

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 15 No. 15 December 1, 1992 Price Rs. 10.00 Registered at GPO, Sri Lanka QD/43/NEWS/92

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PEACE: Citizens Appeal

COMMUNISM

Bureaucracy as class

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REGION

Benazir Bhutto's long march

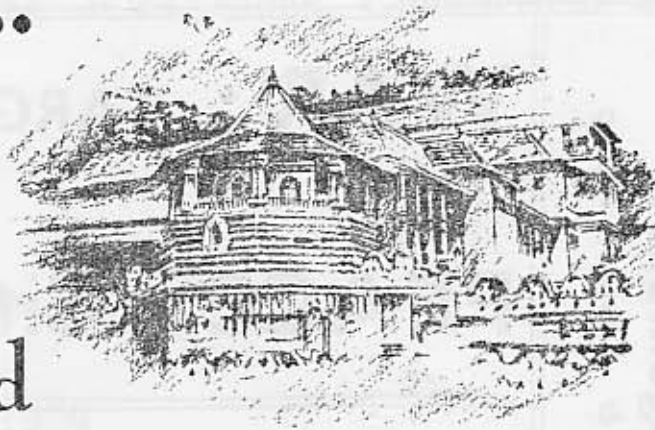
— *Kesava Menon*

INDIA: After Clinton what?

— *Dilip Mukerjee*

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TRENDS

High Time

Deputy Speaker Gamini Fonseka said in the House that it was high time the government stopped all "carnivals" and gave priority to the urgent needs of the armed forces who were fighting a war to safeguard the country. He also called on the MPs to donate their recently announced 30 per cent pay hike to the armed forces; he urged them to give away their Pajero jeeps too to the hard pressed security forces

He said that during the SLP regime austerity measures were introduced during urgent situations and that the government should follow that example.

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Price Rs. 10.00

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing
Co. Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,
Colombo-2

Editor: Mervyn de Silva

Telephone: 447584

Printed by Ananda Press
82/5, Sir Ratnajothi Saravanamuttu
Mawatha, Colombo 13.
Telephone: 435975

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Lankans like it

Sri Lankans living in the US interviewed by Keith Noyar for Lanka's Sunday Times said that they liked the way they do elections there than they do it at home. The Lankans, mostly academicians, said that elections in the US were free and open. They had observed the recent presidential election,

Particularly, they had said they liked the method of candidate selections, presidential debate, strict scrutiny of candidates, independent election coverage and peaceful transition of power.

A professor of the Colombo University engaged in research at the University of Ohio said: "The truth of it is the media have to be free if there is to be democracy".

Most of the Sri Lankans said that the media in the US was free.

Court orders release

The Court of Appeal has ordered the release of a woman who has been detained on the sixth floor of Police Headquarters since July last year. She is alleged to have harboured Varathan who is suspected to have master-minded the JOC bomb blast that year. The CA ordered the release following a habeas corpus filed by the woman's husband.

Disincentive, says Japanese

Masao Sawaki, a Japanese business leader said in Colombo that terrorism was a drawback to investment in Sri Lanka. Japanese businessmen were pessimistic about such situations and tended to move elsewhere, he said. But Mr. Sawaki added that Japan was not the target of terrorism in Sri Lanka and it would not effect Japanese involvement in investment programs here.

Briefly...

ASHRAFF CALLS FOR UNITY

Mr Ashraff, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader, said, in Parliament that he was seated on the Opposition side of the chamber because there were some differences with the other side. But said that he would be happy with a chair, or even a mat, somewhere in a corner as long as he was not branded an "Opposition MP".

Nobody, not even the press, had a clear understanding of the role of the Opposition, he said. Everybody expected the Opposition to oppose the Government all the time and try to throw it out. Mr. Ashraff said to find a solution (to the ethnic problem) there must be the capacity to identify the enemy. "We must know who our friends are. With the mixing up of our friends and enemies we do not know where we are going".

Mr Ashraff also said: "This country was prepared to accept the leadership of a minority Tamil to lead the national struggle. That is the history of our independence movement. The British history was the same. The Conservatives and Labour got together at a time of war. Today if this is a war against the UNP Government the solution is simple. You throw out the UNP Government".

"If the resignation of the Government is not the solution to the war, then what is the solution? Before we find the solution we must know what the problem is. The problem is, this is, not a war that is declared and carried on by the LTTE against the UNP. It is a war against the Sri Lankan nation.

"While the Sri Lankan nation is divided into many parts we are playing games. We do not understand the suffering of the people".

(Continued on page 20)

EARLY WARNING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Kumar Rupesinghe and Michiko Kuroda (editors)

August 1992, £35.00. 300pp ISBN 0-333-56952-0

Can we prevent violent conflicts and wars in the future? This volume reflects the growing interest in developing an early warning capability within the research community, in international humanitarian and aid agencies and in international institutions such as the United Nations.

By "early warning" we mean information that can provide a timely alert to potential conflicts. Key issues covered in the book include: the manner in which the concept of early warning is translated into methodological approaches; identification of root causes for disputes and conflict situations; selection of indicators; determination of methodologies; use of new technologies; possible development of networking; search for conditions for the settlement of conflicts. The processing, analysis and evaluation of information is systematically approached in the collection.

ETHNICITY AND CONFLICT IN A POST-COMMUNIST WORLD

The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China

Kumar Rupesinghe, Peter King and Olga Vorkunova (editors)

August 1992, £35.00, 300pp, ISBN 0-333-56951-2

The post-Communist world has seen a dramatic ethnicity and nationalism. Many of these societies are facing a crisis of staggering dimensions, since the movement towards full democracy also has to cope with widespread demands for self-determination and minority protections as well as the consequences of dismantling the totalitarian state.

The volume explores the contemporary sources, scope and intensity of nationality conflicts in the post-Communist world. The authors address themselves to the resurgence of ethnicity and national, after perestroika and glasnost, within a disintegrating Soviet Empire. They examine the consequences and effects of the drama currently in progress within the various regions of the former Soviet Union. Central issues explored concern identity formation, the nature and implications of internal conflicts and possible paths toward conflict resolution in these societies. The processes of democratization and the potential generation of new conflicts in these countries are also examined as is the question of resurgent ethnicity in China.

INTERNAL CONFLICT AND GOVERNANCE

Kumar Rupasinghe (editor)

August 1992, £ 35.00, 256pp, ISBN 0-333-56953-9

Violence, war and internal conflicts have assumed a new intensity with the decline of the Cold War. Over 32 civil wars are raging today. By the year 2000, our world may well witness over 100 million refugees as a direct result of internal wars. Internal conflicts - ethnic, ideological, or conflicts over democracy and governance - are likely to increase in the future.

This volume consists of case-studies and more theory-oriented papers dealing with Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. Taken together, they spell out implications of wide general interest. Several authors stress the need to develop theories on conflict transformation through non-violent approaches. The focus of this important collection is on questions of identity formation, democracy and violence in the south.

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"The final option for Mr. Premadasa is to continue with the current stalemate, at least until elections are complete, with the constant flow of casualties that this entails. However this course means maintaining a defence budget, running at 4% of GDP a year. It would mean further cuts in public investment to meet donor targets for government expenditure — and would undermine the long-term prospects for economic growth. The progress made in the past three years is a cause for optimism. The success of the enclave economy in the south west shows what can be done. But if Sri Lanka is to realise its full potential it must resolve its civil conflict..." (William Keeling, lead article in 10 page *Financial Times* survey Oct. 27, 1992).

NEWS
BACKGROUND

FEDERALISM: THE RETURN OF HISTORY

Mervyn de Silva

The government's dilemma was made painfully obvious by two events in mid-November — the daring assassination of Vice-Admiral Clancy Fernando on Nov. 16 by a LTTE suicide-bomber, and the island's first international trade fair, together with an Investment Forum sponsored by the Sri Lanka Board of Investment, (Nov. 18-22). Both proved tremendous successes. So is this year's tourist season, with the total number for 1992 creeping up on 400,000. The cold-blooded, perfectly executed murder of the Navy's No. 1. did not take place in any war-zone of the North and East. It took place in the heart of the city, in the sea-front hotel district; in fact, right opposite the Taj Samudra Hotel, where some of the visiting businessmen were staying. The other equally newsworthy guests at the same hotel were the New Zealand test team, many of its members promptly deciding to cancel the tour and return home. Thanks to the persuasive diplomacy of the British and Australian High Commissioners, and the Australian Board President, the tour was not cancelled though some players did take the first plane out.

Celebrating his 38th birthday the same week, Velupillai Pra-

bakaran had not only made up his mind to kill the Navy Commander, who had hit the LTTE hard in the lagoons and sea-lanes of the north, so vital for LTTE supplies and commerce. (The LTTE runs its own Customs service, for travellers to the peninsula.) Nor was the killing the curtain-raiser for the LTTE's HEROES' WEEK. It had a many-sided impact—murderous revenge, the shock-effect to de-stabilise the capital, to undermine the morale of the armed services. A message to the world that the "enclave" economy was not all that secure i.e. economic sabotage, and subversion. Another reason was to sharpen the contradiction between the "military option" school and the "political settlement" lobby, that is to deepen the divisions in the Sinhala political Establishment and intensify the friction between the UNP government and the SLFP-led Opposition, and any policy difference between the civilian regime and the military. It is the reason which Prabhakaran himself offered in an article he had contributed—itsself a rare event—to a Tamil monthly OLAHATH THAMILAR" (World Tamils) that merits special attention. (The ISLAND columnist TARAKI quoted some lines in his weekly column).

