

LANKA

GUARDIAN

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1948 — 1994

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BRIEFLY...

Ministers and missing furniture

Two ministers of the former UNP regime were questioned by the Criminal Investigation Department about the disappearance of valuable furniture from their ministry offices. Among the missing items are antique kavichchiyas (couches), drawing room sets and conference tables.

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Some of the missing furniture have been recovered from the private residences of the ministers, police sources said.

Clinton supports peace moves

The US Administration supports Sri Lanka's efforts to resolve peacefully the civil strife and welcomes the cessation of hostilities between the Government and Tamil separatists, US President Clinton told Sri Lanka Ambassador Jayantha Danapala who presented credentials at a White House ceremony.

The US President also praised Sri Lanka's commitment "to market oriented economic policies".

Inflation down

Inflation has gone down to single digit level for the first time in eight years, according to the Central Bank. The Colombo Consumers Price Index (Cost of Living Index) showed an annual average inflation rate of 7 per cent in February.

Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister and Acting Finance Minister G.L. Peiris told the Sunday Observer that the lower price trends were a result of better domestic supply conditions and efforts by the Government to reduce prices of essential consumer items. The minister noted a steady

decline in the inflation rate since July 1994.

Computers for Jaffna

Computers gifted by Britain to the Jaffna University but held up in Colombo for several months have now been flown out to the northern campus on the orders of the new Defence Secretary Chandrananda de Silva. The Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University had arrived in Colombo earlier to take up the issue of their non arrival in Jaffna. The students and lecturers on the northern campus were unhappy, he told the authorities.

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LONG ARM OF THE LTTE

Mervyn de Silva

The LTTE, an armed secessionist movement in a tiny little island twenty miles from the Tamilnadu coast, can affect not just Indo-Sri Lankan relations but the politics of the governing party in the world's largest democracy. Such is the extraordinary power of the anti-systemic in the so-called "New World Order". Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader is a major factor in Indian politics since Sonia Gandhi challenges Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. The issue she exploits to embarrass and isolate Rao is the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the grandson of Pandit Nehru and the son of Indira Gandhi. Of course, Premier Rao would not be so vulnerable to attacks from the Sonia camp but for the major reverses that the Congress party, under his increasingly lack-lustre leadership, has lately suffered. The last such battle, Maharashtra included, was particularly humiliating.

That's not all. The *Times of India* reported (March 12) that "the escape of nine LTTE militants from the high security Madras Central Jail on Feb. 27, with the apparent collusion of some jail staff has sent shock waves throughout Tamilnadu and left the state government embarrassed".

These electoral defeats came in the midst of increasing political turmoil and extremist violence. So much so the government has clamped direct rule from Delhi on the Janata Dal-governed state of Bihar. (The full results would be known only on March 31st). The point is that these Feb-March State elections were seen as "a referendum on Prime Minister Rao."

The reputed Indian opinion pollster MARG observed in a pre-election report that the results of the Assembly elections in the large Maharashtra state, and Bihar and Orissa are likely to have a "major bearing on the national political scene." It is this political background which made President Chandrika Kumaratunga's visit so crucial, since the issue was Prabhakaran. And the question of "extradition" was by no means a legal issue but a politically explosive item on the Indo-Sri Lankan agenda.

EXTRADITION

The *Island* report on Delhi's demand for LTTE leader's extradition was taken from *The Asian Age*, an international newspaper launched by former Indian editor M.J. Akbar, one of India's frontrank journalists. But Mr. Akbar is more than that. A member of the governing Congress party Mr. Akbar was also an MP, who lost his seat at the last parliamentary polls. The *Age* quoted no less an authoritative spokesman than Foreign Minister Pranab Mukerjee in its report on the LTTE and Delhi's request for Mr. Prabhakaran's extradition. Up to now, the *Asian Age* has not "corrected" nor withdrawn it, with the customary editor's note.

However, the question was not taken up officially. Why? Diplomatic proprieties? Courtesy? Or was the reported statement of the External Affairs Minister an example of diplomatic signalling, meaning Delhi's polite, indirect, gentle reminder to the new Sri Lankan administration of India's *locus standi*? The former prime minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on May 21, 1991 at an election rally in Madras. The killer, Dhanu, was trained so well that in a "trial run" she got close enough to Prime Minister V.P. Singh at a public meeting that she "managed to touch the Prime Minister's feet."

Though there have been Commissions of Inquiry, and two LTTE leaders, Prabhakaran and Intelligence chief Pottu Amman have been named they have not been "found guilty" by any Indian court. Nor has India spoken of extradition. There is no India-Sri Lanka extradition treaty.

TAMILNADU

So India did not (and could not) call for the LTTE leader's extradition. The word did not come up in any of the official talks.

Meanwhile, former TNCC president K. Ramamurthy M.P. has claimed that the LTTE had planned to infiltrate into Tamilnadu via Rameswaram in late March. He also claimed, the TOI reported, that the LTTE had plans to liquidate the Chief

Minister Mrs. Jayalalitha. The LTTE militants who had escaped from Madras jail were hiding in the Southern districts of the state. They were planning to sneak into Madras — probably on March 19 or immediately after the conference on "the Hindu revival" sponsored by the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at Rameswaram. Mr. Ramamurthy also claimed that the LTTE was working with other armed groups like the ULFA, PWG, Kashmiri terrorists and Khalistani militants.

A few weeks earlier nine LTTE militants had escaped from the high-security Madras Central Jail on Feb. 27. "The apparent collusion of some jail guards has sent shock waves throughout Tamilnadu and left the state government embarrassed." The state police arrested two; one swallowed his cyanide capsule.

It is not just the Tamilnadu administration and the Chief Minister that have been shaken by such events and disturbing developments. It is the Rao administration and the Indian state. In a way, it is a "security threat" more serious than the traditional foe, the Pakistani army or Pakistan. (Relations with China have greatly improved despite the issue of Tibet). The in-gathering of the "armed groups" is a menacing threat to the Indian state. So when Mr. Rao tells President Chandrika the resolution of the Tamil conflict is one problem less for India, he means it. But diplomatic courtesies prevented him from going further. If the solution is "federalism" or federal in character — like Tamilnadu 30 years ago — so much the better. In the meantime however, there is the assassination of Nehru's grandson and Indira's son, the wounded pride of the Indian army, and most of all, Sonia's persistent demand — punishment.

STOP PRESS

After the discovery of a large cache of arms, VHF communications equipment and RDX explosives in a Khalistan Liberation Front hideout, police are investigating an LTTE connection.

Eight - Fold Path to Peace

Responsibility?

Until President Ranasinghe Premadasa was himself assassinated, it was popularly believed that he and his supporters were responsible for the successive assassinations of several military and national leaders. But now that he is no longer alive all culpability for the past as well as the present is focused on the LTTE. Anyone who ventures to even consider any other possibility is ridiculed as being a supporter of the Tigers or shielding or justifying the Tigers. The IGP himself was pressed to pronounce the Tigers as responsible for the recent Gamini Dissanayake assassination. He refrained from doing so and said other possibilities should also be considered. There were strong protests at this. However, there is the fact of bitter inter-party (and inter-group) as well as intra-party (and intra-group) conflicts and pro-peace and anti-peace conflicts. The possibility of it being the work of a faction or combination of forces, and the possibility of the use of contract killers (even though suicide bombers) cannot be ruled out.

Further, the responsibility for the outbreak of war in 1987 and 1990 is fixed entirely on the LTTE. But certain other factors are conveniently ignored. After the Peace Accord there was heavy "cheating" or breach of agreements on both sides. For instance, when a Peace Group of 25 persons from different religions and communities in the South visited Jaffna a few weeks after the Peace Accord and met all sections of the people there, including the LTTE, they were given details by the LTTE of Sinhala land encroachment promoted unilaterally by the Government, since the Accord, in the Welī Oya area and these details were published at the time in the Saturday Review. Then there was delay in the setting up of the Interim Committee and there was mismanagement of the case of the arrested 15 Tigers. Later, the implementation of devolution of power was minimal. Again in 1990-1991, the Government dragged its feet over decisions regarding a devolution package and necessary amendments to the constitution, did not have a realistic understanding of the dangers inherent in the situation and left its security forces open to

attack. So, if all the factors are taken into account, the Government cannot be said not to have had any share in the failure of the peace efforts.

Evolving Strategy

All this background is emphasized in order to stress that, in view of repeated failure of past peace efforts, the need for evolving a correct, realistic strategy for peace is essential.

At the Presidential Election just concluded (9th November 1994), Ms Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaranatunga received a very clear confirmation of her initiatives in the peace process. She can now justify her going further ahead on her own. However, it may be wise for her to pursue a collective course of action and we very much hope she will do so. She has received a massive mandate of 62.28 per cent of the votes cast (voter turn-out was 70.52 per cent). But the main opposition party polled a fairly substantial vote of 36.91 per cent. And both parties have almost equal representation in Parliament. It would be a very great gain if the United National Party cooperated with the People's Alliance in the peace process. It was a most unfortunate fact that certain sections of the UNP descended to very low depths in trying to raise racist issues against Ms Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaranatunga herself and the People's Alliance in the run-up to the Presidential Election, especially after the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake. However, if she can overlook this in order to appeal to the better elements in the UNP she would be showing statesmanship of the highest order. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, will also then have a crucial role to play for much will depend on his response.

This Memorandum ventures to put it like this (in the second section): "All parties and groups should view the ethnic question from a national perspective. No party should seek partisan political advantage in the search for peace. The quality of leadership of the President or Prime Minister will be seen in his or her ability to mobilize a collective leadership and a collective solution for peace. There must be a readiness on all sides to make conce-

ssions as well as receive benefits." The peace process may take some considerable time and involve ups and downs so it would be a great strength if the two major parties act together and share responsibilities in moving forward. Only so would it be possible to prevent extreme racist forces (present in many of the parties and groups) from rising up again and obstructing progress towards peace. However, if the UNP and Certain other parties and groups do not cooperate, the President will have to go ahead with those who cooperate, knowing that the broad masses will give necessary support.

