

LANKA

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BISHOP'S MOVE

Mervyn de Silva

DEMOCRACY

V. L. Wirasingha

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Tyrone Fernando

AYODHYA

Rajni Kothari

INDIAN TAMIL IDENTITY

Patrick Peebles

CUBA

Karel Roberts

KASHMIR

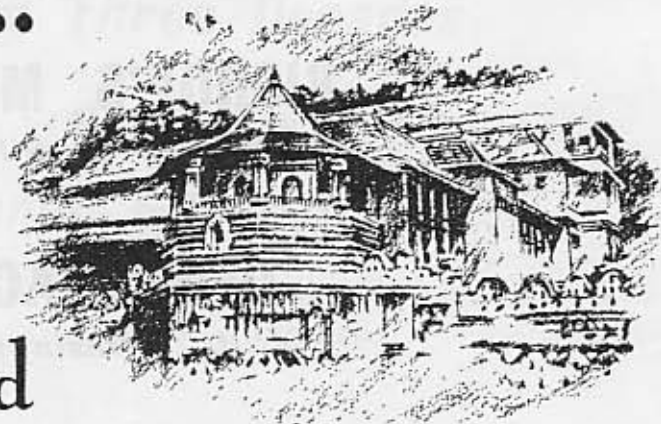
Nikhil Chakravartty

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Briefly. . .

New planes for Airforce

The Sri Lanka Airforce has been given four new Argentina built Pucara ground attack aircraft for the government's war with the northern based separatist terrorist "Tigers" (LTTE). The Pucara can carry two crew, six guns and 1500 kilograms of bombs and are said to cost \$2.8 million each.

Tigers face extradition

Under a new extradition treaty between India and Britain LTTE'rs living in the United Kingdom could be extradited to face charges in India. The treaty is believed to have been signed in Delhi during British Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke's recent visit.

According to British diplomatic sources the treaty was primarily intended for dealing with Sikh and Kashmiri separatists, but would be used to take Tigers involved in the Gandhi assassination too.

Opposition condemns break-in

The midnight break-in at Opposition MP Bandula Gunawardena's residence has been condemned in a joint statement by the SLFP, LSSP, MEP and DUNF, "with disgust and anger".

Political documents are reported have been taken away by an unidentified gang from the MEP MP's Nugegoda residence. "Mr Gunawardena has been earnestly fighting for human rights and for the rights of those who elected

him to office, in and out of parliament. He has often been criticising with facts and figures the oppressive and hostile activities that are going on in this country", the statement said.

Western Province undeveloped

A NARESA study has concluded that the Western Province is undeveloped. Sixteen of the 31 AGA's divisions in the WP are industrially backward. Of the rest two are "highly developed" they are Colombo and Nugegoda.

The study was funded by the Natural Resources Energy and Science Authority (NARESA) and was assisted by the Urban Development Authority (UDA). The researchers have recommended the development of the road and rail network in the underdeveloped areas.

Janasaviya: repayment rate good

The Bank of Ceylon is happy with the recovery rate in Janasaviya loans. The Bank is one of the chief providers of Janasaviya credit and has been registering a recovery rate recently of 91 per cent.

By the end of October 1992 the Bank had given out 301.107 million rupees to 37,101 Janasaviya recipients for small scale enterprises, mostly agriculture oriented.

University exams halted

Trade union action by university teachers have put off medical faculty examinations and halted other activities. The teachers have resigned from posts carrying administrative duties, crippling most functions. Non academic staff too have joined in.

The university staff unions are demanding higher pay scales.

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The Executive Summary of the interim report on POVERTY ALLEVIATION published in the last two issues of this journal, was produced by an "Independent South Asian Commission" approved by the SAARC secretariat on the recommendation of a SAARC summit. The Chairman of the Commission is Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, and the Vice-Chairman/Co-ordinator is Ponna Wignaraja. The members (over 15) have been drawn from South Asian scholars and experts.

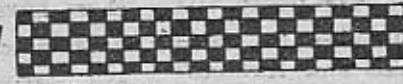
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THE CHURCH TAKES A HAND

Mervyn de Silva

Is Bishop Kenneth Fernando's mission to Jaffna and his two hour-conversation with Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran the proverbial 'little light at the end of the tunnel'? Perhaps. But it would be wise to remember that this is not merely a long but a winding tunnel. But it is a breakthrough. And "Give peace a chance" should be our attitude — even for those seasoned sceptics who are weary of hopes raised only to be dashed in a matter of months, or even weeks.

Let's take a hard look at the pluses and the minuses. The first 'plus' is that Velupillai Prabhakaran, a man who prefers to stay in the shadow, came out of his sanctuary to greet the guests. Second, a record of the conversations was kept, and the Anglican Bishop of Colombo, was prepared to talk to the press. Third the participants included three Tamil clergymen from the Jaffna diocese of the Church of South India. (See Bishop Ambalavanar's complaint). South India includes Tamilnadu, and there is no denying the importance of the Tamilnadu factor — not just in the past but right now. With Prime Minister Narasimha Rao politically embattled in Delhi, the support of Chief Minister Jayalalitha's AIDMK government in Madras, is quite important even in terms of a secure majority in the Lok Sabha. And it is, Mr. Rao is torn between the Congress hardliners, not too hostile to the extremist RSS-BJP and to rising Hindu passions, on the one hand, and to the Marxist-Left (The CPI (M)), on the other. Besides, Mr. Rao is a southerner, the first to hold the highest office. A negotiated

truce in Sri Lanka's north, however short-lived, would certainly ease tensions in Tamilnadu at a time when the Centre faces a dangerously critical situation in India's north, Kashmir most of all. True the Rao administration has made Indian attitudes to small neighbours, far less hegemonistic and interventionist. But any political move in Colombo which creates problems for Delhi in Tamilnadu, would needlessly alienate a basically friendly or non-antagonistic Indian raj. In that light, Prabhakaran's reply on the Mangala Moonesingha Committee's recommendation, should be studied carefully:

FEDERALISM

"The problem is not whether the clauses are satisfactory but whether the government is in a mood to implement them..." It was also pointed in the official record, "the Sinhalese disliked the word 'federalism' till recent times but they have accepted it for the most part..."

Accepted it for the most part? Now, Prabhakaran is the optimist. It is the Indian model the Select Committee accepted and that falls far short of genuine federalism. That is why the States are protesting wildly about a constitution that can remove State governments by a mere proclamation. What is relevant is that hardline Sinhala parties and organisations like the MEP, the, S.A.S. and the HELA URUMAYA has taken an extremely hostile view on the Select Committee report. And the Hela Urumaya, let's remember, represents a fair number of MP's from the main Opposition party. On substance, then, the Christian delegation's talks have not achieved much. But on the symbolic, this is a quite

a breakthrough the gestures represent an advance. And gestures matter.

To put it bluntly, two policemen out of 40 odd policemen and soldiers, including an officer, don't make a big deal. But once again, it is a sign to Colombo and the Sinhala people

Why?

The LTTE cannot be totally impervious to Tamil public opinion certainly in Jaffna nor to international opinion, and trends abroad, especially in Europe. The war in what was Yugoslavia has contributed much to the prevailing mood in western Europe. The refugee problem and the 'alien' presence have become more than a nuisance.

In the richest and most powerful of European states, lately unified Germany, it has exacerbated tensions to the point that extremist German opinion has assumed an ominously 'fascist' character. Bonn has been compelled to change its position on "asylum seekers", a constitutional guarantee for several decades.

SWISS MOVE

Switzerland is one of the smallest of states but it is also the EC country with the highest living standards. It has always been liberal in its attitude to refugees. It has now decided to deport many Tamil refugees. Throughout western Europe, once the haven of the political refugee and the displaced person, these problems are aggravating tensions caused by the recession that has seized the capitalist world. The west would like to free itself of this increasingly oppressive, socially de-stabilising problem. One way of reconciling economic-social need and conscience

NEWS
BACKGROUND

is an improvement of conditions in the Tamil north, i.e. a restoration of near-normal conditions of everyday life — security, food distribution, medical supplies, educational facilities, a semblance of law and order. The war has made a million Tamils a hostage in their traditional homeland.

The LTTE wants to convert that 'homeland' to a separate state. It is for that reason the Sri Lanka State has declared war on "the separatist-terrorists". But the harsh consequences of this undecadred war have brought untold suffering to the Tamils in the peninsula. Whether the LTTE likes it or not, the average Jaffna family feels the 'Tigers' are answerable. That's why the "banned items" (a list of everyday needs) was presented to the Christian delegation, which will now discuss the matter with the authorities. Top of the list is medicine, and some items of food. The other important issue is travel to and from Jaffna, and the problem of security. The lagoon is a major hazard. Some 'safe passage' has to be found for civilians. But who are *bonafide* travellers? The 'tigers' don't wear uniforms. It was Admiral Clancy Fernando who "cleared" the lagoon where 'Tigers' moved freely among the fishermen. It was for that very effective but also very tough operation that the Navy Commander made the supreme sacrifice... in Galle Road, Colombo. Perhaps the Defence Ministry can use the Christian delegation as intermediaries to resolve problems of that kind. It can win Colombo some appreciation from the international community (donors) the NGO's and non-LTTE Tamil organisations and the average Jaffna family.