"Surprise attacks on many fronts in the Eelam territory have struck fear in Sinhala soldiers and continue to undermine their will to fight"

Undermining the army's morale, the will to fight, is of course a basic aim. The territorial imperative is equally important since this is a separatist war, requiring a carving out of territory. Whether the LTTE can actually seize and hold the land from which they have pulled out remains to be seen. Attacking the will of the Sinhala army is a" important because the LTTE cadre is highly motivated (the suicide bomber is motivation at its highest) whereas the poor rural Sinhala youth who has found a job, may not be able to match such motivation. This explains Prabhakaran's next claim:

"We destroyed the army camp at Vanankulam that was giving protection to the colonists in the Vavuniya districts. Following this, as a result of minor attacks along the Vavuniya border many Sinhala settlers left the district..." One massive, murderous assault which breaks the spirit of the soldier, the protector of the colonists, creates a climate of fear where minor assaults are sufficient to scare away settlers. "In the same way"

he writes "Sinhala settlers in Mannararu (Weliyoa) and Trinco have also begun to leave". Note that the LTTE leader uses the Tamil name first, with the Sinhala name in bracket, in an to whom asstetion the land originally belonged? The truth of course lies in the flow of history, colonial and pre-colonial, and at which point you choose to dive into the river. Since history is itself in fierce dispute, (and there are few "objective" historians today,!) much of all this is purely polemical.

But "colonisation" was certainly a declared policy of successive Sri Lankan governments even before independence — settling Sinhala families from the 'overpopulated' south in the newly irrigated areas of the so-called Dry Zone. Opening new lands supported by irrigation schemes and responding to the land hunger of the Sinhala peasant made economic and political sense. What is "colonisation" for the government, a rational policy, became in the eyes of post-independence Tamil politicians and ideologues, "internal colonialism". And thus the fight for the east, the vital theatre of this separatist war.

The ethnic composition of the East makes this political-military contest more complex because a third community is involved — the Muslims. And the Moslems hold the balance. They constitute one-third with the Sinhalese twenty five percent. Since the Muslims are Tamil-speaking rather Sinhala-speaking, which is true of the Muslims in the island's south, the Tamil militants took Muslim cooperation for granted. Accusing some Muslim groups of being used by the Indian army when the IPKF was in charge of the East (the Indian commander was a Muslim) in the post-1987 Accord, the 'Tigers' have treated the Muslims as "collaborators" or "enemies". This was a blunder. In today's world there is no rallying cry as potent as Islam. The LTTE strategy has gradually driven the Muslim community, the Muslim MP's and the most articulate

Muslim party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) into an anti-LTTE stance. The SLMC of Mr. Ashraff has 4 MP'S in Parliament is the largest Muslim group in the house. He has not only made a tactical alliance with the ruling UNP but threatened a *jihad*. And his party has earned the sympathy of the Islamic world. In this region, with Pakistan and Bangladesh as our neighbours, and with more Muslims in India than in Pakistan, which has Iran and the Arab states as its western neighbours, the LTTE has needlessly opened another front.

In the same week as Admiral Fernando's assassination, there was an attempt in the Narahenpita residential area. Who was the target? Some said it was the President's secretary, Mr. K. H. Wijedasa; others argued it was Mr. Munsoor. But better informed sources tend to agree that Mr. Ashraff was the preferred target. Mr. Ashraff has requested arms to launch his *jihad* supported by militant Islamic youth.

POLITICAL DEAL

Territory is of course not the sole issue in this protracted struggle. Territory displaced "power" as the main issue in the Tamil struggle for minority rights. When Mr. Bandaranaike's Sinhala Maha Sabha quit the parent U. N. P., he formed the S.L.F.P. When Mr. Chelvanayakam quit the Tamil Congress after its leader Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam had become a Minister in the UNP cabinet, he launched the Federal party. Though SWRD an intellectual appreciated the federal concept, he offered much less to Mr. Chelvanayakam when the signed the B-C Pact, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact. Race riots and extremist Sinhala-Buddhist pressure forced S.W.R.D. to tear up that pact. When his turn came, the UNP's Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake also signed an 'accord' with the FP leader. It was called the Dudley-Chelva pact. That was not implemented either. It is frustration of the Tamil political leadership and the growing

dissatisfaction of the Tamil constituency, and finally the rising anger of a new Tamil generation in the face of perceived "discrimination", injustice, that the English-educated Tamil professional manning the political parties chose non-violent *satyagraha* as their principal form of protest and agitation. The reply, alas, was assaults, fire-bombs, and anti-Tamil riots. Prabhakaran, a teenagar, living in the Pettah, was the creature of that era. Today he is one of the world's toughest terrorists and guerrilla commanders. He fought the IPKF for three years, and many an Indian general has written books about his military skills, tenacity and amazing ability to mobilise and command a new generation of Tamils.

Meanwhile history has repeated itself. The Mangala Moonesingha Committee was a brain-wave of an independent-minded SLFP middle-rung MP. The parliamentary committee chaired by him was an all-party committee. It represented the consensus of the democratically elected. Perhaps more crucially, it offered the best hope of producing what had eluded the political Establishment for 35 years — a UNP-SLFP consensus. Last week, Mr. Moonesingha announced that an agreement has been reached. The main parties were ready to consider positively a proposal for federal constitution and two separate councils."

Within 24 hours the SLFP and Opposition leader, Mrs. Bandaranaike was denying any such agreement on her side. History it has been said, repeats first as tragedy then as farce.

We would add a third possibility — tragic farce.

Meanwhile Mr. Gamini Fonseka, MP, and super-star of the Sinhala screen has lashed out to prove Prabhakaran had read the Sinhala middle-class mind well.

"It is time we made up our minds, that this is a state of war and therefore the country must be put on a war footing. If we stall to collect the pennies, we will be in deep trouble."

Mr. Fonseka is MP of the UNP, and Deputy Speaker.

Stop the war, press for peace negotiations

Feeling the tragedy and pain of the killings and counter-killings, the terror, repression and destruction that have taken place for many years in our mother-land, we raise our voices and proclaim to the Government and all those who have taken arms and all the political parties and groups that direct them: Stop, think and look around about you! The country that has given us all birth is now a sea of blood. Sinhala people kill other Sinhala people. Tamils kill other Tamils. Muslims too are killed. The different races killed each other. But whether those who kill and are killed are Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim it is the one human blood that flows. Tens of thousands of youth have disappeared and been killed. How much longer will you thus kill each other? Who will be left? Will it not be still other tens of thousands of widows, lakhs of orphans, who will be eternally weeping? The little children who are our hope for the future are weakened by under-nourishment, fear and insecurity. Those who have not taken arms live in fear and trembling before those who have taken arms. The way has been cleared for those who take arms to commit crime and terrorize the people. In such a situation the time has come for us to stop and think. Whither we like it or not we all have one small country. It is an island. Accepting this geographical reality let us even now think as people of one country and save our country. It is extremely important to understand clearly who is responsible for this vast destruction, this curse. The main political forces that have governed this country since 1948 are responsible for this situation. All clergy and religious leaders who are committed to safeguard moral values are responsible to some extent. All those elders, who by keeping silent have helped these conditions to mature, should bear part of the responsibility. So we raise our voices and say to all responsible authorities and to all our people:

1. Take immediate steps to create the political conditions that can enable the stopping of the war.
2. The major communities in this country, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim, recognize each other's distinct identities and nationalities and co-operate in building mutual trust and confidence between the majority and minority communities.
3. The UNP and SLFP declare immediately and unequivocally their stands regarding a political solution.
4. The LTTE declare immediately and unequivocally their stands regarding a political solution.
5. Recognize the right of all people to live in peace without terror. Ensure the human rights of all peoples. Repeal repressive legislation. Enact suitable constitutional

restraints on the excessive powers of the Executive Presidency or consider reversion to a parliamentary system. Restore normal democratic processes to all the peoples, including multi-party system and elections. Release immediately all political prisoners both in the North and the South, against whom there is no real evidence to institute criminal proceedings.

6. All parties and groups and all the peoples in this country support reasonable and effective devolution of power and autonomy, with co-existence and mutual interdependence, which will—
 - (a) Preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.
 - (b) Enable revision of the Sri Lanka Constitution to make devolution of power and autonomy central features of it.
 - (c) Recognize the democratic and pluralistic character of Sri Lankan Society and enshrine core values, both religious and secular, in the Constitution. The Constitution should have a Bill of Rights, that is justiciable.
 - (d) Meet the basic demand of the Tamils for a contiguous and viable unit of devolution in the North-East, with negotiation as to its size and other problems involved.
 - (e) Assure the Sinhala people that the essential character of Sri Lankan society, the essential inheritance of religion and culture, safeguarded through the centuries, is not diluted or diminished, but preserved and developed.
 - (f) Assure the Muslims that their rights will be protected in whatever part of the country they reside. Such assurance may include special provision such as a Zonal Council within the unit of devolution in the North-East. The rest of the peoples of this country need to take more seriously the recent catastrophic suffering of the Muslims in the North and East.
 - (g) Assure Sinhala and Tamil people also of their rights in whatever part of the country they reside. This may include special provision such as Zonal Councils within the unit of devolution in the North-East.
 - (h) Make clear that plurality is not a disadvantage that leads to dilution or diminution but an asset that leads to greater richness and unity in diversity.

7. People of all religions, races, parties and groups launch a joint campaign to build a mass movement for peace on the basis of justice for all. Public meetings, fasts, marches, satyagrahas, poojas, services, seminars, and discussions be held in temples, kovils, churches, mosques, meeting-halls and in the open-air.
8. No party to seek partisan political advantage in this joint campaign for peace. There must be readiness on all sides to make concessions as well as receive benefits. Different communities and sectors can preserve their own distinctive identities and reserve the right to work for their own long term social and political goals and yet be prepared to make real sacrifices and concessions in the present, in order to put a stop to the seemingly endless slaughter and destruction and enable progress towards peace.
9. Recognize the importance and value of the solidarity of the international community. The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, in consultation with other parties and authorities in this country, to agree to mutually acceptable mediating and monitoring bodies, while at the same time preserving national sovereignty, self-respect and dignity. The help of distinguished citizens from different groups and sectors in this country and the help of international mediation as well as a peace-keeping force would be invaluable in participation with the Government and Opposition regarding effective formulation and implementation of promises and arrangements to be made regarding cease-fire, demilitarization, protection of human rights, restoration of democratic processes including, multiparty system and elections, devolution of power and autonomy, with co-existence and mutual interdependence.

