: A Perceptual Approach* (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Forthcoming) and is currently working on a book on *National Identity and the Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*.

This report is written largely on the basis of his having spent approximately six weeks between June 1st and July 8th, 1985 in Sri Lanka, Madras, New Delhi, and London and having conducted over 130 interviews with people directly involved in the Sri Lanka ethnic conflict. He met with members of the Sri Lanka government (including the President and the Prime Minister), leaders of the opposition parties, high ranking military officials, bureaucrats, lawyers, medical doctors, journalists, scholars, businessmen, Buddhist priests; (and other clergymen), foreign observers, spokesmen for some of the Tamil insurgent groups (as well as with some of the insurgents themselves).

events as the starting point of conflict. Each side tends to hold everyone in the other ethnic group responsible for the actions of extremists within each group. If Sinhalese "thugs" kill innocent Tamils, all Sinhalese — including the government — are responsible for not having prevented it from happening. If Tamil militants kill Sinhalese soldiers, all Tamils — including Tamils civilians — are responsible for not having prevented it from happening. Each side blames the other for complicity — at a minimum — and, in a sense, each side is correct in that assessment.

While it was impossible for me to determine with any accuracy what percentage of each



group holds the more extremist view of the other, and what percent is more moderate in its views, it does seem clear that politicians on both sides have a tendency to pander to the extremist views. Politicians on both sides seem to fear that any statement of moderation, or sign of concession to the other side, will be interpreted by the extremists — or by their political opponents — in their own ethnic groups as indicating that they are “soft” on the other group, or as a sign that they are prepared to “sell out” our group. Yet, I am also convinced that the vast majority on both sides want to see an end to the conflict. They may differ on the specific content that they believe a settlement must take, but they want an end to violence and a return to some sort of normalcy.

Given all of the cumulative mistrust, grief, and mutually perpetrated terror that has occurred over the years, one must wonder if it will ever be possible for the two people to live together in mutual respect, in one nation. It was clear during my stay in Sri Lanka that each time another Sinhalese was killed, Sinhalese chauvinism intensified. Similarly, each time another Tamil was killed, Tamil chauvinism intensified. The first step had to be the cessation of violence on both sides. That has now happened, at least for the time being. The next step has to be the building of a new political structure which will allow each of the groups to learn how to rebuild trust of the other (or at least lower the level of mistrust). The building of that structure is being negotiated as this report is written. Whatever the specifics of the final settlement negotiated, it is clear that the way the settlement is implemented on a day-to-day basis may be far more important to the building of future trust than the specifics of the settlement itself.

### The actor

There are three main sets of actors in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict at the moment; the Indian government, the Sri Lankan govern-

ment, and the Tamils. By a series of serendipitous circumstances, a confluence has emerged, where it is in the interests of all three to reach a peaceful solution to the problem now. I believe that each of the actors perceives both pressures and opportunities which make a peaceful solution, now, highly attractive, and failure to reach agreement very dangerous. For that reason it is my assessment that there is a strong likelihood that agreement will be reached, probably sometime before the end of this year. What follows is an assessment of the pressures and opportunities that I believe each of the actors sees.

### Pressure and opportunities as seen by the Indian government

For whatever her reasons, it would appear Indira Gandhi saw it as being in her — and in India's — interest, not only to allow the militant Tamil separatists to use Madras as a base of operations, but also to surreptitiously support their actions. It is said, in both Madras and Delhi, that prior to her becoming actively involved, Col. Kadafi of Libya and George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. (the more radical wing of the PLO), and others, were offering support to some of the militant Tamil groups. (The U. S., remember, is perceived to be supporting the Jayewardene government). It is claimed that when Mrs. Gandhi took over the support for these groups, part of the terms of support included relinquishing that more radical aid; denying officially that India was aiding them; and not allowing any Indians (other than those assigned the task) or foreigners to see the training or have access to information about Indian support. Col. Kadafi at least, is reported to have deferred to Mrs. Gandhi's wishes and allowed her — as *de facto* leader of the “nor-aligned nations” — to take prime responsibility for arming and training the militants. (The dispute raging in militant circles after Rajiv Gandhi came out publicly against Eelam was whether or not it had been a tactical error, on the part of the mili-

tants, to allow themselves to become as dependent upon India as they had.)

Among the reasons that must have motivated Mrs. Gandhi to support those groups has to have been public opinion in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which sympathized with the plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka — particularly after the riots in Sri Lanka of July 1983 — and the fact that elections were scheduled for all of India, and the separatist Tamil party in Tamil Nadu, (the DMK) strongly supported the militants (even the more middle-of-the-road AIA/DMK gave, at least, lip-service to the Sri Lankan cause). But whatever the motives for Mrs. Gandhi's actions, all of that changed by June 1985. By that time, Indira Gandhi was dead and Rajiv Gandhi had become Prime Minister of India. The Congress Party — I, (the faction of the Congress Party which had supported Mrs. Gandhi after the party split years ago — hence the I for Indira) had not only swept the elections throughout India, it had done handsomely in Tamil Nadu as well. The DMK and Tamil Nadu separatism were no longer perceived to be a threat to India. A far bigger threat had become militant Sikh separatism. Rajiv Gandhi apparently came to believe that he could not allow Sri Lankan separatists to prove that military action could achieve the political purpose of a separate state for Sri Lankan Tamils. Sikh insurgency had intensified since the dual blood baths of the Golden Temple and the riots that followed the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi. It was difficult for Rajiv to caution foreign powers not to intervene on their behalf, when India itself was assisting the Sri Lankan insurgents. An independent Tamil Eelam could easily have become a “safe sanctuary” and staging area for Sikhs, Assamese, and other militant-separatist groups in India.

Thus there were pressures on him to act to put an end to the conflict in Sri Lanka. There were also opportunities in that the

(Continued on page 16)



# GANDHI AIMS FOR SRI LANKAN DEAL

John Elliott

Four months after a ceasefire was introduced in Sri Lanka on June 18 between Tamil extremists and security forces, Mr Rajiv Gandhi India's Prime minister, is to make a fresh attempt tomorrow to persuade Mr Junius Jayewardene, the island's president, to negotiate a permanent peace treaty.

Observers estimate that more than 2,500 people have been killed since the island's fragile peace between the minority Tamil group and the majority Sinhalese people exploded in July 1983, sparking escalating violence.

Now International pressure is mounting on President Jayawardene to conclude a peaceful settlement of the Tamil devolutionary claims. He is also facing problems at home as the island's potential prosperity begins to falter.

His talks with Mr Gandhi, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau, follow the reimposition of the ceasefire last Friday after talks initiated by the Indian leader.

Mr Gandhi wants the problems resolved because they cause political unrest in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, bringing an element of instability.

He first met Mr Jayawardene in New Delhi in June, since when Mr Romesh Bhandari, India's senior diplomat and Foreign Secretary, has been conducting Kissinger-style shuttle diplomacy.

Two rounds of peace talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil's representatives, including extremist group as well as mainstream politicians, began in July in the secluded Bhutanese Himalayan capital of Thimpu. The

talks broke down in August, having made little progress, amid renewed violence on the island.

Since then Mr Bandari has been conducting what India calls "proximity talks" in which diplomats in India and Sri Lanka hold negotiations with both sides, avoiding any direct confrontation. This led to last Friday's agreement to a new ceasefire and the formation of a monitoring committee to report on breaches. Hundreds died in breaches of an earlier ceasefire which expired on September 18. In the past few days the Tamil negotiators have been objecting to the Sri Lankan Government trying to enlarge the size of the monitoring committee from five to 11 people, so swamping the Tamil's two representatives.

But there is no mood to break up the process, despite mutual distrust and suspicions. The extremist groups know that they are allowed to operate in India's southern Tamil Nadu capital of Madras because of the tolerance of the Indian Government.

They realise that this tolerance could evaporate if they are too intransigent. So, while they believe there is little chance of reaching an agreement with Mr Jayawardene they do not want to be blamed for any breakdown.

Mr Gandhi broke new ground by personally meeting the extremists leaders last month and now appears to have won their cautious trust as well as that of Mr Jayawardene.

His job tomorrow is to try to persuade the Sri Lankan leader to offer a new negotiating initiative that could move the talks forward on substantive issues.