INTERVENTION

This was a Christian mission, Anglican and Catholic, but Anglican led. The diocese of South India was better known at one time as the American mission. Both the United States and Britain, helped by some EC

members, have been keen to find a negotiated settlement. The Mangala Mooningsingha Committee had their fullest support. Britain of course is Washington's closest ally. The Anglo-American is a "special relationship". That was made patently obvious in the Gulf war. And in this age of intervention, via preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping or conflict-resolution, the two work together closely. Using the U.N.

as "flag" or "umbrella" is now a settled habit of western diplomacy in the so-called 'new world order'. It is in that context we should read the outspoken editorial in the *SUNDAY TIMES*, a newspaper which has excellent credentials on the ethnic conflict as a forthright spokesman of the Sinhala-Buddhist cause. (SEE FROM THE EDITORIALS).

How the world looks at Sri Lanka

To the oppositionists and the doomsayers the report in the *Daily News* (6.1.1993) about President George Bush commending the economic and social development as being "unique for a country of its size and location" must have had the same effect as driving pins into their eyes. President Bush made these comments when Dr. Ananda Guruge, our new Ambassador to America, presented his credentials at the White House. However, to the oppositionists a positive report about Sri Lanka — and that too coming from the centre of world power — is the last thing they would want to read. When they also find that President Bush has lauded the new status of Sri Lanka which, according to him, "is poised to

serve as a model for others" they would, in all probability, wonder why it was no convenient for the American President to have ended his term before Dr. Guruge presented his credentials.

The oppositionists and their clique do not like anything good being said about this country as long as they are not in power. Even an objective assessment coming from a distant observer applauding President Ranasinghe Premadasa's achievements would be dismissed summarily because it does not conform to their dismal view of the world. No doubt, if any comment (local or foreign) went against the government they would be the first to scream their lungs out.

(*Sunday Observer*)

Good Wine needs no Bush

Outgoing US President George Bush, seems determined to play Santa Claus to our bewildered and beleaguered people.

Mr. Bush has cheerfully informed Sri Lanka's new Ambassador in Washington, Dr. Ananda W. P. Guruge, that Sri Lanka's economic development would serve as a model to the others. Warming to his theme, the American President said that for a country of Sri Lanka's size

and location her economic indicators were impressive.

If the economy is indeed on the upswing, people in any country need not be told so. Mr. Bush whose defeat is mainly attributed to the deteriorating American economy should be well aware of it. Good wine, as the old adage goes, needs no Bush and if the economy is spurting ahead we don't need the advice of Mr. Bush.

The quality of life is as important as economic indicators.

(*Island*)

UN role for Lankan crisis

In the dilemma we face today, we need to seriously reflect on the possibility of seeking a just and lasting solution through some other means. The mediation and if necessary the intervention of the United Nations could be one way out of the log-jam.

The lead story on this page today reveals a new effort by Lali Kobbekaduwa, widow of the revered Lt. Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa whose portrait adorns

several calendars this year, to push for the appointment of a Commonwealth Commission to probe the circumstances in which her husband and other top officers were killed at Arali Point on August 8.

In the same spirit, we could also go to a wider scale and look at the pros and cons of the United Nations, through the Security Council and if necessary an international peace-keeping team carrying-out in Sri Lanka a role, similar to what is now

being enacted in Bosnia, Somalia and Cambodia. Why not Sri Lanka? Originally the intention of the international relief force in Somalia was to clear obstacles and take food and essential supplies to millions of people in that war-ravaged country. But the Egyptian UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali is insisting that unless the Somali war-lords and their robber gangs are disarmed, Somalia might fall into the same quagmire again after the UN forces leave.

(Times)

President's letter to Mrs. Bandaranaike

January 9, 1993

Dear Leader of the Opposition

I think it will be useful in the public interest to have a public debate on the Government's development and production strategies. It will also give an opportunity to the people to get to know the alternative strategies that the different political parties have to offer. Such a debate will enable the respective party leaders to clear any misunderstandings and mis-

representation regarding their own party policies and strategies.

You will will no doubt agree that such a debate should be at the level of the leaders of political parties. I will be personally participating in the debate as the Leader of the United National Party. If you and the party Leaders in Parliament agree, we can enlarge the debate to include leaders of all registered political parties who are willing to participate.

I would like to have your views on this matter as soon as possible, so that we can meet and work out the modalities of such a public debate. I am copying this letter to all the other leaders of the political parties in Parliament seeking their views on this matter

Your sincerely
R. Premadasa
President

&
Leader of the
United National Party

Bush Statement

President George Bush has urged the Sri Lanka government to seek a 'peaceful resolution' to its ethnic conflict and warned that 'military expenditure to fight the (Tamil separatist) insurgency will impair the country's economic growth' he has said that 'economic and social indicators' make Sri Lanka a model for other developing countries. The war has lessened productivity, damaged tourism and led to human rights violations. He

said. However he has recognised that the government has 'made strides in human rights reforms'. Mr. Bush was speaking at a ceremony at the White House after Sri Lanka's Ambassador Dr. Ananda Guruge presented his credentials.

The statement has caused some alarm in majority Sinhala-dominated parties since it is known that Tamil expatriate groups in the U.S. worked hard for Mr. Clinton. A reference to a *Voice of America* (VOA) transmitter in Colombo has caused concern

among some Asian diplomats here. Mr. Bush thanked President Premadasa for permitting the construction of a powerful transmitter that can reach the whole of Asia and Africa. During his campaign. Mr. Clinton who praised the contribution of 'Radio Free Europe' in the defence of democracy, and human rights, proposed a 'Radio Free Asia', countries like China, Indonesia, Burma, North Korea, and perhaps Malaysia and Pakistan may have reason to worry about the V.O.A in Colombo.

Tigers mourn Kittu's death

M. S. Vipulananda

LTTE's senior member Sathasivam Krishnakumar alias Kittu is dead.

Kittu, one-time LTTE's military commander in Jaffna, was associated with a Tiger movement since 1977.

Indian authorities said the LTTE blew up a ship in which they were carrying arms and ammunition after Indian Navy vessels surrounded it.

An Indian Defence Ministry spokesman earlier said the ship was ablaze and Kittu was abroad. "LTTE cadres set off explosives on the ship which set ablaze the vessel," another

Indian government spokesman said.

According to reports reaching Colombo, the Indian vessels had surrounded the ship. An LTTE spokesman is quoted as saying the ship, a 280-tonne cargo vessel, was owned by the Tigers. He did not disclose from which port the M. V. Ahad had set out.

Under Kittu's command in 1986 the LTTE massacred the powerful TELO and killed its leader Sri Sabaratnam despite appeals from Tamil Nadu former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. He was also responsible for wiping out of Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). The remnants of the EPRLF launched a grenade attack on Kittu in the internecine warfare as a result of which he lost one his legs. He killed cadres of PLOTE also.

Kittu who went to UK in 1989 was ordered by the British Home Office in 1991 to leave the country. He had been on a visitors's visa. The Home Office alleged that Kittu had abused his position by organising the raising of funds for the Tiger movement. The Home Office also alleged that he tried to obtain arms for the Tigers through threats and coercion among the Tamil community in Britain.

EPDP sources said the LTTE in its morning broadcast had also charged India with deceiving the world. The LTTE alleged the Indian Navy captured the the Tiger ship in international waters and not inside Indian

territory. The LTTE had stated that the Tiger cadres including Kittu killed themselves.

Earlier reports said the navy captured nine Tigers who jumped into the sea from the ship.

Investment

Local and foreign investment reached the 37 billion rupee mark in 1992, over 800 million dollars. In 1991 investments totalled 16.5 billion rupees. The main foreign investors were Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and Australia. The Board of Investment Director - General Lakshman Watawala said that "the investment involved 291 projects as against 111 projects the previous year". The three "FTZ's" in the Colombo-Biyagama-Koggala area had provided employment for over 100,000 persons all working in export-oriented ventures". The 200 garment factories would create another 100,000 jobs. So far American investment is minimal. But a team of US investors will probably visit the island early this year. The US Embassy was supporting the initiative.

Commenting on the larger implications of the new policy of making the whole island a "free trade zone", Mr. Watawala said "Industrialisation is reaching the provinces".

Large donors, says Richard, Brown USAID chief in Colombo like the World Bank and the ADB are dealing with irrigation and other infrastructure projects, while US programs are working more and more on agro-business to try and affect the incomes of the poorer people".

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THE REGION

The lessons Ayodhya has for SAARC

C. Chitti Pantalu

Accident prone as it is, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), has several lessons to learn from the Ayodhya debacle on December 6.

For one, it has shown that the seven-nation club can no longer continue its ostrich like attitude and ignore the geopolitical realities within South Asia if the objectives of true regional co-operation have to be achieved.

The trail of destruction, not just in India but also in neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh, in the wake of the demolition of the Babri mosque forcing the postponement of the Dhaka summit, has not only brought to the fore the fragility of the SAARC charter but has once again underscored the fact that the future prospects in the region will be determined as much by political as by economic variables.

