

LANKA GUARDIAN

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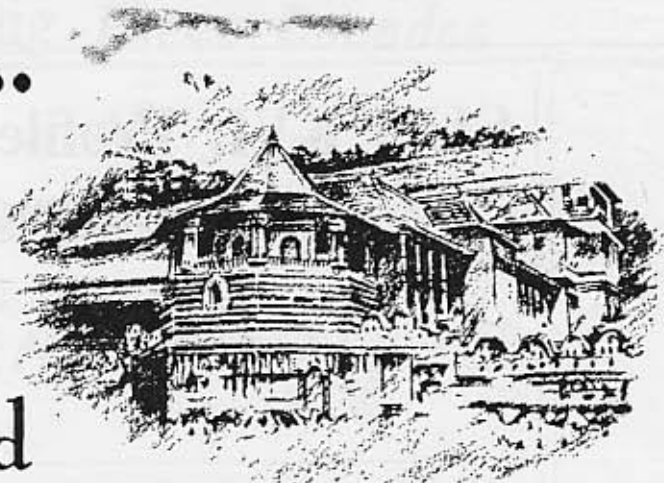
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Briefly...

MORE CONCESSIONS FOR TOURIST TRADE

The tourist trade is to get more concessions. Proposals to extend tax holidays and concessions to all hotels approved before 1981 are now being considered by the government. Reconstruction of hotels, extensions and refurbishing are also to be encouraged.

Also, the government has extended the customary one month tourist visa issued at the airport to cover a three month stay. These changes flow from proposals made before the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Tourism.

MANSOUR OFFERS TO HELP

Afro-American lawyer and university teacher Khalid al Mansour who was in Sri Lanka early this month offered

to mediate between the government and the LTTE. He was suited for this task because he had expertise in conflict resolution internationally and law and also understood the sufferings of backward people, he told Presidential Advisor Bradman Weerakoon.

CAPITALIST AGENT?

SLFP Young Turk Tilak Karunaratne MP is a "multi-national agent who supports the government" in the view of party leader Sirima Bandaranaike's daughter Chandrika according to the government's *Sunday Observer*.

Mr Karunaratne supports SLFP National Organiser Anura Bandaranaike, Mrs B's son, who is opposed to an election alliance with other opposition groups, according to this newspaper.

TOURISM - DANGERS AHEAD

A consultant to the Ministry of Tourism has sounded a warning about unplanned eco-tourism. Dr Pani Seneviratne, the consultant, has said: "The short term effects of the excessive use of natural resources for tourism are overcrowding, intensive construction and plunder of natural resources. The long term effects, such as the precipitation of natural disasters like soil erosion, denudation of forests or depletion of marine resources, may not be immediately apparent".

Dr Seneviratne has said that these aspects have not been sufficiently considered in master plans for tourism development. He was quoted in *Daily News*.

HIGH SECURITY PASSPORT

A new computer printed, machine-readable passport conforming to International Civil Aviation and Interpol specifications is now issued to Sri Lankans. Only 27 countries in the world issue such high security travel documents, says the Controller of Immigration and Emigration in his Administration report for 1992.

TRENDS

Universities unopened yet

Universities closed for many weeks due to trade union action by the dons could not be re-opened even after the Federation of University Teachers' Associations (FUTA) agreed on a compromise solution to the deadlock on their pay demands. The doors remained closed because the non-academic staff too had launched a work-to-rule campaign, also demanding higher pay.

Campus administration and services cannot be conducted without the co-operation of the non-academic staff. The staff union expected the government to respond to their demands as it did in the case of the dons, a spokesman said.

Pay more for power

Claiming that the last increase in electricity rates was as far back as April 1990, the Ceylon Electricity Board, who is the sole supplier, has upped the price by 30 per cent. A spokesman told the government's *DAILY NEWS* that the CEB's capital expenditure was an annual Rs 10 billion and that whatever profit made was swallowed by a debt servicing bill of Rs 4 billion per year.

Of some comfort to consumers is the following promise: the 25 per cent Fuel Adjustment Charge will be removed with the coming in of the new tariffs.

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FOCUS ON MUSLIM FACTOR

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

Trends and events, both domestic and regional, have underlined the importance of the Muslim factor in current Sri Lankan politics, a politics which in the past decade has been dominated by a grievously divisive, and increasingly harrowing ethnic conflict. If the large, South Indian state of Tamilnadu (pop. 55 million) made that conflict more than "internal" because the Palk Straits was only 20 miles wide, the global Islamic awakening, the presence of Pakistan and Bangladesh, our SAARC neighbours, and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India, the explosive AYODHYA issue, and the recent blood-letting have together added another dimension to the Sri Lankan crisis.

Things may have been different if in the meantime, a new political party, the East-based Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, had not emerged as a significant political force in the island's parliamentary politics. But not just parliamentary. The eastern province is the critical theatre in the political-military conflict that has threatened to tear this tiny island apart.

Although 'ethnic', the favoured descriptive term, is acceptable, it is not totally satisfactory in the light of political developments at least since the arrival of the IPKF (July 1987) and the parliamentary polls two years later. It is best to talk of 'identity conflicts'. Had the LTTE and other militant Tamil groups taken a larger view of community-based conflicts, they may not have so easily presumed that a common language (the eastern province Muslims, unlike their brethren in the other Sinhalese-dominated provinces, are Tamil-speaking) would guarantee Muslim sympathy and

support for the "minority" (Tamil) cause. But that was their costliest error. For a community with such a vast, supportive *diaspora* spread from across North America, Europe and Australasia, the EELAM strategists should have known better. Ever since the Iranian revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini, ISLAM has emerged as one of the most dynamic social-political forces in this the tail-end of the 20th century. It has proved so dynamic that the modern world's most intractable regional conflict — the Arab-Israeli — has now been Islamised by HAMAS. What does AYODHYA mean but the direct and violent confrontation between ISLAM and HINDUTVA.

Islam made the linguistic bond meaningless to the Tamil-speaking Muslims of the eastern province. If that is doubly significant, numbers make it so. 33% made the Tamil-speaking Muslims, the vital balancing factor. But the LTTE mucked it up. But the Indians, not unnaturally, grasped its meaning. The Indian Army placed a Muslim general in charge of the eastern theatre and "turned" many a pro-LTTE Muslim youth — at least to assist the IPKF on intelligence-gathering.

LTTE BLUNDER

When a SADDAM HUSSEIN village grew up in the East, when Arab countries, certainly the oil rich, gave "gifts" that helped small development projects, the LTTE should have corrected its mistake. Far from doing that the LTTE massacred some 70-80 Muslims at prayers. The mosque, argued pro-LTTE publicists later, was the secret meeting-place of anti-LTTE,

pro-government Muslim activists. May be. But a massacre of 20-30 families in a mosque? A tactical blunder of the highest order.

Islam replaced language as the more demanding allegiance. And why not? In today's world, it is the most powerful rallying cry. So much so that both the United States, the sole superpower, and Russia, the truncated ex-superpower are nervous — the US mainly because of the strategic Middle-east, Israel and oil, and Moscow because of Moslem Central Asia republics, at least one of which has access to nuclear weapons. All this was clear when President Yeltsin visited India this month.

MUSLIM CONFERENCE

The conservative UNP of the Senanayakes was smart enough to recognise and reward such community leaders like T. B. Jayah, Dr. M. C. M. Kaleel (the permanent treasurer of the party) Sir Razik Fareed etc. When Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike formed his own SLFP, he found a very useful ally in Dr. Badu Mahumud, the head of the Zahira College, Gampola, later founder-president of the Islamic Socialist Front. The ISF was a loyal partner of the SLFP. So much so Mrs. Bandaranaike made Mr. M. S. Alif her Cabinet secretary.

While the SLMC and the new generation of Muslims (men and women) found the Islamic resurgence irresistible, the SLFP forgot its own past, and retreated into an exclusivist Sinhala-Buddhism. And more recently, it has decided to revive the SLFP-Left alliance at a time when "Leftism" is in total disgrace globally, and more rele-

vantly, has little appeal to the rising generation. Once fashionable ideologies lie enfeebled and mute whereas Islam persists in demonstrating its vigour and enormous appeal. The SLFP has embraced the former, and ignored the latter. On the other hand, the UNP, certainly under Mr. Premadasa, has created new space for tactical alignments, recognising the primacy of religion and race in the Age of Identity. The Opposition and SLFP leader did not attend the SLMC. Mr. Ashraff had this to say on the point:

BOSNIA-AYODHYA

"We shall speak to the government and have a dialogue with

any party as we have no attachment to any political party. We do not hate Mrs. Bandaranaike or the SLFP. Otherwise we would not have invited her in the first place".

Equally interesting was this passage:

"We are very concerned about the massacre of Muslims in Baghdad, and in Bosnia, about Kashmir and Palestine, about economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, and the air embargo on Libya..."

Probably a stronger impact on Muslim thinking has been Ayodhya and its aftermath.

It was left to Pakistan's new High Commissioner, Mr. Husain

Haqqani to place the issue in a Sri Lankan context:

"The conduct of Muslims in Sri Lanka was an example to other minorities... other countries too should learn from Sri Lanka on how to win the loyalties of a Muslim minority by tolerance and adherence to the principle of peaceful coexistence and that minorities cannot be won over by the destruction of their places of worship or by communal violence directed against them..."

It is easy to see how a strictly domestic issue (some may even say parochial issue) is externalised and regionalised in a South Asia where its cultural complexion makes both borders and sovereignties meaningless.

Attempt to 'gag' papers — F. M. M.

The Government is attempting to "gag" a number of independent newspapers by restricting their advertising revenue and by administrative pressure, the Free Media Movement charged.

The two largest privately owned newspaper groups, the Wijaya Publications Limited (Sunday Times and Lankadeepa) Upali Newspapers Ltd. (The Island, Divaina) and the smaller journals 'Attha', 'Ravaya', 'Yukthiya', 'Lakdiva' and 'Sirilaka' have all been affected by this "massive campaign" by the Government, the Movement said in a statement.

