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LANKA

GUARDIAN

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RAMBO ROUND 2

“Mad Bomber” Ron VS “Mad Dog” Muammar

— James Reston, Nikil Chakravarty, Daoud Kuttab

WOMENS WORLD

Wife-beating — *Sepali Kottegoda*
Gwen Herat's Poetic

Meditations — *The Outsider*
Patriarchy and Militarism

— *D. Vithanage*

Women and May Day

COMMUNALISM

Tamil Myths — *Radhika Coomaraswamy*
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the English Dept.
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on Election **and**
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ABDUCTED MONKS

'Disappearances' drew world attention in the 1970's as a Latin American phenomenon and a peculiar characteristic of what Costa Garvras in his film based on the Uruguayan experience called 'The State of Seige' and political sociologists termed the State of National Security.

The stark and startling fact of 'disappearances' first brought to light by Amnesty International and then by the State Dept came home to the average Sri Lankan last month in the most bizarre fashion.

Five monks on a fast in support of the Nurses Union strike, two national dailies reported, were bundled into vans by a group of men at midnight and transported to unknown destinations. Two days later, two of the monks found themselves in a cemetery forty miles from Colombo. The others had been dropped off in places close to the city.

Nothing has been said of this incident since then and the daily press, including the major Sinhala papers which usually take up the cause of the Sangha promptly and boldly, has chosen to remain silent. No editorials, no commentaries, no indignant letters to the press. And yet this is a Buddhist land truly proud of its Buddhist heritage.

What is the role of the Sangha in our society? How important are the monks? How sincere is the Buddhist public's protestations of respect and reverence for the Sangha? Is politics supreme and the repressive apparatus all powerful?

SUSPECTS' RIGHTS

A long dormant Bar Association has lately displayed a refreshingly active concern in the legal rights of the citizen. A welcome change from preoccupation with abstruse questions of "legal reform" or the rights of the affluent client has taken place. The need for such concern is all the more urgent when Sri Lankans have now to live with not merely prolonged 'emergency' but the draconian

Prevention of Terrorism Act, a law which Mr. Botha would warmly approve and applaud.

The Bar Association's sub-committee studying much-needed amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code has recommended that the Police should inform a friend, relative or any Attorney-at-law when a suspect is taken into custody.

It has also urged the government to amend the law so that a judge of the High Court or a magistrate could speedily inquire into any complaint regarding the detention of a suspect.

The committee holds the view that Habeas Corpus applications do not expeditiously serve the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights of a suspect when the police exceed the 24-hour rule of detention of a person without charge.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Minister must take responsibility for the Kantalai tank disaster said SLFP leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike at a recent rally. She cited the case of the Indian minister who submitted his resignation immediately after a rail crash. In Sri Lanka, traditions have been somewhat different. After a major train accident, one of our Ministers asked the Opposition whether he was expected to stand by the railway track with a red flag.

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Lanka Guardian
1986-
SLFP

TRENDS
+
LETTERS

Obscurantism?

Mr. Amaradasa Fernando accuses me of many quite terrible things, and among them of "being on the side of the forces of corruption abuse of power and" — nota bene — "obscurantism".

All I did was to correct a series of incorrect statements made by him (some trivial, others serious) and for a reason I clearly mentioned: appearing as they did in a reputable journal, unless corrected, they would acquire the status of established fact. This is obscurantism? Mark you, Mr. Fernando does not challenge me on any of these corrections. Instead he calls them "nit-picking." It is also relevant to point out that the correct version of the facts given by me in no way puts the U. N. P. government in a better light than Mr. Fernando's incorrect version. Surely he is not arguing that if one is against this government and all it stands for it does not matter what one says about it so long as it is contra?

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THE RETURN OF ROMESH BHANDARI (WITH TAMILNADU ESCORT)

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

This time there must be a finality... the Indian government must take effective action if the talks are inconclusive... it can be diplomatic or it can be direct involvement" said Mr. A. Amirthalingam the TULF leader in an interview with Reuters a few days before the Indian delegation led by Mr. K. Chidambaram, the Union Minister of State for Personnel, and Pensions arrived in Colombo.

While Mr. Amirthalingam's remarks made it clear that the exiled TULF was at the end of its tether, equally clear was that for the Sri Lankan press, reflecting no doubt the national mood, it was another "Bhandari misson". All the front-page stories and the political columns gave prominence to Mr. Bhandari, who at the moment holds no official post. Of course, there was one strong reason for such newspaper treatment.

Not long after Mr. Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister, Mr. G. Parthasarathi the co-author of "Annexure C" was eased out of the negotiator's role largely because of Sri Lankan criticism. Before and after Thimpu, it was Mr. Romesh Bhandari, the foreign secretary, who was on centre stage. Besides, Mr. Bhandari who is NOT from Tamilnadu or the Indian south, was Colombo's favourite. To make the role itself more important, the new Indian prime minister himself had publicly enlarged his own involvement. Mrs. Indira Gandhi had only offered her "good offices" whereas Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had openly assumed the role of mediator in the Sri Lankan conflict.

The collapse of Thimpu and the all too evident failure of 'the

cessation of hostilities" — both sides paying little heed to the accords and blaming each other — led Mr. Gandhi, step by step, to reconsider the usefulness of his involvement. By the end of 1985, Mr. Gandhi persisted in posing the question whether his services as mediator were really required any longer. Sri Lanka must make up its mind, he kept saying publicly.

Tougher Stance

Meanwhile the tone of Indian statements, especially in Parliament by the Minister of External Affairs and his deputy, the Minister of State, turned tougher and rougher, "Genocidal intent" and "elements of genocide" were the key phrases in the run-up to the near-confrontation between India and Sri Lanka at the UN sub-commission on Human rights in Geneva. The US State Dept. report, the Judith Hart visit to Colombo (and Delhi), the strongly worded "concern" expressed by many N.G.O's at Geneva (many of them from donor countries) and similar expressions of concern by the World Bank over escalating military spending set the scene in February-March. Meanwhile Colombo had received India's aggressive and brusque reply to its own protest note on Mr. Bali Ram Bhagat's parliamentary speech.

When Sri Lanka reassured Delhi on its commitment to a "political solution" and its continued need for Indian mediatory efforts, Mr. Gandhi took the opportunity to call for new proposals, a better offer of "meaningful devolution". Colombo wanted Mr. Bhandari. But Mr. Gandhi insisted not only on new proposals but proposals in writing and in detail, not in summary.

A messenger was readily available. Foreign Minister Hameed was leaving for Delhi on April 16th for the NAM Ministerial meeting. The message took about three days to draft, the chief author being National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali.

The main component of the new package on devolution is the substance of the Lalith-Neelam Tiruchelvam discussions, particularly on the powers of the proposed provincial councils on law and order, and on land settlement. The power vested in India's "union territories" (Goa, Pondicherry etc) have also been a source of inspiration besides some ideas from Annexure 'C'.

Mr. Bhandari thinks the proposals, at a first glance, are "attractive". The TULF regard them as 'loose' and 'vague'. The armed groups in Madras find no virtues in the latest offer.

The return of Romesh Bhandari has lifted Sri Lankan hearts, at least among those segments of Sinhalese opinion which believe that enough's enough and things will get worse, not better, if the 'war' goes on. Bhandari is our good guy.

Few commentators have paid attention to the composition of the Indian delegation. Mr. Bhandari is not its leader; Mr. Chidambaram is.

He began his political career as an activist in the Congress party's youth committee in Tamilnadu. He is a Congressman through and through. If Electricity Minister Ramachandran is Mr. Gandhi's link-man with M. G. R.'s AIDMK, the Congress ally in office in the state,

(Continued on page 7)

An elephant stung by a bee?

It was a trial bout in a run-up to the presidential contest between Prime Minister Premadasa and SLFP leader, Mrs. Bandaranaike argues Anura Bandaranaike, the opposition leader. That's one possible explanation for the extraordinary manner in which the mighty UNP, with its five-sixths majority in parliament, reacted to the victory of Richard Pathirana (SLEP) at the Akmeemana by-election. A contest, mind you, for a seat that the same Mr. Pathirana had comfortably won at a by-election in 1983 with a slightly bigger majority. Why is the UNP elephant, stung by a bee, running amok, trying to crush all SLFP and Opposition arguments that this particular defeat has more than a passing political significance?

It is a mistake to explain the post-Akmeemana behaviour of UNP stalwarts only in terms of a prestige battle or proxy war between premier Premadasa and Mrs. Bandaranaike. The UNP party machine moved into top gear weeks before the by-election, and the ministerial bandwagon rolled into town. Why did the UNP High Command mobilise all its resources to wrest this seat from the SLFP? Why was a by-election for a seat lost in 1983 so vital to the UNP in April 1986?

The explanation lies in the psychology of the Sri Lankan electorate, from humble voter and bureaucracy to the financial backers of the parties.

By the 1978 Presidential constitution and the 1982 December referendum the UNP changed the rules of the old parliamentary game and altered the structure of Sri Lankan politics. But it has failed to radically re-shape voter psychology which grew out of the introduction of adult suffrage and its free exercise for many decades, and

nourished by a basically two-party system which in its actual operation resulted in regular shifts of power between the two principal contenders, the UNP and SLFP.

When the UNP pulled the "Naxalite" stunt in December 1982 and held a referendum instead of the general election that was due in 1983, the Sri Lankan voter was forced to accept the unpalatable but unalterable fact that this settled system of periodic (5 or 6 years) change had been disrupted. He had to resign himself to the idea that his next chance to defeat the government if he so wished, would come only in 1989. By-elections certainly came but not all of them could possibly affect the UNP's total command of parliament. By-elections could not change governments nor even effectively alter the balance of power in parliament. By-elections were reduced to what they really are — local contests that cannot even hint at changes which may come in 1989.

Not so today. Mrs. Bandaranaike has had her political rights restored and is back in business. The only political personality who can seriously challenge the UNP leadership nationally has returned to the arena.

What is more she has only a single issue on the agenda — a general election.

Now the voter can begin to think in terms of a change of government, not in 1989 but much earlier perhaps. And this feeling has been fortified by events abroad.

AQUINO IMPACT

Even the generals in our neighbourhood are being compelled to hold general elections, however fake. Most of all, there was the tremendous psychological impact — thanks to TV — of the events in the Philippines, once a show-case of US

style democracy just as Sri Lanka was a model of British parliamentary democracy.

The possibility of an election before 1989 is therefore real. The Sri Lankan voter is also a finely tuned opportunist. The slightest sign of shifting political opinion can begin a major subsurface shift of allegiances. The UNP and SLFP the veteran operators of the electoral system, know this only too well. In this contest, that is in today's changed climate of opinion, a by-election can signal more decisive changes in the offing. The most crucial clue is a by-election where it is widely perceived that the regime has lost its grip, that the State-controlled machine is not producing the desirable result.

The truth is that an administration is 'defeated' even before it faces the polls to be out-voted. In a situation such as today's a perceptible shift in electoral opinion causes tremors in the business world (the financial backers of the two major contenders) and in the bureaucracy. The businessmen, modern capitalist or old-style mudalali, become worried and nervous and begin to buy re-insurance. If they gave a million to the UNP, they will now slip a few lakhs to the SLFP. And money matters; it always matters in the competitive parliamentary game.

DE-STABILISATION

In the bureaucracy, the middle strata, probably already aggrieved for predictable reasons, with a new sense of confidence, can start to criticise the regime openly, and even work against it quietly. The "efficiency" of the government is being undermined day-by-day. It is legitimate, if insidious, destabilisation.

In the higher rungs of the administration all but the men totally identified with the ruling party,

(Continued on page 7)

Parliament

Sarath, Lalith on Nurses Monks and Terrorists

Kalawana MP Sarath Muttetuwagama: It is quite clear that the disaster at Kantalai was due to the negligence of the government, the BBC and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported that a crack in the bund was visible months ago.

National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali: They are well known to get their facts wrong.

Mr. Muttetuwagama: Even a government owned newspaper said so.

The nurses strike was an issue brought about by the government. They prolonged the issue by issuing vacation of post orders.

Percy Samaraweera: The priest who brought about the strike will go to hell.

Mr. Muttetuwagama: Those who go to hell will be the people who abducted the five priests at Thunmulla. There was even an Inspector in civvies present at that time.

G. V. Punchinilame: Who is he?

Mr. Muttetuwagama: I cannot mention his name because he might get a promotion.

Sarath Muttetuwagama: The government used the Emergency to ban the Nurses Union. This is the first time a government has used the Emergency to ban a union.

It took 10 days for the government to condemn the US attack on Libya. This was an attack pre-planned by the United States to kill the Libyan President.

It is true that this government is on its bended knees before the United States President Ronald Reagan.

Why did the government ban a meeting by a Muslim organisation here when they wanted to condemn the attack on Libya?

I want to ask whether it is true that President Reagan has sent a message to President Jayewardene saying that there are human rights violations in Sri Lanka and that we should seek an immediate solution to the ethnic problem.

The government is also using the Emergency regulations to take into custody many Sinhala people.

One of them is Indika Gunawardene. But there are many more. A Wimalasena has been missing since last January. His whereabouts still remain unknown.

A Caldera from Kaduwella was a travelling salesman.

At about 10.30 one night, members of the NIB came to his residence and took him. Subsequently his wife received a letter to say he is safe and well, but his whereabouts are still unknown.

Sarath Gamini, an employee from Gulf Lanka Travels, Katubedda, Danapala a Railway employee and there are many more.