INTROSPECTION

Mooted in 1980 and institutionalised at the Dhaka summit in 1985, SAARC now has an opportunity to do some introspection on this subject when it meets once again at Dhaka for the seventh summit next month with the ominous shadows of the demolished Babri mosque looming large on the Sub-continent. The SAARC charter, by its very definition, has precluded the raising of contentious and bilateral matters, particularly of a political nature, at the different forums of the club.

However, the 12-year existence of the regional grouping is replete with instances when political considerations have outweighed logic. Thus the attempts by Pakistan to make political capital out of the Ayodhya incident by raking up the issue, albeit without success, at the pre-summit ministerial meetings in Dhaka should not cause surprise. The attempts also highlight the truth that the grouping can indeed be a victim of political uncertainties, confirming last year's Colombo experience.

While the imperatives of a strong regional economic alliance for a sound future are recognised by one and all in the grouping, it is these political undercurrents among the countries in the Sub-continent that have stymied efforts in this direction. The most recent instance being in New Delhi last month when the Pakistani delegation to the third meeting of committee on economic co-operation convened to finalise the South Asian preferential trading arrangement (SAPTA), displayed its reluctance to play along.

Suddenly, uncertainty dogs the trading arrangement which was taken for granted with the political endorsement expected to be only a formality at the Dhaka summit. Though it cannot be said that Pakistan has totally reneged on this, it is obvious that its animosity towards India is driving the country to look in other directions.

Not surprisingly the latter's attentions are increasingly being devo-

ted to the predominantly Islamic Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO), comprising itself, Iran and Turkey as the founding members. The induction of seven Central Asian republics into the ECO late last month has only led to fears of an "economic counter" bloc based on principles of Islamic fundamentalism in the region.

While it should cause no surprise if Pakistan attempts to rope in Bangladesh into this club at a latter date, notwithstanding its political connotations some have actually seen this as a welcome development. Citing the example of India's successful ties with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the European Community, they have justified such attempts as beneficial to inter-regional alliances by SAARC. While this remains so, the importance of giving primacy of place to political thought within the grouping should not be ignored if the rough patch being experienced by it has to be smoothed out.

In fact the idea goes back to the first summit itself when the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singme Wangchuk, addressing the Heads of State had said, "in the geopolitical realities of our region, it would be unrealistic to ignore the primacy of the political factor, as in the final analysis, it will be the political environment of the region which will determine the shape and scope of regional co-operation in South Asia."

While historical factors have influenced India's relations with its neighbours to a great extent, the difficulties being faced by SAARC can also be attributed to geography with the former's centrality, its vast size, population, resources and economic and military power *visa-vis* its neighbours. These are the basic elements leading to apprehension among the other members of SAARC of the India's perceived "hegemonistic designs".

Its attempts to foster collective self-reliance in the region and keep out external powers have been interpreted by its neighbours as born out of such designs. While the Indian efforts towards regional autonomy and security have not been reflected in any formalised manner so far, they have only led its neighbours searching for political linkages with those very external powers to counterbalance its might.

Added to this, the interplay of the Indo-Pak conflict with

global rivalry between the US and the erstwhile USSR till recently, had only aggravated the tension in the South Asian region. The continuation of these hostilities between the two, notwithstanding the detente among the Superpowers, only goes to show that the key to better relations lies primarily with the two Governments themselves. Though not to such an extent, India's relations with its other neighbours too have witnessed irritants on various occasions.

CHANGE IN CHARTER

Thus, it would be worth considering whether it would be desirable to gradually widen the scope of the SAARC charter, without tampering with the unanimity and contentious issues clause to include also political problems which require the hammering out of a common approach to the advantage of the entire region. While it would be unrealistic to expect this to

be accepted at the first instance, a start could at least be made with informal discussions at the SAARC summits by resuming the now discontinued "retreat" sessions where the heads of government meet.

The forthcoming Dhaka summit could be a start in this direction. Apart from helping to find solutions to regional problems locally, such an effort would discourage attempts to internationalise bilateral political issues and limit the discussion to only within SAARC. This would also be in the direction of fulfilling the objectives, enunciated in its charter and also reiterated at the second summit at Bangalore in 1986, "to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one other's problems."

While the need for such a forum has been felt for some time now, Ayodhya has underscored its urgency.

Playing the 'Communal Card'

Politicians are to blame for religious strife

Rajni Kothari

It would be a mistake to view the tragedy of Ayodhya purely as an act of religious extremism. There was nothing religious about the destruction of a Muslim place of worship by a few thousand hoodlums masquerading as "Hindus." On the contrary, India is a distinctly multicultural,

multiethnic nation with an eclectic, nondogmatic tradition in matters of religion. Any attempt to impose a political and ideological version of "unified Hinduism" on such a society was bound to boomerang. That is what happened at Ayodhya.

For some time, organizations like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Vishwa Hindu

Parishad (VHP) have sought to bring together all segments and layers of Hindu society. The proponents of such a unified theocratic ideology claim that the Indian state has been too partial to Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. The Hindus have been left high and dry, they claim, and as a result suffer most from backwardness and illiteracy and have fallen behind

Prof. Rajni Kothari is an author and political scientist in New Delhi.

in terms of economic development. The key reason for this state of backwardness, they argue, is that the Hindus — unlike the various minorities — have remained disunited and fragmented into so many caste and local identities. Hence the need to unite them and give them their due as a “majority” community.

Fortunately, the mass of Hindus have largely ignored that appeal. Vast numbers continue to live peacefully alongside Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. But in a period of drift and uncertainty, when political authority is unable to hold diverse elements of society together in a common political framework, bigots and rabblers are able to storm their way onto center stage. And in doing so they have raised some serious questions about the future of Indian democracy. Their actions call into question the “secular” credentials of a state and government that have exposed the country’s largest minority — the Muslims — to such wanton aggression by people claiming to represent the Hindus — all the Hindus.

For more than three decades following its independence from Britain, India saw little in the way of religious militancy. There were two reasons for this. One was that, under Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress party held sway as a democratic structure representing a broad coalition of interests and communities. The other was that Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi, was able to win over the masses with her slogan *garibi hatao* (“banish poverty”)

at a time when her party had failed either to reduce poverty or alleviate injustice. The response to her call was astounding, revealing the great faith the people of India — especially the poor and the underprivileged — placed in the Indian state. But rumblings of discontent — as expressed in the defeat of the Congress party in its citadels in southern India, and in the erosion of its social base among the minorities and the poor — caused a loss of nerve among the ruling elite. That led Indira Gandhi herself to play the “communal card,” first in Punjab and then in Kashmir. Among the people of northern India’s “heartland,” especially the mostly Hindu middle class, she stirred a large measure of anxiety about the country’s unity and about threats from “within and without.” Herein lies the genesis of the growth of “communalism” in India’s body politic, for which the ruling Congress party has been as responsible as anyone.

India has always had communal parties representing religious communities, but they had never made much of an impact. In election after election, they remained on the periphery. It was only when the Congress party itself started playing communal politics that the whole atmosphere in the country underwent a dramatic change. The BJP has now caught, in highly virulent form, a virus originated by the Congress party. But in

the case of the BJP, representing as it does the interests of the upper crust of Hindu society the “communal card” has also become an instrument of subjugating not just the Muslims but also but also the backward classes and the lowly castes among the Hindus.

Ruling class: The manner in which the current Congress government of Narasimha Rao handled the threats to demolish the Ayodhya mosque speaks volumes about the complete loss of nerve and self-confidence in India’s ruling class in dealing with crisis situations. Contrast that with the growing self-confidence of the terrorists and the fundamentalists. It is this erosion of the democratic political process and of the democratic political process and of the authority and legitimacy of the state that presents the most disturbing aspect of the current situation.

The only positive note is that the forces that have unnerved the managers of the system are rather marginal to the larger social mosaic that is India. The mass of the people are not only unwilling to destabilize the state but in fact depend on it to restore to them their basic dignity and citizenship. Indian civilization has weathered many storms. It will probably survive this one, too, despite a terrible assault on India’s core values.

In Kashmir wisdom lies in making concessions today

Nikhil Chakravarty

What next in Kashmir? After the three-day safari of leaders of various parties to the Valley arranged by the Government, no one knows what has been its outcome. They have dutifully reported to the Prime Minister whatever impressions they might have gathered, but there seems to be reticence on the part of most of them to spell out what they think should be the way out of the Kashmir crisis.

Nobody, of course, had expected that one trip by the party leaders from New Delhi would set in motion the political process in Kashmir. What the party leaders' trip has made amply clear to all of them is that at present there is no space at all for any political activity on their part in the Valley, that they could make no breakthrough in the boycott call enforced by the militants. In other words, the leaders' visit has sharply brought home the bitter truth that unless and until these parties move out of generalities and speak out specifically on what the militants ask for, there could be no opening for any of them in the Valley.

There may be truth in the official claim, occasionally voiced, that the average Kashmiri is getting tired of the violence and disruption that the militants' activity bring upon them. But nobody can yet claim with a grain of truth that there has come about a swing in favour

of the official position. The fact is that none of the political parties which were in the past visibly active in Kashmir is today in a position to resume activity — such being of the measure of their isolation from the people in the Valley. The inability of the Union Home Minister to mobilise the leaders of these parties along with some others who are not identified with the militants, is an eloquent testimony to the impossibility of resuming what is called the political process in the conventional manner, with a view ultimately to hold elections in the Valley.