The Free Media Movement (FMM) claims that a number of major private companies have been asked not to advertise in the national dailies and weeklies published by the Wijaya and Upali groups. As a result a number of advertising contracts have been cancelled.

Meanwhile, Inland Revenue Department officials have carried out raids on the offices of all seven of the newspaper companies, the FMM states.

At the same time the smaller newspapers have been suddenly subjected to intensive inquiries by the Municipal authorities, the Water Resources Board and

telephone authorities about the punctuality of payment of service charges for these utilities, according to the FMM statement.

While the type-setting section of the 'Lakdiva' has been sealed, 'Sirilaka' has also been raided by the Labour Department officials, the movement said.

"However, that does not mean that the Free Media Movement is a tool in the hands of the traditional parties of the opposition or the JVP. The Free Media Movement has not followed a policy of silence over mistake made by those parties too. The people know that the Free Media Movement has commented on the mistakes made by the traditional parties of the opposition as well as on the murderous policy followed by the JVP.

In a reply to a question raised on this matter by SLFP MP, Mr. C. V. Gooneratne, the State Minister for information, Mr. A. J. Ranasingha stated:

● If any newspaper owning institution or for that matter any institution of the State or Private Sector or any individual defaults on the repayment of any loan taken from a State Bank, it is the normal practice

of such bank to recover the loan given enforcing the relevant legislation to the very letter. It is a crime against the nation to default on the repayment of any such loan given out of funds meant to be utilised for public good. Certain newspaper establishments which have obtained loans running to some tens of millions of rupees from state banks, have neglected repayment of them having utilised, the monies on business activities which have nothing to do with their newspaper trade. Interest payable on these loans which remain unsettled from a long time far exceed, the quantum of the original amounts loaned. The non-repayment of these loans is a crime committed against the nation.

● The government is deeply perturbed that the hon member has chosen to level baseless charges against the government's tax officers and officers of the municipality and of the telecommunication department who exert themselves for the proper discharge of their duties in regard to the collection of income tax, rates and taxes on various services and other dues outstanding from various

(Continued on page 11)

Debating the debate

President Premadasa has reiterated his call to the parliamentary opposition for a public debate and has written to the leader of the Opposition Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike and other leaders of the Opposition political parties in Parliament inviting them for a meeting to discuss its modalities. He has agreed to include the suggestions made by Mrs. Bandaranaike such as the issues of Janasaviya, popularisation and the garments industry within the ambit of the proposed debate.

On principle a serious public debate between the political leaders of a country can be a useful and educative exercise, more so when the political debate nationally is of an impoverished nature. This is particularly so in the case of Sri Lanka where for the last several years the quality of the political dialogue has deteriorated until mud-slinging and name-calling of a dubious and scurrilous nature has begun to pass off as political debate.

The call for a political debate is also a reflection of the deterioration of parliamentary politics. Parliament, after all, should be the supreme debating chamber. It is the talking shop of the nation. Has the quality of the parliamentary debate so deteriorated then that the President who is not a member of Parliament has to challenge the leaders of the parliamentary parties for a debate?

The question also arises whether the debate should be confined to the parliamentary parties. Since the President, after all, is not a Member of Parliament and there are parties which are not represented in Parliament, should not the debate be open to all political parties? Also should only Members of Parliament be qualified for the debate?

(Sunday Island)

Din of the dons

The decision by university teachers to call off their trade union action, 'work-to-rule', or whatever they may call it does not matter, and restore much needed normalcy in our much disrupted centres of higher learning, has at least partly disproved allegations that our academicians are bankrupt or woefully bereft of moral responsibilities and ethical values.

The dispute and disarray in the universities, arose from a wide and varying range of issues, with the dons and heads of departments having valid cases for protests on certain matters. We also do not wish to pass any judgement on the controversial President of the Federation of University Teachers' Associations (FUTA) Dr. Nalin de Silva. Some have dismissed him as a cardboard Socrates, while large sections of students hail him as a crusader against false western or capitalist values.

But the moral and ethical validity of the action by academicians last month and the month before is questionable in certain aspects. We would like to refer particularly to their demand for a special allowance to clear the backlog from the closure of the universities during 1988-91. As one of our readers points out, it was a time of national crisis. Almost all essential services, including health transport, schools, the economy and general administration, came to a standstill — not only the universities. On return to normality none of these other sectors sought any additional payment to clear the stalled workload. Thus the clearance of the backlog of students, a citizen from Moratuwa claims, is the moral duty of the university teachers, because the state had already paid them for the period of closure.

(Sunday Times)

Some reflections on Independence

The lion flag of Lanka will flutter bravely in the morning breeze today, the big guns will boom and magul bera throb as the nation celebrates the 45th anniversary of its independence from the British. Former Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake, widely regarded as the father of the nation, said in an unforgettable speech on that memorable February 4, 1948, that "We glory in the fact that this transfer (of power) has been effected without a drop of blood being shed".

But it is the tragedy of this land that the last ten years have seen torrents of blood spilt in a civil war that continues unabated. What began as a terrorist movement has become a separatist campaign challenging the territorial integrity of the country. Thousands of lives have been lost on both sides of the lines, hundreds maimed and a large number of innocents, like inhabitants of impoverished border villages mindlessly slaughtered.

(Daily News)

Take back the Palestinians

All Ceylon Muslim League president, Dr. M.C.M. Kaleel, issued a statement thanking President Ranasinghe Premadasa for his principled stand that Israel should take back the 400 Palestinians it had deported.

His statement refers to the resolution the UNP working committee had adopted on Monday, condemning the deportation of 418 Palestinians from the occupied territories.

Dr. Kaleel said Shri Lanka had been on the side of the long suffering people of Palestine.

Downturn in Pakistan-India relations

Mushahid Hussain

The last few weeks have seen a further downturn in relations between Pakistan and India, particularly after the wilful demolition of the Babri Masjid. Following this development and even before that, visiting Pakistani nationals to India were put at risk because of the Indian attitude to harass Pakistani travellers. A couple of Pakistanis had also killed by Indian security forces. Although they were presented as "terrorists", no evidence is being presented to substantiate this allegation.

Pakistan finally took the long-expected decision to slash the bloated staff of the Indian Consulate-General in Karachi. Out of a total of 63 persons, including eight diplomats and 55 other personnel, the government has instructed that this mission be trimmed to one-third this size with four diplomats and 16 other personnel, in effect down to 20 from the previous 63. Pakistan's counterpart Consulate-General in Bombay has a meagre staff of five to man the mission, and that too in rented premises of a hotel since India reneged on its previous commitment to hand over the Jinnah House for housing the Consulate-General.

Pakistan has taken the correct decision to trim the Indian mission's staff since it was widely known all over Karachi that this mission was used as a base of operations for the activities of Indian Intelligence. Karachi being a more convenient location than Islamabad for the purposes of destabilisation. Although India had the check to initially reject this Pakistani demand since it has been used to treating its South Asian neighbours as if they were like, say Bhutan, by pushing them around or trying to have their

tail twisted at whim, this time around India has been caught on the wrong foot. Pakistan is within its sovereign right to insist on the number of the staff that a foreign mission can have on its territory. In fact, this was something commonplace between the West and the Soviet Union during the Cold War years and approximately 20 years ago, Britain even took the unprecedented decision to expel over 100 personnel and diplomats from the Soviet Embassy in London on grounds that they were "engaged in activities incompatible with their diplomatic status". As far as Indian argument regarding heavy workload issue of visas in Karachi is concerned, that objective can be met by the staff that has been allowed by Pakistan to function in Karachi.

There is little doubt that the Babri Masjid demolition has been a serious setback to Pakistan-India relations given its domestic fall-out on the Indian Muslims and the highly-charged response of the Muslim community in South Asia as a whole, particularly Pakistan and Bangladesh. In the latter instance, the popular response has been even stronger than in Pakistan where the Bangladeshi Muslims abortively attempted what they termed was going to be a Long March on Ayodhya from the Bangladesh town of Jessore. Undoubtedly, the inspiration to use the term "Long March" by the Bangladeshi Muslims obviously came from the earlier "Long March" which had been launched by the Opposition in Pakistan earlier with similar results.

Babri Masjid and the issue of the Indian mission in Karachi apart, Pakistan-India relations are also being influenced by the

continued Indian occupation of Kashmir as well as an Indian mindset that obdurately refuses to negotiate with Pakistan on any issue. Only on January 6, 1993, Occupied Kashmir witnessed the worst crimes of the Indian occupation army when over 40 people were massacred and 120 houses and shops torched in the town of Sopore in what is the worst massacre of the Kashmiris by Indian troops since May 1990.

In the 26 months since the IJI government has been in office, Pakistan has come forward with proposals on the variety of issues but it is the Indian side that has refused to budge from its position nor ever expressed any willingness to start serious negotiations despite six meetings between Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. On Kashmir, it is Pakistan that went the "extra mile" when, in order to meet the Indians half way, Pakistan agreed to hold bilateral talks with India under the Simla Agreement, which is what the Indians had been demanding all along. In a BBC interview last February, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif even dared to suggest that the "third option", i.e., independent Kashmir, could be a possibility.

On the nuclear issue, Pakistan proposed high-powered talks including China so as to meet the Indian objections that any bilateral talks between Pakistan and India on the nuclear issue would be meaningless until and unless China was also included. On Siachen, the Indians shot down a Pakistan army helicopter with a Brigadier on board and then gloated about this incident with the Indian Defence Minister proudly proclaiming this "kill". And despite Pakistan having been assured by the

Americans that this time around on bilateral talks on Siachen. India would take a "more reasonable and flexible position", the talks between the two countries Defence Secretaries were again at a dead-end. Last year, the Pakistan cricket team's tour was cancelled not by Pakistan but after the threats received from Indian political parties that they would not allow the Pakistan cricketers to play on Indian soil. And Pakistan agreed to open its Consulate-General despite the fact that the promise which had been made by India, namely Jinnah House, was never kept.

