

15
LANKA

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WAR ON POVERTY

— [exclusive report]

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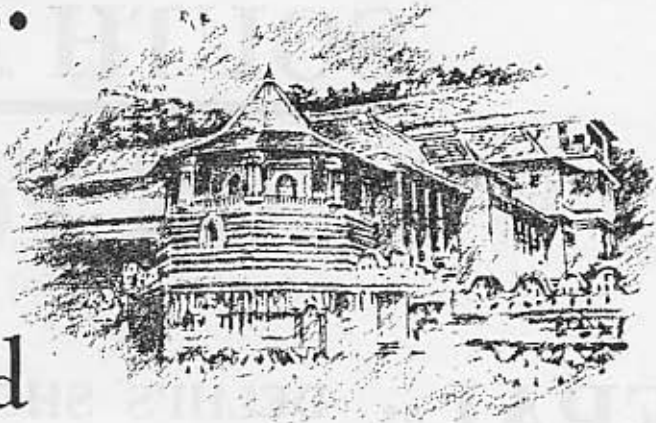
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Briefly . . .

SORRY SAYS MRS KOBBEKADUWA

In a letter to President Premadasa, Mrs Denzil Kobbekaduwa, the slain general's wife, apologised for the press conference which accompanied her request for an international commission to probe her husband's death in an explosion in the North. Mrs Kobbekaduwa told the president that she was unaware of the press conference arranged by opposition parties till she arrived at the Hotel Lanka Oberoi.

"I have only been interested in justice and the truth, and I regret that in my ignorance of politics my ignorance has been turned into a political gambit.

"From the day my husband was killed I have made no secret of the fact that I had my doubts regarding the incident. It transpired that I was not alone in my suspicions and when a group of

well-wishers offered to look into it I readily agreed. When the contents of the report were communicated to me I had no alternative as his wife but to follow it up by requesting the international commission. . . .

"I would like to make it very clear that neither Denzil nor I have ever been interested in politics and if this has been the impression created to Your Excellency, please accept my sincere apologies", she has told the President.

Meanwhile, seven opposition parties have in a statements observed that any Commission of Inquiry appointed to look into the killings of Denzil Kobbekaduwa and others in Kays on August 8 should go beyond a probe into the nature of the explosion itself and examine its possible links to other matters such as political and official power.

MRS B CALLS FOR EXPLANATION

Opposition Leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike has asked her party's MPs to inform her in writing whether they signed a petition calling for the removal of Chief Opposition Whip Richard Pathirana, or not. SLFP MPs had petitioned the Speaker calling for Mr Pathirana's removal, alleging unfair and unwise actions which disrupted activities of the opposition parliamentary group.

REJECTED, SAYS THONDA

CWC boss and cabinet Minister S. Thondaman has said that the Sirinivasan proposals to end the north-east dispute have been rejected by all parties. Basically the proposals call for a federal solution Mr. Thondaman said in an interview that federalism was impractical in the current Sri Lankan context.

FOUL, SAYS ANURAS'S MEN

Anura loyalists accused SLFP leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike of violating the fragile agreement they hoped would end the party's internal crisis, by demanding explanation from party men who had wanted opposition parliamentary Chief Whip Richard Pathirana removed. Pathirana is a Sirima loyalist. Some SLFP MPs complained to the Speaker that his conduct in the House was unfair and unwise and tended to disrupt opposition activities.

(Continued on page 4)

TRENDS

Prabhakaran talks peace

In a message to their "Hero's Week", LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran is reported to have said that the door to peace was open and what was needed was only a knock.

Reports from Jaffna quoted him also as follows: "We do not love Violence. Nor are we war mad. We desire an honourable peace.

But people who thirst for war are determined to destroy us and grab our land. In such a situation we have no option but to fight".

Both parties for consensus

Sri Lanka's two major political parties, the ruling UNP and the opposition SLFP have both come out officially for a consensus solution for the North-East problem.

The UNP made this decision officially at a working committee meeting. The SLFP issued a statement that their MPs who are members of the Parliamentary Select Committee (on this issue) would go along with a consensus "which would offer a fair and just solution to the long drawn north-east problem".

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FEDERALISM:

Too little too late? — and the Islamic challenge

Mervyn de Silva

“Is secular India, ever proud to call itself the world's largest democracy, about to fragment, along bloody lines drawn by race and creed? These are worrying — for Indians, and given the potential for regional unrest, for neighbours too?”
(THE ECONOMIST)

India has a Muslim population as large as Pakistan or Bangladesh its two large neighbours. Pakistan was created on the basis of religion but East Pakistan, though Islamic, seceded when the linguistic identity proved stronger than religious faith. No part of the world has such a richer cultural diversity than the sub-continent. Its cultural matrix has produced allegiances that cross state borders easily. Even the waters of the Palk straits which separate Tamilnadu from Sri Lanka's Tamil northern province is no exception to that rule. The part that Tamil Nadu has played in the political history of the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka, and more strikingly in the decade-long separatist war, is only too well known.

The threat is not just to India's unity but to the Gandhi-Nehru vision of a secular democratic and federal India. But three Gandhis — the Mahatma himself, Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv — have been killed by zealots and separatist militants.

The future of Indian secularism and federalism is now very much a part of the larger discussion on “Whither India?”. By the

oddest of coincidences, a multi-party, multi-ethnic Parliamentary Select Committee chaired by Mr. Mangala Moonesingha of the Opposition SLFP, has at long last produced a “consensus”. The consensus does NOT include the main Tamil parties — neither those parties that represent the Tamils of the north and east, nor the so-called “Indian Tamils” of the central highlands, the plantation sector. The leader of Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr. Thondaman, is not merely the unchallenged trade union leader but a powerful minister in President Premadasa's Cabinet. The federal “solution” may have come 20 years too late but it is a historic decision in that the resolution represents bipartisan consensus, meaning the UNP and its traditional rival, Opposition Leader, Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP. It was a 42-3 vote in the Select Committee appointed on the basis of a private member's motion introduced by Mr. Moonesingha, the SLFP MP.

The 3 “Noes” were the CWC, the TULF, the main Tamil parliamentary party (styled earlier the FEDERAL party) and the EPRLF, the anti-LTTE party that ran the merged North-East provincial council after the ‘Accord’ and the IPKF was deployed in the two provinces. Soon after the Select Committee wound up proceedings, with a majority supporting the devolution of the power to the nine provinces like the Indian Constitution vis-a-vis the Indian states, EROS, PLOTE, TULF,

ACTC, ENDLF, and EPRLF decided against the de-merger.

SINHALA CONSENSUS

So there was SINHALA consensus on an Indian-type federal set-up. Interestingly the Muslims, represented by Mr. Ashraff's S.L.M.C. endorsed the Sinhala consensus while the MEP of Dinesh Gunawardena wanted the unit of devolution made even smaller — a district rather than a province. The larger problem involves two basic issues: territory and power, the unit of devolution and the powers to be vested. It would appear that “territory” worries the elected representatives of the predominantly Sinhala parties more than the actual power to be vested in the Provincial/District Council. The MEP, the most pro-Sinhala prefers the smallest unit, a district, since it fears that a province would be the foundation of a much larger area under Tamil control, and therefore “tantamount” (that's the key word) to a mini-state or a fully fledged independent Stats, another country. That school of thought not only measures the land area but the length of the coast line, apart of course, from resources. Deep down is a *laager* mentality, to use a South African term.

In their approach to the Tamil problem, Indian politicians, policy advisers and intellectuals have used the Indian constitutional “solution” as the model. For instance it is the agitation in the Tamil south over language which led Nehru to

NEWS
BACKGROUND

advocate the idea of a 'linguistic states'. The bitter Ayodhya dispute — Hindu temple, and mosque — suggests that religion has overtaken language as the most tenacious allegiance and powerful mass mobilising force. Of course, the fact that the Indian State has responded to language demands may be part of the explanation for the dramatic resurgence of religious loyalties. Another reason, I suspect, is the near-global revival of ISLAM, starting with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, perceived by the Iranian clergy, intelligentsia and masses, as a "Yankee puppet". The agent of not only of western predators (oil) but of alien cultural forces which were destroying the Iranian identity.

ISLAMIC FACTOR

India lives with two large Islamic states as its closest neighbours — Pakistan and Bangladesh. It has problems with both — disputed Kashmir, the oldest of post-war regional conflicts, and the problem of illegal immigrants, a major irritant in Indo-Bangladesh relations. The postponement of the summit was unavoidable. Nobody could expect Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to leave Delhi. SAARC rules require unanimity in the name of consensus. Thus the Dhaka summit will now be held in January. This issue of the *LANKA GUARDIAN* has an exclusive report on a major SAARC concern, poverty alleviation. Another interesting development is SAPTA, the regional preferential trade agreement, an advance in the realm of regional economic cooperation. But this is a region where religious and ethnic loyalties have no respect for borders or sovereignty.

However, it is domestic-political conflicts, nearly all founded on "identity", that is undermining political stability, and disrupting the development drive. Since the entire region now has entered the post-Cold war era and chosen the IMF-World Bank "regime", two processes can be easily identified.

Indo-Soviet and the US-Pakistani "special relationships have lost all significance after the Red Army's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Soviet collapse. To the US, Pakistan is now expendable. India is the largest market in the world after China. China is "liberalising" in its own fashion and at its own pace, and is not ready to bend — not to the US nor the US-affiliated agencies, the IMF and the World Bank.

The next biggest market, India, is also a virile democracy.

If the Communist menace, the cornerstone of US security policy, is no longer a "threat", and "communism" itself no more an ideological challenge, democratic India has a very special appeal. In the words of President-Elect Bill Clinton, global democracy, means nations at peace, open to one another's ideas, and commerce. In short, the free market of ideas, and goods and services.

But Mr. Clinton (and the US establishment) sees dangers too. — spread of weapons of mass destruction, with means of delivery, enduring regional tensions. Middle-east, Korean peninsula etc, growing intensity of ethnic rivalry, separatist violence, within borders that can also spill over borders, like Yugoslavia and INDIA, and terrorist attacks.

US, ISRAEL, INDIA

For the US, one of the main dangers is ISLAMIC fundamentalism, identified mostly with IRAN. Thus, the new group ECO — Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and several Moslem Central Asian Republics of what is now called the C.I.S. (former USSR). This ISLAMIC groups has created new anxieties in Delhi, Washington and Israel. In an article in the Pakistani daily, *THE NATION*, the eminent Pakistani analyst Mushadid Hussain comments on a report of the Washington-based Institute of Peace which sponsored a seminar chaired by Robert Oakley, former US Ambassador to Pakistan. The report identified new thea-

ats from some combination of IRAN, Islamic fundamentalism, instability and the presence of nuclear capability. India, nervous about Kashmir, has thus moved much closer to the US and Israel. According to Hussain, the emergence of a "US-Israel-India 'triangle' is based on "common fears" of this emerging group.

Buddhist Sri Lanka's responses are most interesting, in domestic matters as well as regional relations. Mr. Ashraff has a firm base in the eastern province, and his SLMC is now the most influential Islamic voice. There were NO anti-Indian (or anti-Hindu) demonstrations in Colombo — or anywhere in the island.

