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LANKA

GUARDIAN

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SACRIFICING THE MUSLIMS

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UNP AND LIBERALS

A CHALLENGE TO CHANAKYAN LOGIC

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BRIEFLY...

Rebels return

Gamini Dissanayake and Ronnie de Mel, two high profile ministers in UNP cabinets under President J. R. Jayewardene's leadership, who quit the party following differences with President R. Premadasa were readmitted to the fold by President D. B. Wijetunga a few days before parliament was dissolved. Dissanayake got back his old (though now somewhat truncated) Mahaveli ministry and de Mel, a long time finance minister, was given Ports and Shipping

Miracle worker Anura

In the pre-dissolution cabinet reshuffle Higher Education Minister Anura Bandaranaike was given the additional portfolio of National Reconciliation, a new one.

He vowed to perform the "miracle" that Nelson Mandela and W. de Klerk, Yasser Arafat and Yitzak Rabin had worked in South Africa and Palestine. In those countries irreconcilable opponents had apparently come together, Mr Bandaranaike said. So why not in Sri Lanka?

DBIPS to probe tea

Petroleum Corporation Chairman D. B. I. P. S. Siriwardene, one of the few remaining Civil Servants of old, has been appointed by President D. B. Wijetunga to probe the tea industry currently in

crisis. He has been asked to investigate and report on the reasons for the unprecedented decline in tea prices.

ETF makes big money

The Employees' Trust Fund (ETF) has earned a pre-tax profit of a record Rs 1,330 million in 1993, up by 35 per cent over the previous year, according to chairman Sunil Wijesinghe.

Casinos still banned says government

The ban on casinos still holds, said a Presidential Secretariat announcement following a newspaper report that casinos were alive and kicking in and around Colombo.

The announcement said: "The ban on casinos introduced under Emergency Regulations, promulgated in May and June 1991, is still in force. These Emergency regulations have not been rescinded. Nor has the government given any green light for operation of casinos.

"Therefore, if any casinos are in operation in the city or elsewhere in Sri Lanka, as stated in the news item, they are illegal. Instructions have been given to the police to deal with them as provided for in the Emergency Regulations and in the law".

"Socialism is the aim"

The government's flagship, the *Daily News*, quoted on its front

page an interview to a Sinhala daily by the SLFP's organiser for Mahara, Nimalasiri Jayasinghe, alias Loku Athula. Jayasinghe said that he was a firm believer in socialism but that in the present climate the establishment of a completely socialist structure had to be a long-term aim; restoring complete democracy was the most pressing need of the hour.

Jayasinghe, better known as Loku Athula then, was among the JVPers who served prison sentences for the insurrection of 1971.

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DRUGS ?

Amendment to Drug Regulation No. 34 of 1984 in Govt. Gazette Extraordinary No. 722/3 of Monday the 6th July 1992.

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Good opportunity to gauge the mood of the electorate

Mervyn de Silva

That was the week that was. On Friday 17th, two former stalwarts of the 1978-88 J.R. regime, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake (Mahaweli Minister) and Mr. Ronnie de Mel (Finance Minister) were back in the party, in Parliament and Cabinet. Under President JR's supervision, Finance Minister De Mel had been the brilliant manager of the new economic strategy that JR had introduced in collaboration with the IMF and World Bank. As Irrigation Minister Gamini Dissanayake had been the manager of the huge multi-purpose Mahaweli scheme, the show-piece development project of the JR Presidency. Such was the symbolic power of this Sri Lankan "Aswan" that Gamini, regarded as JR's pet, was also considered the party's "great white hope".

The Indian intervention and the IPKF presence that sparked the JVP insurrection put paid to such hopes. The astute JR chose the nationalist (anti-Indian) and populist Prime Minister Premadasa to contest the SLFP leader Mrs. Bandaranaike at the 1988 polls. Mr. de Mel misjudged the electoral mood and joined the SLFP. When Premadasa won — not too convincingly — de mel left the country. Mr. Dissanayake joined National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, an equally formidable UNP stalwart in an impeachment plot that misfired. They formed the DUNF — the first serious setback for the conservative "Establishment" party.

The impeachment, though abortive, was the first overt sign of the underlying "dis-unity" of the United National Party.

Question: How much of the DUNF vote has returned to the UNP after the assassination of the charismatic Lalith and recently the return of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake to the party fold?

With his aggressive anti-IPKF, anti-Indian polemics, Premadasa not only matched the nationalist-populist appeal of the JVP but created the correct climate of opinion for Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne and the security forces to quell the JVP insurgency.

Question: Did the JVP mobilise a disaffected generational constituency much larger than its own committed support-base? The UNP has been in office for 17 years; Sri Lankans vote at 18. And 5 years have passed since the revolt was crushed. Did the "JVP constituency" (not the JVP) tilt the balance at the Southern province polls.

The CWC, an ally of the UNP since 1977, has decided to go it alone. It may work with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress of Mr. Ashraff, and then discuss the future with the UNP.

Question: Or with the SLFP-led Peoples Alliance, if the post-election situation calls for such a move?

For the moment, at least, President DB's move has lowered the temperature.

But why the General election which could have been held any time in the next 7 months? And why **this** contest when the Presidential poll must be held long before the parliamentary?

It is clear that President Wijetunge did not wish to take the plunge and seek a second term, until he could gauge the mood of the electorate, identify the weak constituencies, and see how the minorities [Tamil, Indian Tamil plantation labour, Christians and Muslims] vote. Those who do not attribute such motives offer a simpler explanation — astrology.

Two issues will decide voter behaviour, the economic and the ethnic. Sri Lanka was the first in South Asia to adopt free-market policies, and take the IMF-World Bank route. The opposition has already focussed on jobs and rising prices. Though it is careful not to talk of "socialism", it does raise hopes of "structural adjustment with a human face" while condemning "crony capitalism". On the ethnic, the PA and, Chandrika are more conciliatory. Mrs. Bandaranayake and President Wijetunge are staunchly "Sinhalese-Buddhist" in their thinking. The mood is for change. This is certainly true of the "new voters".

CWC will go with UNP or solo

S. Selvakumar

While the two major political parties, the UNP and the People's Alliance are preparing for the big showdown on August 16, the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) with a considerable vote bank in selected districts will decide within the next few days with whom they should throw their weight.

CWC Chief and Tourism and Rural Industrial Development Minister Saumya-moorthy Thondaman speaking from his Kotagala residence stated that CWC Na-

tional Council and the Executive Committee were scheduled to meet on July 2 and 3 in Kandy and Colombo respectively to decide on his party's alliance at the forthcoming general election.

Asked whether his party would support the People's Alliance in the election, Mr. Thondaman said: "If we are not contesting alongside the UNP, then we are not going to contest with any other party". This statement by the veteran politician is a firm indication that the CWC will not support the PA at the forthcoming election. And

even if the CWC contests alone, its members who would win will back the UNP in Parliament.

SLMC chief M.H.N. Ashraff said that right now his party would wish to contest the election solo, but preferred an alliance with the CWC to that with the UNP or the People's Alliance. Asked why he preferred the CWC to the UNP or PA, Mr. Ashraff said that in alliance with a minor party, the SLMC could preserve its independence.

Tight security in Colombo follows arrest of Tiger hit squad

Panduka Senanayake

Security was tightened in Colombo with overt and covert operations being launched by the police and security forces following the arrest in the city of a terrorist hit squad with over 300 kilos of explosives.

"We have tightened security. Joint military and police investigations are on to track down other squad members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are believed to be in the city with more explosives", a senior defence official.

Military and police officers were tight lipped about the intended target of the hit squad, identified as members of the hard core 'Black Tigers'. However, it is believed to be the headquarters of a defence establishment in a very sensitive part of the city.

Defence officials said that it would have been only one of several targets in the city selected by the LTTE.

"We are keeping a close watch on other vulnerable points in the city. There are possibilities of other squads being there with alternative targets", an official said.

According to some officials, the first week of July, set aside to commemorate the achievements of the 'Black Tigers' by the LTTE, would have been selected for the attacks with the most likely date being July 5.

"On that day in 1987 the terrorists carried out their 'Miller Operation' with a cadre named Miller driving an explosive laden vehicle into the army camp at Nelliady. It was their first suicide bombing operation and was carried out soon after the successful Vadamarachchi operation by the security forces against the Tigers", an official said.

Officials believe that a double cab with a secret compartment in which the hit squad members were travelling, at the time of their detection would have been used as a vehicle bomb in the attack.

The detection at a checkpoint, made by one of the army's most decorated officers, led the military to an LTTE safe house in Dehiwala where the 300 kilos of plastic explosives were hidden.

The house had been rented from a Sinhala owner for a monthly sum of Rs. 5000. The explosives, concealed in several metal boxes were hidden under bundles of 'Kottakelangu' brought down from Jaffna.

One of the four hit squad members committed suicide by swallowing a cyanide capsule at the time of arrest

(Sunday Observer)

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Sinhala-Tamil Relations: From Trust to Terror

Jayantha Somasundaram

Sinhala-Tamil tensions and conflicts in the form known to us are of relatively recent manufacture — a truly twentieth century phenomenon — S.J. Tambiah.

A century ago it was believed that there were two major communities in Sri Lanka, namely, the low Country Sinhalese and the Sri Lanka Tamils. Majority status was not an outcome of numbers, because both the Kandyan Sinhalese 31 percent and the Tamils of Indian origin 13 percent, exceeded the Sri Lanka Tamils who comprised 12 percent, of the population. Rather, it was a status that was determined by economic achievement and modernisation. In practice this majority status was the preserve of the Low Country Goigama Sinhalese and the Peninsula Vellala Tamils.

The Karawe Community, in spite of the economic successes that they achieved in the latter half of the 19th century, were denied representation on the Legislative Council until 1912 when Sir James Peiris was nominated to one of the two Low Country Sinhalese seats. The Tamils too enjoyed two nominated seats under this expanded Legislative Council that the Crewe-McCullum Reforms introduced. Also for the first time, an elected Ceylonese seat was created. The Goigama and the Vellala united to nominate Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan who defeated Sir Marcus Fernando in the election to the 'Educated Ceylonese seat'.

A liberal secularism had emerged in the 19th century to which leadership had initially been given by enlightened Englishmen. In 1840 Eliot used *The Observer* to suggest representation for taxation. Later came the Ceylon League consisting of European businessmen and Burgher professionals. In this century it grew to be a secular nationalism to which Sinhala and Tamil leaders subscribed.

Influenced both by the Indian swaraj cry and the ideas of Arunachalam, a group of liberals set up the Jaffna Youth Congress in 1924. They campaigned for the abolition of dowry and called for temple-entry, national identity and self government. In 1931 they sponsored the bo-

ycott of the State Council elections because it had not been preceded by purna swaraj.

In *Communal Politics under Donoughmore Constitution*, Jane Russel wrote that "in the 1910s and 1920s the nationalism which was propagated was a 'Ceylon' nationalism, which drew its inspiration from the fact that Ceylon was a territorially homogeneous unit. This doctrine was enunciated by the English educated elite in both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities and it took for its symbol the goal of Dominion Status and the overthrow of alien British rule. Ironically the Jaffna Youth Congress was the most ardent believer of this proto-Lanka nationalism."