There could possibly be two approaches to the question. One could be to talk to the Pakistan Government first as per Shimla Accord, and through such negotiation bring about an understanding on the question of the future set-up in Jammu & Kashmir. The other line of approach has to be talking directly to the leaders of the militants on the ground and work out an understanding with them about the future set-up. There are merits in both the approaches, as also there may be uncertainties and reservations about either of them.

Negotiate with militants

On the question of holding talks with Pakistan, the initiative was first seriously taken by Mr Chandra Shekhar during his brief tenure as Prime Minister, and Mr Narasimha Rao has followed it up by holding talks with the Pakistan Prime Minister

wherever an opportunity came; whether in any of the encounters in the subcontinent or at any distant rendezvous. The problem, however, lies in the uncertain state of affairs within Pakistan. At one stage, Nawaz Sharif had himself hinted that there could be a third option for the people of Kashmir in any future plebiscite — not only what the UN resolutions envisaged, namely, opt for India or Pakistan, but also to opt for the status of an independent State. The uproar it touched off in Pakistan led him to withdraw from that position and to block twice the planned march of JKLF across the Line of Control.

There is also another argument which can veto any idea of an Indo-Pak settlement on Kashmir, as this may be mistaken for ignoring the people in that State — which may be branded as thoroughly undemocratic. Besides, such an approach negates the stand that India has taken so far, namely that Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union, and so any settlement about it has to be primarily arrived at with the people of Kashmir and their representatives, and that Pakistan's role in it is to be regarded as subsidiary to that basic approach. There is certainly need for an understanding between New Delhi and Islamabad about the future of Kashmir but that is to be subsumed to the principal question, namely New Delhi's settlement of issues with the people of Kashmir.

Two questions are involved in respect of forging an understanding with the people of Kashmir — namely with whom to negotiate, and what should be the parameters of such a settle-

ment. As for the first question, it is clear that the existing parties, whether the National Conference or the Congress or any of the other parties have today no political foothold in the Valley — which is the main theatre of the militants' operation. One has to go beyond the precincts of conventional politics and draw the militants out of their confrontational posture and bring them to the negotiating table.

No cut-and-dried solution

As things stand today, there are two main groups among the militants in Kashmir — the JKLF and the Hizbul Islami. Between the two, the JKLF is more popular but the Hizbul has more arms in its possession. The JKLF stands for independence of Kashmir, that is, it is opposed to Pakistan annexing

Kashmir: while the Hizbul Islami openly campaigns for Kashmir joining Pakistan. Obviously there could be no sense in expecting either the Government or any political party in this country striking a deal with the Hizbul on the understanding of Kashmir joining Pakistan. On the other hand there could be room for talks with the JKLF if one were to make an approach to the militants.

The next question is the extent of autonomy that New Delhi is prepared to offer Kashmir. It is only by offering a substantive degree of autonomy to Kashmir that the JKLF leadership may be persuaded to accept it as the essence of their independence demand, and thereby to agree to come to an understanding not only with the Government but other political parties in India.

Inevitably any step towards more autonomy for Kashmir would raise the question as to what would be the fall-out of such an arrangement on the rest of the country, particularly when there is so much clamour all round for more powers to the states. This is precisely the point on which the far-seeing elements in all parties — the Congress, the Janata Dal, the Left and the BJP — will have to abandon old positions which have become invalid, and boldly envisage a more decentralised State structure for the Indian Union as a whole.

Nobody would be naive enough to expect that there could be an instant, cut-and-dried solution to the Kashmir crisis: An issue which has been hanging fire for four decades. At the

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CUBA

Can the dream be revived?

Karel Roberts

Although it is widely known that the Cuban economy is in dire straits and some people are disillusioned with things in general and with the revolution in particular, Rajiva Wijesingha's report, 'Cuba, the end of a dream,' in the LG of December 1, '92 and continued in the concluding second part, was deeply saddening and even frightening to read—frightening because it left one wondering what the future of the Caribbean island is going to be, unimaginable though any future without Fidel Castro is, to those who have grown up knowing only Castro for Cuba.

At the end of 1958 there was an added dimension of magic in the air, or so it seemed to me in those impressionable years just out of school and waiting for something exciting to happen in the world—anywhere—so long as it happened. Elation peaked on New Year's Day, '59, when the flag of Castro's victorious revolution was raised over the Caribbean island after almost a decade of struggle.

The island of salsa and son had been turned into a charnel house by Batista's infamous regime, with abject poverty on the one hand and affluence on the other, among those who bootlicked the puppet leader and contributed to make Cuba a hot-house of crime and vice. After a long and bitter struggle that later historians, if they are not just fuddy duddys, will record as one of the most romantic sagas of the turbulent Hispanic region, the revolutionary forces led by this man Castro and his able lieutenants, including that other legendary figure of the Cuban revolution, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, overthrew Batista's yoke of repression, riddled with corruption, and swept into power on an enormous wave of popular support.

Living in a chiaroscuro world of fantasy and idealism, the Cuban revolution, and particularly the charismatic appeal of Fidel Castro now smiling out of the foreign news pages of the local newspapers, was to me just the heady wine to add to the sauce that New Year. Here were all the ingredients for an epic victory which I fervently hoped would last forever. 'Che' was murdered, but Fidel looked set for many years to come; somehow he stood more solidly than the Argentinian romantic revolutionary who had a quality of fragility about him.

The Cold War had begun, Kennedy became the youngest US president, and in Moscow Khrushchev's fur-capped coarseness was symbolic of the big Communist bear that the west was forever fearing would swallow it up. Meanwhile, the newly liberated Cuban people were looking forward to a revitalising of life under the dashing young leader who had won the affection of his people in an extraordinary way. His youth—he was only 31 when he won his battle against reactionary forces—his good looks and, of course, the ideals he stood for, earned him the love of the Cuban people. Although the western world may have hated Castro as 'one of those left wing revolutionary desperados,' they could not possibly see him as a Siberian bear. His appearance might ironically have fitted him for some swash-buckling Hollywood film role!

The spirit of the revolution bubbled into the sixties; Castro became the icon to whom his people could turn to for anything. In a system that did not uphold state religion, Castro became the new saviour that Cuban people looked up to with justifiable faith.

Those were the days of cosy, string-attached aid. It was only natural that Cuba looked to mother/father the Soviet Union for relief after the chaos that Batista had plunged the country into.

Cuba was already famous in the west—long before Castro—for its sugar, Havana cigars, rhumbas and rum, the latter commodity which it shared in reputation with British Jamaica. But it needed a large amount of aid to get the island on its feet again. And that assistance could only come from the Soviet Union. After all, Castro had waged and won his war in the name of Socialist struggle and in Communism's highest ideals. Cuba looked to the country that provided its inspiration for the epic struggle.

It would probably be true to say that the flow of Soviet aid lulled Cuba into a sense of eternal security—and protection from the angry west. They could not foresee that it would ever end. For that matter, neither perhaps could their beloved new leader. Perhaps there was too much taken for granted in those days, but Cuba was not alone in that sense.

Wijesingha says Cuba had 'no business' to depend on aid from the USSR. While the morality of any country depending on aid from another is one thing, it must be seen that in those years Cuba had to turn to a friend for help in the plight it had been placed by the previous regime. Generous donor countries from both east and west took nations-in-need under their political wing. What Wijesingha is saying is that the serious economic situation Cuba is now in is the result of the high degree of dependence on Soviet aid that went on till the recent withdrawal of assistance following the 'collapse' of the Soviet Union.

We have the early sixties scenario of a young Castro, idealistic and patently sincere, left holding the baby and looking to nourish it. But often youth-

ful idealism isn't too far seeing; it is rather, arrogant and naive. Not that this is in the least to say that Cuba's new leader was either, but somehow in those heady days going into the sixties, there didn't seem to be so much awareness of the changing attitudes as now. Godfather scenarios where security was given and assured were expected to go on endlessly because no one ever thought the Cold War would end, and no one could foresee which way the wind would blow three decades later.

In addition to the huge task of rebuilding the country and restoring its people to a feeling of political well-being, Fidel Castro also had to face numerous attempts on his life and all kinds of plays to destroy him and the new ideals he had succeeded in imbuing his people with. He fobbed off the infamous Bay of Pigs affair orchestrated by the good, clean new boy of American politics, John Kennedy; he rode the Cuban missile crisis like the storm; he has to this day out-distanced no less than eight US presidents.

Idealism and practicality seldom go hand-in-hand and even when they do, they aren't necessarily cordial bed fellows. Castro's detractors of course say that the realisation of part of his dream was made possible because of the cocooning in the fur muffs of the Soviet Union. Cuba provided the physical and psychological factors of a Communist country on America's off-shore threshold; give and take; Havanas for oil; sugar for whatever. But Cuba was clean because of its leader's belief in certain ideals. Today, aren't arms being passed behind the backs of people to enemies? Irangate, this gate, the other gate. To date there had been no Cubagate.