Though the SAARC summit was postponed at India's request, President Premadasa and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Shariff travelled to Dhaka to be given the warmest welcome by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. Internal and regional-global processes have led to the Buddhist-dominated UNP to work closely with the Muslims, the second largest minority, when the regime is confronted by an uncompromising and powerful Tamil separatist-guerrilla group, the LTTE.

Briefly...

(Continued from page 1)

JVP LOOT FOR YOUTH WELFARE

A Rs 50 million worth of JVP property confiscated by the government is to be used for "youth welfare" and also to pay compensation to victims of JVP violence.

PROTECT FREE EDUCATION, SAYS PROFESSOR

Interdicted Colombo University Professor Nalin de Silva in a press statement urged students to protect free education and resist attempts to close the university. The authorities were planning to incite violence in the University of Colombo and other universities, the professor said.

PEACE APPEAL

Sangha, Christian Clergy Join Campaign

- Ven. Navagamuve Dhammaloka Thero, Chief Sangha Nayaka of Ihala Dolospathiwa, Hiripitiya.
- Ven. Wellawatte Gnanabhivansa Thero, Viharadhipathi, Suvisuddharamaya, Wellawatte.
- Ven. Varaddana Dhammananda Thero, Parivenadhipathi, Dhammarathena Pirivena, Melsiripura.
- Ven. Moragollagama Rathnasara Thero, Parivenadhipathi, Dharmachandra Maha Pirivena, Hiripitiya.
- Ven. Rambukwella Pragmasara Thero, Parivenadhipathi, Polgolla Pirivena, Gokarella.
- Ven. Batapola Nanda Thero, Subadraramaya, Batapola.
- Ven. Buddhiyagama Chandrarathana Thero, All Lanka Peasants Congress.
- Ven. Kiranthidiye Pannasekera Thero, Mahameuna Viharaya, Galahitiya, Molkawa.
- Ven. Pallewela Devarakkhitha Thero, Subadraramaya Pirivena, Gangodavila, Nugegoda.
- Ven. G. Sumangala Thero, Sri Dharmapalaramaya, Dehelvehera.
- Ven. P. Pannaloka Thero, Chulaka Len Purana Viharaya, Ihala Peddawa.
- Ven. Kandulava Aththadassi Thero, Mediriya Viharaya, Kandulava.
- Rt. Revd. Jabez Gnanapragasam, former Bishop of Colombo.
- Rt. Revd. Andrew Kumara, Bishop of Kurunegala.
- Revd. Kenneth Fernando, Bishop-elect of Colombo.
- Revd. Tissa Balasuriya, OMI, Director, Centre for Society and Religion, Colombo.
- Revd. Aloysius Pieris, S. J., Director, Tulana, Kelaniya.
- Revd. Oswald Firth, OMI, Director, SEDEC, Colombo.
- Revd. Yohan Devananda, Devasaranaramaya, Ibbagamuva.
- Revd. Sydney Knight, Director, Kithu Sevana, Colombo.
- Revd. Joseph Sarvananda, St. Paul's Church, Kynsey Road, Colombo.
- Revd. Kumar Illangasinghe, Principal, Theological College of Lanka, Pilimatalawa.
- Revd. Gerald Loos, Colombo.
- Sister Benedict, Salvatorean Order, Kurunegala.
- Professor A. Thurairajah, Vice-Chancellor, Jaffna University.
- Professor Carlo Fonseka, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya.
- Professor H. Siriyananda, Dean of Faculty of Engineering Technology, Open University, Nawala.
- Monica Ruwanpathirana, PIDA, Colombo.
- Sumika Perera, Progressive Women's Front.
- Vasudeva Nanayakkara, M.P.
- Wickremabahu Karunaratne, General Secretary, NSSP.
- T. Nanthakumaran, EROS.
- Muheer Rahuman, Progressive Muslim Front.
- Sashie Peiris, Ceylon Student Federation.
- Charles Abeysekera, Colombo.
- Sarath Fernando, Director, Devasarana Development Centre, Ibbagamuva.
- S. G. Punchihewa, Attorney-at-Law, Writer.
- Chandra Kumara, Lawyers for Human Rights and Development.
- Nimal Punchihewa, Attorney-at-Law.
- Ainsley Samarajiva, Attorney-at-Law.
- Wimal Fernando, Movement for Defence of Democratic Rights.
- V. Thirunavakkurasu, Editor, "Samadhammam".
- S. Thabendran, Dehiwela.
- N. Kandasamy, Colombo.
- Kuliyapitiya Sri Prananda, Vimukti Dharma Kendra.
- Kularatne Wickremasingha, President, All Lanka Peasants Congress, Polonnaruwa.
- Premapala Hewabatage, Secretary, Peasant Resource Centre.
- Wasala Guneratne, World Solidarity Forum.
- Linus Jayatileka, President, Commercial and Industrial Workers Union.
- P. D. Saranapala, General Secretary, Government United Federation of Labour.
- Dr. Sunil Ratnapriya, General Secretary, United Federation of Labour.
- Ronnie Perera, General Secretary, United Lanka Estate Workers Union.
- Chandra Pieris, General Secretary, Organisation of Parents and Family Members of the Disappeared.

Letter

The New Roman Catholic Catechism (1992)

The new Roman Catholic Catechism (1992), the first issued since the Council of Trent centuries ago, is a matter of interest to

the intellectual as well as the practical man.

It is said to contain prohibitions against what are called "modern sins" such as non-payment of income tax and drunken driving. But there is no mention of old sins of greedy monopolies, unconscionable price increases or grinding the face of the poor which the old Ca-

tholic theologians condemned.

And what about tax concessions to help the rich get richer — a form of tax evasion indeed. Is it sinful to trivialize the Word of God!

A rich man's catechism will not find acceptance in poverty-ridden South America.

Patrick Jayasuriya
Colombo 8.

Return of the Rebel

Shamindra Ferdinando

Former Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, at present the hottest political topic, came home ending speculation both in pro-government and anti-government ranks.

Mr. de Mel (68) arrived at the Katunayake International Airport from London after a four-year self-imposed exile. Mr. de Mel a bitter critic of President Rana-

singhe Premadasa left Sri Lanka on December 20, 1988, a day after Mr. Premadasa won the Presidency.

"I have not yet decided about my political future declared Mr. de Mel, addressing the monks and his supporters in one of the halls of the hotel. He added that he was keen to consult the Maha Sangha and the

people before taking a decision about his future in Sri Lankan politics.

"I have been serving the people for forty years" he said. Claiming that the country was at a decisive stage.

Political sources said Mr. de Mel's arrival and the summoning of two key UNP meetings later this week will mark a government propaganda drive aimed at elections to the Provincial Councils early next year.

Lali to discuss details with A. G.

The Presidential Secretariat has written to Mrs. Lali Kobbekaduwa, the widow of Lt. Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa, and requested her to meet the Attorney General and discuss (1) the modalities for the appointment of an international commission of inquiry and (2) the terms of reference for the commission.

Mrs. Kobbekaduwa had earlier written to the President requesting a commission of inquiry and

indicated that she would prefer the commission of inquiry to be drawn from the Commonwealth. This commission of inquiry will be to probe into the deaths of Lt. Gen. Kobbekaduwa and nine others who died in a blast at Araly Point near Kayts on August 8.

In writing to the President, requesting a commission of inquiry from the Commonwealth, Mrs. Kobbekaduwa had acted on her own, disregarding the attempts

of the opposition to grab the issue of an inquiry into her husband's death.

Mrs. Kobbekaduwa's firm action of asking for a Commonwealth commission of inquiry has upset the political plans of the oppositionists. They are unable to move in the matter now as Mrs. Kobbekaduwa is dealing directly with the government.

(S. O.)

VASA OPTICIANS

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India's federalism under stress

Krishna K. Tummala

The hallmark of a federal form, A. V. Dicey wrote some 20 years ago, is that the people "must desire union, and must not desire unity."¹ If in fact they were to unite, it would no longer be a federal but a unitary government. Thus, two seemingly contradictory forces are involved: the desire of federating units for national unity and their desire to retain individual independence. While India attempted to carve out a federal form of government, the emphasis all along has been on ways of keeping it together in the face of polycentrism and historical divisions. Accordingly, India is called a Union of States.

To get a clear picture of India's federalism, one needs to understand the several regional, linguistic, and religious divisions in the country (with 15 recognized languages in 25 states and seven union territories) and analyze the constitutional distribution of powers, devolution of resources, role of governors, emergency powers, the dominant party theme, planning, All-India services, the decentralization of power scheme, and other provisions and processes, including Article 3 empowering Parliament to change the boundaries of any state. This article, however confines itself to an examination of only two of these facets and their net impact on Indian federalism: (1) the use (or misuse)

of the exercise of emergency powers, with particular reference to the case of Tamil Nadu, and (2) the decentralization scheme under the Panchayati Raj Bill of 1989.

EMERGENCY POWERS

Before dealing with the case of Tamil Nadu, it is useful to quickly review the provisions pertaining to emergency powers in India found in Part XVIII (Articles 352-360) of India's Constitution. Three types of emergencies are foreseen: (a) war or external aggression, (b) internal disturbance, and (c) financial emergencies. Perhaps the most controversial in this context is Article 356, which confers powers on the president to dismiss the duly elected state government if he is satisfied "on receipt of a report from the Governor of a State, or otherwise" that there is a breakdown of constitutional machinery in that state. By declaring an emergency, the president can assume all of the executive powers of that state, and may also suspend any or all parts of the Constitution applicable to that state except those pertaining to the High Court. During the emergency, the state's legislative powers will be exercised by the Parliament. Thus, the federal form can virtually be transformed by the central government into a unitary one.

Although the executive power of the Union is vested in the president (Article 53), that power is exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers headed by the prime minister. In the exercise of the emergency powers, however, the role of the governor is crucial.

Role of the Governor

The governor of a state, under the Constitution, is appointed by the president (on the advice of the central government) for a five-year term, but holds office at the pleasure of the president. In actual operation,

however, serious questions have arisen regarding this position. The points of conflict have been fourfold: the appointment of governors, the relationship of a governor with the center, appointment and dismissal by the governor of a state government's chief minister, and the consent by the governor to laws passed by a state legislature. For purposes of this article, only the first two are relevant. Regarding the appointment, several governors have belonged to the party in power at the center, which had long been the Congress (I). A number of Congress members who had lost their office as chief ministers in states, or those who needed rehabilitation for other political reasons, came to be appointed governors. Sometimes active Congress (I) party leaders and even sitting ministers were posted as governors, there were those appointed on whom judicial strictures had been passed, and at times, even personal minions of the prime minister became governors. Added to these now are former bureaucrats, retired army officers, and chiefs of the Intelligence Bureau. Often these appointments are sprung as a surprise on the states.