Ramanathan considered himself a 'Ceylon Nationalist' leader and believed that he would continue to be regarded as such by all the communities. This in 1915 he fearlessly spoke out against the British Governor, defended Sinhalese leaders like F.R. and D.S. Senanayake who had been jailed in the wake of the anti-moor riots, and proceeded to London to argue his case there. On his return he was given a heroes welcome and carried in procession from Colombo Harbour by the Sinhalese leaders he had defended.

The Devonshire-Manning Constitution which was adopted in 1924 extended the elective principle and gave the Ceylonese a majority on the Legislative Council. Anticipating the replacement of communal electorates with territorial electorates, the Tamil leadership had obtained an assurance in 1918 from Sir James Peiris and E.J. Samarawickrema, that the Sinhala leadership would support the demand for a Tamil seat in the Western Province. When this pledge was broken, Arunachalam the founder president, resigned from the Ceylon National Congress. He wrote: My sole reason for withdrawing from the Congress was the breaking of this pledge.

Within the Ceylon National Congress G.C.S. Corea pleaded for reconciliation when he said "The Tamils in Colombo, cut off from their own community in the Tamil domain, were engaged in the struggle for existence among strangers..." And in 1925 the Congress and the Tamil

Mahajana Sabhai agreed to a ratio of 1 Tamil: 2 others in the legislature. But this pledge too was broken by the Congress, now under the leadership of Francis de Zoysa.

The Jaffna Youth Congress boycott collapsed in 1934 and elections were held in the Northern electates. In the wake of the 1936 State Council elections, a Pan Sinhala Board of Ministers were chosen thanks to the permutations and combinations worked out by Mathematics Professor C. Suntharalingam for D.S. Senanayake. This had been prompted by what Senanayake had seen as the lack of co-operation on the part of the two Ministers from the minority communities, Peri Suntharam and T.B. Jayah, in presenting a unanimous request for further constitutional reform. In 1944 Arunachalam Mahadeva, who had been elected to the Board of Ministers the previous year, added a dissenting minute to the Ministers Draft Scheme — the set of Constitutional proposals that Sir Ivor Jennings had drawn up for D.S. Senanayake. It was this absence of unanimity that led to the appointment of the Soulbury Commission by the British Government.

Balanced Representation

As early as January 1918, the Jaffna Association had insisted that there be parity between the Sinhalese and non Sinhalese members of the Legislature. In July 1930 Ramanathan in a memorandum addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, predicted that with the advent of Universal franchise and territorial constituencies, "if out of 58 members of the State council, 35 agree to pull together... (they) will control the machinery of Government (and) ... will have the mastery of Ceylon." It was in the light of these fears that in the 1930s G.G. Ponnambalam advanced the scheme of 'balanced representation' which would restrict the number of seats of any one community to 50 percent of the legislature. Initially he had the support of Malay leader T.B. Jayah.

D.S. Senanayake succeeded in convincing the Soulbury Commission that under the Ministers Draft Scheme the

legislature would not be skewed against the minorities. The Commissioners wrote that "we were furnished with statistics to illustrate the working out of this scheme ... its advocates estimated that of the 95 elected seats 58 would go to the Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils 15, Indian Tamils 15, Muslims 8, making with 6 nominated seats, a minority representation of 43 in a house of 101." But no sooner had he become Prime Minister than D.S. Senanayake introduced citizenship laws which disenfranchised the Tamils of Indian origin. In the 1952 election 75 Sinhalese MPs were returned against 20 others.

Tamils of Indian origin, who were in the main plantation labour, did not evoke communal resentment until 1931 when universal franchise was introduced and the workers became unionised. By 1939 the LSSP was leading the plantation workers in militant strike action which was met with violence by the Government and the employers. In 1942 the LSSP was banned, its leaders arrested and the party went underground. After the War the LSSP returned to launch an agitation which culminated in the 1947 General Strike; they also emerged as the main opposition party in that year's Parliamentary elections.

The United National Party government which took office introduced the Citizenship Act of 1948 which made it necessary for those other than citizens by descent — Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils, Ceylon Moors and Burghers — to acquire citizenship through registration by establishing three generations of paternal ancestry. Prof. Shelton Kodikara in his book *Indo Ceylon Relations since Independence* noted that "the number of Indians who could claim citizenship under the Act was infinitesimal in proportion to the Indian population."

The citizenship Act was the result of the UNPs concern that not only did the Ceylon Indian Congress obtain 7 seats, mainly in the Central and Uva provinces but that Tamils of Indian origin influenced the voting in another 14 electorates in the adjacent Provinces, where the left parties scored victories. The UNP ensured the passage of this discriminatory legislation by invoking fear and hatred among the Sinhalese; Minister A Ratnayake told Parliament that S. Thondaman, the Ceylon Indian congress leader had "a vision of Ceylon federated with India, dominated by India, overwhelmed by India." In contrast H. Sri Nissanka a prominent Buddhist said from the opposition benches: I am not in a position to vote upon a measure which

ignores the first principle of law.

The UNP's citizenship laws which watered down minority representation led to the resignation of Senanayake's Trade Minister C. Suntharalingam and a split in the Tamil Congress as S.J.V. Chelvanayagam went into opposition and formed the Federal Party.

The Alliance Collapses

The collapse of the alliance between the Sinhalese and Tamil elites was the result of electoral politics in a system of territorial constituencies and universal franchise. The grant of the franchise coincided with the rise of the left movement which introduced mass politics. They went to the people with economic slogans and demands, advocating socialism and liberalism. The only way the Sinhala elite could outflank them was by raising racial and religious slogans. At the 1947 election the UNP used posters of temples burning to whip up religious hysteria against its opposition. But the LSSP and CP succeeded in denying the UNP a majority of seats.

The Kandyan Sinhalese had felt left out of power. Thus in 1927 their Chiefs asked the Donoughmore Commission for Federal Polity with regional states for the Tamils, the Kandyans and the Low Country Sinhalese. Electoral arithmetic dictated that the Low Country Sinhalese abandon their alliance with the Tamils to win over the Kandyans. The disenfranchisement of the Tamils of Indian origin, in an electoral system where constituencies were demarcated in terms of number of inhabitants not voters, led to a significant increase in Kandyan representation.

The Goigama leadership was also under pressure from minority Sinhala groups who feared that their prospects for social and political mobility would be stymied so long as the Goigama-Vellala alliance prevailed.

"A numerically stronger territorial representation opened vistas for the 'new class' among the non Goigama, in particular the members of the Karawe, Salagama and Durawa castes. Hence the attitudes of the leading members of the latter groups from the 1920s. James Peiris, P. de S. Kularatne, L.H. Mettananda, Francis de Zoysa, C.P. de Silva and Cyril Matthew are but a few examples of Sinhalese chauvinism taking extreme positions. A Goigama Vellala compact, even through reconsidered as late as 1945 might have excluded the non Goigama arrivistes from their share of the fixed pie," explains A.J. Wilson in *The Break-Up of Sri Lanka*.

Had the Sinhala-Tamil alliance been part of a Ceylonese nationalist spirit forged in the context of a struggle against British rule it may have been more resilient.

As Leslie Goonewardena told Parliament "...we did not have mass struggles against imperialism in order to win independence. If the Sinhalese as well as the Tamils had gone to jail in their thousands, a consciousness not of Sinhalese or Tamil nationalism, but of a Ceylonese nationality would have been built up in that struggle." (Hansard 8.6.56)

B.C. Pact

The introduction of Sinhala as the official language in 1956 further strained Sinhala-Tamil relations. The Federal Party and the Left Parties proposed parity of status for Sinhala and Tamil. But the two Right-Wing Sinhala parties had whipped up the language issue. When he proposed in parliament that Sinhala and Tamil be made state languages, Dr. N.M. Perera said "It would have been easy for me and the members of my party to have sponsored the very popular idea, Sinhala only, and we would have been acclaimed as heroes." But Leslie Goonewardene warned that "there is the grave danger if the Tamils feel that irreparable injustice is done to them, there is a possibility of their deciding even to break away from the rest of the country." (Hansard 8.6.56) And Dr. Colvin R. de Silva predicted that "Two torn little bleeding states may yet arise..." (Hansard 14.6.56).

Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike reached an agreement with Chelvanayagam to address the concerns of the Tamils. "His formula for language (Sinhalese as the official language with provision for the reasonable use of Tamil) and his solution to federalism (regional council with devolved powers) could have consolidated the island state," laments A.J. Wilson in *The Break-up of Sri Lanka*. "Unfortunately he was trapped by the forces he had unleashed; he was compelled to abandon his pact of 1957."

The hard Right bitterly opposed the agreement. Rev. Buddharakita and Health Minister Vimala Wijewardena, who were later to lead the conspiracy to assassinate Bandaranaike, laid siege to his residence, while J.R. Jayawardene marched to the Dalada Maligawa to take a vow to see the pact abrogated.

Chelvanayagam continued to negotiate. On the eve of the July 1960 elections he received an assurance from C.P. de

Silva, Felix Dias and A.P. Jayasuriya that the 1957 Pact would be implemented, and on that basis informed Governor General Sir Oliver Goonetilleke that the FP would support an SLFP Government. But once elected the SLFP reneged on its promise.

Again in 1965 the FP supported the Dudley Senanayake government on the basis of an agreement that District Councils would be set up. But pressure from UNP backbenchers forced the Cabinet to drop the proposals.

Proposals submitted by the Federal Party to the Constituent Assembly were ignored and instead in 1972 a Republican Constitution was enthroned which was Unitary in nature, gave constitutional status to Sinhala as the official language and gave primacy to the Buddhist religion.

Economic Issues

The issues were not only constitutional, they were also economic. As early as 1949 at its inaugural meeting the FP said: Even more dangerous to the Tamil-speaking people is the Governments Colonisation policy. We have only the beginning of it in Gal-Oya ... There is evidence that the government intends planting a Sinhalese population in this purely Tamil-speaking area.

By 1959 Amparai was a separate electorate in the Eastern-Province returning a Sinhalese MP. Colonisation in the Kantalai-Trincomalee area led to a second Sinhala electorate, Seruwila in 1976. Colonisation then switched to the North and a Sinhala AGAs division was carved out of Vavuniya. In the 1980s aggressive Colonisation such as the convict settlements at Kent and Dollar Farms and the Welioya settlement around Army camps were underway. Between 1946 and 1981 the Tamil component in the Eastern Province reduced from 44 to 36 percent, whilst the Sinhala component rose from 20 to 34 percent of the population.

The North did not provide the Tamils with opportunities for social mobility and economic advancement through working the land. Education which facilitated employment in the State sector and the professions was the only escape route.

"The lands occupied by the Sinhalese are among the most lush in the World. It is not a gross overstatement to say that when a Sinhalese is hungry he need only reach out and pluck a mango or plantain (banana). If economic privation is a precondition for high need achievement then it

is not difficult to see why this is not one of the outstanding components of the Sinhalese personality," says Marshall Singer in the *The Emerging Elite*.

"Unfortunately for the Ceylon Tamil, the lands they inhabit are among the least fertile in the Island. Food crops will grow — with considerable effort — but never in great abundance. Thus he has been forced to work very hard on the land and to seek occupations off the land wherever possible."