What conclusion can be drawn from the somewhat bleak track record of the Indians in their attitude towards Pakistan despite successive Pakistani overtures and initiatives to the contrary? Two facts are inescapable in this regard. The first is that the Indians have not yet been able to cross the psychological hump of dealing with Pakistan on a basis of sovereign equality since, deep down, the Indians feel that accepting any Pakistan proposal on any issue amounts to India somehow accepting smaller stature perhaps a size similar to Pakistan's. Interestingly, an eminent Indian scholar privately confided soon after Nawaz Sharif had unveiled his five-power nuclear proposal in June 1991 that "please don't talk about this proposal with us now. Let it come from the Americans and then we will be in a position to take it seriously". India's problem is therefore Pakistan itself, the genesis of this country's creation and its role in the region which India perceives as a sore thumb sticking out to defy the diktat from Delhi, and that too, in a manner which is both dismissive and confident. India would much prefer that Pakistan play the role of a glorified Bhutan and follow the bidding of the Big Brother.

The second conclusion that is evident regarding Pakistan-India relations pertains to the myths that had been nurtured regard-

ing bilateral relations both in policy-making circles in New Delhi and among sections of the political forces and intelligentsia in Pakistan who have favoured what is often claimed to be a "realistic and balanced" stance towards India. Three such myths are noteworthy.

* The impasse in Pakistan-India relations was often attributed to the inability of both governments to break out of an old, rigid mindset which was based on pandering to their respective domestic constituencies. Hence, the argument went, relations could not move forward. But in this case, the government in Pakistan has sought to move beyond the previously stated official positions on a whole range of issues but the Indians have not only stuck to their old stand but they have neither acknowledged nor appreciated Pakistani flexibility on any count;

* Another myth sought to separate Pakistan-India relations from pronouncements and policies of officialdom in both the countries, on the assumption that increased unofficial, people to people contacts and dialogues would result in breaking the deadlock and creating an atmosphere that is favourable to the growth of bilateral relations given the perceived cultural compatibility between the two countries. In the last two years, the maximum number of such dialogues between Pakistani and Indian retired generals, journalists, bureaucrats, writers, lawyers and legislators have been held both in Pakistan and India representing the entire spectrum of political thought, many sponsored by the United States, but these have met a dead-end for the simple reason that even non-official Indians lack the honesty to differ from the Indian Establishment's line on Pakistan and such issues as Kashmir and the nuclear question. Interestingly, at most of these dialogues, Pakistanis have ended up being more critical of their own country, even accepting some Indian formulations about Pakistan, but

the Indians who gathered for these dialogues have not obliged with a similar expression of intellectual pluralism;

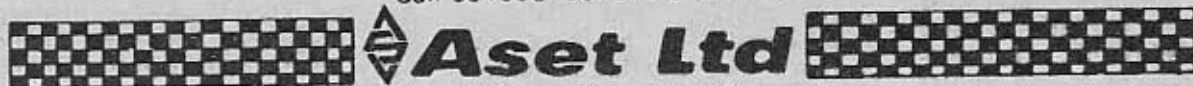
*The third myth that has been exploded in the recent past tried to link the Hinduisation of India with Pakistan's Islamic identity, as if India's Hinduism was a reaction to Pakistan's Islamism on the rather naive assumption that the Indians were, after all, old-school secularists. That myth has also thankfully been set at rest courtesy the demolition of the Babri Masjid in which the Indian Congress government played a major conniving role which was later reinforced by the Allahabad High Court judgement allowing the Hindus to pray at the makeshift Ram Temple that had been set up on the debris of the Babri Masjid. In any case, this argument does not wash because, if anything, the IJI government delinked itself from all its Islamist political allies at a time when the Congress government was caving in to Hindu political pressure and the Indian electorate was electing a Hindu nationalist party to four major Indian states, including the largest one, UP. As the Quaid-i-Azam himself once suggested, but for Hindu petty-mindedness manifested in the Congress line, there would have been no Partition!

This track-record of Pakistan-India relations should be instructive both for our policy-makers and to those of Pakistan's starry-eyed admirers of Nehruvian secularism among our intelligentsia who believed in myths that turned out to be what they were in the first place, i.e., myths with no basis in reality. In this regard, the comments of Pakistan's most seasoned "Indiawala" in officialdom are apt. After ending his second tenure as Pakistan's top diplomat in New Delhi, Ambassador Abdul Sattar told Narasimha Rao in his farewell meeting with the Indian Prime Minister that, "Now that I am leaving India, I feel that the 15 years of my professional life which I have devoted to India in various capacities have been wasted."

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Human Rights in Sri Lanka

1 Introduction and Summary of Findings

An Amnesty International delegation visited Sri Lanka in October 1992. It assessed the government's implementation of the recommendations Amnesty International had made a year earlier on human rights safeguards, and evaluated the current human rights situation in both the northeast and the south. This report summarizes their findings.

Following a research visit by Amnesty International in June 1991 and the publication in September 1991 of *Sri Lanka — The Northeast: Human rights violations in a context of armed conflict*, the Government of Sri Lanka announced its acceptance of 30 of the 32 recommendations for human rights safeguards made by the organization in that report. In February 1992, the government invited Amnesty International to return to Sri Lanka to assess the implementation of these safeguards.

During their October 1992 visit, Amnesty International met government officials responsible for the implementation of the recommendations, representatives of a range of non-governmental organizations and others active in the field of human rights and interviewed victims of human rights abuses. Wherever possible, the delegates attempted to evaluate how new mechanisms to protect human rights were working in practice, and whether the procedural changes ordered by the command of the various security

forces were in fact being carried out. In addition to assessing the human rights situation with regard to government forces the delegates also collected material on abuses of human rights committed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the armed, secessionist Tamil group which has effective control of parts of the northeast and which is engaged in armed combat with government forces.

Among the government official Amnesty International met were the Presidential Adviser on International Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, the Commander of the Army, the Inspector General of Police, the Head of the Human Rights Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Attorney General. The delegates also met the Chairman of the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF), which has responsibility for registering detainees and reviewing their welfare, and visited two regional HRTF offices. In addition, they met members of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal of Persons, which investigates "disappearances" which have taken place since 11 January 1991, to discuss the progress of their work.

Amnesty International appreciates the openness with which its delegates were received by government officials of all levels throughout their visit, and the

readiness with which officials supplied most of the information requested.

This was the organization's second research visit to Sri Lanka since 1982.

Since mid-1991, the Government of Sri Lanka has displayed much greater openness to scrutiny by international human rights organizations. This is a welcome development which Amnesty International hopes will contribute to the strengthening of human rights protection, and the work of human rights organizations, within the country. The government has established new mechanisms to monitor and investigate certain kinds of human rights violation, and most of Amnesty International's recommendations concerning these new bodies have been implemented. However, many other recommendations which the government also accepted have not yet been implemented. These include the establishment of primary procedural safeguards to be followed by the security forces to prevent persons taken into custody from "disappearing" or being tortured. For example, the army was not issuing certificates of arrest after cordon and search operations and admitted that it holds certain prisoners in secret detention, hidden from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Amnesty International learned of prisoners who had been held secretly for up to a year, in the south, abductions by plain-clothed military and police per-

sonnel were reported in 1992. Other aspects of arrest and detention procedures covered by the recommendations and accepted by the government would require for their implementation the amendment or withdrawal of emergency legal provisions, and this has not been done.

The continuing sense of insecurity in the northeast and the border areas, and the difficult security problems posed for the government, had been highlighted the week before Amnesty International's visit. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the secessionist armed group which is fighting the government, had launched a major attack on Muslim villagers in northern Polonnaruwa District. In this pre-dawn raid, hundreds of LTTE cadres descended on four villages and killed over 190 civilians, including men, women and young children. A section of this report details continuing abuses of human rights by the LTTE.

On 16 November the Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Vice-Admiral Clancy Fernando, was assassinated in an LTTE suicide attack in Colombo. The police detained over 3,000 Tamil people living in the south and screened them for connections with the LTTE. The majority were released within a few days.

Compared to the previous year, Amnesty International found that significantly fewer "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions were being committed by the security forces. Nevertheless, these grave violations of human rights continued in the east, particularly, at a rate which remains high, with scores of "disappearances" reported during 1992. Amnesty International was also disturbed to

find that prisoners continued to be tortured and ill-treated in both military and police custody, and believes that the authorities need to take decisive action to curb these practices. In addition, the organization is concerned that several thousand people remain in untried, administrative detention for long periods, some for over three years. To date, there does not appear to be an agreed policy on processing these cases; the various state agencies involved may reach different, inconsistent administrative decisions on individual cases because they work separately from each other and appear to base their decisions on different bodies of evidence. In such a situation, prisoners cannot know where they stand and fear that even if released after spending a period in rehabilitation, which they had understood would lead to unconditional release, they may be arrested again and tried for the original offence. Those not recommended for rehabilitation or release remain in indefinite detention. No clear decision appears to have been made about their fate.

The issue of accountability for human rights violations remains a matter of concern which the government has yet to address adequately. Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern about the apparent impunity with which members of the security forces act, and pointed to excessive powers granted under Emergency Regulations and the lack of proper investigation and prosecution of offenders as contributory factors. Emergency Regulations on inquest procedures following deaths in custody can facilitate the cover-up of deliberate killings of pris-

oners and of deaths resulting from torture, for example. In accepting 30 of Amnesty International's recommendations, the government undertook to expedite cases against those believed responsible for violations of human rights. Yet trials of security forces personnel (usually of police officers, not soldiers) implicated in grave human rights violations have generally failed to reach conclusions, in some cases even after several years.