The cooperation of the armed forces in the peace process will also be crucial. Some critical remarks made by Ms Chandrika Kumaranatunga, when she was Prime Minister, seem to have been published in the Press out of context. These have to be made the subject of honest dialogue. But, actually, the Government has been very wise in consulting the armed forces from the beginning. A tour was made of the military camps in the North by the Deputy Minister Colonel Anuruddha Ratwatte, who had an open dialogue with all ranks, during which he welcomed questions and gave answers which received good publicity in the Press (The Island, 5.9.1994). While there are hard-liners, there are also, of course, reasonable and moderate elements in the armed forces. When their role, involving considerable commitment and sacrifice, as well as the difficulties they face are duly appreciated then cooperation can be obtained through the continuing dialogue.

The role of the LTTE has also to be carefully and realistically thought out. Certain background material has already been given for this purpose. One view is that the LTTE is a terrorist organization, not serious about peace and only concerned about gaining time for war. There is no point in dealing with them. What has to be done is to do the right thing — give a reasonable package of devolution of power — and leave it to the people of Jaffna and the International Community to deal with them. Now, considering that the LTTE is the de facto Government in power in the North and considering that there is not, at present, any fore-seable

possibility of removing them, how far is this realistic? How can any progress be made in the peace process if it is attempted to side-line and ignore a key actor in the drama? However, if it is remembered, as has been pointed out, what caused the LTTE, that is, our common responsibility for the LTTE phenomenon, or our share in the responsibility, it will be possible to approach the LTTE with a less self-righteous attitude, judge them less totally and consider certain other possibilities. The LTTE have repeatedly said in recent times that they are ready to give up the separatist Eelam demand, if sufficient power were devolved to enable autonomous development within a united Sri Lanka. Now considering the increasing burdens borne by the decreasing people of Jaffna, which must affect them too, and considering the long and arduous road to Eelam, with no realistic prospect of ever getting there, how can it be said that it is impossible to think that they will respond to a reasonable offer of peace?

The fact is that such a specific reasonable offer has never been made. What has to be done is to openly make a definite offer to the LTTE as well as to all others concerned. Details can be worked out through negotiation. If the LTTE do not respond positively, then the action can be continued with the help of the people of Jaffna and the International Community.

If a specific, reasonable offer of devolution is made, then the Government can expect massive solidarity support for the peace process from Tamils not only in the North and in the rest of Sri Lanka but also from countries across the world, including the very considerable numbers of Tamils who are strong supporters of the LTTE. Then, at the same time, the Government would be in a strong position, both in actuality as well as morally, to negotiate fairly with the LTTE the process of devolution and demilitarization and the accompanying monitoring procedures.

Also, it must be emphasized that making a definite offer of peace involves making clear the process of implementation of the offer. The Tamils have been let down time and again. Time and again promises have been made and broken or not implemented. The LTTE cannot be expected to lay down arms until the process of implementation is made clear. Demilitarization may have to be approached by stages as the

process of implementation of devolution progresses. This is where the importance of both mediation and monitoring teams will have to be recognized. On the one hand, mutual trust has to be built up by mediation and, on the other hand, there will have to be hard-headed arrangements for supervision and checking by monitoring. Both processes will have to be set up by mutual agreement and set in motion simultaneously. The necessity of a peace-keeping force may have to be seriously considered, also to be set up on a mutually acceptable basis.

But the top priority, now that certain initial confidence-building gestures have been made, is for the Government to decide on certain specific peace proposals, on the basis of various peace proposals that have been put forward by a number of consultation processes in the past ten years.

Sections 3 and 4 of this Memorandum have set out some of the major issues involved in devolution of power and constitutional reform. Various definite and specific proposals that have been put forward have been referred to. Some of these have been evolved out of deep study and wide dialogue both at the grass-roots level and at scholarly level. They are supported by representatives from the main ethnic groups, major religions and modern ideologies, both from the grass-roots and at authoritative levels.

We think that some kind of collective process such as the following would be most likely to achieve positive results. We think it would be good if there were an initial mediatory team, appointed, through consultation, by the President to be in constant touch with her, throughout the evolution of the peace process. This team would have representation as much as is feasible and practicable from the following, that is, from the three main ethnic groups — Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim (Moors and Malays), from the four major religions — Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, the secular ideologies, various sectors such as peasant, worker, student, academic and business communities and clergy and representatives from the government and the opposition. All these representatives should be conversant with the issues involved and known to be broadly in favour of a fair devolution package. The President herself and the Government representatives would moderate a process of achieving a conse-

nsus first within the initial mediatory team. Then this team would share the task of exploring consensus with the various parties and groups, and power-centers, both secular and religious. Visits from the South to the North and East and from the North and East to the South would be part of this process.

The people should be kept in touch with this process through all the media so there could be free and open dialogue, guided by a responsible leadership with a wide vision and committed to achieving peace on the basis of justice for all.

Independent initiatives would also be most valuable and should be welcomed. For instance, there are senior Buddhist bhikkhus of standing as well as other representative persons from the South who are prepared to go to the North and East to engage in dialogue with all sections of opinion there, including Hindu and Muslim traditional opinion and the LTTE. They are ready to personally assure the people there that they understand the need of substantial devolution of power and ensuring their rights to the Tamils. They have already worked to develop understanding of this in the South and they are ready to continue to work for the granting of the reality of power not only in constitutional formulation but in practice to enable the Tamils to achieve reasonable autonomy for their own development, within co-existence and interdependence with others in Sri Lanka. Further, there are, no doubt, Tamils of all sections in the North and East, who are prepared to come to the South to engage in dialogue with all sections of the people there, including traditional Sinhala-Buddhist power-centres and the JAP. At a personal level they could assure the Sinhala people that they understand their apprehensions about the dangers to Sinhala life and culture in the present situation and are prepared to support their endeavours to ensure the advancement of Sinhala tradition and culture.

This kind of dialogue should take place at international level too because, as pointed out earlier, there is a considerable impact of international forces on the local situation. Further, there could be a local in-put into the international dialogue and an international in-put into the local dialogue.

Peace conferences, peace demonstrations, peace festivals, peace marches

should also be organized and would help the advancement of the peace process. However, it is important to remember that there should not be any attempt to intimidate, force or pressurize others to accept one's opinions, There should be a true spirit of responsible consultation and dialogue.

These independent peace initiatives would help and strengthen the official peace moves. Also suitable persons involved in these initiative could be called upon to serve in the official mediation and monitoring procedures by mutual consent of those concerned.

It is thought these ways that the necessary constitutional changes become possible and, more important, their implementation also becomes possible.

(Signed)

1. Ven Daniyagama Sri Vanarathana Thero, Chief Sangha Nayaka of Kalagam Palatha, Viharadhipathi, Sri Vanasingharamaya, Aluviharegama, Senapura.
2. Ven Rambukwelle Pannasara Thero, Chief Sangha Nayaka of Ihala Dolospattuwa, Principal of Polgolla Sasthravinda Institute, Sri Lanka Vayamba Buddhist and Pali University, Gokerella.
3. Ven Mahagalkadawela Punnyasara Thero, Secretary General, Vayamba Aagamika Samagi Sandhanaya, President, Hiriyala Bauddha Bala Mandalaya, Rajachethiyaramaya, Gokerella.
4. Ven Ampitiye Dharmakirthi Thero, Buddhist Service Centre, Vira Puran Appu Pedesa, Kandy Road, Matale.
5. Ven Moragollagama Ratnasara Thero, Parivenadhipathi, Sri Dharmachandra Pirivena, Hiripitiya, Nikadalupotha.
6. Ven. Pallewela Devarakkhitha Thero, Subhadaramaya, Gangodawila, Nugegoda.
7. Ven Batapola Nanda Thero, Movement for Defence of Democratic Rights, Rajagiriya.
8. Ven Baddegama Samitha Thero, Pradeshiyasabha Member, Dutugemunu Viharaya, Baddegama.
9. Ven Keeranthidiye Pannasekera Tissa Thero, Mahamevna Environmental Development Samithiya, Galahitiya, Molkawa.
10. Ven Buddhiyagama Chandraratana

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11. Rt Revd Andrew Kumarage, Kurunegala.
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29. Santasilan Kadirgamar, Coordinator, World Solidarity Forum Group, Japan, formerly Lecturer, Jaffna University, and President, MIRJE, Jaffna.
30. Wesley Muthiah, Secretary, Sri Lanka Estate and Plantation Workers Educational Trust, London, and World Solidarity Forum Group, U.K.

Waiting — 4 Kundasale

*With all arrival there is departure
This we knew then but it didn't seem
As real as the honey in your breath.*

*Was it treacled curd or fragrant dairy cream?
Memory cannot tell
Details drowned in the brimming surge of love
The tremors to each touch and the great sigh
Eye searching eye.*

*Then drowsing with the flambouyants at the window
Raining crimson through the afternoon
Till shadows trail
Their signals for departure by the grey Night Mail.*

U. Karunatilake

The Concept of Hegemony

Humayun Kabir

The huge asymmetry between Sri Lanka and India has been the most important of the factors contributing to the former's threat perceptions vis-a-vis the latter. Physically, India is fifty times the size of Sri Lanka and forty times larger in population. Although Sri Lanka shows better Physical Quality of Life Indices (PQLI) with a higher per capita income than India, the former pales into insignificance in the vastness of the technological and industrial might of the latter. Militarily, Sri Lanka has been an incomparably weaker power unable to protect itself from aggression and even to put down internal armed violence and insurgency, while India has been a strong regional power commanding the fourth largest army, seventh largest Air Force and eighth largest Navy in the world. This asymmetry in size and capability between the two countries has decisively informed and shaped the Sri Lankan mind, psyche and policy, often leading to complexity in Indo-Sri Lankan relationship. Inevitably, therefore, India has always been the most fundamental preoccupation in Sri Lanka's foreign and security policy. But before I offer my arguments to this proposition let us briefly discuss India's regional policy and perception about Sri Lanka.