"The preponderance (of Ceylon Tamils) in the administrative and professional ranks has commonly been attributed to the availability of good secondary schools in the Jaffna peninsula. There are deeper reasons however. The secondary schools developed because of a powerful demand. The demand arose because of the concentration of population in the peninsula and the ecological limitations these regions did not have the same degree of economic opportunity available to the people of the central highland and the south-west lowlands," says Anthropologist Michael Roberts.

At the turn of the century Low Country Sinhalese who comprised 42 percent of the population and Sri Lanka Tamils, 12.8 percent had 39 and 29 percent of professional places.

On the other hand 75.3 percent of indigenous plantation owners were Sinhalese in 1917, Tamils accounted for 9.6 percent. "The economic resources of the Tamil areas were much limited than that of the Wet Zone and although there were Tamils with investment in plantations and trade, in this they hardly matched the Low Country Sinhalese. The educated Tamils turned to the profession and to service in the bureaucracy, especially in the lower clerical grades. Literacy in English was high in Jaffna," says K.M. de Silva.

Even though they were dominant in the area of property ownership and control, the Sinhalese found themselves outnumbered in the area of employment, both at the administrative and professional levels which the Northern Tamils and the Burghers dominated and at the manual level where Tamils of Indian origin comprised the bulk of plantation labour.

The language policy automatically enhanced the competitiveness of Sinhalese for entry to the public service. However, at that time the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna demanded that persons educated in English or Tamil be prevented from taking

public examinations until 1967 and F.R. Jayasuriya fasted in support of that demand. The Minority Rights Group in UK reported that Tamil representation declined as follows:

	1956	1970
Administrative Service	30	5
Clerical Service	50	5
Professionals	60	10
Armed forces	40	5

Economist S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe warned that "If the present recruitment patterns which often offer less than 10 percent of the places to the Tamils is continued, it will almost certainly aggravate inter-ethnic tension."

The Language policy also resulted in the emigration of large numbers of Burghers and Tamils. This coupled with the repatriation of 600,000 Tamils of Indian origin changed the ethnic composition of the Island.

	1911	1981
Sinhalese	66	74
Tamils	26	18
Moors	7	7
Burghers	0.6	0.2

From 1971 admission to the Universities ceased to be on the basis of merit only. Prof. K.M. de Silva writes "The qualifying mark for admission to the medical faculties was 250 for Tamil students whereas it was only 229 for the Sinhalese. Worse still, this same pattern of a lower qualifying mark applied even where Sinhalese and Tamil students sat for the examination in English.

In the following year a system of media-wise standardisation was introduced, it was later coupled with a system of district quotas. The former benefited the Low Country Sinhalese, the latter the Kandyanans. "In every case the changes in admission procedure was not due to educational reasons but to political pressure," writes historian C.R. de Silva in *Collective identities, nationalism and protest in modern Sri Lanka*. "By 1977 the issue of University admissions had become the focal point of the conflict between the government and Tamil leaders. Tamil Youth, embittered by what they considered discrimination against them, formed the radical wing of the Tamil United Liberation Front. Many advocated the use of violence to establish a separate Tamil state of Eelam. It was an object lesson of how inept policy measures and insensitivity to minority interests can exacerbate ethnic tensions."

Broadcasting futures

The agenda for the discussion was prompted by the recent revolution in broadcasting technology principally, the advent of satellite television transmissions. This new technological era has created an unprecedented opportunity for large numbers of broadcasting organisations, both domestically-based and international, to use the television medium. For the first time, millions of people are becoming television viewers in their own homes. But the very impact of the satellite revolution has also given rise to a range of new, and sometimes urgent, issues. In the countries of the Indian sub-continent, lively debates are in progress about how to respond. These revolve around various questions, such as the need to develop a strategy for dealing with the cultural effects of foreign programmes on a mass indigenous audience; how to license and regulate new regional stations, as well as trying to guarantee standards of quality in their programming.

The chairman of the proceedings, Shri Pran Chopra, opened the discussion by suggesting that the increased competition between various areas of the media can only be beneficial. Where competition is restricted, there is a risk of official interference, censorship and falling standards in output.

The keynote address was delivered by Shri P.S. Deodhar, whose recent inquiry, on a government-appointed committee, has encompassed a wide range of broadcasting issues. He pointed out that the communications revolution has been effectively exploited by private enterprise; public sector broadcasting in India is hampered by bureaucratic practices. There is a need for creative people in this field to enjoy greater freedom. But the many debates on the future of the electronic media, which may throw up important issues, often fail to lead to any particular conclusion.

The rapid growth of satellite television, by its nature, is very different from the development of radio stations, which may start at a local level and aspire to a wider field of nationwide transmission. With television, the emphasis has been, primarily, on the wider canvas. But local transmitters, linked to a satellite network, should allow for a mix of programmes, retaining those of particular interest to a local audience. This would also help to encourage grassroots television production and ge-

nerate advertising revenue. Cable operators will eventually be able to offer up to one hundred different channels on Indian television.

A BBC sponsored Seminar series was held in Delhi, Islamabad, Dhaka and Colombo.

Shri P.S. Deodhar also drew attention to the potential role of the electronic media in reaching the substantial illiterate section of the population in developing countries. The task of informing and educating such people will give greater responsibility to the broadcasters. But this business also has to be commercially viable, dependent as it is on advertising revenue. The message carried on the medium should help to evolve a distinctive Indian identity, as has happened in the United States. India's failure, over recent years, to develop a coherent policy on what kind of software or programming to transmit, has been damaging. Television, after all, has a direct impact on its viewers, particularly children. There is an urgent need for research into the psychological and social effects of television in India.

A special presentation was made by Dr Geoffrey Pardoe, of General Technology Systems Ltd (UK):

"Where Is Media Technology Taking Us?"

Dr Pardoe emphasised the widespread improvements in the performance both of visual and sound transmission, and the accessories of electronic equipment, such as microphones and cameras. Digital technology which is more compact and efficient than its predecessors is bound to change the face of television programming. The number of channels which would be available, carrying technically clear signals, offer the prospect of widely-diffused public service information tips for health and sanitation care, for example.

At the organisational level, there are many ways to create joint ventures and licensing agreements between groups in both developed and developing societies. Here, it's not just a matter of transferring technology, but of pooling human expertise in management, set in a proper co-

mmercial environment, with supporting services and quality control available to the technicians.

The discussion was then thrown open to allow a variety of contributions from speakers. Among the points raised were the following:

- Shri P. Kashyap *All India Radio*: Concern that the dominance of commercial interests in satellite television will swamp public service aspects of broadcasting. There must be a sense of social responsibility so that the broadcasters maintain a human understanding of their audience, not patronising them, for example.
- Shri K.M. Shrivastava Dept. of Journalism, Punjabi University, Patiala: Fear that whichever party is in charge of central government will try to retain excessive control over such a powerful medium. The priorities of the ruling elite are fundamentally different from those responsible for the technology or the production of programmes. Unlike the development of the press, broadcasting has traditionally been in a closer relationship with government.
- Dr Kiran Karnik Consortium for Educational Communication, University Grants Commission: The extent of television reception with projections of 40 million television sets in India, reaching about 200 million people still leaves open the question of access for the remaining 70 per cent of the population. Also, in the new television companies due to come into existence, there shouldn't be any confusion between the owners and the managers. Regardless of who owns a station, the management should be autonomous.
- Kailash Budhwar, formerly Head of BBC Hindi Service, challenged Professor Deodhar's argument that the media could create a specific Indian identity. Who would decide that identity? The task should not belong to the media. The diversity and plurality of Indian culture have to be recognised and defended, where necessary, against homogenising and centralising tendencies. Anyway, advertisers are looking for regional, as well as national, markets, so regional programmes should be guaranteed.

- Shri S.S. Gill, former Secretary, Information and Broadcasting: The aims of providing education and entertainment aren't always consistent in practice. New satellite channels are full of low-quality programming, but are very popular. If some people are apprehensive about the coming of satellite television, it's because its image is mostly as a low-brow entertainment medium. Operating in the open market-place, it's no surprise that quality standards are low; the companies believe that they, by screening entertainment, rather than news or information programmes, they can boost their audience, and so gain more advertising revenue.

Several speakers objected to this down-market approach to television, but there didn't have to be a conflict between high production standards and popular appeal. However, there is a real risk of quality being compromised in commercial conditions. On the other side, pressures to reduce *Doordarshan* television channel to being a hand-maiden of commerce should be resisted; it has to be funded by the state in order to carry out its function as a public broadcasting service.

- Shri Harish Khanna, former Director-General, *Doordarshan*. The official response in India to satellite television has been slow and inadequate. Technology has set the pace, but shouldn't necessarily overwhelm strategic planning of the medium. There is a challenge to be faced. The creative talent certainly exists, but it has to be nurtured and given proper facilities.

The need for more home-based coverage of news events because the international news organisations aren't always sensitive to the attitudes of the local community. There was a feeling that some people are currently afraid of a so-called invasion from the sky which is how satellite television is seen in certain quarters, as a purveyor of programmes which may be offensive to the local culture, possibly even pornographic at times. But global television should encourage Indians to preserve and reassert their own culture and heritage.

Generally, there was praise for the BBC World Service. Its programmes are ambassadors for the United Kingdom and the British way of life. But sometimes its coverage is too parochial for an international audience. And BBC Asia (TV) hardly deals with South Asia; it tends instead to focus on the Far East.

Sam Younger, Controller Overseas, BBC World Service Radio, said that the role of an international broadcasting organisation depends crucially on its ability to provide programmes of quality and relevance to its target audience. The BBC cannot compete in local coverage of news and other events with free and well-developed media in the target areas. What the BBC handles is the wider international perspective. On the subjective of the general growth of television in the sub-continent, Sam Younger emphasised that the experience of Britain shows that radio, a vastly cheaper medium, has not been killed off by the expansion of television; it remains a popular and dynamic medium.

Patrick Chalmers, Director, World Service Television for Asia, pointed out that although the BBC didn't seek to usurp the role of regional broadcaster, it should increase the amount of regional content it carries. The BBC is looking at the funding possibilities of additional programming for the sub-continent. He sees an opportunity for an Indian weekly review news programme. But if it were tuned too much towards India, it might not be so acceptable in other parts of the region.

Mrs Shahwar Sadeque, a Governor of the BBC, reaffirmed the Corporation's belief that, in its own operation, there is no necessary link between audience ratings and commitment to public service broadcasting. The BBC must ensure that all the licence fee payers in the general British public i.e. everyone with television sets should have their fair share in the programmes. If the programmes are of high quality, they will have high audience ratings. At the heart of the BBC's is its mission to inform, educate and entertain.

The chairman of the seminar, Shri Pran Chopra, concluded the discussion by posing the question: do the media make a society, or is it the society that makes the media? However it happens, it's obvious that a society gets the media it deserves. For those who have complained about the policy in this area or the current state of the media, it's important to address the social and political factors which determine the values and priorities of society. We have to look at India's media policy in the particular circumstances in which it operates, and then try to understand its reach, its benefit, its effectiveness, and, above all, the question of its freedom.