A working paper drawn up in New Delhi at the end of August proposed a devolved form of provincial government. The extremist groups are continuing to reject this paper, however, claiming that it proposes an inadequate administrative solution for problems which need a more basic approach. They want it to take into account four basic principles which they describe as their homeland areas, their national identity, their right to determine their own future and the provision of voting rights for all Tamils.

The Sri Lankan Government says it is not prepared to entertain the principles, nor is it at present prepared to meet the Tamil's other demand that their strongholds in the north and east of the island should be combined in one province under any new administrative setup. But it is possible that both sides might one day slightly soften their line on the issue of the north and east being merged.

Mr Gandhi will explore this tomorrow, as well as the possibility of the two sides holding direct talks again during the next few months.

In the meantime the extremists and some diplomats fear that the Sri Lankan Government is gearing up for a military solution. It has been arming civilians and last Friday passed new legislation to set up a national armed reserve force with powers of compulsory recruitment.

Mr Gandhi has spoken sharply about the need for a political solution to such issues, "because a military solution can be only temporary."

— *Financial Times*, October 17, 1985.



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# 'MATHEW' DISMISSAL TOO LATE'

— Thondaman

1. Q: In your long career as a Trade Union leader, what would you say was the most significant event or episode?

A: It is very difficult to cite a specific event as the most significant. I have experienced many, numerous struggles from 1944 onwards, and each one is memorable. I cannot single out any particular incident as the most important.

2. Q: There have been many attempts to challenge your leadership inside and outside the CWC by the Left Movement, Mr Aziz and by Mr Shanmugathasan in the late 60s and 70s through his Red Flag Union. Why do you think that all these attempts were not successful in their intentions?

A: It is very difficult for me to give you all the reasons for these happenings. But, it is a fact. It is left to you all to arrive at a conclusion about the reasons. As far as I am aware, the Left Movement or Aziz, their argument is to say that I am a big employer and therefore, I am not fit to be a Trade Union leader. At that time, before the nationalization, I had about 2000 workers working in my estates and it is not that I was away from the scene. Always I was right in the middle of the plantations and I had my special interests. In spite of being an employer, I continued to be the leader of CWC and the people are following me. I don't think that the Red Flag Union was a serious challenge at any moment. But, the Left as a whole, yes. Democratic Workers Congress president Aziz was with us and he left us to form his own union. In spite of all these happenings and attempts, it

Interview given by Mr. S. Thondaman, M. P. and Minister of Rural Industrial Development to Dayan Jayatilaka and S. Balakrishnan. A Sinhala translation of this interview appears in 'Vimasuma', Kandy.

is a fact that people, by and large, chose my leadership. I don't give you the reasons but one has to see what made the people to decide on me.

3. Q: Now, is it true that many Sinhalese plantation workers have been joining your union in recent times?...

A: Yes. It is particularly after the successful strike in the plantations in April last year. The Sinhalese workers in the plantation sector are very enthusiastic in joining our union. I feel that is because, when they think of any leader of a Trade Union who is a Minister, they may feel that he will always fall in line with the thinking of the government rather than giving priority to the working class interests. But, I am not that type of a Trade Unionist! In last years plantation strike, the Sinhalese workers were quite satisfied that as a Trade Union the CWC, and as a Trade Union leader Thondaman, will give priority to the interests of the workers in spite of our association with any government. Therefore, the Sinhalese workers are joining us in large numbers even in the predominantly Sinhalese areas, like Galle, Deniyaya. etc.

4. Q: In that sense is it correct to say that while you are remaining within the government, you are being more independent and adopting more pro-working class positions than the LSSP and CPSL did when they were partners of the Coalition Government during the 1970-77 period?

A: They were trying to give more weightage to conventions. In my case I have joined the government with a certain purpose. To serve the interests of my people, the interests that I have been looking after for the last 40 years. Therefore, I did not want to be a slave of any Convention if it is going to be against the interests of those whom I am serving. The other people made the mistake in only trying to build up certain conventions.

5. Q: During the period of the Ceylon Indian Congress, the plantation workers and the Left Movement in this country maintained close links. So much so, in the 1947 elections, the plantation workers votes were decisive in electing many anti-UNP candidates. For example, Mr T. B. Illangaratne won the election with the support of the plantation Tamil votes. This was true even during the Hartal period, I think. Now, you are a member of the Cabinet of Ministers in the UNP Government. How do you explain this shift?

A: That is true. In 1947 and before that, we have been working very closely with the Left Movement. In fact, we were made stateless because of the fact that D. S. Senanayake's UNP Government thought that as long as the plantation workers are here, the Left Movement cannot be suppressed. Therefore, they thought, the best way to begin is to deprive us of our citizenship status and make us stateless. Since at the time of the citizenship law in 1948 and 1949 and even earlier, the Left



parties were strongly sympathetic to the plantation workers, when they joined a coalition with the SLFP, they should have done their bit for the plantation workers to undo injustices. It is very unfortunate that they didn't see that when they were making the new constitution in 1972. They should have worked to remove the disabilities cast on the Tamil plantation workers community. But it didn't happen. The only possibility to working together with the Left was over and there is no room to work with them today.

6. Q: During the Presidential election Mr Kobbekaduwa made certain self-criticisms of his conduct when he was a Minister in 1970-77 period and accepted certain demands placed before him by the joint committee of the plantation Trade Unions. This included the promise to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. To what extent do you think that this was a genuine change of heart on the part of Mr Kobbekaduwa why didn't you adopt a more sympathetic position towards his candidature in October 1982 Presidential elections?

A: When he was a Minister in 1970-77 period, his attitude was a declared antagonism towards the Tamil plantation workers. Any statements or promises on the eve of an election cannot be taken seriously! As far as the UNP, in particular Mr J. R. Jayewardene's relationship with me is concerned, we have worked together for a very long period. From the period when he was in the Opposition, we have worked together. We have participated in Attanagalla and Anuradhapura "Satyagraha" with him. We jointly organized the Nuwara Eliya "Satyagraha". We have built up a relationship where we can understand each other.

In these circumstances we will have to value the friendship or relationship that has been established for over a long period than some sort of statement or promise by a person during the course of an election campaign.

7. Q: When we come to discuss the Referendum of December 1982, I think that the CWC was one of the decisive factors in the victory of "Lamp". In the light, so to speak, of what happened in July 1983, do you think it would have been better for the Tamil people as a whole if you would have abstained at the Referendum or in fact campaigned against the decision to postpone the General Elections?

A: As far as we are concerned, we like to take a positive step in any matter. If you go on half-heartedly, then you are not effective enough. Whatever we do, whether right or wrong we must make up our mind and go forward. Then we have a claim on something. If you go half-heartedly, you will also receive the return half-heartedly. Therefore, whatever you do you got to make up your mind. Not always will you do a right thing. But, if you are satisfied in your own mind that it is the best, then you must try to give the lead and take positive decisions.

8. Q: Don't you think that it is particularly after July '83 that perhaps you should have voted against the Referendum? Don't you think that in helping extend the life of the UNP government without any election that you have unwittingly contributed to the present situation?

A: In my case, as far as elections are concerned more than half of our people don't have the votes. Therefore, it is a "no election" situation for us. Having

an election or extending an election is the same and doesn't make very much of a difference. For the last 28-30 years, the majority of the plantation Tamils are without votes! Then why not the entire country also experience what the plantation Tamils have experienced for so long?

9. Q: After the dismissal of Mr Cyril Mathew from the Cabinet, there was an expectation that there will be a speedy resolution of the ethnic conflict. But, that does not seem to have taken place. I know that this is somewhat a sensitive question. Would you say that even despite Mr Mathew's dismissal from the Cabinet, there is still a hard line Sinhala presence within the Government which is blocking the attempts of some to resolve the ethnic problem?

A: First of all, I am of the opinion that the decision taken to dismiss Mr Mathew from the Cabinet was not a correct decision at the time. If he was dismissed when everybody suspected JSS involvement it was understandable. But now, the entire thing is over, the damage had been done and what is the use of removing him at this later stage? There is a feeling in the UNP that as a whole, the people may think that the UNP has lost its Sinhala-Buddhist aspect after the dismissal of Mathew. So they go all the way to make the Sinhala people to believe that UNP is still very strong in Sinhala influence. I think that is this way more damage is being done. On the one hand, the President may think that he has dismissed Mr Mathew and therefore the Tamils must be satisfied; many people think that this is a cause for satisfaction for the Tamils. But, I don't consider that the Tamils are not concerned



about whether Mr Mathew is, in or out. What they expect is the removal of all the injustices! My own opinion is that it was at the wrong time that Mr Mathew was removed from the Cabinet.