Although he does not say so in stated terms, what Wijesingha seems to be reflecting is the typical western attitude to the only Communist-run state in the western hemisphere — namely, that Cuba has no business to

still be there when nations are throwing off socialist mantles and donning the glitzy costumes of cavorting capitalism in the sex-and-money floor shows of the west, neo Nazis et al. He is saying 'deprivation, they name is socialism, just like the pampered Sri Lankan with everything, because there was no beer and skittles somewhere and, wot, no soft drinks in another, because his hotel had run out of jam for breakfast.

Of course you can't eat personalities Castro still has at age 65, is what Rajiva Wijesingha is saying. But it is not exactly right to say that Cuba has not looked at reality. A decade or so ago there were serious moves towards certain selective private enterprise projects; Spain has since the last decade been investing in hotel projects to help Cuba's tourist industry. The island has always been an exotic tourist destination to westerners, one of its best advertisements being that Ernest Hemingway stayed there.

True, Cuba has been severely set back by the withdrawal of aid after the Soviet Union went back to being Russia, surrounded by its former satellite states, now fragmented and crying out for their own individual pies. The US still has Bush's three-year economic blockade of the island going, and Castro is calling for even greater austerities from his people. And the west is appalled by this call because the mere word austerity today has connotations of penury and deprivation and perhaps because it is linked with socialist ideals in a way, and achievement eventually, but not the western concept of it.

Writer Rajiva Wijesingha's interest in and perhaps affection for Cuba started at the end of the Cuba craze of the 1940's and '50's that prevailed in the then Ceylon. This writer was caught somewhere in the middle, so that faint memories of Hollywood's celluloid tropical paradise merge with stirring scenes of the revolution when Fidel Cas-

tro became a pin-up boy in the pro western school I went to, surprisingly enough.

In the '40's and '50's Ceylon, people were wondering what was going to happen to their tropical paradise island where palms waved and lured the rich to weekends in Havana, and a deep-throated crooner sang despite the sand in his shoes sands of Havana. These were of course the English-speaking middle classes who feared that the Commie pig Castro would soon put an end to the picture postcard, westernstyle ambience, albeit an ambience of decadence, that washed Cuba, but where millions of poor Cubans could only genuflect at the altar of their God, cross themselves and pray for deliverance from the tyranny they were going through.

Who was this Castro, Ceylonese middle-classes asked themselves and each other, who was going to deprive them of their entertainment via the silver screen, of romance and intrigue and rhumba dancers which formed part of their intellectual staple? How we were brainwashed at home and outside by elements that saw Castro as yet another big bad wolf who was devouring all the good of the west in his country and was about to turn it into an ironjacketed land, joyless and dark. They could not see that this new star on the horizon had his own dream, that dreaming was not the prerogative of America.

Cuba watchers are now looking closely at Bill Clinton; will he, wont he? But the temptingly interchangeable, kaleidoscopic dual image with Cuba-hating Kennedy looms somewhere on the shortening horizon. If Clinton has diplomatic exchanges with Cuba it will be an enormous psychological uplift for the island's people, caught between loyalty to their revered leader and the capitalist glitz that is being syphoned in the form of television images over an illicit transmitter.

(Continued on page 18)

Shaping the "Indian Tamil" Identity

Patrick Peebles *University of Missouri - Kansas City*

The period I am looking at is one of extraordinary growth in the agricultural export economy of the British Crown Colony of Ceylon. It began with a depression caused by a blight that destroyed the coffee plantation economy. Within a few years the area cultivated with tea surpassed the maximum area of coffee cultivation (about 300,000 acres), and in the twentieth century rubber cultivation increased dramatically. By the end of the period about 800,000 acres were devoted to plantation agriculture. Tea and rubber exports, along with coconuts (which was not a plantation crop), were the mainstay of the prosperous colonial economy. In addition to high profits, agricultural exports provided most of the government revenue, directly or indirectly. The plantations paid export duties on their crops, and they paid import duties on the rice they fed their workers. The arrack and toddy the workers drank was a government monopoly, and railways that transported the crop, the rice, the workers and the booze realized even more revenue. Though the 1880s annual government revenue hovered just above ten million Ceylon rupees; in 1919/20 it passed 80 million rupees for the first time. Prosperity enabled the government to eliminate grain taxes in 1892. Revenue enabled the government to build more roads, railroads irrigation works, schools, and dispensaries.

Colonial prosperity was built on the plantation economy, and the success of plantations depends on the maintenance of a cheap, dependent labor force. British planters recruited workers from the southern districts of Madras Presidency from the early nineteenth century. "Indian Tamil" is the name given today to the Sri Lankan community who are associated primarily with the descendants of these

laborers, many of whom remain plantation laborers.

The virtually unlimited supply of poor agricultural laborers in south India, provided enough workers both to increase the number of workers for the expanding plantations and to keep labor costs extremely low. Over time, families settled on the plantations and a resident population was established. At the height of the industry in the 1870s, approximately 200,000 men women and children lived year-round on the plantations, before going into a decline associated with the transition from coffee to tea. Nearly half of this number remained in Sri Lanka even at the low point in 1885. The census of 1921 enumerated over 600,000 "Indian Tamils." They made up over 13 percent of the Island's population. By this time, nearly 20 percent of the people categorized as Indian Tamils by the census did not live on plantations. The Indian Tamil identity neither was glorified by its own intellectuals nor was idealized by nostalgic elites. Indian Tamils were powerless to define their own social identity, and it is an identity defined primarily by what John Rogers called earlier today, "outsiders." My paper is concerned with evaluating the public statements of British planters and the colonial government, and with inferring the self-identification of the Indian Tamils from their actions.

INDIAN TAMILS IN 1881

Migration from south India has been continuous throughout Sri Lankan history. Unlike earlier migrants, the Indian Tamils continue to be identified with Tamilnadu. This in turn owes a lot to their continuing identification with plantation labor. Plantation agriculture requires a large, resident, easily controlled labor force. Elsewhere in the British Empire, indentured laborers replaced freed slaves as a

closely supervised labor force. Plantation labor was "unindentured" in Sri Lanka because the planters could bring laborers from south India easily. The Government of India was unable to insist on indentured contracts for emigrant labor, as they did in the former slave colonies. As what was called euphemistically "free" workers, the plantation laborers of Sri Lanka were technically on monthly contracts, and could leave to seek other employment on one month's notice. Labor mobility is not beneficial to the plantation system, however, and so the Ceylon planters used a variety of measures to bind the workers to the plantations: they withheld wages for several months; they created legal restrictions on workers rights, enforced by justices of the peace who were planters; they turned the plantations as much as possible into enclaves in which centered as much of the workers' lives on the estate as possible from childbirth to funerals; and probably most important, used Indian Tamil overseers called *kanganis* to control the recruitment and the daily lives of the Indian Tamils.

Paradoxically, the mobility of the plantation workers was restricted more than that of indentured workers, precisely because they were "free". An indentured laborer had guarantees that the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka never did. The Government of India required, for example that other colonies of the British Empire make land available for indentured workers to settle on once their indenture had ended. When they were able to demand the right, they created around the indentured workers "a ring of free Indians who, in process of time, acquired specific rights and economic interests in the colonies concerned" (Sundaram 1933:5). The Government of India assumed that the Indian Tamils of Sri

Lanka would have the same opportunity, although they never did. In general, the Government of Ceylon resisted intervention in plantation labor issues, even when pressured by the Government of India through the Colonial Office.

The plantation workers were relatively homogeneous in the coffee era. The great majority were agricultural workers earning low wages on the plantations, picking coffee beans and performing other unskilled task. A few of the workers were traditional occupational specialists — priests, washers, barbers — but for the most part the only distinct group were the *kanganis* and the *kanakapillais* (book-keepers), who often were of higher caste (Vellala, Agamudiar, or Kallar “Non-Brahmins”) than the workers (Pallar or Paraiyar “Adi Dravidas”).

The key figures in the social structure of the plantation were the *kanganis*. They predate the beginning of coffee planting, and they were quickly incorporated into plantation [management as labor recruiters and supervisors of work crews. *Kanganis* normally made several trips a year to India to recruit additional laborers, both as seasonal workers during the height of the picking season, and as the permanent settlers. Planters advanced them money to use for the recruitment of workers in India, payments called “Cost Advances.” A worker would begin his or her career in debt to the *kanakani* and remain under his control until the debt was repaid. Planters dealt with laborers primarily through the *kanganis*, which gave the latter a great deal of control over the lives of the laborers and an opportunity to amass a sizeable fortune.

The immigrants had security — food shelter, employment, medical care and a small cash income — in return for long hours of monotonous work. Planters and officials were quick to point out that living conditions on the plantations were superior to those in the villages

of their origin. It was a generally bleak and unvarying life nevertheless, and the common experience was one of the central features of the Indian Tamil identity.

The Government of Ceylon recognized Indian Tamils as a distinct Sri Lankan community by the time of the 1881 census. The term “Indian Tamils” was used by censustakers in 1881 as a nationality.” In the Rules for Filling up Census Schedules (13 January 1881), Rule no. 6 read:

6. Under the heading “Nationality” shall be accurately described the race and country to which the person belonged. This, a Tamil born in Ceylon shall be entered as “Ceylon Tamil;” and Tamil born in India shall be entered as “Indian Tamil” (Government of Ceylon 1882: xxxviii).