Gross violations such as the massacre of civilians and the "disappearing" of prisoners by soldiers had earlier remained outside public scrutiny. Since mid-1991, however, there has been a new readiness by the authorities to acknowledge that, in certain recent instances, extrajudicial executions have been committed by the military and home guards operating in the east, and inquiries of different types have been held into these events. These inquiries have not fulfilled the standards set in international instruments on the investigation of such violations, and the follow-up remains slow. Only one case so far has come to trial. That case, the first and only massacre by soldiers to have been the subject of an independent Commission of Inquiry in Sri Lanka, was tried before a military tribunal not a civilian court. The government had acknowledged the responsibility of soldiers for the murder of at least 67 civilians at Kokkadichcholai in June 1991, and had paid compensation to relatives. However, 19 of the 23 accused were acquitted of all charges and the tribunal did not find any person guilty of murder (see below).

2 Implementation of Amnesty International's Recommendations for Human Rights Safeguards

The 32 Amnesty International recommendations were divided into four broad areas, each of which is discussed below: those intended to create a climate in which human rights violations

are less likely to occur; those intended to prevent "disappearances"; those intended to promote respect for the rights of detainees and their families; those intended to prevent extrajudicial executions.

The two recommendations which the government rejected are concerned with the issue of impunity. The government refused to repeal the Indemnity (Amendment) Act of December 1988, claiming that it was longer in force. In fact, the act continues to apply to the period 1 August 1977 to 16 December 1988. It provides immunity from prosecution to government and security forces members, government servants and others involved in forcing law and order in that period, provided that they had acted "in good faith". Amnesty International learned during its 1992 visit to Sri Lanka that the government still has no intention of repealing the act. Secondly, the government refused to expand the mandate of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal of Persons to include investigation of "disappearances" which took place before 11 January 1991.

(To be continued)

Attempt to ...

(Continued from page 4)

quarters to the government. The government also wishes to inform the hon member that in case these officers conduct themselves in this matter over-stepping the limits of the law, they can be dealt with legally.

(4) The hon member evidently sheds crocodile tears about the hardships the media personnel suffer, the alleged loss of freedom of the mass-media and the threats supposed to be directed against them. However, we feel grateful to him for providing us with this opportunity to remind him of the persecution of the mass-media and the suppression of their freedom carried on by the former SLFP government under the cover of special laws and the emergency law.

The old and the new

News Item: "On 1st January, 1993 the twenty-five Government Agents of Districts were replaced by 250 Divisional Secretaries."

*The New Year dawned in '93, midst explosive din,
Alas! within the Residencies the mood was dark and grim.
Those mansions vast, on spacious lawns, on hill-tops,
sun-kissed shore*

Lay bereft and forlorn, as G.A.s rose no more.

*For close upon one hundred years they ruled the countryside
Agents of a Raj, now gone, puffed with viceregal pride
Resplendent in their ostrich plumes, they governed humble
blacks*

*From Kachcheries, with Mudaliyars, and clerks with files
in stacks.*

No wonder they were loath to go

When Britannia ruled no more.

*The new lords of The Residencies, true sons of Lanka's soil
Booted out cook-appus, 'bistake' and Yorkshire pud.*

The aroma of bacon, gave way to coconut oil

As 'kussiammas' toiled and moiled to dish up native food.

*Assistants for his office work, for lands, co-ops and food,
For poor relief, for festivals, they helped as best they could
The G.A. at his many tasks. They were a motley army,
Some were bad and some were good, but quite a few
were barmy!*

*Seated at their polished desks, they signed away at permits
For guns, for paddy, lands and water; liquor shops and logs.
But, latterly, their time was spent in honouring Members'
chits*

*The sad and bitter truth was that — they had become
only cogs*

— Though cogs with cars and flags and perks

Their role was that of humble clerks.

*Their sun had set, their day was done. In their faltering
footsteps*

*With vim, vigour and confidence strode the people's reps
Who MUCH preferred a smaller cog to be at call and beck*

So every Division has today, a Divisional Sec.

*Good bye! Government Agent. Farewell! an age that was.
The up and coming D. S., has sent them all to grass.*

*Like the dew on the mountain, the foam on the river,
Like the peel of a banana, they have gone — and forever.*

George Aratchigedera

Two centuries of subjugation

Tisaranee Gunasekera

The Torricelli Act is a blatant attempt to tighten the screws still further by extending these restrictions to Cuba's relations with other countries. But for the last 3 decades the US has been putting pressure on all trading partners of Cuba to cease and desist having links with that country. These attempts at coercion/blackmail have become so glaring that even America's allies have been forced to protest against US behaviour. Just to mention one such instance, in mid May 1992, on instructions from its headquarters in the US the Pepsi-Cola company in Montreal decided not to abide by a contract it had entered into for the sale of 25,000 boxes of soft drinks to Cuba. The Political implications of this act were correctly interpreted by the Canadian authorities. As a result the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to the State Department standing: 'We cannot accept... that US officials take steps in Canada in support of the application of US laws to inhibit Canadian firms from pursuing express Canadian Government policies of promoting trade with Cuba in non strategic goods... if they are indeed long standing US practice, they should be discontinued.'

Rajiva Wijesinghe chides Cuba for not being able to produce "something of its own" after 30 years. Contrary to this, Cuba has managed to produce quite a few things of its own—as I pointed out a little while ago. Now, let me give an example of how a vengeful neighbour is preventing the Cubans from further developing their industries. The Cubans have been having a sales contract with the Swedish Company Alfa-Laval to purchase equipment (manufactured in Sweden by Alfa-Laval) for their booming Pharmaceutical indus-

try. That was until Washington found that a single part of the equipment, a filtering membrane, was of U.S. origin. As a result, in May 1992, Alfa-Laval cancelled the sales contract it had with Cuba. During the last 30 years the US government has managed to close all the traditional markets for another of Cuba's major exports, Nickel—by the simple expedient of demanding a guarantee that no product exported to the US would contain Cuban nickel. Right now, Washington is also demanding that those exporting sugar to the US guarantee that the shipments sold to the U.S. market contains no Cuban sugar.

This is only the tip of the iceberg. The restrictions imposed on Cuba as a part of the US blockade and their impact on Cuban development process are too varied and numerous to be listed here. I will limit myself to saying that not many countries would have been able to perform the feats (in all fields) that Cuba has managed to, while being subjected to such a strangling embargo.

A HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

Rajiva Wijesinghe's comments on the US blockade are extremely interesting: "Certainly the Americans were turning the screws, even generally speaking liberal Congressmen voting to tighten sanctions in the hope that economic collapse might necessitate change. Such ruthlessness seemed appalling. Yet was there an alternative?—given that the regime in Cuba showed no signs of adjusting itself to reality." (Lanka Guardian, Dec 1, '92). Firstly, I don't think I'm wrong in assuming that Rajiva Wijesinghe (reluctantly!) approves the blockade—because according to him there's no other 'alternative'. It's fortunate that this opinion is not shared by an absolute majority of the

countries in the world (including almost all the allies of the US)—as the recent UN vote clearly proved. Probably because they know that the blockade is (despite the lofty words used by the US administration and its apologists like Mr. Wijesinghe to justify it) none other than a shameful attempts by the US to punish a tiny neighbour for daring to disobey its dictates.

Indeed, in order to understand the real reasons behind the blockade one must look at US-Cuban relations in their history. The US attempt to subjugate Cuba, to interfere in the purely internal affairs of Cuba commence with the Cuban Revolution in 1959 i.e. after Cuba became a socialist country. As Ricardo Alarcon, the new Cuban Foreign Minister, mentioned in his recent address to the UN (during the debate on the Cuban Revolution): "In 1808, ten years before the birth of Karl Marx, the United States tried to obtain from Spain the sale of its then Cuban colony.

In 1823, years before the first publishing of the Communist Manifesto, the United States invented the so-called theory of the "ripe fruit" according to which Cuba, when separated from Spain, would be necessarily incorporated to North America.

In 1898, five years before the founding of the Bolshevik party, the United States intervened in our war for independence, frustrating it and imposing upon us four years of military rule.

In 1901, 16 years before the triumph of the Socialist October Revolution in Russia, and while militarily occupying our island, the United States imposed an amendment to the Cuban Constitution through which it stripped Cuba of part of its territory which it still usurps in Guantanamo and assumed the "right" of intervening in Cuba.

Several decades prior to the commencement of the so-called Cold War, the United States intervened on more than one occasion with its occupation troops, ousting and imposing

(The writer is Director of PEOPLES BANK Research Unit)

governments and intervening in all possible manners in the internal affairs of the country until 1 January 1959." (Blockade — Page 38). The US like any other global or regional power cannot put up with 'disobedience' in its backyard.

Obviously the US rulers who are working so assiduously to 'liberate' the Cuban people, seem totally unconcerned about the fact that their blockade is hurting the same people most; that they are even condemning Cuban children to death by their "tightning of the screw" (the same way they are forcing Iraqi babies to die, to punish President Saddam Hussein). For example, the blockade is preventing Cuba from importing parts indispensable to equipment for the treatment of children with cardiac conditions. When an epidemic of hemorrhagic dengue erupted in Cuba in 1981 (the Cubans, with reason, suspect that this was introduced from abroad), the US authorities hindered Cuban efforts to acquire the necessary products for the elimination of the agent of that epidemic. Around 100 Cuban children paid with their lives, the price for this particular effort by the US authorities to free the Cuban people.

THE ONLY WAY OUT?