The Police were using unmarked cars for this.

Denzil Fernando: All fairy tales.

Mr. Muttetuwagama: They are not fairy tales. This is the truth. I want to ask the government what they are going to do about this.

How can government under the cover of the Emergency, arrest Sinhala youths?

There is also another issue, I want to raise. We have also asked the government about mercenaries working here.

I will name a few. Mike Bolas, David Butler, Dick Patson, Sandy Russel and Deal Mcwith.

Why are they working here? Isn't it true that some are paid Rs. 300,000 a month?

They are also able to do what they wish since they are working for the Defence Ministry.

I also want to know what this Keeni Meeni Corporation is doing here?

I also want to know about some purchases by this government.

Government purchased two Bell helicopters for 1.1 million US Dollars.

These were ordered for President Marcos, who had paid an advance, but suddenly the Philippines forfeited the advance and the helicopters were purchased by us. We also later purchased ten helicopters which are not bullet proof. Some of our Air Force personnel have sustained injuries due to this.

The government had also bought a helicopter for three million US Dollars.

This has been done while the helicopter price is 1.495 million.

Four helicopters like this have been purchased and they are not serving any useful function.

There is another matter I like to raise.

There is a disparity in the salaries paid to Special Task Force personnel and normal Policemen who are working in the North and the East.

These Policemen are fighting the same battle and undergoing the same risks, but the STF personnel are paid more.

But, then the STF has special privileges since the President's son, Ravi Jayewardene is in charge of it.

Gamini Dissanayake: Ravi Jayewardene is a Security Advisor

to the president. He is not in charge of the STF.

Mr. Muttetuwegama: When I asked the last time how he was a member of the Security Council, the reply was that he was in charge of the STF.

What is happening to the ethnic problem?

The government is blowing hot and cold as regards to India.

Relations with India are always changing. At Dhaka, President Jayawardene told Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi: "You lead we will follow"

But when Mr. Bhagat made a statement what happened here?

For the first time the government decided to put down in writing and sent the Foreign Minister to India.

This is good. But shouldn't the government show the proposals to the people who are concerned about these proposals before coming to any agreement?

I also want to know whether the government is serious really to solve the ethnic problem?

**National Security Minister
Lalith Athulathmudali:**

This debate has been an 'acharu' upto now. But Akmeemana has been the centrepiece of it all.

After the Akmeemana by-election there have been analyses in this country, which have not being used in the world before.

The vote for the UNP has improved since the by-elections held in 1982, 1983 and 1986.

I tell you that in 1989 when a general election is held it will improve even more.

If the Leader of the Opposition lost this by-elections, the people would have said that Anura is leading the SLFP on the wrong road.

I listened to many of the speeches made at Akmeemana. The speeches gave the terrorists some things to quote from.

You may have made them in the heat of the moment but I hope you will not do that again.

There is an administration in the North and East. If the Army is not there, there would have been no administration.

The BBC has quoted opposition politicians, that the Police are taking into custody innocent Sinhalese people.

I want to clear this up. People who have been arrested are from the South with terrorist connections. It is not true that 300 to 400 have been arrested.

The number arrested was 49 and at the moment 41 are being held. These people have links with the PLOT and the EPRLF. The PLOT has definite connections with the JVP.

I cannot give the names of the arrested since it would hamper investigations.

They belonged mainly to the majority community. They have committed robberies. One had a pistol in his possession which was earlier stolen by the PLOT at the Nikaweratiya Bank robbery.

There are still more to be arrested. We are awaiting the Attorney General's decision to send them on trial.

There are 11 arrested with EPRLF links but not connected to a political party. They are pledged to an armed overthrow of the government. They met EPRLF leader Padmanabha for talks on an armed revolution.

They have been trained in Vavuniya and in India. Their leadership is known and some have been arrested.

The total number is 200. They first trained eight in handling explosives and in combat in the EPRLF camp in Kodampakam for three months.

Some were Sinhalese and members of the estate community.

When they wanted to bring in arms, they leased land in a certain area and were arrested there.

I don't want to disclose names, but you will be surprised at the suspects connections.

However no member of a political party has been arrested.

Thus far we have successfully broken these two organisations just when they were getting off the ground.

Many members of the Parliament have asked me about the landmines. There is equipment against sophisticated landmines. But these landmines — they are called culvert mines. The only way it could be detected is by walking.

A group of young soldiers raided an LTTE hideout in Trincomalee and killed some terrorists this morning.

We have made some definite proposals regarding the ethnic problem. The TULF says it they are not clear enough. But some people in India say it is certainly enough for discussions.

These proposals will soon be released to the public.

The government has gone as far as it can. If this option is not taken, then we will have to take the other path.

People say to us that there is no military solution.

Of course there is no military solution. The government of Sri Lanka does not believe that there is a military solution. It is the terrorists who believe that there should be a military solution.

We should convince the terrorists that there is no military solution.

Mr. Bhandari is expected to come next week. He has to convince all terrorist groups, specially the LTTE and TELO, of his efforts and those of Mr. Gandhi are to prove successful.

I also want to thank Mr. Thondaman for his efforts. He is the only one who said it was time that some one stood up and spoke the truth.

— (SUN)

Sri Lanka, India citizens for political solution

At a meeting of citizens of Sri Lanka and India held in Bangalore on April 15 and 16 it was held that the citizens were in complete agreement that a military solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic problem was neither **feasible nor desirable** and that the problem should be solved politically.

The meeting was held to ascertain through an exchange of views as to how best they could assist in the effort to restore peace in Sri Lanka and move forward to a just and equitable solution of the ethnic problem.

The participants at this meeting were:

Mr. Godfrey Gunatilake, Director, Marga Institute, Mr. Charles Abeysekera, President, Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, Mr. Olcott Gunasekera, formerly Ceylon Civil Service, Mr. A.M.M. Shabdeen, Chairman Leaders' Group of Companies and formerly of the

Ceylon Civil Service, Mr. Mervyn de Silva, Editor, LANKA GUARDIAN, Mr. M. A. M. Hussain, former Member of Sri Lanka Judiciary, Mr. P. Devaraj, Director, Congress Labour Foundation representing Sri Lanka and Dr. R. R. Diwakar, Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Mr. C. Subramaniam, former Union Minister and Vice-President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mr. P. S. Kailasam, former Judge, Supreme Court of India, Mr. Thomas Abraham, former Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi, Resident Editor, INDIAN EXPRESS, Madras, Mr. S. Ramakrishnan, Executive Secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay and Mr. S. R. Venkatachalam, Bharatha Vidya Bhavan, representing Bangalore.

A Press release by the Marga Institute states:

"The meeting is in complete agreement that a military solution is neither feasible nor desirable but the problem should be solved politically.

The first step to such a solution would be the cessation of violence by both sides and the restoration of mutual confidence so as to enable the resumption of negotiations. Perpetuation of mutual conflict should be avoided in the interests of innocent citizens and future generations.

"The meeting is unanimous in its view that solutions will have to be found within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. It noted that the Government of Sri Lanka had already agreed to the creation of Provincial Councils.

"The devolution of power to the Provincial Councils to the maximum extent possible is vital if satisfactory progress is to be made towards the peaceful solution of this conflict.

"The meeting holds the view that it is essential for the democratic government of Sri Lanka to devise ways and means to enable all sections of the community to participate effectively in the political and national life of Sri Lanka at all levels.

"The participants agreed to continue their consultations to help in the process of finding solutions to these problems."

The Return . . .

(Continued from page 3)

Mr. Chidambaram's main task is to ensure that the interests of the Central government (Delhi) are not sacrificed vis-a-vis Tamilnadu. Within the state itself, Congress tries to protect the interests of its coalition partner from the increasingly successful assaults of the D.M.K. of Mr. Karunanidhi, who has become the vocal champion of the Sri Lankan Tamils. But Mr. Gandhi, as premier and Congress leader, has another vital interest — the Centre-State balance of power. The Tamil issue must not be allowed to affect that too much.

Mr. Ranjan Mathai is attached to the Sri Lanka desk, having served in Colombo for three years. Mr. Balakrishnan is a Harvard-educated legal pundit.

The delegation will be back in Delhi on May 2nd. On May 4, an all-party conference will be held in Madurai to discuss the Sri Lankan issue.

Letter . . .

(Continued from page 1)

I believe Dr. Costain de Vos died several years ago. I suppose it must mean something that his ghost still haunts your correspondence columns.

R. M. Pathirana

Colombo 4

An elephant . . .

(Continued from page 4)

start to smile with opposition! Even those firmly pro-government search for "links" with opposition leaders, usually through our generously accommodating and tolerant "extended family" structures. **Permanent secretaries, corporation chrimen, top cops, three star soldiers can always find a nephew or niece who has married some in-law of Mrs. Bandaranaike second cousin.**

The erosion of confidence, the slippage of effective control, the internal de-stabilisation — that is the familiar pre-election process and it is the sure knowledge of how this process works to the disadvantage of each regime before the day of battle dawns which has made some nervous UNP'ers hit the panic button.

— D.

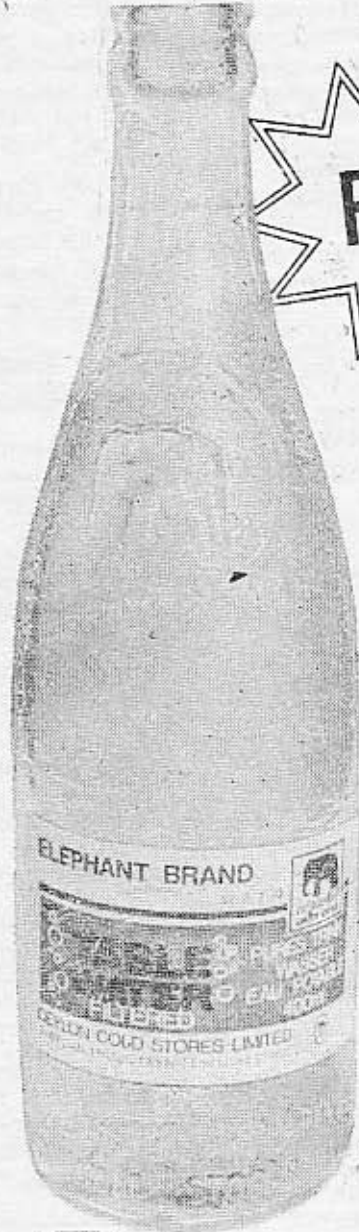


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The Sixth Amendment

The majority must have its way but the minority must have its say

— The Council for Liberal Democracy

In August 1983, while Colombo had not yet recovered from the rioting, arson and bloodshed in which so many of our people suffered terribly, the government enacted the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment which is now part of the Constitution of Sri Lanka, forbade any advocacy support or public belief in separatism or of the creation within Sri Lanka of a separate state. The amendment has made any expression of separatist opinion an offence for which the punishments are the deprivation of civic rights, the confiscation of property and of passports, the forfeiture of the right to practise a profession and other measures of a punitive character. The Sixth Amendment also makes it mandatory for all Members of Parliament to take an oath affirming a unitary Sri Lankan state and makes it impossible for any candidate for any election to present himself or herself for election unless a declaration on similar lines is first made.

The Council for Liberal Democracy was the first political movement in Sri Lanka to unreservedly condemn the Sixth Amendment and to request the repeal of it in its entirety. The emphatic condemnation of the Sixth Amendment issued by the CLD in September 1983 is reiterated on this occasion, when, in response to the total and object failure of all attempts of the government to bring about a negotiated settlement of the Tamil Problem, the CLD is convinced of the overwhelming necessity for the repeal of the Sixth Amendment.

The Council for Liberal Democracy asserts its unequivocal and absolute opposition to the principle of separatism and to the division of Sri Lanka. The unity, independence and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka are principles to which the CLD is fully committed. Further

more as a liberal political movement, the CLD believes fundamentally in individual liberty and as a rational movement it supports the achievement of those conditions which will provide the best chance for a resolution of the racial conflict which threatens to lead this country inexorably towards the destruction of a civil war. It is upon these considerations that the CLD bases its attitude to the Sixth Amendment.

Even if the appalling insensitivity to the feelings of the Tamils demonstrated by the timing of the Sixth Amendment could be overlooked (and the CLD believes that it cannot) the lack of respect for individual liberty shamelessly and brazenly demonstrated by the articles of this Amendment invite the strongest possible condemnation from all sincere friends of freedom. The CLD deplores the grossly illiberal interpretation of democracy resorted to by the supporters of the Sixth Amendment which enables them to think that the peaceful expression of a sentiment that they abhor may justifiably be made unlawful. In doing so they have failed to grasp a very simple but firm principle which is fundamental to a free society — that intense disapproval of a point of view, even by a majority, wherever formed and however conceived, is no justification for the suppression of that point of view. A nation which declares the peaceful expression of any conviction to be outlawed has taken a significant step towards the destruction of a free society. A liberal democratic state must not elevate contentious political issues on which individuals do differ to the status of sacred dogma. As long as we respect the rights of other people we must all have our right of free expression. An enlightened and civilized approach to the highly charged issue of Eelam should therefore be based

upon the maxim. "The majority must have its way but the minority must have its say."

We do not here refer to racial majorities and minorities though on this vexed issue political majorities and minorities unfortunately, coincide with race. What the CLD emphasises is the principle which must govern the general approach to rights in a liberal democratic state. Thus, while it is right that those of us who form the political majority in Sri Lanka that is emphatically opposed to the dismemberment of this country must stand firm in preserving it as a united whole, we must not make the **advocacy**, as opposed to the adoption of practical measures to the attainment of a separate state within a part of our national territory, illegal.

