

15TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 16

No. 1

May 1, 1993

Price Rs.10.00

Registered at GPO, Sri Lanka QD/43/NEWS/93

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Ananda Guruge on

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— Arden

The future of 3rd World communism

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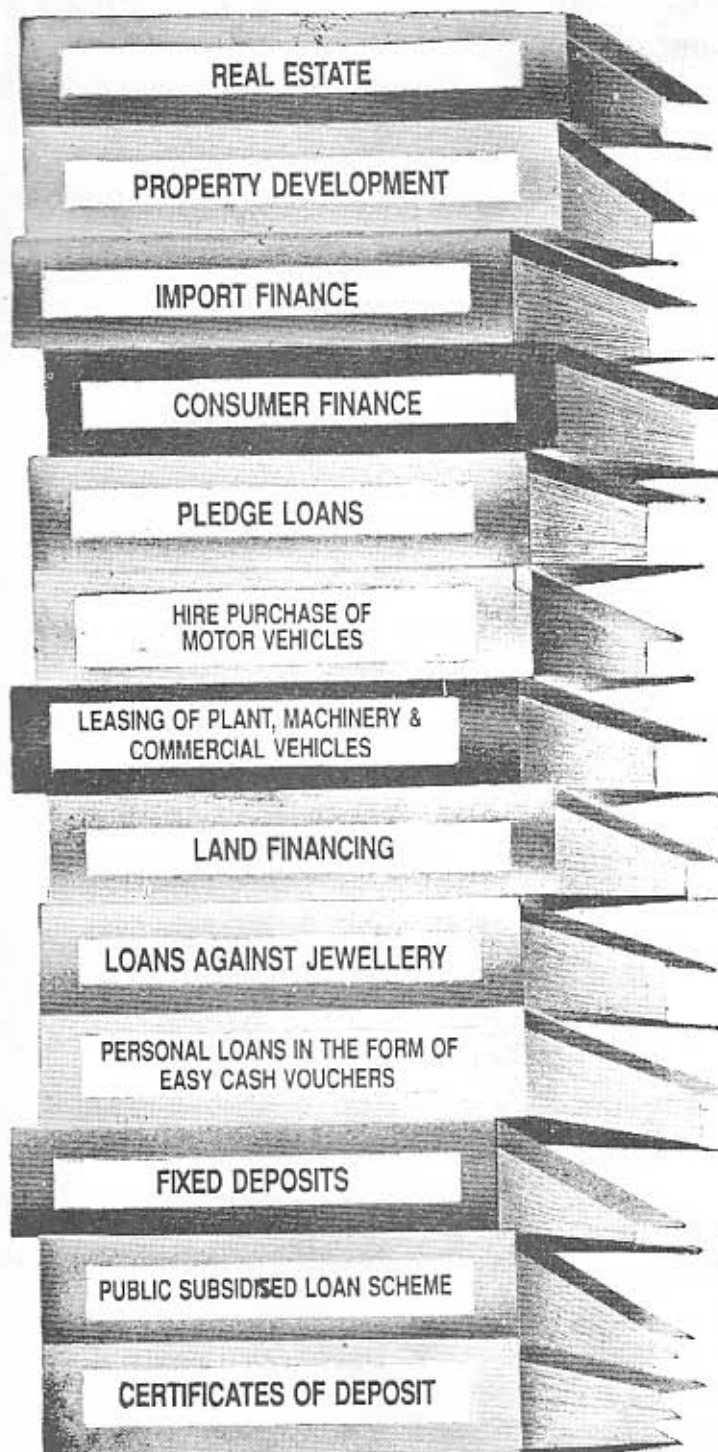
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Briefly...

Malay identity

At the 70th annual general meeting of the Sri Lanka Malay Association leaders of the community expressed their satisfaction that the Malays of Sri Lanka had not been lumped together with the Moors under the nomenclature 'Yonaka'. That will continue to apply to Moors only. The Malays, the Borahs, the Memons etc will be registered separately.

The Malays and the Moors are both of the Islamic faith. The Malays have long been irritated by the tendency among the ignorant to confuse religion with ethnicity.

LANKA GUARDIAN

Vol. 16 No. 1 May 1, 1993

Price Rs. 10.00

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.
No. 246, Union Place
Colombo - 2.

Editor: **Mervyn de Silva**
Telephone: 447584

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

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TRENDS

The quality of literacy

A high literacy rate is not necessarily indicative of a high quality of education, Higher Education Minister A.C.S. Hameed told a gathering at the opening of a school hall in his electorate. The education system had failed to meet the needs of the country, the minister said, according to a report in the government-controlled Daily News.

Food for Jaffna

The food situation in Jaffna had improved. Efforts were now being made to build a buffer stock, Rehabilitation Ministry Secretary Christie Silva said. In February 11,400 tons of food had been sent to the GA Jaffna, 9856 tons in March and 6,912 tons up to April 20.

There were talks in progress to get the LTTE to unload the food at KKS, the Secretary said.

Not yet

The SLFP had not appointed a "Chief Minister candidate" for the Western Province, Mr Anura Bandaranaike said in parliament when Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe referred to Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga as "Chief Minister candidate".

That will be decided after the elections, Mr Bandaranaike said.

Police harassment

The DUNF leadership has complained to the IGP and the Elections Commissioner of continued police harassment of its candidates contesting the May 17, Provincial Council elections. The complaints came after the police took in 30 persons, including North Western Province DUNF leader G. M. Premachandra, for questioning on the night of April 21.

DUNF leaders said they would inform the international observers present in the country of this continuing harassment.

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ASSASINATIONS: THE FISSURES WIDEN

Mervyn de Silva

On Friday 23, the DUNF President and former National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali became yet another victim of the violence that has lately gripped 'the dhammadeepa', the tropical paradise. It is sad to see a politician of such immense potential, become a mere casualty of what is now a commonplace of Sri Lanka life. As President J.R.J.'s National Security Minister he had been intimately involved in what was soon to be a frighteningly remorseless process — the politics of the gun. Just four years earlier he had nearly succumbed to his wounds after the daring JVP bomb attack in Parliament.

Some admirers and well-wishers may see yet another irony. The former Oxford Union President and accomplished debater had rarely concealed his admiration for S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, also an oratorical "star" in that famed debating society. The parallel didn't end there. Quite consciously he strove to project the image of the "new" SWRD, dissatisfied by the party leadership and its

political style. Though S.W.R.D. too fell to an assassin's bullets, the analogy cannot be seriously sustained.

First, Lalith and his group, tried to overthrow the leadership in what he himself admitted was a *konspiratzia* albeit constitutional. Second, S.W.R.D., increasingly critical of Sri Kotha's conservative program, decided that he must present the electorate with a new program and a different personality. He was as much against Senanayakist conservatism as with the "father-son, uncle-nephew" feudal practice. Lalith's chief grievance was capsuled in his own pet phrase "One-Man-Show". Whereas President J.R., the Patriarch, did exploit the clear generational gap between him and the rest of the ministers, Lalith resented what he regarded as an over-concentration of authority sustained by a superstar style — the use of the media was another of his constant complaint. In short, he would have been quite satisfied if chosen prime minister or given a portfolio which permitted him to consolidate and broaden

his mass base. Higher education was far from helpful in the pursuit of a wider electoral appeal. He had to break out of his rather constricted mass base (metropolitan) and alter his personal image (Royal College, Oxford, Hultsdorp lawyer). In this regard, he had sensed that even his fellow dissident, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake from Kandy-Nuwara Eliya, had a distinct advantage.

WIDER MEANING

But the assassination of Lalith Athulathmudali, a formidable *persona* by any standard, has far wider significance.

First, the cult of violence or "gun culture" as some commentators like to describe it. It was not quite Lalith's generation and certainly not his class that launched the JVP insurrection in 1971. Though extravagantly styled "Guerrilla", the JVP revolt had more than a touch of comic opera. And yet, in the light of the current crisis (and let's bear in mind that this event is just another episode in a deep-ranging national crisis) the JVP uprising was an "early warning", a phrase now comfortably accommodated in the increasingly respectable "conflict-studies — conflict-resolution" discourse.

The Sinhala generational revolt was followed in the next decade by the Tamil youth revolt. The self-same frustration and anger over jobs, over opportunity for upward mobility, led however to a different discovery — racial discrimination and deprivation rather than class oppression. The banner of revolt was ethnic, all the easier to raise, and mobilise popular support given the proximity of Tamilnadu, with a population so much larger than Sri Lanka.

In the unlikely post of National Security Minister, the Oxford debater became militarist, convinced that he could defeat the "Tigers" in the field of battle, if only he was given the troops, the weapons and the full support of the government, and hopefully the Opposition and the Sinhala masses.

At least at the start, National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali did not

ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES

R. Premadasa

President of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has recently seen the publication of many new magazines and newspapers. They express a wide variety of views. This trend reflects the very high literacy that prevails in our country. It also signifies the people's respect for free expression of opinions.

The *Lanka Guardian* has maintained continuous publication for fifteen years. This is the best tribute to its performance as an opinion journal.

I congratulate the *Lanka Guardian* on this achievement. I wish it all success.

Sirimavo

R D Bandaranaike

*President SLFP,
Leader of the Opposition*

I described the first ten years of the *Lanka Guardian* as a tremendous achievement and commended the journal for its balanced journalistic appraisal of both local and foreign events. Once again, on its 15th anniversary I congratulate the *Lanka Guardian* for its high journalistic standards.

understand, or understand fully, the nature of the war. This I realised only after several interviews, on and off-the-record, and frank exchanges. (Articulate, perhaps too talkative for a Defence minister, he loved to discuss and debate and rarely shrank from an argument). If he had all the men he needed and all the money for the equipment required, he was certain, he could defeat the LTTE or force it to the negotiating table. All he asked was money — a bigger budget. On that he clashed with another prominent Cabinet personality, Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, the IMF's man. While Ronnie de Mel used the IMF-World Bank argument for a modest defence vote, Lalith would often suspect that there was personal motivation too.

INDIAN FACTOR

Lalith didn't fully grasp that even if he had all the money, men and material, he would NOT be allowed to crush the LTTE and the armed Tamil movement by Delhi. The armed struggle and the cadres, trained and armed by India, constituted Delhi's principal instrument of coercive diplomacy conducted to protect and advance what the new *raj* perceived as its strategic interests, as the regional power in a bipolar world; a nation with its own sense of destiny, shaped mostly by history.

The parippu-medical supplies air-drop by the IAF after Lalith's Vadamaarachchi operation was Delhi's soft option. President JR read the message loud and clear, to the great disappointment of his National Security Minister. But Finance Minister De Mel, and more so Lands Minister Gamini Dissanayake, had already persuaded JR, who may not have needed much persuasion, that India must be permitted to play "conflict-resolver" and "peace-keeper" in keeping with its regional pre-eminence and its political stakes in Tamilnadu.

At that moment in history Prime Minister Premadasa, who knew nothing or little of all this, and Lalith were on one side; Ronnie de Mel and Gamini were on the other, with the brilliantly resourceful High Commissioner Dixit, playing a vital role.