The above statement was drawn up after a discussion at a Public Meeting of representatives from different religions and communities held in Colombo on 3rd September 1992 and further discussed, amended, accepted and signed at another Public Meeting of representatives from different religions and communities held in Colombo 1992.

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- S. G. Ranasinghe, Secretary, Agriculture Department and Health Department Laboratory Labour Federation.
- D. A. Nanayakkara, Secretary, All Lanka Security Service Union.
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- M. D. Daniel, Co-ordinator, Peoples Welfare Association, Bentota.
- Shani Dayananda, Co-ordinator, People's Welfare Association, Bentota.
- T. W. Milinda, Secretary 'Dayake Sabha, Sri Siddhartharamaya, Induruwa.
- P. Sumanpala, President, Janhitha Welfare Association, Dedduwa.
- J. A. S. Jayakody, "Sanasa", Barumbe, Nikadalupeetha.
- J. A. Jayawardene, President, Rural Development Society, Ihala Barumbe, Nikadalupotha.
- R. D. M. Tillekratne, Secretary, Rural Development Society, Ihala Barumbe, Nikadalupotha.
- C. de. S. Neelamuni, "Navaka Janasannivedi Madhyavedi Kavaya," Kurunegala.
- D. T. W. G. Dissanayake, Secretary, United Farmers Association.
- R. M. B. Hearth, Secretary, Human Rights Association Kurunegala.
- J. Fernando, Family Rehabilitation Centre, Siridhama Mawatha Colombo 10.
- Bandara Hettigama, Radio Artist.
- Srinath Perera, Co-ordinator, Legal Aid Section, Sarvodaya.
- Preethi Dharmasiri, Legal Officer, Sarvodaya.
- Jehan Perera, Co-ordinator, Communication Section, Sarvodaya.
- Dharma Gunasinghe, Hon. Treasurer, Sarvodaya.
- Vasanthi Samarwickrama, Sarvodaya.
- P. W. Mahawatte, Vice President Sarvodaya.
- Rose Perera, Secretary to the President, Sarvodaya.
- Rear Admiral A. W. H. Perera, Sarvodaya.
- Chandani Dodagammana, SETIC, Kandy.
- Asoka P. Perera, Ekamuthu Children's Association.
- K. D. Thusara Chaminda, Janodaya Kendraya.
- Sarath Kumara Dulwela, Lanka Community Institute and Environmental Centre.
- H. M. Jayasekera, F.L.D.H. Beligalla, Mahiyangana.
- Vijitha Dissanayake, Uva Community Development Centre, Passara.
- Palitha Amarasinghe, Maruthaya Sanvada Samuhikaya, V. Murugaiya U.C.D.C. Badulla.
- Vasanthi Dissanayake, Institute of Study and Research for Action.
- Suresh Premachandran M.P. EPRLF.
- K. R. Kuganeswaran, M.P. EPRLF.
- Emmanuel Silva, M.P. EPRLF.
- Prince Casinader, M.P. EPRLF.
- K. Navaratne, M.P. EPRLF.
- R. Somatilleke Rajapakse, Social Economic Development Education Centre, Yatiyantota.
- Lionel Jayampathy, District Secretary L.S.S.P. Kegalle.
- Nimal Jayasinghe "Game Vedak" Organisation. Bulathkohupitiya.
- Raja Somatilleke, Secretary, Peasant Organisation. Deewela.
- Shanthi Prasad Kirihena, Sri Lanka Red Cross Association, Kegalle.
- Damian Silva, Sri Lanka Scout Movement, Kegalle.
- M. Senagama, Lanka, Estate Worker's Union.
- A. M. S. Nazeema, Kandy.
- Roshane Thaheer, Yahalatenne.
- Meena Fazi, Alawathugoda.
- Rizvia Fazeez, Watapola.
- Shakila Fervin Cader, Katugastota.
- Minakul Vasheena Marshuk, Katugastota.
- Shahabdehn Udayar, Muruthalawa.
- M. E. A. Zahir, Kandy.
- Shagik Alexander, Nilwalampitiya.
- M. H. M. Ashmi, Matara.
- M. I. S. Hamed, Colombo 10.
- Mohideen Bawa, Polonnaruwa.
- Akram Mohamed, Kandy.
- M. R. M. Aruz, Kandy.
- H. Uduma Lebbe, Rambukkandana, Ridigama.
- S. Zahia Lebbe, Rambukkandana, Riddigama.
- Athauda Seneviratne, M.P. LSSP.
- George Seneviratne, Former Minister, North East Provincial Council.

Benazir: Long March or Media Blitz?

Kesava Menon

ISLAMABAD

Even as assessments are being made as to who has won and who has lost in the latest confrontation between the Pakistan Government and the Opposition, the earlier question as to the date chosen for the Opposition's Long March has been superseded by the question of why the Government went to such extraordinary lengths to prevent it. That switch in the priorities assigned to the two queries is itself a pointer to the likely shape of the final assessment.

The Opposition, or rather the main chunk of the People's Democratic Alliance, had been toying with the idea of launching such a Long March for quite some time. If memory serves correctly the first occasion on which this plan had been mentioned was during the Gulf war, but the idea had been put in cold storage for a long time after that. It was pulled out of the ice box a couple of months or so ago when the Opposition began holding a series of rallies in various cities in the north of the country. Even then it seemed to be a mere proposal, floating in the air, as the Opposition kept switching the tack of its anti-Government attacks and seemed to have been given up at a time when it was waiting for a breach in the ranks of the ruling party, to be exploited for moving a successful vote of no-confidence.

It, therefore, came as a surprise when Mrs. Benazir Bhutto suddenly switched tack once again and gave a call for a Long March to Islamabad. As envisaged the programme called for thousands of workers from all over the country to converge on the capital's twin city Rawalpindi for a final march to the square before the Parliament House complex in Islamabad. While the purpose of the march was to register the Opposition's

demand that the Government of Mr. Nawaz Sharif either step down or be made to quit, there was much vagueness about what the marchers would do once they got to Islamabad.

There seemed to be some certainty that the marchers, once they got to Islamabad, would stage a sit-in before the Parliament House since Mrs. Benazir Bhutto compared her proposed programme to what Mr. Boris Yeltsin did in Moscow last year. When combined with their rhetoric calling for the overthrow of the elected Government and their claims that this would form the "last push to the crumbling edifice," the programme could be viewed as being infused with a great deal of militancy. But, although the Government was to rely on this in justification of the clampdown it was to order there was no real anticipation among the public that the programme would take a violent turn.

Theoretically, a certain amount of violence could be deemed to have been necessary if the Long March was to result in the objectives desired by its organisers. If there was violence during the Long March — or as an observer put it, if there were 20 or 30 deaths — it could trigger a nation-wide upheaval which could in turn have induced the President or the Army Chief to force Mr. Nawaz Sharif to quit. However the defect in this theory was that Mrs. Benazir Bhutto and the other Opposition leaders were the last persons who could afford to trigger violence as that could have consolidated an often bickering establishment against it.

As the deadline approached, and the Government made it clear that it was not in a mood to permit the Long March, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto and her associates took pains to point out

that their programme was entirely peaceful in intent. They also began to be a bit fuzzy about the proposal for a sit-in. While they might have been successful in convincing the people about the peaceful nature of their proposed programme, they could never explain how they thought their objectives could be made to materialise. Neither was Mr. Nawaz Sharif about to step down nor was Mr. Ghulam Isaq Khan in any apparent mood to sack him.

For its part the Government put out that the PDA had planned the programme with quite different objectives from the ones it had stated. At one level, it was to claim, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto was merely interested in launching a "media blitz" to boost her flagging fortunes. Rather more fancifully it claimed that Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, apprehending that the Government by successfully implementing its economic programme would gain an unshakable hold on power, had decided to launch her protest to both sabotage the economic programme and to retain the political support which she was in danger of losing.

If the Government was as sure of its ground as it claimed there was little reason why it should not have allowed the Long March to proceed. Few would concede that any sit-in, even if staged, could be prolonged considering the onset of winter and the decline of militancy in the PDA politics for many years. The onus would have been on Mrs. Benazir Bhutto to show that she did have the kind of popular support that she claimed. By virtually paralyzing the country to prevent the Long March from becoming a success, the Government only seemed to substantiate her claim that she was the kind of politician who could bring the country to a standstill.

THE REGION

No impact likely on Indo-U.S. ties

Dilip Mukerjee

NEW DELHI

Partisan politics stops at the water's edge. This American adage underlines the truth that U.S. foreign policy is based on a national consensus deriving from the country's perception of its interests. It follows from this that the differences, which figure in Indo-U.S. relations under Mr George Bush will continue to be as just troublesome during Mr Bill Clinton's tenure in the White House.

In fairness, however, it should be added that the factors contributing also to an unprecedented warmth between New Delhi and Washington in recent months, as high-lighted by growing contacts in the military field, will retain their relevance because of the underlying geopolitical realities, chief among them being India's proximity to the Gulf.

As Mr Clinton said in a major statement of foreign policy in New York last April, the end of the cold war does not mean the end of danger in the world. "Even as we restructure our defence" in the light of the collapse of the main adversary, the Soviet Union, "we just prepare for new threats" of regional and ethnic conflicts. This means a U.S. need for access to the Gulf in case the region faces another intra-mural crisis, a context in which India's participation in "co-operative vigilance" could be helpful by way of staging facilities for aircraft and naval vessels. This perception will obviously count as much with Mr Clinton as it does with the Pentagon and the state department under Mr Bush.

In other words, there is no reason to expect any change in the tenor of an improving relationship though there may be some difference in how Mr Clin-

ton and his associates put across their concerns or in the choice they make from among available instruments to gain a particular objective such as non-proliferation.