Rajiva Wijesinghe "reluctantly" supports the blockade because that is the only way to defeat Fidel Castro. The fact that after more than 3 decades of the and more than 1 year without the Soviet Union, despite all the hardships and deprivations, the Cuban Revolution still remains undefeated and unbowed should tell him something. Maybe not — because after a few days in Cuba and after talking to a handful of Cubans (by the way, does he know the language?) he's fully certain that Fidel is unpopular and will have to go. If Rajiva Wijesinghe were to travel in a private bus in Sri Lanka, he will hear nothing but the most virulent criticism of the Premadasa government. Going

by these, the government shouldn't have won the local government polls; it shouldn't have survived this long. The loudly expressed opinions of a few or even a sizeable minority of unsatisfied elements do not necessarily represent the sentiments of the majority. And when it wants to, the majority will express its will — with or without multi party elections. After all there were no multi party elections in the USSR or a number of Eastern European countries (and there was no crippling blockade either to force the masses to rebel) and yet the people managed to impose their will and overthrow their governments (according to the interpretation so believed by the likes of Rajiva Wijesinghe). If the Romanian people manage to get rid of Nicola Ceausescu (once so highly regarded by the West and later equated with Romania's other well known historic figure, Vlad the Impaler) then there's no reason to think that the Cuban people, if they want to, will not get rid of Fidel Castro.

The Cuban people are armed and trained and this should make it all the easier. Incidentally the fact that the Cuban government has done something that not many governments in the world would dare to do — arm the people — should tell us something about the relationships between the Cuban people and their leaders. The fact that they have not, the fact that Cuba managed to win so many outstanding victories in the last year (which would have been impossible without the support of the masses), clearly proves (that despite what the US and its apologists say) the Cuban people support the Revolution and Fidel.

One final point. It's true that (thanks to the best efforts of the US, mostly) the Cuban people are going through a very difficult period — and the Cuban leaders are the first to admit it. As Fidel said recently: "the phase of triumphalism and easy victories is passing. That is why it's so important to resist, beca-

use in resisting lies the key to victory." The Cuban people are doing just that — resisting and winning — as the magnificent performance at the Olympics and the recent high sugar harvests clearly indicate. (Inefficiency can't be the norm as Rajiva Wijesinghe says — because these facts conclusively disprove him). And though Cuba may no longer seem like an ideal to Rajiva Wijesinghe, to millions of people the world over Cuba remains an ideal to defend — as the massive solidarity campaigns from from Brazil to India clearly prove. Obviously this includes quite a few North American people who are willing to break rules and risk arrest and suppression for Cuba — as evidenced by the 'Pastors for Peace' effort.

Che Guevara once said in his 'Man and Socialism in Cuba' "If his revolutionary eagerness becomes dulled when the most urgent tasks are carried on a local scale, and if he forgets about proletarian internationalism, the revolution that he leads ceases to be a driving force and it sinks into a comfortable drowsiness which is taken advantage of by imperialism, our irreconcilable enemy, to gain ground". (Man & Socialism in Cuba) The Cuban Revolution never forgot these words by Che and tried to perform their internationalist duties to the best of its ability — from sending troops to Angola to defend the Angolan revolution and people from the attacks by the forces of Apartheid South Africa and their local stooges, to sending doctors and teachers to many a Third World country. (This includes Sri Lanka. Cuban doctors, followers of Che, are serving in the war torn East as well as the South, rendering yeoman service to the people of those areas). That is why the Cuban Revolution still retains capacity to enthuse, mobilize, motivate not only Cubans but also millions of people all over the world. And so long as it retains this capacity, the Cuban Revolution will remain young, vibrant, alive... and strong.

GLOBAL CHANGE

Understanding the Soviet collapse

Sumit Chakravarty

The dramatic changes in the international scene the second half of 1989 have been breathtaking in their pace, sweep and depth. The historic nature of these changes are becoming increasingly transparent with every passing day. Those who had forecast the "end of history" following the demise of statist socialism fashioned on the lines of Stalin's schematic presentation of Marxism and based on the employment of unalloyed brutality and coercion as practised by autocrat-generalissimo himself, have been forced to revise their thesis in the light of later developments. As for the protagonists of the so-called "new world order" a euphemism for the unipolar global structure destined to replace the bipolar arrangement of the Cold War era, they have suffered a heavy blow from George Bush's failure to get re-elected to the office of the President of the United States.

The most striking manifestation of the global changes in the last few years was the burial of the Cold War which began 46 years ago with Sir Winston Churchill's famous speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. The US-USSR summits in the last seven years laid the groundwork of such a momentous happening. It was no doubt a stupendous task for one had to painstakingly construct an edifice of trust in US-USSR ties so essential to overcome the debilitating consequences of the renewed vitality acquired by the Cold War since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan at the fag end of 1979, something which is at times referred to as the second Cold War. But such a task was accomplished primarily due to the outstanding personality of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the last President of the USSR,

who played the most dynamic role in ensuring the turn from superpower confrontation to co-operation. Gorbachev literally personified the phenomenal global transformation. It was Gorbachev's personal initiatives which led to not merely arms control but actual reduction of nuclear weapons that had never happened in the past. The dialogue initiated in Geneva in November 1985 when Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev first met each other, proceeded slowly but steadily through Reykjavik in October 1986 to Washington in December 1987 when the protracted negotiations yielded for the first time a treaty eliminating a whole class of weapons in the two countries' nuclear arsenal, namely the intermediate and shorter range missiles. Such an agreement, called the INF Treaty, was subsequently ratified in Moscow in May-June 1988 when Reagan formally met Gorbachev for the last time as the US President.

The first face-to face meeting Gorbachev had with the next US President George Bush, was off the coast of Malta in December 1989. With profound changes underway in Europe as a result of the collapse of the statist undemocratic regimes in Eastern Europe, the Malta summit witnessed political co-operation between the two leaders in the context of Europe in particular. But more noteworthy was the fact that Gorbachev and Bush jointly affirmed at that summit the end of the Cold War. The subsequent summit meetings — between Bush and Gorbachev in Washington in May-June 1990 and in Moscow in June 1991, and between Bush and Yeltsin in June 1992 after the USSR had faded into history and Russia assured the role of its successor with Boris Yeltsin as the Russian

head of state) — formalised the final burial of the Cold War with the US and USSR, and subsequently Russia, overhauling their original relationship of political adversaries. The 1991 Moscow summit saw the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) visualising a marked reduction in the number of nuclear warheads from over 22,000 to about 8500 by 2000 AD. The Washington summit next year went much beyond what the last Bush-Gorbachev meet had achieved in Moscow: it was agreed that the nuclear warheads on both sides would be slashed to a total of 6500 by 2003 A.D. But it was not only the quantitative reduction of nuclear warheads that enhanced the significance of the 1992 Washington summit. For weeks there was speculation in the media as to whether such a drastic cut was at all possible as it would strip Russia of its strategic parity with the US in the nuclear field, the basis of its superpower status. In fact the key issue was the largescale reduction of the SS-18 and SS-24 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) whose destruction the Russian experts had made conditional on the US scrapping of its sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). The final agreement showed that whereas the US concerns on the preservation of the SLBMs had been by and large accepted the Russian land based ICBMs, the SS-18s in particular, were substantially curtailed.

The unequal nature of the agreement must not be overlooked. But it cannot possibly obliterate the importance of the accord in terms of bringing down the overall level of the deadliest weapons of mass destruction. It is of considerable value that public opinion in the US

(The writer is editor of MAINSTREAM, India's leading journal of ideas)

called for an end to the US allies rearming themselves even after the Bush-Yeltsin summit. Thus *The New York Times* wrote soon after the summit: "The world has barely absorbed the stirring summit news that the superpowers have agreed to drastic cuts in their fearsome nuclear arsenals. The West can now truly look to the ex-evil empire with hope instead of horror. So what are America's allies, France and Britain, doing? Increasing their nuclear arsenals, with US help."

"The British and French decided to modernise their nuclear weapons starting years ago, long before Mikhail Gorbachev resigned and the Soviet Union dissolved. Unless both countries move quickly to reconsider and retrench, they will remain the captives of dangerous, mindless momentum. The Bush-Yeltsin summit talks provide a simple, dramatic starting principle: Reduce nuclear warheads."

The end of the Cold War that the global changes ushered in was undoubtedly a historic and highly positive development. But in the wake of the changes it was found that the 'socialist' regimes in Eastern Europe having collapsed under the pressure of popular, peaceful upsurges — upsurges that underscored the total lack of public sanction for those governments — the US was interpreting the entire process as a triumph of western democracy and market forces over the totalitarian system prevalent in all the countries that became members of the 'socialist' world — from the former Soviet Union to Albania and even Yugoslavia.

While the collapse of statist socialism as a legacy of Stalin was beyond dispute there was, however, controversy over the interpretation of these developments as a triumph of Western democracy and market forces. But first one must dispassionately analyse the causes behind the downfall of the 'socialist' regimes in Eastern Europe and the erstwhile USSR.

It should be acknowledged that, despite the Stalinist state structures in the East European states as well as the former Soviet Union, economic growth in those countries was quite impressive and in 1969 the distinguished western economic historian, Angus Maddison, published a study of the two major high growth economies of the world, Japan and the USSR. According to Maddison (*A Maddison, Economic Growth in Japan and the USSR*, London 1969) the per capita Soviet economic growth between 1913 and 1965 was the fastest in the world of all the major or developed countries, Japan included. Whereas the Japanese output grew by 400 per cent, the Soviet output was up by 440 per cent.

It is true, as has been highlighted by the South African Communist leader, Joe Slovo, in his incisive pamphlet, *Has Socialism Failed?* brought out in 1990, that "statistics showing high growth rates during Stalin's time prove only that methods of primitive accumulation can stimulate purely quantitative growth in the early stages of capitalism or socialism — but at what human cost?" It is also true, quoting the same Joe Slovo, that "more and more evidence is emerging daily that in the long run the excesses (of the Stalin period) inhibited the economic potential of socialism".