The proposition advanced by the advocates of the Sixth Amendment, that to allow the expression of an opinion is to actively advance it and that which will never be accepted by a majority should not be permitted to be supported is muddle-headed and wrong as well as being a nightmare of intolerance. That to allow the expression of an opinion is not necessarily to advance it can clearly be established. We have only to take note of the way in which various opinions which are probably distasteful to many of us, such as communism and racism, have been expressed in Sri Lanka without leading to the mass acceptance of these ideas. By the same token, we have permitted revolutionaries who condemn the democratic institutions in which a majority of us believes, to advocate the violent overthrow of our political institutions without being indirectly threatened by them. We have like all liberal democratic states believed that an offence is committed only when practical steps to overthrow the state are taken as with the Insurgency of 1971,

not when a public meeting is told that the 'nasty capitalist state must be violently overthrown'.

The Council for Liberal Democracy believes that it is the same principle of tolerance to all opinion that is peacefully expressed and does not actively attempt to interfere with the liberty of others — that must govern our attitude to separatism. The CLD therefore deplores the harsh curtailment of individual liberty and the authoritarian imposition of a unitary ideology embodied in the Sixth Amendment.

The Council for Liberal Democracy asserts that not content with circumscribing the freedom of the individual, the Sixth Amendment devalues and restricts the sovereignty of the people which is supposed to be protected by the Constitution. An essential feature of a representative democracy is that the people can elect as their political representatives any persons who in their view best represent their convictions and interests. The provisions of the

Sixth Amendment deny to voters of this country their right to elect a Member of Parliament or of a local authority who advocates separatism. The political choices that a free voter can make have therefore been illiberally, arbitrarily and undemocratically limited and may have set a precedent by which further restrictions on the political views of candidates seeking election, could be imposed.

The CLD further advocates the repeal of the Sixth Amendment, in view of the current political context. The deplorable political consequence of the Sixth Amendment was that the party of moderation among the Tamils, the Tamil United Liberation Front, was forced to withdraw from Parliament. While the CLD does not share many of the TULF's political convictions, the evidence seems to us overwhelming that had that party remained at the centre of Tamil political opinion the prospects for a negotiated settlement would have been far greater. The banishment of the

TULF from the centre stage of Tamil politics and in particular the denial of a platform to its moderate and constitutional members has enhanced the significance and credibility of the men of violence. The injustice and political ineptitude embodied in the Sixth Amendment has left sixteen parliamentary constituencies vacant for almost three years and has all but foreclosed the options for constitutional Tamil politics. It is ludicrous to expect any sensible settlement of the Tamil problem without bringing the Tamil people back into the political process and that can only be done by the repeal of the Sixth Amendment to permit the democratic representatives of the Tamil people to return to Parliament by the free votes of their constituents.

The Council for Liberal Democracy is convinced that the best argument and best insurance against political violence is political freedom. The Liberal

(Continued on page 15)

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Part II

The Crisis of Sri Lanka, a General Election and Mrs. Bandaranaike

Chanaka Amaratunga

The advocates of the postponement of elections in 1982, who now dispute the moral imperative for a General Election attempt to confuse a referendum with a General Election. It is argued that consultation of the people and an affirmative verdict are a sufficient justification, that it is effrontery for anyone to object to the extended Parliament for to do so is to negate 'the will of the people' and to be antidemocratic: for 'democracy', we are told 'is majority rule'. They argue this is grossly to simplify our political institutions and the meaning of political ideas. The first point that needs to be made is that the democracy which free countries (including our own) are committed to its representative in character and limited in the scope of what it can do to individuals. This combination of representative institutions in which minorities are represented as well as majorities and in which the opportunity for the former to regularly become the latter and vice versa must exist as well as the protection of the fundamental liberties of the individual against the will even of a majority (which can often be tyrannical and intolerant) makes it more accurate to characterise the free countries of the world as liberal democracies rather than as democracies. Liberal democracy does not acknowledge the verdicts of referenda as being sufficient justification for the destruction of personal liberty and other fundamental liberties such as the right to exercise the franchise. That majority verdicts are insufficient justification for the curtailment of individual rights will become clear if we consider a referendum in

which the proposition put is to enable the execution of all persons who are over six foot tall. It will be obvious that even if a majority of those casting their votes agreed that this should be done, such approval would do nothing to alter the outrageous injustice and cruelty of such a deed. Likewise, most people would accept that a proposition that sought to carry out genocide upon a people could not be justified by a majority vote. And it is useless to argue in a century that witnessed the Nazi holocaust that a majority could never be persuaded to agree to such an abomination. It is then obvious that there are types of questions which cannot legitimately be put at a referendum in a liberal democratic state. A question that seeks to postpone an election and to extend the life of a legislature which consists of representatives of the people cannot be put without violating the fundamental rights of the individual citizen to exercise the franchise and without rendering hollow the representative character of parliament. When the supreme instrument of representative democracy ceases to be representative not merely of a majority but of the whole people, the claim of a nation of such condition to be a liberal democracy is itself in question.

The exercise of referenda in free countries amply demonstrates the limitation upon the sort of issues which are the proper stuff of a referendum. Three referenda in Europe make fine examples of the sort of subjects on which direct consultation of the people is reasonable and just. The referendum in the United Kingdom on Britain's continued membership of the European Community the referendum in the Irish Republic on liberalisation of divorce laws and the

forthcoming referendum on Spain's continued membership of NATO. None of these issues directly impinge upon the franchise or upon the fundamental liberties of the individual. They are significant issues of policy on which public opinion is divided even across parties and on which therefore a majority vote by the electorate is a just basis for deciding upon the issue.

It will now be clear that the proposition approved by the Referendum of December 1982, was entirely inapt and that the conduct of a referendum for the postponement of a General Election, is an abuse of parliamentary democracy and of the liberal democratic process. The absurdity of basing a claim to continue with the present Parliament until 1989 is further compounded by the acts of intimidation, the adoption of double standards and of obstruction and violation of the law by which fair play in the conduct of the Referendum was rendered impossible. As the various abuses in the conduct of the Referendum campaign have been well-documented elsewhere and as the space available to me is limited, I shall not attempt to establish what is public knowledge. It should be acknowledged however that a considerable proportion of those who voted 'YES' to the extension of the life of Parliament for six years did so of their own will as a consequence of a variety of political factors. This does not to my mind, diminish the validity of the case against the legitimacy of the present Parliament nor in favour of the essential unfairness of the Referendum campaign.

There is a further moral argument in favour of an immediate General Election which is only indirectly

(Continued on page 13)

Dr. Chanaka Amaratunga recently received a Ph.D. from LSE and is the General Secretary of the Council for Liberal Democracy.

More or less about English

Arjuna Parakrama (Second Class, Lower Division)

Too much has perhaps been said on this subject already, but I wish to focus on some of the unexplained assumptions of the debate in such a way as to also indicate, generally, the pitfalls that may confront similar discussions.

At the outset let me identify what I find good and useful in Qadri Ismail's critique of the teaching of English literature at Peradeniya. He raises crucial questions regarding the validity of English studies in Sri Lanka today.

He criticises traditional theory and focuses on some important recent developments in the field. He proposes curriculum reform with a view to making the honours degree in English more relevant to the central concerns of our times. Much of his effort has been directed towards situating the study of literature in the larger social context, and this is of fundamental significance. However, it is the manner in which he does this that I find symptomatic of his ambivalence regarding literature itself.

It seems to me that the critique by focusing exclusively, as it has done so far, on the English Department at Peradeniya (and that too as distinct from the much larger Sub Dept) tends to say something about this department's importance at least in relation to the rest of the university. This implicit valorization runs counter to much of which is explicitly stated. Thus it would appear that this apparently radical critique of the English Department on the grounds that it has become irrelevant, escapist or simply had derives from the notion of the "specialness" of the study of English, and the notion that irrespective of what happens to the rest of the university the English Department is obliged to meet certain (i. e., higher) standards. In terms of its implicit elitism this polarization (English vs Rest) is itself illuminating.

Or to put it another way: if Qadri wishes to undermine the importance assumed by/attributed to English literature and the English Department at Peradeniya it would seem that by focusing exclusively on the department itself he has tended to do the exact opposite. An emphasis is placed upon English literature and the English Department, its dons and its products past and present in relation to many other things which go on in our universities, creating the overall impression that the English Department and its concerns have a special place in the scheme of things.

It would be useful perhaps for me to cite a few passages as examples of what I mean.

In his essay of July 1st we are told by Qadri that the Department has declined from the time when "the noble portals (were) once graced by the greats — Ludowyk, Passe, de Souza and so on." It would seem that the most objectionable period has been the "last thirty (almost) years", "the last two decades or so" when one can show "little wonder that those coming out of it... have made hardly a contribution to Sri Lankan intellectual affairs." It appears to be in the nature of things that the handful of graduates produced by the English Department each year should distinguish themselves in intellectual affairs — they are after all the cream benefitting from the study of the cream of disciplines! The fact that they have not done so, if indeed they have not done so, is not due to the slight decline in the hegemony of English but due instead to the decline in the quality of teaching in the English Department at Peradeniya, or so Qadri would have us think.

In the essays of August 1 and December 1, he seems to change his mind, and instead presents Ludowyk as the villain of the

piece. In fact it is in his comparison of Leavis and Ludowyk that one can perhaps discern the reason for this ambivalence. Leavis is acknowledged as elitist but "one must nevertheless make the point that it is elitism in the good liberal style, if you like, elitism good right. What is wrong with it, is that the theory never quite matches the practice. Leavis failed in his grand task." But for Qadri, "at least he had a grand vision... Leavis was passionately concerned (sic) that the proper study of Literature would save the British way of life, British Civilization... But Ludowyk had no such vision."

It is allowed for a moment that "Perhaps Ludowyk is being more realistic," but we are informed that this is still a "watered down" version. One does not need here the benefit of the value judgement, the negative connotation embedded in the phrase "watered down" to realise that Qadri is sympathetic towards aggrandised notions of the function of literature and, thereby, Departments of Literature, as life-saving.

The necessity, then, for Qadri is not to discard Leavis as elitist but to 'modernise' him, so much so that the "redefin(ition) of the significance of English; which is basically Lankanising Leavis... could have given the study of English some relevance." The question of whether Leavis is realistic or not, whether he is in fact right or wrong, has become irrelevant in the glow of his grand vision. There seems to be a gesture here in favour of holding theories, visions, etc., even if they are known to be wrong. The important thing seems to be to have these visions.

Leavis, then, has a grand "vision," and Ludowyk not even a "point of view," which, incidentally is a very curious idea especially coming from someone who claims to be in touch with the "fascinating

recent developments in criticism and theory.

The aggrandisement involved in the conception that literature somehow provides us with the key to the kingdom, the panacea for all social ills is strangely similar to the old formulation of literature as something that, willy nilly, makes us sensitive. It seems to me that we must accept that literature will no more provide us with exclusive or special insights into life than would religion — the dividing line between the cultural priesthood and the cultural priesthood may be imaginary.

This inflated notion of the function of (English?) literature becomes more pronounced in our specific context where the tiny English Department is criticised for not fulfilling its social obligation as producer of intellectual leadership, as purveyor of higher truth. "The whole business of kaduwa; I very firmly believe could be blamed upon the English Department apart from an iniquitous social system." The sweeping generalisations, the clichés may at first glance show that Qadri grants a parity of status to the English Department and the social system, but a further function of such a statement is to undermine the notion of an "iniquitous social system" as somehow not very important. The juxtaposition thus serves both to trivialise the inequity and to elevate the Department. The disarming acknowledgement can be made "not that a radical English Department could have ever hoped to change the system," and then one can continue regardless, "but..."

Qadri goes on to say,

"but since departmental dons, or students, have invariably dominated commissions of inquiry into English teaching, a more realistic, intelligent and humane (sic) consciousness of what English does, and of what could be done with it within the department (my emphasis), would have inevitably percolated upwards and downwards."

The goings on "within the department" between let us say, a faculty

of five and a student population of twenty assumes responsibility for fundamentally macrological socio-economic issues.

It is in this vein that Qadri writes, "Apart from the societal dimension that makes this task impossible within the present societal structure, there is also the other one: this would entail that our English departments, as currently constituted, would cease to exist." Again the English Department is juxtaposed with the rest of society; again the pattern of disarming acknowledgement-cum-dismissal is followed, and the English Department is conferred with an alarming priority of status.

(To be continued)

The Crisis. . .

(Continued from page 11)

related to the issue of legitimacy. The present Parliament was elected in July 1977, a time when the democratic Opposition was uniquely unpopular and it was elected on the simple plurality or first-past-the-post electoral system. The result of that election produced a gross distortion of the will of the electorate. For 51% of the vote the UNP obtained over 85% of the seats, for 30% of the vote the SLFP obtained less than 5% of the seats and the parties of the left obtained no seats at all for a combined total of over 5% of the vote. This drastic underrepresentation of the Opposition and overrepresentation of the Government has wrought considerable damage on Sri Lankan Parliamentary democracy. The Government has become increasingly arrogant and repressive in its exercise of power, and Parliament has ceased to play a role as the protector of the liberty of the citizen. The monolithic majority achieved by a single party has even been used to intimidate the Government Parliamentary Party into slavish acquiescence of the diktats of its leaders and the right to individual conscience of the member of Parliament has ceased to exist. It is this Parliament in which individual freedom and diversity have been almost completely wiped out, which

has been given a new lease of unhealthy life by the anti-parliamentary exercise of the Referendum. A free Parliament is thus another important need which only a General Election can fulfil.