Democrats have always been very much concerned about the dangers stemming from the spread of nuclear weapons, though it can be argued that the legislation in this regard spear-headed by Mr Jimmy Carter following India's 1974 test would have been put in place just as readily by a Republican President. But it also needs to be noted that both Democrats and Republicans have been equally pragmatic in dealing with nuclear hold-outs as evident from waivers agreed upon by Democrat-dominated Congress to allow U.S. aid to Pakistan in deference to strategic compulsions of the cold war. From this one can safely infer that an executive led by Mr Clinton will allow India the time and opportunity — as the Bush administration did — to adjust its nuclear stance to meet current international concerns.

Indian policy-makers will, however, have to keep in mind that Mr Clinton is keen on giving the International Atomic Energy (IAEA) the authority to undertake surprise inspections in member countries as a safeguard against the development of clandestine facilities *a la Iraq*. It can be presumed that nations will be given notice that barring access to the IAEA will make them liable to U.N. sanctions.

Human rights constitute another field in which a Clinton presidency many turn out to be more uncomfortable than either those of Mr Ronald Reagan or Mr Bush. Mr Clinton has accused the Republican administration of continuing to "coddle

(China's) aging rulers with contempt for democracy and human rights" and said there was no justification for doing so. A report in *Tribune* by its correspondent cites him as saying that India has been discriminated against in this regard. Even so, there is reason for concern that India's record in this respect in Punjab and Kashmir may invite harsher scrutiny once Democrats take over.

By the same token, Democrats are likely to be unforgiving of the export of terrorism from Pakistan by way of weapons, training and cash. The threat to name Pakistan as guilty of this may, therefore, become far more real. But it is just as well that New Delhi is already trying to respond to the criticisms it has been facing from Western human rights organisations as evident from the plans being drawn up for a statutory commission to prevent abuses and the consultations being held with Kashmiri leaders to revive the political process. India may well have to move faster and faster to keep out of trouble.

In the economic arena to which Democrats are committed to giving priority, things may become marginally worse not only for India but other third world traders because of Mr Clinton's promise to open up markets for American goods and services. Questions of market access and safeguards for intellectual property rights may well become a more important factor in the U.S. relationship with nations than they have been so far. The fact that provisions like Super 301 now find place in the statute book is because a Democrat-dominated Congress so wanted, as New Delhi would need to remember in dealing with the incoming U.S. administration.

The Last Marxist Tragedy

Rajiva Wijesinha

I got to Cuba, finally, 33 years after the revolution, 31 years after the Bay of Pigs fiasco that had seemed then to sanctify that revolution. I had been particularly anxious to get there soon, for it seemed inevitable that Cuba too would soon change, like all the other Marxist regimes that had crumbled so dramatically; and I wanted to see it before then.

It had after all been in the sixties when I was growing up, a unique phenomenon, a Communist regime firmly entrenched it seemed in the West. True, it had never been part of adolescent mythology, the way Vietnam had been, but with what we knew as the triumphant courage of Fidel Castro and the idealistic fervour of Che Guevara, it had been a force to reckon with in the run up to the heady student sixties.

At the time, and for years thereafter, in some sense at least it had seemed an ideal. Reading in subsequent years about the repression that had developed, the stifling of dissent, the insistence on conformity, the building up of privileged elites, the desperate urge to flee of so many, one had begun to wonder. But even so, some air of achievement had clung to the name, an air exemplified by the remarks of a very British delegate at the Conference I was attending in Jamaica, who remarked on the sense of hopelessness and desolation he felt on that Caribbean island. Cuba on the contrary, he commented, had pursued a very different model of development, designed to produce concrete benefits for all its people and even if things were not going all that well now, the ideal had been admirable and something surely had been achieved.

And so indeed it had. Health care was, one gathered, excellent, and the educational system

catered to everyone, so that the awful deprivation so many were doomed to by birth alone elsewhere in the Western hemisphere was not experienced here. But despite such achievements, the general standard of living was deplorable. The life that the regime had succeeded in achieving for its citizens, healthy and widely literate as they might be, was pitiful. They suffered from rationing, from shortages, from widespread stagnation. The most common occupation was queueing, for coffee from roadside stalls in the morning, for orange juice (you had to bring your own glass, or else you got none, for the vendors only had bucketsful, and one large jug to pour out), for buses, for clothes, for ice-cream. Of sustained productive activity there was little. 1992 was of course particularly unfortunate. Castro had just made a speech in which he talked of further austerities, and certainly the country was going through its worst crisis in years, after the withdrawal of the Soviet subsidies it had so long enjoyed. Certainly the Americans were turning the screws, even generally speaking liberal Congressmen voting to tighten sanctions in the hope that economic collapse might necessitate change. Such ruthlessness seemed appalling. Yet was there an alternative? — given that the regime in Cuba showed no signs of adjusting itself to reality.

For the reality it should have admitted to itself was that the present state of collapse was primarily its own fault. It had no business to be so dependent still on Soviet subsidies. After 30 years surely it could have produced something of its own, been less dependent on charity for energy, for food, for the very basis of life. It had not done so, everything produced locally had to be exported, I was told, to help earn what was now recognized as real money,

so as to pay for fuel. The result was rigid rationing, milk only for children, four eggs per person, half a pound of chicken a month, one pair of shoes a year, and after queuing desperately for these, I gathered, the supplies were liable suddenly to run-out before many of these who had stood for hours could be satisfied.

There were hardly any shops, only occasional outlets open for very limited periods to supply one or other of the few commodities of which supplies were available. Restaurants did not exist, in the sense which we understand the term. For coffee, in the morning, one had to queue at little outlets that served only that, little splashes of black coffee more often than not in makeshift receptacles of newspaper. Snacks in the evening could be obtained from vans after one had queued to get into the areas where they were served. One or almost two varieties anywhere in town, dough with some sort of flavouring, no meat at all.

I did finally find what I took to be a restaurant; but there was no choice as to what one could eat. The tired-looking waiter simply pointed at the next table when I asked for a menu. All there was spaghetti with watery tomato sauce, served with a side dish of rice and beans, boiled up tastelessly together. There was nothing to drink either, no beer, no soft drinks, no coffee, only water

[But there was an exception to all this. That was the shops, and restaurants, that catered to tourists, as well as to anyone else who was able to pay in dollars. Even in such places there were some limitations. The coffee for example had run out at breakfast at the hotel I stayed at, and there was no jam. But there was certainly more than there was anywhere else, which was the case too at the shops in the hotels and in designated tourist areas, the only places where one could freely obtain, not only items such as postcards

and batteries (which could arguably be classified as luxury goods), but also have necessities such as toothpaste.

The problem for the vast majority of Cubans was that you had to pay for such things in dollars — or in a bizarre invention, such as I had never seen before, not even in the Soviet Union in Brezhnev's darkest days; specially designated tourist money. This too came in pesos, as did ordinary Cuban money, but the exchange rate was one to one, a far cry from the twenty to one that once was offered over and over again, all over the town. In theory one was not meant to make such exchanges, but in practice one had to, to use the buses for instance, for the conductors did not know what to do with tourist money, and one quite patronisingly scorned the tourist coin I gave him and let me travel free. It was a telling commentary on the staff in the tourist shops, who insisted on what was deemed the more valuable money, which most Cubans doubtless would not have had access to. The lunacy of the system came home to me most tellingly at the Bodeguila de Medalin, where Hemingway had been a habitue before the revolution. The fact was now being ruthlessly exploited in a grossly capitalistic fashion. You had to pay dollars, or the equivalent in tourist pesos to drink there now. The Cubans themselves, the vast majority who were not privileged to possess dollars, the natives whose company presumably Hemingway had relished, were no longer welcome.

And this it seemed to me was the obvious sign of a defeat much sadder than one could have conceived of, thirty years ago; that Cuba had enshrined the dollar, icon of the United States, to estates, to establish a privileged class, with a status far far higher than that of the average citizen.

Typical of this disgraceful situation was what went on at Havana's most distinctive site, the ice-cream parlour Coppelia

that has flourished now for years in a large tent-like structure in a park. Cubans queue up in hundreds, from eight in the morning even on what are supposed to be working days, to enter the tent or the various enclosures round about it, to eat ice-cream. They tend to have to wait three or four hours for the privilege.

Upstairs however, into one parlour, one can troop in straight away without waiting, if one has dollars. The service in them was much better, the doctor in front of me in the regular queue said sadly. I had in fact been there the previous day, and I was to find out graphically that this was true. Much better too, I was to discover was the choice of what was available. It was no wonder that the doctor was surprised I did not exercise the privilege possession of real money entitled me to.

But on this second day I was determined to endure what the Cubans have to; until more than two hours had passed that is. At that point I must confess, I grew impatient, and jumped the queue. It was easy to do this, for I simply slipped into one of the outside enclosures by a side entrance through which I had noticed the attendants letting in people they knew. I was even able to save my conscience in that I did not actually deprive anyone of them since I sat at a table where there were two little children already, the system that operated was that people in the queues had to wait until the head waiter signalled to the door-keeper that a table was free, which usually happened long after customers had left, since none of the attendants seemed to feel any obligation to expedite anything.

I took an hour to finish, which was the time it took to be served twice, and also provided refills for the children at my table. All this cost me less than one dollar, at the black-market rate at which I had obtained my Cuban pesos. That was the level of pricing, not only for ice-creams, or coffee, or bus travel, or even the de-

lightful ballet performance by a variety of young stars, from a range of countries including the United States. But choice was woefully limited; and when I finally left Coppelia the good doctor who had come there before me with his wife and children, who had now been waiting for over three hours, was still in the queue, still a little distance from the zealously if not efficiently guarded main entrance to the tent.

The proliferation of inefficiency seemed to be the most prominent characteristic of the regime. Obviously, the main problem for statist socialism is the absence of a system of incentives for employees to give of their best and perhaps the problem is insuperable. In Cuba however no attempt appeared to have been made at all to introduce any efficiency measures, or to get employees personally involved to some degree at least in their work.

The bus station provided a bizarre example of this. The desk at which tickets were, finally, to be obtained had half a dozen people behind it, but most of the time they did nothing at all. Occasionally, on strips of paper torn from already used sheets, one would write on the reverse a string of the same numbers; generally more than were required, for on two or three occasions I saw them count the number they had written and tear up the excess.