10. Q: There is supposed to be a ceasefire now and official sources charge the militants violating the ceasefire. At the same time there are press reports of massive round-ups in the northern and eastern provinces. Operations are being launched and the newspapers carry the news on attacks on such and such terrorist camps. Do you as a Minister think that on the side of the Government the ceasefire is being properly adhered to, and the conditions are being created for successful negotiation?

A: The Government has agreed or a ceasefire even unilaterally. Whenever some attacks on forces take place, the forces are trying to retaliate even against civilians. According to their thinking, they can't account to the Sinhala people unless this sort of thing is done. That is responsible for all these troubles today. But, any ceasefire, I am told, has never been a complete success. Likewise, we too cannot expect a complete ceasefire. On the other side, so many organizations and youths are involved. Not all the groups are maintaining discipline or control. Therefore, the incidents take place and then the Government takes retaliatory measures. The ceasefire situation could create a condition where there is less violence.

11. Q: Many people believe that the CWC's proposal presented at the Round Table Conference for Regional Councils constitute perhaps the last chance for some sort of a rational settlement of this whole problem. When you were speaking of Regional

Councils, you were talking about one for the plantations and one for the North and East; what you call the traditional homelands of the Tamils. But many Sinhalese completely reject the idea of traditional homelands. This includes President Jayewardene to go by one of his recent speeches. He said that he does not agree that land should be alienated in proportion to the ethnic composition of those who reside there and it should be done according to the ethnic proportions of the entire country. Now, how do you explain your adherence to this idea of "traditional homeland" which is the basis of your call for Regional Councils?

A: The traditional homeland idea is not something that we are speaking of in a situation like this present emotional background. This matter has been discussed in the days of late S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, and again it has been discussed in the days of Dudley Senanayake of the UNP. Even after the formation of the present government, a new constitution was drawn up. There are special accommodation for the Tamil language for these two provinces. And also the court language in the country in these two provinces are provided. Therefore, you can't just go on as to what the people are talking at the spur of the moment in a given situation of present days conditions. With these backgrounds, we read it and we look at it. Any reasonable thinking man will know as to whose claim is right. As far as the CWC proposals are concerned, there is no question of demanding regional autonomy for the plantation areas. We only ask for the Tamil concentrated in Northern, Eastern provinces being amalgamated. As far as the plantation Tamils are

concerned, I have only asked the same facilities and treatment that is provided to the Sinhalese living in the Vavuniya area, be provided to the Tamils in the plantation areas. What is good for the Sinhalese in Vavuniya can be certainly good for the Tamil plantation workers in the up-country.

12. Q: Why do you ask for a single unit for the Tamil people in the North and East when many people in your own Government say that no such linkage is acceptable?

A: If you admit that cultural and other identities of a certain group of people are identical, then why should they be fragmented? If you can place the group in such a way where they don't have to be fragmented, then they can work together and they can look after their own interests.

13. Q: What about the Muslims?

A: Yes. Muslims, Sinhalese or any other ethnic groups must be provided the same facilities to be together. There is no necessity to provide consolation to a particular group and ignore the others.

14. Q: From the inception of this constitution in 1978, the primary tendency is being towards the centralization and concentration of power. The government, has postponed the General Elections through Referendum, fights by-elections so vigorously. Do you think that such a Government will agree to any substantial devolution of power which means sharing of power, to solve the ethnic or any other issues?

A: No, No. They must consider any devolution and normal decentralization. But, when it becomes to solve the ethnic issue, it becomes a problem. I don't think that there will be



a strong resentment if generally the country agitates for a decentralization. Participation in power by the people. But, unfortunately, in the South, the Sinhalese people don't ask for it. They are in one of the political parties, and therefore they think that they are looked after. Here it is more party politics than the peoples' participation. Therefore, when the Tamils have taken it seriously, that gives a handle for some to deny the demand for decentralisation.

15. Q: About an year ago, there was a three-sided polemic in the press between Minister Gamini Dissanayake on the one hand, yourself and Minister Devanayagam on the other. Minister Gamini Dissanayake accused the CWC of deliberately transferring the plantation workers to the Vavuniya areas to form a so-called buffer-zone for some strategic reasons or the other. What is happening to the plantation Tamils who have moved towards the North and the East? Have they been subject to harassment by the security forces. or are you satisfied that they are well and safe?

A: It is very unfortunate that Minister Gamini Dissanayake accused CWC as having been involved in resettlement which is a baseless accusation. It is not true at all and as a result of that misunderstanding by him, the regularisation of encroachments in relation to the other parts of the country has been delayed; unnecessarily the people are suffering too. Now, in Vavuniya and Trincomalee areas, most of the Tamil people who are undergoing harassment and suffering are the people of Indian origin and who have been migrating from the plantation areas for safety

reasons ever since the outbreak of the 1958 communal violence. In these areas, the settlers were gathered together and put in the refugee camps. Some of them are living in the jungles. The CWC has made representation to the President and in spite of the assurance given by the President's office early this year and through the public statements made by the President himself, assuring that all the affected people will be rehabilitated, still the plantation Tamils in these areas are undergoing severe hardships. We hope that once the ethnic conflict is resolved, they may be rehabilitated.

16. Q: There is much concern about the new phenomenon of "Sinhala refugees" in the South. What is the position that you and the CWC have taken on this issue?

A: Whether Sinhalese or Tamils, they are citizens of this country. The situation of this ethnic conflict has led to the Tamils to become refugees and, naturally the consequences have led towards the other people to be put in the same position. Neither this Government, nor anyone can guarantee that the Sinhalese will not be led to this position. One section of the citizens became the refugees just because they are Tamil-speaking, and the other people felt that they can rejoice over it. Just because they are Tamils, they don't take it seriously and even don't feel that their brother Tamil citizens are refugees. The result is that any injustices allowed to be perpetrated can always boomerang.

17. Q: Since Mr Parthasarathy's and Mrs Gandhi — J. R. Jayewardene's talks in New Delhi and so on, there have been

the periods of optimism and pessimism concerning the possibility of finding a solution to the ethnic conflict. There have been times where the peace was seen to be around the corner. I believe that your own statements over the last 2 years or so, reflected that sense of optimism. Right now, what do you feel and what is the message that you are going to carry to the militants that you are going to meet in Madras?

A: I don't know what message I am going to carry. But, I was always very much optimistic. Recently I read an article on the Kurds and the Tamils, where so many agreements of ceasefire, etc. have been made, but nothing was properly carried out. After reading that, I am now, little bit pessimistic about our situation. The whole article is very much relevant to our present situation. It looks to me that with the types of happenings, you can't expect much. Rajiv Gandhi was able to get some sort of solution in Punjab of which is an unusual. But we will have to go very cautiously.

18. Q: If the situation continues this way without an early negotiated settlement, what do you think the future will be for the plantation Tamil community?

A: It is very difficult to assess. As far as the CWC is concerned, as an Organization of the plantation Tamils, we are completely free from the influence of the TULF, or any other Tamil groupings. The plantation Tamils' problem are very different from those of the Tamils of the North and the East, and we expect the Government must attempt to solve our problems independently of whatever

(Continued on page 19)



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# CAT'S EYE

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## Jaffna Women Challenge Male Chauvinism

Recently a leaflet entitled "Warning to Women", which was issued all over the Jaffna District, laid down some "Commandments" and observations for Tamil women. These included orders that girls, on coming of age, should wear long skirts; that married women should not go out on bicycles except with their husbands; that they should not wear immodest garments like nighties; that women should not be seen in public except where necessary, and that if they did, they should be beaten. The observations included the rebuke that out of ten Tamil girls, only one girl is a virgin; the others are morally "loose". If women had good morals, men would marry them without any dowry; parents who don't teach good manners to their girls should be punished. The leaflet was signed 'Well-wishers of the Tamils'.