The Registrar-General was not happy with the results and did not report the material he collected in the Census Report. He blamed the planters for not cooperating with the enumerators and wrote:

... there is great reason for believing that although it was expressly desired that it should be stated whether the Tamil population was India-born or not, this point was in numerous instances disregarded (Government of Ceylon 1882: xxvii).

Thus, at the beginning of this period the Government intended to use the term Indian Tamils for all Tamil-speaking residents born in India, but was unable to do so.

THE PLANTATION LABOR POPULATION, 1881-1921

In the twentieth century Government of Ceylon took greater responsibility for the recruitment and for the living conditions of plantation laborers (Wesumperuma 1986). In some cases this brought the planters in conflict with the government (such as when it required that workers remain in quarantine

camps to prevent the spread of contagious disease and when it required plantations to provide schools), but more often the government cooperated with the planters in taking control over the recruitment and employment of labor from the *kanganis*, and keeping the cost of labor to a minimum.

The increased government intervention in the lives of plantation laborers had the effect of integrating Indian Tamils into Sri Lankan colonial society, while at the same time emphasizing their differences. For example, one hand, education of children on plantations became part of the general discussion of the need to raise literacy rates, and the plantations are brought under the grant-in-aid procedure in effect elsewhere in the island, but on the other hand implementation of educational policy on the plantations was left up to the planters. As a result, while educational opportunity in Sri Lanka expanded in this period, few Indian Tamils ended up attending school.

Many of the stereotypical pronouncements about Indian Tamils that are still heard today can be traced to this period, as the Government of Ceylon attempted to rationalize one policy or another. In general the Government of Ceylon portrayed the Indian Tamils as aliens who considered themselves Indians, and who were isolated in plantations, with little contact with the Sinhalese villagers in the vicinity of the plantations.

Officials and planters continued to call them “immigrants” even though one-third of the laborers were by this time born in Sri Lanka. By 1921 Census Report (I:202) says that “an Indian cooly born in Ceylon, whose parents had been domiciled there for say, 60 years” would still be an Indian Tamil, because “stock, and not birthplace, determines race.”

The British emphasized how ties of caste and the “Hindu joint-family,” continued to bind

the Indian Tamil to his ancestral village. To buttress this argument planters invoked textual references from south India to describe the Indian Tamils. For example, the *Planter's Handbook of Caste and Customs*, which was intended to introduce new young planters fresh out from Britain, says that "what I have been able to set down as a result of my own personal knowledge from observation and experience is but a small matter compared with the amount of detail I have been able to gather from the works of other authors," and he cites "the well-known volumes of the Abbe Dubois, . . . E. Thurston and a few others" (Green 1925: vii).

Jayaraman, relying on planters' memories and official reports, presented the case that *kangani* formed a link between the workers and their Indian origins (1975: 57-61). Immigrants observed restrictions on commensality on the journey to the plantations: they either did not eat during the journey or they travelled with a gang of same caste. At the plantation the *kangani* ensured the workers registered under their correct name. Jayaraman believes that the *kangani* was a senior member of the village caste group, and maintained the restrictions of the home village's caste panchayat restrictions. On plantations the *kanganis* helped to maintain endogamy and pollution restrictions.

Such accounts of the "patriarchal *kangani*" are common in annual reports of the Ceylon Labor Commission and in presentations made by the Government of Ceylon to various Indian and British investigators in the early twentieth century. What makes them implausible is that they occur side by side with conflicting accounts of the "villanous *kangani*," the exploiter who defrauded the laborer and stole workers from one plantation to take to another, for a price. There certainly is some truth in both accounts, but by themselves they carry little weight.

Finally, because the government passed legislation to regulate the recruitment, transportation, employment and living conditions of the plantation laborers, a myth was created that the plantation laborers were a favoured minority over the bulk of the population who did not have such legal protection. The myth ignored evidence that the plantation laborers were the poorest, unhealthiest, least educated and least mobile people in Sri Lanka.

All these representations seem to have been calculated to gain approval from the Colonial Office and the Government of India to continue labor recruitment. Emphasizing the transient nature of the Indian Tamils and their close connection with India establishes the need for continued recruitment. Emphasizing the few areas where the government protected the workers obscures their miserable living conditions. If the planters and the government admitted that their main objective was to keep costs low and profits high, they might not have received as favourable a response from New Delhi or London.

The British colonial view is summarized by S. A. Pakeman (1964:16):

These are generally known as 'Indian Tamils', and until recently few of them had permanent roots in the island. Most of them have always cherished the idea of returning home some day to their native land and settling down there in their old age — though some of them were born in Ceylon and have never been to India; indeed, on some estates there are Indian labourers of the third and even fourth generations in Ceylon. The number about the same as the Ceylon Tamils, but they cannot be considered as really Ceylonese, even those families who have been for several generations in the island. . . . The Indian Tamils have never mixed nor wished to mix, to any extent, with the Sinhalese. . . . They have regular employment, and

are reasonably well paid and housed in comparison with the Sinhalese villagers who are their neighbors.

By the time he wrote this, it had become a standard part of political debate in the Island. Before 1921, however, there are few references to Indian Tamils by Sri Lankan elites. Near the end of this period the Ceylon National Congress began to list the grievances of plantation laborers in their criticism of British colonial rule, but in much more sympathetic tones.

INDIAN TAMILS AND INDIA

We have little direct evidence of the self-identification of Indian Tamils, but there is some indirect evidence.

The first published census statistics on Indian Tamils in the Census of 1911 suggest that the Indian Tamils thought of themselves as a Sri Lankan community. The instructions given to the enumerators stated that all persons who traced their descent to south India were to be considered Indian Tamils, whether they were born in Sri Lanka or not, but the preliminary report says that "No doubt mistakes were made, and the children of Indian Tamils in many instances were entered as Ceylon Tamils, because they were born in Ceylon. . ." (Government of Ceylon 1911:2). By comparing the 1911 Census with the 1921 Census, in which the enumerators were more careful, I estimate that that 55,000 to 70,000 persons were enumerated as Ceylon Tamils in 1911 but as Indian Tamils in 1921. That is, more than ten percent of the Indian Tamils identified themselves as Ceylon Tamils, in spite of instructions to the contrary. This is consistent with the fact that an increasing proportion of the population were second and third generation settlers in the Island.

The idea that the Indian Tamils considered themselves "birds of passage," as some recent scholars say, is untenable. The question remains, what con-

stituted the Indian Tamil identity in their own minds? Some clues will appear in the works on Indian Tamil culture today, both by the people themselves and by outside scholars, but their is some historical evidence which suggests that the Indian Tamils of this period were neither as isolated nor as directly tied to the villages of their ancestry as the literature suggests.

First, the majority plantation laborers settled permanently in Sri Lanka. My current research and that of Dharmapriya Wesumperuma, who painstakingly reconstructed migration patterns from 1880 to 1910, suggest that the amount of cyclical migration (plantation workers who migrated as adults and retired to India when their productive years were over) was small. Most of the passenger traffic between India and Sri Lanka were merchants except in years of overrecruitment of urban workers. About 20,000 to 30,000 plantation workers a year traveled to India. Many of these returned as *paraiyals*, or "old migrants." My tentative conclusion is that the number of cyclical migrants was small, under ten percent of the male plantation population.

Second, the Indian Tamils were never as isolated as the planters wanted them to be; they were able to move within Sri Lanka. Although they found it difficult to acquire land for settlement, especially after the decline of the coffee industry, many moved from plantation to plantation. They were technically free to move on one month's notice. Debt bondage did not tie the workers to the estate as much as it did to their *kangani* creditors, who often moved entire gangs to new plantations. Planter's complaints suggest that such "crimping" was common. Indian Tamils also were in contact with people outside the estates. The most important category would be Indians in other walks of life — Tamil-speaking shopkeepers, merchants and temple priests. The twenty percent of Indian Tamils who did

not live on plantations probably included were laborers who left the plantations. There were Kandyan Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamil workers on plantations, although it is not likely that there was much communication between them. Their strongest contacts with other ethnic groups would be with low-country Sinhalese and Muslim carters, tavernkeepers, and shopkeepers. Finally, plantation laborers made pilgrimages to such places as Adams Peak and Kataragama.

Finally, the connections between the Indian Tamils and Tamilnadu were clearly very complex: 1) There were new migrants every year, and those newcomers could keep others in touch with events in India, particularly those who lived on plantations previously; 2) There is a small percentage of the population who were contemplating returning; 3) others who were born in India and presumably had memories of India; and 4) laborers probably experienced more cultural diversity than they would have had in India. Even if it were true that the *kangani* reinforced the ties between workers and their ancestral village and caste, there would be a dozen or more *kanganis* on each plantation with different origins in Tamilnadu.

There picture that begins to emerge is one of a distinctly Sri Lankan community with an identity based on the shared experience of the plantation system and on a variety of linkages with Tamilnadu. There is still no direct evidence of how the Indian Tamils perceived their own identity, but it is no longer suffices to call them "unassimilated," meaning that the Indian Tamils today don't conform to one of the other identities in the Island — perhaps Jaffna Tamils or Kandyan Sinhalese. The Indian Tamils of the early twentieth century seem to have assimilated very well, in the sense of incorporating their experiences into a distinct identity.