South Asia in India's strategic calculus: Policy towards Sri Lanka

Conscious of India's size, population, resources, and ideals of freedom, her leaders developed an urge for India to play a major power role in world affairs. The rulers of India, from Jawaharlal Nehru downwards, avidly backed by the foreign policy and strategic community and indeed by public opinion, have considered India as a regional great power and regarded the region as her natural sphere of influence.

The Nehru government inherited a body of British strategic doctrine, developed for the defence of the British Indian Empire, as the basis of its own strategic theory. In British times, the external security of India had rested on a three-fold basis¹²: (1) safeguarding of the north-west frontier of India, through which successive invading armies had made inroads into Indian

territory; (2) preventing the area around the Indian sub-continent from falling under the control of foreign power; and (3) maintaining command of the Indian Ocean and its environs. Owing to the fact that Britain had the absolute mastery of the Indian Ocean during most of the time of its rule in India, British strategic concepts of the defence of India were based largely on a continental system of security. The system rested on erecting an 'extended frontier' based on a cluster of buffer states around India. Its assumption was that any threat to India would be resisted beyond India's borders, while its complement was a foreign policy pursued with the objective of preventing foreign powers from gaining undue influence in these buffer states.

Sri Lanka was valued for the protection it afforded the expanding British possessions in India. The British evolved a security doctrine of strategic unity in South Asia for the defence of India and they treated Sri Lanka as an integral part of it.

Independent India's regional objectives and interests have been the following: that the regional order in South Asia should be India-orchestrated; that the small states in the region lie within her security sphere, and must comply with India's security requirements by not internationalising bilateral issues and not becoming involved in alliances or security relationships with external powers; that management of the security of the region is the essential preserve of India; that India would not exclude use of a military option in defusing a situation in her neighbourhood which she deemed inimical to her security interests; that India must limit and eventually eliminate involvement and influence of outside powers in South Asia, and if at all there has to be external intrusion into the region it must not contradict, if it does not support, India's security interests; that India's attitudes and relationships with her South Asian neighbours depend on their appreciation of India's regional security interests; and that the other states in the region will serve as buffer states in the event of an extra-regional threat, and hence India's concern for stability in her South Asian neighbours.

India, therefore, has always regarded the region as her natural sphere of influence and her policy has always been one of either attitudinal or behavioural hegemony in the region.¹³ Although the word 'hegemony' comes from the ancient Greek and refers to the dominance of one state over others in the system, it is used in diverse and confused ways. Part of the problem is that unequal distribution of power is a matter of degree, and there is no general agreement on how much inequality and what types of power constitute hegemony. Attempts have been made to develop the concept of hegemony by representatives of varied intellectual traditions, such as world-systems analysis, historical materialism, and international relations.¹⁴

Antonio Gramsci produced a theoretical elaboration of hegemony with his pathbreaking interpretation of the dominance of the bourgeoisie in a modern capitalist state. He also cautiously extended its use to the study of international relations.¹⁵ One such definition is given by Imtiaz Ahmed, who means by hegemony "the contradictory combination of consent and coercion organised by the dominant social forces".¹⁶

The concept of hegemony is generally defined in terms of leadership, predominance and preponderance of one state over a group of several other states. Whitman, for example, defines it as "the leadership of a country (or group of countries) that plays a special role, enjoys unique privileges, and takes special responsibility for successful operation of (a political or economic system)".¹⁷ Keohane and Nye define a hegemonic power as one that "can change the rules rather than adapt its policies to existing rules".¹⁸

Another scholar writes that hegemony refers to a certain 'moral and intellectual direction', a true civilisational 'common sense' that reverberates and penetrates in all the corners and interstices of the global system pulled together by the world's hegemon, deeply impregnating the ideology and culture of so-called 'national societies'. He further writes that a second component of hegemony is the

political direction, or the capacity of the hegemonic power to build a network of international coalitions to perpetuate its leadership. This implies the capacity to exact the compliance and to insure discipline within the ensemble of nations integrated within its system of alliances.¹⁹

But hegemony can be both global/system-wide and regional, and again both general and issue-specific,²⁰ as Shaheen Akhtar contends that hegemony "implies the predominance of a nation or a group of nations within a given area".²¹ Stephen Cohen also writes in a more specific manner: "Regional hegemony or dominance... implies the existence of local military preponderance over neighbours through the spectrum of force, the availability of non-military instruments of pressure (including inducements and economic coercion), the ability to influence the consequences following upon domestic political weakness in rival regional states, and a willingness to conduct a strategy of diplomacy that places regional dominance above other objectives".²² Bhabani Sen Gupta defines hegemony in the following words: "Hegemony is defined as ability to persuade or coerce another actor to do what it would not normally wish to do but what the hegemonist power insists it must do... However, in the actual market place of international politics, hegemony means that a power cannot be invaded by those over whom it has hegemonic influence, that its voice is heard with deference, and that it is not denounced or criticised except in subdued, polite language".²³ By this measurement, India is the hegemonic power in South Asia.

It transpires from the above that hegemony can be country-specific, context-specific and issue-specific. In case of Indo-Sri Lanka relationship, India's hegemony depended on the domestic situation in Sri Lanka, on the foreign and security policy orientation of a particular Colombo government, on the regional and global strategic situation, and on India's economic-technological and military power. The issue areas of hegemony are Sri Lanka's foreign and security policy and the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic conflict, that is, in both realms of Sri Lanka's domestic and external relations. Instances or incidences of India's hegemony in relation to Sri Lanka will be identified as and when appropriate during the course of the present analysis. For the benefit of the subsequent analysis a working definition is offered: hegemony is an exercise of power by state A, through coercive or non-coercive means, directly or indirectly, vis-a-vis state B, effecting in the latter's conformity

in the realms of its domestic and foreign policies to the policy advantage of the former.

Since its independence, India, in its efforts to exercise regional hegemony, had adopted the 'Organski model'. According to Organski, preponderance of one country is more likely to produce peace and stability in a region, because weaker states dare not attack, while the stronger state need not attack.²⁴ India's emphasis on 'fact of life' in South Asia, which is a reference to natural hierarchy that goes in favour of India, implies her desire for regional order through preponderance. This may be implemented either through coercive or non-coercive means. Indira Gandhi's or Rajiv Gandhi's governments are often referred to as having applied coercive means while the 'Janata model' is a moderate approach to exercising of regional hegemony. The Janata government, in the late 1970s, played down India's power and showed restraint in using coercive diplomacy in its dealings with regional neighbours, with a view to maintaining regional peace and security. The Janata model gives preference to persuasion over imposition or coercion, to inspiring confidence over bullying the neighbours into submission.

India's Sri Lanka policy constitutes the following objectives: (i) to ensure that there was no external involvement in Sri Lanka which India would perceive to be detrimental to its security interests; (ii) to ensure that Sri Lanka did not offer any base or communication facilities to any external power which might use them as springboard against India; (iii) to discourage or prevent Sri Lanka from forging any external linkages or alignment which might be interpreted in New Delhi as a challenge to India's preponderant position and to its role as the security arbiter in the region; (iv) to convince Sri Lanka that the military presence of non-littoral powers in the Indian Ocean threatened the security of all the countries of the region; (v) to ensure that the political instability in Sri Lanka did not affect India's domestic politics and threaten its own security in any manner; and (vi) to expand India's own influence in Sri Lanka's domestic politics, specially over the ethnic issue.

The factor that distinguishes India's policy towards Sri Lanka from that is pursued in respect of neighbours is primarily the island's geo-strategic location on India's oceanic frontiers. Being an island, Sri Lanka is likely to be more vulnerable

to the influence of the world's major naval powers present in the Indian Ocean, a factor to be taken into due account by India in its strategy to safeguard its security interests in the area. The strategies and policy instruments that were employed by various Delhi administrations to achieve their policy goals with regard to Sri Lanka have been peaceful diplomacy, coercive diplomacy and military intervention, and naval defence build-up, the concept of Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOPZ) and use of the Tamil 'Trojan Horse' as a source of interference in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka.

Notes

12. See for details, Shelton Kodikara, *Strategic Factors in Interstate Relations in South Asia*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, ANU, Canberra, No. 19, 1979, pp. 13-14; Maharaj K. Chopra, *India: Search for Power*, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1969, p. 218.
13. In my effort to understand India's regional policy I have drawn upon Rosenau's conception of foreign policy. According to him, there are three phases in a state's external behaviour: a cluster of orientations consisting of attitudes, perceptions and values; policies, variously referred to as strategies, decisions or plans, consisting of the specific goals and means for achieving them; and the behaviour itself. James N. Rosenau, "The Study of Foreign Policy" in James N. Rosenau et al (eds.), *World Politics: An Introduction*, The Free Press, New York, 1976, pp. 15-35.
14. For details see *Mershon International Studies Review*, Ohio State University, USA, Vol. 38, Supplement 2, October 1994, pp. 361-376.
15. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers, New York, 1971; Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", *New Left Review*, No. 100, November 1976-January 1977, pp. 15-25.
16. Imtiaz Ahmed, "State, military and modernity: The experience of South Asia", *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1994, p. 65.
17. Marina V.N. Whitman, *Reflections of Interdependence: Issues for Economic Theory and US Policy*, University Press, Pittsburgh, 1979, p. vii.
18. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1977, p. 44.
19. Attilio A. Boron, "Towards a Post-Hegemonic Age?: The End of Pax Americana", *Security Dialogue*, Oslo, Vol. 25, No. 2, June 1992, 212-213.
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21. Shaheen Akhtar, "India in S. Asia: An Analysis of Hegemonial Relationship", *Regional Studies*, Islamabad, Vol. XI, No. 3, Summer 1983, p. 61.
22. Stephen P. Cohen and Richard L. Park, *India: Emergent Power?*, Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., New York, 1978, pp. 6-7.
23. Bhabani Sen Gupta, "Hegemony in South Asia?", *World Focus*, New Delhi, Nos. 95-96, Nov-Dec 1987, p. 63.
24. A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1968, p. 294.

Can reforms have a human face ?