The National Front government of V.P. Singh, which came to power in 1990 after defeating Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress (I), embarked on a new practice. In January 1990, the president asked 18 governors to resign "to facilitate a reshuffle by the Union government." Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed defended the action thus: "The Governor is a representative of the Center and he should enjoy the confidence of the Government at the Center." He went on to declare that while the state governments will be consulted as the appointments are made, it is not necessary to have their concurrence.² These 18 governors were holdovers from

Krishna K. Tummala is Professor and Director, Graduate Program in Public Administration, Department of Political Science, Kansas State University, Manhattan. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Fifteenth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Buenos Aires, July 1991, and is the beneficiary of the discussions there. In particular, the author wishes to thank M. Y. Pylee for his astute observations. The author is obliged for a Senior Fulbright Fellowship (Summer 1990), which supported research in India.

the Rajiv Gandhi government, and while the action of the new government can easily be understood and perhaps even justified in political terms, the practice in effect made the office of governor a spoils position. If, indeed, the Singh government had weeded out the politically corrupt governors and appointed apolitical personalities or, even preferably, if they had followed the recommendation of the Sarkaria Commission that a governor should not belong to the party in power at the center when the state in question is controlled by an opposition party,³ they would have stated a very healthy convention. The concept that governors are agents of the center in itself strains the federal principle, and to convert the office into that of a party functionary destroys not only the federal structure but also the constitutional intent. Thus, the new appointments did "not suggest an inspired attempt to uplift the . . . political context," in that they were politically motivated once again.⁴

The relationship between the governor as the head of a state and the center (which appointed the governor) is of crucial importance. There are two issues in this context. One, can the President of India act alone in the exercise of emergency powers without waiting to receive a report from the governor, and two, can the governor act as an agent of the center by imposing president's rule, thus dismissing a duly elected state government? In case of an emergency in state, the Constitution prescribes that the governor should send a report to the president before an emergency is declared, but the governor need not consult with the chief minister of the concerned state. The president thus is to act on the recommendation of the governor in determining whether there is a breakdown in the state administration. Whether the governor is rendering impartial advice or acting as an agent of the center, and whether the center's actions are bona fide when dismissing a state govern-

ment are important legal and constitutional issues. Yet, so far both the state high courts and the Supreme Court of India have shown a great deal of restraint in declining to entertain political questions, and in particular the exercise of powers under Article 356, i.e., the Emergency.⁵

However, the Supreme Court in the 1979 Raghukul Tilak case ruled that the governor could not act as an agent or employee of the center, and also specified that the appointment of the governor and his tenure at the pleasure of the president "does not make the Government of India an employer of the Governor. The Governor is the head of the State and holds a high constitutional office which carries with it important constitutional functions and duties and he cannot, therefore, . . . be regarded as an employee or servant of the Government of India." The Court went further: "It is impossible to hold that the Governor is under the control of the Government of India. He is not amenable to the directions of the Government of India, nor is he accountable to them for the manner in which he carries out his functions and duties. His is an independent constitutional office which is not subject to the control of the Government of India."⁶ But it was precisely as agents of the center that some of the governors began acting, as was highlighted in the case of the dismissal of N. T. Rama Rao's government in Andhra Pradesh in 1984.⁷ On the other hand, those governors who had not obliged the center invoked the wrath of the government, as the case of Tamil Nadu illustrates.

President's Rule in Tamil Nadu

Consequent to the 1989 general elections, the state of Tamil Nadu came under the control of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party headed by M. Karunanidhi, who defeated the previous All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) government, which was friendly to the Congress

(I). After the death of AIADMK leader M. G. Ramachandran, the party was split into two factions, one led by his wife, Janaki, and the other by Jayalalitha, the southern film star—and reputedly MGR's mistress. The latter subsequently came to control the party, and she continued to maintain amicable relations with Congress (I), in opposition to the DMK. At the center, with the defeat of V. P. Singh in 1990, Chandra Shekhar became the prime minister, with his own party controlling less than 10% of the seats in Parliament but with the support of the congress (I) and its allies who between them had a strength of 211 (Congress alone had 197 seats). Thus, it was obvious from the day of his inauguration that Chandra Shekhar would be obliged to Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress (I) leader.

There was in fact continuous pressure from Gandhi, along with the AIADMK and its leader, Jayalalitha, on Chandra Shekhar to dismiss the Karunanidhi government under the pretext that the law and order situation in the state had deteriorated. It was alleged that the Sri Lankan Tamil militants—the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE)—were creating havoc in Tamil Nadu. It was even suggested that the LTTE, in conjunction with the United Left Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh, posed a serious threat to national security. Chandra Shekhar could not oblige the Congress as Karunanidhi commanded a majority in the Tamil Nadu State Assembly. And even on December 26, 1990, the prime minister declared: "At the moment there is no proposal to impose President's rule in Tamil Nadu." He went on to say that he will not interfere "unless and until it became imperative for the cause of national unity and if something is perceptible to the people that something is happening."⁸

(To be continued)

Notes

1. A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*

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Strains remain in Indo-Nepal relations

Nitish Chakravarty

NEW DELHI

Even though geography as well as civilisations and culture bind India and Nepal inseparably together, the relationship between the two countries at the governmental level has not always been the warmest.

During long years of oligarchy in Nepal, India bashing became a favourite ploy to divert the people's attention from the real causes of their suffering. It was widely believed that the inspiration for the veiled hate-India campaign often came from sources close to the palace.

In the past couple of years, Nepal has gone through major changes in its political structure. The so-called partyless panchayat system (not very different from the Pakistani military rulers' experiment with "guided democracy"), foisted by the palace, has been replaced by the parliamentary form of democracy. For the first time Nepal has a government elected by its people.

The Government headed by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has adopted a realistic attitude in its dealings with India. But others have rushed in to fill the vacuum created by the exit of the palace-inspired India baiters. They have kicked up a shindy over what they allege is a sell-out to India. In their perception, the terms of all the agreements that the Koirala Government has negotiated with India are tilted in favour of the big neighbour.

When the reins of power were held tightly by the kings, albeit under the cloak of a nominated Prime Minister, India baiting took many forms.

For years Nepal sedulously tried to mobilise world opinion in favour of its version of an exclusive zone of peace in South Asia. China was one of the first to back the move. Some 70 countries endorsed it, but India had reservations. India

saw in the Nepalese proposal a subtle attempt to block its own initiative to secure international acceptance of a proposal declaring the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

With obvious encouragement from the palace, pressure was mounted on India to revise the Indo-Nepal treaty of peace and friendship of 1950, which was negotiated during the rule of King Tribhuvan, on the plea that some of its provisions hurt Nepalese interests. In India too similar demand was drummed up by Gorkha National Liberation Front supremo Subhas Ghising, though ostensibly on other grounds.

India-Nepal relations hit a new low in 1989-90 when the trade and transit treaty lapsed because of dis-agreement on the terms of its renewal. The movement of essential goods, including petroleum, was severely hit for a while. The Government-run media in Nepal put all the blame on India for what it perceived as India's arm-twisting tactics to reduce Nepal to the status of client state.

The truth was however, different. India's insistence on fresh negotiations was provoked by the gross abuse of trade and transit facilities for passing on goods made elsewhere to this country. Kathmandu became, and remains till this day, the nearest shopping centre for Indians crazy about *phoren* goods. Business in electronic goods imported from abroad is still brisk in Kathmandu's shopping arcades. His Majesty's Government did little to curb smuggling across the southern border into India.

Apart from this, progress on the far more important issue of utilising Nepal's enormous water resources for mutual gain was pitifully slow. The melted snows of the Himalayas which flow down to the plains below are the kingdom's most valuable resource.

Nowhere in the world are water sharing arrangements worked out without a hitch, and no one expects India and Nepal to do so in a jiffy. But the anti-India lobby had for years successfully thwarted even preliminary attempts. Nepalese rivers have remorselessly ravaged the sub-Himalayan region in India and Nepal's woes have been no less.

The Koirala Government has, however, taken some meaningful steps to iron out creases in the trade and transit arrangements as also to utilise Nepal's water resources.

But it is too early to hope that India baiting will be a thing of the past, and a truly warm relationship between the two neighbours is around the corner. While the palace-inspired India haters have receded into the background, Nepal's minuscule communist party is now in the forefront of the campaign to run India down for its so-called hegemonistic designs.

During Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's recent visit to Nepal, an agreement was reached on tying up loose ends in the existing arrangements for the export of Nepalese goods to India. One of the changes made was abolitions of the pro-forma clearance system and introduction of a system of certificate of origin.

The Politburo of Nepal's "united" Communist Party has construed it as an arrangement that will "adversely affect third country trade". What the Communists are asking for is unhindered rights for the export of goods imported from third countries to India. And this is exactly what India wants to curb.

The clarification of an earlier agreement on the Tanakpur barrage, which will benefit both

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There was little to see and less to do

Rajiva Wijesinha

It was not that Havana in itself was dull. The old city though rapidly decaying, had a distinct charm, the quaintly elaborate public buildings on a much reduced scale from what Spanish colonialism had produced in the grander mainland holdings; the narrow homely streets of balconied residences; the leafy courtyards that had been preserved in museums; and the broad sweep of Malecon, the thoroughfare by the sea, with the open space by the fort at one end where people gathered to watch the sun set across the bay over the softened outlines of the new town. And the newer area too had some places of interest, the university built on a hill, beautifully planted with massive trees, reached by a grand flight of steps with a magnificent view down to the sea — and, surprisingly one thought, though on reflection perhaps it was the best clue to Castro's aspirations, a carefully preserved Napoleon Museum in a very elegant and substantial residence.

But after three days, there was little to see, and less to do. The ballet had been satisfying, a collection of young stars from a variety of countries including the United States, but not exceptional; and though it was excellent value at 3 pesos, that doubtless explained why the once grand opera house was looking decrepit, why there were no programmes and no refreshments available and why the public address system for announcements and the recorded music crackled so much. With no interest in the discos which required dollars, there seemed no alternative for my last evening except an old French film; fortunately I had a much more interesting insight into Cuban reality when I began drinking in the early afternoon with some youths I met on the street, a

party that went on for several hours and included various passers by who were summoned to join us, until that is my money gave out. The rum they were able to provide (at exorbitant rates, doubtless, but there was nothing else to do with no Cuban money, and their stories of penury and deprivation certainly demanded sympathy) seemed of excellent quality. This, they explained, was because one of them worked in a hotel part-time, and was able to get away with what was otherwise reserved for export or for dollars.

Before that, I had spent an evening with an old couple who had once known a Sri Lankan seaman, and then he and his girlfriend who were at the university. They lived in a grand old house in what had once been a rich area. It had belonged to his parents, the old man, told me though now they lived only on the top floor, up a winding staircase one had to climb in darkness.

The floor below was closed up, though I was promised that if I returned — with a tin of any sort of food from the hotel shops where alone such things were available, the old man almost shamefacedly asked — I would be shown the drawing room, which was kept as a memorial to the past. What I was shown was a collection of postcards bought in Darjeeling just after the Second World War by the old man's brother, who had been a great traveller.