Nonetheless, it must be mentioned, especially in the wake of the worldwide anti-socialist propaganda unleashed at present, that Communist Europe was not an unmitigated economic failure. As Goran Therborn notes in the article "The Life and Times of Socialism" (*New Left Review*, July/August 1992), the "conclusion should be that a successful basic industrialisation and economic modernisation was achieved". However, according to Therborn, the "further development of mass consumption, services, and a post-industrial quality of life was never achieved". Why? A group of Czechoslovak scholars who produced the Richta Report of the Czechos-

lovak Academy of Sciences in 1965 identified the obstacle. Excerpts from the report are worth studying:

"Experience shows that the present system of management and the concepts on which it is based, born as they were in different conditions to those of today, have proved incapable of grasping or mastering the transition from industrialisation to the technical and scientific revolution. Following this transition, investments in qualitative changes in the forces of production, in intensive growth, in modernisation, new technology, scientific development, and in raising levels of training and skills, and improving working and living conditions, reducing the length of the working week, etc., become... more profitable than the construction of more industrial enterprises of the traditional kind... Although in terms of production of industrial goods Czechoslovakia can compare itself to the most advanced nations in the world, it lags behind considerably in the development (and dynamism) of its productive forces, and in the progressive changes that are now becoming decisive."

That was in 1965. In three years time the shortlived 'Prague Spring' was snuffed out by Soviet tanks. The new ideas, spelt out in the Richta Report, could have received a positive response from Alexander Dubcek, the architect of 'Prague Spring' who passed away only the other day, if only he was not unceremoniously removed prior to the installation of a Soviet guided regime. But in different conditions, designed by the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, there was no possibility of translating those new ideas into reality.

Essentially therefore the problem that confronted the East European states stemmed from lack of democracy. What needs to be understood, however, it is fact that the major uprisings or attempts at post-War reform in Eastern Europe — the 1953

workers' upsurge in the GDR, the 1956 revolt in Hungary, the 1968 opposition to the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia — were, despite official protestations to the contrary, explicitly socialist up to the Solidarity movement in 1980–81 in Poland. "What is more," as Goran Therborn points out, "apart from the most unbending members of the *nomenklatura* and a handful of sycophants, few socialists had ever had any enthusiasm for one-party regimes, police surveillance of leader cults, not to speak of the Berlin Wall. Such phenomena had long been regarded as either inimical to socialism or at least as regrettable peripheral phenomena. Their demise was therefore warmly welcomed by socialists, and even received positively by Gorbachev, upsetting only the rulers of the few remaining Communist states."

In fact the first spectacular show of dissent against the Honecker regime in the GDR in 1989 was led by the pro-socialist New Left intellectuals. However, they were later swamped by the anti-socialists. Why did this happen? According to Joe Slovo, "it is our view that the fact the processes of *perestroika* and *glasnost* came too slowly, too little and too late in Eastern Europe did more than anything else to endanger the socialist perspective there."

In varying degree the same explanation is valid while analysing the developments in the different republics of the former Soviet Union though it must be underlined that the consequences of the aborted coup of August 1991 played a pivotal role in the demise of the world's first socialist state and the disintegration of the USSR.

While on the question of democracy one must necessarily recall the valuable notes of caution and warning issued by such a talented public leader as Rosa Luxemburg. In her "Zur Russischen Revolution", written in prison in 1918, she pointed out that the "unwieldy mechanism of democratic institutions" has a powerful corrective force

in the form of the movement of the masses and their increasing pressure". Thereafter she asserted: "The more democratic the institution, the stronger and livelier the pulse of the masses' political life, the more direct and precise its impact despite all party signboards, outdated election lists and the like. It stands to reason that every democratic institution has its limits and shortcomings like all other human institutions. But remedy found by Lenin and Trotsky, that is, the elimination of democracy, is worse than the disease it is supposed to cure because it shuts off that life-giving spring which provides the means of correcting the inherent faults of public institutions..."

BOOKS

Elusive Icons

Romesh Gunasekera, *Monkfish Moon*, Granta Books, London.

Romesh Gunasekera grew up in Sri Lanka and the Philippines but now lives in London. His stories fit into a by now well-established genre: a young writer from a former colony examines his native land, its literary and social traditions and post-colonial upheavals, in the light of his own Western experience and education. The native land equates with family feeling and warmth of emotion while the West is associated with coldness and detachment, a certain heartlessness and, most certainly, great loneliness suffered by both ex-colonials and ex-colonialists.

Gunasekera, like others of this school, works through apparently plain presentation of speech, action, feelings and physical setting. His scenes are sharply etched and he draws the reader into a situation in a few spare sentences. Generally, however, he leaves the reader to make connections and interpret what he is given and, in particular, to decide what is to be seen as mysterious and what is normal.

Elusive icons drawn from the natural world hover behind these fictions. There is, in particular, some authorial teasing about the monkfish of the title, which — a

"Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party — no matter how big its membership — is no freedom. Freedom is always freedom for dissenters. That is not said out of a fanatical sense of justice, but because that is the essence on which depends the reviving, healing and purifying effect of political freedom, and it ends the minute that freedom becomes a privilege..."

"... the very nature of socialism precludes the possibility of its realisation through decrees... The public life of the state with limited freedom is poor, meagre, schematic and sterile because by excluding democracy, it shuts off its sources of spiritual wealth,

note informs us—are not to be found in the ocean around Sri Lanka.

This is not to say that the stories lack shape. Ordinary life in Sri Lanka itself or in England, lyrically but exactly evoked, is gradually or abruptly disturbed by an incident or echo from the country's rumbling civil war. Characters previously at one are driven into inarticulate separation. Sometimes the narrative stops moments in advance of an event — we may be left to guess what it will be — which might or might not resolve the situation. Sometimes it arrives at a point of unresolved suspension.

The element of teasing unresolvedness precisely evoked is, finally, what matters. In Sri Lanka, history has been twice dismantled and many times disrupted, and it seems that no person, however remote from the political upheavals, can remain unaffected. We are left observing a series of partly assembled jig-saws, their overlapping, fragmented, unreliable patterns providing a world through which puzzled, often dissatisfied and alienated characters move, by no means without purpose but with a strong sense that the world no longer endorses them as once, perhaps, it did.

But Gunasekera is not in the least a glum writer. He delights in subtle perception and apprehension and in the exact transmission of these.

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Aung San Suu Kyi; the Roots of Buddhist Courage

Jane Russell

An Essay Based on a Reading of "Burma and India — Some Aspects of Intellectual Life Under Colonialism" by Aung San Suu Kyi. (Published by Indian Institute for Advanced Studies, Shimla, 1990)

"We are fully prepared to follow men who are able and willing to be leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Tilak of India; like De Valera of Ireland; or Garibaldi and Mezzini of Italy. Let any body appear who can be like such a leader, who dares to be like such a leader. We are waiting." (p. 68)

The voice of Aung San, founder of the Burmese National Army, architect of modern independent Burma, drafter of the Burmese constitution, liberation fighter and national hero rings out as the last quotation in his daughter's book, "Burma and India — Some Aspects of Intellectual Life Under Colonialism". Aung San made this statement in 1936 when as a very young man, he emerged as one of the leaders of the University student boycott — a boycott which effectively began the independence movement in Burma.

The key word in the statement is "dares": it appears in italics in the text of Suu Kyi's translation of her father's words. Daring is what characterised Aung San. He dared to fight the British and then just as his country achieved independence, he was assassinated by political opponents for whom his daring had become too sharp a thorn in their side. Neither he nor his country were able to achieve political maturity. After his death, Burma declined from a nation on the threshold of great hopes to a political backwater of authoritarianism, corruption and economic and moral stagnation.

Today Burma is a byword for hopelessness — not least because Aung San's daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, the only person who had dared to take on General Ne Win and the junta of military rulers who had ruled Burma with an iron hand since 1962, has been as effectively silenced by a five-year confinement under house arrest, an imposition which still has another two years to run, as her father had been by the assassin's bullets. However, the academic who returned to Burma in April 1988 to nurse her ailing mother through a terminal illness, leaving her English Oxford don husband and two sons behind, has re-defined Burmese politics for the youth of Burma. In walking with serene insouciance towards the guns blocking her path at a public meeting in April 1989; in organising the National League for Democracy which, even if it has since dropped her as its Secretary-General, owes its international reputation entirely to her efforts; in inspiring the NLD and the Burmese people with such confidence that in May 1990, with Suu Kyi 10 months into her period of house arrest and banned by the Junta from contesting the polls, the NLD were able to gain 70% of the popular vote, routing the military candidates and exposing the military's claim of popular support as the sham that it was, Suu Kyi has blazed a trail of leadership for her young countrymen to follow. In October 1991, Suu Kyi became the first Buddhist woman, and the first Burmese, to be awarded the Nobel peace prize "for one of the finest examples of courage shown in Asia for decades." The daughter of Aung San has dared to be the leader that her father had called for: in Burma the ideal of Buddhist courage had been re-born.

Suu Kyi's intervention in Burmese politics has not been quite as fortuitous as circumstances would make it appear. This is clearly intimated by her slim but delightful book comparing intellectuals and political ideas in Burma and India in the colonial era. Even a cursory reading reveals a powerful yet subtle and sophisticated intellect at work. Suu Kyi is a woman of wisdom: a woman who has had the opportunities denied to almost all her fellow countrymen and countrywomen to enlarge her experience of the world, to study and interact with intellectuals from all parts of the world, to live and move in the mainstream of 20th century political ideas. Her book delineates her as a woman on par with Rosa Luxemburg, Hannah Arendt and Simone de Beauvoir. For such a person to have stood on the sidelines when Burma erupted into mass demonstrations followed by a massacre of demonstrators in Rangoon in August 1988, would have gone against the grain of her birth and subsequent education.

That the military authorities had always feared her — as the daughter of Aung San and as a force in her own right — is clear from the Preface of her book. "When I first proposed a study of intellectual life in Burma and India under colonialism, I had counted on spending one year on the project," she writes. However, my appointment as a fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study was delayed by the need for government clearance, and I found myself with only six months to work on a very broad and diffused subject. The limited time at my disposal, combined with the difficulty of obtaining the material I needed, has led to a much shorter study than I

had originally planned". Harassment, such as delaying clearance for her very innocent studies in India, on the part of the Burmese government even before 1988 was therefore very much part and parcel of Sun Kyi's experience.