Mohan Rao

In recent times we have seen some euphoria in influential circles over the positive outcome of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) package. This package includes policies that India has adopted as it embarks on a reckless spree of globalising its economy. The excitement stems from the spurt in the industrial growth rate, the strong balance of payments position (BoP), the huge inflow of foreign investments, the comfortable foodgrains position and privatisation of inefficient public sector undertakings. However, little thought has been spared for other consequences of these policies, especially on health.

For a start, we could learn something from the experience of the Latin American and African countries which underwent structural adjustment programmes in the '80s under the aegis of the World Bank and the IMF. The results have been systematically documented in journals such as *Social Science and Medicine* and the *Economic and Political Weekly*, and in two excellent books. *The Impact of World Recession on Children* by R. Jolly and G.A. Cornia, and *Adjustment with a Human Face: Country Case Studies*, edited by Jolly, Cornia and F. Stewart.

These studies show that subsequent to the adoption of structural adjustment policies in these countries, the levels of unemployment and underemployment increased accompanied by a reduction in the real wages of the poor. Even the middle classes suffered. There was also a steep hike in the price of food. Since expenditure on food takes up a large share of a poor family's budget, the effect on the nutritional status of the poor was clearly regressive. The data show that there was a decline in expenditure on other things as an increasing proportion of the budget of the poor and the middle classes was being devoted to food. At the same time, more food expenditure was being reoriented towards starches and cereals, and less for animal and milk products.

The dominance of the informal sector in the labour market resulted in what has been described in these studies as the "feminisation of labour and poverty".

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Forced by poverty, women and children were entering the non-skilled and poorly paid informal sector in larger numbers than ever before, resulting in an increase in school dropout rates in these countries.

It was not long before that these changes were also reflected in the health of the people. Health indicators such as the death rate and the incidence of disease, which had shown a spectacular decline in the past, either remained static or showed an upward trend. The infant mortality rate, considered to be a sensitive index of socio-economic and health development, increased in some countries and while its decline came to a grinding halt in others. The ratio of infant deaths to total deaths increased. Similarly, the proportion of infant deaths due to malnutrition increased as did the proportion of infants born with low birth weights. Several countries saw a significant increase in child mortality.

Even as many of these countries exported exotic fruits and flowers to the West, there was a steep increase in domestic food prices. The data from a large number of countries show a greater prevalence of malnutrition among women and children. There was a sharp increase in the proportion of underweight mothers. Pregnant and lactating mothers received less than 85 per cent of their calorie needs and 90 per cent of their protein needs. A higher incidence of anaemia was also reported.

Reeling under budget cuts, health institutions in these countries were unable to cope with these problems which were compounded by the fact that trained doctors and nurses took flight to greener pastures in the West. Public health services, seldom an area accorded high priority, collapsed. Water supply, sanitation and preventive health programmes came to a grinding halt. Public hospitals, despite inadequate staff and widespread lack of drugs and equipment, attempted to "recover costs" through user fees. The result was that although morbidity levels increased attendance at health centres declined. This was particularly true of routine and preventive health services.

The experience of countries in Latin America and Africa does not augur well for the poor in India where structural adjustment policies are now being impleme-

nted. Not only does India have a large poverty stricken population, but also it has seen no fundamental change in the disease and death patterns over the last four decades. The disease and death profile continues to be dominated by the diseases rooted in poverty — diseases not essentially amenable to technical intervention.

This pattern of diseases and deaths can only change with substantial and sustained public health inputs.

Some economists have noted that the structural adjustment programme has resulted in a deceleration in employment generation. In addition, the food subsidy — in real terms — has been reduced since the commencement of adjustment policies. Wholesale prices of food have risen by about 20 per cent, but the consumer price index for the landless agricultural labourers has gone up by over 25 per cent. The *Economic Survey* (1993-1994) admits that the spurt in inflation is due to a rise in prices of foodgrains, particularly rice and pulses — the major protein component of the Indian diet.

The structural adjustment programme has involved further reduction in India's commitment to health sector development. Central grants, as a proportion of the states' total medical and public health expenditure, fell sharply in the post-reforms period. Real expenditures declined even more sharply. It is particularly interesting that budget cuts have not affected the family planning programme which focusses on the poor in pursuit of its targets. The poorer states, which have low health status and poor development of health services, have suffered more from cuts in Central grants. This has led to greater regional differentials in access to health care.

In its 1992 *State of the World's Children Report*, UNICEF observed that "the deterioration of the economic environment is translated in many countries into rising malnutrition, preventable disease and falling school enrolments". Structural adjustment, the report goes on to say, should have a human face. The question that refuses to go away — in the face of evidence from other already afflicted countries — is: can structural adjustment have a human face?

The significance of NAM in the 1990s

Manel Abeysekera

Frankly I find it difficult to believe that the movement is dead and I agree with our distinguished guest speakers Ambassador Sutresna and Ambassador del Amo on this point. Having said that, I believe that NAM will die unless there is a great deal more of re-thinking, re-defining and re-vitalising. We must be thankful to the Jakarta 10th Summit of NAM and its Chairman's personal drive in this regard to re-orient NAM'S focus and direction.

During the East-West conflict in a bi-polar world, NAM held a balance between the 2 super-powers and its voice and vote counted for something in the U.N. and other international fora. In a single super-power world and a globalised economy, can NAM can have the same role, status and influences. This is borne out by what Ambassador del Amo states: **"The northern developed countries are leading or ruling the world both politically and economically"**. He goes on to state how this is so in the U.N — particularly in the control over the Security Council and, on the economic side, in fixing world market prices and in leading in finance, science and technology. He then goes on to argue that, for all these reasons, the developing countries need their "own independent global factor" But, the question really is, how independent a global factor is NAM. Ambassador Sutresna also recognises the constraints NAM has to cope with in international co-operation.

My second point is that, through sheer weight of numbers in a group, be it the Group of 77 or the NAM, a collective voice is heard, as both Ambassadors point out, in the UN and other fora. This may influence a Resolution, a Declaration, a Communique or even a covenant or Convention, but does this really amount to much in real terms thereafter? Do not the "powers that be" go their own way, even in disregard of these agreements which remain just documents rarely translated into action? Furthermore, are not NAM members often attracted to go the same way

as these powers especially for economic gain? Which means also in political terms as well, subtle though the link may be, for economics and politics can hardly be separated nationally or internationally. Therefore, while I agree with the speakers that NAM has a voice as a group in international fora, I would have liked to have seen them give specific illustrations of NAM as a global factor. Or are there none to be cited.

APARTHEID AND PALESTINE

My third point is that, as the two Ambassadors stated no one can deny the contribution of NAM to safeguarding world peace, to disarmament etc. But is it not true that many of the achievements they have quoted could have been the result of factors other than NAM? For example, let me refer to two of the major developments of the 1990s. Though NAM had fought against apartheid and defended the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for decades, would apartheid have come apart without a de Klerk and a co-operative Mandela. Or the Palestinians obtained their foothold without the pressure exerted by the U.S.A. the good offices of Norway and the co-operation of Rabin and Arafat? Ironically, these developments have come about because of the disappearance of super-power rivalry together with the danger of East-West confrontation especially though a Palestinian spark and not as a result of the support given to the anti-apartheid voice or the PLO by the USSR or by NAM. Ambassador Sutresna states that the collapse of bi-polarism has vindicated NAM's principles, but if NAM was designed to deal with a bi-polar world, can one say that the collapse of bi-polarism vindicates the Movement? Nor can NAM take credit for its collapse.

NAM AS FORUM

My forth point is that perhaps we have read too much into NAM and that is the reason is why we are discussing its value today as opposed to Yesterday. My own view is that **NAM is today what it has always been** — a forum for discussion,

exchange of views and expression of opinion — a kind of voice of the South which creates a climate of opinion that is indeed a most useful factor in international relations, but that this does not necessarily enable NAM to effect change as an "independent global factor" — to use Ambassador del Amo's phrase — in the sense that it can influence crucial international developments and trends, which are determined by other forces, especially by those who have the power to do so both politically and economically. In short if the principles for which NAM stands, which find close affinity to those of the U.N Charter, we have to ask ourselves whether the U.N or NAM have been able to give teeth to them and positively influence international relations. This ofcourse, does not, in any way, diminish their moral value nor the fact that NAM members together find strength where individually they would not. But we have to admit that NAM lacks solidarity which is often the cause of its ineffectiveness in practical terms. I was happy to hear Mr. Childers state that, a few weeks ago, they did find that solidarity — which they lacked last year to pass a U.N resolution requesting an advisory opinion of the World Court whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law. The lack of solidarity therefore only calls for more effective strategies if indeed any such can be found. One can only hope that the NAM Jakarta Declaration of 1992 will be realised. I quote: "Through dialogue and co-operation, we will project our Movement as a vibrant, constructive and genuinely interdependent component of the mainstream of international relations". I think the key phrase here is **"interdependent component"** which contrasts with Ambassador del Amo's phrase "independent global factor".

My final comment is to pose the question as to how we may achieve the preservation of the value of NAM by translating its principles into international relations. I believe that one of the key reasons for NAM not being able to achieve

anything great is that its membership has not attracted at least some of the countries of the North even though several of them, such as those of Scandinavia, are generally in agreement with our principles. Would they join us and given us the necessary clout if we did not call ourselves "non-aligned" especially in a post-cold — war world? Or do we wait hopefully for some of our members to acquire the clout that the North has?

Ambassador Sutresna cites a number of activities in which NAM is engaged, especially after the Jakarta Summit, including that of championing global interdependence particularly through North-South and South-South dialogue. But such dialogue has been with us for decades without our seeing a real break-through.

No wonder Dr. Gamani Corea referred to it as "the dialogue of the deaf" in his keynote address at the inaugural session of this seminar. The same may happen with regard to NAM'S efforts in them and in its efforts to review and reform the U.N and the Bretton woods institutions. We have already heard Dr. Saravanamuttu and Mr. Childers on the power-play in the U.N and how the Bretton woods institutions escaped from the co-ordination authority over them vested by the U.N Charter in the UNGA and ECOSOC. Is our lack of success because we do not have members of the North in our Movement? We may have joint meetings with them in trying to further our efforts, but meetings and dialogue are not an end in themselves.