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Can the . . .

(Continued from page 14)

Why does the western world think that because it brought about what it loves to claim is the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, that no other country still running on socialist lines has no right to continue doing so, even if it is able to weather the storm and not merely survive but been to provide more for its people and become prosperous once again while still retaining its leader of three decades. After all, a man at age 65 is seen by men not to be old, so shall we say late middle age? There are much older leaders in the world, as we know.

What, then, is the remedy for Cuba as seen by Wijesingha and those like him who feel that something has to happen and soon? Do to Castro what the 'reformers' did to Ceaucescu in Rumania? Clap the man who rescued his country from the clutches of one of capitalism's most infamous characters into prison and wave the magic wand that would 'liberate' the Cuban people, i.e. bring in unbridled forms of capitalist, western-style free living, rake in the American shekels and of course enthroned a true, benign, democratic 'dictator' who will open up the brothels again, throw the island open to AIDS (otherwise it wouldn't be attention — worthy or 'fash') and put women back on their knees?

A Mockery of Democracy

V. L. Wirasingha

What distresses those who are dissatisfied with the present Constitution is, I have found most often, what distresses me too, namely, that it secures to the President autocratic powers, the exercise of which makes a mockery of democracy in this country.

Clearly, an Executive Presidential system is compatible with democracy only if there is effective separation of powers, executive, legislative and judicial, with sufficient good sense, mutual respect and commitment to the Common Good of the country within and between the three repositories, to ensure their working harmoniously together, but without surrender or debilitation of their several rights and privileges, or encroachment on one another's several domains. This has been unequivocally reflected in the American and French Constitutions. It is this separation, of powers that enables the courts and legislatures of the USA and of France, the latter through their control of finance and exclusive legislative powers, to provide checks to arbitrary decision-making by the Presidents in the exercise of Executive powers. He needs finance to implement action, and he often needs legislation too for the same purpose. It necessarily follows that high executive policy, although it will not have been initiated or formulated by the legislature, can scarcely be implemented save with the concurrence of the legislature — which therefore acts as an effective check on executive impulsiveness or worse.

The personnel of the Executive, whether in the USA or in France, are wholly outside the legislature. If the French President recruits any of his Secretaries

from among the members of the legislature, and they are willing to serve him, they must resign from membership of the legislature.

So meticulously principled, clean and clear is the Separation of Powers in those countries! In our Constitution, on the contrary, Separation, having been prescribed in Article 4, is, totally, and with complete cynicism, repudiated in Article 43 (2), which provides that

“The President shall be a member of the Cabinet of Ministers and shall be the Head of the Cabinet.”

It is appropriate to remind ourselves at this point that the Members of the Cabinet are Members of Parliament, i.e., of the legislature, to which we look to provide a check to arbitrary decision-making by the President! So, here, we have the delectable situation of the Executive himself, the President *ipsissimus*, accommodated in the driving seat of the legislature, a position ideally suited to influencing and directing the operations — and deliberations — of those charged with seeing to it that he himself did not ‘kick over the traces’!

The non-hilarious aspect of this essentially mirthful situation is that it makes complete nonsense of the separation of powers and, *ex hypothesi*, of any pretence that what we have is a democratic dispensation. What Article 43 (2) enables — and, indeed, prescribes (all the more effectively for provision contained elsewhere for proportional representation (of which more anon) is see-through dictatorship.

“Pity the poor legal draftsman” has ever been my whispered wail as I reflected on the ‘mission impossible’ assigned to

him, namely, to provide for separation of powers, for separation of the Executive a *mensa et thoro* of the Legislature, in particular, with provision simultaneously, however, for him to get back to bed and board in that same household! Not unpredictably, the mission has failed miserably. All that has kept the citizenry bemused has been the extent of the space-time between Articles 4 and 43 (2) with all their inducements to a somnolent amnesia in between. If the contents of Article 43 (2) could, by a mischievous Legal Draftsman, have been placed in, let us say, a proviso to Article 4, our Island Story from 1977 might have been vastly different.

The Legal Draftsman's dilemma has yielded other curiosities too:-

Article 43 (1) provides that

“There shall be a Cabinet of Ministers charged with the direction and control of the Government of the Republic, which shall be collectively responsible to Parliament”.

As Gilbert observed in “The Gondoliers”,

“Search in and out and round about

And you'll discover never”,
what the word ‘Government’ there includes or excludes! It surely cannot include executive action, which is the President's sole prerogative — Parliament may only ‘check’ through the budget and legislation — although it suggests that the legislature is *omni-competent* and the separation of powers is only so much hilarity, the butt being the President!

Admittedly, the President needs competent, high-ranking officials to assist him in the discharge of his executive duties; but the constitutional vesting in him of authority to appoint Cabinet

(The text is, substantially, that of a presentation made to a Seminar at the Methodist Centre.)

Ministers and multifarious other Ministers, who are Members of the Legislature (1) to perform executive functions — under his control and direction and as being answerable to him — is inimical to the separation of powers and wholly unacceptable. The reason is clear enough: this function secured to the President, of appointing Members of Parliament to positions of executive power and responsibility and of discontinuing them from such positions has a high potential for influencing and even corrupting them, which undermines the assurance of honest discharge by the Legislature of one of its fundamental duties, that of providing in its deliberations and action a "check and balance" vis-a-vis the President's exercise of his executive power!*

What appears most clearly is the President's stranglehold on Cabinet Ministers and on other Ministers too, through his powers of appointing and discontinuing them at will. All understandable enough if they were solely executive officials subordinate to the President, but utterly execrable since they are Members of the Legislature.

Equally clear is the stranglehold that the President has on all Members of Parliament who belong to the same political Party as he himself, in consequence of the manner in which the provisions relating to proportional representation operate. At the very least, provision must be made for the holding of a by-election to fill a vacancy caused even by defection. Worth considering are the merits of holding such a by-election in the polling district in which the ejected MP received his own largest number of votes at the General Election.

* The situation is as ludicrous as the Chairman of a firm's being the Chairman simultaneously of the firm of Accountants auditing that firm's Accounts! That is the straight thinking the Constitution contains on 'Separation of Powers'! O Di immortales! Et Hercules furens!

Proportional representation as at present provided for ensures for the Party voted to power at a General Election continuance of the same numerical majority for the entirety of the life of the sitting Parliament, there being no possibility of crossings-over of MPs through dissatisfaction with the Government†, and with no provision for by-elections. This offends against the axiom of representative democracy that the Party in power must continuously be at risk of defeat through having forfeited its acceptability. The suggestion made in the second paragraph of the preceding paragraph should go some distance towards providing a partial solution.

It is eminently worth remarking, too, that proportional representation, as it operates now, largely nullifies the freedoms of expression and of assembly guaranteed to the citizen in the Constitution in so far as their effect on Government policy and action is concerned. Even the most persuasive case established would scarcely induce a Member of Parliament, even if he were convinced himself, to take a line unacceptable to his Party,* for fear, not only of expulsion from his Party — which he may account no great loss — but also (and more importantly) of ejection from Parliament, without opportunity to contest a by-election.

Under an Executive Presidency it is most unhealthy that, as provided in Article 107, "The Chief Justice, the President of the Court of Appeal and every other Judge of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal shall be appointed by the President of the Republic" at his own

* or, if he is of the Government Party, to the President. Cp. W. S. Gilbert:
 "When in that House Mps divide,
 If they've a brain and cerebellum too,
 They've got to leave that brain outside
 And vote just as their leaders tell
 "em to."

† This is the core significance of the recent Supreme Court decision re expulsion of Athulathmudali, Dissanayake et al.

will and pleasure. Perhaps all these appointments, except that of the Chief Justice alone should be made by a suitable panel of selected jurists. As matters stand, the temptation to curry the President's favour in judicial functioning in the hope of promotion in judicial office can scarcely be discounted.

Article 35, which assures the President omnibus immunity from legal proceedings against him, whether in his official capacity or as a private citizen is wholly undemocratic and indefensible. Since he is vested with executive power, which may be wielded unjustly, to the detriment of individuals or groups, this immunity is potentially especially tyrannical.

The title of my presentation errs grievously on the side of leniency to the Constitution, which is radically abhorrent to democracy in its approach to separation of powers. If an Executive Presidential system is continued, the Constitution must be recast to conform more nearly to the American pattern, with dignity restored to the Legislature and the Courts. If I may be forgiven for stepping out of the strict line of my topic, the rival merits of a modified Westminster-style Constitution, with resuscitation of a Second Chamber, should receive earnest consideration. Even if we continue to have an Executive Presidential system, a 'limitation' of the present Constitution is the absence of a Second Chamber the US Constitution itself provides for a Senate alongside the House of Representatives as part of the Congress. In providing for a Senate in their Constitution, the Soulbury Commissioners stipulated that the "Governor-General shall endeavour to appoint (as the 15 official Senators) persons who he is satisfied have rendered distinguished public service or are persons of eminence in professional, commercial, industrial or agricultural life, including education, law, medicine, science, engineering and banking." 'Wise words to ponder'.