Back From Belsen

Clowns' Cantos - 5

*Frankenitsyn, clicks in
To his historical niche
More smooth and slick
Than that old favourite, Rasputin*

*May be, on Prophecy
Rasputin was equally eligible
For the Nobel
But this Czar got him
Before the Trust met
And that far Soviet
Got the Czar
(A Nobel scenario, from Old Zhivago)*

*For Frankenitsyn
It was'nt original Sin
Captivating and tense
In its comparative innocence.
It was the dark sin of Judas
Without the clink, or glint, or flash
Of silver shekels in the Soul's night.*

*Only the betrayal of the Savior, Time
That saved him thus to play this mime
Returning. Did Judas also return
To the Scene of his Crime?*

U. Karunatilake

US Climbdown on China

Inder Malhotra

How things change! Less than two years ago, during the U.S. presidential campaign, Bill Clinton was thundering against George Bush's China policy, denouncing it as "coddling of tyrants from Baghdad to Beijing".

These words were supposed to have sent "shivers down octogenarian spines" in the Chinese capital. What a cruel twist of irony it is that today brittle backbones are to be found not in Beijing, but in Washington D.C. There can be no other meaning of what some have called Clinton's pathetic climbdown or tame turnabout on the crucial question of China's most favoured nation (MFN) trading status and its linkage with human rights. In large parts of the United States, there was an audible sigh of relief when Clinton ended the absurdity of making China's MFN privileges in the lucrative American market dependent on its "record" on human rights, as judged by Washington, which is infested with human rights zealots.

This sea change in American policy in a short span of 12 months — for it was around this time last year that the U.S. president had extended for a year China's MFN status and declared magisterially that further extension would depend wholly on an improvement in China's human rights performance — has important lessons for not only the United States, but also the entire world. India needs to analyse these lessons with the utmost care because China's superbly skilful handling of American hectoring should give heart even to those in the Indian Government, especially in the Ministry of Finance, who begin to wilt at the slightest sign of U.S. displeasure or pressure.

However, before discussing these lessons, it is necessary to go over the various stages through which America's agonising reappraisal of its relationship with China has passed and the reasons why China has prevailed almost completely on its own terms, while the Clinton crowd has had to eat humble pie.

In June 1993, still flush with his electoral victory, President Clinton had laid down seven preconditions for any further extension of MFN status for China. Two of these were "mandatory": that China should stop exporting to the U.S. goods produced by prison labour, and that it allow "free emigration" of a "certain number" of dissidents who were, until then, barred from leaving Chinese shores. According to the Clinton administration,

these two conditions have been "largely met".

But, on the remaining five conditions on which China had to show "significant progress", the story is different. These five conditions were wide-ranging and included such demands as an "easing" of Beijing's "repression" in Tibet, allowing prisoners to be visited by the Red Cross, adherence to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and so on. All that China has done is to agree to a "visit to Beijing" by a U.S. technical team to talk about (emphasis added) halting its jamming of Voice Of America (VOA) radio broadcasts. The U.S. demand was for an immediate cessation of jamming!

As it became clear that China was not taking U.S. treats of termination of its MFN status seriously, Washington's rhetoric on human rights escalated and visits to Beijing by American emissaries became more frequent. Far from being overawed, the Chinese very subtly told the visitors that their lectures were falling on deaf ears.

The case of the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, the highest-ranking U.S. dignitary to go to China since the Tiananmen Square massacre, was the most instructive. In the Chinese capital, Christopher had been preceded by his Assistant Secretary of State, Robert Shattuck, who is the "pointperson" for human rights. He had clandestinely met some Chinese dissidents. These dissidents were understandably keen to meet Shattuck's boss, and Christopher was more than willing to receive them to underline his message to the rulers of China. But the Chinese authorities not only upstaged Christopher but, figuratively speaking, rubbed his nose in the dust. They arrested the dissidents just before Christopher was due to receive them and released them ostentatiously exactly when his aircraft was taxing at Beijing airport for the take-off on the journey back home!

Later, at repeated American prodding and pleading, Beijing released from jail some political prisoners. Simultaneously, however, it issued fresh decrees imposing strict restrictions on political activism. Patiently but unambiguously, they told the American interlocutors that the U.S. concepts of human rights could not apply to other countries, that they would accept or do nothing likely to disturb social stability in their country, and that pressure would get America nowhere.

The high point of China's performance was that, instead of itself playing its ace — China's enormous economic importance to the Americans — it let captains of American business do so. Even while human rights groups went on demanding the termination of the MFN status for China, chief executive officers (CEOs) of top U.S. corporations and multinationals read out the riot act to the White House.

Any monkeying with China's MFN rights, they warned, would be followed by retaliatory Chinese action that would be "disastrous" for the U.S. and catastrophic for places like Hong Kong. America exports £ 9 billion worth of goods to China (against China's whopping exports to the U.S. of £ 31 billion). While China would surely be hurt by denial of access to the American market, the suffering of the Americans in reverse would be worse. For, said the hard-headed CEOs, 150,000 to 200,000 jobs would disappear overnight at a time when every single job in America matters.

Moreover, China's trade with the U.S. flourishes because the Chinese goods are cheaper. Would millions of American consumers agree to pay more for a whole range of items, from toys to garments to shoes, for the joy of upholding human rights?

Thus it was that the Clinton climbdown, when it came, turned out to be even more humiliating than was expected. Speculation was that while the U.S. President would never dare to end China's MFN status, he would, in order to save face, impose several "token" sanctions against China.

In the event, he imposed a solitary and measly sanction: a ban on the import of Chinese assault guns and their ammunition which, at present, accounts for a mere £ 100 million! Human rights groups and others have surely criticised Clinton for having "betrayed" the human rights cause. They have described his action as "morally too dishonest" and politically "too embarrassing". But this is clearly a minority view.

The American public generally has welcomed the end of the agony. This means that the strength of the human rights lobby in the U.S., especially at the Capitol Hill, has so far been exaggerated. Some good may come out of this sobering drama if the Clinton administration — and those zealots who have been hijacking its age-

nda — at least realise that relations between nations are much too complex to be governed by a single criterion, especially when it is something altruistic and generic like human rights or, for that matter, non-proliferation, market access and so on.

As events in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, North Korea and elsewhere have shown, the sole surviving superpower is in no position to browbeat even tiny nations. Nothing can be more foolish for the U.S., therefore, than an attempt to lay down the law for countries which are independent actors in world affairs, as China surely is.

And, so is India or Japan (with which America has a massive trade dispute). China has never minced its words in pointing out that American concern for human rights can be selective and that there is a tendency to use human rights as a "political weapon".

It is strange that a decade and a half after the Jimmy Carter disaster, the Clinton crowd is unaware of the complications that the mindless promotion of human rights can cause.

In Iran today, you are likely to come across a large number of tormented people who curse Carter for having imposed on them the present Islamic revolutionary regime. Carter at least was sincere in his devotion to human rights, while Clinton is cynical. Moreover, Carter changed his tack after the hostages crisis in Teheran.

Clinton has yet to show that he has also seen the light. And this brings one to another difference between the Carter set-up and the Clinton dispensation. Jimmy Carter was surrounded by able foreign policy experts: Zbigniew Brzezinski as national security adviser and Cyrus Vance, still, in demand as an elder statesman, as Secretary of State.

Clinton, personally lacking in both interest and aptitude where foreign policy is concerned, has chosen the weakest possible foreign policy team.

It has needlessly, and in a foolhardy manner, aggravated the difficulties which could have been avoided by a more adroit set of players. No wonder, reports from Washington suggest that both Christopher and Tony Lake, the present national security adviser, might be asked to leave soon. In deep, the joke is that when the former Deputy Secretary of State, Wharton, was given the order of the boot, most Americans had said that the "wrong man" had been sacked.

Christopher, they added, should have been the first to go. Since Strobe Talbott, a distinguished journalist and a Clinton

crony, has proved to be a much more acceptable substitute for Wharton, it remains to be seen whether his former room-mate at Oxford would promote him to the position of Secretary of State, which might inject an element of realism and dynamism in the present floundering foreign policy of the world's mightiest nation.

India also needs to mend its rundown machine for implementing its foreign policy. But this painful subject must be discussed separately some time. For the present, the more important task for Indian policy-makers and diplomats is to grasp the effectiveness of the Chinese style, which contrasts with that of this country.

The first thing to note is that the Chinese have never refused to discuss any subject, including human rights, with the Americas. Every Yank of any rank wanting to hold forth on human rights was welcomed in Beijing and then put in his place, as has been described in the foregoing paragraphs.

Secondly, and more importantly, in their dealings with the overbearing United States, the Chinese have consistently combined tactical flexibility with strategic firmness. They never compromise with their basic principles and stand. But, on details, they give in gracefully whenever they consider it necessary or expedient to do so. Their decision to account for or release political prisoners, combined with countervailing measures to drive home their basic point, has been mentioned earlier.

It may be added that on intellectual property rights and patents, China had conceded years ago what India is still contemplating. Thirdly, it merits both attention and applause that while the Chinese say quite harsh things about the United States — especially when they think that their sovereignty or honour is being called into question, the most notable case being Bill Clinton's "chance meeting" with the Dalai Lama at the White House — they never shout and scream.

The latter, unfortunately, has become the hallmark of the Indian scene. Of course, the Indian and Chinese political systems are different, and may this difference last for ever. But in a vigorous and competitive democracy also, national interests can be pursued in a style that combines firmness with dignity. Objectivity demands that differences between the Chinese and Indian positions in relation to the United States should also be taken into account.

China's clout is immense; Indian leverage limited. This is true both of economics — which is now said to be the main determinant of international relations —

and strategy, which has by no means lost its edge.

Indeed, during the painful American debate on China policy, it was repeatedly emphasised that while the policy must be governed by America's great economic stakes in the People's Republic, the crucial importance of China's geopolitical role simply could not be ignored.

Henry Kissinger, always a realist, repeatedly told his countrymen that if *annoyed*, China could make "life miserable for the United States" because it was the "second most populous nation in the world, with a large military equipped with nuclear weaponry and was a veto-wielding member of the U.N. Security Council, where its continued cooperation was essential for the pursuit of America's interests".

Kissinger was joined by many others in underscoring that, without China joining the U.S. in doing so, there was no way to contain North Korea's nuclear ambitions! A positive outcome of P.V. Narasimha Rao's visit to the United States has been that the emphasis in Indo-US relations has shifted from divisive political differences to the immense possibilities of economic cooperation between the two countries. But this is subject to two caveats.

In the first place, the potential of Indo-US economic relations has yet to be realised. Although some U.S. investors consider India to be a better market than China in the long run, at present and in the foreseeable future China's economic weight would far exceed India's.

Secondly, India's geopolitical and geo-strategic importance would not be taken seriously until we can put our house in order, establish over the troubled Kashmir valley much greater control than exists at present, start the political process there and leave the U.S. in no doubt that it would never succeed in its design to first cap, then reduce and finally eliminate, India's nuclear programme.

Let there be no mistake about it. The U.S. has not abandoned this objective and it is being tiresome in its demands that Indian missiles like Prithvi must not be deployed. To thwart the various stratagems the U.S. would surely come up with would require greater sophistication and skill than was in evidence when the so-called secret meeting at London was organised or the U.S. allowed to get away with the impression that, with some minor variations, India would swallow the idiotic proposal for a nine-nation conference to discuss the problems of nonproliferation and regional security in South Asia only.