The numbers that were not torn up were given out to passengers who had got to the top of the queue. This was determined by one of the expectant passengers themselves, as they all clustered around benches marked with the various destinations. The selected passenger wrote up a list on a piece of scrap paper, which he or she read out at intervals to ensure that people were still waiting. Names kept being crossed out, and the list rewritten on still more scrap, until finally, at whatever it seemed arbitrary time the list was

(Continued on page 14)

Soviet Bureaucracy: A Composite Class

Reggie Siriwardene

There is no doubt that the self-confidence with which Bolsheviks were headed with the October insurrection and their refusal to compromise with the moderate socialists were bolstered by their conviction that a large European revolution was in sight. Commenting on this fact, Isaac Deutscher raises the question 'whether Lenin and Trotsky would have acted as they did, or whether they would have acted with the same determination, if they had taken a soberer view of international revolution and foreseen that in the course of decades their example would not be imitated in any other country.'¹¹ Deutscher goes on to say: "History produced the great illusion and planted and cultivated it in the brains of the most soberly realistic leaders when she needed the motive power of illusion to further her own work."¹² It is a pity that even so independent and intelligent a thinker as Deutscher succumbs to the habit, so common among Marxists, of not merely anthropomorphising but even deifying history. It wasn't 'history' that planted in the Bolsheviks' brain the illusion of the imminence of the European revolution: the illusion was self-created, and fostered by their faith in the Marxist doctrine that the contradictions of Western capitalism had reached breaking-point.

By 1923, however, Lenin had to reckon with the fact that the European proletariat had not come to the rescue of the beleaguered Soviet state, and the fiasco in that year of the attempted revolution in Germany made the reality all the more inescapable. By that time Lenin was deeply troubled by the internal course of Soviet society and its state as well. In one of the last articles he wrote out of these

preoccupations, 'Better Fewer, but Better', he found a fortifying hope in the prospect no longer of European but of Asian revolution:

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the over-whelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.¹³

When I read this passage, remembering Lenin's discouraged reflections during the same period on the bureaucratisation of Soviet society and of the party itself, I sense in the vehement assertions — 'there cannot be the slightest doubt', 'fully and absolutely assured' — the attempt of the dying man to sustain his own faith in the face of assailing doubts.¹⁴

II

I shall return later to the significance of the shift in Lenin's thinking in his last stages from an European to an Asian perspective. But first, I must now address frontally the question: Were the Russian Revolution, and the state to which it gave birth, socialist?

There are two possible ways in which this question can be confronted assuming, that is, that one isn't a True Believer for whom in the former Soviet Union all was for the best of all possible worlds. One way

is to take all the attributes of a socialist state and society as found in the writings of Marx and Engels, and those of Lenin before the revolution, and put them in one pan of the scale. In the other pan one would put the observable features of the Soviet state and society, and weigh them one against the other. There can be no doubt what the result would be. This is, in effect, what most dissident Marxists (dissident, that is, from Soviet orthodoxy) have done. They have started with an ideal model of what socialism should be, constructed out of the classic texts, judged the Soviet Union by it, and found it wanting. On this intellectual road, once one has come to the conclusion that the Soviet state deviated from 'true socialism' the next questions will be: What went wrong, and when? When did the Revolution lose its innocence? When was the apple eaten, and who was responsible for the Fall?

In the Soviet Union under perestroika, from about 1988, large numbers of intellectuals were engaged in asking these questions, with indubitable sincerity, and often considerable heartsearching and anguish. When did the Revolution go off course? With the great purges and trials in the 'thirties? With forced collectivisation and break-neck industrialisation? With the establishment of the monolithic party at the end of the 'twenties? With the death of Lenin and the rise of Stalin to power? With the creation of the one-party state and the banning of factions in the ruling party in 1921? With the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1918? Not surprisingly, some of the intellectuals who pursued this quest ended with the conclusion that the original sin lay in the

October Revolution itself. Today the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, similar questions are being raised and answers offered by non-Soviet Marxists, as one may see from a year's perusal of *New Left Review* or *Economic and Political weekly*.

The sterility of that line of thinking — starting with an ideal model of socialism and measuring the Soviet state and society against it — has been most lucidly and cogently brought, out by the late G. V. S. de Silva:

The aberration theory: The Soviet Union is an aberration (largely due to Stalin). It is by no means a model of a true socialist society. This view was largely reinforced by the Chinese experience. Here at last a true Socialist model. But now there are doubts about China too. Is China also an aberration (due to Deng Xiao Ping)? And what of the countries of Eastern Europe, N. Korea, Indo-China, Cuba, not to mention Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, South Yemen, Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau etc? Are they all aberrations? This is a very idealist position to take reality is an aberration and only the idea of Socialism is real.¹⁵

A related point was made in his own way by the former East German dissident, Rudolf Bahro, in the course of his critique of the Eastern European socialist regimes when they were still in power.

Theories of deformation are all rooted in a Romantic manipulation of history. If only people, especially those in the Bolshevik party, had willed more intensely and acted more wisely, if instead of actually existing socialism, we had genuine socialism, or at least a different and better road! There is no need to be fatalistic to distrust conclusions of this kind. They do not provide any key to history or to the present, and neither therefore to the future of our system.¹⁶

Besides the forms of wishful thinking mentioned by Bahro,

there are others to which dissident Marxists have been prone. If only Lenin had lived... If only Trotsky had succeeded Lenin... If only the social-democratic leadership — or Stalinist, according to taste — hadn't aborted the European revolution... all these and similar fantasies err by elevating individuals and their subjectivities to the level of the decisive factor in human history.

It is true that social and historical forces do not operate otherwise than through the agencies of thinking, feeling and acting persons. But one can say that since these force — whether people in the mass or material and ideological circumstances — are so much larger than the individual actor — even the exceptional individual — what happens is that the leader who makes his mark on history does so because he is peculiarly fitted by his personal attributes to play the role demanded of him. In the specific circumstances of the rise of dictatorship in post-revolutionary Russia, the relationship between historical development and individual personalities is, I think, correctly defined by Bahro.

As Plato, already discovered, the existence of *homo politicus* is tragic when 'he has not found the state that suits him.' This was the experience of Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin and many other former revolutionaries, who had *subjectively* anticipated a different state than that which was the actual results of their efforts... They lost power because *they* did not fit into the state that was in the process of development. Stalin won power because he did fit it.¹⁷

Bahro's strictures on 'theories of deformation' apply even to the book which has been probably the most influential, and is certainly the most eloquent, of all those writings which espouse the view that the Soviet Union was a 'deformed workers' state' — Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*. As a polemic against

the Stalinist regime and an exposure of its pretensions to have achieved the perfectly classless and democratic society of Marx and Lenin's dreams, it is a brilliant feat of political pamphleteering. As political analysis it is seriously flawed by the implications inherent in its title and their development in the body of the book. Once again, the concept of 'betrayal' assumes an original uncorrupted condition which has been perfidiously violated. Whether one thinks of Stalin as an individual or the Soviet bureaucracy as a class, the charge of 'betrayal' belongs more to the realm of political mythology than to that of rational social theory. If the Revolution was 'betrayed' in the sense that the hopes and aspirations of those who participated in it remained unrealised, then the betrayal was less by any individual or group than by social reality itself. As we have seen, the original Marxist vision assumed a revolution emerging out of the economic, political and cultural conditions of an advanced capitalist society. No such revolution materialised, and the undeveloped Russia that the Bolsheviks inherited could not have provided a substitute.

The concept of the Soviet Union as a 'deformed workers' state' that became part of the common parlance of the Trotskyist movement raises the question: At what stage does one suppose the deformation to have taken place? One could use the concept to imply that in comparison with the ideal socialist model envisaged by Marx, the Soviet state was deformed from the start, like a thalidomide baby emerging from its mother's womb.¹⁸ But that would be to admit that the 'model' was an irrelevant criterion in the given historical circumstances. Or one could use the description to suggest that the Soviet state was born healthy but suffered later maiming. The historical evidence doesn't support this latter view because strong and persistent criticisms of the bureaucratisation of the Soviet state were

being made by revolutionary participants of sympathetic observers from the early days of the Revolution — notably by Rosa Luxemburg and by the small oppositional factions in Bolshevik party from 1918 onwards.¹⁹

Trotsky's explanation for the triumph of bureaucracy in the Soviet Union relies heavily on the circumstance of the isolation of the Revolution in an undeveloped country with an economy of scarcity:

The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It "knows" who is to get something and who has to wait.²⁰

This parable of Trotsky is true as far as it goes; but in order to explain the power of bureaucracy in post-revolutionary Russia, we have to add other factors, some of which are indeed recognised by Trotsky elsewhere in *The Revolution Betrayed*. The fundamental task of the post-revolutionary era was to lay the basis for an industrial revolution through primitive capital accumulation in the hands of the state; and with the scarcity of resources, this had to be accompanied by a drastic restriction of consumption, which necessitated coercion. Given the initially low cultural level of the masses and the influx into the industrialising cities of a raw mass of peasant labour, the requirement of a rigid labour discipline further strengthened the power of the bureaucracy. Two other factors, however, that Trotsky was little disposed to recognise were the Byzantine traditions of the Russian state, now refracted through the Communist Party, and the nationally heterogeneous character of the

former empire which had to be held together by the steel frame of the monolithic party. Still less, however, was Trotsky ready to admit, at this time of his life, the inherently authoritarian tendencies of the Bolshevik party as a contributory element in the bureaucratisation of the Soviet state. This blindness was in spite of the fact that in the pre-revolutionary years he had conducted a bitter controversy with Lenin over the closed and tightly controlled party organisation that the latter stood for. In the course of that controversy he had given expression to a memorably worded prophecy that Bolshevism would naturally gravitate towards a centralisation of power: 'The party organisation (the caucus) at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organisation; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee.'²¹ Trotsky, however, had gone back on this insight in mid-1917 when he joined the Bolshevik party, and in the early post-revolutionary years he had himself participated in the fulfilment of the first part of his prophecy: the process by which the party organisation substituted itself for the masses. By the time he wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* in exile, he had become a victim of its later stages: the substitution of the Central Committee for the party, and the substitution of the dictator for the Central Committee.²²

(To be Continued)

Notes

11 Deutscher (1954), p. 293.

12 Ibid., pp. 293-294.

13 Lenin (1977a), p. 725.

14 The article 'Better Fewer, but Better' is in fact fundamentally concerned with making proposals for reorganisation of the state apparatus, which Lenin describes as 'so deplorable not to say wretched'.