Mobilising Sinhala-Buddhist opinion by exploiting to the full the provocative presence of the IPKF, the army of the huge neighbour, the historic enemy, the JVP launched its second insurrection — Lalith's first close encounter with Death.

An abortive impeachment move against the leader of the United National Party gave birth to the Democratic United National Front, led by Lalith and Gamini.

"United" and "National" are common to the parent party and its rebellious offspring.

The truth is that the past two-three decades and the tragic mismanagement of the "National question" i.e. the Tamil issue, mocks the self-acclaimed "unity" of the UNP and Sri Lanka. Self-destructive violence, grievous disunion and party division are the main characteristics of the country named Sri Lanka. The condition of the Bandaranaike dominated SLFP dramatises the fact of fissure even more strikingly.

Opposition calls for emergency meeting of parliament

SLFP leader Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardene and USA MP Athauda Seneviratne have sent a joint memorandum to Prime Minister D. B. Wijetunga asking him to advise the Speaker immediately to summon parliament, now in recess, to discuss the current political situation following the assassination of DUNF leader Lalith Athulathmudali.

Gamini calls for restraint

DUNF deputy leader Gamini Dissanayake appealed to this party cadres and the public to keep the peace during Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali's funeral as that was the greatest honour they could bestow on their departed leader.

"We do not want violence over Mr. Athulathmudali's body. He had seen much violence. Do not indulge in violence. Don't get provoked even if such attempts are made", Mr. Dissanayake said in his appeal issued at the press conference at his Kollupitiya home.

He warned that violence would only provide an opportunity to the government to postpone the May 17 provincial council elections. The DUNF and other opposition parties wanted the election held as scheduled.

The DUNF produced an affidavit from its Kirulapone organiser A.J. Premadasa denying that he had identified the Tamil youth Apiah Balakrishnan as the man who assassinated Mr. Athulathmudali.

Mr. Dissanayake said the state media had made a play of the identification which Mr. Premadasa had now denied.

Foreign correspondents said the state media could not be blamed because Premadasa had told them also that Balakrishnan was the assassin.

Mr. Dissanayake said he would not be surprised if Premadasa gave another affidavit to the one given to them.

Question: You too have used pressure to get the affidavit?

Mr. Sarath Amunugama said the DUNF was producing the affidavit for what it was worth. Then he produced two of the four eyewitnesses who could identify the gunman.

Dastardly murder will be probed: — President

President Ranasinghe Premadasa said on Friday that the United National Party unreservedly condemned the dastardly and cowardly assassination of Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali.

He was addressing 4,000 delegates from the Attanagalla and Dompe UNP branches at Millathe, Dompe. Two minutes' silence was observed in honour of the slain leader at the commencement of the meeting.

The President said: "I was deeply shocked when I heard of the assassination. As a person who strove to eliminate terror, I do not condone cowardly and inhuman acts of this nature. I spoke to the Defence Secretary and the IGP and instructed them to obtain the assistance of Scotland Yard and Interpol to probe the assassination of Lalith Athulathmudali.

"This matter should be probed to the roots. Who did it? And why? The country should know the answers to these questions.

"The UNP has a membership of 4.5 million. They adhere to a code of conduct. They have not however attained spiritual enlightenment.

Scotland Yard team arrives

A Scotland yard team led by detective Superintendent arrived in Colombo at the invitation of the government to probe the assassination of Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali.

The four member team as a forensic expert and a pathologist. The visit follows request made by Defence Secretary General Cyril Ranatunge to the U.K. High Commissioner Mr. John Field.

ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES

S. Thondaman

Minister of Tourism & Rural Industrial Development

I have great pleasure in sending this message of felicitation on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of *Lanka Guardian*.

Over the years the journal has rendered yeoman service to the cause of communal amity in our multi-ethnic country. It has steadfastly stood for human rights and has fought against every form of exploitation.

I wish *Lanka Guardian* all success in the future and I am confident that it will continue to serve the people of this country as an independent and fearless journal in the years ahead.

Mahinda Rajapakse

M. P. for Hambantota District

Plurality in the media is as important as a free media and I have looked upon the *Lanka Guardian* to play this role and play it more than adequately. Catering to the more politicised of the English readership, the *Lanka Guardian* has always presented another point of view whatever the issue the editors felt should be discussed. This no doubt is important in a world where another man's point of view is not much recognised.

Let me therefore wish your pen more durability on its 15th birthday.

Bernard Soysa

General Sec. LSSP

The *Lanka Guardian* came to be published at a time when there was a great need for such a journal. The freedom of the media was hampered in many ways.

The publication of a journal that did not fear to express radical views, that would provide a forum for some degree of free discussion and enable the dissemination of contrasting points of view was a badly felt need. The *Lanka Guardian* filled the lacuna.

The journal must be congratulated on that achievement. It is edited by a journalist whose abilities have been very widely recognised.

In the midst of the many changes that have taken place in Sri Lanka these past fifteen years the *Lanka Guardian* has had to travel a difficult path made more perilous by the pitfalls that increased with the years.

With an understanding of these difficulties I heartily congratulate the *Lanka Guardian* on its positive contribution and its triumphs. I offer The *Lanka Guardian* my best wishes.

Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam

Director, International Center for Ethnic Studies

The *Lanka Guardian* needs to be congratulated for 15 years of continuous publication of serious political and social criticism. It remains the most influential periodical on Sri Lanka with a important readership in Sri Lanka and abroad.

Mangala Moonesinghe, M. P.

The *Lanka Guardian* within fifteen years of existence has created its own niche in the salon of national journals as a reliable source of current political commentary and analytical reportage on international affairs. In the global media market the *Lanka Guardian* has been a trail blazer for the foreign affairs minded intelligentsia.

While wishing it all success in the future, I am confident that the *Lanka Guardian* will maintain the standards of journalism and continue to contribute to qualitative and innovative political thinking so necessary to a nation focussing on economic ascendancy by the 21st century.

M. Haleem Ishak, M.P.

It's a pleasure to greet the *Lanka Guardian* at its 15th anniversary. The fact that this news magazine has been able to live through such a fairly long period of time undoubtedly facing various odds common in a country like Sri Lanka speaks for the esteem it has gained among its readers.

Born at a time when the reading public, those who patronized English publications in particular, felt a great need to have access to independent news, views and analysis, *Lanka Guardian* has been able to bridge that gap to the best of its ability.

The tradition has being sustained to this day by the *Lanka Guardian* with its objective presentation of facts and comments.

Let me wish *Lanka Guardian* more and more successes in the coming years in its march forward to fulfil its avowed endeavour to present the reader with "other news and another view".

Gamani Corea

**Former Secretary-General
U.N.C.T.A.D.**

The *Lanka Guardian* has reason to look back on its 15 years of publication with satisfaction and pride. It has filled a need and been a source of critical comment on current affairs both national and international. I have come to look to the *Lanka Guardian* for information and analysis of high quality. I am

happy to extend to it my best wishes for the future and hope that it will continue, with increasing success, to make its highly valuable and significant contribution.

Desmond Fernando

Secretary-General, International Bar Association

Like its editor, the *Lanka Guardian* has remained a perceptive observer of the Sri Lankan and South Asian scene. While its editor remains our foremost journalist, his little magazine has no parallel as a forum for free and educated opinion on all those issues, local, regional or international that concern the intelligentsia.

Professor G. L. Peiris

**Vice-Chancellor and
Professor of Law of the University of Colombo.**

It is appropriate to recognize on this occasion the quality and the scope of the contribution which has been made by the *Lanka Guardian* to the moulding of public opinion in our country on a variety of issues. I have suggested in many fora that the lack of vigour and vitality of public opinion is a factor which fundamentally inhibits the emergence of viable solutions to urgent national problems.

There has been extensive discussion in recent weeks about the role of the media. One of the prime requisites in this regard, to my mind, is the element of objectivity and dispassionate appraisal. This is, quite clearly, an essential foundation for the achievement of balance both in regard to the presentation of news and the making of any assessment or comment on news presented to the public.

The cardinal strength of the *Lanka Guardian*, in my opinion, is the importance it has consistently attached to the values of objectivity and detachment not merely as a matter of precept and pious aspiration but in actual practice. For this, if nothing else, the public of Sri Lanka has reason to be deeply appreciative of the contribution that has been made by the *Lanka Guardian*.

H. L. De Silva, P.C.

The survival of a journal which has been in the forefront of creating a body of critical opinion in Sri Lanka on a wide variety of significant issues is indeed a matter for congratulation. More so, because this effort has been carried on with commendable vigour and independence yet with a sense of reasonableness and balance. Above everything else it is a marvel how the *Lanka Guardian*

has been able, despite the rise in costs of publication, to make it available to the public at such a reasonable price.

Wishing you and your paper many more years of success in this dedicated endeavour to serve the discerning reading public of Sri Lanka.

V. P. Vittachi

I am happy to send *Lanka Guardian* my congratulations and best wishes on its fifteenth anniversary. It is the rare periodical that lasts a year in Sri Lanka. Fifteen years of uninterrupted publication speaks for itself. With the media infested with political toadyism *Lanka Guardian* has been the voice of sanity.

Bruce Matthews

Professor of Comparative Religion, Acadia University, Nova Scotia, Canada

Since its inception I have turned to the *Lanka Guardian* for reliable, interesting and often unusual commentary on Sri Lankan and regional affairs. In particular, I have looked to the articles that Mervyn de Silva himself has written, for they have invariably been timely analyses of often complex political, economic or cultural issues. There have been times when Mervyn has been more or less alone in providing this service, times when it has taken a lot of courage to publish critiques of state policy or to report on controversial events. For years, Mervyn was somewhat of a voice in the wilderness, especially when his publication boldly set down what the stakes were in certain national crises. Nobody else was providing this kind of commentary in the English language in Sri Lanka. In this way, Mervyn's *Lanka Guardian* was a trail-blazer. His publication still retains a seniority and a panache that is well-deserved. Its balanced judgement on national affairs continues to be held in respect, so much so that one not infrequently sees it cited in heavy academic journals and books. I salute Mervyn and the *Lanka Guardian* on this anniversary.

Gamini Weerakoon

Editor, Sunday Island

The *Lanka Guardian* has survived 15 years of the most turbulent period in this country's contemporary history. It commenced publication at a time when the first pressures on the free press of the country were distinctly felt. To have continued uninterrupted publication and maintained credibility is a remarkable achievement. I do hope the *Lanka Guardian* will continue to maintain the standards it has achieved in the past.

Sinha Ratnatunge

Editor, Sunday Times

Tabloid journalism, now a flourishing business, should regard the *Lanka Guardian* not only as a pioneer but as an example to follow in its choice and treatment of public issues for comment and analysis.

It has always taken up questions that the large publishing houses have ignored or treated casually.

The *Lanka Guardian* can be proud of its 15 year achievement.

Ajith Samaranayake

Associate Editor, Island

The *Lanka Guardian* during its fifteen years so far has performed the function of both a journal of political and social opinion as well as a forum for diverse views at a critical time in Sri Lanka's affairs, no easy task in the grim landscape of English-language publishing. There has been no other English journal which has survived for so long and this is entirely due to the efforts of its Editor, Mervyn de Silva, who is indubitably the doyen of Sri Lanka's journalists. The journal has no doubt changed down the years and some might even say has become more restricted in its appeal but this is due not to any intrinsic weakness of the compilers but to the paucity of writing talent in English, which is the perennial bugbear of the English-language editor.