Many women's groups in Jaffna vehemently protested by issuing counter leaflets with women distributing them, riding double on motorbikes. The Women's Study Circle a feminist group in Jaffna, wrote 'Women Awake', which said that this reflected the violent attitude against women in Jaffna society. The handbill was denounced as totally anti-women and anti-social. Jaffna women were warned that they should be vigilant about these utter reactionary ideas, and should unite to fight such views. Similarly the women's section of the PLOTE — issued a handbill entitled "We are vigilant". The offending leaflet was called foolish as it discouraged the growth of progressive opinion on women. The suggestion was also made that the ceasefire had led to a reversal to the old social system. The EWLF, which is the women's section of

EPRLF also issued a leaflet called 'Warning by Women' saying that such anti-women elements should be identified and exposed. The Jaffna Mothers' Front also put out a press release stating that the handbill was perhaps not worthy of reply; it was offensive particularly to those women who had recently courageously come out on to the streets to demonstrate about arbitrary arrests of their family members. The Mothers' Front urged that such slanders should cease immediately.

While such changes are occurring in Jaffna, some expatriates are continuing the old customs. For example —

### \* Matrimonial !

Brother seeks Hindu professional for engineer sister, aged 29, from Valvettithurai, employed in Australia. Box M51 c/o Tamil Times.

Parents seek suitable Christian Tamil husband for tall, slim, fair 31 year old, working daughter good character and family. Family recently domiciled Australia and can offer sponsorship if needed Good dowry available. Box M56 C/o Tamil Times.

These two advertisements are from the September issue of the **Tamil Times**, published in London and devoted to articles supporting the separatist movements. One of the adverts openly refers to a 'good dowry' and good family, the other by mentioning Valvettithurai indicates caste.

A recent copy of **Eelamurasu** a daily local paper in Jaffna, carried an advertisement by a marriage agency offering bridegrooms ranging from 'PHD's to proletariat'. Social backwardness dies hard, even in times of unrest and upheaval.

## Multi-Ethnic Beauty Queens

A cultural by-product of the open economy has been the proliferation of beauty competitions which have now reached epidemic proportions. Many women oppose these competitions — not because of puritanism but because they are a vulgar commercialisation of female beauty reducing women to the level of commodities. While women's organisations in many countries have protested against such cattle shows, and in England have succeeded in getting the BBC television to ban the showing of such events, in Sri Lanka, such protests are yet to come. One factor, however is that unlike our pan-Sinhala cricket team, the less 'typically Sinhala' you are the better your chance.

What better representatives of our Islands multi-ethnic stock than the recent Beauty Queens who seem all to be of mixed origin! These include Queen of them all, who won the International Mrs World contest (and now, understandably advertises much-needed panadol for us) is **Rosy Senanayake**, as does the recent Queen **Natalie Gunewardena**; Another winner **Ramani Bartholomeusz**, has a name which speaks for itself and **Jacqueline Pereira**, the last Miss Sri Lanka, has a Norwegian mother.

How come, we may ask, in this epoch of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, does the concept of beauty include certain obvious foreign traits like a very fair skin, light eyes, and European height and proportions? Perhaps, as Professor Gananath Obeyesekere said, the only Aryan connection of the Sinhalese is the one that comes via Europe, and in these competitions we are stressing our 'Aryanness'.

In this context we are reminded of a famous article by James



Rutnam, revealing that S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike also had Dutch Burgher and Tamil ancestors and was therefore eminently suitable to be the Prime Minister — since the blood of all communities run in his veins.

### Child Marriage

The Sun of 4.11.85 reports that the archaic law (of 1908) that Sri Lankan females to marry at the age of 12 (Burgher Females at 14) and all males at 16, will be raised to 16 for females (except Muslims) and 18 for males. It may come as a surprise to many to realise that child marriage (which we regarded as a social evil in neighbouring countries) is still legal in Sri Lanka and continues to be practised.

While welcoming changes in the law, we would raise two important questions. Why not make the law applicable to all females? Why allow a minority, like the Muslims, to have child marriage, which goes against the social policies of the country?

Second is the question of consent. Normally a female has to consent to her marriage, but in the case of Muslims consent is not required from the girl as is given by the parent or guardian. This is a violation of a basic principle of justice and should be changed.

Another more fundamental question that has to be tackled is the right of minorities to have laws that may go against basic rights guaranteed in the constitution, or to put it another way, should women of **any community** be penalised by laws which deny them their basic human rights?

In India, the trend is in the direction of change and Muslim women have been given rights (eg. maintenance) by the supreme Court, not recognised in their religious laws. This has, of course led to protests by fundamentalist Muslims, but has been welcomed by liberals.

In Sri Lanka too, women's organisations are coming to the view that they will fight for democratic rights for **all women** and will oppose any archaic laws that are tolerated on the pretext of being religious laws.

## BALLAD OF THE SHALLOW GRAVES

Thrushing wings loss jacarandas  
Lilac, on the stirring grass  
Honey tits with throats aquiver  
Twig traced clusters drink and dart  
Through leaf-bare twigs lead bliths forays  
Spider gray in the white veiled sky  
Spilling from the lilac sprays  
Half drunk cups for ants to Pry.  
Birds and ants will take their fill  
Of honey while Madame takes the sun  
Combining black tresses, the bungalow still  
Frames her and the scene she gazes on.  
By the path at the edge of the tailored lawn  
A family struggle to the field  
Of skimpy millet beyond the bungalow hedge  
Where poor soil to hunger will not yield.  
Kurakkan battles with the rocks  
Green spears leap hopeful to the sun  
Sparse withered ears their hunger mocks  
Their frail toil futile, never done.  
One corner of the field is lush  
Strange, on the slope above the hut  
Where the hill side water in a noontime hush  
Flows past the spot a man was shot  
His comrades scattered on the hills  
Troops hunted him out of the gulleys fern  
Hustled him down the track by rill  
To the hut they forced his wife to burn.  
They made her dig his shallow grave  
While his children crawled round the smoking ruin  
The shot ricocheted in her mind for days  
Editing her daze of suffering.  
From the hills that night his comrades came  
Slipped through the hedge from the bloodied moor  
Wan moon aghast in the lily frame  
Gun butts tapped low on the doctors door.  
Warm dreams shattered and the sickle moon  
Hung waiting in the clawing twigs  
Stirred the lily pond like a devils broom  
Fear choked the brief nights peace like weeds.  
Trial at moonset, dark the dawn  
Voices, one shot, and scraping earth  
Locked up in the bedroom her fears foregone  
The reason, the reason? Bitter the search.  
They laid him two feet in his tailored lawn  
From the state, these youngsters had not yet learned  
Arson, and rape and the charring of bones  
Only frank judgement and verdict, the doctor earned.  
Day saw them hunted back to the hill  
The doctor brought up and an inquest held  
Headlines ablaze with the bungalows peril  
And the beautiful widows tragical tale.  
The coroner didn't trouble the other widow  
But a monitor lizard nosing the stench of death  
Disposal without inquest wasn't his law  
Shooed off by the women, a sob in her breath  
Wild creatures, weeds, and hunger at bay  
She still has her children their voices and play  
Reaching the bungalow where loneliness sits  
And jacarandas fall to the flutter of tits.

— U. Karunatilake



# The reach of Rajiv Gandhi's visit diplomacy

Bhabani Sen Gupta

**T**he Prime Minister's two-week hectic five-nation tour has made more international headlines for its surprise finals: the sudden totally unscheduled one-day visit to Moscow for an exclusively personal meeting with the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. According to reliable information, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi decided on the Moscow visit after his meeting with President Ronald Reagan and after listening to Reagan's address to the 40th anniversary session of the United Nations General Assembly. His request for a tete-a-tete reached Gorbachev when the Soviet leader was in Sofia. He immediately signalled his readiness and rushed to Moscow, cutting short his Sofia visit. Needless to say, the Soviets were highly pleased with the second Gorbachev-Rajiv summit in six months.

Rajiv Gandhi was disappointed with his 30-minute meeting with Reagan at the presidential suite at the Waldorf Astoria hotel and the speech delivered by the US President at the special 40th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly. Mr. Gandhi had mounted a concerted campaign against Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme hoping that it would spell caution in the Reagan Administration's response to Islamabad's request for continued military and economic assistance after 1986 when the current aid package expires. To his dismay, he found that not only had the Reagan administration resolved to offer Pakistan another hefty package, President Reagan had actually written to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and vice-president Bush, who presides over the Senate, certifying that Pakistan has no nuclear weapons programme and recommending waiver of the Symington amendment for another five years.

The amendment, too, expires next year.

Mr. Reagan's United Nations speech convinced Mr. Gandhi that the the United States was not prepared to go into the Geneva summit with any serious intention to negotiate nuclear arms control and disarmament. Thus on two of his highest priority foreign policy objectives, namely, defusing the threat of nuclear war and preventing Pakistan from going nuclear, he felt let down by the United States. The Moscow visit has to be seen as a followup of his deep frustration. It was not a balancing act, as the prime minister himself pointed out.