REGIONAL FORCE

Perhaps the emergence of regionalism since NAM was founded may assist by it being harnessed to promoting NAM principles intra-regionally, inter-regionally and finally internationally. The decision of the Jakarta Summit to constitute a member of expert groups to help provide a degree of specialisation, particularly on economic issues, augurs well for NAM'S negotiating process with the North based on well-founded premises, facts and arguments, especially in the context of some U.N. organs supportive of NAM such as UNCTAD, playing a muted role today, and the need for NAM to therefore redouble its efforts to translate principles into specifics. We must not forget that the host of the first NAM Summit was symbolic of the archetypal non-aligned state and therefore of the movement itself, in that it was in the heart of post-World War II East-West rivalry. Surely, we do not want

NAM to disintegrate as has its original host — which, of course, has been for reasons other than those which brought about NAM, but NAM was powerless in that situation and perhaps NAM must look beyond symbols, symbolism and principles and translate them into some kind of practical reality. Non-alignment was designed to establish well balanced relations with all nations, irrespective of social and ideological systems while maintaining freedom of action and without being drawn into the vortex of East-West rivalry. It was also designed to transform unequal political and economic relations so as to facilitate the establishment of a just and peaceful order, today NAM is confronted with a changing political multi-polarity — in which perhaps only the U.S.A is capable of projecting its influence globally — and with a deepening global interdependence, an intensification of ethnicity and a global information industry, all of which it must seek to cope with through practical and pragmatic means.

One such course for NAM may be to present a NAM philosophy and stance not only at the U.N and other international fora but also to inject its principles and values at the regional and sub-regional levels which are increasingly becoming the operative areas of political and economic action. At the same time, we have to recognise that not all regional groups are geographic, that they are indeed dependent on a number of variables and are subjected to external influence especially of the economically and technologically powerful, such as the U.S.A, Europe and Japan. Conversely, we should ask ourselves whether NAM principles and cohesion would be strong enough to withstand these very regional and sub-regional interests, forces and goals. Furthermore as was seen in the Iraq-Kuwait war, NAM was powerless to act both to prevent it or end it — despite both protagonists being its members — nor to prevent sanctions countinuing against Iraq, for the very reason that there was no regional consensus among NAM members and therefore no collective clout.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Another strategy would be to enhance NAM'S conflict — resolution and confidence-building mechanisms and here I strongly support Ambassador Sutresna in his advocacy of this. Perhaps NAM should relate them to the regional groupings that have developed among NAM members. In this respect, NAM members would need to first put their own

houses in order, to reconcile the existing discrepancy between NAM ideals and practice as Ambassador Sutresna has pointed out. While acknowledging that it is most welcome that NAM has moved from dwelling on grievances and has generally shed its adversarial approach to the North and the policies of international financial institutions — which, alas, most NAM members cannot do without — and is now focussing on and seeking a constructive dialogue, offering to engage in all fields, as Ambassador Sutresna has shown, it may be practical and pragmatic to further reduce its focus to specifics in such a dialogue and co-operation. This may, in turn, also reduce the gap between NAM and the North and create some common ground and interest and thereby result in NAM'S weight being used to push through some favourable results, however modest they may be, for mutual benefit.

NAM may have been born through the desire to avoid the destructive efforts of bi-polarity and the title of the movement may give the impression that it has no relevance in a non-bi-polar world. But one must not forget that the principles for which NAM stands are just as valid today as they were in a bi-polar world: sovereignty and non-interference in international affairs of states. Development and equity, anti-colonialism and the championing of South issues.

We still need to be mindful of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states, we still need to fight against neo-colonialism especially of unequal economic terms for the South because, regrettably, we do not see any great improvement in any of these areas of concern after the disappearance of bi-polar. Therefore, NAM is still valid, not in nomenclature, which is a very narrow way of looking at it, but most certainly for what it stands. The million dollar question is, ofcourse, how NAM may work to realising its arms and it is this area that we have to work on in a practical way. It is to be hoped that the post 10th NAM summit efforts, especially through its new approach to relationships with the international community and international institutions, to which Ambassador Sutresna has referred, and working with the North as opposed to confrontation with it, would bring about some positive results. Simply put, I would like to see an "Invitation to Dialogue" extended NOT by NAM to the North but by the North to NAM. Then we can be sure that NAM is alive and kicking.

PEOPLE, POWER AND POLITICS

— Some heretical thoughts

Dayalal Abeysekera

The writer professes to be a non-expert in any matters pertaining to the title of this paper. However, he is determined not to abdicate his responsibilities as a citizen of this country and wishes to offer a line of thought which he brazenly feels may offer some hope to an otherwise faltering search for a new constitutional idiom. The writer further wishes to punctuate this introductory disclaimer by stating that he has hitherto not read a single constitution of a country (including that of Sri Lanka) and as at present entertains no wish whatsoever to do so in the foreseeable future. He firmly believes that there is a relative abundance of expertise on matters pertaining to constitution framing and legality within the country. As such he does not intend to display his ignorance on such matters. The attempt herein is to raise basic issues, clarify certain assumptions, establish quasi-principles (which obviously will have to be brought under the constitutional expert's microscope if it ever warrants serious consideration), and suggest certain *modus operandi* to establish a framework for enunciating a pro-people constitution.

Towards a Pro-People Mode of Representation

The latter part of the preceding sentence would have undoubtedly highlighted the writer's bias to the perceptive reader. Yes, the basic point of departure of this writer is that the constitution this land is definitely not people friendly; if at all, it is more friendly towards the occupants of positions of power. As such, the chances of hijacking the people's will, camouflaged as the exercise of democracy through the expression of universal franchise, by

the people's representatives are unacceptably high. This is mediated through the interlocking of the people's representative to a political party apparatus which in turn exercises a potentially corrosive effect on the people's will by literally super-riding it through the 'party will' which derives its legitimacy by obtaining a 'national mandate'. The snowballing of power does not stop with the core of the party; it accentuates itself by coopting the bureaucracy, absorbing and conniving with commercial interests and in the worst of times by compromising the judiciary as well. In short, the party spreads its tentacles and assumes a monolithic stranglehold on power which gets prostituted as the 'people's will'. Juxtaposed with the 'people's will' as expressed by any hamlet consisting of 100 households, it is extremely doubtful that the 'party will' could ever claim even a marginal correspondence to the former at any given point in the life of the reign of a party elected to govern.

Angry and vociferous denunciations of 'idealism', I believe, are already audible and aimed at this thematic discussion but hopefully the reader would persist with us if the former is as convinced of the degree of absence of 'the people' from what is enunciated as government policy flowing from the people's mandate.

The dry zone farmer laments for the lack of water while the country spends millions on the speedy disposal of flood waters (where? into the sea, of course, you dummy!) in the greater Colombo area. Have we at least thought that both these phenomena occur within the same country and that the excess water may possibly be diverted to scarcer localities? Even an O.L. student knows that there is a surfeit of precipitation within the central ring of mountains in this country. The large part of the dry zone lies just outside this ring of mountains. Isn't it possible to pierce this mountain ring with a modest pipeline at a few vantage points and divert a portion of the 'excess' water to the thousands of

village tanks, most of which lie in a state of disrepair and abandonment. Without attempting to create massive reservoirs which invariably result in mass human displacement and ecological disasters, why not harness the energy that the water will generate when flowing from the highlands to the dry zone (at near sea level) by a network of smaller power plants?

One doubts that it is the expression of the will of the up-country vegetable farmer to import vegetables from abroad to keep the prices down. One wonders if even the consumer is keen on munching the foreign farmers vegetables after being used to the local one's produce from time immemorial. Doesn't the solution lie in linking up producers and consumers in a symbiotic embrace which will result in an organisational structure that is accountable to both the producer and consumer, perhaps, with the ideal of giving the farmer 100 percent more for his produce and at 50 percent less to the consumer (*vis-a-vis* current 'market' prices of the day) while the intervening operation is conducted on an economically viable basis to yield a conscionable profit. Such (some might say, hypothetical) approximations of 'people's will' could very well abound which have hardly grazed the cutting edge of the 'party will'. It is doubtful that the current constitutional set up will ever provide the necessary checks and balances and hand over the reins of the governance machinery to the people.

The Habitat's Right to self-Determination Vs. the Omnipotence of Party Power

The proposed constitutional set up implicitly assumes that each habitat (*gamgodella*) should have the right to decide what is best for itself, propose mechanisms to achieve the desired state and be in a position of strength to bargain with the State and bureaucracy to obtain the necessary resources and services towards fulfillment of its set goals.

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Even with the introduction of the Soulbury Constitution, it is very doubtful that its framers ever made provision in a practicable sense for the people to achieve their own goals. It was essentially predicated on the assumption of a 'benevolent donor-ignorant recipient' relationship in terms of the people's representative and the people. However, compared with what transpired after the introduction of the proportionate representation (PR) system, the Soulbury set up at least demarcated periodic accountability of the people's representative to the people in terms of a tangible geographic locality. When the district became the playing arena (rather than the more restricted electorate), the people's representative achieved the practical capacity to evade accountability to the people. In fact, the electors soon after casting their vote went about saying that they did not have a representative. One of the worst forms of non-accountability, unacceptable within a functioning democracy was perpetrated on the people with the people's representative gravitating to presenting him/herself as the agent of the party. The party became the ultimate core of power, the omnipotent source of *shakti* that could dispense near-unlimited largesse to the chosen few. Of course, the system's wealth-generating capacities were restricted and as such, the handouts were also restricted and had to be distributed on a most-favoured individual basis. The people's will as being personified by the people's representative in any non-hypocritical sense ceased to exist. A patron-client relationship predicated on a naked instrumental rationality (stripped of the cohesive socio-cultural idiom that was usually found in a feudalistic setting) was imposed on the people.