I wish LG well on this anniversary and may it have the strength and the support to continue its important functions and maintain its high standards. The country needs a critical journal of opinion of unencumbered by any prejudices or affiliations to a any political party or caucus and the *Lanka Guardian* is still the best equipped for this role.

Nihal Ratnayake

'Island'

To survive, let alone grow, through the climatic changes over the past one and a half decades could not have been easy for an independent journal. But the *Lanka Guardian* has done it, revealing in the process not only a high degree of journalistic competence but also a measure of dedication.

The *Guardian* must continue, whatever the odds, to serve those few thousand thinking people among the English reading public in this island.

Professor Bertram Bastiampillai

Dept. of History and Political Science, University of Colombo.

The *Lanka Guardian* has been to me for long a valuable source of information on contemporary affairs of an international, regional and national character. I have found

that it provides interesting reading on significant subjects.

This publication has helped me immensely in gathering facts and comments whenever I had to prepare a lecture or write an article of a learned nature! It has made the search for data easy.

The *Lanka Guardian* had been often the first to come out with news and views on events and matters of topical interest. It has been critical, evaluative and fair in providing assessments and has focused attention in its articles and reports on subjects covering local and international politics, economics and developments of social interest in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

It is a lively journal of a serious nature which has been coming out regularly in Sri Lanka and a publication that has been forthright as well as balanced in making its presentations.

I wish that Editor continues with the useful work he has done and all success for the future in putting out this modestly priced, reliable and responsible publication which sheds so much light on matters of interest and importance to scholars and serious readers alike.

Ray Forbes

Director, B.C.I.S.

The 15th anniversary of the *Lanka Guardian* is a milestone in the history of higher journalism in Sri Lanka. Mr. Mervyn de Silva, Editor, certainly deserves heartiest congratulations on this occasion, and best wishes for even greater achievements in the future.

The *Lanka Guardian* broke new ground in making available to those interested in foreign affairs, easy and convenient access to commentaries, reports and reviews from specialists in the subject from the widest possible horizon. In doing so it has filled a vacuum that existed in this sphere.

I am happy that *Lanka Guardian* has acted as a catalyst in promoting serious writing on International Relations in the Sinhala medium. There is increasing evidence of this which is very encouraging.

As Director of Studies of the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS) I take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable service rendered by the *Lanka Guardian* to students of International Affairs by providing them with a handy reference journal at a very modest price. The easy availability of secondary source material through the *Lanka Guardian* has facilitated dissertation-writing immensely.

Well done, *Lanka Guardian* and many more years of discovery and enlightenment to those seeking an understanding and awareness of contemporary issues.

Comrade Shan: The Long March

Dayan Jayatilke

Comrade Shan was a year younger than the October Revolution. He became a fulltime Communist cadre half a century ago. He died a month away from the 40th death anniversary of Joseph Stalin.

Mao-Tse-Tung summed up the essence of Marxism as he saw it, in the phrase 'it is right to rebel.' It was a terse abbreviation of Stalin's lesser known but more accurate summation of the essence of Marxism: "It is right to rebel against reaction." Mao's contribution to scientific socialism is best set out in his own 1962 injunction to the 7000 cadres — "Never forget classes and the class struggle." Engaging in revolutionary politics in Lankan society in which the class struggle in its classic sense has not been fought out in violent forms, comrade Shan's practice almost inevitable saw that class struggle transposed to the instance of ideology. Shan's distinctive contribution then, can be expressed by us in the phrase "never forget ideology and the ideological struggle." Shan was the only Lankan Marxist of his generation who took ideology seriously.

Shan was not a "progressive," a leftist in general. He was a Communist and became one at a time when the term stood for men and women "of special cut," as Stalin put it. That the Lankan Left was unique in that it contained a preponderance of Trotskyites over Stalinists, tells us much about this society and petty bourgeoisie — and none of it positive.

Later, Shan wrote of this time: "Today it is easy to be pro-Soviet.... The Soviet Union came out of the war as a great power and subsequently has matched every achievement of the Western imperialist powers — including those in space. But it was a different question during the war. The reactionaries and the Trotskyites were blatantly anti-Soviet while the doubters were many. We, Communists, alone were unshaken in our belief that the Soviet Union would come out of the war tri-

umphant. I was very proud of this stand. Our faith in the working class, Socialism the Socialist State and was more than amply vindicated... It was worthwhile having lived during those momentous times and have one's faith vindicated. From the time of the rout of the German army at Stalingrad when Soviet heroes fought and died with the name of Stalin on their lips and turned retreat into victory and advance, the Soviet Red Army raced to Berlin which they reached by May 1st 1945, despite the slowness of the allies in launching the 2nd front. I remember that as we were unfurling our banner near De Mel's Park, Slave Island for that year's May Day demonstration, I saw the Ceylon Observer's huge headline "Red Flag Over the Reichstag!" ('Political Memoirs...' p. 21-22).

While Pieter Keuneman was a consummate consensus politician, his ideological contribution bears no distinctive stamp or physiognomy. One still does not know much about Pieter's Marxism, except for its deliberate understatement, subtlety and semantic sophistication. One recognizes his craft and style, but not the substance of his ideas. The theoreticians of the party were comrades Kandiah, Vaidyalingam and Shan. It was they who were most articulate on ideological questions at meetings of the upper echelons of the party. And when an ideological deviation such as the Sinhala chauvinist line of G.V.S. de Silva and Joe de Silva (in Kandy) arose, the party sent in Shan. It was he who drafted the Political Reports of both the militant 1948 3rd Congress (Atureliya) and the moderate 4th Congress in 1950 (Matara).

Shan was a rarity in that he combined the roles of ideologue and working class leader, though the combination was fraught with its tensions. It is thus that Shan achieved the unique success of retaining the loyalty of the CP's Trade Union base when he split with the party on the Sino-Soviet Question. Nowhere else in the Third World did an uncompro-

misungly Maoist party succeed in this — almost always, ideological radicalism found its exclusive agency in the petty-bourgeois youth, leaving the organized working class in the hands of the old reformist leadership.

A nostalgic view of the trajectory of the Lankan Left holds that the formation of the United Left Front of 1963 marked its zenith. However, an assessment that is guided by scantest regard for analytical rigour would conclude that the ULF of '63 was already corrupted by social chauvinism. All the constituent parties had shifted to the policy of Sinhala chauvinism. All the constituent parties had shifted to the policy of Sinhala Only and the presence of Phillip Gunewardena, whose shock troops had played such an infamous role against the Left in the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1958, makes us wonder at why the '63 convergence happening that year — the climatic moment of the Open Polemic commencing from 1960, concerning the general line of the World Communist Movement. There is no Communist party that took the Soviet Line in '63 that ever went on to make or seriously attempt a revolution. Those who did so were either neutrals or sympathizers of the CCP position (such as the Vietnamese), subsequent split offs from the pro-Moscow parties or were formed after the schism and thus took no sides in it (the Afghan). It is testimony to the seriousness with which Shan took ideological questions that he sided with the CCP and spearheaded this struggle in Sri Lanka.

In a classic working out of the dialectic, it was Shan's fidelity to the letter of Mao-Tse-Tung Thought that swept him to the highest heights a Sri Lankan left leader has ever been and cast him down to isolation and solitude. Shan was present at one of the greatest moments of drama and sheer spectacle in the history of world revolution — in Tien An Mien Square, watching Chairman Mao reviewing the millions strong crowd at the height of that mad 'storming of the heavens,' the Great

Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Shan not only addressed a meeting of five thousand Red Guards, he met and talked at length with Chairman Mao in June 1967, in the white heat of the Cultural Revolution, when Mao was at his most charismatic and at the pinnacle of his worldwide fame. Which Lankan leftist (and how many South Asian Marxists) ever exchanged ideas with a man who did as much to change world history?

It was Shan who was relied upon by the Chinese party to wage the ideological battle outside Sri Lanka, in Asia and the Third World. (Tragically, this included polemics against 'Castroism-Guevarism'). In this regard Shan the founding of whose party antedated by a few years, that of most Maoist organizations the world over, played a more active and prominent role than even Charu Mazumdar — which explains the respect in which he was held by Indian revolutionaries and radicals even in the last years of his life. Memory brings back the sincere concern on the face of comrade Khodandaraman, the veteran revolutionary organizer and lege-

ndary ideologue of the People's War Group in India, when at a clandestine conclave, I replied his question 'how is comrade Shan?' with the answer that he was in poor health.

The Cultural Revolution, that titanic-traumatic social experiment, issued from Mao's genius which foresaw with luminous prophesy the problem of capitalist restoration but erred grotesquely in its preventive prescription. The external expression of the Cultural Revolution was the transmutation of the Sino-Soviet split from an ideological struggle into a clash between two states with supposedly hostile social systems. The contradictions among the Communists, incorrectly handled by Mao, turned into antagonisms. Even genius errs but when it does so, the consequences are colossal. The socialist camp and the world movement were irrevocably sundered. Very few parties and leaders refused to be polarised into one of the new 'two camps'. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) was one such which carved out an independent path — a development not unrelated to the prese-

nce in its leading ranks of B.T. Ranadive, whose independent criticism of Mao from a proletarian revolutionary standpoint, dated back to the late 40's. Shan, with his rock like solidity and his passionate commitment to Maoism, was temperamentally and intellectually incapable of this feat. The CPI (M) survives the general crisis of socialism, combining ideological continuity (and a large measure of fidelity to Stalin) with adroit political manoeuvre. Shan's Ceylon Communist Party died long before he did.

In the 1960's Shan's party contained the raw material of revolution. A crop of highly talented and intelligent young cadres in the Universities and among the studentry, militant Sinhala workers in the city and Tamil proletarians in the hill country, the All Lanka Peasants Congress in the NCP and a large number of the oppressed caste youth in Jaffna — and solid international contacts with a powerful ruling C.P.

(To be continued)

PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

GOVERNMENT'S NEW PROGRAM

He was inaugurating the fifth session of the second Parliament.

He said Sri Lanka had to face many challenges during the last four years. Notable among them were the mounting defence expenditure, the Gulf crisis and the worldwide recession. In spite of these obstacles we have done extremely well compared with many other countries", he added.

At long last, he said, Sri Lanka is now lined up for a smooth "take-off" economically.

"Our objective is to achieve newly-industrialized country status by the year 2000. Economic growth alone is not going to serve our people. That is why we are striving to achieve growth with equity. In fact, equity and social justice will be the guiding principles of our new society," he added.

He said government policies had been endorsed by the large majority of Lankan people several times in the past. Multilateral and bilateral donor countries and agencies have helped us immensely. Foreign and local investors have placed their trust and confidence in us said the President.

He asked: Is there any alternative before the people? As far as I can see some disjointed assortment of negative and contradictory ideas had been put forward. There is no consensus even among the different proponents of these fanciful ideas. They will only lead to social insecurity, political instability and economic calamity.

However, the policies and programmes of my gov-

ernment will avert any such unfortunate situations, said President Premadasa.