The five-nation tour was partly in pursuit of bilateral diplomacy and partly of what is known as mobilisational diplomacy. The bilateral diplomatic effort related to Britain, Cuba and the Netherlands. The field for mobilisational diplomacy was the Commonwealth summit of the Bahamas and special anniversary session of the United Nations. To be sure, both the Commonwealth summit and the UN session provided ample opportunities to talk bilateral issues with heads of government of several countries. Mr. Gandhi had very important and vital consultations with Sri Lankan president Junius Jayewardana in an effort to dissolve the deadlock in the political talks between Colombo and the Tamil militant and moderate groups. Unless Colombo is ready to add some more substance to its proposal to create elected provincial councils with chief ministers, the Tamils will not wind up their struggle for Eelam.

Mr. Gandhi also had useful meetings with the prime minister

of Australia and the visiting statesmen from several African countries, especially Kenneth Kaunda and the leaders of Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

At the UN, the most significant meeting, politically and diplomatically, was the prime minister of China, Zhao Ziyang. The cordial nature of the meeting and the optimism with which both prime ministers spoke to reporters encourage hope that the 6th and the 7th rounds of India-China talks — the 6th to be held early November and the 7th in six months thereafter — may pave the way for a political breakthrough without which the complex emotive and inflammable border dispute cannot yield to a settlement.

The meeting with president Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan apparently did not go off very well. The Pakistan president, back home, played subtle politics with the meeting. A Pakistani spokesman had told correspondents in New York that Mr. Gandhi and Gen. Zia ul-Haq had agreed that representatives of the two countries would have "technical" discussions on the Indian and Pakistani nuclear programmes. This was promptly denied by an Indian spokesman.

In spite of that denial, Gen. Zia told reporters in Islamabad that he and Mr. Gandhi had agreed at some kind of discussion, on the nuclear issue. The Pakistan president was obviously catering to president Reagan who is particularly demanding that Pakistan removes Indian fears of any pending Pakistani nuclear programme. Mr. Gandhi's diplomacy was aimed at persuading the US president to put pressure on Pakistan to abandon its nuclear weapons programme even at the pain of denying Pakistan another hefty package of military and economic aid. That diplomacy



did not move at all. It now remains to be seen how Mr. Gandhi deals with the almost certain renewal of US military aid to Pakistan at the end of the present aid package, its quality, and the terms on which it is given to Pakistan.

At the Commonwealth summit Mr. Gandhi took the lead to put pressure upon the British prime minister, Mrs Thatcher, for an agreed programme of effective economic sanctions against South Africa. He had the full backing of the African presidents and prime ministers, considerable support from the Commonwealth statesmen from the Caribbean and significant support from Australia and New Zealand. Margaret Thatcher however stonewalled all meaningful sanctions and got away with what she herself gleefully described as a harmless package of "tiny" sanctions which would leave South Africa even more defiant of world opinion. Mrs Thatcher lost no time to proclaim her "victory" to the assembled British and American reporters.

The ground rule of the commonwealth is that all decisions are taken on the basis of consensus. At the Bahamas summit, the African leaders were so exasperated at Mrs. Thatcher's arrogance, that they even pushed the idea of adopting a separate resolution prescribing strong sanctions. Mr. Gandhi, however, persuaded them to keep to the ground rule of consensus because sanctions by Commonwealth countries other than Britain would have no impact on South Africa. Even if Margaret Thatcher "won," Britain was completely isolated from the rest of the Commonwealth on the South African question. This has had a polarising impact on Britain's internal politics. The Labour Party will now have a greater punch in its coming electoral battle with ruling Conservative Party and British public sentiment may make Mrs. Thatcher regret the totally insensitive stand she took at Bahamas.

What Mr Gandhi failed to do at Bahamas, he succeeded very well in doing at UN headquarters in New York. As leader of non-aligned Group, he stood at the forefront of the worldwide struggle

for nuclear disarmament and arms control, against apartheid and for a new international economic order. His language was soft and his style was non-belligerent. But the thrust and substance of his diplomacy was clear and allowed no equivocation.

The one-day visit to Cuba raised hundreds of eyebrows in the United States but exhilarated millions in Latin America. Six to seven hours of intense discussions with Fidel Castro and the fulsome praise showered by the Cuban leader on Mr Gandhi show unmistakably that the two built a prompt and strong rapport and saw most of the world issues in the same perspectives.

With the recent five-nation tour, Mr Gandhi has acquired considerable experience of visit diplomacy and had his first test in mobilisation diplomacy in the first year of his prime ministership. This is a reflection of the importance India enjoys in the world of nations. This importance comes from the strength of Indian economy and its political system and the independence of its foreign policy. Urgent problems wait for the prime minister's unflagging attention in the South Asian neighbourhood and within the country. His neighbourhood policy is yet to take a clear shape; only its vague outlines seem to have emerged. If he can put flesh and blood into a neighbourhood policy of conciliation and accommodation at least with the small nations of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, India's international status will rise much further and its voice will be heard with greater respect by nations large and small, strong and weak.

## The Ethnic . . .

(Continued from page 6)

Sri Lankan government — particularly after the attack on the sacred city of Anuradhapura on May 14, 1985 — had finally accepted the reality that, given the current condition (of the militants being able to use India as their base of operations) there was no way the Sri Lankan army could sup-

press the insurgency, militarily. The Sri Lankan government now wanted a political solution. That desire was so strong that they were prepared to accept concessions to the Tamils that, politically, they could not bring themselves to accept at the All Party Conference, just 18 month before.

In addition, resentment of the militants activities in Madras was growing. "Shoot-outs" between rival fractions of militants in Madras, reported smuggling of drugs, TV sets and other consumer goods, as well as of arms that were finding their way into the hands of militant Sikhs, all contributed to the building of this resentment. Further, the influx of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in South India (estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000 in June 1985) was causing problems. The poorer ones had to be housed and fed at camps in India at government expense. To the degree that the Indian government let the fishermen in the camps leave to ply their occupation, they became competitors to Indian fishermen. The brighter, more educated young refugees were competing with Indian students for places at the colleges and universities of Tamil Nadu. All of this added to the pressure on Gandhi to find a solution.

In addition, Rajiv had the opportunity to pressure the Tamil militants into accepting a political solution, short of Eelam, thanks to Mrs. Gandhi having made the militants so heavily dependent upon India. Added to this was the opportunity for Rajiv to create a role for himself — and for India — as the peacemaker of South Asia. One of the things India wants, and needs, is stable friendly governments on its borders. All of this came together just prior to Rajiv Gandhi's first trip abroad, to the West. Surely this was an opportunity not to be missed.

(To be continued)



# THE BLACKENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Archie Singham

If one were to choose a metaphor for the most important change that has taken place in the United Nations over the past 40 years, it would be the gradual blackening of the Delegates Lounge. The founders of the United Nations saw it primarily as a small and exclusive "white man's country club" where the European ambassadors would take a leisurely boat ride to meet and converse with their kith and kin in New York about the state of the world.

Here in New York, they did tolerate their poor relatives from Latin America who, in any case, saw themselves as Europeans who were accidentally located in Latin America. The brown cultures were represented by a few irascible characters like Krishna Menon who were allowed from time to time to talk about their rights and difficulties. The yellow cultures were fortunately represented by the Methodist Chiang Kai-shek and his charming English-speaking, American-educated wife. There were of course, the troublesome Slavs from the Soviet Union with their foolish notions about revolution. On the whole, however, it was indeed a splendid agreement made by the victors of World War II.

The management of the club was undertaken by the experienced British and French ex-colonial civil servants who had to be found new jobs as a result of the dismantling of the empire. The Scandinavians filled in the gap as secretaries general primarily because they were outside the traditional conflicts that had occurred in Europe. The Europeans also view-

ed New York City as an ideal location for the U. N., especially to train the United States for the enormous responsibility of governing the world. They tolerated Roosevelt's somewhat naive and romantic notion about the organization, but were relieved when the practical southerner, Harry Truman (who took time out to sign the Charter between the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) assumed the presidency. Europeans also saw the U. N. as a place where their former colonials could be socialized. New York City became a social center for the Western diplomatic world every autumn; it enabled them to take in some theater, shop and see the Niagara Falls.