Western ambivalence, ineptitude and cowardice

Horace Perera

The Territory

The former Yugoslavia, as it emerged from world war I and subsequently from World war II, consisted in 1945 of six constituent republics all but one of which (Bosnia-Hertzevovina) were established on a dominant nationalist basis. Reading the map from West to East, the six are the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Hertzevovina itself, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. Vojvodina and the Albanian dominated Kosovo-Metohija district¹ were autonomous provinces within the republic of Serbia. The entire country is bounded on the West by the Adriatic sea Italy, on the North by Austria and Hungary, on the North-East by Romania, on the East by Bulgaria, on the South by Greece and on the South-West by Albania. All its neighbours have in varying degrees, an interest in developments in Yugoslavia.

The People

The Serbs are comparatively the largest nationalist group in the territory taken as a whole. They are the dominant group in Serbia proper, in its northern province of Vojvodina and in Montenegro. They command a significant minority (32%) in Bosnia-Hertzevovina where the Muslims count 43% and Croatsians 17%. They constitute a fair majority (about 25%) in Croatia, and small minorities in Slovenia, Macedonia and in the southern province of Kosovo which has a Albanian majority of 90%.

Languagewise the Serbian language is used in Serbia proper and in Montenegro, with the exception of the southern Serbian province of Kosovo where the Albanian language dominates. In the Independent Republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia their respective national languages prevail. Ofcourse, there are linguistic minorities in all the republics. There are two alphabets: the Cyrillic and the Latin. The former is in use in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia while the latter is current in the other republics and in Kosovo.

There are three major religions: the

Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and Muslim faiths. The Serbs, Montengrins and Macedonians belong largely to the Orthodox Church, Slovenes and Croats are largely Catholic while a little more than two-fifths of Bosnia-Hertzevovina and a large majority of Kosovans are followers of Islam. There are religious minorities, including small groups of Protestants scattered in different republics. It has been said that "Nowhere in Europe can a more complex web of interactions be found".

The Writing on the Wall

The relations among these nationalist, linguistic and religious groups have, over the years, been far from harmonious both within each republic and among them. Consequently rivalries, tensions and even hostile feelings have persisted. These have been acerbated in the course of the last three decades by a number of factors, the more significant of which have been the following:-

1. The continuation, since 1954, of an extremely centralized bureaucracy and of the communist party that controlled it, even when waves of freedom and calls for democracy and for market economies were sweeping through Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the second half of the 80's.
2. The resurgence of Serbian nationalism stemming from their interpretation that the Federal Constitution, crafted by Tito in 1974 to serve Yugoslavia after his death, was detrimental to Serbian interests in that it extended protection to Slovenes and Croats and to the Albanian dominated population of Kosovo and further that it practically gave republic status to the Serbian provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo.
3. The deterioration of the economy especially since 1987 and the consequence of the leaders of the different republics with national concerns and an increasing realisation that: more decentralization was the solution.
4. The death of Tito in 1980 and with his demise the disappearance of the one person with sufficient stature to moderate

or even restrain separatist tendencies.

5. The election as President in 1987 of Slobodan Milosevic, a hardline "communist nationalist" totally opposed to democracy and obsessed with the promotion of Serbian nationalism and the creation, not of a politically and economically stable Yugoslavia, but of a "Greater Serbia". His dissolution, in the interests of the Serbian minority, of the Kosoyo Government and its National Assembly in retaliation of a proposal by the 90% Albanian dominated segment of the province for a greater measure of autonomy, his threat to declare the internal frontiers of the republics "an open political question" if efforts to replace the federal structure of the country by a confederation continued, and his outright rejection of a joint Slovenian-Croatian proposal for the replacement of Yugoslavia's quasi-federal structure by an alliance of sovereign states show clearly the direction in which the political winds were blowing. On the one hand there were, in republics other than Serbia and Montenegro, movements seeking greater autonomy or, as in Slovenia and Croatia, complete independence. On the other hand there was Milosevic determined not only to maintain the existing structure but even, if he considered it necessary, extending Serbian control over the other constituent republics. It is not surprising therefore that in the elections held before the end of 1990 the voting in all the republics was on ethnic lines thus strengthening the independence movements in Slovenia and Croatia and stirring up Slobodan Milosevic's ambition for a "Greater Serbia". With the action taken early in January 1991 by Slovenia and Croatia to invalidate federal laws in their republics it was evident that Yugoslavia was ominously and inexorably moving in the direction of civil war.

Western Myopia and Muddling

1. The wars in Slovenia and Croatia

As early as January 1991 it was clear that Slovenia and Croatia on the one hand, and Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia on the other hand were on a head-on collision course. The centrifugal forces in the two

1. Hereafter referred to only as Kosovo.

constituent republics were quite loud and vociferous and in February went to the extent of invalidating federal laws in their territories. In Serbia, in spite of a anti-communist demonstration against him by an extreme right wing group, Milosevic's power was on the rise. It was in this situation that the then US Secretary of State, James Baker, declared that the US would back the status quo and warned Slovenia and Croatia not to withdraw from the Federation. Johnathan Eyal of the Royal United Services Institute in London rightly commented that this declaration and warning from the solitary Super-Power sent the wrong messages to both sides. Milosevic and his nationalists were convinced that the West would not intervene in what to them was a purely domestic matter. For their part the Slovenes and Croats decided to establish their independence before Western pressure was built up to restrain them. Hence on 25 June Slovenia declared its independence to be followed a few days later by the declaration of independence by Croatia. As should have been expected the Yugoslav Peoples' Army (JNA) invaded Slovenia and later Croatia. Slovenia was better equipped and moreover had a "negligible" Serb minority of only about 5%. Its territorial defence forces put up stiff resistance and the JNA was compelled to withdraw after ten days of fighting. Croatia was much less equipped to deal with a very largely Serbianized army and was at a further disadvantage by the fact that it had a sizable Serbian minority. In fact, in 1990 there had been an armed insurgency for cultural autonomy by the serb minority in the city of Knin. The fighting was fierce but the superior JNA had no difficulty in taking control of Krajina as the majority of its population were ethnic Serbs. Only in January 1992 was peace plan brokered by the UN Envoy Cyrus Vance. The plan included the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops, the functioning of local authorities in three UN Protected Areas under UN supervision and the withdrawal of Serbian forces. None of these three parties (the Croats, the Serbs proper and the Serbian minority in Krajina) are satisfied. The Croats may in time try to recover the lost territory; Serbia is not likely to give up what it has gained and the Serbs in Krajina are totally opposed to returning Croatian rule. Consequently there have been a number of cease-fire violations which show no signs of abating. The Serbs did withdraw their heavy weapons but they are reported to have moved them in the direction of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

2. Diplomatic Recognition

At the beginning the European Community and the US were divided on the question of diplomatic recognition of the breakaway republics of the former Yugoslavia. Responding to a strong Croatian lobby in its territory Germany exerted considerable pressure on its fellow members and on 17 December 1991 the European Community agreed to grant recognition to those republics which measured up to certain specific criteria. January 15, 1992, was the deadline for complying with these requirements. The more important of these were a commitment (a) to the observance of human rights, particularly of minorities, (b) to the principal that border changes should be effected only by peaceful measures and (c) a requirement to support Lord Carrington's Hague Peace Process. Germany, however, jumped the gun and declared recognition of Slovenia and Croatia by Christmas 1991 without adequately checking whether these republics complied with the criteria that had been agreed upon. To maintain the appearance of unity the other members of the Community extended diplomatic recognition to Slovenia and Croatia. Slovenia very largely met the criteria that had been specified. As for Croatia, the fact is that its human rights record, under President Franjo Tudjman, left much to be desired and that his government did not, to all appearances, look like one that would not hesitate to use force to solve border disputes: a view that was subsequently justified.

3. Bosnia-Herzegovina — Independence

The next republic to break away and declare its independence was Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its desire for independence could have stimulated by the ease with which Slovenia achieved and established its status as a sovereign republic, by the decision of the EC at the Hague Peace Conference in 1991 to offer recognition to any republic that asked for it, provided it met the criteria laid down (vide para 2 above) and by the fact that Croatia secured recognition even though it did not measure up to all the requirements. Underlying all these was the fact that the Muslim dominated government did not at all relish the idea of being subjected to a "Greater Serbia" with Slobodan Milosevic at its head. In view, however, of the fact that the Muslims constituted only a relative majority (43%) of the population and there were substantial Serbian (32%) and signi-

ficant Croatian (17%) minorities, and the ferocity of the Serbian intervention in Croatia, the Muslims might have acted with caution. They placed too much reliance on the majority they commanded in the National Assembly and on the support they could count on the Croatian segment of the population who were smarting on the Serbian intervention in Croatia. Suggestions for partition to ensure self-determination for themselves were rejected and they opted for independence by a majority vote in March 1992, in National Assembly.

4. E. C. Recognition

The E. C. was faced with a new situation. Unlike as in Slovenia and Croatia where, for all practical purposes, there were two ethnic groups, Bosnia-Herzegovina had sizable numbers of Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Under the circumstances the E. C. decided to accept its Arbitration Commission's recommendation that the issue of recognition be decided by a popular referendum. The Serbs Proclaimed their total opposition to such a device and refused to participate in it. Taking no notice of this reaction by about one-third of the population, the Muslims and the Croats went ahead with referendum and obtained an overwhelming majority for independence. At this stage one would have expected the E. C., particularly in view of the Serbian reaction to Croatia's declaration of independence in 1991, to delay recognition and try to bring about a settlement between the Muslims and Croats on one side and the aggressive Serbs on the other. But "kept to the recommendation of its Arbitration Commission" the E. C. and the USA extended recognition to the new republic. If the E. C. and the US had shown an ambivalence in regard to the recognition of the independence, particularly of Croatia, they displayed an amazing stupidity in granting recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina. They surely did not expect the Bosnian Serbs or Belgrade to remain idle. As a matter of fact, even before recognition, Bosnian Serbs had begun to blockade the airport in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

5. Western Ineptitude

The West should have been aware of the centuries long, deep seated hatred of Serbs for Muslims. After its defeat in 1380, in the battle of Kosovo, Serbia had for a period of three hundred and fifty years, been a Turkish Pashalik enduring all the

miseries which that lawless regime imposed. Not only had the Serbian aristocracy been wiped out — save those in Bosnia who converted to Islam and in time, from the Serbian point of view, became a national in feeling about their peasantry had also been bled by their children being forcibly recruited, by the “blood tax”, into the Turkish army thus making them the instruments of their own subjugation. These memories rankled and were roused further by the unfortunate appearance in 1990 of an essay, written about two decades earlier by Bosnia President Izetbegovic, in which — inter alia — the view was expressed that “there can be neither” peace nor co-existence between the Islamic religion and Non-Islamic social and political institutions”. The Muslim attitude to the Serbs has been referred to earlier and needs no repetition. As for the Serb attitude to Croats; there was not much love lost between them. Many still vividly remembered that during world War II Croatia had from 1941-1945 been a Nazi Puppet State and, under the dictatorial rule of Ante Pavel, the head of the terrorist organization Ustashe, had suppressed with extreme brutality all, including Serbian, opposition to Nazi domination. The Croats, on the other hand were bitter that, due to Serbian intervention parts of their territory, such as Slavonia and Krajina, were UN Protected Areas. In fact on 28 February 1992 Franjo Tudjman had informed the UN that he could not accept any plan that did not provide for the immediate restoration of the full authority of the republic of Croatia. He was really retracting on an agreement reached earlier to set up UN Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia as part of the Serbian population in two of these UNPAs were also protesting, but on the use of the words “in Croatia” in references to the UNPAs. They claimed that this tended to prejudge the issue. A factor which was not adequately noticed was that both Serbs and the Croats, in spite of their differences, seemed to have had one objective in common and that was to carve out, from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbian and Croatian dominated areas and annex them to their respective republics leaving an emasculated Bosnian Republic. Some media reported that before the escalation of the war, Slobodan Milosevic and his Presidential counterpart in Croatia had met secretly in Graz in Austria to discuss the details. Among the factors that are said to have prompted this meeting, if it was held, was a deep concern among Serb and Croat leaders about the possibility of

a strong fundamentalist Muslim republic on their frontiers followed by increasing flows of immigrants from the Middle-East into the Balkans. However that may be, the scene was set for a prolonged and sometimes confused war in Bosnia-Herzegovina spurred on by ethnic chauvinism, religious hatreds and territorial aggrandizement.