You will recall the inauguration of the Fourth Session of the Second Parliament. It took place on Tuesday the 24th of September, 1991. What did we witness on that occasion? We witnessed the misuse of a provision in the Constitution. It was an ugly attempt to impeach the will of the people. It was a shameful and ill-begotten conspiracy.

This conspiracy had been hatched very secretly. This came out in an interview given by the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition to a newspaper. I quote below some excerpts from that interview:

"The impeachment process which has become the most important topic today is not something recent. We have been discussing such a course of action with the Members of the Government Party for quite sometime. These discussions have been going on very secretly."

We could not present the Impeachment Motion by ourselves, because the SLFP Membership was insufficient. Such a course of action could be taken with a section of the Ministers and Members of Parliament of the United National Party. Therefore, I was extremely happy when they agreed to extend their assistance for this."

The conspirators had submitted a Resolution to the Hon. the Speaker.

(Excerpt)

The J. R. Years (1)

Arden

A FREE AND RIGHTEOUS SOCIETY

Cabinet ministers in independent Sri Lanka are a hardy lot; they rarely die in office. In the 30 years from Independence to 1977 two prime ministers died violent deaths (D.S. Senanayake in a riding accident, Solomon Bandaranaike by assassination), a Minister of Health (George Rajapakse) died by surgical misadventure and just one minister died of what are called natural causes and he (A.B. Perera) was not a career politician but a Minister of Justice brought into the cabinet through the senate. He died a few weeks later.

Then, contrary to form, four ministers¹ of J.R. Jayewardena's 1977 cabinet died; but they were all new-comers to ministerial rank and died before they were imbued with the compulsion to live that power bestows.²

By way of contrast to all this, eight members³ of Dudley Senanayake's 1965-1970 government died after they went out of office; six members⁴ of Mrs. Bandaranaike's 1970-1977 government died after her government fell.

Power is not merely a heady wine, it is a life enhancer. Parliamentarians of Sri Lanka have awarded themselves pensions, handsome emoluments, and fringe benefits. A parliamentary career is a financially rewarding one. This being the case, politicians in Sri Lanka never quit. Thus we have J.R. Jayewardene, who in 1944 proposed in the State Council that Sinhala should be made the official language instead of English (a motion that was opposed by D.S. Senanayake and Solomon Bandaranaike who wanted both Sinhala and Tamil) still there in the thick of it more than forty years later trying to make amends for some of the long-term consequences of his youthful indiscretion. In 1957 Jayewardene stages a protest march to compel prime minister Bandaranaike to tear up his pact with the Tamil leader Chelvanayagam allowing for regio-

nal councils and the use of Tamil as the language of administration in the north and the east. Thirty years later the same Jayewardene is seen trying to pacify the Tamils with many more concessions than he successfully stalled in 1957.

Another significant fact about Sri Lanka is that political parties are family heirlooms. The U.N.P. of D.S. Senanayake is inherited by his son Dudley, the S.L.F.P. of Solomon Bandaranaike comes to his widow Sirima, Philip Gunawardena's M.E.P. is bequeathed to his son Dinesh and so on. Candidates for election are nominated, not by the local branch organisation, but by the proprietor of the party. A natural result is that there can be no fresh blood at the leadership level to renew and reinvigorate the policies and politics of a party. In Western democracies leaders of parties are constantly being unceremoniously discarded when they fail to produce results and new leaders brought in. Sri Lanka this is not possible. Memories are long, old grudges are nurtured and kept warm and politics is a battle for power and the spoils of office between owners of party machines.

It was these uniquely Lankan conditions that it possible that at a time the voters were in a mood to reject the United Front government lock, stock and barrel, J.R. Jayewardene, the stayer, was still in there pitching, and available and eager to spearhead the anti-S.L.F.P. onslaught, and lead the forces that were crying out for the restoration of democratic government.

Jayewardene made the correct noises, denounced everything the U.F. government had done to offend the voters and held out kind of promises they wanted to hear. He would guarantee a free press and restore freedom of speech; he would stop the practice of the government resorting to emergency powers on every slight pretext; he would repeal the Business Acquisition Act; he would remove the curb on the publication of news about the activi-

ties of the cabinet; he would abolish corruption and what he referred to as "family bandyism" (a locution of his coinage meaning nepotism); he would restore democratic practices; vindictiveness would have no place in his government; above all he would call an all-party conference and once and for all settle the ethnic dispute on a permanent basis.

When on 22 July 1977 the United National Party, pledged to usher in a "Free and Righteous Society" won the general election in a landslide victory, obtaining 140 out of a total of 168 parliamentary seats, the auguries for Sri Lanka were very favourable and the hopes of Lankans were high. The election ended seven years of economic stagnation under the *etatiste* regime of the United Front government of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

1. S. de S. Jayasinghe, Shelton Jayasinghe, C.P.J. Seneviratne and S.B. Herath. (In February 1988 Asoka Karunaratna died).
2. This compulsion was strikingly illustrated when on 18 August 1987 an attempt was made to assassinate the president. Two grenades were tossed into a parliamentary committee room where the president was in conference with his parliamentary group. Five cabinet ministers who were seriously injured in the explosion all survived. Two men died, one a district minister not of cabinet rank and the other a clerk. Jayewardene himself was unhurt.
3. Dudley Senanayake, M.D. Banda, C.P. de Silva, Philip Gunawardena, U.B. Wanninayake, I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla, V.A. Sugathadasa and M. Tiruchelvam.
4. Felix D. Bandaranaike, Michael Siriwardena, N.M. Perea, Leslie Goonewardena, Hector Kobbekaduwa and T.B. Tennakoon.

Light at the End of the Tunnel?

(Notes on a talk at the Asia Society, Washington)

Ananda Guruge

I do not address you as the official representative of the Sri Lanka Government.

I shall skip history and the causes, guided by the parable of the doctor and the wounded man in the *Tevijja Sutta*, the Buddhist scriptures.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT IN THE NORTH AND THE EAST?

- (1) Not an ethnic or religious conflict: i. e. not a Sinhala vs. Tamil or Buddhist vs. Hindu conflict.
- (2) Not a liberation war of a minority with defined homeland: two-thirds of the Tamil population live with the majority in the rest of the Island.
- (3) An isolated terrorist organization resorting to an armed struggle for a separate state called Eelam.
- (4) Marked by a process of ethnic cleansing: attacks on Muslim and Sinhala villages; mass evacuation of Muslims from Jaffna and Mannar.

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS

- (1) *LTTE* — Its sole mission is to set up a separate independent State in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. No indication of its policies and role, if such a State is established, has been given to the Sri Lankan public or even the Tamils.
- (2) *Other Tamil Militant groups* — ready to enter a democratic process in the context of a unitary Sri Lanka with greater devolution of power and rectification of measures perceived as discriminatory to Tamil interests
- (3) *Tamil political parties* — mostly in disarray and hence indecisive. Under threat of LTTE retaliation and actual attacks, have lost much of the confidence and leadership. Compelled to be cautious and wavering.
- (4) *Major Opposition Parties* — reluctant to get involved other than in urging the Government to solve the problem; but often adopts a double standard criticizing it not solving the conflict quickly as well as in finding fault with every step whether conciliatory or military. Appears to work

on the premise that whatever the authorities do, would be wrong. But also gives the impression in some of their statements that the Security Forces, if unchecked or given more resources, could solve the problem.

(5) *Intellectuals and Academics* — Apart from attempting historical explanations and attributing current situation to various decisions of the recent past, no position has emerged from any influential or responsible circle. Whatever opinions expressed are governed if not coloured by their political affiliations and sympathies.

PUBLIC REACTIONS

- (a) *Those resident in the Northern Province (i. e. almost entirely Tamil)* — a beleaguered population with the burden of a long-drawn military conflict extending to nearly two decades. Obligated to abide by the demands of the LTTE re financial support and conscription of combatants. Most affected by the presence of the IPKF till its withdrawal. No option than to get out either to the South of SL or to any country offering asylum, as and when they are allowed to do so.
- (b) *Those living in Eastern Province* — Drawn into the conflict as LTTE inclusion of this Province in its claim for a separate State, in spite of the fact the Tamils are a minority there vis-a-vis Sinhala and Tamil populations. Could have been less affected by the armed conflict if Indo-SL Accord did not oblige the temporary merger of N and E Provinces. Currently enjoys a measure of civil administration despite intermittent terrorist attacks and ambushes.
- (c) *General public elsewhere in the country which includes the Sinhala, the Tamils of Indian origin in the Estates, the Majority of the Tamil population (specially the more educated classes, professionals and successful businessmen)*: As they are the least touched by the conflict other than when agitated and shocked by "ethnic cleansing" in Sinhala and Muslim villages on the borders of N. and E. Provinces or sporadic bomb explosions and assassinations in Colombo, their's is a general attitude of apathy and complaisa-

nce. As the bulk of the security forces come from poorer rural homes (there is no compulsory conscription in SL), deaths and casualties in the Security Forces do not affect the vast majority. For some people, the conflict could be in another planet!

(d) *Expatriate Sri Lankans* — How they react depends on when and from where they came:

- (1) *Older immigrants largely professional* — hardly concerned or even interested other than in cases where affiliation to a particular political party colours one's opinions. A few may even harbour unrealistic and dangerous chauvinistic tendencies, based on a mistaken notion of patriotism to a motherland or a community there of with which they hardly have any close ties any longer.
- (2) *More recent immigrants mainly of professional or academic standing* — Tends to be more vocal, but again, according to individual ethnic, religious or political affiliations or sympathies. Either over-reacting to the 1983 incident and the brutality of the JVP uprising and its aftermath in 1987-89, tends to blame the majority community or the Government or both for everything. Either they do not know or purposely ignore any positive developments and considers that the unmitigated criticism of the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Government make them appear more tolerant and just in the eyes of their peers in the host country. This category could include all SL ethnic groups and are usually the most ardent supporters of Human Rights Movements if and, if only, they are concerned with the SL situation. Shows a readiness for conciliatory measures even if some of their suggestions are less practicable (e.g. English as a panacea for all ills in SL). With no intention to return to SL, their concerns are more related to the phenomenon of "refugee-fatigue" in the host countries.
- (3) *More recent immigrants of less than professional standing* — Considering how the conflict has enabled them to become economic refugees in Industrialized Cou-

ntries, their reactions and attitudes vary according background and place of origin. They bring with them their ignorance as well prejudices and tend to be drawn into militant organizations. Most active politically, socially and culturally and sometimes cause embarrassment to the host countries.

EMERGING PICTURE OF THE CONFLICT (DIVERSITY OF PERCEPTIONS, REACTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF PERSONS PROVIDING INFORMATION)

- (a) Blurred, if not incomplete and faulty.
- (b) Faulty assumptions, apportioning blame and responsibility without an adequate assessment of the situation.
- (c) Underlying prejudice that the majority population or the Government or both together are responsible, with the corollary that the minority is always right.
- (d) Simplistic solutions like putting pressure on the Government to cease military action unilaterally or proposing partitioning and exchange of populations.
- (e) A grave domestic problem for the host countries which are obliged to grapple with labour and social unrest caused by "refugee-fatigue" and ultra-right wing politics. These countries are ready to promote any solution in SL as long the influx of asylum-seekers could be checked.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION: MILITARY OR POLITICAL?