Neither of the two major powers took a serious interest in the administration of the U. N. The U. S. sent mediocre officials — with the exception of Ralph Bunche — who, after all, could not be integrated into the foreign policy establishment. The U. S. S. R. saw the U. N. merely as a window to the world and also sent junior officials. The dominant Western cultures had always seen the international civil service as an extension of their own national bureaucracies. Thus, the organization was politicized from its very inception. The recent furor over the politicization of the civil service in the U. N. is primarily a reaction to the demands of the Third World for a greater share of the patronage.

Thus the nation of a pleasant and tranquil European country club did not last long. The Slavs from the Soviet Union proved to be much more difficult than anticipated and indeed displayed many more Oriental than Western characteristics. (In fairness, Churchill had warned Roosevelt about

the Oriental tendencies in the Soviet Union which were manifested by Stalin). Then that darling Asian couple Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mai-ling were unceremoniously replaced in China by a peasant from Hunan thus making a mockery of the Security Council which continued to insist that Taiwan represented the people of China.

The Cambridge-educated brahmin from India, Nehru, turned out to be nothing more than an oily colonial politician with silly notions about the "third way." The affable Latins were slowly being poisoned by pernicious doctrines from the Soviet Union and the Third World. The British, who had always assured their American cousins that the Arab world could easily be controlled by purchasing sheiks and sultans, soon found that they could not keep their promise. The establishment of the state of Israel produced a vitriolic reaction from the Arab world, challenging the steady flow of cheap oil to the Western industrialized world. However, what had never been anticipated was the impact of all these changes on Africa.

British anthropologists had assured the world that given the process of cultural evolution these "primitive people" of Africa would take a long time before they could join the family of civilized nations. Instead, Africans accelerated their demands for independence and began to disrupt the entire continent. In order to deal with these traumatic developments, Macmillan tried to convince his Afrikaner cousins that it would be better to prepare for the winds of change and allow the colonies to become states. But the revolution in Africa not only brought winds of change, it broke the dikes and nearly 50 Black

Dr. Singham has been a resident anthropologist in the Delegates Lounge, practicing his craft of participant observation in connection with a book on the Non-Aligned Movement which will be published this winter.



nations took their seats as equal partners in the country club at the United Nations.

Hence, what began as a small and exclusive white man's club has become a potpourri of races and cultures—the majority of them from the Third World.

The entry of former colonies into the international family of nations also caused great social problems in New York, for one could no longer distinguish between waiters, guards and ambassadors. Local institutions and establishments were invaded by Africans with their multicolored robes. Arabs with their desert tunics, and Asians with their dour uniforms. New York City was totally unprepared to accommodate all these new cultures in the tranquility of the East Side. What made things worse was the peculiar eating habits of these newcomers who filled the apartment buildings with the pungent aromas of curries, soy sauce and oils. Even the elegant delegates dining room at the U.N., which was noted for years for serving the finest French cuisine, now had to introduce a greasy lamb stew known as couscous.

But the new members had an even greater political impact. They began to make rude demands that seriously upset the conventions of European-defined diplomacy. Further, they began to take themselves very seriously in the economics sphere with their call for a new international economic order.

The vast bulk of these new nations were originally designed by Europe as their hinterland whose only task was to produce certain commodities for European consumption. With independence, most ex-colonies inherited a one-crop economy and were, in effect, "commodity states." They quickly found that political independence meant functioning in a global economy which made a mockery of their capacity to determine the price of their commodities and to maintain their sovereignty. The U.N. became a splendid forum for them to meet and, most

importantly, to organize themselves into commodity unions. They found that a collective bargaining strategy was essential if they were to survive in the global economy.

It is this strategy of creating commodity unions that has most enraged the Western states of the post-World War II era. For this "grand alliance" of states so admirably described by Richard Barnet in his recent study, *The Alliance*, had assumed that the Third World would continue to be junior partners in the global economy. Instead of being satisfied with this role as junior partners, they began to talk about forming commodity cartels and restricting the exploitation of their resources.

While the liberal Western economics would have been willing to accept the idea of collective bargaining, they quickly put their foot down when these countries began to use the U.N. to talk about restructuring the global economy. The institution that the West had seen as a place for the political education of "backward" peoples was becoming a threat to their security and their standard of living.

The universities were among the first to sound an alarm. New volumes with titles like *A most Dangerous Place* (Daniel Patrick Moynihan) or, more recently, *Nation Against Nation* (Thomes Franck), began to appear, warning of the dangers of a U.N. controlled by the Third World. The one basic issue that both Republican and Democratic administrations unite in their hostility against the U.N. is its position on Israel and the Palestinian people. It was left to the Reagan administration to formulate a strategy for taming the world body by bringing it into the framework of Western values agreed upon by the liberal-conservative coalition.

This strategy had three components. At the political level, there was the determination to destroy the new coalitions formed within the U.N. that would threaten Western hegemony. Opponents

of the increased presence of the Third World were particularly annoyed at the growing alliance between the non-aligned countries and the socialist world.

To put an end to all of this, a distinguished professor of political science from Georgetown University developed a sophisticated and empirical loyalty test which would be administered every year at the U.N. This social science test examines the voting behavior of U.N. members and accurately measures the ideological predisposition of a given state. The purpose of the test was to determine how U.S. aid would be dispensed rewarding friends and punishing enemies.

Another distinguished professor, who in now a senator from New York, warned China last week that it had failed this test and had to do better next term if it wanted to graduate and become a responsible member of the civilized world.

The political implications of this test indicate a shift away from multilateral diplomacy to bilateral diplomacy. In the economics sphere, such a rewards-punishment system would also put an end to the collective bargaining strategy and stop all talk about global reconstruction. Finally, at the cultural level, the Reagan administration recognized the importance of the U.N. as a social institution. Its New York location in the capital of the world's communication industry has enabled the U.S. to inculcate Western market values throughout the globe.

The U.N. could play a major cultural role in changing the traditional values of a society by replacing them with more "modern" Western values. This transformation is most notable in the dress and social mannerisms of the delegates in the lounge. The traditional robes of Africa and the tunics of Asia have been replaced by three-piece "dress-for-success" Pierre Cardin suits. Chinese, Indian, Middle Eastern and African cuisines have also all been modified to satisfy the tastes of the newly emergent international Yuppie class.



Further, if the U. N. agencies like UNESCO become hostile to market values, they will be liquidated immediately. This new cultural foreign policy is an extension of the Reagan administration's domestic policy, which has been characterized by Black political scientist Ron Walters as the "revival of white nationalism." The revolution which began in communities like Canarsie — and described by Jonathan Rieder as a revolt against liberalism — has now reached the East River.

The United Nations ambassadorship has been an exceptionally useful forum for the political careers of American politicians. The Eastern establishment has used it to give their candidates — like Lodge and Bush — experience in international politics. Kennedy used it as a retirement slot for Adlai Stevenson and then destroyed Stevenson's moral credibility over the Bay of Pigs. The lower middle-class white ethnics found U. N. bashing an excellent way of displaying their patriotism and winning support of the emigres of Eastern Europe. Moynihan and Kirkpatrick used the position to establish themselves as superpatriots who were defending Western Christendom from barbarism. Andy Young got his baptism of fire in international politics as ambassador and was swiftly sent back to the ghetto politics of Atlanta after his meeting with the PLO. And the mayor of New York periodically refers to the world body as "a cesspool."

After the "zionism as racism" vote, the U. N. became the target of the Israeli lobby and lost much support from its liberal constituency in the U. S. White and Black politicians who were supporters of the U. N. were reluctant to defend it for fear of being targeted by the lobby and lose support among the liberals. The U. N. has lost these American constituencies in the northeast — except for the Black and Latino communities and the white internationalists. Despite the anti-U. N. hysteria in the press, the vast majority of the American

population, according to recent surveys, still support the organization.

The major powers also agreed that the biggest issue of our times, nuclear disarmament, must be permanently removed from the U. N. and placed squarely in their libs. This complicated issue was not to be the concern of the poweries of the world, but the business of the Grand Alliance and its adversary, the Soviet Union. If there is to be any significant negotiations on disarmament and nuclear policy, they were to be conducted outside the world body and within the framework of a summit. The U. N. would than be left to merely ceremonial functions.