15 de Silva (1988), p. 242. It must be added that it is probably G. V. S. de Silva's earlier intellectual affiliations with Maoism that make him address the position of those who equate Mao's China with 'true socialism'. Trotskyists, on the other hand, would take the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky in power as the ideal norm, though this conception be as vulnerable.

16 Bahro (1978), p. 139, I have not been able to verify whether G. V. S. de Silva was influenced by Bahro's book though there are some striking affinities in ideas between it and his essay. De Silva's essay was published in full (posthumously) only in 1988, but was apparently written in 1979-80 (personal communication from Charles Abeysekera). Bahro's book appeared in German in 1977 and in English translation in 1978.

17 Bahro (1978), p. 116.

18 It is noteworthy that Trotsky's phrase echoes that of Lenin, 'a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions', which he used as early as 1920 to describe the Soviet state — and ironically enough, in a debate against Trotsky, who wanted the trade unions absorbed into the state apparatus.

19 Luxemburg (1961) contains her main critique, the pamphlet on the Russian Revolution, especially Chapter VI on 'The Problem of Dictatorship', pp. 68-72. An excellent account of the early 'libertarian' Bolshevik faction can be found in Farber (1990).

20 Trotsky (1945), p. 112.

21 Deutscher (1954), p. 90.

22 It must be said here that apart from the fact that Trotsky was by temperament little capable of self-critical reflection, he would in exile have been disinclined to look back on his former differences with Lenin because the ruling Stalinist group had exploited these differences to the full in their propagandist campaigns against him, and he was concerned to establish himself as the true ideological heir of Lenin.

The Last...

(Continued from page 11)

closed, the lucky ones left at the top were designated potential recipients of tickets for the next available bus, on the following day if one was lucky.

That at least was how it seemed to me things were meant to work. It proved impossible to find out exactly, even at what was supposed to be the information desk. After two long drawn out visits to the bus station, the second at dawn, I decided to give up. The effort of getting out of Havana was clearly not worth it. There was only one bus a day to Trinidad which was the city I'd hoped to get to, it would certainly be almost impossible to get to, a second destination and it was also quite likely that I would fail to get back on time for my flight even with a couple of days grace if I had got to Trinidad. It seemed more sensible to head back early to Jamaica.

(To be continued)

Among five accords Meech-Lake is a special case

John M. Richardson and Jr. Jianxin Wang

Their key role in bringing the Nimieri regime to power was recognized. President Nimieri was personally committed to reaching some accord and empowered a skillful negotiator, in the person of Vice President Alier, who could effectively communicate with both sides. Signing of the accord was followed by implementation of its provisions, again under the direction of Vice President Alier.

In contrast to the Sudan, negotiations leading to The Punjab Accord failed to involve key actors with strong interests in the negotiations. The accord provided for major concessions, involving land and water rights, from the leaders of Hariana province. Prime Minister Gandhi first overestimated his ability to persuade recalcitrant provincial leaders and then lost interest in the process when the configuration of forces in Indian provincial politics changed. In failing to ensure the support of militant Sikh leaders, Gandhi committed an error that he was to repeat in the Indo-Lanka accord, two years later, with equally disastrous consequences.

Among the five accords, Meech-Lake is a special case because Canada is a modern nation and because there has been little violent conflict between the English and the *Quebecois*. However there are parallels between the problems encountered in ratifying this accord and those in the Punjab case. Implementation of each accord failed in part because the negotiations excluded parties with strong interests and effective veto power. Prime Minister Mulroney was so focused on resolving outstanding issues between Quebec and the

federal government that he neglected the concerns of other provinces and failed to see the impact of the accord on Canada's indigenous peoples.

When one compares recommendations from studies of conflict resolution against what transpired in negotiating and implementing the five peace accords the shortcomings of the accords become apparent. Parties to the accords, especially "external" third parties made commitments that could not, or would not be kept. The effective veto power to key actors, who were excluded from the negotiations, was either underestimated or ignored. Thus, most of the ethnic peace accords failed to establish communication, build trust, identify mutual interests or resolve fundamental issues among major protagonists. This offers grounds for hope, not pessimism. It suggests that negotiators of ethnic peace accords have something to learn from studies of conflict resolution and that the process of negotiating such accords can be improved.

HOW CAN NEGOTIATORS DO BETTER?

Effective Mediation and Conflict Regulation

Studies of ethnic conflict by Horowitz (1985), Azar (1991) and others provide convincing evidence that violent ethnic conflicts will rarely, if ever be "resolved" by the protagonists alone except through the capitulation, destruction or extermination of one of them. But "conflict resolution" through military victory is likely to be an uncertain, costly, destructive and time consuming process (Richardson and

Samarasinghe, 1992). Even though third party intervention was largely ineffective in negotiating and implementing the accords discussed in this book, we believe that a strong case can be made for effective third party intervention. But what type of third party role is most likely to bring warring parties together and mediate a successful accord. Principles of effective mediation, as described in the literature, may contribute to a successful outcome, but they will not be sufficient. To be effective in resolving ethnic conflicts, third party negotiators must be more than skillful. They must be (or represent) key political actors in their own right who bring influence, strong interests in resolving the conflict and substantial resources to the negotiation process.

Readers will recognize that this conclusion is consistent with Saadia Touval's work on the Middle East peace process (1982) and differs from the view that an effective role can be played by a dispassionate, technically competent mediator who is not politically involved. Although Touval is primarily writing about international conflicts, I believe his findings are relevant to the concerns of this paper. The more-than-thirty year armed struggle between Israelis and Arabs certainly qualifies as a protracted social conflict.

According to Touval, mediating powers in the Arab-Israeli conflict had strong national security interests in the outcome and were often biased toward one side or the other. However bias did not appear to limit their effectiveness. Serious negotiations were more likely when

a mediating power could exert political pressure that would bring the protagonists to the negotiating table. When negotiations commenced, the ability of the mediator to provide benefits for both sides and to reduce risks that adversaries assumed by making concessions were key factors contributing to success. Successful mediators were able to create a "win-win" situation by providing positive incentives to both sides and serving as credible guarantors against backsliding or cheating.

The Camp David Accords illustrate many of these points. After thirteen days of arduous negotiations, Egypt and Israel reached agreement on the terms of a peace treaty and on Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula. There has been peace between the two nations for more than a decade. The United States used not only political pressure, but the prestige of the U. S. Presidency to bring top-level representatives of two major protagonists to the negotiating table. President Carter provided not only good offices, but substantial financial incentives and military guarantees. In addition to these political, financial and military resources, the President and his aides used many of the techniques of "problem solving" negotiation that have been described above.

The story of Camp David Accords illustrates that partial resolution of ethnic conflicts may sometimes be possible without military victory; it also illustrates that the task of framing a sustainable ethnic peace accord should not be undertaken lightly, nor with any certainty about the outcome. Moreover, Camp David may be a model of limited generality. Tensions between Israel and Egypt were high, but a number of circumstances, not easily replicable, contributed to the results achieved. Negotiations were preceded by major political changes in both Israel and Egypt, catalyzed by President Sadat's trip to Israel and speech before the Israeli Parlia-

ment. Both Egypt and Israel were already politically beholden to the United States and were major recipients of U. S. Aid. President Carter was perhaps uniquely skilled among U. S. Presidents as a peacemaker and willing to risk the reputation of his Presidency on a favorable outcome.

The circumstances of many ethnic conflicts are less favorable than those faced by the Camp David negotiators. Members of conflicting groups may be intermingled, as in Northern Ireland, Croatia, India and Sri Lanka, making clear territorial demarcations difficult. There may be multiple groups and divided authority on one or both sides, complicating the negotiation process. Leaders of militant groups may have little predisposition toward the give and take of negotiation and see few gains from a peaceful outcome. There may be more than one external power with a stake in the outcome; some external powers may see greater benefits from prolonging conflict than from conflict resolution. Moreover it would be inaccurate to label the Camp David results "conflict resolution." Rather, the accords managed to reduce friction between the two protagonists sufficiently so that further negotiation, rather than the use of force became a mutually acceptable basis for managing potentially violent conflicts and beginning to resolve outstanding disputes.

Mediation has a role to play in resolving violent ethnic conflicts and may sometimes provide a successful basis for long-term conflict management. But given the costs and intractability of such conflicts, implementing conflict reduction or conflict management strategies before violence breaks out would seem to be far more promising and cost effective. Paradoxically, we have far less detailed knowledge about conflict avoidance in ethnically diverse societies than about the minutiae of negotiation, mediation and arbitration. Nordlin-

ger's work on conflict regulating practices identified a promising area of research that, until recently, has received little attention. Horowitz's work on mechanisms of conflict reduction and his comparative analysis of structural vs. preferential policies to reduce ethnic conflict represents a significant step forward. Work in this genre can be helpful in preventing the outbreak of violent conflict and in building a durable peace following a successful mediation effort.