It was the girl who had studied English, who explained clearly the horrors of the system; but it was her boyfriends' simple earnest exclamation — 'Life is horrible here. You cannot understand how horrible it is' — that brought home to me most sharply the misery into which Castro has plunged Cuba. The more light hearted but equally despairing complaints of the young men with whom I drank the next day, the luckier ones amongst them having work for just a couple of days each week,

asking repeatedly for money for food for their children, for clothes, for anything I could spare, simply confirmed that it was not only the relatively privileged who had suffered.

* * * * *

But had nothing been achieved? The Briton's remark in Jamaica had struck home then, in part because my previous experience of the West Indies had been the Bahamas, which seemed to have no identity save that of a holiday playground for Westerners. Jamaica was not quit that, but in the squalor of downtown Kingston and the division of the city into sharply differentiated areas, in the proliferation of all-inclusive beach resorts that were wholly sheltered from the wider life of the country, in the ramshackle nature of most of the dwellings one saw when travelling by train or road, in the regular reports in the news papers of deteriorating services and increasing violence, one perceived something terribly sad — on the last evening of a whirlwing tour of several towns, a Sunday, passing similar-looking churches of various similar sounding denominations, where throngs in peculiarly artificial looking clothing sang lustily of Jerusalem, passing too in the shadow near every street corner groups of young men silently smoking as the sickly smell of Marijuana filled the air, one wondered whether this model of under-development were not perhaps worse.

Underlying it all of course is the historic horror of what happened in the West Indies. The extremes in Latin America I had seen and experienced before, but whatever the outrages that had occurred there, whatever the expropriations the Indians had suffered, there was not the same sense of pain one felt in the black Caribbean. The uprooting the slaves had undergone, from cultures it seemed especially ill equipped to provide consolation for individual deprivation, had created a hallowness difficult to

Dr. Rajiva Wijesinha is President of the Liberal Party and a member of the Human Rights Committee of the Liberal International.

fill. The development of structures that would create a confident sense of community, while encouraging individual potential, was bound to be long drawn out process, endangered by insecurities and touchiness that could easily explode.

The black caribbean had a long and difficult way to go, but despite the problems, it seemed to me in end that, most notably in the emerging middle class of blacks who were now recognizably the backbone of the country, progress was being made. Despite the political and economic upheavals of the seventies, there were signs that democratic institutions were becoming entrenched, the professions fulfilling wider social roles beyond being simply ways of earning a living. Even the newspapers, basic though they were in their approach, suggested a society in which dissent was recognized as contributing to development, where questions could be asked without fear that the answers would reveal the inadmissible.

For Cuba then, which had inherited much more that could have provided continuity, there was no excuse at all. The plea so often heard in mitigation is the destructive impact of American hostility. That one was aware of anyway and reading at the very time of my visit 'The House of the Spirits' with its terrifying account of what had happened in Chile with American support, one could not underestimate the ability of the United States to undermine. Certainly before Jimmy Carter at least introduced, for the first time in what seemed aeons a concept of morality into American Foreign Policy, one has to grant that its effects were generally disastrous to those outside the charmed circle; in America especially, through interference and manipulation, as well as through the relatively innocent phenomenon of what might be termed economic and social osmosis, the draining away of limited resources, it has by and large proved destructive. But even if one grants that Cuba had no chance outside shores, given that it had succeeded ap-

preciably in citing itself away, given too the resources within the island itself, there was no reason that its people should not have had something at least approaching a decent life.

Having failed to provide that it ought surely to be clear to Castro that he might as well give up and go. In a sense it must be frustrating, having come to power with a sense of idealism, and one need not deny him that, to admit failure now. But that it is failure surely is obvious. Even if he could pretend that it was not inherently absurd for the country to have become so hopelessly dependent on the Soviet Union over the last thirty years, surely he must recognize that there is no Soviet Union to come to the rescue again. Even if he could claim that there was once a well thought out economic policy beneath the utter penury that now obtains, he must recognize that even countries that still claim to be Marxist have recognised that such theories do not work, and have discarded thorough statist controls and moved towards allowing people to develop something at least of their own potential. Surely there can be no doubt that change must come.

But for change to come swiftly and efficiently, Castro must go. In Belize, a couple of weeks later, I read that he had changed his Foreign Minister to appoint someone it was claimed who could move towards reapproachment with the United States. There is of course no absolute reason why Castro himself could not arrive at some sort of arrangement with the States. But for confidence to return amongst his own people he ought to remove himself. That indeed is the sole form of redemption left to him, the way in which he could show that power has not corrupted him as it did with the regime he overthrew. To cling on at this stage, hoping, when he has no grounds at all to do so, that things will improve under the regime he set up can only obstruct the one hope of a better future for his people. The people of Cuba, who doubtless gai-

ned something, but have suffered far more deprivation in the last few years, deserve better. They deserve to be set free.

Strains . . .

(Continued from page 9)
countries, was another important outcome of the Prime Minister's three day trip.

Prime Minister Koirala is fully aware of the hostility that a section of Nepalese politicians bear towards India, and candidly said so in an interview to an Indian journalist on the eve of Mr. Narasimha Rao's visit

Tanakpur has become a test case for Indo-Nepalese co-operation, and Mr. Koirala has staked his own future on it. The agreement with India has been challenged in the Supreme Court in Kathmandu, but Mr. Koirala minces no words in saying that "if the understanding with India on Tanakpur is disturbed, Nepal's economy will be jeopardised"

He wants the Opposition to realise that it is not just water that flows waste into India from Nepal but water that can be converted into money which is so necessary to bring about a turnaround in Nepal's moribund economy

Mr. Koirala's sage counsel does not seem to have yet sunk in. The Opposition holds the trump card for under Nepal's constitution agreements with a foreign country have to be ratified by a two-thirds majority in parliament before implementation.

The ruling party does not have that kind of a majority in parliament. But Mr. Koirala has made it clear that if it comes to the crunch, he will go in for a referendum on Tanakpur.

The communists are of the view that the main problem over Tanakpur remains unresolved. Even if their objection to the Tanakpur clarification is mild, they mince no words in attacking the deal over three of their country's major rivers — the Karnali, the Panches-war and the Buri Gandak. The cry has gone up that "Nepal's national interests are not going to get priority when it comes to these projects".

Evidently, it is going to take some more time to remove all the misgivings in Nepalese minds.

A New Social Contract

Chapter 1: Nature and Magnitude of Endemic Poverty

The discussion was based on notes prepared in the Secretariat, which illustrated various indicators by which poverty in the South Asian Region was being measured. These ranged from the simple GDP and Per Capita Income measurements to the PQLI and Human Development Index which brought in other qualitative dimensions such as nutrition, primary health care and literacy indicators. Attempts by countries to add indicators such as deprivation or lack of access to basic human needs such as safe drinking water, health and sanitation, the deprivation and marginalisation of the poor resulting from inaccessibility of the terrain and sheer neglect of the large regions and people from the basic services and main growth process were discussed. The difficulties of quantifying the extent of poverty, the statistical base and the "State of the Art" were analysed. It was also suggested that emphasis should be made of vulnerable households and groups such as women headed households.

From the question of measurement, the Members looked at the question of the changing profile of poverty and the impact of some of the interventions into the lives of the poor over time. An attempt by South Asian Scholars to establish guidelines for the evaluation of the process of poverty alleviation was also placed before Commission Members. Reversal of the phenomenon of poverty reproduction and alleviation of endemic poverty was seen in these guidelines as a self generating process, in which each stage in the process was a part of a continuum. Subsequent stages are built on the collective experience of the previous ones. The criteria started with quantitative analysis of changes in the eco-

This Note has been prepared by Dr. Ponna Wignaraja, Vice-Chairman, on the basis of the discussions at the Commission's Second Meeting in New Delhi, 27th May to 29th May, and informal follow-up consultations with individual Members of the Commission and the Secretariat. The themes for inclusion in the Report which emerged at the First Commission Meeting in Colombo were further developed during the Second Meeting, on the basis of written submissions by Commission Members and their Advisers.

conomic base and some social indicators. Then went on to assessing the attitudinal changes brought about as the poor participate in development as subjects, and the basic institutions they create to sustain their efforts. In an attempt to see whether these various criteria could be aggregated so that an overall assessment could be made of the impact of the process of poverty alleviation within a poor community over a specified time horizon, two further dimensions were identified. It was considered necessary to probe -

- i) whether a change is taking place in the social consciousness of the poor themselves;
- ii) whether they are being empowered, so that they can assert their right to resources to which they are entitled to.

It was agreed that for the purposes of this Report a precise definition of the nature and magnitude of poverty was not required. But it was necessary to discuss the various dimensions to be included in an effort at a more sophisticated measurement and evaluation of poverty alleviation processes. This in itself was an educational tool and helped to understand this complex political, economic and social phenomenon. It was also agreed that the diagnosis of endemic poverty was there and

what the Commission needed to focus sharply on was the question of HOW to alleviate the worst forms of poverty within a given time frame. The broad conclusion was inescapable, that no matter what criteria was used the majority of South Asian countries suffer from all the ills of underdevelopment, namely, unemployment, poverty, alienation and social vulnerability. After half a century of economic development interventions the incidence of unemployment and under employment has in fact increased. The income disparities have in recent years widened dramatically.

The Secretariat Note and the gist of the discussions were to be an input into the draft of this Chapter being prepared by Dr. B. S. Minhas for the Dhaka Meeting.

Chapter 2: Inadequacy of Past Development Responses

With this broad conclusion that the numbers of poor have increased over nearly half a century and the condition of the poor has been growing worse in nearly all South Asian countries as the point of departure, the Commissioners discussed a draft of the Chapter with the above heading prepared by Dr. Ponna Wignaraja. The draft analysed the paradigm that had influenced the dominant development intervention into South Asian economies and the lives of the poor.

The past strategic options attempted to "catch up" with rich countries through modernisation and industrialisation, with its vacillation between export orientation and import substitution. This was a long term strategy. In midstream there was a switch to agricultural modernisation, with the initial "Green Revolution" focus and later the sectorally fragmented Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP).

These strategies were critiqued by the members from the point of view of the poor. It was clear that poverty alleviation was not at the core of any of these

strategic options, no matter what form it took or label it bore. They were growth oriented and as far as the poor were concerned they had to wait for a "trickle down" of the benefits if at all. While the theoretical justifications fitted in with one or another "fashion" in mainstream economic theory, these strategies and the manner in which they were implemented did not respond to the South Asian reality. For instance the large numbers of people, mainly poor were in rural South Asia and the early development intervention through industrialisation was anti-rural. When agriculture was introduced as a priority area, it was biased in favour of the rich farmer. An increase in agricultural production without nutritional improvement of the poor was not an acceptable strategy in a cultural milieu which considered food as a human right. Rural development was eventually thought necessary. But the form it took was not a sufficient answer. The IRDP's with its fragmented "delivery" of inputs to the poor through centrally planned processes was faulty from the point of view of the institutional arrangements and choice of technology. These programmes were based on scarce resources and even these were spread too thinly. Though some growth and re-distribution resulted, it was insufficient.