- (a) No one considers a military solution feasible, acceptable or durable. All agree that the conflict can be resolved only politically. N.B. the Government position that the military operations are meant to contain and weaken the terrorist operations of LTTE and to induce it to return to the negotiating table.
- (b) The perception of what constitutes a political solution differs and so do views vary on what has to be done and how.

THE PRINCIPAL INGREDIENT FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION: THE RECOGNITION OF THE REALITY AND APPRECIATION OF WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DONE HITHERTO (i.e. facts unknown to or willfully ignored by critics in both SL and abroad):

- (a) Real grievances, resulting from decisions of the past regimes, redressed during the last decade:
 - (i) Parity of Tamil as an official language and language of administration;
 - (ii) Increased opportunities for Higher

Education in Tamil, including the Universities of Jaffna and Batticaloa;

- (iii) New recruitments on ethnic ratios
- (b) Perceived grievances which are not founded on fact or data (e.g. Discrimination as regards employment and economic opportunities; cultural and religious oppression).
- (c) Population Distribution: The majority of the Tamil Community lives and works in a completely integrated environment in all Provinces other than the Northern Province and parts of the Eastern Province. This distribution precludes anything like the so-called Cyprus solution or partitioning like India and Pakistan with an ensuing exchange of populations: nor like delinking Bangladesh from Pakistan.
- (d) Major political solutions already embodied in the Constitution specifically to satisfy Tamil aspirations:

(i) Provincial Councils with similar legislative and executive powers as are conferred by the Indian Constitution to the State Governments;

(ii) Devolution of authority worked out to the most acceptable degree within the concept of a unitary nation;

(iii) Northern and Eastern Provinces temporarily merged to have one Provincial Council until the Eastern Province decides whether to so continue in a Referendum;

(iv) Proportional Representation in Parliament, Provincial Councils and other elected bodies to ensure that every interest is equitably represented;

(v) Executive President elected directly by the entire population to represent all ethnic and religious groups.

5. Steps taken to remove the impression of inadequate representation of minorities in the national life:

- (a) Example set by the President who makes his major speeches in all three languages or ensures that these are instantly translated into Tamil, sentence by sentence.
- (b) Trilingualism in Parliament and State-owned media (Television, Radio and Newspapers).
- (c) Equitable representation in high positions in the Government.
- (d) Ministers or State in charge of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs and Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs.
- (e) Performance of Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim religious rites in all important State functions.

Further Steps taken by Government

to restore the confidence of minorities:

- (a) Improvement of the Human Rights situation by implementing almost all of the recommendations of the Amnesty International and the UN Commission on Human Rights;
- (b) Immediate corrective action and compensation wherever acts of indiscipline of Security Forces are detected.
- (c) Timely warnings to civilians to evacuate intended combat zones.
- (d) Regular shipments of foodstuff and essential supplies from Colombo to ports in the Northern Province to feed and medically care for the beleaguered civilian population in the Jaffna peninsula.
- (e) Running hospitals and schools and other services in the rebel-held areas with the help of the International Red Cross and the French *Médecins sans Frontières*.
- (f) Maintenance of over 600,000 displaced persons in refugee camps.
- (g) Enabling the free movement of people from rebel-held areas to the rest of the country in spite of the potential risk of infiltration of terrorists and suicide-bombers.
- (h) Liberalized issue of travel documents, release of foreign exchange and unrestricted facilities to travel abroad in search of employment or asylum.
- (i) Taking the benefits of the significant economic growth in the rest of the Island to N & E Provinces: e.g. the two garment factories opened in Vavuniya on 28 November 1992 in partnership with international collaboration; and the weeks decision to locate the second international airport in Hingurakgoda, a point close to where N & E Provinces meet.

OBSTACLES TO SOLUTION AND SOME PROMISING SIGNS:

- (a) A political solution has to be by consensus of all political parties or at least the two major parties which have shared the governance of the country since Independence. Earlier attempt to reach such a consensus through an All Party Conference failed. The current effort is to ensure it through a Parliamentary Select Committee — a proposal made by the Opposition and agreed to by Government. A major breakthrough is reported in that both the major political parties have agreed to a Tamil M.P.'s proposal for a Federal Constitution.
- (b) Opposition to the delinking of the temporarily merged Northern and Eastern Provinces has remained a further obstacle. Some headway appears to be taking

place in reviewing the position by its main proponents, the Tamil Parties. This is likely to be solved now that a compromise is being worked out in the context of a Federal Constitution.

(c) The final obstacle is the intransigence of the LTTE, aggravated by its recent atrocities committed against civilians of all communities including Tamils. Reported infighting in the ranks of LTTE have enabled the Security forces to get invaluable information. In the meantime, the stage is set for a negotiated settlement if the LTTE seeks it. The President has thus reduced his terms for recommending negotiations to the barest possible, namely,

- cessation of hostilities (i.e. cease-fire)
- accept the democratic process
- recognize other Tamil political parties.

Elections to the N & E Provincial Council could be held immediately violence ceases in the area. If the LTTE enjoys the confidence of the people, it would be welcome to take over the administration.

RESOLVING THE CONFLICT: WHAT CAN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DO?

(a) Eliminate ill-informed judgments and prejudices and search for an objective understanding of the problem as it really is, and grasp available alternatives:

- Recognize the 1983 violence as an aberration and give credit to the people who have not allowed themselves to be provoked into similar retaliatory violence despite calculated and heinous provocations.
- Note the many positive steps taken by the Government as well meaningful gestures of many important individuals and appreciate how the tolerance and patience of the people have enabled the Government to handle the situation as a law-and-order or security problem.

(b) Accept the position that the Government has gone as far as it can and embodied in the Constitution itself a democratic political solution which should be given a serious chance to succeed. An elected Provincial Council could redress any further grievances which the people of the region may have, and also negotiate further improvements.

(c) Condemn all forms of violence and terrorism in particular as ways of seeking political or social redress and campaign vehemently against drug and gun running which nourish international terrorism.

(d) Stop encouraging the notion that minorities have an implicit right to resort

to violence to have their political objectives achieved.

(e) Most specifically, convince the LTTE through their expatriate friends, supporters and sympathizers that **Peace** deserves a try, that the conditions laid down by the President represent the norms of the highest political decency, and finally the LTTE should seek power through the ballot and not the bullet.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

A generation of people inhabiting the Northern Province and parts of the Eastern Province has lived through the

most trying conditions and their misery is the concern of every right-thinking citizen. They have to be relieved from the burden of suffering. A responsible Government has offered an opportunity for them to emerge from this darkness. The light in the form of democratic political structures and processes has been placed within their reach. What deters them, in all likelihood, is the perennial worry and dilemma of the terrorist as to what will happen to him or her when the gun is dropped. World public opinion has a vital role to play in the war against terrorism.

The Non Entits Tale

Part II

*The Dane was repatriated for his pains
Our Hero with his Ties juggled again
Rode the crest of the open-market wave
And came to roost, the New Establishments slave
He snatched the wholesome pint from school boy bands
Made Mother's faint with their Milk Bill in their hands
Set up a Task Force for Nutrition and Health
And put the prices up in morbid stealth*

*The Task Force reported that condensed milk
Was harmful to the Poor, though tea boutiques
Were the main market, not starving infants
The Task force claimed to save from diets deficient.*

*Our Hero, now an Accountant, dazed on Profit
Whizzed his abacus on the inflation rocket
Targetted milk away from the cup of Tea
To the rich man's Cake and Glutton's spree.*

*Hard to unravel our Hero's evolution
Without pinning down the point of devolution
Soul, Conscience, Ethos, whatever within him
Linked to his genes, may be, was mutating.*

*The final result was a Great Betrayal
That ensured his patriotic Survival
In the official Mahavamsa addendum
As a Leveller of State accumulation.*

*In one decade his dedicated ilk
Downed drainwards the Bus and the Milk
Blessed by Priest, Politician and Tycoon
Like ghouls in the wake of a typhoon*

*Bringing braying Bankers to the Wake
Of Plant and Plantation, poised to rake
Corp-Corpses transmuted into Bullion
On Mortgages, a dozen, a Million*

*Doing his bit during this Great Rape
Like his Old Ties his New Flag fluttered fake
While he handed our National Wealth on a plate
To Swine growing fat at a rate.*

*While he cast away pearls from the sweat
Of years of Peoples labour and fret
Plundered on the Free Market Spree
Death rode on the falling Rupee.*

(Continued)

U. Karunatilake

The Prelude to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987

Negotiations Between India and Sri Lanka, November 1984 to Mid-1987

K. M. de Silva

Once the decision to hold the talks was taken, the question of a venue arose. Bhandari's anxiety that the talks be as wide-ranging as possible was accompanied by a concern to protect their confidentiality. The decision to hold the talks in Thimpu in Bhutan was taken for this reason: the venue would be as isolated a place as one could get in South Asia. While special telegraph lines were available between Thimpu and Delhi, the discussions would take place without any journalists being present.¹¹

The Sri Lankan government delegation consisted of a group of senior lawyers led by H.W. Jayewardene, (President Jayewardene's brother).¹² Facing them on the other side of the table were six Tamil delegation. It was evident, from the outset that the TULF had been superseded by their more aggressive younger rivals. Symbolic of this loss of precedence was the relegation of the TULF leaders to the less prominent seats at the conference table. The main spokesmen for the Tamils were the separatist groups — through lawyers who represented them — reflecting, very accurately, the current reality of the politics of the Sri Lankan Tamils.¹³

Their spokesmen outlined a four-point programme the principal feature of which was an insistence that their right to self-determination be recognized, and along with it a right to an identified 'Tamil homeland', i.e., the Northern and Eastern Provinces. They were joined in regard to the latter point by the TULF. Not surprisingly the Sri Lanka government's delegate would not concede this. The talks broke down but Bhandari persuaded the two parties to meet again, and a second round of talks were held in August. The Tamil representatives persisted with their demands and were offered, in response, a system of Provincial Councils. The talks were adjourned in mid-August without agreement.

One could not expect Tamil separatist groups to articulate their case either on their own, or through their spokesmen, with sufficient flexibility and concern for nuances of meaning to make any discussion with their opposite numbers yield practical results. Bhandari, for one, felt

that the Tamil groups — with their advisors — did not know the difference between posturing and negotiating. They — with perhaps the exception of the TULF — were not used to the latter, and their legal advisors did not help much in this regard. They were too legalistic — much more so than the government delegates who themselves rejected the principal demands of the Tamil spokesmen on the ground that these were incompatible with Sri Lanka's constitution — and unrealistic, and he made the point that the Tamil groups breached the confidentiality of the talks by leaking information to the *Hindu*.¹⁴

While these talks in July-August 1985 did not yield any positive results immediately, the momentum was kept up thanks largely to Bhandari's initiatives. The cessation of hostilities negotiated prior to the discussions and for a period of three months originally was extended beyond October 1985. It had been scheduled to expire at that time. This was followed by discussions between Sri Lanka government representatives led by H.W. Jayewardene and Indian officials led by Bhandari. These talks proved to be much more fruitful than the Thimpu discussions. A framework for devolution of power in Sri Lanka emerged from them. In essence it was an expansion of a working paper originally prepared for the Thimpu and post Thimpu discussions in New Delhi between H.W. Jayewardene and Indian government representatives in July and August 1985. One of its most significant features was that the unit of devolution was to be a province — there are 9 provinces in Sri Lanka — no longer a district. Secondly the powers to be devolved on these provincial units were much wider than had been envisaged in earlier discussions. The carefully drafted document which the two sides initialled became the basis of all future negotiations between Sri Lanka and India.¹⁵ It came to be known in official circles as the Delhi Accord of August 1985.