Recapitulation

Here is a summary of our major conclusions:

1. If violent conflict has broken out, negotiating a successful ethnic peace accord, without military victory on one side, will require third party intervention.
2. The third party should be substantially more powerful, politically, than any protagonist, should have a strong interest in reaching an accord and be willing to commit substantial resources to implementing its provisions. The United Nations or a regional group such as the European Common Market, ASEAN, SAARC, OAS or OAU might play the third party role if group mediation is backed by major powers.
3. Third party leaders must resist the temptation to try imposing a solution using military force. The use of neutral peace keeping forces, under conditions agreed to by all key protagonists, may be a temporary expedient.
4. Third party negotiators should be committed to establishing communication, building trust and identifying areas of mutual interest among the protagonists.
5. Use of the "workshop format" and other conflict resolution techniques can be

an important part of the negotiation process, but should be viewed as complementary to the role of a politically powerful, highly committed third party.

6. All key actors with potential veto power over implementation of an accord should be involved in the negotiations.
7. Conflict management is probably a more desirable and attainable goal for ethnic peace accords than conflict resolution. Many ethnic conflicts may be manageable, but not resolvable.
8. Successful negotiation of an accord should be viewed as the beginning, not the end of the conflict management process.
9. Potential third party intervenors as well as protagonists should recognize that the most propitious and cost effective time for managing ethnic differences is before violent conflict breaks out.
10. Among conflict management strategies found in the literature, Donald Horowitz's proposals, emphasizing design of political structures to mitigate, diffuse and channel ethnic tensions appear to be the most promising.

As the 1990s begin, a new generation of political leaders is grappling with questions of constitutional and institutional design in ethnically diverse nations. These leaders need to understand more about the causes of ethnic conflict and how alternative institutional structures can either mitigate or exacerbate ethnic tensions. Further, the costs and benefits of attempts to resolve ethnic tensions by force need to be realistically appraised. When tension does lead to conflict, leaders of contending groups and potential third party intervenors need to know which negotiation and mediation

strategies are likely to be most effective. Those of us who are scholars need to research these areas more fully. But much is already known and there are lessons to be learned from accords that succeeded only partially, or not at all. While seeking new knowledge, we need to communicate what we know now to political leaders in ways that are clear, powerful and relevant. And we need to apply our current knowledge more widely and effectively.

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DYNASTY

Those days, what days!
 Much psychology didn't go
 With school masters ways.
 Not much time for the grappling ones
 Condemned as Drop-outs to become Bums
 Or may be creepers for white geezers
 Upcountry in the Slave camps.

Fancy then what grave shock
 Upheaves their venerable minds bed rock
 Seeing such black sheep and scape goats
 In VIP pens of famed Airports.

In their time they hadn't known
 Shortcut to Cabinet and Board room
 Meant throwing up the mental switch
 And clambering on for a blank, dull, hitch
 On the Sales Van or Bandwagon,
 With the Song of the Road, the Drop-outs Code
 To Cabinet or Corporate Board.

U. Karunatilake

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The Federal Alternative

S. Sathananthan

4.7. The "foremost place" for Buddhism

The failure to switch over to the lunar calendar did not deter the demand for a change in the secular nature of the Sri Lankan State. The secular State was transformed when the 1972 Republican Constitution accorded Buddhism a "foremost place". The meaning of this phrase was explained by a leading Buddhist monk and Mahanayake of Malwate Chapter, Ven Sirimalwate Ananda Mahanayake: "Buddhism should be given priority and other religions be given reasonable prominence" (*Ceylon Daily News*, 18 March 1989, p.1). What constituted "reasonable prominence" for other religions was of course decided by Buddhists.

4.8. On two official languages

A longstanding Tamil demand has been that the Tamil language must be an official language. In response to pressure from India under the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord, the GSL amended Article 18 of the Constitution in 1987 to make Tamil the second official language. But even at this late stage, the Sinhalese ruling fraction lacked the wisdom to give gracefully that which cannot be held by force; they lacked "higher nationalism". Their cultural myopia led them to amend Article 18 in such manner as to retain the primacy of Sinhala language; the amended Article read as follows:

"(1) The official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala.

(2) Tamil also shall be an official language".

In Article 18, the subordinate position of Tamil is emphasized by specifying that Sinhala is THE official language whilst Tamil is AN official language.

The subordination is further underlined by inserting the word "also" when referring to Tamil. More importantly, the words

"Sri Lanka" were excluded in (2) above. This could convey the impression that the Article does NOT specify that Tamils shall be an official language of the whole of Sri Lanka. If Tamils and Muslims were given "proper recognition and respect", then Sinhala and Tamil languages should have been given equal status. And the Article should have simply said: "The official languages of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala and Tamil". Today, Article 18 continues to do violence to the minor nationalities.

In short, the Appraisal's assertion that Sinhalese did not pursue national unity "sufficiently seriously" is a gross misrepresentation. The unitary State controlled by the Sinhalese ruling fraction has deliberately and systematically denied precisely the "proper recognition and respect" to Tamil and Muslim nationalities which the Appraisal implied could exist and the lack of which was well documented (Jayewardena, 1985).

Despite the absence of "higher nationalism" and the unlikelihood of its emergence, the Appraisal claimed that the demand for federalism and, as a last resort, secession made by Tamils is premature and inappropriate (p. 7, 10). But Sri Lanka is a textbook example where a minor (Tamil) nationality explored over more than three decades numerous ways of resolving the nationality question through negotiations and non-violent agitations within the framework of a unitary State. All such initiatives were repeatedly frustrated by the refusal of Sinhalese leaders to compromise (Wilson, 1988). Indeed, the willingness of Tamil leaders to compromise was misunderstood by Sinhalese leaders as a sign of weakness: thus the Sinhalese MP and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Mr Nimal Karunatilake,

advised the Parliament that in respect of the "Jaffna (Tamil) community... probably the best attitude that should be adopted to all these loud protests is to regard them with a certain amount of indifference, because leaders of their community seem to choose on every occasion to ask for 100 percent and be satisfied with 25 percent" (*Hansard*, vol 33, 1958: 1140).

Sinhalese chauvinism could not have tried harder to pave the way for the emergence of liberation struggles by Tamils.

5. Irrelevance of a unitary State

The Appraisal defended the unitary State on the grounds, firstly, that "ever since 1815 there has been a strong tradition of centralism" (p. 16). However, the British in 1815 established the authoritarian colonial State in Sri Lanka to facilitate unchallenged rule over "natives" and undisturbed plunder of resources (Sathananthan, 1988). To describe the centralized colonial State as a Sri Lankan "tradition" is a gross misreading of history.

The Appraisal believed that an advantage of a unitary State is its "efficiency" (p. 14). But it should be amply evident by now that the inability to manage conflict has revealed the tragic inefficiency of the unitary State in the context of the multinational society in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, the Appraisal described a federal State as "a much too expensive a luxury for a small State" (p. 14). This is nothing new. During Parliamentary debates on the 1956 Official Language Bill, a Sinhalese MP, Mr D P R Gunawardena, claimed that by adopting Sinhala as the sole official language, the State would "save unnecessary expenditure of money" and unnecessary duplication of officials for various types of work" (*Hansard*, vol.24, 1956: 1731), which would otherwise have to be incurred if Sinhala and Tamil are both official languages. Thus, measures necessary to protect the language rights of, and ensure justice to,

minor nationalities were trivialized as "unnecessary" expenditures.

The subsequent staggering social and political cost of the undemocratic language policy — the economic dislocation caused by anti-Tamil pogroms, non-violent resistance and guerilla struggles by Tamils and the their growing political alienation — are well known. But more than three decades later, the *Appraisal* mindlessly repeated that "a unitary system makes for the avoidance of unnecessary expenditure" and "prevents the duplication of establishment costs" (p.14). This assertion is laughable in the face of escalating costs of retaining a unitary State: military expenditure has spiralled over the past few years as the State battled to crush the LTTE; and the allocation of about Rs 12.5 billion for military expenditure in the 1990/91 national budget almost doubled to Rs 25 billion (US\$ 0.6 billion) in 1991/92.

The social and economic costs of creating many hundreds of thousand refugees and disruption of economic activities in the NEP, the political cost nationwide of authoritarianism and violation of human rights, and the geo-political costs of the abridgement of Sri Lanka's sovereignty under the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord are beyond estimation.

Indeed, to say that a federal system is too "expensive" is to admit that the Sri Lankan unitary State incapable of ensuring justice to the minor nationalities; that it has no legitimacy in the eyes of Tamils and Muslims. This confession can only further justify the demand for a separate Tamil State.

A review of the *Appraisal* was published as a newspaper article titled "Is Federalism the answer" (Peiris, 1990), written by a Sinhalese academic, Prof G L Peiris (Law Faculty, and Vice Chancellor of University of Colombo). The author agreed that the unitary Constitution does not permit a federal system and thereby shared the vulgar legalism of the *Appraisal*. He concurred with the fallacy that federalism is a luxury Sri Lanka cannot afford. And he subscribed to the alar-

mist and erroneous claim that a federal system would lead to the future reservation of the NEP for Tamil-speaking peoples only.

In conclusion, he wrote in a moderate and reasonable tone to describe "a sensible idea: let the present constitutional set up have a fair trial". However, before Independence Tamil political leaders had worried that there would be little scope for Tamils to exercise and defend their rights as a people within a unitary (Soulbury) Constitution. They anticipated that Sinhalese would exploit the unitary Constitution to establish political hegemony over Tamils. But in 1945 a Sinhalese member of the State Council, Mr Francis Molamure, also had spoken in a moderate and reasonable tone and requested "the Tamil community... to give us (Sinhalese) a fair chance; to give us a fair trial" and he invited Tamils "to come in with us and enable this Constitution which is offered to us to be given a fair trial... After all let them see, when we have more power in our hands, whether the majority community is going to, as they say, dominate over them or whether the majority community is going to be fair to them" (Debates of the State Council, 1945: 7004). Prof Peiris repeated the almost identical invitation and implicit assurance to Tamils and Muslims today. He surely cannot expect his invitation to be taken seriously.

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Briefly . . .

(Continued from page 1)

SLFP AGAINST MERGER

SLFP leader Mrs Sirimvo Bandaranaike announced in parliament that her party was now against the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. She said that the SLFP was no longer supporting the Democratic People's Alliance manifesto of the 1988 Presidential Election. "The DPA manifesto was defeated by the people", she said.