The project appraisal methodology and the use of cost-benefit analysis by Donor Agencies and the Developing Country Governments as for a direct attack on poverty, prompted by resource limitations and market imperfection in an attempt to allocate scarce resources "efficiently", too was evaluated. It was agreed that the poor constrained by lack of access to resources are not guided by considerations of optimising output and profit maximisation per se. The poor do not differentiate between "economic" and "non economic" activities and endeavour to minimise resource use and to eliminate waste. Empirical studies have established that the techno-

cratically evolved packages from mainstream economic theory had little relevance to the behavioral patterns of the poor and in fact further polarise the village and result in the village rich who control the basic economic and social institutions in most South Asian villages becoming richer and leave the poor poorer.

The majority of the poor did not benefit by these strategies. The various reformist options, eg. Basic Needs Strategy, which were then introduced to speed up the "trickle down" and administratively ensure the re-distribution, ranged from programmes targeted on the poor or attempts to put a safety net for the poor through "delivery" of basic services. Even these were only partially successful, and only temporarily ameliorating their condition. They were not sustainable in the shorter run even in their own terms, in the absence of the availability of massive resources, mainly external capital.

The in-depth analysis of this "zig zag" and vacillating course that the development intervention took and its weak thrust also showed that several sharp contradictions were beginning to emerge in South Asian economies and a multi-faceted crisis was emerging in South Asia which went beyond poverty.

When severe balance of payments difficulties began to manifest itself in most South Asian countries there was a further shift of strategy to the "Open Economy" strategy. Despite protestations to the contrary, it took an ideological form and a simplistic reliance on the market. "Opening the Economy" by itself in a situation of endemic poverty, only further sharpens the contradictions and initially throws the burden of adjustment on the poor. The recommended corrective to this by the system was "Adjustment with a Human Face". This was to be done again mainly through the "delivery" of additional basic services to the poor, to cushion the effects of adjustment. For the poor this was not a sufficient

answer, either. The critique revealed that from the point of view of the poor, redistributive justice in itself was simply not the issue. Except for the old, destitute and disabled whom society would need to carry through charity, what the majority of the poor required was a more positive option, where they had the opportunity to contribute to growth and keep a greater part of the surplus they generated in their own hands.

The strategy of "Opening the Economy" was justified intellectually in terms of "supply side economics" and the assumption of a hospitable framework for international economic relations. The South Korean experience was held up as a model. The replicability of the "South Korean Miracle" in South Asia was analysed. The conclusion was that while South Korea was certainly a "Success Case" of capitalism under neo-classical conditions with export led growth, it was a complex model, whose essential elements went beyond the adjustment policy package being advocated to and adopted by most South Asian countries. In South Korea, the movement towards an open economy and export led growth was accompanied by a great deal of State intervention, and human development with culturally conditioned social justice built into the process including land reform.

The resurgence of the "Open Economy" model, and the adoption of "stabilisation" and "structural adjustment" programmes have not been successful in correcting fundamental macro-economic imbalances. In fact worsening unemployment, in the short and medium term, widening income disparities and falling real wages indicate that the process of endemic poverty continues unabated. The developing world has in fact come back to square one. Limits to development options caused by rapid erosion of the natural resource base and concern for environmental pollution coupled with ever growing protectionist international environment and the resultant

deteriorating terms of trade and an ever diminishing share of the world trade for developing countries makes the open economy model inadequate and at best only partly relevant in addressing the issues of poverty and inequality.

The fundamental flaw even in its own terms, in the past development responses in South Asia, was also that it relied on efficiently allocating the scarce factor—capital—rather than mobilising and utilising the factor in surplus, namely the people, and in particular the large numbers who were poor. Clearly, if poverty was to be alleviated within a reasonable time frame, and an effective response both to the economic crisis and the other crises confronting South Asian countries was to be made, a more rational strategy, which moved simultaneously on two fronts, was required. A different accumulation process than that pertaining to economically advanced countries, which they were imitating, had to be identified and made complementary. The Members felt that there were strong compulsions for identifying these alternative driving forces for a new accumulation process and a need for a massive redirection of the social effort to this end.

The discussion then focussed on human and social mobilisation particularly at the micro terrain as the primary mechanism for accumulation in the South Asian context. There was a material basis for this observable from the experiences already on the ground which had matured in the past ten to fifteen years in South Asia itself. From the point of view of the poor, it meant that the conventional accumulation was insufficient. It had to be supplemented with savings, investment, asset creation and sustained contribution to growth by the poor themselves. The major input into this complementary accumulation process was the creative energy of the poor, their knowledge and wiser use of local

natural resources, with human development as an essential prerequisite.

The analysis went further to examine the multi-faceted crisis that was confronting all South Asian countries. This crisis was more than a purely "economic" crisis or even a poverty crisis per se. It had economic, social, cultural and political dimensions, as well as, internal and external dimensions.

The critique using the backdrop of the wider multi-faceted crisis facing all South Asian countries revealed that not only was the past development intervention inadequate in its own terms, but that the strategic options were at best only partially relevant to the concerns of the poor. Even "more of the same" undertaken "more efficiently" would not thus reverse the process of endemic poverty, let alone the process of poverty reproduction. From the point of view of the poor a different and more complex two pronged development strategy was required. This strategy would need to maintain the gains from past attempts at industrialisation and modernisation of agriculture (with some damage limitation to meet environmental concerns, increasing social polarisation, the need for labour intensive industrialisation, etc.) while at the same time alleviating poverty through a second front, in a manner where growth, human development and equity were complementary and not trade offs.

Chapter 3: Lessons from "Success Cases"

The point of departure for this Chapter was that despite the somewhat bleak picture of the conventional development response to enabling the poor to move out of poverty, there was a positive side.

The question that was addressed here was a fundamental one. If the strategic options for a

direct attack on poverty alleviation in South Asia as part of a more complex overall development strategy was to be identified, where was the source of inspiration, the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual framework for action to come from?

Further, if not only the adequacy but also the relevance of the past development intervention were in question, and a different strategic option for poverty alleviation was considered necessary to be found, then the only place to look was at whatever "Success Cases" macro/micro that were in evidence on the ground in South Asia itself.

On the basis of papers specifically prepared by Mr. Venugopal and Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan and other background studies undertaken by South Asian scholars and activists working together and documents which were circulated, the discussion proceeded to identify several "Success Cases" macro/micro, on the ground in South Asia from which lessons could be drawn for identifying critical elements in the strategic options for poverty alleviation.

The first part of the discussion was based on illustrative macro interventions by the State: in India in relation to issues such as food distribution, basic education and employment guarantees; in Sri Lanka's Janasaviya Programme; Bhutan's decentralisation strategy; Maldives' strategy for the islands; and the search in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal for alternative complementary development pathways and poverty alleviation strategies consequent to the re-introduction of democracy. The gender issue and the role of poor women as a new social force was extensively discussed in this session on the basis of a paper prepared by Ms Vina Mazumdar.

The second part of the discussion concentrated on micro level experiences of the past ten to fifteen years, which had matured

or were beginning to be sustainable in South Asia. Here, the poor themselves were participating as subjects in a process of moving out of poverty and contributing to growth. Where a "sensitive support system" was provided by the State, a Bank, an NGO or other organisation, these activities were able to expand, provide substantial geographical coverage and involve large numbers of the poor. An in-depth analysis was made of the AKRSP (in NWP Pakistan), Women's Development Programme (in Rajasthan, India), the SFDP (in Nepal), the Atoll Programme (in Maldives), a Health Programme (in Bhutan), BRAC (in Bangladesh) and the Janasakthi Bank Society (in Sri Lanka). Other cases such as the Amul Co-operative and SEWA (in India), the PCRW (in Nepal), the Orangi Pilot Project (in Pakistan), the Grameen Bank (in Bangladesh) and the Institute of Nursery Studies Programme (in Sri Lanka) were also touched upon, reflecting the kind of social mobilisation that was taking place, where the poor contributed to growth under varying socio-political circumstances. Critical elements in the methodology of participation of the poor in development were also identified from these cases.

The main lessons drawn from the Macro Micro experiments were:

At the Macro Level

- 1) The State had a lead role to play in Strategic Planning for Poverty Alleviation and needed to articulate a clearly identifiable second leg in the overall development strategy which was pro poor.
- 2) In operational terms this pro poor strategic option required formulating a separate plan for the poor, identification of the transfer of resources to the poor and with a clearly identified time frame and a different evaluation methodology.

- 3) In addition to this lead role of the State, which also involved formulating detailed enabling policies and identifying "entry points" for poverty alleviation, the State also through its line Ministries and decentralised State apparatus needed to provide "sensitive support" to activities initiated and undertaken by the poor themselves. In addition to the State support, other macro institutions such as the Banks, NGOs, cooperatives and the Private Sector also needed to be re-oriented to sensitively support initiatives of the poor. In some cases new macro institutions would have to be established.

At the Micro Level

- 1) The first lesson that was clear was that at the micro level, a new set of values were emerging. These were compatible with the culture and related to relations between people, relations between people and nature, and attitudes to work, leisure and savings.
- 2) Without participation of the poor as subjects of the process no sustainable effort at poverty alleviation was possible. A political rather than a purely technocratic approach was required.
- 3) In all the "Success Cases" a common methodology was apparent, where the poor organised themselves spontaneously or organisations of the poor were built by sensitive facilitators or external catalysts who had a commitment to and identity with the poor.
- 4) A new kind of Facilitator, Animator, Social Worker was required in large numbers at several levels to catalyse this process of social mobilisation and to build organisations of the poor. Irrespective of whether these catalysts were generated internally or were out-

siders there was a great deal of training and sensitisation that was required to put more of them in place.

- 5) Poverty alleviation required a holistic approach and was a process which could not be projectised in a fragmented or narrow technical manner. Poverty alleviation required the initiation of a series of interrelated small scale activities by the poor and these cannot either be pre-determined or encompassed in the conventional project approach. The project approach assumed that there was a beginning and an end to the project and all the inputs and outputs were quantifiable. The poor are guided initially by considerations of minimising resource utilisation and elimination of waste rather than maximising benefits and profits in the short run.
- 6) If the poor were provided with access to resources they could contribute to growth. Under the old development response there was a reverse flow of resources from the poor to rich within the countries which also needed to be stopped.
- 7) Finally institution building and capacity building was an integral part of sustaining the process. Reorientation of existing support system institutions was also an essential part of the process.

Chapter 4: A Pro Poor Perspective

The discussion of this item of the Agenda was based on a paper prepared by Dr. Maqsood Ali. It was supplemented by an input by Dr. Wignaraja entitled "Growth, Human Development and Equity: No Trade Offs", and an extract on "the perspective" in a study entitled "Towards a Theory of Rural Development" by a group of South Asian Scholars. The Members accepted the conclusion that South Asian countries needed to move on two fronts, i.e. the modernisation, industrialisation and

"open economy" front, as well as, the poverty alleviation front, simultaneously. The two fronts would eventually need to merge, but initially could be separate. The task of the Commission was to develop the Poverty Alleviation part of the development strategy and make specific implementable recommendations.