During his brief spell as Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari had built up a very cordial relationship with President Jayewardene and his government. While this helped him in dealing with the Sri

Lankan side, it made him suspect to the Tamils. However, by the time he was virtually forced out of office in March 1986 under pressure from the pro-Soviet lobby in Delhi, he had achieved a great deal. The principles and details of a viable scheme of devolution of power for Sri Lanka had been agreed upon by the two governments.

His successor A.P. Venkateswaran had much less rapport with Rajiv Gandhi than Bhandari. Moreover he believed that it was impolitic to let the Indian Prime Minister get personally involved in the minutiae of negotiations on Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict with President Jayewardene, and contrived to return policy formulation to the Ministry of External Affairs where it had been before Bhandari moved it to the Prime Minister's office. Secondly, Venkateswaran placed greater trust in the TULF and virtually pushed them into taking the lead in negotiations with the Sri Lankan government.¹⁶ The TULF leaders were not unwilling to play the new role that Venkateswaran had devised for them but they were terrified at the prospect of antagonizing the more aggressive Tamil groups. Venkateswaran called representatives of these latter groups to Delhi and persuaded them to let the TULF take the lead in the discussions with the Sri Lankan government scheduled to be held in Colombo later in the year.

The Framework and details of the devolution package drawn up under Bhandari's initiatives were reviewed under Venkateswaran, and modifications were introduced to make the package acceptable to the Tamil representatives. Indeed the latter had been decidedly unenthusiastic about the framework of devolution negotiated between the two governments in 1985. Venkateswaran hit upon the idea of giving this greater acceptability by using the Indian state system as the model for Sri Lanka's devolutionary schemes. It contained enough of a federal structure to keep the TULF happy, while its quasi-federal nature, with the central government more powerful than in most federations, made it acceptable to President Jayewardene and his advisers. Besides, there was sufficient ambiguity in the new propo-

sals to allow for bargaining and give and take, and for more compromise.¹⁷

Apparently the Indian side had hoped to make the position of the governor of a province weaker than in the Indian system. They had hoped too that the Sri Lanka government would not insist on following the Indian pattern but Sri Lankan negotiators saw how important the governor was in the Indian system in protecting the interests of the central government and unhesitatingly opted for a governor on the Indian model. To the surprise of the Indians, the TULF conceded the point, without any reservations, leaving Venkateswaran and his advisors to suspect that the TULF fancied the prospect of a governorship for one of their members. There had apparently been another point of difference between Venkateswaran and the TULF: he had urged the TULF to stick to the district as the unit of devolution but the TULF was all for a provincial unit. Venkateswaran's argument was that the district was entrenched in the constitution, while the province was barely mentioned in it. The problems of the Eastern Province — which became a matter of acute controversy later in 1986 and thereafter — may have been resolved more easily had the unit of devolution been the district and not the province. The Amparai district could have been left out of consideration, and an amalgamation of the Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts could have been sought.

ARMED CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA

These negotiations took place against the background of regular outbursts of ethnic violence, especially in the north and east of the island, and conflicts between the security forces and Tamil guerrillas and terrorist groups. Greatly improved relations between the two countries did not extend to any serious efforts to prevent the use of Indian territory by guerrillas and terrorists for attacks on a friendly neighbour, much less to close down these facilities and camps. Nor, more important, did the supply of arms through Indian agencies to the various Tamil separatist groups stop. Rajiv Gandhi, so much less dependent on a southern Indian political base than his mother, and intent on taking a more even-handed approach than her to the problems posed by Sri Lanka's ethnic conflicts, found his options more limited than he would have liked them to be. And the constraint lay in the ethnic politics of Tamil Nadu and the public support the Sri Lankan Tamils enjoyed there. The Tamil guerrillas and terrorist groups continued to have training facilities and bases in Tamil Nadu and ready access to sophisticated weapons.

Among the most prominent of the regional political notables in the interplay of forces in India on the Sri Lankan issue was M.G. Ramachandran, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. By 1983-4 his health was visibly failing, and his associates and hangers-on had begun to take decisions on his behalf. After 1984-5, his health broke down to the point where he could hardly speak (and the wags in New Delhi referred to him as the "unspeakable" Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu) and his hangers on, male and female, interpreted his wishes through lip-reading, movements of his eyes (and sometimes his eyelids) and hands.

In addition, there was internecine fighting among these Tamil separatist groups, in the course of which the LTTE won a bloody victory over its main rivals in the last week of April 1986.¹⁸ One of Prabhakaran's principal rivals, Sri Sabaratnam was killed in this clash. The LTTE were also helped by a decision of the Sri Lankan government, taken in mid-1985, as part of an understanding that was reached with the government of India in the mediatory process, that its forces in the north of the island would be kept within their barracks or camps. In a serious tactical error the Sri Lanka army stopped their regular patrols of the streets of Jaffna. The LTTE took immediate advantage of this to mine all the roads leading out of the army camps, and proceeded thereafter to build barricades across the roads. Makeshift barricades were converted to concrete bunkers. Very soon the army in Jaffna fort could only be supplied by air. The result of this decision was to give the armed Tamil separatist groups effective control over the Jaffna peninsula.

When guerrillas and terrorists directed their attacks against the security forces they were generally repulsed. When, however, their attacks were directed against unarmed Sinhalese civilians, they were effective in demoralizing the civilian population in the remoter areas of the country in the north-central and eastern regions. The most ferocious of such attacks had occurred in 14 May 1985, when a heavily-armed group of terrorists made a surprise raid on Anuradhapura, killing nearly 150 civilians. It included an attack on the precincts of the sacred bo-tree there, one of the most venerated sites of the Buddhist world. Attacks on civilians became more frequent thereafter. A new pattern was perceptible in these attacks in 1986, when Sinhalese peasants were shot to death in the east of the island by LTTE hit squads during the religious festivals in May and June when the villagers were most rela-

xed.

By this time Tamil separatist groups had become a formidable guerrilla force, much stronger than their Indian mentors had believed they would ever be. The Sri Lanka government for its part was compelled to divert a steadily increasing proportion of its annual budget to the expansion and equipping of its armed forces. Military action against these Tamil separatist groups in the north and east was escalated. Equipped with arms purchased from Pakistan and China, and trained either in Pakistan, or in Sri Lanka by Israelis and British mercenaries, the Sri Lanka armed services were becoming more impressive fighting units than they had been before.¹⁹

As clashes between these groups became more frequent and casualties increased India's mediatory role did not prevent a return to the Indira Gandhi policy of a diplomatic offensive against Sri Lanka, and a propaganda blitz conducted through her embassies and High Commissions abroad accusing the government of human rights violations. Sri Lankan and Indian diplomats clashed at the UN in New York and Geneva, all part of a policy of 'moral' sanctions aimed at persuading Sri Lanka to return to the bargaining table. The Indian embassy in Washington and the High Commissions in Ottawa and London, in the meantime continued to be centres of support for Tamil separatist groups operating in those countries.²⁰ Indian newspapers, led by the *Hindu* gave their support to this government-inspired campaign.²¹ At a different level, the Sri Lanka government found traditional western arms suppliers reluctant to supply arms to Sri Lankan forces, and most of the western powers were unwilling also to provide training facilities on any large scale for them. All of them were anxious not to give offense to India.

REFINING THE DELHI ACCORD, 1986

The Sri Lankan government regarded the Delhi Accord initialled on 30 August 1985 as an important step forward in reaching a settlement with the Tamil minority, and "a reasonable basis for negotiation and settlement." There was also initialled at the same time the *Conditions of Implementation of the Accord*, and these provided for the means of restoring normal civilian administration to the disturbed areas of the north and east. As we have seen, neither the several separatist activist groups nor the TULF, however, responded positively to the proposals in the Delhi Accord and it took several months of negotiations with them before the Indian government could send an official delegation to Sri Lanka for further discussions on possible adjustments and modifica-

tions of the Delhi Accord.

The new delegation was led by a Minister of State not in the Cabinet, P. Chidambaram, a young (40 years at the time) Tamil who aspired to a Congress-based leadership of Tamil Nadu, and Natwar Singh, Rajiv Gandhi's Minister of State for External Affairs. The Chidambaram delegation arrived in Colombo on 30 April 1986 and held very intensive talks over the next five days. For the first time since Indian mediation began in late 1983 the principal negotiators for the Indian government were politicians were not bureaucrats or diplomats. On their departure from the island an official communique announced that: "The Sri Lanka government agreed to make further concessions beyond the terms of the Delhi Accord." These latter were embodied in the proposals dated 4 May 1986. Two separate notes were annexed to these, one on "law and order and the scope of the powers devolved there under, and another "on land settlement..." This latter was the result of negotiations between Chidambaram and Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Lands, Land Development and Mahaweli Development. In regard to both these and other matters agreed upon on 4 May 1986, the Sri Lanka government gave an assurance that "further negotiations are possible to arrive at [a] final agreement."

Once the Chidambaram team returned to Delhi, it was possible for the Indian government to persuade the TULF to begin direct negotiations with the Sri Lankan government for a further refinement of the agreements reached so far. By the time they arrived in Colombo President Jayewardene had embarked on a new political initiative, the Political Parties Conference. Eight political parties met him at the Conference room of the cabinet office in the early afternoon (4 p.m.) of 25 June 1986. A delegation from SLFP met the President later that afternoon (6 p.m.) but it was evident from the very outset that they would play no part in the proceedings of the Political Parties Conference (PPC). A series of discussions with a number of political parties was held between 2 and 12 July 1986 following upon these preliminary discussions. On 9 July the proposals agreed to in Delhi in August 1985 with modifications and extensions decided upon in Colombo and Delhi thereafter, were published for discussion at the PPC.

A TULF delegation arrived in Sri Lanka from India, led by A. Amirthalingam, and met President Jayewardene for formal talks on 13 July 1986. They joined in the discussions at the Political Parties Conference, but even more important, the

TULF had no fewer than 37 formal meetings either with President Jayewardene or with him and some senior Ministers of the government or senior Ministers on their own, between 13 July and 29 August 1986. Among the Cabinet Ministers with whom the TULF had discussions were the Minister of Finance, Ronnie de Mel, the Minister of National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali, and Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Lands, Land Development and Mahaweli Development. They had four separate meetings with Gamini Dissanayake, between 23 July and 29 August 1986, on the issue of distribution of state lands in the north and east, and especially in the areas covered by the gigantic multipurpose Mahaweli development scheme. The principles and details of the settlement reached between Dissanayake and Chidambaram were subjected to very close scrutiny during these discussions. While some adjustment of the details was made, the principles remained unchanged.