APC TO DISCUSS AMENDMENT

The All Party Conference (APC) is to be convened to discuss a draft Amendment to the Constitution. The Amendment deals with the time limit on petitions to the Supreme Court in cases alleging fundamental rights.

RONNIE: CASE TO STAND

Prime Minister D. B. Wijetunge told parliament that the Government had no intention of withdrawing the District Court case against former Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel. The case was due to be heard again on December 3.

SURIYAPPERUMA GOES TO COURT

Former SLFP General Secretary J. R. P. Suriyapperuma was granted an enjoining order against the SLFP leadership he applied for to the Colombo District Court. The order prohibits party leader Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike and members of the Central Committee preventing Mr Suriyapperuma exercising his rights as a member of the Central Committee and/or as a vice-president of the party. The court issued summons on the defendants returnable no December 7.

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The Kingdom of Jaffna

Serena Tennekoon

During the latter half of 1984 and early 1985, the *'Kalina Samvada'* (Contemporary Controversies) pages of the Sunday *Divayina* became the forum for three newspaper debates on Sinhala history, culture and identity. The Sinhala daily, *Divayina* (hereafter *Dv.*), and the Sunday *Divayina* — *Divayina Irida Sangrahaya* — as well as their English counterparts are published by the Upali Newspaper Group which was established in 1981 by a Sinhala millionaire entrepreneur, Upali Wijewardena. Although both daily and weekly *Divayina* are newcomers on the competitive Sinhala newspaper market, recent (1985) readership figures indicate that they are the most popular Sinhala newspapers. In the absence of survey data on readership preferences, the success of *Divayina* may be attributed partly to its selective criticism of government policies which is coloured with a strong sense of Sinhala nationalism. While such editorial policies may be formulated in response to the perceived needs of a nationalist readership invariably they also inform and influence mass opinion. In this regard, the *Divayina* newspaper debates represent not only a cross-section of the views of the Sinhala intelligentsia, but also an example of the media's participation in the generation and maintenance of particular kinds of nationalist discourse.

All three debates concerned aspects of historical relations between Sinhala and Tamil. It is my contention that appearing as they did at that particular time, these newspaper debates constituted a culturally familiar mode of discourse within which Sinhala identity and nationalism were examined and reaffirmed.

Since much of the controversy highlighted nationalist versions of history and culture, throughout this chapter I shall use the terms 'history', 'myth', and 'past' loosely to refer to the various interpretations of the past which

were debated. My intentions is not to sift facts from fictions or myths from history, regardless of the extent to which such exercises are even possible. I treat history as a mode of discourse which reveals 'as much about the nature of interpretation itself as it is about the subject matter which is the manifest occasion of its own elaboration'. I analyse history as a cultural-political construct which is caught in the process of (re) composing national identity and examine how the Sinhala have selectively appropriated their past in order to understand the present and shape the future.

The first controversy was sparked by a comment made by a prominent Sinhala lawyer. Gaminii Iriyagolla, in the course of an extensive interview which was published soon after a bomb explosion — which was attributed to Tamil militants — at the Madras Airport in August 1984. Iriyagolla, who has written and spoken on subjects ranging from state irrigation policies to Tamil nationalism on this occasion attempted to refute Tamil claims to a traditional homeland in the north and east. He was especially critical of the notion that an independent Tamil kingdom had been established at Jaffna around the thirteenth century, from which time on Sinhala and Tamil rulers had administered their separate kingdoms until western colonialism transformed domestic politics. Dismissing the Tamil nationalist use of history, Iriyagolla charged,

They the Tamils are fighting to restore the independent Tamil kingdom they say they once had. Yet there was no such thing. And we cannot give them something they never had.

Iriyagolla's denial was premised on a widely-shared understanding of Sinhala identity through time (history) and space (geography), derived mainly from sources such as the

mytho-historical chronicle the Mahavamsa. In post-colonial Sri Lanka, the search for Sinhala national identity remains oriented to a past when they apparently retained undisputed hegemony over the entire island. And within the parameters of such an imagination. It would indeed be difficult to admit the possibility of a separate Tamil kingdom in thirteenth-century Jaffna as well as (by extension) a politically autonomous Tamil region in the north and the east today.

Iriyagolla's reconstruction of history was challenged by Carlo Fonseka, a member of the Medical Faculty at the University of Colombo, who is perhaps better known as a leftist activist and social critic. Armed with the works of two Sinhala historians (K.M. de Silva and Vijaya Samaraweera), Fonseka declared that, contrary to Iriyagolla, Sri Lanka had been politically unified only by four Sinhala kings, and that in the thirteenth century an independent Tamil kingdom had indeed held sway in the north.

Although the initial dispute was between Iriyagolla and Fonseka, it provoked a number of *Divayina* readers to offer their own historical readings and counter-readings. At a fundamental level, Fonseka's critics implicitly agreed that in the thirteenth century, Jaffna appeared to be outside the political control of southern Sinhala administrations. Beyond this different interpretations abounded: that the kingdom of Jaffna was short-lived: that it was not an independent kingdom but a client state of a neighbouring south Indian kingdom; and that it was not a Tamil kingdom because although the population may have been Tamil, their rulers were of Aryan (that is non-Dravidian) stock. Whatever the historical evidence, these claims resonated with the Sinhala political consciousness of 1984. For example the emphasis on thirteenth-century Jaffna as a puppet regime of a south Indian kingdom was strikingly congruent with the widely-shared notion that Tamil Nadu 'harboured terrorists' today and, if

DEMOCRACIES

unchallenged would control the separate Tamil state of Eelam tomorrow. At stake then was not a mere historical detail — the medieval kingdom of Jaffna — but Sinhala hegemony in modern Sri Lanka now endangered by Tamil separatism.

The issue of whether or not in medieval times the north was under Sinhala political control spilled over into a related consideration, the question of original inhabitants. Some contributors to the *Divayina* controversy became preoccupied with establishing the pre-Tamil existence of Sinhala settlements in the north. In this regard, a couple of contributors utilized evidence of ancient Sinhala-Buddhist ruins in the north and east to prove that the Tamils were mere latecomers. And despite some attempts to demonstrate the fluidity of ethnic identities through history, anti-Tamil sentiments surfaced in the rhetoric of P. L. Gomis, 'The original invaders of Lanka were Dravidians. Gomis insisted that the Dravidians could not have been the original settlers of Lanka because they constitute a small population today. This he claimed, proved that the Dravidians came to Lanka as invaders and never as permanent settlers:

It would be accurate to define the Dravidians of North (of Sri Lanka) as descendants of South Indian invaders who came to plunder weak Sinhala kingdoms. They multiplied at random and were unable to sustain a continuous independent kingdom of their own.... This is their true inheritance (*janma jatiya*) which continues to guide even today's Tamil extremists as they murder and plunder from South India.

As is evident in this passage, the past was closely and constantly juxtaposed with the present. Mytho-historical details were not important in and for themselves but as antecedents or models for the understanding of present events. History was a mode of discourse which both facilitated and framed the dis-

cussion of ethnic relations in general and Sinhala identity in particular.

Some of the participants in this debate were sensitive to these meta-historical issues. For instance, Carlo Fonseka pondered that whether a Tamil kingdom existed in the north was ultimately irrelevant to the present ethnic crisis. Another contributor, M. T. Samaranyaka, heightened the absurdity of 'splitting historical hairs' to solve the ethnic crisis by extending the search for 'original' inhabitants to pre-historical limits. The sole Tamil participant in this debate, K. Kandasami, having identified himself as a casualty of the July riots, also agreed with Fonseka, conceding that 'we only need history to build the future'. And, impatient with the surfeit of history, a (Sinhala) contributor, Susil G. Seneviratna, attempted to change the mode of discourse:

It is my belief that the debate on whether there was a historical Tamil kingdom is not concerned with clarifying historical issues. If the Tamils are claiming their rights, it is clear that we (Sinhala) are directing this debate to prove that they don't have such rights. As a result we are covering up the gravest problem we face today and avoiding coming to grips with it. I would like to invite our intellectuals to stop obfuscating the issue and discuss it directly.

It is not entirely clear whether the absence of 'direct' discussion on contemporary nationalist politics was due to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the *Divayina*-reading Sinhala intelligentsia or to the exercise of editorial discretion. If indeed it was the case that *Divayina* readers preferred to contemplate the prevailing conflict tangentially through historical situation rather than directly through the terms of the present, then it would seem that for the Sinhala the past constituted a significant mode of discourse within which they believed the present (and future) could be negotiated and redefined.

(To be continued)

Sri Kantha denies that India and Japan are democracies (L.G. of 15/11). According to how democracy, more specifically liberal democracy, is understood today a country has to meet two criteria to be regarded as democratic. One is that the people should be able to choose their government from among competing political parties at free and fair elections. The other is that the government must respect democratic freedoms, the most important of which is freedom of expression.

It is beyond dispute that India and Japan meet those criteria. That is why they are invariably listed among the democratic countries in the proliferating literature on the subject, for instance in Robert Dahl's books or in Fukuyama's *The End of History*.

Certainly democracy as practised in one country will not exactly replicate what prevails in any other. Cultural determinants, such as the family in South Asia or hierarchy in India and Japan, can be expected to give a localized shape to democracy, and some countries can seem to be less democratic than others. All the same, a country is regarded as democratic provided the two criteria mentioned above are met.

We can, of course, posit an ideal form of democracy and argue that not just India and Japan but the Western countries as well are not properly democratic. Democracy in an idealized form has not been realized anywhere, for which reason Robert Dahl prefers the term "polyarchy" to "democracy". It remains, however, that as Churchill once observed democracy with all its imperfections is the worst form of government, except for all the others.

It is important that we Sri Lankans should not be confused about democracy. That confusion led to the failure to recognize the dangers posed by the brutal and stupid 1977 regime, which spat on democracy and transformed the paradise isle into a blood-drenched horror. The horror continues under our system of "nonsense democracy."

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Izeth Hussain

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