There are some severe difficulties with this global vision. The dispossessed of the world have the nasty habit of making their presence felt. The safety and the security of the East and the West cannot be guaranteed without the participation of the victims. There are at least four major war zones in the world today — the Middle East, Southern Africa, Southeast and Southwest Asia, and most recently, Central America. These war zones and the states within them have the capacity of leading the world into a nuclear abyss. Many Third World states, like the Native Americans before them, are sitting on much of the world's resources that are necessary for the expansion and continued growth of the Western economics in addition countries like China, India and Brazil appear to be potential lucrative markets. On the other hand, the debt crisis severely threatens Western fiscal institutions. Then there is the revival of religious fundamentalism and the emergence of other anarchistic movements that threaten not only the Western world, but the entire international system. As the international system becomes more anarchical, the danger of a global war and nuclear confrontation increases.

Given these conditions, the Delegates Lounge at the United Nations continues to symbolize

the organization's best hope: the possibility of some form of communication among diverse cultures. For while the major powers may prefer bilateral diplomccy, the character of the political and economic problems that confront the world today are global and inter-related and can only be resolved multilateral.

The revival of racism in the West and the growth of fundamentalist movements like Pol Potism in the Third World can unleash dangerous forms of barbarism. Under these conditions, the case for the U. N. now assumes a new importance for it remains the only organization that can expose rampant racism, chauvinism and political repression throughout the world. For the U. N. to become a viable organization, it requires changes not only in the behavior of Third World states, but most important, a maturity of relationship between the superpowers. In the final analysis, neither the superpowers nor the Third World states can afford the luxury of international anarchy. The world can only be safe when all nations accept a policy of cultural co-existence. As in the words of the Network to educate for World Security. "The United Nations — Where Even Enemies Can Talk."

## Thondaman's . . .

(Continued from page 12)

happens. A few months back, I took a decision that I must get the solution to the problems of the plantation workers before the 31st of December, 1985. If by any means I am unable to achieve this expectation, then I will concede that my leadership has failed and I will have to either change the attitude of my leadership, or step down and allow someone else who can provide a dynamic leadership, a chance.



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# MOBILISATION LAW

**A**ccording to provisions in the bill —

\* The Competent Authority will be appointed by the President in consultation with the Minister in charge of the subject of mobilisation. He will be empowered to delegate any of the powers, duties and functions conferred on him under the act on any other public officer with the approval of the Minister.

\* A national service order made by the Minister will require any person noticed to enlist for obli-

gatory service in the national armed reserve.

\* Failure to report for a selection examination to enlist in the reserve will be an offence punishable by imprisonment of four years.

\* A certificate from the Competent Authority to the effect that a person had failed to obey a national service order will be prima facie evidence.

\* The period of service for members of the reserve will be ten years.

\* Any member of the reserve who has completed a basic training and is rendering initial service full time service or mobilised service may be transferred to the armed forces or the police force as reservists or mobilised reserve units.

\* The basic training period for members of the reserve will be six weeks.

The Act also provides for the establishment of a National Cadet Corp. which will be provided part military training and civic training but will not be an active service.

## Report warns of SDI risks

Mark Tran

**M**EMBERS of Congress were poring over a study yesterday which could have a great influence on their Star Wars thinking.

The report, released by the office of technology assessment, a congressional research body, contains many of the criticisms that have been levelled at President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative.

The document was commissioned by the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Given the uncertainty about the wisdom of pursuing Star Wars development, the study should rapidly gain status as an authoritative document.

In an initial reaction, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr Les Aspin, warned that "after spending billions of dollars, we could find we have bought ourselves greater instability."

Although Mr Aspin said he was willing to continue supporting research on the programme, he added that the US should "think twice" before deploying a space-based system.

The Administration's Star Wars funding requests this year generated heated debate and a number of congressional provisions reflect the unease about policy.

Congress cut \$1 billion off Mr Reagan's request for \$3.7 billion — the final figure for 1986 being a compromise between \$2.9 billion in the Senate and \$2.5 billion in the House.

The provisions tacked on to the final figure include a requirement for Mr Reagan to certify before deployment of any SDI system that it will work despite Soviet efforts to attack it and that it could be deployed more cheaply than the Soviet Union could expand its missile forces to overwhelm it.

Another provision bars the use of any Star Wars funds "in a manner inconsistent with" various treaties, including the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Although the OTA report contains some points to buttress Star Wars enthusiasts, the overall tone of the report is likely to fuel congressional doubt about the programme.

The study says Soviet technology "probably does not exceed our own." Although the Soviet Union is "vigorously developing advanced technologies" for spaced-based strategic defence, "in terms of basic technology capabilities. The US is clearly ahead of the Soviet Union in key areas."

It echoes criticisms made elsewhere on the destabilising nature of Star Wars by saying that if both superpowers possessed moderately effective missile defences there would be an "extremely dangerous possibility" of a nuclear surprise attack.

There could also be a race to increase weapons that bypass Star Wars defence, such as jet bombers and low-flying cruise missiles.

Perhaps most important, the report ties the success of the programme to progress in the US-Soviet arms talks.



# English Department : what for the telling ?

Qadri Ismail

'EVERY generation must provide its own literary criticism... (since) each generation brings to the contemplation of art, its own categories of appreciation, makes its own demands upon art, and has its own uses for art.' (T. S. Eliot)

I write this reply with a sense of waste, without alternative. You have to take on your critics even if they do not dent your case.

In the four months since my statement of the fact that the teaching of English Literature at the Peradeniya University Department of English (PRUDE) was empty at the core, utterly irrelevant to understanding Sri Lankan reality and only created an unfortunate variety of snob, not one teacher or recent student of English who perhaps knows better has come out to defend the dons. (Unless the vacuous D. Perera falls into either category — she rants so!) It was left to the tribe of the ultra-alienated, the Sri Lankan poets in English, to provide two counsel for the defence: one second rate (Patrick Jayasuriya) and one Second Class (Gamini Seneviratne). Jayasuriya sounded as if he was in Ashley Halpe's drawing room before composing his critique: the things he said were the same things — more or less — that Halpe told me when I made some of the same criticisms to him while still a student at PRUDE. Nevertheless his arguments, unlike the red herring Seneviratne's, have the semblance

of substance. So we will deal with the latter first.

I met Seneviratne after his writing, though before the publication, of the letter. I asked him what he had to say. He said he took very strong exception to my remarks on PRUDE and then turned away! I could have understood this behaviour — though it is still not justified — if I had attacked him personally. But I was not being personal about anyone. What men, Seneviratne, just because I said something you are not liking you are going to refuse to speak with me also? Not nice, no, ah, behaving like that?

Seneviratne reminds me of the chap who said he would blow up the dam and only blew up his fingers. When you try to defeat an argument you must even if you are second class, use other and, if they exist better arguments. Not throw mud at your opponent and smugly feel that you have won your case. Perhaps a lifetime's inactivity as a bureaucrat has something to do with this. So before going on to deal with his non-arguments, I must stress this point very strongly. **That Seneviratne tries to denigrate my case not by destroying it point by point but by trying to insult me. This may be good for the fish market, but it by no means refutes my argument. There is, really no case for the defence. Halpe has admitted, in cold print, his own guilt. But**

Seneviratne either does not realize that; or, unable to reply and still holding a sentimental attachment to the past (Which no doubt makes him feel superior to the mass of people in the country) choses denigration as the only way out.

After all that, it may surprise some people to hear that I thoroughly agree with Seneviratne that standards have dropped at PRUDE. However, in his implacably snobbish view the fault lies with the student. Those unfortunate village yakkos who unlike those in his time-didn't go to the "best" schools. After four years of listening to them (I must add here that I cut every lecture I could, not being inclined towards masochism) I know fully well who is responsible for the drop. Today's student is no less intelligent than yesterday's (with the exception of the likes of Seneviratne). It is today's lecturer, without a conception of the task before him/her, who has taught rather than lectured and substituted snobbery for knowledge in his/her — therefore "substandard" student. Of course the overall blame for this must go to those who presided over the demise.

But even if I had the misfortune to study in a substandard dept., Seneviratne should have had the sense to realise that I would know my literary facts. Not being inclined to give me the benefit of the doubt, he got easily caught in a trap I laid for someone else. And



while enjoining the irony of being "corrected" by someone who once actually said that Machado was influenced by Eliot. The trap consisted of four deliberate slips, of which Seneviratne noticed only three. The first three were factual errors which any mugger (like G. S.) would have caught immediately. The next required a slight quantity, a very slight quantity, of intelligence to catch; and I wasn't surprised that Seneviratne failed here. I said in the course of my argument that the title of the undergrad publication **An Ear To The Ground** was grammatically incorrect. Now, given my liberal attitude towards grammar, an ear should be allowed. In other words, there was a contradiction in my argument which Seneviratne did not notice. This despite him asking me to learn to write grammatically! More fart than shit, no, Seneviratne?