Before I consider the pragmatic case for or against an election, it seems apposite that I deal with a point of confusion that colours the practical context in which the argument for an election is carried out. Although this has not been made explicit, the opponents of an immediate election use the apparent legitimacy conferred upon this Parliament by the Referendum as a sufficient condition for its continuance until 1989. There is no reason why this should be so. The legal right of a Parliament (even one that owes its existence to a proper General Election as understood in the free world does not obviate the possible necessity in particular situations of uncertainty or crisis for a new appeal to the electorate. There is a firmly established tradition within multi-party democracies of early dissolutions of Parliament for a variety of reasons — the interests of the party in office, the need to resolve an issue of particular contention, a constitutional or economic crisis are some of them. If one were to pick examples from the British experience the General Election of 1983 is an example of the first, the General Election of February 1974 an example of the second, the two General Elections of 1910 an example of the third and the General Election of 1931 an example of the fourth. In all these instances the natural life-span of the British Parliament had not run its course. It is therefore clear that even if the legitimacy of this Parliament were not in dispute, a case could be made by analysis of the current political situation, whether or not, consultation of the electorate in a genuinely representative form, would be the appropriate response to the exigencies of our time. The demand of Mrs. Bandaranaike that finds a powerful echo in diverse political circles must now be examined in relation to its context — in terms of my category of 'pragmatic considerations' not devoid of moral content.

Nationalism : Sinhala and Tamil Myths

Radhika Coomaraswamy

Introduction:

The intensification of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict in the 1980's has led to the development of "morbid symptoms" not only in our political process, as evidenced by the creation of a national security state, but also in our scholarship and political writings. The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of these writings and to point to their relationship to nationalist ideology. As Romila Thapar writes in "Communalism and Ancient History"

"Historical interpretation is integrally related to a people's notion of its culture and nationality. This in itself makes historical writing one of the most sensitive intellectual areas with wide repercussions on popular nationalism and political beliefs."¹

This preliminary inquiry will be divided into two parts. The first will take a look at two recent and important works on Tamil nationalism — a book by Satchi Ponnambalam entitled the "National Question and the Tamil Struggle", and an article by N. Satyendra called "Legitimate Expectations"². The second part of the inquiry will be directed at one aspect of the latter day reiteration of past myths by Sinhalese ideologues. Writings in this category are numerous, emanating from official sources such as The Ministry of State and also from various unofficial groups and individuals. Some of the more blatant of these publications such as *Kauda Kotiya?* (Who is the Tiger?) *Sinhalayage Adisi Hatura* etc... (The invincible Enemy of the Sinhalese) have already been analysed and debunked by some Sinhala scholars who have also examined the mythic background common to these writings in separate as well as joint volumes.

Kumari Jayawardena's *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*; The Social Scientist Association's *Ethnicity and Social Change*; The Committee for Rational Development's *Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict, Myths and Realities*, as well as individual articles by scholars such as K. M. De Silva, and C. R. De Silva, have provided the backdrop for a critical assault on some of the myths relating to Sinhala nationalism.

I do not therefore propose to deal with all aspects of Sinhalese nationalist myth making. However there has recently been a spate of writing which use archaeological and settlement history as a means of reiterating Sinhala myths about the Sri Lankan nation-state. In this regard, I propose to look at one of these, a more scholarly article by G. H. Pieris on "An Appraisal of the Concept of a Traditional Tamil Homelands" which has been widely disseminated and references to which have appeared even in our daily newspapers.

Disturbing trends in Tamil Nationalist writing:

Until the 1970's Tamil politics at the national level was rights oriented, a reaction against measures taken by governments motivated by a Sinhala nationalist ideology. Though Tamil culture and creative writing witnessed a renaissance in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka after the rise of the DMK, Tamil political discourse in Sri Lanka in the 50's and the 60's was characterised by a sense of grievance and political oppression. The rhetoric and language of Tamil politics was "developmental" — i.e., grievances with regard to education, employment and land. In addition, it was "democratic" — i.e. against laws that appeared to discriminate against the Tamil language and for political structures which would allow for autonomy in pre-dominantly Tamil areas.

From the forthcoming volume
Facets of Ethnicity in Sri Lanka
by the Social Scientists' Association.

Consciousness was centred around language and economic rights. This has been analysed by Professor Sivathamby as being the discourse of the Federal Party, which represented for the most part the interests of the Tamil middle classes.³

In June 1985, at Thimpu the Tamil groups put forward four principles as a framework for resolving the present crisis —

- a) recognition of the separate national identity of the Tamils,
- b) respect for the integrity of the traditional Tamil homeland,
- (c) recognition of the right to self-determination of the Tamils and
- (d) Citizenship rights for all Tamils.

These principles are of course the expression of a people who have moved away from the concept of Tamil rights to an ideology of Tamil nationalism.

It can be said that nationalism in any form has both progressive and regressive aspects as part of its core. Tamil nationalism, like its Sinhala counterpart in the 1950's is no exception. Tamil nationalism has had a positive impact on Sri Lankan Tamil society, with its rise, for the first time; Tamil politics is actively speaking out against distinctions of class, caste and gender. Sri Lankan Tamil society which was conservative and hierarchical is finally being challenged from within. The discourse contains a mixture of democratic, populist and leftist ideologies. Tamil political awareness, as reflected in the writings of those committed to a Tamil nationalism, has within it seeds of social liberation. At the same time, like Sinhala nationalism of the 1950's, the discourse of Tamil nationalism, ESPECIALLY AS EXPRESSED IN CERTAIN TYPES OF EXPATRIATE LITERATURE, appears to contain the same communalism, which if unchallenged

will lead us further into the modern era of neo-tribalism.

Sinhalese intellectuals in the 1950's who attempted to straddle both the progressive and negative aspects of nationalist ideology, ended up in the 1980's as sad apologists for ethnic chauvinism. If they were analysing any other part of the world but their own, their approach would have been different. But, bogged down by an ideology which had a built-in ethnic bias, their conscience failed. The imperatives of tribe and religion prevailed over abstract philosophies, so much so that many ended up justifying the 1983 riots, or resisting any attempts to dispel the racial hysteria of the times. Some spent their efforts constructing international conspiracy theories or recreating past myths, refusing to come to terms with their own chauvinism and intolerance. The few Sinhalese who attempted to fight this regressive nationalism were castigated in the media as betrayers of the Buddha, half-castes and generally traitors to race and religion. Many others just remained silent, hostage to the "mass consciousness" which, ironically, may have been of their own creation.

It may be argued that Tamil intellectuals cannot afford to make the same mistake. Political ideologies which further the cause of social justice which fight oppression and exploitation must be distinguished from those which find their sustenance only in tribe, race and ethnicity. The right of ethnic groups to political expression, to political autonomy and even to a separate state may be justified in "political" terms of the right to self-determination or the right to be free from oppression or exploitation. It poses difficult problems if it is justified in terms of the discourse of a chosen people.

Many progressive scholars will however, argue that the nationalism of the oppressor must be distinguished from the nationalism of the oppressed. But, experience, especially in Sri Lanka, has shown us that even if this type of discourse is marginal during the period of dissent, it becomes more legi-

itimate when movements acquire political power. Unless there is a deliberate attempt to counter this consciousness, it may emerge as the dominant force in Tamil political thinking.

The discourse of a chosen people, which is a familiar and important part of Sinhalese nationalism has become a new a disturbing phenomenon in Tamil political writing. In surveying some of the books and articles, which have come out since 1983, there appears to be an alarming and rapidly growing process of myth creation about Sri Lankan Tamils. It is important that these myths be dispelled now, before they receive ideological vigour.

Where does this discourse come from? The rise of the DK in Tamil Nadu and its version of anti-Brahmin, populist nationalism had an important effect on Sri Lankan Tamil consciousness in the 50's and the 60's. Tamil pride in culture and language had been an important part of Tamil identity, but there was no automatic spill-over into Tamil political discourse and political writing.

Even as early as the 1950's, Mr. C. Suntheralingam spoke in terms of a Dravida, Saiva Siddhanta consciousness as part of the Sri Lankan Tamil identity. However, his writings were on the fringe of the movement and were, therefore not reflected in the consciousness of other Tamil political leaders, especially S. J. V. Chelvanayagam who was a Christian with little affinity for this type of political consciousness. In the 1970s when the demand for a separate state was made, there was much writing which pointed to a sense of pride in Tamil history; but again, Tamil political discussion and discourse, whether among moderate Tamils, or in the publications of Tamil militant groups, centered around Tamil grievances based on linguistic and territorial rights and their sense of oppression. It was this discourse that gave birth to the concept of a Tamil Linguistic region.

The riots of 1983, however, had a major qualitative impact not only in terms of the increasing radicalisation of the Tamil popu-

lation, but also in the type of language and discourse used to present the Tamil cause. Certain Tamil nationalist myths which had been politically latent began to be openly expressed; there was a deliberate and conscious attempt to create a Dravida, Saiva Siddhanta political identity: The main thrust of this campaign appears to come, not so much from Madras or Jaffna, where every day issues of survival point to a different type of political, but from the expatriate community, who have begun to write extensively on Tamil history and ideology. Their writings are circulated widely and have an important effect on Tamil consciousness.

(To be Continued)

FOOTNOTES

1. R. Thapar, "Communalism and Ancient History" in R. Thapar et al ed, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History*, New Delhi 1977 p. 10
2. See S. Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Struggle*, London, 1983; N. Satyendra, "Legitimate Expectations" in SIM ed. *Ethnic Violence, Human Rights and Development*, Utrecht, 1985.
3. See K. Sivathamby, "Some Aspects of the Social Composition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka", in SSA ed. *Ethnic Conflict and Social Change*, Colombo 1984.

The majority must...

(Continued from page 10)

is the ultimate and the most successful opponent of political violence because by his respect of views so divergent from his own he reduces the need for taking up the gun. Authoritarianism and intolerance achieves the opposite. When people find that they cannot freely express their views, they are led, with some justification, to feel that there is no recourse save violence.

The Council for Liberal Democracy is convinced that Sixth Amendment, proclaimed as a powerful weapon in the fight against separatist violence' has provided instead its strongest justification, and become a source of support for the very thing it was designed to curtail. The CLD therefore requests the government, even now, to see sense and repeal this intolerant, authoritarian and ultimately unconstructive piece of legislation.

The Politics of Communalism

A. Jeyaratnam Wilson (University of New Brunswick, Canada)

Jane Russell in her *Communal Politics under the Donoughmore Constitution 1931-1947* (Dehiwala, Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd., 1982) provides us with the seedbed of what was to happen in the years following independence. In this work of hers so rich in insights into the political culture of the petty squabbling between persons and people entirely unaccustomed to the workings of an altogether strange and eccentric constitutional mechanism, we get some idea that 1948 and after was nothing to be surprised about. The writing was there on the wall.

What strikes the observer is that there are three British constitutional documents, the Colebrooke-Cameron Report of 1833, the Donoughmore Report of 1928 and the Soulbury Report of 1945 each of which created dissidence and dissatisfaction among the minority ethnic and religious groups. The British who were so adept at discovering formulae to still the pace of discontent in Guyana among other territories, did not desire to choose the cautious route in Sri Lanka. The analyses of the three reports referred to could form a study in themselves. Briefly Colebrooke-Cameron laid the foundations of the unitary state, Donoughmore turned its face against multiethnicity and Soulbury hoped Westminster will take root when the commissioners would well have been aware that their hero, Don Stephen Senanayake, had only a few more years to live.

The depressing account which Russell relates in each of her chapters tell their story of Sinhala intrigues and the Jaffna Tamils' search for the holy grail of communal ratios which might stem the tide of the new flood of electors caused by the introduction of universal suffrage. We have the familiar picture of the atomization of Tamil politics and G. G. Ponnambalam's valiant effort to

close the loopholes. But he failed to gain the unconditional and wholehearted support of the minorities which mattered. The Sinhalese fared better. They knew what was in store. They did not chafe at the restraints. Instead they went along with the system knowing full well that at the end of the road the bonanza of a single unitary state would be the prize for loyal and unstinted cooperation in the war effort.

Here we find the men of destiny beginning to use their tools to carve their respective niches in history. D. B. Jayatileke opted out. Don Stephen Senanayake more a creation of the Wijewardene newspapers emerges a paper tiger. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike gave the latter a good run for his money. J. R. Jayewardene with Bandaranaike were dabbling in Sinhala Buddhist politics — denominational schools, the official language, the national anthem, the national flag. G. G. Ponnambalam ultimately emerges as the charismatic uncrowned king of the Northern Tamils. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam was biding his time but with uncanny foresight was able to anticipate all the calamities that would befall the Tamil community in the postindependence years. I like Russell's quintessential portrait of Chelvanayakam:

...Chelvanayakam was seriously concerned with the political effect of Sinhalese Buddhist cultural resurgence on the future of the Ceylon Tamils. Chelvanayakam was a thoughtful man; as a politician he displayed (the) integrity...His Tamil communalism was not the froth of an opportunist but a deeply felt and considered judgement backed by an appreciation of Tamil culture which amounted to blind loyalty. Chelvanayakam's attachment to the Ceylon Tamil culture came much closer to a true Tamil nationalism and his gloomy views and oracular attitude proclaimed him the heir to the Ponnambalam Arunachalam who had turned in his bitterness from the ideal of a United Lanka to the concept of a Tamilnad or Pan-Tamilan state in his solstitial years. Although S. J. V. Chelvanayakam did not present a

differentiated policy to that of Ponnambalam in 1947, his political approach augured a radical change in the tone and demeanour of Ceylon Tamil politics in the post-independence period (PP. 1321-22)

Jane Russell has correctly discerned the character of the man who was to alter the political history of Sri Lanka. The most prickly problem for the Tamils at this time was however the folly of the Jaffna Youth Congress and the antics of C. Suntheralingam. Together the two made a mess of a Ceylon Tamil movement which might have otherwise fared better. The National Congress held its ground as a low country Sinhalese organization. They knew they had got on to a good thing, universal suffrage, and they meant to stick with the British on it. The British imperialists for their part realized that the future protection of their commercial and military interests as well as the maintenance of the Commonwealth tie lay in working with one man, Don Stephen, not with any organisation.