The central theme of this discussion is to propose *modus operandi* to make the people the *de facto* and *de jure* holders of power and to make the people's representative function as an effective instrument through which this power is realized for the fulfillment of the people's goals. In other words, to increase the accountability of the representative to his/her electors as well as to set up checks and balances in order to actualize the transparency of his/her activities. Due to the gravitation of the representative to an extremely low level of accountability during the course of the last half century and the tendency

of this back-sliding to be ordained as the accepted norm rather than the temporary aberration, it is feared that the surgery proposed herein may sound rather extreme to many a reader. However, it must be stated that these remedial proposals are made in full cognisance of the virulence of the gangrene that has set into the body politic.

Changing the Image and Role of the Peoples' Representative

Several modifications are imperative if a substantive qualitative change is to be brought about in the functional accountability of the people's representative. The role model of the representative has to change drastically from the tinpot dictator mentality extracting compliance through the systematic application of coercion to that of the ascetic who has renounced the pursuit of worldly aggrandizement and set himself the sole salvation goal of delivering his electors to a better quality of life as defined by the latter. At the risk of raising the ire of my fellow Buddhist brethren, I wish to slightly modify a stanza which should in my opinion be the guiding beacon of the new representative in the most extreme *yatha vadi thatha kari* sense. This is "*nathithi me saranag angnga - janatha me saranag varang*" (underscored modification by the writer) meaning that "there is no other salvation for me except that which is mediated through the people". Obviously this is a quantum leap from the prevalent reality and needs definite mechanisms to institutionalize this attitudinal and behavioural change as the non-deviable norm.

To be fair by the people's representative (RP), s/he cannot be expected to effectively serve millions of voters in a district. The sheer heterogeneity of the population of a district in terms of its needs and aspirations will make an absolute mockery of RP's capacity to serve. Thus, it is proposed that the creation of a manageable network of constituencies is of prime essence in the quest for regenerating effective RPs capable of leading one's electors to the promised land from the front.

Apart from this need we have seen the many undesirable features which self-generated with the introduction of the district-based choice of representatives. As was pointed out earlier, the lack of a bona

fide representative from the point of view of the voter on the one hand coupled with the drastic reduction in the level of accountability in the RPs to the electors on the other is a non-tolerable feature of a functioning democracy. The undue advantages reaped by candidates with relatively high national or regional profile (such as past ministers, popular film stars and even university dons) vis-a-vis new (perhaps more dynamic and progressive) candidates is yet another drawback which seriously jeopardized the assumption of fairplay. The conspicuous intrusion of the quantum of disposable (investable?) wealth as a key factor in ensuring one's success at the hustings unfairly placed poorer candidates at a distinctive disadvantage. High expenditure naturally imposed the economic necessity of recovering this 'investment' within a restricted time span which in turn invariably led to the institutionalization of corruption as the accepted way of life of the RP. The voters of a district when defined as 'fair prey' for all candidates within one party led to the breakdown of unity within the party which seriously undermined the basic rationale for organizing a political party, viz., unity of purpose of the aspirants to membership of that party.

The foregoing would indicate that the present system of electing district-based representatives cannot be tolerated within an accountable and transparent democracy. Our proposal is, in a way, to go back to what prevailed, but with certain conspicuous modifications. The similarity with the Soulbury set up is that we should go back to the electorate with an indetifiable RP, patently accountable to his/her electors. The election of the RP is primarily predicated on the receipt of a simple majority of votes (the so-called 'first-past-the-post' system). However, certain elements of proportionate representation will be superimposed on this result of a simple majority which might entail minor reversals of this primary result. This we shall explain later in more detail, by exploring a hypothetical example (see, pp. 14-20).

Rationale for Redemarcation of Electorates

I must confess to my ignorance of the provisions made in the Soulbury set up for demarcation of electorates. However,

the re-demarcation of the electorate is very much a central theme in this paper as the foregoing denunciation of the district-based election of RPs may have implied. Manageability in terms of size, the relative homogeneity of the population and contiguity of the land area demarcated are the three vital axes emphasized in the re-demarcation exercise.

What should be the optimal size of the electorate? Any numeric cut-off would be as arbitrary as any other. However, accepting the principle that any hamlet or village should be afforded the right to choose what is best for them, within reason, this cut-off can never be nearer the millions, if at all, closer to the thousands. We also note that a relative homogeneity in terms of life style exists between villages in close proximity to each other. Thus, in order to strike a balance we would like to propose that an electorate should ideally not deviate from within a range of between 15,000-20,000 voters. Accordingly, our concrete proposed is to redemarcate electorates so that at the inception, each electorate will have 15,000 voters. This number could be allowed to grow up to 20,000 at which point, another redemarcation is to be effected so that the figure is one again brought down to 15,000 voters. In areas where there is no excessive net in-migration, this 33 percent growth may well take 15 or more years.*

The writer can almost hear the denouncers' fingers flying over their calculators. With just over 10 million voters, at the worst I am proposing a house of representatives in excess of 650 RPs or at the every best, one with 500 RPs. Surely with even Mother India having just over 500 RPs to fend for its gargantuan near one billion population, the writter must certainly be off his rocker. Perhaps. But we never promised to discuss a change of relative insignificance. After all, these are supposed to be 'heretical thoughts'. So, once again, we appeal to the reader to stay with us because we sincerely think

* (It might be pertinent to point out that we have shown elsewhere — *Lanka Guardian of 15th October, 1993* "Voters and Population Growth: The Need for Vigilance" — that our voter registration system is currently running at a higher level than what the population figures would seem to show. Some suggestions for tightening up the registration system are made therein.)

that the entirety of the microscopic minority of the population who are capable of relatively unbiased thinking need to put their heads together if the country is to salvage a dependable and sustainable mode of equitable socioeconomic development for the large majority of the people that concurrently assures peace and prosperity as well.

A house of representatives with 650 RPs becomes a near ridiculous proposition for a population of 17 million Sri Lankans. But if these numbers are to be found in nine houses with clearly demarcated geographic boundaries, rights, duties, obligations and jurisdictions, then the proposition would surely lose a large proportion of its incredulity. Of course, there will still be some who would be shaking their heads but let's leave them to gather their thoughts and move on.

Yes. If you are beginning to catch our drift, what is being proposed herein is nothing less than the abolition of the Parliament in the manner in which it has existed during the post-independence era. But before you go into tantrums and vehement protestations, let me assure you that there is a more lean, business-like, hopefully more efficient and meritocracy-based Parliament being proposed within our discussion. But before we expand on this national Parliament, it is imperative that we move on with the constitution of the 650 RPs in their nine (or whatever number of) Councils. The nomenclature is not important and can be modified but the essential feature is to understand the issues and principles being addressed so that an enlightened discussion could ensue aimed at developing these thought processes to a functional level of beneficence for the large majority of the people.

Setting up Regional (Provincial?) Councils

The next heretical proposal is the setting up of regional councils within the country. We do not have an optimum number of regional councils to be created but if they are to be recreated (deviating from the existing provinces, for example) they should adhere to the principles of contiguity of geographic areas falling within the region and homogeneity of agro-

climatic terrain which in turn would exert a homogenizing influence on the principle source of livelihood of the majority of people. We believe that certain proposals to this effect have already been made by several experts. It is to review the efficiency of such proposals made and to modify or adopt them if they meet the test of scrutiny.

Since it is somewhat difficult to relate to two or more new constructs and follow a line of reasoning, let us assume that the existing provinces will persist as the regional entities in the proposed reorganization of the socio-political administration of the country. Thus, there will be nine (or eight?) regional or provincial councils, each with a sitting house of representatives of its own. Since the prime assumption of this reorganization is the restoration to each village or hamlet the right to determine what is best for itself within reason, we propose that all essential matters concerning the land mass of the provincial council be taken out of the national parliament and handed over to the former. This means that all development-based financial handling, civil administration, law and order and land concerning the geographic area of the province, should come within the purview of the provincial council (PC). Only matters pertaining to the Judiciary, national defence, mass scale natural disasters, infrastructural development activities concerning two or more provinces should fall within the pail of the national parliament. In effect, what we are proposing is that the PCs should be granted de facto authority towards self determination; however, they should not, in our opinion, be granted the right to secede since the principle of a unitary state is to be safeguarded at (almost) all costs. Since it is possible that certain actions of the national parliament could be construed as undermining a particular province's right to self determine, easy access should be provided to bring such points of difference to the independent (national) judiciary which would adjudicate on the matter. This would readily provide a safety valve against the building up of grievances which have a tendency towards fuelling cessationist propensities.

(To be Continued)

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Sri Lanka in German Media

Bernd Schiller

Three sections, only three, characterize the reports about Sri Lanka in the German Media — and all three are connected.

First there is the government's fight against the Tamil rebels in the northern part of the island, the Tamil Tigers. If there are dead men on one or the other side of the combatants it's at best reflected in an agency report of 10 lines on the very last pages of our newspapers. Only if there is a spectacular bomb attempt like last week against a battle ship of the Sri Lankan Navy, or a terrorist attack against ministers or even — like last year on May 1st — against the president, also the TV-news mention this so called smouldering civil war. TV-magazines like "Weltspiegel" or "Auslandsjournal" hardly ever show report from the land of Sons of Lions (the Singhalese) and Tigers — and if they do, then mostly with subliminal sympathy for "the boys", as the Tamils called their warriors with affection on one and respect on the other hand.

Those articles scarcely mention at all, that the Tigers are a cruel terror-group, just like the ETA or the IRA or — not too long ago — the PLO, financed and supplied by similar sources in the Middle East. Also do they scarcely mention that the Tigers don't have a very significant support in their own Tamil population. The majority of the people in Sri Lanka, whether they are Singhalese or Tamils, Buddhists or Hindus, Christians or Muslims, is tired of murdering, weary of violence and counterviolence. Plus — I have not heard nor read in Germany that the Tigers have to use their terror even against the "inside", against their own compatriots and fellow Hindu, to be able to recruit people and food at all.