6. The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina when it came was, from the beginning, marred by the merciless massacre of civilians (including women, children and infants) widespread rape, inhuman concentration camp arrangements with inmates dying, inter alia, of hunger, the destruction of ancient monuments, desecration of places of worship, brutal forms of ethnic cleansing, the flow of waves of refugees into neighbouring countries etc. One would have expected the major Western Powers led by the solitary Super-Power to take effective measures to protect the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of republics to which they had, with what now seems unseemly haste, extended recognition. Alas this was not to be so. They appeared to be gripped with a strange inertia and a shameless cowardice. Any military intervention was ruled out at the beginning though later in Resolution 836 of 4 June 1993 and Resolution 844 of 18 June of the same year the use of airpower was authorized “in and around safe areas..... to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate...”. International action came to be restricted to considerable rhetoric, impassioned appeals for avoiding recourse to force which went unanswered, the churning out of a rapid succession of unenforced resolutions by the Security Council, condemnation in strong terms of rape “specially against Muslim Women”, monitoring of a mandatory arms embargo on “all parties” in the conflict, a succession of unsuccessful peace promoting missions, cease fires signed only to be violated, the proclamation of “safe areas” for Muslims only to find them attacked by Serbs. “pinprick bombings” by NATO planes to protect these areas only to provoke retaliatory measures by the aggressors, etc. The only international efforts which were successful were gallant humanitarian aid missions conducted by UNHCR, the ICRC and Relief NGOs. Even these were occasionally hindered from reaching the beleaguered by Serbs who seem to have lost all sense of human feeling. All in all,

it can be said that international efforts did not, for various reasons, measure up to the requirements of the time.

7. “Not a Dog in the Fight”

One important element that was lacking in the international response was effective leadership by the US; by the Bush and later by the Clinton administration. It was election time in the States and the focus of Clinton's election campaign was on domestic issues. Bush, the “Victor of the Gulf War” had to trim his sails accordingly and consequently frittered away the chance he had to exert US might to check Serbia when it attacked Slovenia and Croatia in July 1991. Clinton inherited the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina but was not in a position to give effective leadership to US's Western allies as his formative international experience was eluding the draft and protest US involvement in Vietnam. Hence it would have been embarrassing for him to send young Americans to fight in a war in a “far away country. James Baker is said to have justified Bush's non-involvement by declaring that the US “did not have a dog in that fight”. Actually the US and its Western allies were, as a body, acting like a bewildered dog barking loudly from the safety of the Security Council, scurrying from one crisis point to the next, nibbling at Serbs attacking the safe areas, snarling at violations of cease fires, growling at the scant attention paid by the Serbs to NATO ultimatums, and now that a “peace process” has been started snapping at all concerned to ensure just and fair treatment for the rights of “victims” whom they had an obligation to protect with more effective measures.

Abbreviations

- EC The European Community
- NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- UNPROFOR United Nations Protection Force
- Sources
- UN Press Releases
- Resolutions of the Security Council
- The UN Chronicle 1991 to March 1994
- The Weekly Guardian
- The International Herald Tribune
- The Independent
- Le Monde
- B.B.C and CNN Broadcasts
- “Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition”
Edited by Regina Cowen Karp (SIPRI) O.U.P
- “Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict: Threats to European Security”
Stephen Iwan Griffiths (SIPRI) O.U.P.

South Asian Perspective

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

For situating the ideal of the *People's Plan for Twenty First Century* (PP21) in the regional context of South Asia, it is necessary in the first place to define the region, to articulate its regionality, as well as to combine the current ethos of regionalisation with the spirit of people's plan for the twenty first century.

South Asia forms a single, uninterrupted mass of land connecting the deserts of West Asia and the rich fertile soil of the Near East, and the lower part of the mountains of Central Asia with the Pacific region of the continent — the South East and the Far East. It is a huge land mass with large river basins, undulated plains being cultivated, intricate water networks, of almost same topography and climate and home of some one-fifth of world's population. Richness in natural resources and abject poverty exist side by side.

In human development index, the countries of South Asia occupy almost the same position. Widespread illiteracy, low position of women, child malnutrition, low wages, poor health services, heavy incidence of external debt, unfinished agrarian reforms, fall out of structural adjustment programme at the behest of the Fund-Bank, high military spending, discrimination of the indigenous peoples and the minorities, communal tension, migration — all these are but some of the problems facing South Asia region as a whole.

There are very noticeable differences also. Differences in size of territory, population and natural resources endowment are high. Ethnically, countries are diverse from each other. Development of civic politics and of popular movement for democracy and justice also vary from country to country. These differences rule out any standard prescription of development for all the countries of South Asia. Particularly, differences in economic strength remains a forbidding factor towards regional integration. Narrow delimitation of South Asia is another such deterrent.

Yet, similarities, override the dissimilarities and differences. They demand that a regional perspective be adopted for people's plan for the next century. Only that way, that is, by defining South Asia regionally, geographically, geo-economically and geo-ecologically, the countries and the peoples of this region can negotiate the arrival of the twenty first century and can have meaningful dialogue with other parts of Asia and the world.

The similarity in the countries of the region raises the significance of commonalities with

regard to some of the most pressing issues. Governments are becoming increasingly coercive reflecting crises in governance and lack of governability. Civil rights issues are, hence, everywhere gaining importance in people's agenda. The IMF dictated structural adjustment measures and the GATT dictated agreements are causing economic dislocations resulting in the destruction of the grassroots communities, more inroads of trans-national capital, shrinkage in employment opportunities, fall in the standard of living of the working masses, withdrawal of state support to the vulnerable sections, lifting of controls on monopolies and a more repressive policy to coerce the people to accept these changes.

Corruption is rampant throughout the region. Centralization of power resulting in marginalisation of autonomous voices of people can be found in all the countries. Police and military methods are being used everywhere. The state is increasingly regulating social life. The result is less state in terms of responsibilities and more state in terms of oppression. Again, throughout the region we find nationalist ideologies are being used by the regimes to strengthen their existence and, thereby, add legitimacy to their positions. Thus governments talk less of the region, more of their respective nations against other nations of South Asia. Bilateralism is the smoke screen of such a vicious reflective nationalism.

Again, because of a shared past, problems of communal violence, ethnic unrest, language conflicts and eviction cross State boundaries and become regional problems. Migration, water sharing, energy harnessing, combating fundamentalism, protecting minority rights, and such other issues have to be tackled both bilaterally and multilaterally, in other words regionally. There is the imperative of sharing knowledge, skill, resources and abilities, even if at a gradual pace, in the context of a dominant agrarian milieu, natural and man-made disasters, drought and flood, energy crisis and adverse terms of trade with the North.

In this age, when knowledge itself is an important component of power, such sharing of knowledge and at a primary level, is important. Therefore, whether for intra-region trade, or for support to economic activities, solidarity with democratic activism and upholding commonalities, the sharing of information and knowledge becomes crucial at all levels. Sharing is the first step towards forming an agenda of people's planning in and for South Asia.

Yet, can we rely on the States of South

Asia to steer this process of sharing? These states have only brought misery, fed on rivalries, nurtured chauvinism and jingoism, supported mutual conservatism, have uniformly looted natural resources, arrogated to itself all power while selling their own dignity to the masters abroad. The existing power structure stands in direct opposition to all the popular movements, forces and formations and the various empowering attempts of the people. The elites and the ruling oligarchy in South Asia do not have faith in the destiny of their own region. They look to the Northern powers for succour, in as much as these powers today consider South Asia a hopeless region, marginalised and damned possibly for ever.

People's planning thus implies opposing reactionary forces everywhere in South Asia, criticizing the existing power structure, plans and programmes and suggesting an alternative paradigm. This process has started in the countries of South Asia sporadically within the limit of national boundaries. The people are on the move in all the countries struggling for empowerment, livelihood and dignity. The task is to bring out the regional imperatives in this process, regional dimensions of all future-building activities. PP21 in South Asia signifies this spirit and responds to this imperative. It is not a monolithic structure or an attempt. It is a moral urge upon the peoples of South Asia to realize the identity of South Asia, as well as to reflect South Asian plurality.

It is necessary thus to briefly recount the process of PP21 and capture its spirit.

THE PP21 PROCES

PP21, since its inception in 1989, has been conceived as a dynamic and creative process of interaction within and among communities and people's coalitions, networks and movements in relation to the issues and realities affecting them. Japan being a major actor in the global scene was an appropriate venue for the people who came from different parts of the world to witness the struggle of the people, the victims of development within Japan and emerging people's movements. The participants could identify themselves as one people fighting against a common enemy, the oppressive global structure.

It was a forum to assess the role each one was playing. It provided the opportunity to participate and express views. It was a canvass to draw and depict the vision for a future. It was an occasion to commit to future tasks. It opened the possibility of a new relationship and cooperation transcending all narrow walls and boundaries.

(a) **The Spirit of Minamata**

The PP21 in Japan in August 1989 which culminated in the formulation of the *Minamata Declaration* was a new style and type of movement. It helped strengthening the awareness that the people should, and can, act not merely to resist the imposition of anti-people ideas and systems, but to create an alternative future for themselves. It stimulated the creation of new formations and networks for trans-border collaboration and action.

(b) **The Rajchadamnoen Pledge**

In the absence of an appropriate mechanism for follow-up, the process itself sometimes has lost its direction. But the ideas, the dream and the vision that *Minamata Declaration* contains were the driving force for action. The PP21 movement was further accelerated and strengthened by the events of November-December 1992 in different parts of Thailand. The process of interaction among the peasants, workers, urban poor, women and the indigenous peoples further consolidated the process. The *Rajchadamnoen Pledge* of December 1992 reiterated the commitment to build trans-border alliance of the peoples in struggle, solidarity and hope.

(c) **South Asia Initiative**

The news of the demolition of the *Babri Masjid* came as a shock to the South Asian participants in Bangkok PP21 assembly. They immediately decided to respond to the situation and act to build understanding, confidence and trust among the billion population.