The beginnings of the dispute on ethnic proportions in the public services are pinpointed by Russell but for quite different reasons advanced by the Sinhala ethno-nationalists of contemporary hue. In 1937, the Selangor Unemployment Enquiry Committee enquired into the retrenchment in government service in the Federated Malay States in 1937, noted:—

So far as the Jaffna Tamil are concerned, in days that are now gone, the Jaffna Tamil was the backbone of the government Clerical Service and the Railways. Jaffna was then the only country which had an oversupply of English-educated men.

So it seems obvious that the British did not prefer the Tamils to the Sinhalese or the Tamils to the Malays or Chinese. The simple fact was that the arid peninsula offered the Tamils very little opportunities of alternative employment and they therefore took to

(Continued on page 19)

Patricia Pittman

Trial of the generals

Pablo's testimony: 'The night they came to get me, Claudia said something I will never forget — that each 31 December I should drink a toast to her and everyone, because she was already dead...' Claudia is still 'disappeared', and the military and the police claim she was never detained.

Buenos Aires 8 October 1985... Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera, former junta member and head of the Argentine Navy from 1976 to 1979, shook his fist threateningly at the panel of six judges. 'Are my accusers those we defeated in the war?' he asked before a public that had come to hear the infamous military leader refute charges of human rights violations. 'We are protagonists in an historical aberration... the war against terrorism was a just war. Nevertheless, I am here now because we won that war,' he said in reference to the so-called 'dirty war' against leftist subversion that began in March 1976 with a military coup. By the time the repressive period ended in 1982, people had disappeared in massive numbers variously estimated at 10,000 to 30,000. (See 'Nunca Mas', *Index on Censorship* 3/1986.)

On 9 December, two years after the return to democracy, Massera was found guilty of having ordered the torture and murder of thousands of people who were kidnapped and taken to the Navy Mechanics School, one of 340 secret detention centres used by the military government to hold the 'disappeared'. He received a life sentence along with former President General Jorge Rafael Videla for murder, torture, abduction and extortion. Of the seven others indicted in the same case, three received

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terms of four and a half to 17 years, and four were acquitted.

Massera's indignant self-defence was not unwarranted, given the absence of an historical precedent for a trial of this nature. Nowhere in Latin America has a democratically elected successor government brought its predecessors to justice for human rights violations. The Argentine press has called it 'The Trial of the Century', and others have dubbed it the 'Latin American Nuremberg'.

The closest parallel to the Argentine case is probably Greece in 1974, where a new democratic government tried the former military dictator. However, the human rights violations that had occurred in Greece were on a much smaller scale and less vicious. The charges themselves focused on sedition, only tangentially touching the human rights issue. The Greek military regime had been weakened by their war in Cyprus, just as in Argentina, the Falklands war helped to discredit the armed forces.

The Argentine trial will have a unique place in world history and is already having a considerable impact on neighbouring countries concerned about preventing future abuses by the military elite. Not all the results are in, since trials of other military officers for human rights abuses continue.

But two things are already clear. First, in a nation where the military and the right wing have

traditionally enjoyed total impunity, the judiciary has been potentially strengthened by bringing the nine generals and admirals to justice. Never before had the military or the right wing been held accountable for political violence. Second, the trial proceedings have aired the long-hidden truth of what went on during those dark years. These are reasons to expect that this awareness will have a lasting impact on the population, making future abuses much less likely.

Although the problem of young urban guerrilla groups and harsh responses from the armed forces was also being seen in neighbouring Uruguay, Brazil and Chile at the time, the killing machine that was put into operation in Argentina with the March 1976 coup was unlike the repression seen in other parts of Latin America.

Patricia Derian, former Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, testified before the court on the view from the US during the Carter years.

'In legitimately reacting to the terrorist threat, the Argentine government went over-board and became even more dangerous terrorists for the population.'

In 1976, the new military regime began implementing a plan for the total elimination of opposition. The programme extended far beyond the estimated 500 armed guerrillas that existed and was

based on the systematic 'disappearance' of individuals. Throughout the military's rule these operations were conducted under extraordinary secrecy, and it was denied that the thousands of missing people had been detained, or had been killed. Public statements and even written internal orders avoided mention of the illegal repression.

They simply referred to 'elimination of delinquent subversives'. Large sectors of the security forces were compromised in the repression so that pact of silence could be maintained.

The judicial branch abetted this policy by rejecting thousands of writs of habeas corpus.

Other institutions, particularly the press and the Church, remained silent. Among the general public, only people directly affected by the repression had any idea of the magnitude of the atrocities being committed. (See Robert Cox, 'Never Again?' *Index on Censorship* 3/1986.)

Despite elaborate attempts by four consecutive juntas to cover their tracks, the persistent efforts of relatives of the victims, organised in human rights groups, resulted in the collection of testimony from thousands of survivors and witnesses. After the collapse of the military regime, when the newly elected president, Raul Alfonsín, assumed office in December 1983, he formed the National Commission for the Disappearance of the People (CONADEP). The commission, through the use of computers to cross-reference the mass of its documentation, was able to arrive at a list of 8,960 disappeared people, and detail the methodology used in most of the cases. The results of this investigation were edited under the title *Nunca Mas* ('Never Again') and 200,000 copies sold in Argentina.

But it was not until the public trial of the military

commanders commenced in April 1985 that the average Argentine unavoidably came face to face with the secret war. Massive press coverage included a special weekly magazine called the *Newspaper of the Trial* ('*Diario del Juicio*'), nightly news reports on television, and usually a page a day in all newspapers.

The impact on public opinion of news of the trial was accompanied by reports of right-wing terrorism in support of the former juntas. Several young activists were kidnapped and tortured for periods of a few hours, and six people were held for ransom, one of whom has still not reappeared.

Death threats were also received by hundreds of journalists, politicians and labour leaders, as well as by witnesses and prosecutors in the trial.

The government has attributed these episodes to 'unemployed' civilian and military bands that had operated in the repression and now wished to demonstrate their continued strength. **Top aides to Alfonsín admit that they still have not been able to bring the intelligence services under control, despite the appointment of democratically-minded officers at the head of these bodies.**

Surprise trial

The Argentine human rights movement is indeed one of the strongest in Latin America, and was partly responsible for creating the political situation in which the new democratic government knew the issue of the disappeared could not go unanswered. But the human rights initiatives had no major impact on the general public until after the military had failed in the Falklands. While Massera and other commanders attempted at the trial to vindicate their triumph over the guerrillas, it was clear to most Argentines that the only real war fought in Argentina was on the

Falkland Island in 1982. That humiliating defeat, coupled with the deepening economic crisis, divided and weakened the armed forces to the point where the human rights issue could be aired.

This first occurred in the form of mass rallies demanding the 'Reappearance Alive' of the disappeared and 'Punishment of the Guilty'. In desperation the last military junta declared an amnesty for those involved in the 'war against subversion', only to receive a resounding rejection of the law by the judiciary, politicians and the press.

As the election of October 1983 approached, Raul Alfonsín of the centrist Radical Party emerged as the charismatic alternative to the traditionally popular Peronist movement. He campaigned as a defender of human rights, non-violence, and democratic institutions.

From the start of his campaign he made clear that he would discriminate among the repressors, by establishing three categories of responsibility: 1) Those who gave orders, 2) those who simply carried them out in the line of duty, and 3) those who committed excesses, i.e. torture murder robbery. The implication was that those in the second category would be exempted from punishment.

Upon assuming office on 10 December 1983, in a spectacular public speech, Alfonsín announced the indictment of the nine members of the first three out of four juntas to govern Argentina during the seven years of military rule. In order to show his condemnation of violence from both sides, he also ordered the prosecution of seven guerrilla leaders, two of whom are being tried and five of whom are still at large. The CONADEP was then created, which over the course of nine months collected information that later would form the basis for the case presented by the state prosecutor during the trial of the commanders.

There are an estimated 1,700 cases currently pending in the military courts that may eventually be appealed to civilian courts under Alfonsín's reform. It is expected that the top leaders, such as the former Chief of Police in the Province of Buenos Aires, General Ramon Camps, General Luciano Benjamin Menendez from Cordoba, and the head of the Navy Mechanics School, Captain Chamorro, will be convicted. Other lesser officials on trial, such as Captain Alfredo Astiz, may be let off given the difficulty in proving that he exceeded orders. Astiz was captured by the British on the South Georgia Island and the French, believing that he was responsible for the abduction and murder of two French nuns, sought but did not obtain his extradition. He was also allegedly responsible for the shooting and subsequent disappearance of Dagmar Hagelin, a 17-year-old Swedish girl he had mistaken for another young woman who was allegedly involved with the guerrillas.

No one had anticipated the public dimensions the proceedings would assume. People queued all night to obtain one of the limited number of entry passes allotted each day, and the courtroom was packed with local and international press. When, on 22 April, the first witness was called to the stand, an atmosphere of credibility was generated by the sombre formality of inquiry passed by the six judges.

Each night the television news brought the trial into every Argentine's home. Theo Van Boven, former human rights director at the United Nations, reported the thousands of denunciations of disappearances received by that body. Admiral Salvio Menendez admitted there had been detainees in the Navy Mechanics School.

Eric Stover, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, testified that a team of North American forensic anthropologists had identified cadavers buried in unidentified graves as persons listed as 'disappeared'.

Unexpected justice

While human rights leaders have criticised aspects of the court's final ruling, particularly the acquittal of four defendants, no one would deny its historical significance. Mignone called it a beginning. 'We must now follow through on the remaining cases of human rights abuses,' he said.

For most ordinary Argentines, the two life sentences constituted an unexpected act of justice. There are still fears — probably unfounded — of an amnesty, but there is also hope that these acts of justice will strengthen democracy and help prevent future military intervention.

The public denunciation of the use of illegal methods to suppress opposition, brought home in the court's arguments, is being heard all over Latin America. Current military dictatorships know that one day they too may face such a trial. Chileans are already busy gathering evidence against those who have perpetrated official violence outside the legal system.

This possibility in itself may have a restraining influence on the security forces.

History may also mark this trial as a turning point in the military ideology — so common in Latin America — which includes the self-appointed assumption of the national defence against the political left by setting itself above the law and employing techniques of secret disappearances to terrorise those it perceives to be subversive. Certainly the continued trial of lower level officers, which is likely to drag on for several years, will keep these issues alive.

Prosecutor Julio Strassera, in his closing statement, eloquently reflected on the lessons of the trial. He referred to the over 9,000 disappeared people who accompanied him in this task, and expressed the hope that they will not only demand the punishment of the of the crimes committed against them; they will also want this inevitable act of justice to serve

as a condemnation of the use of violence as a political instrument no matter who uses it, so that the idea that there are good deaths and bad deaths can be done away with forever.'

The Politics . . .

(Continued from page 16)

to government service. It is clear from Russell's analysis of the disputes between the Sinhalese and Tamils on the subject of representation, that the Tamils feared for their future having, as Russell has made obvious, no other recourse to alternative sources of employment.

Yet another pressing question that reared its ugly head during this phase was the presence of Indian Tamil plantation workers in the Kandyan Sinhalese areas. On this question, the Ceylon and Indian Tamils acted in unison while the Kandyan Sinhalese increasingly realised that in unity with their low country Sinhalese fellowmen lay their strength. The problem was left unresolved both by the Donoughmore and Soulbury Commissions giving rise in the end to irreconcilable conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities.

Ceylon was unfortunate in the governors the island had during the twenties and thirties. Hugh Clifford was unpredictable, barely in poise. Russell thinks Caldecott was dim. Manning liked intriguing. Which leaves us with Herbert Stanly, Reginald Stubbs and Monck-Mason Moore. Were they tried and tested men? Were the members of the Donoughmore and Soulbury Commission any better? Had the island been in surer hands, the ills we are prey to presently could have been avoided.

Russell's book is invaluable for any student wishing to probe into the contemporary politics of Sri Lanka. As a scholar, she has successfully understood the mentality of the numerous political figures she has investigated. She has studied the literature and produced a work of considerable value.

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The Allies

The Questions That Won't Go Away

James Reston

WASHINGTON

After the American air raid on Libya, it was "rally round the flag, boys" here. But there are many unanswered questions about the wisdom of this advance.

This was supposed to be a surprise attack, yet the president and his aides were on the air for over a week felling Colonel Moamer Qadhafi that the Americans were coming. Why warn him in advance and give him the chance to move American citizens into target areas or even to take them hostage?