On the basis of the discussion, several propositions which needed to inform the perspective for the strategic option for poverty alleviation emerged:

- 1) A new set of values had to be articulated consonant with South Asian cultures, which could inform both the overall development strategy, as well as a strategy for poverty alleviation. The new strategic option had to be operationalised in a manner that Growth, Human Development and Equity were not trade offs as in the old framework of development, but were complementary. The material basis for this was demonstrated by the experiences on the ground, which also re-inforced the proposition that the poor can contribute to growth. Both the values and the process would differ fundamentally from conventional development thinking and action.
- 2) The second set of issues discussed for inclusion in the Perspective related to the new accumulation process which the poor themselves could initiate at the base of the economy. The poor had demonstrated that they could save, generate income and create assets at the base of the economy, in the people's sectors. This accumulation process by the poor also involved using factors in surplus such as poor people's creativity, their knowledge system and local unutilised and renewable resources. It also meant keeping poor people's surplus in their hands and a real transfer of resources to the poor. It would be an additional process of accumulation to

that generated through the conventional public and private sectors.

- 3) The third proposition discussed related to the dual role of the State which not only had to take a major bold new initiative for poverty alleviation, but also had to sensitively support initiatives taken by the poor to contribute to growth through enabling policies and supportive programmes frameworks. In the strategic thrust other institutions such as Banks, Cooperatives and NGO's also had to play a sensitive support role to initiatives taken by the poor and would need to be mobilised and re-oriented for this purpose. A social transformation of considerable magnitude had to be envisaged. There was no choice. A committed State system which trusts the poor, would need to make an unambiguous commitment to alleviate poverty with a renewed commitment, new policies, mechanisms and re-allocation of resources.
- 4) This process of poverty alleviation required new participatory institutions, sensitisation and training and re-training of several categories of committed persons identified with the poor. The institution building, sensitisation, training effort had to be on par with the effort made to achieve modernisation and industrialisation and the "Green Revolution", as a "top down" planning process. The new institutions that were built had to release the creative energies of the poor, as well as empower them to assert their rights to the resources to which they were entitled. New umbrella institutions or reorientation of existing institutions were required for coordination of the myriads of small activities and to provide sensitive support to what the people themselves were capable of doing.

- 5) Finally, the discussion revolved around the international system that would need to support such a strategic option. Clearly regional and global co-operation on new terms would need to re-orient their thinking, their staff, their consultants and their procedures to support sensitively this kind of strategy.

The discussion of this section concluded with the suggestion that the Commission should recommend that each country should have a separate plan for the poor. In other words, the overall development strategy, while opening up the economy and industrialising (with appropriate damage limitation features to take care of environmental concerns and use more labour intensive technology, etc.) should also immediately put in place a clear cut parallel strategy for poverty alleviation based on participation of the poor as subjects and social mobilisation as the process. The two fronts of the strategy should move forward with equal vigour. Even if initially they started separately, gradually they would need to be linked and made coherent.

This second leg of the strategy would require to be implemented through a separate plan for the poor. Conventional development planning mystified resources allocated for poverty alleviation, which enabled their diversion from the specific purposes for which they were intended. The plan for the poor should not be merged with several items in the usual capital and current budgets through which most plans are implemented and through the normal budgets of fragmented Sectoral Ministries. This kind of allocation does not permit a clear identification of the transfer of resources to the poor or its impact, despite so called "tagetting".

Operationalisable elements in the poor plan and concrete transitional strategies and mechanisms were then identified.

Was the Russia Socialist?

Reggie Siriwardene

III

I must return now to the question with which I initiated the second part of my lecture: Were the Russian Revolution, and the state to which it gave birth, socialist? I have tried to demonstrate that to try to measure Soviet reality against a theoretical model of 'socialism' derived from the Marxist classics is a sterile procedure which doesn't help our understanding of the historical phenomena. It is just as pointless as it would be to try to describe 19th century French society in terms of the doctrines of Rousseau. What remains? If we are concerned not to use 'socialism' as a political catchword but as a term with a value in the construction of theory, then we must study the social formations concerned and educe from their concrete relationships and institutions an account of what 'socialism' has meant in practice. We must conceptualise in other words, 'actually existing 'socialism' (in the phrase the Bahro adopted in the seventies)' — or, it seems more appropriate to say today: 'the actually existing socialisms and those that have actually existed.'

The first two premises necessary for such a conceptualisation were stated by G. V. S. de Silva with his customary lucidity:

- i) No advanced capitalist country has become socialist (with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia, which is a very special case).
- ii) On the contrary a number of pre-capitalist societies have become or are in the process of becoming socialist.²³

De Silva goes on to draw the conclusion to be derived from these circumstances.

...where a country had got out of pre-capitalism through a bourgeois revolution under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and consolidated the process of self sustaining accumulation and expanded reproduction, a subsequent proletarian socialist revolution has not only never taken place, but even the possibility of it has receded more and more into the background, other than in exceptional cases by external intervention, as in Czechoslovakia. This is the reality of our present historical experience and it points quite definitely in the direction that the socialist revolution takes a country out of pre-capitalism and not out of capitalism.²⁴

This conclusion of de Silva is in line with that drawn by Bahro regarding the October Revolution:

The October revolution, already, was not, or was at least *far more* than, the... 'deformed' representative of the proletarian rising in the West that has not taken place. It was and is above all the first *anti-imperialist revolution* in what still a *predominantly pre-capitalist country*, even though it had begun a capitalist devolution of its own, with a socio-economic structure half feudal half Asiatic.²⁵

Both Bahro and de Silva, then, are agreed that 'socialism' must not be understood now in the sense in which Marx used the term. He means by it a society arising out of and resolving the contradictions of advanced capitalism, but no such society has come into existence. Instead the societies that we have called 'socialist' represented an alternative route out of pre-capitalism for countries

which have never produced a bourgeoisie strong enough to carry through far-reaching capitalist development. To modify a well-known epigram of Ernest Gellner, we may say that Marx sent a message to the proletariat of the metropolitan centre, but it was delivered to the peoples of the periphery who needed to climb out of pre-capitalism.

The question may, of course, be raised how far Russia in 1917 was pre-capitalist. It is true that in European Russia capitalist industry had progressed considerably since the 1880s, while capitalist differentiation on the land had taken rapid strides after the abolition of serfdom. However, the Tsarist empire was a conglomeration of different modes of production, from modern industrial capitalism to quasi-feudal, tribal and nomadic forms. Moreover, the fundamental problem of Russian society was the political dominance of the archaic feudal absolutist state, which was an insuperable obstacle to change. This was made clear by the failure of even the moderate political reforms initiated by Witte and Stolypin in turn, due to the distrust in these reforms of the autocracy and the obstruction of the nobility. The absolutist state collapsed in February 1917, but the weakness of the bourgeois political leadership and its lack of a tradition of parliamentary government meant that no political class was available to build Russia as a viable bourgeois state. Bahro's and de Silva's analyses are, therefore, I think, applicable to revolutionary Russia, and still more obviously true of the Eastern European countries with formerly retarded capitalist development and of the Asian and African societies that have taken the socialist path.²⁶

Here I would return to the eastward shift in Lenin's thinking during the last stage of his life. Lenin, of course, had not gone as far as repudiating the Marxist concept of socialism as a way out of the contradictions of advanced capitalism. But in his last articles he was deeply conscious of the distinctive characteristics of the Russian Revolution, dividing it from the socialist revolutions that Marx had envisaged; and in his reply to Sukhanov he predicted that these differences would be even stronger in the Asian revolutions to come.

Our European philistines never even dream that the subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries, which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions, will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than the Russian revolution.²⁷

I am therefore in fundamental agreement with Bahro and de Silva regarding the character of the Russian revolution. But they wrote more than a decade ago, and this is 1992. Between the time they developed their argument and now, we have witnessed the cataclysm of the fall of the socialist states in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. In what way does their thesis need to be modified today to be accommodated to these realities? I shall address myself to this question in the last part of this lecture through a discussion of the character and role of the Soviet bureaucracy.

IV

The Soviet bureaucracy was a composite class,²⁸ including both political elites and economic managers and technocrats. The former in the immediate post-revolutionary era, having been recruited from the cadres of the Bolshevik party, were imbued with a strong sense of ideological devotion to the cause they served. Consequently for most of them, the observance of a

spartan life-style and the renunciation of economic privilege was a point of revolutionary honour. The managers and technocrats initially included large numbers of 'bourgeois' specialists, and it was necessary to offer them material incentives in order to obtain their willing co-operation. However, the general egalitarian climate of the time meant that disparities in remuneration and differences in standards of living between the economic and technical elites and the mass of workers had strict limits in the first years of the revolution.

The situation changed in the Stalin era. Partly, this was the result of the erosion of revolutionary fervour with time; partly, it was due to the need the regime felt, during the years of massive construction, to encourage effort with material rewards. Stalin in the 'thirties' deliberately promoted inequality with his campaigns against the heresy of egalitarianism, with the Stakhanovite movement designed to encourage skilled workers, and with the whole array of economic privileges granted to the bureaucracy.

In the 'thirties' Trotsky was haunted by the fear of a 'Soviet Thermidor' (the phrase was derived from the reaction in revolutionary France that followed the fall of Robespierre). Trotsky thought such a Thermidor in the Soviet Union might take the form of the bureaucracy converting itself into a possessing class and restoring capitalist private property. This prospect failed to materialise at the time, and Deutscher points out that under Stalin's rule by terror, the bureaucracy was too insecure to think of converting itself into a property owning class;

Even the one bond that might have been expected to unite it, the bond of privilege, was extremely tenuous when not only individuals but entire groups of the bureaucracy could be, frequently were, stripped of all privilege al-

most overnight, turned into pariahs, and driven into concentration camps. And even the strictly Stalinist elements, the men of the party machine and the leaders of the nationalised industry, who formed the ruling groups proper, were by no means exempt from the insecurity in which all the hierarchies trembled under Stalin's autocracy.²⁹

After Stalin's death the position of the individuals bureaucrat was less precarious into a state which, though not law-governed, was at least for the privileged groups, less subject to arbitrary terror. Meanwhile the erosion of what was once dubbed 'communist morality' continued; cynicism, careerism and the appetite for self-enrichment grew among the elite, and reached their apex during the Brezhnev years. Such sensational scandals as those of the massive corruption indulged in by Rashidov, the Uzbek party boss, or Churbanov, Brezhnev's son-in-law, which came to light during the years of perestroika, were evidently only the tip of the iceberg. What was decisive for the future of the Soviet Union, however, was that from the 'sixties onwards, the economic autarchy of the Soviet Union began to end as necessity compelled it to enter more and more into the world market. Meanwhile, Western capitalism, instead of reaching the terminal crisis for which Marxists had been waiting at least since 1914, had reached new heights of productive expansion. Not only had its global reach widened since the Second World War, but it had carried through a new industrial revolution through electronics and information technology. The growth of international capitalism wasn't a harmonious or crisis-free process (capitalism by its very nature has always been conflictual and crisis-ridden), but this did not remove the pressures and strains on the Soviet economy as a result of the widening of the gap in technological levels and productivity. The situation was

well described by Bahro in an interview with Fred Halliday in 1983:

The autonomy of the socialist system is very relative...The technological inferiority of the socialist countries forces them on to the world market, subordinating them to the rules of that market which work against their interests... In order to keep us with the West, including in the arms race, the Soviet Union is forced to import Western technology and therefore to sell its raw materials cheaply — and then there is the unsolved problem of agriculture. In short, the Soviet economic profile is a variable within the productive forces of a world market controlled by capital. If we put in perspective all the other factors, social, political and culture, it is actually the nuclear bomb which allows the Soviets to play the roll of second superpower. And yet, this very superpower role is fatally overburdening the Soviet economy: the economic competition with capitalism which the Russian Revolution initiated has been a failure.³⁰

This was the state of things when Gorbachev launched perestroika. During the six years of that era, there were, I suggest three tendencies among the Soviet bureaucracy. On the one hand, there were the conservative elements, entrenched in the central bureaucracy and the security apparatus, who wanted to preserve the status quo: it was the representatives of these groups who made their last-ditch stand with the abortive coup of August 1991. Secondly, there were the bureaucracies of the republics who saw in the loosening of central control an opportunity to strengthen their own power. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the leaderships of several of the minority republics have made a quick conversion from Communism to nationalism, and have retained their positions and their power structures under the new

dicological labels. Thirdly, there were the ardent reformist elements, who started by supporting Gorbachev's initiative, but ended in many cases by wanting to go faster and further than him. I don't suggest that all of them were motivated by the same aspirations. There were no doubts some who by conviction opted for liberalism, parliamentary democracy and intellectual freedom; but it is very likely that there were others who felt that a free enterprise system and linking with Western capitalism would offer them greater material rewards than what was by then the creaking inefficient bureaucratic structure of socialism.³¹

What then have the three-quarters of a century of the Russian Revolution achieved? Perhaps this, is its most lasting legacy: that it has laid the essential foundations, through industrial growth, mass education and creation of scientific and technical skills, for the future bourgeois development of Russia. It would then appear that we have to modify Bahro and de Silva's historical perspective. Socialist revolutions are an alternative way out of pre-capitalism; but in Russia as well as in Eastern Europe, the overwhelming economic superiority of the West has determined that in the end these societies, after their detour, should rejoin the capitalist road. Evidently then, socialism turns out to have been really a transition from pre-capitalism to capitalism for countries that have failed to produce a bourgeoisie who make a direct passage from one to the other.

Let me sum up the argument in this way. The historical experience of this century already confirms the soundness of the Bahro/de Silva theory that socialism was an alternative way out of the pre-capitalism for countries without a strong bourgeoisie. The experience of the last five years in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe suggests the further hypothesis that for such countries socialism

is a transitional stage between pre-capitalism and capitalism. For final confirmation of this hypothesis we may await the future development of China, Vietnam and other socialist states that are already introducing market economies and learning capitalist techniques.

It may appear strange that what the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did in the ultimate result was to prepare the way for the bourgeois transformation of Russia. I have referred in an earlier part of this lecture to the historical controversies about the English and French revolutions. Although it now seems very doubtful whether these revolutions were led by the bourgeoisie, or were the outcome of the bourgeois mode of production chafing against feudal fetters, it is perhaps still possible to argue that the political changes in England in the 17th century and in the 18th-19th prepared the way for the development of capitalism. So perhaps in their objective results, these revolutions can still be termed 'bourgeois'. But in Germany, the corresponding transformations were carried out from above, by Bismarck. So why should we think it inexplicable that in Russia, where no powerful bourgeoisie or reforming state had emerged before 1917, it was left to the Communist Party regime to fill the historical vacuum?

The prospect of a new Russian bourgeoisie inheriting the legacy of the Communist state may be a melancholy one to dispirited Marxists. True, it is all the rather anticlimactic: what was at one time regarded as the contest between two world systems seems to have ended 'not with a bang but a whimper'. I should like to offer this consolation: at any rate, it's better than the big bang we all dreaded at one time.

Notes

23 de Silva (1988) p. 244.

24 de Silva (1988), p. 245.

(Continued on page 24)

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.

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Kumar Rupesinghe, Peter King and Olga Vorkunova (editors)

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Kumar Rupasinghe (editor)

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Sinhala culture: the 'double-headed serpent'

Serena Tennekoon

Even while the Kingdom of Jaffna and the antiquity of Tamils and Sinhala were passionately disputed, a second storm was already brewing in the same newspaper. The Sinhala Culture controversy was sparked by a Sunday *Divayina* editorial titled Intellectuals and seminars. Referring to a recent seminar on Sinhala Culture the editorialist questioned its relevance and suspected its motives.

The seminar at issue here was held on 19 September 1984 at the Colombo Public Library and was organized by a group of mainly leftist Sinhala intellectuals of the Open Arts Circle and the Workers and Peasants Institute. According to some of the participants the original topic for discussion 'Do the Sinhalese have a Culture?' was later modified to 'Do the Sinhalese have a Great Culture?'. This qualification was important but it was also misleading. For the purpose of the seminar, Great Culture referred to culture in the Great Tradition (*maha sampradaya*). The seminar organizers could hardly have been ignorant of the politics of that concept, of its unmistakable resonance of superiority and high culture, but they refrained from problematizing the very classification of Great and Little Traditions. Thus it was hardly surprising that the seminar was controversial on several levels.

Central to the controversy were two seminar papers presented by Newton Gunasinghe, a Colombo University sociologist, and Charles Abeysekera a social scientist, literary critic, and human rights activist. Gunasinghe maintained that contrary to popular assumptions the roots of modern Sinhala culture did not stretch in an unbroken line to the Anuradhapura period of Sri Lankan history (circa 250 BC —

1017), but only to the Kandy period (circa eighteenth century). Focusing on the Kandy period, he examined the relationship between the mode of economic production and selected cultural traditions and concluded that Kandy period culture — and in extension modern Sinhala culture — belonged to a Little Tradition (*cula sampradaya*).

In making distinction between Great and Little Tradition cultures, Gunasinghe did not refer to anthropologists like Robert Redfield or Milton Singer McKim Marriott, M. N. Srinivas or Ganapath Obeyesekere, but offered his own definition. According to his first criterion, a Great Tradition produced works of lasting artistic value whereas the merits of a Little Tradition culture fluctuated with the shifting socio-economic conditions which produced them. Second the works of a Great Tradition were removed from the activities of daily living, while Little Traditions were intimately connected with and reflected the stuff of humdrum life. Finally Great Tradition cultural productions were the achievements of full-time specialists supported by the economic surplus generated in their societies. In contrast Little Tradition artists were amateurs who also had to engage in economic production.

Abeysekera's paper was not especially concerned with the problem of Great and Little Tradition terminology. Even so, his analysis was influenced by some of Obeyesekere's work. Abeysekera contrasted 'village Buddhism' with the Buddhist cultural identity created in the twentieth century. By the early twentieth century, he argued Sinhala culture had fractured into several regional cultures whose common feature was a syncretistic form of village Bud-

dism which was considerably different from the original, textually preserved doctrine of the Buddha. Having discussed some of the significant factors (such as the Buddhist reform movement) which shaped Buddhist identity, Abeysekera concluded that.

What we recognize as Sinhala culture today is not something which is naturally linked to the unbroken 2,500-year-old historical evolution of the Sinhala. Rather this culture has changed during the last 100 years in response to various economic and political needs. In the course of this development this (new) Sinhala culture has displaced village Buddhism to a secondary position.

The *Divayina* editorialist objected to the focus of the Sinhala Culture seminar. He contended that to explore the question, do the Sinhala have a culture, was absurd: 'For not only do the Sinhala (like other peoples) have a culture but according to the experts, when compared to other cultures Sinhala culture en'ays a great and unbroken tradition. The editorialist then caricatured the seminar participants as intellectuals performing like peacocks on seminar platforms implied that they were being manipulated by 'external' power and accused them of deliberately misleading the public instead of providing the general public with the strategies and strength to deal with the shattering assault on (our) nation and culture.

This editorial proved to be a mere prelude. A week later, the matter of ulterior motives was pursued in stronger prose. Sinhala intellectuals of the sort who were critical of Sinhala culture were accused of being sponsored by wealthy two-faced organizations which mask their real and sinister intentions (of

weakening the Sinhala) with pious concern for their problems. The editorialist also alleged that motivated by greed rather than patriotism Sinhala intellectuals had prostituted their professional skills to the highest bidders. In short they were traitors.

These two editorials set the tone and the agenda of the debate which followed. For example, next to the second editorial was published a lengthy article by Sarath Wijesuriya headlined, 'Lurking behind social science. Devadattas huri rocks at culture'. According to Buddhist legend, Devadatta, the Buddha's evil cousin had made several unsuccessful attempts on the Buddha's life — on one occasion, toppling boulders in his path. By comparing social scientists to Devadatta, Wijesuriya cast them as the (un-Buddhist) villains of this drama and symbolically elevated Sinhala culture to a quasi-sacred status beyond critical debate.

The theme of traitor-intellectuals publicly disparaging their already maligned culture circulated for several weeks in articles which were both passionately nationalistic, aggressively populist and anti-intellectual. For example, consider Gunawardena Suriyarachchi's rather apocalyptic vision:

Sinhala culture, once a football for hypocritic-experts, has now split into a double-headed serpent of Great and Little Traditions. It is truly astonishing that this split began to emerge only recently. Having masticated all that is edible of Sinhala culture, they are now swollen-headed with pride and denigrate even its unchewable dregs. But does any one of these false experts try to rescue Sinhala culture from the abyss into which it has fallen?

Again, echoing the suspicions of the editorialist, C. Rajapaksa concluded his rambling critique of Gunasinghe's Little Tradition thesis, charging that Little Intellectuals (*cula ugatun*) were selling

the country to foreigners for dollars.

A cartoon version of this theme also appeared in the Contemporary Controversies page. It figured two balding men, positioned back to back and sharing the same lower torso. One man, dressed in western clothes, looked smug clutching a wad of dollars in his left hand a sign announcing, 'Culture is for Sale' in his right hand. The other was dressed in the loose *kurta* which comprises the top half of 'national dress' for men. He was sour-faced and carried a sign which exclaimed, 'There is No Culture'. This then was the traitor-intellectual, a lanus-faced opportunist who, by virtue of his westernized training was not only presumed incapable of understanding his *real* culture but also guilty of deliberately distorting that culture for a fistful of dollars.