To the second section: Besides the civil war tourism is of current interest. Since 1983, that is since the outburst of the bloodiest riots during the very old quarrel between Singhalese and Tamils, the very same saying has been said over and over again:

"There's hell in paradise"

That sounds handy, and at least during that summer 1983 it fits perfectly well. I also have to admit of use this metaphor myself once in a while.

Let's keep in mind: There's no country, no island on earth, that has been compared to paradise so many times, where there was a searching for the Garden of Eden so often, than the old Ceylon, the legendary "Land of hyacinths and rubies", the "Island of jewellery", the bright and beautiful, royal and thriving country": Sri Lanka.

For now 150 years German travellers praised no other tropical destination the same way they have adored this island, which truly and without any doubt is incredible:

"Ceylon! So there we step onto this heavenly island, so many times sung of. We stand deep inside the fairyland of the tropics." In 1905 the German gentleman-globetrotter Julius Meurer expressed himself that enthusiastically in his published notebook, and in the 20's it was the poet and nobel prize winner Herman Hesse himself, a more down-to-earth character, who exclaimed, after he had seen Colombo, the palmbeaches and the sacred mountain Sri Pada (Adam's Peak):

"Truly, this is paradise, it really is paradise!"

Even earlier, 700 years ago, the Arabian traveller and scholar Ibn Batuta said of Ceylon:

"She is the best of the world!"

And today there are the catalogue-writers, who continue the historical pattern by defining Sri Lanka as paradise.

Whoever has visited the island knows that the travel reports do not exaggerate. You will indeed find everything they promise: friendly people, wonderful beaches and breathtakingly beautiful landscapes. But no serious travel report can do without bringing up the tourist's security risk:

What is to do and what not to still be safe; which regions are taboo?

These are the common questions. Most of the time, what probably is understandable, the backgrounds are only touched upon briefly.

At best the thousands of years of feud

between the Buddhistic Singhalese and Hindu Tamils, that flare up over again, are mentioned — and at that point there follows the phrase of hell in paradise..

Even the more detailed travel guides, that are supposed to prepare the readers for the country and its inhabitants, therefore also for possible problems, hardly go into the history of quarrels or for instance the role of the former colonial powers. If you — for example — take a look into the thick Apa-Guide, you won't find such commentaries. There the island simply degenerates into an exotic scenery for western tourists, into an artificial paradise.

Particularly the part of the British, who have played the same perfidious game of *divide et impera* as for instance in Palestine, has been absolutely insufficiently light up. (In my books and travelguides, I tried, if I may say so, to so to speak "make up" for all that.)

All in all the German readers and spectators lack that little background knowledge, that would be necessary to put the conflict in its place — a bit more distinctively. I have even been asked by journalists, therefore a group, who are supposed to be better informed than average:

"Really, what's up there; what's it all about anyway; why do the beat each other black and blue.."

Seriously, flat and simple are those questions. And many times have been asked: "why is it only the Tamils, who come to apply for asylum, why not members of other ethnic groups?" That brings me to the third section about which we, here in Germany, hear more often, but still very vaguely. We read about Tamils seeking asylum, who — in the past more than nowadays — are brought into the country — sometimes by criminal gangs. But I believe, that the German public is not informed properly about the situation of the minority in Sri Lanka, about their (by the way in the meantime) — incredibly improved-chances for education, about their job prospects, about their past as a part of the economic and cultural elite of the country.

So now I have reached the deficiencies,

about which there is in too little press coverage, even though there are almost 100,000 Germans who book a few weeks of vacation the island of Sri Lanka.

First of all there is the topic "economy". Sri Lanka went through an amazing development. During the years of civil war — like riots, through which most regions of the country were still quiet, something like a little economic miracle took place. But hardly any travel report, no article about the Tamil troubles ever discusses the new middle class nor the drawbacks of the new prosperity (that of course would be much more impressive without the civil war since the state of Sri Lanka pays for the fight against the Tigers about as much as they earn through the booming tourism.) The drawback is determined by

- * rapidly increasing traffic without simultaneously growing infrastructure,
- * smog,
- * loss of identity in parts of the by now mostly western orientated city population (almost nobody wears saris and sarongs anymore),
- * environmental problems.

But the drawbacks also have a positive side-effect: People become committed to feminist or ecological movements, who achieve remarkable results in fighting against new hotels, ruining landscapes and migration from the land.

We do not get to know much about that either. An exception, if I may say so, is sometimes the BRIGITTE, "my" magazine. In our latest edition for instance we introduce a major — very successful — women's organisation (Agromart) and discuss it in a considerably detailed report.

But the biggest single project concerning Sri Lanka's so called progress is not known well enough. I am talking about the Mahaweli-dam-project, one of the largest in the world, after all the German tax payers participated with up to ten millions, the German industry and commerce provided experts and other kind of construction assistance. There are a lot of matching topics, also about the ecological problems of this huge project. In the German media: almost zero.

Instead criticism is been used almost like a cliché — over and over again — without having done any research, whether the conditions may have changed. That is the case in nearly all the articles or remarks about the Tamil teapluckers situation in the highlands. One author or

journalist seems to copy from the other, although strong trade unions and an altering state of consciousness (even among the plantation owners) resulted in remarkable improvements.

Positive background reporting about politics concerning Sri Lanka is as rare as about all the other matters. An example: Despite intensive searching in archives and attentive studying of the most important daily and weekly newspapers I did not find anything about the housing project of the former president Premadasa nor did I see anything in the foreign magazine programmes of our TV-channels. Premadasa, in the meantime assassinated, was not only vain and had left a memorial to himself by distributing a clock tower to every village, no: he also promised everybody a roof over his head. What may have sounded first like an hollow coconut had remarkable success. Thousands of new housing schemes were built.

Instead of mentioning this positive progress even some quality weekly newspapers created (outside the elections) exaggerated horror scenarios.

But this summer Sri Lanka had — as we call it — a good press, at least increased attention. All the major daily newspapers, especially Frankfurter Allgemeine, Frankfurter Rundschau und taz, reported balanced and in detail about the election campaign and later about the new prime minister. In this context I would like to emphasize Mr. Erhard Haubold, southeast Asia correspondent of the Frankfurter Allgemeine, an excellent reporter.

After the victory of Chandrika Kumratunge all the nationwide dailies and all the important weekly papers published great portraits of Mrs. K. They also dealt with the latest situation and discussed at length the widely held hope for peace-discussions with the Tamils. The situation is comparable to Northern Ireland or the Middle East where until not long ago nobody would have expected truce and a reason to hope for peace.

But also scepticism towards the new political conditions occurred in the articles. Headlines like "The fear stays" (Sonntagsblatt) or "The Tigers are not in their cages yet" (Frankfurter Allgemeine) reflect the ambivalence between hope and continuous trouble.

The personality of the new prime minister, who might also be the next president, was fully appreciated, her heritage as the daughter of two former prime ministers

(Solomon Bandaranaike and his widow, "Mrs. B.") has been put into today's political context.

I suppose, the Sri Lanka embassy's representative of the press and also the ambassador himself can be satisfied with the clippings in the German press before, during and after the elections. Quite the reverse on TV: No background information, Chandrika's victory was not even mentioned by the Tagesschau, the most important news, but only by the "Heute Journal" and no lengthy report was given in the "Tagesthemen", the background news. As I said before: 100,000 Germans yearly travel to that tropical island state; Germany is an immensely important trade partner. The Deutsche Bank in Colombo already counts 100 employees and their manager, a man from Hamburg, sees a great potential for German economy in the country. German television does not reflect any of this.

Finally and to complete the picture I would like to go a topic that has been receiving attention for the past 60 years among people who are interested in it. Sri Lanka is the home of pure Buddhist teaching. Since excellent German scholars have published about the Theravada (or Hinayana) Buddhism for decades now, there is no other country wherefrom so many spiritually interested tourists travel to Sri Lanka for the purpose of meditation. Three names may stand for this kind of contemplation. First of all there is the Reverend Nyanatiloka and then the Reverend Nyanaponika, a Jewish German who was consecrated a monk in 1937 by the first.

And finally the honourable Ayya Khema, who was consecrated nun in 1979 in Sri Lanka and who has created an interest and affection towards Sri Lanka's most important religion, that also characterizes the island's everyday life, by her papers and seminars.

I would like to conclude my exposition with a quotation of the Ven. Nyanaponika. I have visited him several times in his hermitage near Kandy and he wrote me the following sentence as a dedication in a book:

"May the light of Buddha's teaching brighten up the lives and thoughts of many men all through their daily life, so no part of their journey through life may stay in the dark".

I believe that this final remark harmonizes with the topic of our conference, and I hope you do not mind my quoting it here.

History of Negotiations : a Chronology

Elizabeth Nissan

About International Alert

International Alert is an independent international NGO established in 1985 and is a registered charitable foundation in the UK and the Netherlands. The organisation seeks to contribute to the resolution of internal conflict by promoting peace and conciliation through dialogue and furthering the observance and enhancement of international humanitarian and human rights standards.

With a motto of "There is no freedom where there is no peace," International Alert provides a unique non-governmental initiative to unite countries divided by ethnic and internal conflict. Working from a position of committed neutrality with all parties including government and opposition groups, the mediators analyse the cause of internal conflict, enable dialogue to take place and set standards of conduct to avoid violence, thus helping to develop the skills necessary to resolve conflict non-violently.

The organisation informs government, inter-governmental and international agencies, non-governmental institutions and the public about potential and actual conflicts to enable harnessing of international opinion for conflict resolution at the early stages.

International Alert's current activities include:

- **Training:** Establishing a network of trainers to help negotiators to develop skills for dealing with conflict.
- **Early Warning & Preventive Diplomacy:** Sharing information and ideas with a wide range of actors on how to predict conflict and emergency situations, how to recognise the danger signals and how to develop appropriate mechanisms to avert violence.
- **Self-Determination:** Campaigning for the establishment of suitable mechanisms in International Law to define the concept of Self-Determination and assess the claims.
- **Conflict Resolution in the Soviet Union:** International Alert has undertaken a number of fact-finding missions to regions within the former Soviet Union and is now developing various initiatives for the resolution of ethnic conflict there.
- **Peace and Negotiations in Africa:** International Alert is expanding its programme in Africa during 1994 and 1995 particularly in South Africa and Kenya.