The administration's theory, or at least its hope, was that this bombing raid would demonstrate President Ronald Reagan's determination to stamp out terrorism. But did the administration really believe this? And if so, why are

all departments and agencies here in Washington and all our embassies abroad now on special alert, and why are American citizens being advised of the risks of traveling abroad.

The president has proclaimed the raid a "success." But how would he know at this early date? How many lives were lost in this so-called "surgical strike"? Did it isolate Colonel Qadhafi or bring the Arab world to the Libyan leader's side?

Assume, for example, that Mr. Reagan terrorized the Libyan leader and the other terrorists. What would the Russians do? Probably nothing, except to convince Colonel Qadhafi, as they have been trying to do ever since he took over Libya, that the Soviet Union should

have a permanent naval base at Tripoli in the middle of the Mediterranean. Such a development would be some success," not for Mr. Reagan or even for Colonel Qadhafi, but for Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, and his naval strategic planners.

Moscow lost no time in making its position clear on the Libyan raid, and linking it to the larger questions of U. S. Soviet relations.

After calling the attack on Libya a "criminal action," the Russians cancelled the meeting that was to take place May 14 to 16 between Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze to discuss the agenda for a Reagan-Gorbachev meeting later in the year.

Had the president considered the effect of the bombing raid on allied, congressional and Soviet relations? This is what is now beginning to be debated in Washington.

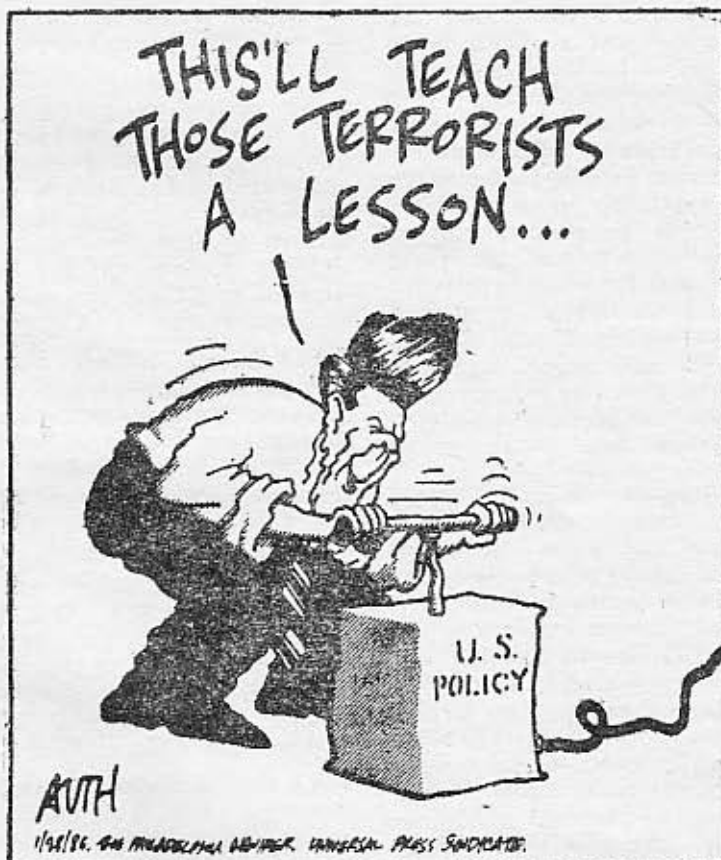
Maybe the most important question being asked in this and in allied capitals is: What has come over Mr. Reagan recently to inspire this aggressive military response to his problems in the Mediterranean? For some time he has been criticized as a ceremonial president, dependent primarily on his staff.

But recently, as if in resentment against these charges, he has been more assertive, demanding his own way with Congress and the allies.

The main question is whether this is achieving the ends he seeks or the opposite. Not only Colonel Qadhafi's Communist and Islamic supporters, but Spain, Italy, Greece, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Japan have expressed reservations about the attack.

Meanwhile there are some other puzzling questions. With U. S. aircraft carriers off Sicily, within easy striking distance of Libya, why choose fighter-bombers out of

(Continued on page 22)



... Or a Cynical Appeal to America's 'Rambo' Instinct?

Daoud Kuttab

EAST JERUSALEM

Israeli-Occupied West Bank — Ordinary people, as well as the experts in this part of the world, are trying to figure out what single result can come out of the American bombing of the two largest cities in Libya.

Will it stop the vicious cycle of violence in the Mediterranean, Europe and the Middle East? Will it result in the collapse of the Libyan government? Will it bring an end to indiscriminate injury and killing of innocent people? Will it spread throughout the world a new set of principles of human rights, human dignity and respect for human life?

The answer, to all the above, is no.

Rather, the raids will most certainly accelerate the present cycle of violence and counterviolence. More and not fewer innocent people will be made victims as a consequence of president Reagan's trigger happy, militaristic actions.

Unfortunately, the American people have been sold a nicely prepared package of half-truths. Colonel Moamer Qadhafi has been portrayed as a monster, and American raids on Libya are offered as the cure for international terrorism. But if terrorism can be defined as inflicting injury or harm on innocent people, then the U.S. president has become the latest member in this unwanted group. By attacking civilian targets, Mr. Reagan can no longer be seen as any saner than Colonel Qadhafi.

Neither will the accelerated cycle of violence be confined to the Mediterranean. Countries such as Britain, which have aided the United States, will be the targets

of counterviolence. Here in the Middle East, the Israeli government will take the American action as a vindication of its own policies of state terrorism against Palestinians, both in Lebanon and in the occupied territories. Meanwhile, the lack of a solution of the Palestinian problem continues to be a source of despair and tragedy.

The U.S. action also will not result in the collapse of the Qadhafi government. The people of Libya will unite behind their government.

We have a saying in the Arab world that "even if my brother and I fight against our cousin, all three of us will unite in fighting the common enemy." Whether Mr. Reagan likes it or not, he has made Colonel Qadhafi a national Arab hero.

The president's claim that his actions are meant to bring peace to the world has an empty ring here in the Middle East. How can such a violent action produce a peaceful result? The bombardment of the Lebanese mountains by the battleship New Jersey is still fresh in people's memories. In Arab nations and the Third World, anti-American sentiment will increase. While Mr. Reagan acts like a cowboy, Mikhail Gorbachev looks the sober statesman and scores points by urging mutual superpower withdrawal from the Mediterranean Sea.

Mr. Reagan's actions destroy existing understandings between people and nations of the world. Instead of dealing objectively before international bodies with any evidence of Libyan complicity in terror, Mr. Reagan and his war cabinet have declared themselves judge, jury and executioner. Unable to persuade Western allies to carry out a boycott of Libya, the president has taken upon himself the role of world policeman. Tragically, the new world order set by Mr. Reagan is the old

jungle law — might makes right, the rich devour the poor.

The real motives behind the raids were different from what Mr. Reagan advertised. They were not meant to stop terrorism. Simply put, his actions were politically motivated to appeal in a demagogic way to the Rambo syndrome now so strong among Americans.

As far as Mr. Reagan is concerned, it does not matter whether a country is democratic or totalitarian, whether it is run by the will of the people or by a dictator. What matters is whether the country can be counted on to be under the wings of the United States. And if it is not, it is fair game. (I. H. T.)

The Questions . . .

(Continued from page 21)

Britain, only to be refused air passage over France, and be forced to detour around Spain for fear of incurring that country's opposition as well?

The answer we get here is that Mr. Reagan was determined to demonstrate to the allies that he would strike Libya with or without their cooperation and to remind Colonel Qadhafi that even without aircraft carriers in the region, America could hit him with land-based bombers.

The French confirm that their embassy in Tripoli was hit by our bombers, but more important, that they believe they have done more to contain Colonel Qadhafi's ambitions in Chad by quiet military and diplomatic actions.

So there clearly are doubts here — serious doubts that are not being expressed in public. This is true not only in the allied embassies, where some officials are inclined to believe that the only "winners" in this struggle so far are the Russians and Colonel Qadhafi.

All this is denied by the administration, but these unanswered questions are likely to emerge.

—The New York Times

The writer, managing editor of the English-language Palestinian weekly *Al Fajr* in Jerusalem, contributed this to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Rambo on the Rampage

Nikil Chakravarty

The position that the President of the United States of America holds in the affairs of the world carries with it a modicum of dignity and a certain degree of responsibility. It is amazing that the present occupant of that high office has recently demonstrated that he possesses neither. Leaders of nations sometimes indulge in bitter polemics and hurl harsh words at each other, but none of them has called another head of a state a mad dog. Not, at least since Adolf Hitler. But that's what President Reagan has called President Gaddafi of Libya — an ostentatious display of vulgarity which shocked the world.

But this indecency-diplomatic indecency — on the part of the vaunted leader of the "Free World" was surpassed by his deeds a few days later, on April 15, when the US bombed a number of places in Libya in total defiance of all codes of civilised society, not to speak of international law. President Reagan did not care to put on a fig-leaf in committing this aggression, for he could trot out no justification in defence of his misdeed. In the eyes of the world, this barbaric action has earned for President Reagan himself the epithet of a mad dog.

The US Administration was making feverish preparation for this blitz attack under cover of a so-called campaign against international terrorism, in which it tried to single out President Gaddafi as the evil organiser of the recent acts of terrorism. The bomb blast in a West Berlin night club in which one American lost his life along with others as also the bomb outrage in an aircraft flying between Rome and Athens were held up by Reagan's special emissary, Gen Walters as proof of a Gaddafi conspiracy. But Walters could convince none of the Governments in West Europe about Libyan complicity in these bomb incidents — not

even the Governments in whose territory these two violent incidents had taken place.

This however did not deter Reagan from ordering the bombing or claiming as he did after the attack, about his having evidence which is "direct", "precise" and "irreputable," regarding Gaddafi's complicity. Unfortunately for Reagan, this so-called "evidence" that barring his lapdog, the Thatcher Government in Britain, none of the West European powers stood by him, and two of his NATO allies — France and Spain — did not permit overflight by US warplanes, showing up a rift without precedent in the Western Alliance.

This blatant show of force by the US Administration has demonstrated its weakness more than its strength. Never has USA been so isolated in the comity of nations. The Arab nations, the Nonaligned Movement, China — not to speak of the Soviet Union and its allies — have come out denouncing Reagan's banditry in Libya, while his NATO allies have refused to rally behind him. No U.S. President has left his country in such shivering cold — bereft of support excepting Britain and Canada and of course Israel and may be South Africa. By his Hitlerite arrogance "If necessary, we will do it again"), Reagan has invested Gaddafi with a measure of respectability which the Libyan leader did not enjoy before.

It is doubtful if President Reagan personally has any comprehension of the consequences of his Big Bully politics. One is tempted to quote what his former Budget Director, David Stockman had to say about him: "Reagan's body of knowledge is primarily impressionistic. He registers anecdotes rather than concepts. Reagan has a mind like a trench — narrow but deep. The President might be getting a little senile." This senility is good neither for the well-being of the United States nor for the peace of the world.

INDIA'S response to Reagan's primitive troglodyte approach to

international politics has been along expected lines. At the time of the previous US attack on Libya (March 24-25), New Delhi's initial reaction was rather muffled, but at New York, as the Chairman of the Nonaligned Bureau, India fell in line with the sentiments of the Nonaligned member-states when they denounced US action as an act of aggression. This time, the very first statement by India's External Affairs Minister in Parliament (April 15) "unequivocally condemned" US action as being "in total disregard of international law and constitutes nothing less than a clear act of aggression" and found it "reprehensible that a Permanent Member of the Security Council having a primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security has taken the law into its own hands and resorted to measures contrary to all norms of international conduct and the principles of the UN Character." Perhaps no other incident since World War II has evoked such strong condemnation from the Government of India.

— (Mainstream)

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Positive Results of India's New Diplomacy in Sri Lanka

Bhabani Sen Gupta

The past one year has clarified India's policy with regard to the ethnic civil war in Sri Lanka to a point where its impact on both sides to the conflict is beginning to tell. Up until 1984, policy makers in New Delhi had kept military intervention as an implied option. The most important problem, however, was one of credibility. The rhetoric of intervention did not frighten Colombo for all practitioners of politics and diplomacy knew that the rhetoric could not be translated into action. On the other hand, Colombo made abundant use of its simulated threat perception to mobilise domestic and international support for its ethnic deprivation policy, and to neutralise the not insignificant number of Sinhals who had been arguing for a policy of reconciliation with steadily — though slowly — increasing effect. In Tamil Nadu, interventionist rhetoric got the Congress-I and the AIADMK some political mileage, but the gain was ephemeral and even dangerous. It created expectations that could not be fulfilled.

About a year ago, prime minister Rajiv Gandhi crafted a new policy to deal with the Sri Lanka crisis. It was a down-to-earth policy within the range of India's resources and the limits of the proprieties of diplomacy. He sent a simple message to Jayewardene and Tamil militants: The ethnic conflict is a problem between the two largest communities of Sri Lanka. It is not an Indian problem. India would be willing to help if the two sides to the conflict agreed to talk their way to a political settlement. For this both sides would have to resile substantially from their polar positions. The Tamils would have to give up their claim to a separate

sovereign state and settle for local autonomy; the Sri Lanka government would have to make autonomy substantive, not fictional. India's good offices will be available if Sri Lanka were ready to pursue the political track. If, on the other hand, Jayewardene determined to seek a military solution and braced his army for a fight-to-a-finish role, he could please himself, and face the consequences, but he couldn't expect India's help.