In the South Asian setting, PP21 is not only relevant, but is a necessity. It opposes the present model of development that divides and marginalises the people in this region. It proposes a new paradigm for development in harmony with nature. The PP21 is now envisaged as the emerging trend in people's movements and coalitions in the fragmented South Asian scenario.

(d) **The Ongoing Process**

A group of representatives of concerned people's groups met at Kathmandu in 16-17 February 1993 to identify trans-border issues of common concern. As a follow-up of the Kathmandu meeting, the "South Asia Convention on Communal Harmony" was held at Dhaka in 23-24 July 1993. The participants in a joint declaration vowed to combat communalism and fundamentalist forces in the region through a series of campaigns, networking and solidarity actions on a transborder basis.

A day long workshop on "River Water and Environment Issues" was held at Calcutta on 24 August 1993. Participants decided to address the river water issues with a people's perspective on the basis of catchments and people's need and not on the basis of political boundaries. The idea of forming a *People's Commission* was floated and accepted by the participants as an initial step in a series of interventions required in the field of environment. The *People's Commission* held its first meeting in Dhaka in November 1993 and initiated an integrated action programme on the *Ganga* basin.

More than a hundred participants from the South Asia region representing different NGOs, political parties, cultural forums, social movements and grassroots groups joined in a meeting at Madras during 26-28 August 1993 in search of a South Asian perspective for PP21 and to concertize strategies and actions for future. Separate workshops were held on areas identified at the Kathmandu meeting and specific recommendations were formulated for each areas of concern. A working group meeting at Kathmandu in November 1993 further synthesized these recommendations and prepared a draft on South Asia Initiatives for concerted interventions in specific areas.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

In order to become an Alliance of Hope, PP21 faces certain specific challenges in the South Asian perspective. The manner in which these challenges are handled and responded will, to a large extent, shape the character of the Alliance.

(a) **Enhanced Interaction**

Within the vast array of progressive formations in the Civil Society, certain types of interaction patterns have set in. NGOs interact among themselves; voluntary agencies have their own networks; women's groups have created their communication channels too; political formations and social movements also interact among themselves or with other types of formations. But interactions across these formations have been largely limited. Besides, interaction with other formations like popular social movements, local and sub-regional traditional structures, media and cultural groups, academia and students' movements have been mostly non-existent.

As an Alliance of Hope, PP21 must stimulate this process of wider interaction across such formations. Otherwise it runs the risk of remaining a narrow alliance of the most organized and vocal formations. South Asian perspective

necessitates such a broad-based interaction.

(b) **People-To-People**

The ordinary citizens, without the banner of an association or an institution, were visible source of energy and support at the birth of PP21 in 1989. That strength of PP21 requires even greater challenge in South Asian perspective. The Alliance of Hope must not be merely an alliance of institutions, networks, or other organized formations. Alliance of Hope must truly become people-to-people alliance. This is specially critical in South Asia where trans-border interaction of ordinary citizens is severely restricted due to inter-State hostility and consequent erection of non-porous 'walls' on the borders. These 'walls' need to be overcome more concertedly. People-to-people process and widespread citizens' involvement are, in fact, necessary ingredients of overcoming these 'walls', because most existing institutional formations have also become partisan in inter-governmental divisions and hostility.

The Alliance of Hope has the most striking and lasting potential if it reaches ordinary citizens in various South Asian countries and stimulates and supports the process of trans-border civic relations. This is a tremendous challenge in South Asian perspective since stimulating a people-to-people alliance is far more complex, painstaking and long-term process than mere networking of existing institutions in various fraternities.

(c) **Solidarity in Diversity**

The South Asian perspective demands an appreciation of and respect for cultural and social diversity. This diversity has been a source of great strength in building resilience and vigour in South Asian societies. However, recent years have witnessed a growing intolerance towards diversity. Sensitivity towards and co-habitation with dissimilar others is rapidly declining in the region. The socio-ecological nature of diversity and cultural strength of plurality need to be reemphasized in the South Asian perspective. PP21 can truly become an Alliance of Hope if it is able to promote tolerance of and respect for such diversity. It is necessary that PP21 not merely accepts this diversity but also actively promotes and facilitates it.

A related challenge is building solidarity in face of such diversity. Most gestures, networks and mechanisms of solidarity merely extend to similar and familiar others. The South Asian perspective necessitates strengthening processes, gestures and spirit of solidarity within

the Alliance of Hope across diverse and dissimilar nature of formations in the civil society. Solidarity in diversity is a truly momentous hope in PP21.

(d) **Shared Alliance-Building**

The very essence of PP21 is a process of building and rebuilding the alliance. It is a dynamic process which has already acquired a certain character and shape. In the South Asian initiatives, some of these have been reflected. The challenge of building an Alliance of Hope requires shared responsibility among multiple actors. Such an alliance can not, perhaps should not, be built from a centralized location or secretariat. The interaction and communication stimulated and encouraged by PP21 becomes the fundamental basis of building the alliance. This demands sharing of responsibility across sectors, political boundaries and formations.

The sharing of responsibility must also contend with the need to overcome politics of knowledge and participation. While growing movements and expanding participation is critical for alliance-building, the value and contribution of knowledge and analysis needs to be emphasized.

The challenge is to ensure coherence, while following the 'shared' approach. This is possible only when 'sharing' is demonstrated by acts of responsibility. Sharing in responsibility for building and nurturing the alliance also demands accountability with respect to these actors. The alliance-building process must ensure this.

(e) **Positive Agenda**

Finally, the Alliance of Hope needs to present a positive agenda based on the aspirations of ordinary citizens about their desired way of life. The current situation presents an opportunity to proactively define the agenda for the future of our peoples, communities and countries, instead of merely reacting to the agenda set up by the Governments, national and international agencies and institutions of the market.

Popular movements and new struggles continue to emerge throughout South Asia. While struggle, protest and resistance are integral elements of strategies for survival by most people in South Asia, it is significant that PP21 attempts to present a positive agenda which reflects the aspirations of ordinary, struggling people. That will become the basis for elaborating People's Plan for the twenty first century.

THRUST AREAS

In order to make positive interventions and to foster solidarity, understanding and cohesion among the people, concerted actions are necessary to put forward an alternative paradigm. In the context of the realities of the region, series of activities are required in several broad areas as follows:

(a) **Environment and People's lives**

The natural resources base is being indiscriminately exploited by the profit seekers undermining their sustenance. particular mention may be made about the forests, watersheds and rivers which have been systematically destroyed by State-sponsored projects. The State has failed to protect the rivers and the habitat. Structures are being built in the name of "green revolution" and "modernization". These have obstructed the natural flow of the rivers, displaced the people, denied their customary rights over natural resources and destroyed their livelihood patterns.

(b) **Ethnic/Communal Harmony and Right of the Women, Minorities, Dalits and Other Oppressed Groups**

Violence of the dominant groups is unleashed to weaker groups in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, casts and sex. The situation of women in all countries of the region is precarious. The hegemony of the powerful sections of the society with their strong grip on the state is manifested through their brand of ideology and statehood. The state is provoking and promoting chauvinism in many respects. The principles of secularism and ethnic harmony are set aside by hegemonic groups and classes. The millions are denied of right to livelihood and cultural autonomy.

(c) **Human Rights and Demilitarization**

Human rights record in the region is poor in any acceptable standard. States are at loggerheads which obstruct free flow of the people and information. Rights are being curtailed and the militarism is rationalized on the false premise of "national security". There are increasing investments on military hardware and software and meagre resources are allocated for education, health care and employment generation. The people want an end to political rivalry, hatred, mistrust and divisive policies of the States across the region.

(d) **Globalization, Structural Adjustment and People's Economy**

The power of capitalism and the TNCs is now more than ever before. Although they are in crises, they are trying to overcome it by changing faces and becoming more and more ruthless. The latest prescription to revitalize global

capitalism has come in the form of "structural adjustment facilities". These resulted in large-scale unemployment, destruction of livelihood patterns and plight of the millions at the grassroots. The states in South Asia have become partners of the hegemonic multilateral agencies and the TNCs to marginalise the disadvantaged communities in the name of growth, efficiency and modernization.

(e) **People's Perspective on Development Alternatives**

Development models prescribed by the North have failed to deliver benefit to the people. In spite of all pessimistic developments, many communities at the grassroots have been able to protect and promote indigenous values and survival strategies. Such a value system and strategies are important and relevant in the context of a sustainable society which has become a dream for the new generation of people and development activists. It is important to derive lessons from sustainable options which already exist and strive for alternatives which would bring a conducive environment to live peace and in harmony with nature.

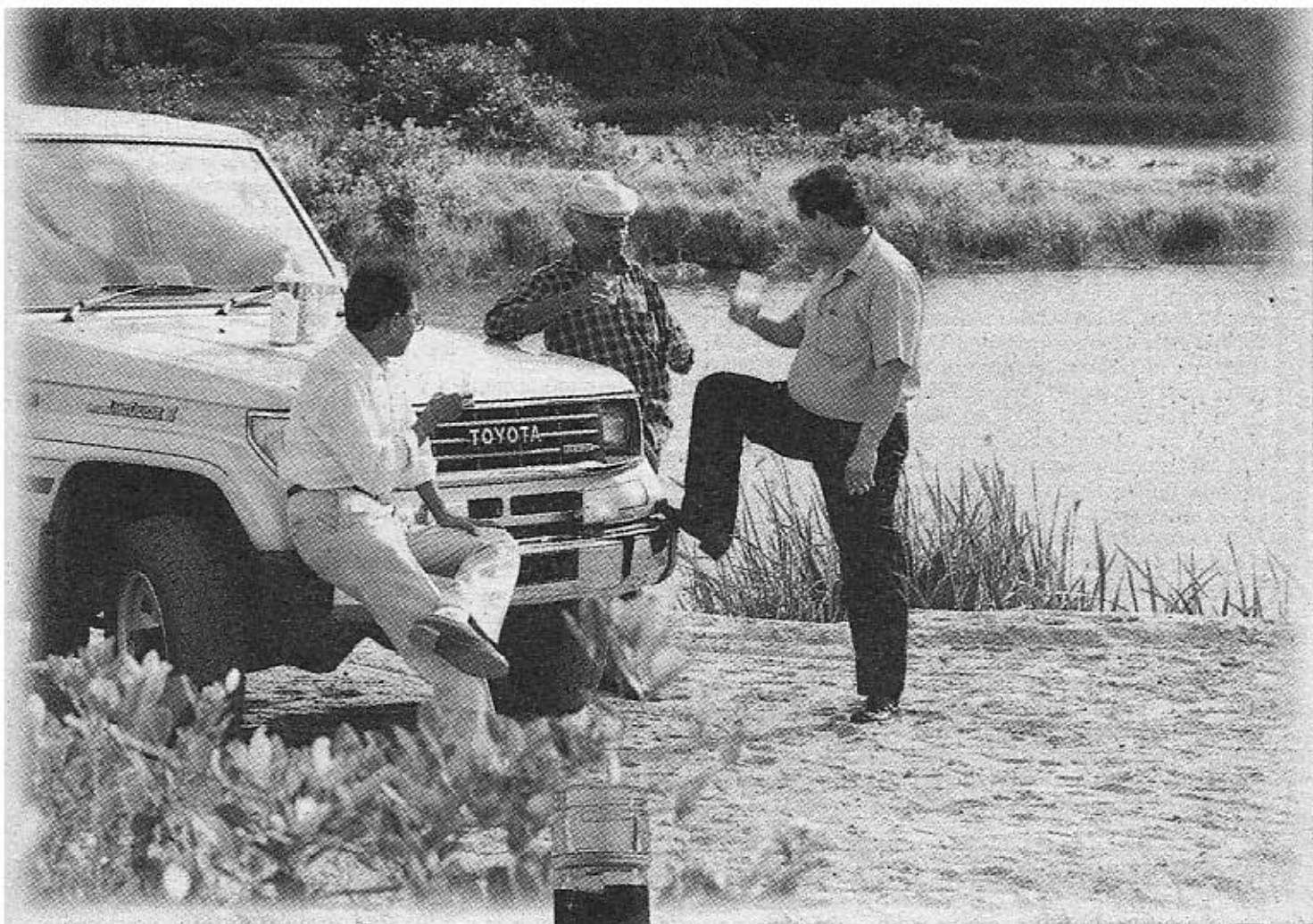
COMMON SLOGANS

In all these five broad areas, already series of interventions have been made. In order to devise an effective process for alliance across the region, it is necessary to establish horizontal linkages with all types of people's formations. In this backdrop, it is necessary to build Alliance of Hope around slogans of common concern irrespective of political boundaries:

- Right to free flow of the people and information;
- Moratorium on all state-sponsored projects which undermine the environment and displace the people;
- Stopping arms race and to foster collective security for the people;
- South Asian common market based on the needs and aspirations of the people and grassroots communities;
- Adoption of a uniform charter of human rights based on the principle of secularism, gender equity and cultural plurality.