For the successful implementation of its role, International Alert maintains a position of committed neutrality, strictly bound to international standards of human rights and humanitarian laws, and impartiality with regard to the parties in any conflict. International Alert has Consultative Status, Category II, with the UN Economic and Social Council.

Funding for International Alert is obtained from a wide range of national and international organisations which include development agencies, charitable trusts and foundations.

This document provides an overview of the various agreements made by the Sri Lankan Government regarding the Tamils' claims to equality and, latterly, self-determination and gives the current status of those agreements. It is a technical document and does not attempt to set any of the events it records in their political or social context. This is not because those contexts are considered unimportant but rather that the need to provide a factual record of the central agreements in each negotiation in as concise a manner as possible was the objective.

It is hoped that this will be useful to all those concerned with and interested in a negotiated peace being established in Sri Lanka and will provide a useful reference for scholars and practitioners alike.

Chronology of Events

FEBRUARY 1948
Ceylon Citizenship Act passed, Indian Tamils lose citizenship

MAY 1952
UNP wins general election; Dudley Senanayake as Prime

Minister until August 1953, when he resigns and is replaced by Sir John Kotelawala

APRIL 1956
MEP coalition wins general election; SWRD Bandaranaike becomes Prime Minister

JULY 1956
Official Language Act passed ('Sinhala only')

JULY 1957
Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact

MARCH 1958
Anti-'Sri' campaign

APRIL 1958
Abrogation of Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact

SEPTEMBER 1959
SWRD Bandaranaike assassinated; Dahanayake forms government

DECEMBER 1959
Parliament dissolved

MARCH 1960 Dudley Senanayake forms government following elections in which UNP was returned as largest party, but without overall majority	AUGUST 1985 Draft Framework of Terms of Accord and Understanding ('Delhi Accord')
30 MARCH 1960 Federal Party statement of minimum demands	1986 Chidambaram proposals
APRIL 1960 Government defeated in parliament elections called; Mrs Bandaranaike assumes presidency of SLFP	JUNE 1986 Political Parties Conference
JULY 1960 SLFP wins general election; Mrs Bandaranaike as Prime Minister	JULY 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord; Indian Peace Keeping Force
OCTOBER 1964 Indo-Ceylon Agreement ('Sirima-Shastri Pact')	NOVEMBER 1987 13th amendment to the Constitution provides for Provincial Councils
MARCH 1965 UNP-led 'National Government' under Dudley Senanayake, following general election	LATE 1988 Citizenship granted to remaining stateless Indian Tamils
MARCH 1965 Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact	1988 — END 1989 JVP insurgency
MARCH 1966 Tamil Language Regulations published in Gazette	DECEMBER 1988 R Premadasa wins Presidential Elections
MAY 1970 Coalition government under Mrs Bandaranaike formed after general election	FEBRUARY 1989 UNP wins parliamentary elections
APRIL 1971 JVP insurgency	1989 All Parties Conference
MAY 1972 Tamil United Front formed; TUF 6-point plan	APRIL 1989 — JUNE 1990 Talks between government of Sri Lanka and Tamil Tigers
MAY 1972 Republican constitution	MARCH 1990 Last IPKF soldier leaves
MAY 1976 Vaddukoddai resolution adopted by newly formed TULF	1991 — 1993 Parliamentary Select Committee
JULY 1974 Sirima-Gandhi Pact	MAY 1993 President Premadasa assassinated; DB Wijetunga becomes president
JULY 1977 UNP win general elections; JR Jayawardene as Prime Minister	AUGUST 1994 People's Alliance wins general election; Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge becomes Prime Minister
1978 Second Republican Constitution creates executive presidency	
AUGUST 1980 District Development Councils Act	
JULY 1983 Widespread violence against Tamils	
AUGUST 1983 Sixth Amendment to the Constitution prohibits advocacy of separatism	
JANUARY — DECEMBER 1984 All Party Conference	
JUNE 1985 Jayawardene/Rajiv Gandhi summit	
JULY — AUGUST 1985 Thimpu talks	

Summary of Negotiations, Consultations and Legislation Relating to Tamil Grievances

I.

Date

19 August 1956

Position Statement

Federal Party's demands to Prime Minister SWRD Bandaranaike following the Trincomalee Convention.

Main Issues

Demanded within one year:

- 1) Federal constitution;
 - 2) Parity of status for Tamil and Sinhala languages;
 - 3) Repeal of existing citizenship laws which discriminate against people of Indian descent;
 - 4) Immediate halt to the colonisation of traditional Tamil-speaking areas with Sinhala people;
- Threatened "direct action by non-violent means" if these demands were not met.

(To be Continued)

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“LIHINI” — A “Maya Shakthi” Production

(“Lihini” performed recently at Lionel Wendt Theatre)

Sinhala theatre of the 1980's showed a significant improvement in theatre-craft, particularly in disciplined acting and in some very good ensemble playing. However no particular theatre style seemed to emerge, and while the dramatists continued to be increasingly incoherent and verbose, the tendency to distort and caricature Brechtian and existentialist theatre in translation and adaptation, continued apace. As a result, Sinhala theatre consisted either of slick entertainment or of plays with inadequately analysed social philosophy.

The play “Lihini” is a distinct departure from the usual sort of Sinhala play we have seen in the recent past. It provides neither empty entertainment nor empty social philosophy. It is the first I have seen of the productions by the Maya Shakthi group and illustrates a very successful attempt at developing a naturalistic style in Sinhala theatre.

Maya Shakthi was first planned as a refinement of the very successful and effective theatre training group conducted by Dhamma Jagoda, the Ranga Shilpa Shalika. After Dhamma's death, his wife Manel Jagoda, together with several other talented people in theatre field, notably Parakrama Niriella and H.A. Perera decided to form Maya Shakthi as an experimental theatre group. This group favours a metaphysical approach emphasising the development of consciousness in addition to acquiring the basic stage techniques needed for competent acting. They emphasise spirituality rather than surface craft and their values include teamwork, cooperation and the need to acquire some degree of self awareness as a prelude to good acting. They take an exploratory approach to acting and stagecraft and the goal is the development of an universal, impersonal acting style. The cathartic effect acting has on the performer has also been recognised by this group as an important function of theatre. This is actually a important though little recognised function of amateur theatre.

Though based in Sri Lanka, Maya Shakthi has had the good fortune of having access to theatre ideas from outside the country through a series of contacts with theatre people from abroad. Their exposure has included new movements such as the ‘physical theatre’ and the work of Grotowski. One such contact was Chris Connolly, who was responsible for drawing attention to the play ‘Gulls’ by the Australian dramatist, Robert Hewett. This play became the basis for “Lihini”.

The play “Lihini” is about a brain damaged boy, Kalinga who is looked after by his sister. The cast contains two other characters, the sister's lover and the neighbour who helps to look after Kalinga. The play deals with the interplay between these four characters. This play is an exercise in naturalistic theatre, influenced by Stanislavsky, who is quoted on the first page of the play, now available as a publication. Well produced, well directed and superbly acted, it was a very commendable venture in the Chekhovian mode. There were beautifully subdued performances by Manel Jagoda and Laksman Mendis, and two virtuoso performances by Dharmajith Punarjeeva and Ramya Wanigasekera. Punarjeeva's was a sustained performance calling for considerable stamina. He played Kalinga as a sort of spastic and was on the stage for the full duration of the play. Ramya, as usual showed much stage presence, and provided a good contrast to the ‘Method’ acting of the two main characters.

The stage setting followed the naturalistic theme, with real tables, real chairs, and even real sand on the beach. Stage lighting was used to a far greater extent than is usual in Sinhala theatre. The cleverly designed stage set included a sea beach, living room and two bedrooms, with action set in each of these. There were lightning quick costume changes, which indicated the passage of time, and the cloths themselves, in muted colours, emphasised the neutral, indeterminate but nevertheless western setting of the

play. It is greatly to Punarjeeva's credit that he did not nativise the play and thereby make it look ridiculous. The ‘special effect’ of seagulls, manipulated by three actors, was interesting even if the symbolism did not come out clearly. The music, which commanded attention in its own right, was by Premasiri Khemadasa.

The were defects, but most were due to insufficient rehearsing at the Lionel Wendt itself. The music was a trifle too loud, the lighting effects needed a little more practise, the seagulls were a little too large for the Wendt stage, and the actors could of be heard very clearly from the back of the auditorium. Also the play was too long.

“Lihini” also heralds the arrival of a significant new talent to the Sinhala stage — Dharmajith Punarjeeva. A soft spoken young man in his late twenties, Punarjeeva shows a deep commitment to theatre. His handling of ‘Lihini’ showed patience and care. It also demonstrated his versatility. Punarjeeva is the translator, the director, the chief actor and the designer of the stage set for ‘Lihini’. He has been successful at all four levels — a rare achievement. Punarjeeva produced several prize winning plays while in school, and later won the UNDA award at the OCIC film making course. After completing his A Levels, he decided he wished to work in the theatre and went in search of a suitable training. He joined the team of ‘Puntila’ as a production assistant and ‘gopher’. He has been with Maya Shakthi from 1991 and has produced several plays with this group.

Though naturalistic theatre has long been a part of the European theatre tradition, it has not become a part of the post-independence Sinhala theatre tradition. This review is written in the hope that it will encourage the bi-lingual intelligentsia of this country to see “Lihini”, as this type of theatre cannot survive without their support.

Kamalika Pieris

 ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

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Customer Listings at a staggering 5.5 Million

Branch Network in excess of 328, THE LARGEST

in Sri Lanka

In just three decades People's Bank has grown to become a highly respected leader in the Sri Lankan Banking scene. Their spectacular growth is a reflection of the massive resources at their command dedicated to the service of the common man — a dedication that has earned them the title "Banker to the Millions"

PEOPLE'S BANK



Banker to the Millions