Jayewardene made a stunning blunder by declaring in February that he would be seeking a military solution of the civil war within the year. He boasted that the Lanka army was better trained and equipped, that the Tamil guerrillas were losing, and getting divided amongst themselves, and he even went to the length of promising the Sinhals a peaceful island by December 1986. The Sri Lanka president, as if to demonstrate that he meant business, proceeded to do a little Vietnam or Lebanon in Jaffna. He ordered bombing of Tamil areas. His army drew up "security zones" populated by Tamil civilians and took reprisals for guerrilla attacks by killing or maiming innocent people and destroying their properties. Evidently, Jayewardene wanted to establish a clear edge on the battlefield in order to wrest a favourable political settlement of the Tamil problem. He seemed to forget for moment that this is what the French had sought to do in Algeria, the Americans in Vietnam and the Israelis in Lebanon. Sri Lanka's astute political leader, like most of his Sinhala compatriots, totally overlooked the "nationalist" content of the Tamil commitment to the civil war.

But he realised his blunder quite soon. Then tried to wriggle

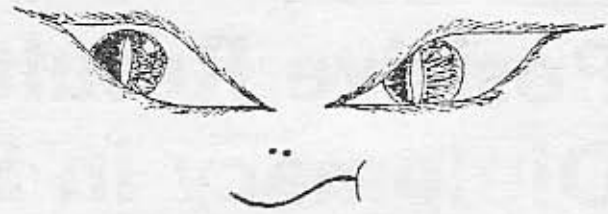
out of it. He said he would separate the military from the political aspect of the conflict, settle the military aspect militarily and the political aspect through negotiations. This splitting tactics failed to take off. The Indian government called off the February visit to Colombo by the foreign secretary, Romesh Bhandari, demonstrating that its good offices were available **only for a political settlement**. For once, a denial policy practised by South Bloc worked.

It worked because Sri Lanka just cannot carry on the burden of this wasting civil war much longer. Rajiv Gandhi's new diplomacy turned world opinion against Colombo. At the recent meeting of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Sri Lanka was accused of genocidal operations against Tamil civilians by a number of countries hitherto sympathetic to Colombo. Meanwhile, officials conceded that the civil war and development could not go together. Finance minister Ronnie de Mel bluntly told prime minister R. Premadasa that the present level of defence expenditure and the slump in commodity prices would compel the government to "drop some of the projects included in the Public Investment Programme," and rule out the inclusion of new projects. It became quite clear to most Sri Lanka that the president had beefed up the army only risking an imminent economic crisis. What they didn't know, but the president did, was that the army wasn't doing all that well in Jaffna and that the guerrillas weren't exactly losing the war.

India's year-old diplomacy, then, has yielded positive results. First,

(Continued on page 30)

CAT'S EYE



MAY DAY AND WOMEN WORKERS

The 100th anniversary of May Day in Sri Lanka is celebrated amidst many upheavals and changes in our society. These include the important new development of militancy among women workers, especially sections such as nurses. The strike of nurses draws attention to the fact that our economy is today heavily based on the cheap labour of females — in the plantations, agricultural, service and industrial sectors. In key areas of the service sector too, such as health and education, women play a dominant role — as doctors, teachers, nurses and paramedical workers. Moreover the bulk of our foreign exchange earnings is also attributable to women's labour as tea pluckers, garment workers in the FTZ and housemaids in the Middle East. In the Free Trade Zone women are nearly 80% of the work force (90% in the garment factories in the Zone). Women form 77% of the unskilled workers in the Middle East, while migrant remittance are now second to tea exports, forming 27% of foreign exchange earnings, with the largest percentage of remitted savings being sent by the women who are housemaids.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that some of the most militant strikes that have taken place since the crushing of the 1980 general strike, have involved women workers; the most important of these being the two successful strikes by the women garment workers of the Polytext Garments factory at Ja-ela (just outside the Free Trade Zone) in 1982 and 1984; the agitation in

the plantation sector where women were at the stoppage of work in the January (in the form of prayer campaign) and the recent strike of nurses.

These strikes have also drawn the support of other women's organisations and feminist groups. During the Polytext struggles, members of women's organisations joined in the picketing and issued leaflets and posters; nuns too came out to help the strikers and material and moral support was given to the Polytext struggle by other women workers.

The nurses strike, which lasted nearly a month, has also evoked a similar response. Twenty women's organisations sent a memorandum to the President in support of the nurses and produced a poster with several demands — the lifting of the proscription on the Public Services Nurses Trade Union, the ending of thuggery against nurses and the granting of their demands for higher wages. They also helped in lodging and feeding nurses evicted from their quarters, made till collections of money from the public and spoke at meetings organised in the Abhayaramaya temple, the headquarters of the union president Rev. Muruttetuwe Ananda, the militant monk. Perhaps the most publicised gesture was by the country's most famous and popular women singer Nanda Malini, who gave a benefit concert in aid of the nurses strike fund; her songs are reportedly banned from the radio as a result of her support for the strike.

It is important to note that women workers including nurses

are no longer docile, submissive females — qualities for which they were, no doubt, recruited. The nurses — a middle-class section with upward social aspirations — proved that they could overcome the 'Florence Nightingale' image imposed upon them, and could come out in a militant struggle for their economic and trade union rights.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN JAFFNA

— (*Bye bye Natkunam*)

On March 8th this year, the International Women's Day was celebrated for the first time in Jaffna, a reflection of the development of feminist consciousness that has emerged recently in the North. The celebrations organised by the Women's Study Circle combined culture with consciousness — raising. A talk was given explaining the significance of March 8th and emphasising that feminism was not an anti-male ideology. A ballet was also performed — *Sakthi Pirakkuthu* (Power is born) which portrayed the various forms of oppression and exploitation of women ending with a song —

Women are organising
themselves together
They all united
To make their own **dharma**
(way of life)
They are rising up with fervour

There was also a poetry recital on the theme — 'Let us win the

World'. Significantly, several men were active participants in the programme, participating as advocates of women's equality and supporters of the women's movement. Another event on Women's Day was a public demonstration and a meeting jointly organised by some of the women's organizations in Jaffna. Many women and young girls took part in this demonstration, shouting slogans against all forms of exploitation and oppression of women and also against the indiscriminate killing of civilians by the armed forces.

In addition, on March 8th this year, there were posters all over Jaffna against patriarchy, against sexism in the mass media and against violence against women. One poster said "Let us forget the Four Virtues, let us develop a fighting spirit". In the Tamil tradition, a good woman is expected to have The Four Virtues of fear, shame, pretence and ignorance. (Natkunam). This year the women have openly challenged the 'Brahmins' of the Tamil establishment, rejecting all these man-made female virtues!

POETRY BY WOMEN

Symbolising the new mood among women in the North is a collection of poems in Tamil by women entitled 'Sollatha Sethikal' — (Messages Unspoken) recently published by Women's Study Circle of Jaffna. These poems which have a feminist perspective, were written by ten women — some of them students in schools. This shows the creative potentiality that women have; but often these talents are unrecognised and unnoticed if not actively discouraged. One poem from this collection says —

I want to spread my thousand wings
 I want to fly across the sky
 I want to touch the sun
 the moon
 the stars
 I want to be a sky-ship which goes
 up and up and up
 I want to be the birds that move across the sky
 But
 The pots and pans
 The thali and the fence
 push me into the
 lower depths.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT THE WORKPLACE

A woman journalist recently resigned from her position in a daily newspaper. Evidence of sexual harassment and the abuse of authority by a male superior was presented. Though we cannot pass judgement on this particular case, these types of events have increasingly been brought to the notice of CATS EYE by women who have claimed that they have suffered sexual harassment in their workplaces. Women participate increasingly in the workforce in Sri Lanka. They are often forced to rely on male favours and patronage for promotion and work opportunity. This has created an ideal situation for the crime of sexual harassment. Every employee has the right to a work environment free of unwanted sexual pressures, and the employer has a corresponding obligation to prevent male employees from depriving women of this right. Infact, in some societies, sexual harassment is seen as an aspect of discrimination and legal action may be instigated against the company for compensation as well as against the individual concerned. We feel such laws should exist in Sri Lanka and should be subject to trade union protection. Sexual harassment is one of the most serious occupational hazards faced by working women. This undermines the integrity of the workplace and assaults the dignity of its victims. Women often have no other recourse but to submit since the men are usually their superiors who have the capacity to dismiss them. If women are to be truly equal they must be

allowed their dignity in the workplace and this right should therefore find protection in the law.

* * *

Dear Cat's Eye,

I was glad to see your reference in the recent LG (15.3.86) to the struggle in India on the law of maintenance and the Muslim *sharia* (religious law) — and was heartened by the stand taken by progressive Muslims.

In Pakistan recently an important conference was held of Muslim women from North Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines and Malaysia. They took up the issue of women's oppression and also opposed the bill in the Indian Parliament exempting Muslims from the maintenance law.

"We strongly oppose the proposed bill as it is against the spirit of Islam which is based on the principles of equality and justice for all human beings before God. Islam especially exhorts the just treatment of women and it is stated in verse 241 ch. 2 of the Quran:

For divorced women
 Maintenance should be provided
 on a reasonable (Scale)
 This is the duty of the righteous

We therefore strongly urge the Indian Parliament to reject this bill.

The conference also drew the attention of the Governments of Muslim countries of the world and the countries with Muslim minorities to the plight of divorced women separated from their children.

"Under the patriarchal system in the concerned societies millions of these women are deprived of the rights of custody of their children after a certain age.

We demand that the concerned Governments introduce progressive and humanitarian legislation to end this discrimination."

Fawzia Alavi

Correspondence

What constitutes the militarization of our society?

I have always found your magazine (which is the only journal of repute I receive here apart from Voice of Women and Spare Rib) to be enormously educative. It has been even more so in recent times. For instance in the Cats Eye column in your issue of 15th March I was educated out of a misconception I had held for many years. Having read the excellent analyses on the 'ethnic issue' in your pages, especially those by Kumari Jayawardene, Newton Gunasinghe and Radhika Coomaraswamy I had held the view that the war in the North and the militarization of our society was mainly due to 'race and class'. I had thought that institutionalised Sinhala racism or Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism, coupled (if you will pardon the expression) with the tendency towards the centralization of power by the dependent bourgeoisies especially against the backdrop of the crisis of capitalism (local and global), constituted the mainsprings of militarization in our society. But just this week the columnist of *Cats Eye* informs us that it is patriarchy that is the fundamental cause.

Lest I be accused of unfair paraphrasing, permit me to quote the relevant sentence. The emphases in dark print are mine. "However, the persuasive militarization of our society and the glorification of war..... cuts across classes and reveals a **more fundamental truth** about militarization that class analysis does not account for: that **militarism is a male fantasy** (in which some women may also participate) based on the patriarchal values of aggression and domination".

In this most profound of definitions then, racism goes unmentioned, and class is displaced by a truth "more fundamental": militarism is.....a male fantasy. This is the most brilliantly insightful and terse definition I have encountered — one that evidently escaped both Luxem-

berg and Lenin in their analyses of militarization — since Eric Segal defined love as "never having to say you're sorry". Significantly though I have not come across in any of the documents, speeches or statements of the Tamil militant organizations, definition of the war being waged against them or their people, couched in the terms that *Cats Eye* chooses. Nor can I remember coming across, in the writings of the Vietnamese — surely a terrible victim of militarist aggression in our century a definition of this phenomenon in which the characteristic factors of imperialism and capitalism were analytically superseded by others.

But then perhaps *Cats Eye* knows better about these things! *Cats Eye* characterises, and implicitly denounces, "aggression," "possession" and "domination" as patriarchal values. I should have thought that the rejection and denunciation of these values would depend on the context. Aggression against whom? Possession of what and who by? Domination of which social classes by which others? Circumstances, as the man, sorry person, said alter cases. When Commandante Dora Maria Tellez hurled two grenades and killed several National Guardsmen during the take over of the National Assembly in 1978 in Managua, and later when she commanded one of the zones in the final insurrection, was she participating in a male fantasy based on the patriarchal value of aggression? And what of leading Sandinista guerrillas such as Monica Baltodano, Leticia (Vicky) Herrera and Gladys Baez? What does *Cats Eye* think of their stated motivations and values? When the Nicaraguan women organized in AMNLAE raise the FSLN slogan 'Patria Libre O Morir!' (Free Homeland or Death!) and join the militia to suppress the contras,

thus ensuring the hegemony of the popular classes, perhaps they are captives of the utterly reprehensible 'patriarchal values' of 'possession' and 'domination'? Could it be perhaps, that these poor women trapped in male fantasies have not yet liberated themselves (from class analysis!) and scaled the heights of feminist consciousness at the summit which sit the assembled *Cats Eye* constituency.

What feminists do in depicting women as naturally pacifistic is to reinforce the male monopoly of organized violence upon which rests the power of the State (and the 'counter state'). At a simple level it also reinforces the stereotypes on the basis of which the male child is gifted the toy gun and the female child, the nurses kit. (The Florence Nightingale fantasy? Not today, surely?) No wonder then that the AMNLAE leaders are on record as categorically calling for a 'womens movement that is not feminist' incidentally do 'marxist-feminists' ever wonder why Marx and Lenin spoke of 'the workers movement' and never 'the workerist movement'?