The subject matter of the book also indicates a pre-occupation with men of action. In searching for the roots of courage among public men, Aung San Suu Kyi is herself looking for a standard, a set of guidelines by which to measure her own contribution. As she explains over and over again in a subtly-phrased, delicate prose, the will to act "lies in forging strong links between thought and action" (p. 70). This was particularly true of her father, "for whom the two followed each other in an uninterrupted chain of endeavour" (*loc. cit.*). But it was also true of Nehru: "For him the ideal was action which was not divorced from thought but which flowed from it in a continuous sequence." (p. 39)

Ideas and action and the connection between them are explored through the careers of the intellectuals and political actors in India and Burma under British rule. Although this is done from an academic viewpoint and with the skills of a mature academician, one feels that Suu Kyi does not make this exploration purely from academic motives. There is always behind the quiet, almost fragile, voice of reason a powerful will that searches through the lives of famous men for the hidden concatenation between personal integrity and public ideals. She recognises them most clearly in those individuals who were able to synthesise east and west, theory and practice within the "tradition initiated by the renaissance in India". (p. 16)

Ranmohan Roy, Sri Ramakrishnan, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, G. K. Gokhale, S. Radhakrishnan, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru come under her close scrutiny. And her percep-

tions are not clouded by reputation: "It is disturbing," she writes, "when a man of Gandhi's vision callously writes of English women as wandering in the streets and slaving away in factories, of western students as recognising no law 'save that of their own fancy' and of those who had received their education through the foreign medium as having lost their intellectual vigour" (p. 58). The xenophobic elements in Gandhi's ideology have rarely been alluded to by scholars, western or eastern. Gandhi's reputation and stature usually overawe his biographers and critics. But Suu Kyi, who spent several years of her childhood in North India (her mother was a diplomat in New Delhi), breathes in the rarefied air of those who are willing to be judged by the exalted standards set by Gandhi himself. It is only those elevated political actors, such as Gandhi, Andrei Sakharov, the Panchen Lama, Nelson Mandela and Suu Kyi, who by their personal sacrifice, beliefs and commitment can become the foci of humanity's conscience. These "Warriors of the Spirit" are able to overcome the failings of the age to create a yardstick by which Political Man may measure himself.

Suu Kyi certainly has her preferences among the intellectuals and political figures of the Indian renaissance. But generally speaking, she evinces great admiration for the Indian, and especially the Bengali, thinkers who were able to transform their country's thinking within the space of 200 years. In an important passage in her book, she discusses the reasons for the failure of the Burmese to carry through a similar transformation under the pressure of the western ideas emanating from the colonial rulers. As she points out, "the times and circumstances under which India and Burma were incorporated into the British Empire were vastly different" (p. 11). The assimilation process which took over 200 years in the case of India was telescoped into barely 50 years in

the case of Burma. The ability of the Burmese to fuse quite different, if not to say even contrary, ideas — those of their tradition with those of the British rulers — was, therefore greatly constrained by the limited time (barely two generations) given to them to do so.

The failure of the Burmese "renaissance" has however yet another explanation according to Suu Kyi: quoting an English Burmophile, H. Fielding Hall, she points out that there was no noble or leisured class in monarchical Burma.

"Consequently, the monarch had to recruit as his ministers men from the villages, who for all their natural capacity, did not have the breadth of view, the knowledge of other countries, of other thoughts, that comes to those who have wealth and leisure". (p. 57)

Suu Kyi takes this line of reasoning further: "The situation had not changed radically under British rule. There were in Burma no Ranmohan Roys, no Tagores, no Nehrus, people with wealth and leisure to pursue knowledge for the sake of knowledge, to travel, to see for themselves how other civilisations worked in their own milieu, to set standards of cultural refinement and intellectual excellence". (p. 57)

This unfortunate situation has obviously persisted in Burma even up to today. The favoured class since independence has been the military. But they have shown time and again a xenophobic narrow-mindedness and cultural and intellectual mediocrity that has kept Burma firmly out of the mainstream of world political development. The role of Suu Kyi has been therefore to try to introduce the kind of political and intellectual renaissance carried out by Tagore, Nehru et al in India within Burma. The fact that she seems to have failed in the short-term must be largely due to the fact that she is trying to accomplish what was achieved by numerous Indian intellectuals over several

generations, entirely by herself and within the space of a few years.

In an essay "Human Rights are Not Alien to Burma" written by Aung San Suu Kyi in honour of her father, appearing in a book "Freedom from Fear and Other Writings", she says this:

"Despotic governments do not recognise the precious human component of the state, seeing its citizens only as a faceless, mindless — and helpless — mass to be manipulated at will. It is as though people were incidental to a nation rather than its very lifeblood".

(One is reminded at this point of Bertolt Brecht's remark after the workers' rebellion took place in East Germany in 1953: "After the rebellion of 17th June, one could read that the people had forfeited the government's confidence and could regain it only by redoubling their work efforts. Would it not be simpler for the government to dissolve the people and elect a new one?" quoted in "Men in Dark Times" by Hannah Arendt, Pelican Books, 1973, p. 210).

Suu Kyi continues:

"Weak logic, inconsistencies and alienation from the people are common features of authoritarianism. The relentless attempts of totalitarian regimes to prevent free thought and new ideas, and the persistent assertion of their own rightness brings on them an intellectual stasis which they project onto the nation at large.... Patriotism is debased into a smokescreen of hysteria to hide the injustices of authoritarian rulers who define the interests of the state in terms of their own limited interests. The official creed is required to be accepted with an unquestioning faith more in keeping with orthodox tenets of the biblical religions which have held sway in the West rather than with the more liberal Buddhist attitude: 'It is proper to doubt, to be uncertain.... Do not go

upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing Nor upon tradition, nor upon rumours... When you know for yourself that certain things are unwholesome and wrong, abandon them. When you know for yourself that certain things are wholesome and right, accept them." (Time Magazine, Oct. 28th 1991, p. 12).

The comparison Suu Kyi makes between the monolithic, intractable attitude of the military junta in Burma and the liberal tenets of the Buddhist faith, which is the determinant of Burmese culture, illustrates her point that Burma has still not resolved the clash of ideas consequent upon the colonial occupation. In her book, she traces the influence of Indian cultural ideas upon Burma. "Of these influences, the most important was Buddhism which became so integral a part of the Burmese ethos that it has become common to say: 'To be Burmese is to be Buddhist'". (p. 10). According to an article appearing in a recent issue of the Law & Society Trust Fortnightly Review — "Buddhist Legacy to Modern Law and Society with Special Reference to Myanmar and Thailand" — Aye Kyaw —: "Buddhism brought with it the conception of democracy. One may wonder why the democratic election and institution were not well developed, particularly in Burma and generally in other Buddhist societies in Southeast Asia" (p. 5. L & S. T. Review, May 16, 1992).

Suu Kyi herself poses this question in her book, particularly in comparison with the Indian attachment to democratic norms in the post-independence period. She answers it in Part II of Chapter One (pp. 18ff):

"While Indian intellectuals were caught up in accelerating attempts to master, absorb and adapt ideas imported from the West to meet the needs of their own country, the Burmese were still steeped in their traditional ways" (p. 18).

Traditional religious scholarship in Burma is characterised thus: "Since growing up in the ancestor's shadow was the desideratum, a scholar, however eminent, could never think in terms of originality of thinking or of questioning the validity of existing systems or texts". (p. 19). This scholastic attitude was reinforced by a social system which was "imbued with the spirit of Buddhism which 'enjoined nothing at which the reason jibs' and was therefore 'remarkably free from social injustices'" (p. 20). She continues:

"Burmese society had no rigid caste or class stratifications. Women enjoyed rights and privileges which a Victorian lady might well have envied. The practice of the ubiquitous monastery providing at least a basic education for local children had resulted in a high percentage of literacy. There existed alongside the teachings of Buddhism a fund of superstition and supernatural lore... but these rarely entailed sinister taboos or practices. In fact, the social life of village Burma — and Burma was fundamentally a land of villages owing allegiance to a king who, remote in his capital, left them to the jurisdiction of a governor or to their own ministration — presented... an idyllic picture." (p. 20).

The need for national regeneration, which had been the stimulus to the acceptance of western ideas in India, was therefore nothing so dire in Burma as in India. However, Burma "certainly presents a situation which demonstrates that a sound social system can go hand in hand with political immaturity". (p. 21). Suu Kyi goes further: "In fact, it could be argued that, because the social system placed no inordinate burden on the lives of the people, it made them more tolerant of the deficiencies of government". (p. 22).

That this attitude on the part of the Burmese has persisted up to today could be ascertained

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The Role of Media in Nation-Building

Victor Gunewardena

INTRODUCTION

This note seeks to discuss the subject of media in relation to nation-building not in the abstract, but in the context of Sri Lanka. However, certain conceptual issues are basic to any discussion, whether contextual or not.

Among such issues are our understanding of the expression "media" and of the concept of "nation-building".

By "media" is commonly understood the means (media) of mass social communication, as distinct from inter-personal or group communication. What is envisaged, therefore, by the use of the particular term are such media as mass-circulation newspapers, radio, television and cinema, each of which has the capacity to reach audiences far and wide with speed, thereby, giving the content of their respective messages immediacy and contemporaneity as extensively as possible.

Historically, the media have developed as institutions, whether of the State or of private corporate bodies. They have sought to act, each in its own sphere, to communicate variously the point of view of the State or of an organisation or group, to further the concerns of an ethnic group, a class or cultural or religious entity, to advocate the political ideology of a party, to promote commercial interests or to voice opposition to or criticism of the policies and actions of governments.