The discussions between the government of Sri Lanka and the TULF, and the discussions and debates within the PPC continued over three months. While the SLFP boycotted the discussions, all other parties, including the traditional left not represented in parliament, participated in the conference. In general the conference endorsed the proposals submitted for discussion, clarified some complex issues, and identified potential points of difficulty and ambiguity, all of which made it possible to widen the scope of the powers conceded to the provinces in the projected scheme of devolution submitted for discussion. These modifications and extensions were incorporated in the proposals sent to India in September 1986. They included draft Constitutional Amendments, a draft Provincial Councils Bill, schedules setting out the Reserved, Concurrent and Provincial Lists, as well as detailed memoranda dealing with law and order, land and settlement and education. The subjects of finance and administration were discussed in detail but no final agreement was reached. An official statement issued by the Sri Lanka government on 26 November 1986 asserted that

"apart from the subjects not finalized, these proposals constituted a package which would have been a reasonable basis of settlement, fair to all sections of the people of Sri Lanka."

The outstanding difficulty was not finance and administration on which agreement had still to be reached with the TULF, but the fact that the TULF and the Tamil separatist groups in general conti-

nued to press for the creation of a single regional unit encompassing the northern and eastern provinces as a Tamil ethno-region. The Sri Lanka government was unwilling to consider, much less concede, this, because of its political implications — an erosion of its electoral base would have been both wide and deep and its stability would have been undermined with great rapidity.

(To be continued)

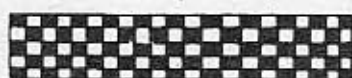
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11. *ibid.*
12. As a prelude to these talks discussions were held between H.W. Jayewardene and Attorney General of India, on 15 and 16 June 1985.
13. For a comprehensive statement of the Tamil viewpoint at Thimpu, see, N. Satyendra Thimpu Declaration: the Path of Reason" in the *Tamil Times* vi (4) February 1987, pp.11-14.
14. Romesh Bhandari, interview with author, 29 April 1991.
15. The Draft Framework of the Terms of Accord and Understanding were initialled on 30 April 1985, by R. Mathai for the Indian side, and by E.F. Dias Abeyasinghe, Secretary of the Sri Lankan delegation. The Sri Lanka delegation had further talks with senior officials of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs from 10 to 13 September 1985 on conditions of implementation of this accord, providing for the means of restoring normal civilian administration.
16. A.P. Venkateswaran, interview with author, 24 April 1990.
17. *ibid.*
18. For 3 days beginning 29 April 1986, the LTTE turned their guns on their rivals, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and crushed them remorselessly. The TELO leader Sri Sabaratnam was among those killed on that occasion. For an account of What happened on that occasion see the *Hindu* 13 May 1986, an article entitled, 'The Wounds in the Peoples' Psyche are Deeper?'
19. For an assessment of the military situation in Sri Lanka at this time see, Colonel Edgar O'Balance "Sri Lanka and its Tamil Problem, in *Armed Forces* 5 (12) December 1986, pp.542-43. *Armed Forces* is published by Ian Allan Ltd, in Conjunction with the Royal Limited Services Institute for Defence Studies.
20. See the statement made by Dr G.S. Dhilon, Leader of the Indian delegation to the 42nd Session of the Commission Human Rights, Under Agenda item 12, on 5 March 1986. This brief statement was in response to a very comprehensive one made by Dr H.W. Jayewardene leading the Sri Lanka delegation on 4 March 1986 setting out in detail the negotiations conducted between the governments, and also details of attacks by Tamil separatist groups on civilians, and clashes between the Sri Lanka security forces and Tamil separatist groups.
21. And not only Indian newspapers. Indian officials in New Delhi were talking to Western journalists based in New Delhi. See, for example, an article "India shows Impatience with Sri Lanka Talks", by Steven R. Weisman, *New York Times*, 27 December 1985.

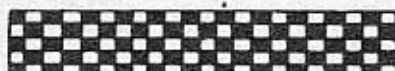
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VIOLENCE AND RUMOUR MILLS

The trouble with the "free press", now a major issue in the national political debate, is all too free to beat the racist drum in the midst of ethnic strife and war. This raises the fundamental problem of responsibility, a moral, social obligation, a question rarely discussed.

The western tradition which has given birth to many of the ideals that the "Third World" media seeks to honour, does not need to face up to the grave dangers that an irresponsible press may create. The Irish problem is over a century old and LONDON is far from protected from IRA bombers but British society is not likely to be torn apart or its stability endangered by the Irish struggle. In 'Third World' societies torn apart by fierce ethnic conflicts, the media's potential for national disharmony and violence is immense. Two Indian journalists discuss the role of the press in the post-Ayodhya weeks. — Ed.

Press and Ethnic Violence

Ramesh Menon and Soutik Biswas

In Meerut, it was a youngster who slashed himself on the chest on the orders of a satta don placing odds on when the riots would begin. In Bhiwandi, it was a bullfight which sent people scurrying indoors. In Surat, it all began with the report that three Hindu girls had been raped. And in Calcutta, the story had a young Muslim being killed by mobs when actually he had died in a road accident.

Post-Ayodhya, when the nation was in the grip of a communal frenzy, vicious, incendiary rumours became rampant. Almost everywhere, the sheer power of the rumour virtually crippled the police and the administration's conventional methods to quell trouble. It was a grim reflection of the depth of the distrust between the two communities. "Rumours have become the worst enemies of communal amity," says Biman Basu, CPI(M)'s central committee member. And Surat's Mayor Ajit Desai of the BJP, admits that riots would not have been so brutal and so uncontrollable had rumours not played a vital role.

In Calcutta, the Hindu backlash on the Muslim-dominated slums of Dhobiatala, was exacerbated by rumours that many Hindu women had been raped and their breasts chopped off in the Metiabruz riots. And people in the suburb of Salt Lake went running indoors after an intrepid cable operator telecast a BBC 'news' that thousands of Muslims, armed with automatic guns, had crossed the Indo-Bangladesh border and were marching towards the township, where Chief Minister Jyoti Basu

also happens to live.

"Rumours start floating when, kept indoors by prohibitory orders, idle minds start becoming devil's workshops," says H.A. Safwi, Calcutta's joint commissioner of police. And the devil surely ran havoc. Bombay's bustling south district became a ghost city as panic-stricken office-goers rushed back home hearing about Bal Thackeray's 'arrest' and phone lines were jammed by people and their relatives frantically seeking information.

In Kanpur, when an eight-year-old girl ran down a Muslim ghetto with a can, neighbours ran indoors shouting that there would be an attack on them. Nobody bothered to check that she was only rushing to fetch some cooking oil during curfew relaxation.

To compound the problem, in most cities, efforts to combat rumours were poor. Jyoti Basu made a customary television speech asking people not to pay heed to rumours. But by then, the rumour mill had done its damage.

"When we were being besieged by calls from panicky residents, we should have had the use of television immediately in order to dispel each rumour," suggests a Calcutta DCP.

For the police, all that it takes to dispel fear and cool passions is a public address system. But most police stations in cities don't have megaphones. Political parties could help by deploying responsible cadres in affected areas. But often they

prefer to let the situation simmer. What Desai doesn't admit is that a lot of rumours in Surat were generated by the BJP itself. The police even crib that countering rumours is the responsibility of the information departments, which should take a more active role in troubled times rather than issue pious appeals for harmony.

Countering rumours is the responsibility of citizens as well. But this time, the distrust and the divide ran so deep that people believed the next rumour even after the previous one had proved to be hideously untrue. Moreover, the scepticism about the state's power and abilities hit a new low with businessmen and responsible professionals in Calcutta believing strongly that the police had deliberately suppressed the Metiabruz 'rapes' and the press had blacked it out in the 'public interest'.

Nor could the press absolve itself of blame. Especially after the *Indian Express* front-paged a report during the riots that a boatload of sophisticated weapons had arrived from Karachi. When an eminent columnist like Girilal Jain picked up this piece of misinformation, the day of the rumour had finally arrived.

Everyone, therefore, was responsible for legitimising this fatal instinct. The police, a section of the press and practically everybody who sat at home and couched up such lethallies. Not entirely surprising considering that the Hindutva cause itself is clothed in so many myths and untruths.

Beyond the fringe

Fred Halliday

The Communist party of Sri Lanka together with the Lanka Sama Samaja party, the parent Marxist organisation in Sri Lanka, have returned to the fold. The P.E.P. will fight the seven provincial council polls under the banner of the recently formed P.E.P or Peoples' Alliance. It was that self-same alliance which assumed office in 1970 — the zenith of Left popularity and power. But what really is the future of the Marxist movement and the C.P. in the post-cold war world? Fred Halliday, an authority on the subject, discusses the issue. Prof Halliday, now teaches at the L.S.E.

Three years after the collapse of the communist regimes in eastern Europe, and one year after the suppression of the Communist Party in Russia, the situation of former pro-Soviet and other communist regimes in the Third World presents a curious and little acknowledged paradox. These regimes were, in the past, regarded as weaker than those of the more developed communist bloc, and were in many respects dependent on them, for arms, diplomatic support and political inspiration. This was a perception shared by both sides in the cold war. The Russians became increasingly doubtful about the benefits of helping Third-World revolutionary allies, and were skeptical of the possibilities of building "socialism" in poor, Third-World states.

Washington saw this Soviet weakness in the Third World as its opportunity. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration placed the emphasis of its second cold-war offensive against Russia in Third World, just as the USSR had attacked the US through its vulnerable clients — in Vietnam, Ethiopia, Cuba, Nicaragua and so forth. US strategy involved covert CIA support for anti-communist guerrilla movements — notably in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua.

The collapse of communism in eastern Europe and the USSR has, however, shown both these perspectives to be simplified, or at least premature. For the fact is that, while the communist regimes in more advanced countries have been destroyed, and most of the communist parties reduced to states of greater or lesser isolation, in the Third-World regimes once allied with the USSR or modelled on it, this has not occurred, despite far greater levels of violence and civil war organised against them. In many of them, the same ruling parties remain in power. In others, even where the party has lost power, it retains considerable sway through its influence in the administration and armed

forces. In virtually none of the 20-odd Third-World states that were in the Soviet bloc has the European pattern been repeated.

In those states formally ruled by communist parties, two — China and North Korea — were independent of Soviet influence and here the ruling parties remain in traditional control; China, with great adaptation in the economy, North Korea, with an inflexible persistence in traditional ways. In the five others where pro-Soviet communist parties ruled, the picture has also altered little: in Vietnam and Cuba, the parties retain a monopoly of power; in Cambodia, the core of the regime remains the Hun Sen faction installed by Vietnam in 1979; in Laos, the Lao Dong party, although forced to share power, retains the dominant position in the regime; while in Mongolia, the erstwhile Communist Party, voted out of power in 1990 in the first free elections, returned to power in new elections held in the spring of this year.