It would be misleading to characterize this *Diyayina* controversy as entirely polemical and divorced from the presentations made at the Sinhala Culture seminar. For some contributors were concerned with the substantive issues raised in the seminar rather than their allegedly sinister implications. For example, Nalin de Silva — an academic and social critic who was also a participant in the Sinhala Culture seminar — criticized Gunasinghe's choice of the Great and Little Tradition classification. Calling attention to the colonial origins of such western social-scientific concepts, de Silva argued they were inappropriate to the Sinhala context. Another, Mangala Illangasinghe (who professed to be no sociologist but engaged in the study of history and education challenged Gunasinghe's findings on the mode of economic production in the Kandy period and also his choice of Little Tradition cultural forms. In a similar fashion, Mendis Rohanadeera — also an academic — objected to Abeysekera's attempt to locate the development of modern Sinhala culture in the political and

economic (class) processes of the twentieth century. His critique was based on the assumption that the ancient roots of Sinhala-Buddhist identity were self-evident and the development of this identity through history was therefore unproblematic.

When compared in style and tone to the explosive prose discussed earlier, these critiques were undoubtedly more tempered, and the arguments couched in social science rhetoric. However, I am not suggesting that the latter were ideologically innocent. In fact, the Sinhala Culture seminar itself as well as the responses it elicited were bound by competing ideological claims: in general, both Abeysekera's and Gunasinghe's analyses were located within neo-Marxist paradigms while their critics were guided primarily by nationalist/populist considerations.

The entwinement of nationalism and social analysis hinted at in Rohanadeera's contribution referred to above was more explicitly articulated by Nalin de Silva. In another article de Silva reflected.

In the context of the present national problem it would have been better if this question (whether the Sinhalese have a Great Tradition culture) was discussed under a different topic. The theme of the seminar should have been the Sinhalese have a great cultural heritage that they can be proud of but should not impose on other ethnic groups. Those who claim that the Sinhalese have an inferior (*paḥat*) culture will never have any credibility with the people.

Accordingly, critical analyses of one's own culture at a time of national crisis (in this case, the Sinhala-Tamil conflict) were deemed at best counter-productive or at worst destructive. Unlike the ideal Weberian intellectual for whom politics and science (scholarship) were separate vocations, Sinhala intellectuals were expected to act politically as nationalists not traitors

and as defenders of their cultural heritage not its critics. It was because Gunasinghe and Abeyssekera flouted these implicit requirements and chose to deconstruct prevailing notions of Sinhala culture at a time when Tamil nationalism appeared to threaten Sinhala identity that their explorations proved to be so explosive.

Ethnicity, social scientist and national heroes

Many of the themes which had already emerged in the two foregoing debates were reopened in a third *Divayina* controversy. This dispute began over a volume of essays *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka (ESC)* published in English and Sinhala by the Social Scientists Association (SSA) in 1984. This collection was the product of a seminar held in 1979, before the July riots. Although the editors of ESC had hoped that the papers in this volume will at least force some of the exponents of Sinhala and Tamil nationalism to look more closely at the myths misinterpretations and misunderstandings that have nourished their ideologies, the nationalist backlash which ensued demonstrated otherwise.

This controversy was concerned with reconstituting a Sinhala identity perceived to have been defamed by Marxist academics. As such, it was a continuation of previous arguments in a new guise. Central to the new dispute was the reinterpretation of two important Sinhala nationalist heroes — Anagarika Dharmapala and King Dutugemunu. Anagarika Dharmapala was one of the leading figures in the early twentieth-century Buddhist reform movement which contributed the first wave of modern Sinhala nationalism. King Dutugemunu (Dutthagamani Abhaya) was the epic hero of the Mahavamsa and is best remembered for his victory over Elara, the south Indian ruler of the northern kingdom, in the second century BC.

Dharmapala: no 'savage blood is found'

The reappraisal of Dharmapala's life and work was provoked by Kumari Jayawardena's essay in ESC, in which she explored the links between merchant capital, the rise of a Sinhala petit bourgeoisie, the religious and cultural revival of this period and their communalist implications. With specific reference to the revivalist ideology she claimed that.

Rather than being swept away by the winds of nationalism and national unity the older forms of identity were given a new lease of life, resulting in communalism, casteism, a distortion of history a revival of myths of origin and hero-myths along with the creation of visions of a past "golden age"

The most fundamental of these myths was the three-pronged notion of Aryan-Sinhala-Buddhist identity which pervaded the speeches and writings of the reformer, Anagarika Dharmapala. Jayawardena pointed out that Dharmapala believed the Sinhala to be descendants of the Indo-Aryan race who were pure and more civilized than other racial groups in the area; that Lanka was Sihadipa, the island of the Sinhala people who claim descent from (the Indo-Aryan) Prince Vijaya; and that Lanka is also Dhammadipa, the island of the *dhamma*, where the dying Buddha predicted his teachings would flourish: 'Racial purity and religious purity were thus combined and the "pure Aryan Sinhalese" became the appointed guardians of the "pure doctrine" of Buddhism.

Jayawardena was by no means the first social scientist to offer a critical appraisal of Dharmapala and the Buddhist reform movement. Nevertheless, the timing of the ESC publication and its availability in Sinhala help explain the outrage it provoked.

Ven. Kahawatte Ananda proved to be Jayawardena's most persistent and bitter critic. He lambasted her for 'dynamiting our national heritage' by maligning Dharmapala and the Buddhist-nationalist movement. Specifically, he objected to her treatment of the notion of Aryan

origin. Pointing to Jayawardena's implication that Dharmapala's comment, 'the Sinhalese... in whose veins no savage blood is found... stand as the representatives of Aryan civilization' was racist, Ven. Ananda accused her of confusing the Sinhala meaning of *arya* ('those who do not indulge in lowly, animal-like behaviour') with Hitler's 'fundamentally different concept of a superior Aryan race'. However, Ven. Ananda continued to use the Sinhala term *arya* in a racial sense: he ascribed the Buddhist meaning of *arya* (which is related not to race but noble conduct) to the Sinhala *jatiya*. Furthermore, that Ven. Ananda was convinced of the (northern) Indo-Aryan origins of the Sinhala was explicit in his angry reaction to a discussion of the close ties between ancient Sri Lanka and (Dravidian) south India in the ESC essay by Susantha Goonatilake:

Supposedly our ancient Sinhala culture and society was based on south Indian culture and society. Supposedly we inherited our irrigation system from south India... what better distortion of history to support the cause of Eelamists.

These vigorous reaffirmations of their Aryanness fit into the broader context of Sinhala cultural-political preoccupations of this period according to which the ethnic conflict was perceived as a replay of ancient Aryan-versus-Dravidian conflict.

Having angrily dismissed Jayawardena's analysis of the myth of Aryan origins, Ven. Kahawatte Ananda also challenged her exposition of Sihadipa (the idea that Sri Lanka is the island of the Sinhala). In her essay, Jayawardena had claimed that according to Sinhala-Buddhist ideology taking shape at the turn of the century,

Sri Lanka was the *land of the Sinhalese* and — non-Sinhalese who resided there were allowed to do so by grace and favour of the Sinhala master 'race' who had prior rights of possession and were the exclusive 'son of the soil.'

Referring to this passage. Ven Ananda accused Jayawardena of deliberately making false allegations.

What is she trying to show the world by imputing to Anagarika Dharmapala things that neither he or any other reasonable Sinhala even intended? No one will reject the notion that this country belongs to the Sinhala. It is the Sinhala who have lived in this country since ancient times. At that time the term Sinhala encompassed all who lived in this country. The Sinhala have never let any live here subject to their grace and favour and they have treated other (ethnic) groups like their own brothers.

Ven. Ananda's confused demonstrations point to the central problematic of Sinhala identity:

it is at once inclusive and exclusive. Sinhala (ethnic) identity is conflated with Sri Lankan (national) identity. On the one hand this is a linguistic problem, for a single term, *jatiya*, continues to denote both ethnic group and nation. However, as the passage quoted above as well as many of the arguments already discussed in this paper testify, this limitation is not a mere linguistic one but also ramifies through Sinhala culture and politics.

Jayawardena had specifically related the concept of *Sihadipa* to Dharmapala's chauvinism toward ethnic minorities. In particular, she had cited Dharmapala's comment. Look at the Administration Report of the General Manager of Railways... Tamils, Cochins and Hambankarays are employed in large

numbers to the prejudice of the people of the island — sons of the soil, who contribute the largest share. Both Ven Kahawatte Ananda and a new entrant to the controversy, Minuwangoda D. Liyanage, believed that Dharmapala's sentiments were justified. Liyanage, in particular, characterized the (early twentieth-century) minority leadership as loyal colonial lackeys who would have come under inevitable attack during Dharmapala's anti-colonial campaign: 'The shot intended for the crocodile often strikes the birds who prey on the crocodile's back. That is the fate of those who eat the filth on the back of crocodile's. The image of parasitic scavenger birds clearly disparages the minorities — very likely, privileged and opportunistic Tamils.

(To be continued)

Was the Russian...

(Continued from page 19)

- 25 Bahro (1978), p. 50. When Bahro uses the term 'Asiatic', he refers to Marx's concept of 'the Asiatic mode of production'.
- 26 Bahro explicitly excludes 'the GDR and Czechoslovakia, which are untypical precisely because they already had capitalist industry' (Bahro, 1978, 48). These countries, however, as mentioned by de Silva in the case of Czechoslovakia, had no genuine popular revolutions: socialism was imposed on them by conquest.
- 27 Lenin (1977a), pp. 707-708.
- 28 I wish to make it clear that I don't accept the orthodox Marxist definition of 'class' as definite in relation to the means of production; even in the bourgeois societies cultural characteristic seems to me no less important for the definition of class. Moreover, concepts of 'class' need to be radically modified when applied to societies with no significant private ownership of the means of production.
- 29 Deutscher (1963), pp. 120-121.
- 30 Bahro (1984), pp. 202-203.
- 31 Deutscher, in his comments on Trotsky's fears of Thermidor, suggested that these fears were exaggerated. Deutscher made this judgment because he always tended to see planned economy and socialised property in the Soviet Union as irreversible. I think subsequent developments have in this respect vindicated Trotsky against Deutscher.

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India's...

(Continued from page 8)

- (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 141.
2. *The Hindu* (international weekly edition), January 27, 1990, p. 1.
 3. The Government of India appointed the Sarkaria Commission in 1983 to study the issues of federalism and make necessary recommendations. Its report was virtually rejected by the opposition parties no sooner then it was released in 1988.
 4. Editorial in *The Hindu* (international weekly edition), February 10, 1990, p. 8. Incidentally it appears that the president of the Union was consulted, and his "counsel appeared to have weighed in the final decisions." Surely the concerned chief ministers were consulted, instead of "imposing" the governors (p. 1).
 5. For example, for the High Court see *K. K. Abao v. Union of India*, A.I.R. 1965 Kerala 229, and *Rao Birendra Singh v. Union of India*, A.I.R. Punjab and Haryana 441. For the Supreme Court, *State of Rajasthan & Others v. Union of India*, A.I.R. 1977 SC 1361.
 6. See *Hargovind v. Raghukul Tilak*, A.I.R. 1979 SC 1109 at 1113.
 7. Krishna K. Tummala "Democracy Triumphant: The Case of Andhra Pradesh," *Asian Survey*, 26: 3 (March 1986), pp. 378-95.
 8. *The Hindu* (international weekly edition), January 5, 1991, p. 2.

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