The foregoing are only some of the functions which the media have been performing and continue to perform. Some media perform such functions crudely, blatantly and in a glaringly par-

tisan or propagandist manner, while others strive to be fair, objective and professional. Depending on the manner in which the media function, in the public mind they are variously identified — either as being biased and partial, or as being partisan in some matters and fair in some others.

CONSTRAINTS

It would be correct to say that no media organisation now functioning in Sri Lanka is free of some type of constraint or other, be it legal, structural or functional, and that such constraints are reflected in the manner in which the particular newspapers or State radio or State television function.

Among the legal constraints in Sri Lanka on the freedom of expression, publication and information are certain constitutional restrictions, which form part of the regulatory framework relating to the exercise of these freedoms.

Before we proceed to an examination of the relevant constitutional restrictions it is necessary to clarify what is understood by the concept, "freedom of expression" (sometimes referred to also as the freedom of the press).

The right of freedom of expression is derived from the human faculty of communication, which basically is an innate capacity of the individual's social nature to relate to other individuals and groups of persons and forms and structures of the larger society and to receive and exchange socially relevant information. This faculty of social communication is fundamental to civilised human existence.

Being fundamental in such a manner, it belongs as a right of the human person. It is not a right or a privilege which either

the State or other institutions of social governance bestow on him or her. Freedom of expression (including also freedoms of speech, publication and information) is a necessary aspect of human liberty and a vital means by which to facilitate individual growth and social development. By exercising this right the individual is able to interact with other persons and institutions in the social environment.

The exercise of this right by the individual must of necessity recognise the identical right of other persons. Hence the right has corresponding obligations, which imply a due sense of responsibility in its exercise. To that extent it is not an absolute right and is subject to limitations that flow from cognisance of the rights of others and of the good of the social collectivity.

Among the dimensions of the freedom of expression are the right of the individual to express his own opinion privately as well as publicly, both orally and in print, and without interference. It also means that the individual has the right to seek, receive and diffuse information, ideas and opinions through any medium of communication, regardless of frontiers.

INFORMATION AS A SOCIAL RIGHT

The right of access to socially relevant information is crucial to the individual's understanding of society, to gather facts about it and engage in the free exchange of ideas and opinions that would facilitate his participation in the various processes of individual and social development.

Such access to information is not only an individual need but also a social necessity because societies and governments need to be correctly and adequately informed in order to be able

(The author is Director, Political Studies and Editorial Services, Marga Institute)

to perform their respective functions efficiently and as expeditiously as possible.

Thus, freedom of information, which is an integral aspect of freedom of expression, is both an individual and a social right. Both freedoms are essential to the exercise of other basic liberties, and are conducive to citizens participation in the decision-making process in a democracy.

What is extremely important to note is that freedom of expression and other related freedoms are rights that inhere in the individual and are not institutional rights. Thus, there is no freedom of the press, or radio or television or cinema per se, although those media institutions articulate such freedoms. It is, therefore, incorrect to conclude that the press or other media are entitled to a right of expression which is distinct from that of the individual or even greater than it.

However, historically as the power and influence of newspapers grew, freedom of speech and expression and of information and publication came to be identified with the social institution — the press — which exercised that right especially to check on day-to-day governance of the polity by the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. Hence, Thomas Carlyle's reference to the press at the Fourth Estate of the realm, in England in the nineteenth century, assigning to it pre-eminently the role of monitor or adversary in its relationship to government.

NO SPECIAL CLAIM TO PROTECTION

Undoubtedly, this watchdog role of the press of media vis-à-vis the government of a country is very important and salutary. But it has given rise to the contention that the press as an institution has a special claim to protection.

In the United States of America the issue was clarified

by the the Chief Justice Burger of the US Supreme Court, who in 1978 in what is considered a landmark judgement, said inter alia —

"The purpose of the Constitution was not to erect the press into a privileged institution but to project all persons in their right to print what they will as well as to utter it... The liberty of the press is no greater and no less — than the liberty of every citizen of the Republic"...

"... In short, the First Amendment does not belong to any definable category of persons or entities; it belongs to all who exercise its freedom."

In Sri Lanka, too, the courts have interpreted freedom of speech and expression as being an individual right and not an institutional right. What privileges or protection the press is seen to enjoy over and above those of the individual derive from certain privileged institutions, the proceedings of which it seeks to cover, namely Parliament and the courts.

It is indeed surprising that the media, especially the press, in many countries are seen to act as if they are entitled to a greater degree of expression, publication and information than that to which individual citizens are entitled.

Exercise of the right of freedom of speech, expression, publication and information carries with it special obligations and responsibilities. Consequently, the legal restrictions to the exercise of these rights are intended to secure:

- * respect of the rights and reputations of others; and,
- * the protection of national, security or of public order, or of public health or morals.

The above restrictions are stated in paragraph 2 of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 19 also contains a subsection 3.1, which recognises the

imperative of protecting the rights and reputations of other individuals, while Article 19 subsection 3b takes cognisance of the State's duty to protect the public interest, be it national security, public order, public health or morals.

In Sri Lanka, the necessary legal safeguards are provided either under the general law or in specific enactments, and restrictions on the exercise of freedom of expression may in exceptional circumstances be imposed by resort to regulations framed under the Emergency.

CONCEPT OF MUTUALITY

There is thus a concept of mutuality inherent in the exercise of freedom of expression. Duties and responsibilities flow from that concept and they indicate the limits of individual's rights.

States are obliged to provide a legal framework to regulate the exercise of the freedom of expression as well as other natural rights. It is an imperative of good governance of safeguarding the public interest, of maintaining law and order, of ensuring the equality of all citizens and of protecting social peace and harmony.

The Sri Lanka Constitution provides for restrictions on the exercise of fundamental rights in certain circumstances. Such restrictions are intended to protect the "interests of racial and religious harmony or in relation to parliamentary privilege, contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence".

These constitutional restrictions form part of the regulatory framework. Additionally, there are provisions in the general law which derive from the need to secure due recognition and respect for the rights and reputations of others and to protect and promote the interests of the common good. Some such laws are those pertaining to sedition, official secrets, causing public disaffection or

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DRUGS ?

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LETTER

Bishop's visit

On this day 4th February 1993, the 45th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka, the following words of poetry cross my mind:-

"When Freedom dressed in
blood stained vest,
To every knight her war
song sung"

These are the first two lines of the haunting lyric on the "ODE TO LIBERTY" by Thomas Chatterton.

There have been a spate of letters in the press during the last two weeks, some of them below journalistic ethics, slinging mud, sneering, ridiculing the Bishop and his visit to the North, thereby justifying the sentiments expressed in the hymn, written by the English Bishop Herber on Ceylon, thus:-

"Where every prospect pleases
and only man is vile".

Whenever reference is made to the ongoing civil war in the North and East, in Parliament or outside, the debate of discussion centres around two options, (i) Political solution (ii) Military solution. So far the former has proved a failure. All the conferences, committees and so on from ABC to Z have been brought to nought. Our politicians, without exception, have been labouring and labouring. They have laboured like mountains but have been unable to bring forth even the proverbial mouse. In regard to the second option, the fighting has been going on so long, but the military muscle has been unable to bell the CAT; in the process much blood has been shed, many dead, many maimed for life, so many widows, so many orphans, so many refugees, so much weeping and wailing gnashing, untold agony and misery.

The Buddha in his teachings such as, "The conqueror breeds

hated; the vanquished lie in pain; the peaceful one lies happily, giving up both victory and defeat. "(Dhammapada 201), taught ambitious conquerors such as Asoka to lay down arms.

78 per cent of Sri Lankans venerate the teachings of the Buddha, the balance 22 per cent also follow their own religious precepts judging by what we see everyday. In such a religious atmosphere the ongoing civil war is a major contradiction. The explanation for same is given in another of the Buddha's teachings; "This city wherein decay, death, conceit and hypocrisy are deposited is built of bones and plastered with flesh and blood" (Dhammapada 150)

It behoves on every Sri Lankan to examine his conscience and to realise the horrors of the continuation of the present war. It cannot be left to politicians and political parties alone as they are primarily self interested. The Bishop has given a new idea. Rather than pooh pooh it, why not improve on it and consider the third option.

Internal warfare in a civilised country claiming over 2500 years of culture is a crying shame and a self condemnation.

The aim of any system of faith or worship is for the welfare of mankind, whereas war is for the destruction and misery of same. Therefore Religious leaders of Sri Lanka (of all faiths) who are "calm in body, calm in speech, calm in mind and well composed" should meet as one and bring about a Memorandum of Understanding for Peace. For any settlement to be ever reached people must be able to sit down in a calm atmosphere of peace, goodwill and trust. Thereafter negotiate. Consider this point calmly if you are really keen on a settlement.

S. Thambyrajah

Colombo 3.

Aung San...

(Continued from page 20)

by looking at the Burmese political experience over the past few years. The complete collapse of the NLD opposition, the lapse into lethargy by the mass of voters when the election results were completely ignored by the military, the jingle which the students used to sing; "we are not rice-eating robots" — suggesting of course that is exactly what they were — all suggests that immaturity is still the hallmark of Burmese politics.

In this context, Suu Kyi's efforts to stimulate her fellow countrymen into shaking off their apathy and fear come more clearly into focus. In her major essay "Freedom from Fear", published in 1991, she concentrates her attention on the four 'a-gati', the four kinds of corruption in Buddhist moral law. "It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it".

PART 2: Understanding "Bhaya-gati"

The Role...

(Continued from page 22)

incitement to an offence, profanity, obscenity and the proper conduct of elections.

Undeniably, a regulatory framework is necessary to ensure a proper balance between freedom and responsibility between rights and obligations. But what is objectionable is that at times the interpretation of the law and the enforcement of restrictions, especially during times of Emergency, appears to be arbitrary and partisan. Consequently, worst affected are the public, whose rights to know socially relevant facts or to have access to information of public interest is either curtailed or denied altogether.

(To be continued)

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