Cats Eye pronounces her verdict on all socialist revolutions "Unfortunately, socialist revolutions that pursued classless societies have failed to address the oppression of women in their societies". If, instead of the word 'address' *Cats Eye* had used 'abolish', then I would have had no cause to demur, but now I have to ask *Cats Eye* whether the unbinding of the feet of Chinese women, was no great feat or leap forward. Finally I would also recommend as mandatory reading, the account of the Cuban Womens Congress, (in which Fidel too participated) penned by Germaine Greer (remember her?) in the *New Internationalist* last Spring.

Yatirawana

D. Vitanage

Wife - beating: The Hidden Crime

Sepali Kottegoda

'He started beating me about one year after we married. His family didn't approve of our marriage and put a charm so that he would grow to hate the sight of me. I couldn't have children for four years, but even after our first child he continued to beat me. If I point out anything he has done wrong, he hits me. Once he beat me so much I left the house and went to my parents' place. A few days later my son came and asked me to come home.'

— Woman aged 32, mother of three children

'My husband used to drink even before we married. The money he would give me was not enough for household expenses. I used to make and sell stringhoppers, hoppers, and earn enough to keep us going. His salary would finish in two-three days. Then he would come to me and ask for money and beat me. He fell ill because of his drinking. Then he used to lie on his mat and curse me all day and all night — such terrible things he would say. It was only after he fell ill and we went to collect his pension that we learnt he was actually getting twice the amount he had given me.'

— Widow aged 72 years

'My father beats me especially when he drinks — which he does every evening. My mother left our house to work in another house, my elder sisters are married and live separately. I live here with my husband, children and younger brother and sisters. Once my father hit me with a chair when I was two months pregnant and I lost the baby. He demands money for his drink. He wants fish and meat with every meal, but when he is angry he throws his plate of rice on the floor.'

— Woman aged 27, mother of two children

* * *

These are but a few instances of wife/daughter beating which go

on within the walls of our homes. The particular examples cited above come from urban low-income households, but there is little reason to doubt that the phenomenon cuts across different social strata and ethnic groups. Violence against women is evident in all societies today. It takes many forms: it includes varying degrees of intimidation, harassment, physical and mental abuse, or extreme or less than extreme injury. (1) Long-term physical harassment and intimidation of women in the home is but one feature of this larger phenomenon.

In the course of a few months of research, the number of cases of wife/daughter beating which emerged directed this researcher's attention to seek the causes for the prevalence of such practices. The question 'why did your husband/father beat you?' brought a variety of responses. 'It's the economic problems we face... Somebody has but a charm on him to make him hate me...It's because he drinks too much...It's because I talk back to him or I refuse to do some household task for him...It's only since he met this other woman.' All such responses can be seen to contain an element of excusing the man for the act itself by bringing in a number of factors for which ultimately the responsibility lies with the woman. However, examples from all over the world, from India, Malaysia, Argentina, Britain, USA are too many and too alarming to dismiss the issue or to file it under the head 'Caused by women themselves'.

In contemporary society women's position, both within and outside the household, rarely permits her to take decisive actions or decisions regarding her own welfare. The prerogative to control the woman, to 'teach her her place in the social network' lies with the man. In most homes this act of intimidation takes place at least once. It is not an issue which women would talk about

unless the question is specifically asked of them. But once they are asked, the ensuing discussion reveals that woman-beating is by far the most commonly used practice whereby male superiority is asserted. It recurs so frequently that there is resignation or acceptance of this form of intimidation among most women. Self-defence in such instances is rarely considered by the woman as a viable course of action to take. Woman is socialised in such a way as to inhibit her from actually reacting with violence against violence. Moreover, individual acts of violence or self-defence are usually rejected by women — 'If I ever try to hit him back, he would break my arms...We are not like men, we cannot hit others like they do. 'By itself, hitting back does not offer the solace a woman needs after an attack.

What form of redress is available to a woman subject to beatings and physical abuse at home? In some countries like Britain, the USA, India, Malaysia, Hongkong, women's groups working on this issue have successfully brought the issue to public attention. They offer women centres of refuge where they can stay, have access to legal and some form of financial aid until they feel confident about taking decisions regarding their future. However, in most countries, as in Sri Lanka, there is little support for battered women. The existing legal framework, casual and negligent attitudes of the police (who invariably take the view that it is a 'domestic' matter), the cultural inhibitions on the part of the victims, overwhelm the woman and prevent her from seeking or finding refuge from such attacks. While many women are forced to seek hospital treatment after being attacked, few would lodge complaints with the police for fear of further intimidation.

(Continued on page 32)

Positive Results of . . .

(Continued from page 25)

It has clarified India's stand and turned international opinion around — from blaming India for obstructing a settlement of the civil strife, to blaming Colombo for its belligerence. Secondly, it has eliminated the demand for military intervention that used to be uttered by some Indian hard-liners. Even they now realise that intervention or even the demand of it was producing results opposite to what was desired. Thirdly, the new diplomacy has deprived the Lankan government of the smokescreen of an Indian threat perception. It must now choose between a military and a political settlement. And finally, the positive role of Indian diplomacy is now seen in total clarity. No one can blame

India for messing up the Sri Lankan crisis.

The last weeks have shown that Colombo cannot fasten on a military settlement, but must return to the track of political solution. It has sent several messages to New Delhi asking for help, more specifically for Bhandari's visit. India's foreign minister, of course, flexed some rhetorical muscle even though it ran counter to the prime minister's new diplomacy. The "ultimatum" that Sri Lanka must work out a political settlement "within a month" didn't impress any one because it lacked back-up teeth. Mr Bhagat must resist the temptation to lapse to the rhetorics of the diplomacy of the earlier regime.

He did better, however, by urging a number of governments, through quiet diplomatic channels,

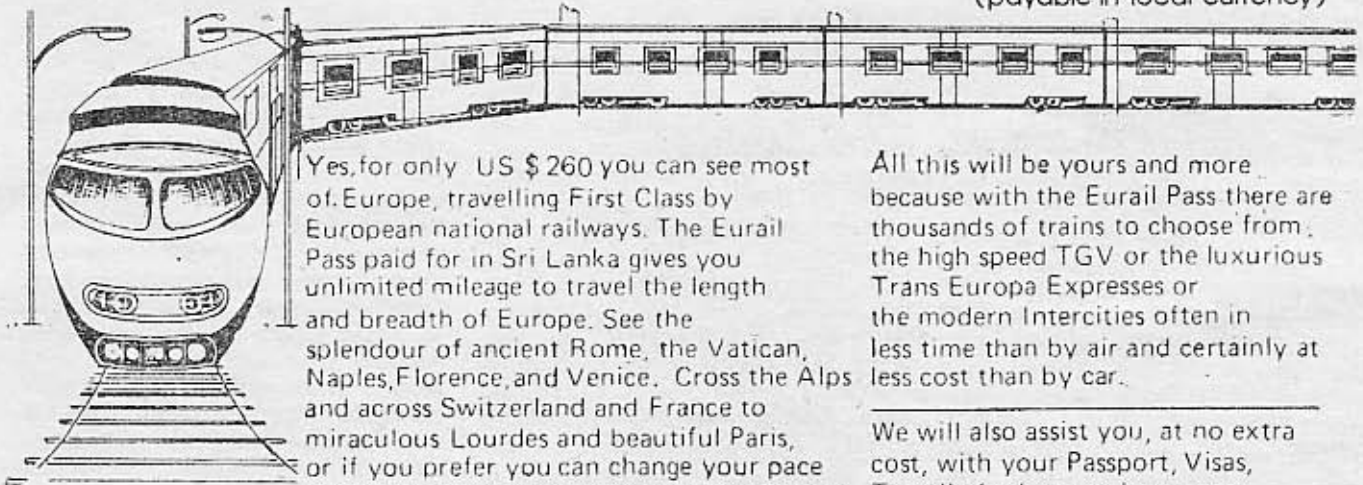
to do whatever they could to restrain the belligerence of the grand old man in Colombo and to bring him to the path of political reconciliation. Several governments have actually rendered such advice, spiced with implied warning that they may not be committing their contributions to the World Bank's annual aid to Sri Lanka if the civil war did not end soon in a political settlement.

If Sri Lanka seriously wants India to resume its diplomacy, New Delhi will have to do so. But it will be under a strong handicap. The man who has operated the new diplomacy with admirable purposefulness and has won a lot of credibility among all political circles in Sri Lanka retired on March 31.

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Under the spreading Herat tree!

The Outsider

One of the few unfailing sources of pleasure for the average reader of the popular press is surely the regular literary outpourings, prose and poetry, of GWEN HERAT. The felicity of style is surpassed only by the staggering range of subject matter.

Recently, a book on the complete cricketer, a splendid contribution to the burgeoning Heratian oeuvre and a change of pace, so to say, for the writer, saw hordes of promising young wielders of the willow as well as the most venerable students of the sport rampaging through Colombo's bookshops until the S.T.F. rushed to the spot to restore order. Needless to add, two retired umpires, slightly short of sight and breath, were caught in the crossfire, the coroner determining later that the poor guys were plumb out of their minds to stray into such an insecurity zone.

"Versatility" says a wellknown newspaper reviewer is the hallmark of the writer's work. Interested in a somewhat more educated elucidation, I turned for help of course to a Peradeniya pundit who mumbled something about Ashish Nandy and "the catharsis of the post-industrial state and its existential vortex". Despite the maddeningly faulty phone connection, I pressed him for something closer to a textual analysis and his response, at first a muffled cry of sudden pain, was "the Christina Rossettian ambience, the experience, the memory, intelligence and action, cannot be the number you dialled is not in use..." which is helluva way of dodging a simple question, unless of course the English dept. has been infiltrated by Krishnamurti's devoted pupil, Ananda Tissa de Alwis.

Anyway, left to my own devices, I read Gwen Herat's thoughts on "The Saffron Robe":

*"I look around and comprehend
This baseless, empty life
Unseen Truth reveals inward sense,
Far beyond my reach.
But the golden, saffron robes of thine
Beholds my failing heart"*

*"Beneath a spreading tree, in wilderness
At thy feet, I revere
And feed upon the wondrous truth
Thy mind gently disclose.
Love and hatred, greed or lust
May not touch my lonely life..."*

My own base and lonely life deeply touched by Gwen's sublime meditations, I prayed for more. In answer came another voice, perhaps from the same nest of singing birds and bards, equally concerned with the priestly pursuit, but this time with doctrine and decorum and their strict compliance in the matter of our rebellious nightingales. By a coincidence that has a vague air of the miraculous, the self-same hallowed editorial page of the "Daily Noose" offered us barely six days later sister Sumana Karunaratne on "STRIKE BY NURSES". A truly inspired reply, if I may say so, to the Nayake Thera who suggested that the legality or propriety of a monk leading a trade union should be settled by a court of law.

She clinches the official case, with this magisterial pronouncement:

"All strikes lead to harassment in one form or another... It is therefore clear that we need not go to a court of law to decide whether it is correct for a Bhikku to lead any trade union".

Envious of this all too evident attempt by an incipient feminist cartel to monopolise liturgical discourse and debate, Kautilya plunged into battle, holding aloft the defiant banner of sexual equality. In those cloistered circles where the secret appreciation of the purest bad verse is almost approaching the status of an elitist cult, the Outsider of course is the undisputed master of the craft. Dashing off some undefiled doggeral, I submitted the same for publication in the identical journal. Not even the courtesy of a rejection slip. I am left with no alternative therefore but to appeal to you to publish my verses with the customary apologies, I suppose, to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,

Wife-beating. . .

(Continued from page 29)

The issue at stake here is two-fold. Firstly, we must recognise that woman beating cannot be confined to a few instances of the actions of 'irate husbands' confronted by economic problems reacting in a deplorable manner towards their wives/daughters. All forms of violence against woman are a part of the structure of patriarchy which pervades our society whereby male authority is asserted over woman. Recognition of this factor opens the way to discussion and formulation of action to counter this situation.

Secondly, there is an urgent need in the event of physical intimidation to offer such women forms of redress on the lines of the women's refugee centres operating in Malaysia, Hong Kong and other countries. There is a need for closer co-operation between concerned women's groups, the state and non-government agencies, formulation of a responsive legal framework, the support of the police, hospitals and women's groups to enable concrete assistance to be given to these women. Woman-beating has been with us for a long time: it is time to unite against it.

*Beneath the spreading mara tree
The Commie Bhikku stands
A rabble-rousing soak is he
With eyes red, and shaking hands.
And the anti-government speech he makes
Defies all codes in Buddhist lands.*

* * * * *

*On the platform of the Buddhist Hall
The nationalist bhikku speaks
Just hear him bawl and maul
The J.S.S. and other freaks.
And the monk who's guilty of this breach
The party goon squad quickly seeks.
A scuffle, and the saffron robe is well beyond
his reach.
Next time, he'll know to make a
non-violent speech.*

* * * * *

*Neath the L.R.C. office dome
His Benz three hundred stands
Near the tycoon's nursing home
Where nothing is of local brands.
And karma, dhukka, kaya is all he talks
To the poor suffering things who change
his bed pans.
He leaves behind a thousand note
No Sri Lanka printed one.
He's not after the nurses' vote
His karuna is for the Ward Three nun.
How come he pays this fabulous fee?
Silly girl! He is U-an-Pee!*

LIKE THE ROOTS OF THE BANYAN

*Our agony like the roots of the banyan
Has prised opened the plaster
That now splinters and fall apart
Revealing the brickwork, tender red
And these roots, with time have probed
And tentacled the mozaic
Opening devious passages
Ill-concealed clefts for further intrusions
Disabling a structure
In an uncompromising fatal grip.*

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