Even in the most contested case of all, Afghanistan, the Hizbi Vatan, or Fatherland Party, has far from disappeared in the wake of the Mujahideen victory of late April. The divisions within the Mujahideen ranks, and the continuing cohesion of the former regime's armed forces and political and administrative apparatuses, mean that, in many districts, they retain a place in the new coalitions that run the fragmented country.

Elsewhere in the Third World, a similar pattern has prevailed. A decade ago there were around a dozen states in the Third World considered by Moscow to be in transition to, or in the preliminary stages of, socialism.

Five of these were especially valued by Moscow: Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, South Yemen and Ethiopia. In three of them, former ruling parties remain intact and in power, even if in coalition with their former foes: in Angola and Mozambique complex negotiations, as in Cambodia, have been underway to bring about compromises, so far without success, while in South Yemen, the Yemeni Socialist Party has, through unification with North Yemen, become one of the two ruling parties in the new states, with its political machinery, army and intelligence forces intact. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas lost the February 1990 elections, but they retain considerable influence in the armed forces and in the state machinery, and are in what is, in effect, an unofficial coalition with Violeta Chamorro: their party apparatus is intact, and they seem set to make a strong showing in the next elections, scheduled for 1996.

Only in Ethiopia has there been a complete removal of the old regime, through the triumph of the guerrillas of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary democratic Party in May 1991. But here the removal of a pro-Soviet party was achieved not, as in the eastern bloc, by the triumph of a pro-western movement, but by the victory of a formerly Maoist guerrilla movement, armed largely by Iraq, with belated US diplomatic aid.

In the other states of the Third World also considered "socialist orientated", the record of continuity so far is striking: in the main Arab allies of the former USSR — Algeria, Libya, Syria, Iraq — the old states survive. In a range of African countries — Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Congo — the former ruling parties are still active or in power. The countries where there has been a complete change are few: Grenada, Surinam, Cape Verde and Sao Tome.

In the future, these regimes may not, however, escape the fate of their more developed former patrons. In some, growing social and political crises seem likely to topple the existing regimes in the near future, leaving little room for the former ruling parties — Cuba and North Korea seem cases in point. Elsewhere, chronic economic crisis has so undermined the regimes that little is left of their former programme — Tanzania and Algeria being obvious examples. Those forced into coalitions — South Yemen, Nicaragua, possibly Angola — will find their room for manoeuvre curtailed by their new allies at home and diplomatic engagements abroad. Most intriguing are the cases where the ruling parties seem intent on retaining political power, but in so adjusting the economy that little of the traditional centralised system will remain — the most prominent examples being China and Vietnam.

Even if they do disappear, however, the survival of these regimes indicates the need for some rethinking. Their endurance may be ascribed to a range of factors — a greater willingness to use coercion, a more successful insulation from external political pressures, a stronger sense of nationalistic identification with the regimes. These regimes were in the main repressive, but had considerable achievements in the social field — in equity, secularism, welfare, equality of women — that are likely to be sub-merged in any new system, as they have been in eastern Europe.

Whatever else, this record, even if transient, casts doubt on the view traditionally held in both Washington and Moscow, that they were merely clients of the Soviet Union itself.

Women and Family Law Reform in India.

By Archana Parashar. Sage Publications, India.

Women and the Rule of Law

Over the past two decades the Western feminist scholars have questioned both gender equality as a feminist goal and the capacity of law reform to achieve that goal. A critical scrutiny of this quest by Archana Parashar, Lecturer in Law at Macquarie University, Sydney, exposes its drawbacks and alerts us to be cautious in applying its theories to the Indian situation.

Archana is not so naive as to believe that law reform *ipso facto* brings about the desired social change. She recognises that "legal equality by itself cannot put an end to all the disadvantages suffered by women." It is nevertheless a primary though limited step in the struggle against their oppression. While law may not directly change people's convictions and values, it can function as a "persuasive norm" and though it may not bring about actual change in behaviour, it can serve a "symbolic function".

With this belief, the author has undertaken a critical study of the role of law in perpetuating discrimination against women, and the role of the state in improving the status of women by reforming the religious personal laws. She focuses mainly on the family law, as, for the vast majority of Indian women, family life continues to be the crucial aspect of their existence, and there is hardly any meaningful alternative to it.

A paradox is highlighted. On the one hand, the Constitution guarantees sex-equality as a fundamental right. And, on the other, the religious personal laws that discriminate against women are still being applied — four decades after the adoption of the Constitution. While Hindu personal law has been extensively reformed, religious personal laws of the minorities have

been by and large left unchanged.

How has the state justified its discrepant conduct in reforming religious personal laws of different communities and why has the State, after accepting the principle of sex-equality, failed to translate this constitutional principle into the provisions of personal law? These are the two main questions that the author has attempted to answer in the book under review.

As a prelude to answering these questions the history of religious personal laws in India are traced out. The distinction between personal and other spheres of law was introduced in India by the English rulers, who from the beginning refrained from touching the personal laws of the natives even as they modified Hindu and Islamic law in other spheres. This laid the foundation for the development of personal laws in the post-independence period.

The legislative history of the Hindu law reform proposals and examines the basis on which the State claimed to reform Hindu law. Archana argues that these reforms were not designed to give complete legal equality to women, and hence, the improvements in the rights of women are far less than what is generally believed. "The state meant to improve the position of women as a component of its plan of modernisation, but it did not intend to upset or alter in any substantial manner, the power structure of the family."

In reforming the personal laws of the minority communities — Muslims, Christians, and Parsis — the State adopted a different approach. The religious personal laws of these communities have remained unmodified. The question of reforming these laws is linked to the minority status of these communities rather than

to the position of women in them.

The official vacillation in dealing with the personal laws of the minorities, and the opportunistic stand of the government when confronted by uncompromising religious leaders has documented. As a consequence, "Hindu women have gained new rights though not complete equality while women of the minority communities continue to suffer inequalities."

Emphasising the constitutional guarantee of equality, and the obligation of the State to safeguard the interests of women and to improve their state, a strong case has been made for severing the connection between religion and civic rights by enacting a secular uniform civil code. The case for such a code can be and has, no doubt, been made from several ideological positions. The author's concerned advocacy of the need for such a code is that it is preeminently intended to ensure legal equality for women. In fact, as she justifiably avers, "if religion and culture can be maintained only at the cost of discriminating some sections of the community, then it must be queried whether the burden is to be borne by women alone."

Impassioned as her arguments may sound to be, Archana has strengthened them with incontrovertible evidence in the form of historical records, parliamentary proceedings, legislative enactments, court cases, and pulpit and platform orations. Her familiarity with the literature on the subject (as revealed by the comprehensive bibliography) and her ability to cite them at appropriate places are remarkable. Legal activists, feminists, and social scientists alike are sure to find this scholarly treatise interesting and illuminative.

Pak-India Relations

In the article Pak-India relations by Mushahid Hussain (*Guardian* — February, 15th), he refers to M.A. Jinnah having said "but for Hindu petty-mindedness manifested in the Congress there would have been no partition."

In this respect it will be interesting to read the following which appeared in the Tamil Daily *Veerakesari* of 1987.12.07. The Pakistan Newspaper *Frontier Post* had reported of Jinnah at deathbed having told the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan "I created Pakistan. Today I realize that was the biggest mistake I ever made. Today if I get an opportunity I will go to New Delhi and tell Jawaharlal Nehru to forget what happened in the recent past and become friends again."

This was reported to have been disclosed by Colonel Elahi Bux who was Jinnah's Doctor to Mohamed Yahyajan, the Education Minister of the North-West Frontier Province State Government.

S. Panchadcharam

Valaichchenai.

Suu Kyi's Burma and Sri Lanka

Suvimalee Karunaratna has observed that, "Suu Kyi's Nobel prize winning book, *Freedom from Fear* (was) written under house arrest in Rangoon" (*LG*, April 1). I wonder whether she had really read the contents of the book, if not the Introduction written by Suu Kyi's husband Michael Aris, before making such a foolish comment.

In his Introduction, Michael Aris had noted, "Suu's writings in this collection fall naturally into two parts: firstly those she completed in Oxford, Kyoto and Simla before her return to Burma in 1988, and secondly a medley of later essays, speeches,

letters and interviews...". The first part (the meaty section) consists of four lengthy essays, namely "My Father" (1984), "My Country and People" (1985), "Intellectual Life in Burma and India under Colonialism" (1990) and "Literature and Nationalism in Burma" (1987). The figures in parentheses were their publication dates. Suu Kyi was placed on house arrest from July 1989. Almost all the 16 short items collected into the medley in the second part by Michael Aris, were written (or delivered) by Suu Kyi before she was put under house arrest.

I also agree with Jane Russell's observation that, "throughout this book (*Freedom from Fear*), there is the constant reiteration of (Buddhist) themes that would be as applicable to Sri Lanka as to Burma" (*LG*, March 1). In fact, two decades ago, the noted Cambridge anthropologist Edmund Leach had published quite an interesting paper entitled, "Buddhism in the Post-Colonial Order in Burma and Ceylon" in the journal *Daedalus* (winter 1973, vol. 102, no.1, pp. 29-54). In this study, Edmund Leach had compared the parallel careers of Aung San and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, both of whom fanned the flames of Buddhist activism and "both died by assassination". What is most striking for me in Suu Kyi's book is that, in her essays about her father Aung San, she makes no reference to this academic paper of a respected British scholar. One can easily guess, why Suu Kyi had left out this important contribution of a not so mediocre intellectual. In his study, Edmund Leach had presented a not so flattering portrayal of Aung San, which Suu Kyi would have found difficult to gulp. So much for her academic credentials and bravery.

I quote Edmund Leach in some detail; "Aung San was in touch with Japanese agents from around 1938 and, when threatened with arrest in 1940, he escaped to Tokyo. He returned to Burma with the invading Japanese army in 1941.

Contrary to legend, the Burma Independence Army, which Aung San then organized, was originally an insignificant group to which the Japanese offered little support. It is extremely doubtful whether this 'army' ever engaged in any form of combat....In the spring of 1945 Aung San, who had previously been denounced by the British authorities as a dangerous traitor, was suddenly recognized by Admiral Mountbatten as 'the leader of anti-Japanese resistance in Burma'. Without this recognition Aung San would likely have disappeared without a trace. The subsequent build up of Aung San's reputation as 'Burma's popular hero' was very elaborately engineered..".

Jane Russell should have consulted this paper of Edmund Leach, before observing somewhat outlandishly that "Suu Kyi herself may be compared, with some justification, to Nehru" (*LG*, March 1). In my opinion, Suu Kyi's comparison of her father Aung San to Mahatma Gandhi is far-fetched. Call it an affectionate outpouring of love, "My dear Pappa", by a high school girl, who had lost his father prematurely. Edmund Leach's conclusion of the careers of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Aung San also need emphasis. He had inferred, "both Bandaranaike and Aung San seem to have perished because, having ridden to power on the crest of a militant Buddhist nationalist wave, they would both have like to reach some compromise agreement with the kind of Western 'modern' society which, in their hearts, they both really admired."

I wish to end this letter by saying that I respect Suu Kyi's fight for human rights in Burma. But to elevate her as modern day Joan of Arc is somewhat premature. Let her mature during her incarceration. Her best thoughts have yet to be delivered. What had been published in her only book so far is not that great.

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