An effective trans-border alliance would develop and would be strengthened if meaningful interactions and actions are facilitated around these slogans at the level of ideas, activists and social movements. This would form the basis for a sustainable people's alternative at the South Asia level which would lead us to the twenty first century.

(This draft declaration has been prepared on behalf of the PP21 South Asian Initiative, April 1994)



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by nature
have a desire to
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CHILDHOOD: maiden poem by Vakeesan wins award

It came as a surprise: Vakeesan (17) wins an award for his maiden poem: CHILDHOOD. He is a grade 12 student of Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute, Scarborough. He was born and educated upto grade 10 through Tamil medium in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Within 2 years of his arrival in Canada, Vakeesan wins this award in English Poetry Contest in his school.

His friend Shan was the only son of the late Sri Lankan Tamil writer Nellai K. Peran. The Perans were killed when an artillery shell hit their house on July 15, 1991.

"The topic for the contest was: CHILDHOOD. I guessed my classmates would write something pleasant. I thought of writing something different" says Vakeesan.

"How different?"

"My friend Shan is not alive. If he were alive, my memories about him would please me. Since he is not alive, those memories hurt me. I miss him in this poem."

In my home country,
At the beginning of a new term,
The teacher begins to call the names.
I know she isn't going to call Shan.

The days with him are unforgettable.
The days we chased squirrels from the mango trees,
The days we collected bullets as a hobby,
The days we went rabbit hunting and fishing
Instead of going to school,
The days we hid in the bunkers which were

Dark and muddy and full of snakes and scorpions
In the night.

The day I heard the explosion of an artillery shell,
And I ran to see my friend but I
Couldn't see his face.

That is one of my childhood memories.

Poetic brevity and aesthetic content adorn the poem. The way he expresses his childhood impressions touches the heart of the reader. He presents a moving picture of the innocent lives falling victims to the civil war in Sri Lanka. He ensures that his readers in Canada join him in missing his friend who died in Sri Lanka 3 years ago.

S. Velupillai

Canada.

Liberal democracy Sri Lanka-style

In his reply (June 1) to my comment in the *LGof* May 1, Dr Chanaka Amaratunge has chosen to be grossly insulting. Unwise of him, which he may not realize even after reading this because he is evidently in a confused state of mind.

The confusion shown in his arguments is reflected in his style as well. He concludes his reply by stipulating his requisites for "civilized discourse", one of which is accuracy of terminology. But in the very next sentence he commits a howler by accusing me of "firing badly aimed brodsides with the zest of a loose cannon." A cannon, an inanimate object, is not capable of zest which might be expected only of the person who fires it. Not the only howler in his reply, which shows that accuracy of terminology is not his forte. In his prose, as in his politics, CA fails to practise what he preaches.

The confusion shown in his arguments is very striking. He seems incapable of recognizing plain facts, and of making simple logical connections. I will illustrate.

He is outraged by my having stated in

an article last year that both the DUNF and the Liberal Party were championing liberal democracy. There we have a very clear demonstration of an incapacity to recognize a fact that was staring him in the face. For it is an incontrovertible fact that the DUNF did champion what amounted to liberal democracy, even if its leaders were insincere about it, and what is more it did so with spectacular results. The impeachment motion galvanized the public on the issue of the Presidential system. A torrent of articles in the press was followed by meetings, seminars, lectures, at which the Presidential system was pulverized and the public turned against it. That was a major DUNF contribution to the promotion of liberal democracy, and not the only one.

CA's point, of course, is that Athulathmudali's democratic pretensions should not have been taken seriously. I certainly did not, just as I cannot take CA's liberal democratic pretensions seriously either. What is at issue is performance, not the pretensions of politicians. The difference in performance is that Athulathmudali

advanced liberal democracy, while CA has been betraying it.

I will now demonstrate his incapacity to make simple logical connections. He says that I had thought of the LP as God's gift to Sri Lanka in 1991, a status shared in my estimation by the DUNF in 1993, but by 1994 the LP is beyond the pale. He then asks, "What has happened during these years to evoke these confused responses?"

Surely it should have been obvious that in my view the LP of 1994 is not the same as the LP of 1991, a view which far from being eccentric is shared by others including some of the ablest LP members who abandoned that party, namely Tisse Jayatileke, Saravanamuttu, and Rohan Edrisinha. Surprisingly CA himself writes just two paras later. "The UNP has no one unalterable identity which makes it impossible to work with it at all times." He is evidently unable to make a connection between that remark and the identity of the LP itself.

The central issue behind this debate is

whether a liberal party can ally itself with anything like the UNP and retain its credibility. Before discussing it, I must first make a clarification about the title given to my earlier, "Chanaka: Another Fascist?", which was the consequence of editorial privilege, and not mine. The question at issue is not whether CA is himself a fascist like Zhirinovskiy. However I will not cavil over that exercise of editorial privilege, because the question may be worth considering after all.

What I wrote was that the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia is headed by a Hitlerite racist and fascist, while "in Sri Lanka the Liberal Party is in alliance with the racist and fascist UNP", and therefore both are accommodative to racism and fascism. What has to be determined is whether the UNP can be properly characterized as racist and fascist.

CA declares that it is a gross exaggeration to use the term "racist" of a party which accords a significant place to the minorities within it, has devolved a measure of power and enfranchised the previously disenfranchised. Those are broad generalities which cannot suffice to dispose of the question. I did not go into details about racism towards the Tamils, but I referred to a detailed and lengthy letter to the Island in which I had established that the UNP has been contemptuously racist towards the Muslims. CA is at liberty not to read that letter. He is not at liberty to challenge my characterization of the UNP as racist without meeting the arguments in that letter.

As for fascism, I made it clear that I was using that term in the popular sense of addiction to totally unprincipled brute power. CA does not meet my point about the UNP's record of unrelenting State terrorism for seventeen years. Instead he irrelevantly argues that a party which tolerates a considerable degree of political dissent and maintains "a liberal democratic structure" cannot be called fascist. That argument is irrelevant because I did not say that the UNP is fascist in all aspects of its governance. I used the term fascist in a limited, precise and from a liberal standpoint, a damning sense.

"A liberal democratic structure", says CA. Democratic? He must acknowledge that the first essential of democracy is that the people be allowed to choose their

government at free and fair elections, and he must acknowledge further that no government with anything like the UNP's record of rigged elections can be regarded as properly democratic. He does acknowledge violent electoral malpractices "especially in the years prior to 1990 when we opposed it". Are we to believe that he is unaware of the blatant rigging that went on at the recent Eastern PC elections, a foretaste of what we might expect at the Presidential and General elections?

I cannot see that the LP's alliance with the UNP, a party that is "racist", "fascist", and "undemocratic", all of which are terms used in very precise senses, is excusable. CA does not advance his argument in any way by saying that "Mr Hussain and others of his ilk" must disabuse themselves of the notion that liberal democratic ideals are betrayed when liberals enter into alliances with parties which do not share many of those ideals, after which he adds that Western liberals have allied with Conservatives, Social Democrats and so on.

It is hardly an adult level of argument to suppose that Hussain and his ilk are unaware of those well-known facts. CA and others of his ilk, on the other hand, seem stangely unaware of another well-known fact. It is that liberals have too often destroyed themselves by an excess of liberal tolerance, entering into alliance which have proved to be self-destructive. I quote from a source ready to hand, an article by Michael Barone in which he writes of liberal parties. "If their strength is tolerance of diversity, their weakness is tolerance of anything — including their own destruction." (Dialogue — No 103, 1994).

The really important question is whether the Western liberals will ally with a party having anything like the record of the UNP. The Udugampola affair, the Franciscu affair, the Kuliypitiya pardon, the continuing refusal to properly investigate the disappearance of 31 school children at Emblipitiya, the removal of the Bribery Commissioner, the denial of promotion for her Deputy, the blatant rigging at the Eastern PC elections, and now the dismissal of the Western Province Governor for acting constitutionally, are all among the grand achievements of the present Government in just over one brief year in office. Does CA really expect the public to believe

that the Western liberals will ally themselves with a party having that kind of anti-liberal and anti-democratic record?

It appears that in accordance with the characteristic defect of liberals CA has been displaying an excess of tolerance. Or is it something else? An outraged LG reader has sent me a copy of the December 1988 issue of the Liberal Review, of which CA was a co-editor. It has to be read to be believed in the perspective of subsequent LP somersaults.

Mrs Bandaranaike's candidacy provided the "only hope for peaceful and democratic political change" she was the "only truly national candidate", her programme was "unmistakably tolerant, democratic, and centrist", she held out "the promise of a liberal democratic constitutional order", and so on. Shortly afterwards the LP withdrew its support for that paragon. Was it that she failed to include CA in her national list?

The indictment of President Premadasa in the same editorial, a savage diatribe, has also to be read to be believed, again in the perspective of another somersault. We find this, "There can be no doubt that he has been at the forefront of the UNP's undermining of political and individual freedoms through such acts as the deprivation of Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike's civic rights, the Referendum and the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. Liberals have noted with particular concern the repeated attacks made by Mr Premadasa on the multi-party system of government".

In the old days there was only one system of logic, at present there are several such as symbolic, mathematical, and modal logic, and now we have the entirely novel system of Chanakian logic according to which Athulathmudali was forever beyond the democratic pale for what he did under the 1977 Government, but not so President Premadasa.

What precisely is CA's understanding of what liberal democracy should mean in practice? That it sanctions a liberal tolerance towards practically anything, a total irrationality, an abandonment of all principle? Or is it that there is just one grand overriding principle which makes everything else unimportant and irrelevant, the one principle of getting Dr Chanaka Amaraturunge into Parliament?

Izeth Hussain

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