Fate of the indigenous people

Tyrone Fernando

We all know Ananda Coomaraswamy as an honoured and revered son of Sri Lanka whose intellectual brilliance and erudition earned for him a reputation as one of the worlds greatest scholars. But how many of us know the scope of his works and scholarship?

A pioneer as an orientalist and a traditionalist, we recognise him today for the sheer brilliance and originality of his perceptions of art, history and indology and his expositions of traditionalist societies and cultures and his advocacy of the preservation of the purity and authenticity of the unchanging primordial and universal tradition. His abhorrence of the 'undesirable influence' western ideologies could have on the eastern psyche influenced his work. This was mainly due to the conviction brought about by his meticulous studies. The more he delved the more convinced he became that the philosophical basis of past societies, even their religions, their culture, their art were superior to the knowledge of the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is apt therefore that the Directors of Cultural Survival Trust have decided on the topic of indigenous people to be the subject of this 1992 Ananda Coomaraswamy Oration.

Justifiably, the question of the future of the many indigenous peoples still surviving in various parts of the globe is gaining increasing relevance and impor-

tance. While many express concern for their survival others express concern that these tribal clans resist integration and thus hinder national progress. There is no doubt that to some rulers the survival of indigenous people pose worrisome issues which they could do without while others will tolerate these issues for purposes other than that there should be genuine respect for their rights as individuals. I do not today wish to indulge in an anthropological analysis of the indigenous people of world but rather to discuss certain legal issues relevant to the subject of their survival and for this purpose there are certain fundamental questions which I wish to pose which, even I, have viewed with a certain amount of concern while watching the momentum with which issues relating to the indigenous people around the globe has gathered force.

It is being asked — is it in the best interests of the indigenous people to ensure their survival in these times of rapid economic and technological advancement? What right have we to ask this question? If it is the will of these people to retain their identity and continue their way of life what moral right has any other to determine that they must integrate with an alien society? And for what benefit to them? There are some who profess to beliefs based on concepts which are akin to the

colonial masters of yore to whom 'civilisation' was nothing but their way of life and anything else was but savage. Practices of another culture yet unknown to them was not to be tolerated. It was a matter of pervasive confrontation based on an all-pervasive view. Permission to continue with indigenous practices was only given because of an attitude of tolerance and was not based on any respect for the rights and beliefs of others. Differences in beliefs, without any discrimination, were regarded as inferior. One can perhaps understand this attitude for they came with sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, to conquer, to plunder, to spread their religious beliefs in preference to those of the inhabitants of the colonies and their motives were clear: to bring light to those in darkness and also to get rich. But what of our people who have survived even these temporary interferences? Do we have objectives more noble than the colonial rulers? Or is there some similarity of thought or of principle? What can they hope for in the 21st century?

There can be no generalisation about global attitudes. The treatment of the indigenous people varies across the globe. Let us look closer at what we have to offer them. Consciously or otherwise, we have provided in the supreme law of our land, the Constitution, several rights which could be interpreted to mean

that state policy is indeed in favour of preserving them as they are. In the Chapter setting out the fundamental rights of our peoples, Article 10 guarantees the freedom of thought, conscience and religion including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice. So, if animism is preferred to any other form of worship, if trees are equated to the status of gods as known to the so-called civilised beings, the right to so believe is recognised. There is implicit in this recognition the thought that by our own standards we must guarantee to them this freedom. The Directive Principles of State Policy as set out in Chapter VI of the Constitution which principles are expected to be followed as a guide by Parliament, the President and the Cabinet of Ministers in the enactment of laws and the governance of Sri Lanka for the establishment of a free and just society, recognise several societal objectives and goals. These include the realization by all citizens of an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing the continuous improvement of living conditions and the full enjoyment for leisure and social and cultural opportunities; raising the moral and cultural standards of the People and ensuring the full development of human personality. Let us consider these objectives. What could be meant by 'an adequate standard of living'? There is no doubt that this is a relative term. Whose subjective view is to prevail? Would it be necessary to wean the indigenous people away from their culture and habitat in order to facilitate the achievement of the State objective of impro-

ving the living conditions of our peoples? Even if this was done would it result in an improvement of living conditions? Are the indigenous people not living in conditions in which they are totally at peace? Is it a fact or is it a myth that the moral and cultural standards of the indigenous people far surpass those of the developed world? Let us not be presumptuous in assuming that the principles of peace and freedom flow from the great assembly of the United Nations. They were known to the indigenous people as a concept inherent to life long before the need for the United Nations was felt. They were in no way responsible for the situation which called for the establishment of a United Nations. Is there something then that we could learn from them? What is viewed as barbaric or savage by the western world (whose citizens are rightly or wrongly accepted as civilised) after all may be mere practices indulged in not with improper motives but because these are accepted norms. As an example, a veddha woman scantily clad is not offending their codes of attire, but a member of the Royal Family so clad would very definitely be offending accepted norms of behaviour.

Article 27(5) of the Constitution provides that the State shall strengthen national unity by promoting co-operation and mutual confidence among all sections of the people of Sri Lanka, including the racial, religious, linguistic and other groups, and shall take effective steps in the fields of teaching, education

and information in order to eliminate discrimination and prejudice. Entrenched in this obligation is the duty to give priority to the problems of the indigenous people.

Article 27(10) promulgates that the State shall assist the development of the cultures and the languages of the people. Why then was it considered necessary to engage in a programme to bring the veddha community into the mainstream of life as a consequence of what was perhaps considered an infrastructural necessity when the accelerated Mahaweli Project was underway. Many of the problems that surfaced could have been avoided if an attitude more sympathetic towards respecting the rights of individuals had been adopted. We do get carried away with arrogant thoughts that preservation of culture would not include the preservation of practices which we label as 'primitive'. In this whole process there was more thought spared for the displaced wildlife than for the indigenous people who were re-settled against their will. The unfortunate result was that they were drawn into local conflicts thus souring the relationship with others including Government officials. Indeed an unfortunate situation. And to enforce their rights they had to make use of alien systems of law or else theirs was not a voice to be listened to. There was at the time no ac-

ceptance that the indigenous people may just want to carry on with their way of life. Perhaps the presumption that they would not resist integration was an arrogant one. Or was it? It is indeed heartening that the Government of President Premadasa has now accepted that the problems of the veddha clans

should have been looked into prior to the attempt to resettle them and that there is now a recognition of the need to preserve a traditional culture. It is in furtherance of this policy that the Vannietto Trust has been established with the primary objective of taking specific measures to protect and nur-

ture 'veddha vannietto' culture. The fact that the Trust is managed under the chairmanship of a government official and also includes several other government officials is indicative of the renewed and enlightened thinking of the Government.

(To be Continued)

CORRESPONDENCE

The Reconciling Formula

It has to be recorded, with regret, that the reconciling formula, the sweet voice of reason has once more eluded the country and the discount and civil war have entered into the year 1993. Those of us who are advanced in years will note, with deep regret, that the present day youth have been deprived of the peace, tranquility and education, which we had the good fortune to enjoy and receive. Many of the youth of the last two decades have been pinched away in the prime of their lives. The much cherished order and law have been eroded. The ordinary man sees quite clearly that family bandyism and nepotism is a part of Sri Lankan politics and that bribery and corruption is the way of public life. Even if there should be an election, what difference does it make. It is Hobson's choice for the voter. Sri Lanka can boast of Sinhala leaders, Tamil leaders, Moor leaders, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islam leaders but not Sri Lankan National leaders. The ordinary man sees that the politicians are not interested in settling the ethnic conflict, because that is their "Beggars' wound"

So long as there is hope; so for the benefit of the present day youth who will be the future leaders, a few appropriate lines from the exchange of letters between Professor Arnold Toynbee and Professor Talmon, on the "Argument between Arabs and Jews" are reproduced. In his letter from Jerusalem date 18.7.67 to Professor Toynbee, Professor J. L. Talman states:-

"A man greatly revered by both of us, my late teacher T. H. Tawney wrote:-

'It is a tragedy of the world where man must walk by sight that the discovery of the reconciling formula is always left to future generations, in which passion has cooled into curiosity, and the agonies of people become the exercise in schools. The devil who builds bridges does not span the chasms till much that is precious to mankind has vanished down them forever.'

Surely enough blood has flowed down the chasms for the reconciling formula to be evolved and accepted at last. It is infinitely sad that homo sapiens should be so dominated

and twisted by irrational drives and intractable aversions that only an overwhelming shock and inexorable fait accompli are able to make the sweet voice of reason heard." (reproduced from the magazine ENCOUNTER of October 1967)

S. Thambyrajah

Colombo 3.

In Kashmir...

(Continued from page 11)

same time, the magnitude of the problem should not be made into an alibi for drift or complacent reliance on the armed forces to settle what is essentially a political problem. What is imperative is that the initiative has to be taken now, for opening a dialogue with the militants and to be ready to discuss, boldly and unreservedly the quantum of autonomy that can bring about an enduring settlement.

This is a mandate that history imposes not only on Mr Narasimha Rao alone, but leaders of all political parties. In a world of Earthshaking changes, nobody can afford to hold on to old postulates. Wisdom lies in making concessions today.

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