My reasons for the "slip trap" were quite simple. (To those who want to know, I actually thought "all fart no shit" to be Lankan — that was not a slip.) We Lankans have an obscene habit — quite apart from that of taking attacks on one's ideas personally — of avoiding the point if given half a chance to do so. And I expected indignant teachers of English to condemn me for confusing Leigh Hunt with Coleridge etc. and not rebut my proposition. In their absence, it was Seneviratne who got caught in the slips!

But I must tell him where he is wrong about grammar. Beginning by advising him not to meddle in affairs in which he publicly parades his incompetence. The science of linguistics — all the time he spent vegetating in the bureaucracy — has made tremendous advances. A contemporary linguist, or even one twenty years ago, would have laughed at the neo-colonial mentality displayed by a Samaranayake (just as I laugh at that displayed by Seneviratne). Samaranayake's **Practical English** and the theory it is based

upon, is now very out of date.

What is grammar? It is the form — or, if you like, rules — imposed upon the language by human beings so as to ensure maximum efficiency in communication. It is not a tool to prevent communication. On the other hand, English grammar as it exists today most definitely is designed to prevent communication — especially among those who are not born into a community that speaks it (i.e. those who are not white skinned). English grammar evolved when the language was being standardised in 17th and 18th centuries — at the same time the bourgeoisie was consolidating its stranglehold on the English polity. It eventually became a tool to suppress people socially — first the Americans, then the other whites outside England and now the blacks who speak it due to the colonial experience. In the last two decades or so — Seneviratne would not know this since he was busy being useless in the bureaucracy — linguists have realised that there is no "correct" way of speaking any language. This is not to say they advocate anarchy, but recognize that a "standard" language is not just a social product but just one of many ways of (all equally "correctly") speaking it. Thus they make a very radical claim: that all dialects are equal. Historically, this is based on the obvious occurrence that before the language (was standardised) came the dialects.

Being a radical Sinhalese, Seneviratne should defend the right of the people of this country to communicate in English rather than use the Kaduwa to cut them down. Since he does not, I can only lament the loss of his youthful radicalism and suggest to him — since he gave me similar advice — something to read in return: Frantz Fanon's book **The Wretched of the Earth**, especially the section on brown sahibs. It is 25 years old, but Seneviratne is about

that much — at least behind his times. As for me, I will not give up the only language I possess — Lankan English — for all the strictures of Seneviratne and other people with colonised minds. Writing — and communicating — without tainting my mind with another's rules is an assertion of our freedom. (So I will not take up Seneviratne's offer of a trained teacher to "improve" my style. If his wife needs some business, I suggest she catches hold of some unwitting urchins I wouldn't want her — or anyone else — to make me forget what I know. I had enough problems on that score at PRUDE.)

(To be continued)

Israel — Sri Lanka

## Renewal of ties discussed

TEL AVIV

Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel met in Paris last week with President Junius R. Jayawardene of Sri Lanka to discuss renewing diplomatic ties, Israel Radio reported Monday.

Mr. Peres was in Paris for meetings with French leaders as he was returning from Washington.

Mr. Jayawardene stopped on his way back from the Commonwealth meeting in the Bahamas, the report said.

Sri Lanka severed ties with Israel in 1970 under pressure from Egypt, when Egypt and Israel were at war.

There are reports that Israeli secret service agents recently advised the Sri Lankan authorities on counterinsurgency tactics against Tamil guerrillas.

Israel opened a special interest section in the U. S. Embassy in Colombo last year.

It also has three agricultural experts there advising on tapping water resources and on other farming projects.

— The Associated Press



**Letters. . .**

(Continued from page 1)

Mr Vittachi jumps to the conclusion that I stand for a one party system. That is the predictable knee-jerk reaction of any big businessman to anyone who uses class as a category of social annlysis. A knee-jerk reaction is one mediated entirely at the level of the spinal cord; so it doesn't call for a cerebral response.

Mr Vittachi accuses me of misrepresenting him and of contradicting myself. He also advises me to effect some repairs to my prose style. Leaving style on one side, let's focus on the substance of what I said.

As we all know, after the opinion of a majority of judges who heard the appeal of the Mahara election petition case was declared, the Civil Rights movement proposed that the Constitution should be amended to enable the President to be brought to courts in connection with alleged election offences. Thereupon Mr Vittachi rushed into print on the subject of the CRM's proposal. He took the view that everybody including the President should be permitted to fling allegations against rival candidates during election campaigns. The normal law of the land, he explained, should be sufficient to prevent wild and reckless allegations from being made. If the normal law of the land was sufficient for the purpose then by implication the amendment proposed by the CRM was unnecessary.

On reading Mr Vittachi's letter I rubbed my eyes in disbelief. How could he have failed to see that so long as the President remained immune from all suit, the normal law of the land would not restrain him from committing election offences? In fact, election offences alleged to have been committed by the President were what the Mahara election petition was mainly about.

Here, then, was a major contradiction: a smart man making a jackass of himself on a

specific issue. Such things do happen every now and then! Thus, Mr Vittachi is really the embodiment of the contradiction he has attributed to me. All I did was to expose it and offer an explanation for it in terms of his social class.

As to Mr Vittachi's belief that he and I do not share the same register of discourse, may I tell him that it has never been my aspiration to share such a register with big businessmen or — for that matter — with the likes of bogus-doctorate —flaunting Costain de Vos and prostitute-quoting Ms D. Perera

**Carlo Fonseka**

**Dr. Carlo Fonseka's Catch 22**

A. Dr. Carlo says that what Mr. Ismail says has to be listened to with respect because he has a first class certificate.

B. Who gave Mr. Ismail the certificate?

A. Peradeniya's English Department.

B. So what has Mr. Ismail to say?

A. That Peradeniya's English Department is an effete institution bogged down in bourgeois elitism and that it is his historical duty to pull a knife on it.

B. But.....

A. Exactly.

**CRITO**

**The Supreme Court**

I refer to the news item in the issue of the Ceylon Daily News of the 4th instant pertaining to the ceremonial sitting of the Supreme Court on the occasion of the retirement of Justice D. Wimalaratne.

Mr. Nimal Senanayake PC, President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka had, according to this report, stated inter alia as follows:

"Your Lordship could not have ever imagined that one day a citizen would be allowed by the Supreme Court to proceed with his complaint that a judge from the seat of justice had violated his fundamental right by ordering him to be

flung unceremoniously and arbitrarily into a prison cell; and that the Supreme Court would actually find that the judge had, to use the characteristically restrained language of the Supreme Court, "made a mistake", and that no bad faith had been demonstrated, ignoring with characteristic charity the maxim 'culpa late dolo malo aequipatur' that serious negligence is the equivalent of a wicked intention".

The Supreme Court has ruled and no doubt, will rule in the future on various issues. It has been stated time and again that an independent and objective Judiciary is essential for the working of a democracy. No doubt the Court will continue to observe the maxim that justice should not only be done but appear to have been done.

**B. Mahinda**

Colombo 5.

**The English Dept.**

Dr. Carlo Fonseka takes exception to the "authority" I quoted on the irrelevant ground that she was "a well-known prostitute". In addition to what Dr. Fonseka calls her, Ms. Rice-Davies was (is?) also a witty woman. And I quoted her remark not, as he wrongly claims, to defend Peradeniya's English Department (which does not need defending from the likes of Mr. Ismail) but to characterise Dr. Fonseka's penchant for applauding adolescent contumely.

Illogically, the "authority" that Dr. Fonseka himself quotes to justify Mr. Ismail's hobbledehoyhood is that very English Department's certificate awarded to the man who so haughtily derides it. Dr. Fonseka's reasoning is quite hopeless.

Actually, it is from Dr. Fonseka's letter I learn that Mr. Ismail was given a first class by the Department, which makes me wonder if, after all, Mr. Ismail is not right in having a poor opinion of it.

**(Ms.) D. Perera**

Colombo 5.



# **INTER-RACIAL EQUITY AND NATIONAL UNITY IN SRI LANKA**

(The document was produced by the Marga Institute 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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