

9
LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 18

No. 10

October 1, 1995

Price Rs.10.00

Registered at GPO, Sri Lanka QD/33/NEWS/94

MEDIATION: U.S. Knock on the door

— *Mervyn de Silva*

VIOLENCE IN GALLE: Who dunit?

P. A.: 1st YEAR REPORT

More minuses than pluses

— *Pearl Thevanayagam*

Chandrika's Reforms: *S. Sathananthan*

CONFLICT AND FOREIGN POLICY

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ENGLISH WRITING IN SRI LANKA

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BOOKS

DEVOLUTION THE ANSWER?

— *Martha McDougall*

WITH THE BEST COMPLIMENTS

P. A. : 1st YEAR REPORT OF

ELEPHANT HOUSE SUPERMARKET

QUALITY AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

NO. 1 JUSTICE AKBAR MAWATHA
COLOMBO 2.

BRIEFLY...

Prelates against proposals

At a meeting of the Maha Sanga held in Kandy to protest the government's devolution proposals many prominent prelates said that their views had been ignored by the government. Also, state controlled media was being used to sling mud at opponents of the proposals; only views of the supporters found expression, they said. Dr Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thera said that the author of the proposals was not Prof. G. L. Peiris as widely believed but Dr. Tiruchelvam who had originally presented these proposals to Rajiv Gandhi in India in 1985 but the Indian Prime Minister had rejected them.

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There was a powerful international conspiracy to destroy the Sinhala race and the Buddha Sasana. All those who were attached to the Wider Institution which published the book 'Buddhism Betrayed?' written by a Tamil professor were now behind the PA Government, the Venerable Thera said.

The Most Venerable Pottewela Sri Pagnasara, Maha Nayake Thera of the Sri Lanka Ramanna Nikaya said: However, that the majority were for the devolution. If the proposals were unsuitable an alternative set of proposals would have to be prepared, he said.

Censorship

War news came under censorship from September 22. Media Ministry Secretary Edmond Jayasinghe was appointed Competent Authority.

Media Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake told a press briefing: "There has been distortions and exaggerations (by the press). Some of the information being disseminated will ensure that there would be no end to this war. I do not think there is such irresponsible reporting anywhere in the world".

Danger on the campus

Undergraduates forcibly occupying a hall of the Peradeniya University are belived to have stocked large quantities of petrol and wire nails.

A notice issued by the Registrar said: "In view of the deteriorating security situation in the campus and the information that large quantities of petrol and nails have been purchased from Kandy and brought to the Hilda Obeysekera Hall..... immediate action may be necessary to evacuate the students occupying the Hall forcibly".

The university has been closed and the campus has been declared out of bounds by the authorities following violence and intimidation of staff.

Lankans stuck in Singapore

Crooked job agents have dumped ninety Sri Lankans in Singapore after promising them lucrative employment in Europe. European countries do not grant visas for Sri Lankan job seekers but no visas are necessary to enter Singapore. The unscrupulous job agents unload them in Singapore and disappear.

Investors meet Fowzie

Mr Fowzie, the Minister of Health and Highways, met with prospective investors in Canada during the XXth World Road Congress held in Montreal. Mr Fowzie explained the opportunities available for investment in infrastructure facilities on BOO-BOT basis and concessions the government had on offer. Many reportedly expressed willingness to invest in Sri Lanka.

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Price Rs. 10.00

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

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 447584

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

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CONFLICT: U.S. MAKES A MOVE

Mervyn de Silva

The incorrigibly unpredictable and uncooperative Mr. Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives has watched Congress, now dominated by the Republicans, approve a resolution on Sri Lanka that was passed unanimously. Since the United States is more than a superpower — the collapse of the Soviet Union made it the sole superpower — few countries can afford to ignore the formal gestures of the US Congress. It has offered its "good offices" to help resolve Sri Lanka's harrowing ethnic conflict. It has gone a step further. In the resolution **unanimously** passed by the House, the U.S. would urge ALL parties "to negotiate in good faith with a view to ending the current armed strife and to find a just and lasting political settlement to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict while assuring the territorial integrity of the country".

Now, the question of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity is precisely the issue raised by some 3,000 Buddhist monks who launched a protest campaign ten days ago in Kandy, the ancient Sinhalese capital and the traditional seat of "Malwatte" and "Asgiriya" which some of our British governors often identified with Canterbury and York. Though Sri Lanka is not a theocratic state, both major parties, the UNP in office and the SLFP in opposition (or the other way about) made it a point to enshrine in the constitution the special status of Buddhism, its "pre-eminence".

INTERNAL CONFLICT

All this may not have mattered if only President Chandrika Kumaratunga's "Peoples Alliance" could dismiss the Maha Sangha's allegation that the P.A. is vulnerable to the pressure of the minorities.... and therefore responsive to their demands, often at the expense of Sinhalese-Buddhist interests.

NO U.F.

This is an intensely domestic conflict.

The P.A. is no ordinary "United Front" like Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike's coalition of 1970, which included the two leading Leftist parties, the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. These two Marxist partners did have sharp differences since the pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninists launched the Communist party. But by the 1970's the "Trotskyism" of the L.S.S.P. (more Titoist in practice than Trotskyite) made little impression on the day-to-day behaviour of the party's powerful troika — Dr. N.M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and Mr. Leslie Goonewardena.

President Kumaratunga's problem is NOT the ideological diversity of the Peoples Alliance, though it does sometimes affect the political "line" of each constituent party on a particular item on the agenda of the P.A. as a government. Numbers rather than ideological or policy differences make life for the P.A. its President and Cabinet difficult. It has no stable majority in the 225 seat Parliament where the SLFP-Left coalition's traditional foe, the conservative U.N.P. can count on 90-95 votes on any major resolution before the national assembly.

As for the clergy, its strategists need only ask 'how many battalions has the TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front), the SLMC (Sri Lanka Muslim Congress) or the C.W.C. (Ceylon Workers Congress) got? The U.N.P., though defeated, was by no means crushed. Besides the P.A. had to be satisfied with a very modest 50% at the August parliamentary polls. The overwhelming majority of Sinhalese [74% of the island's population] is Buddhist. Besides, the conflict that threatens to tear this tiny island apart is an ETHNIC conflict, a conflict rooted in antagonistic group identities. The more heightened the tensions, the stronger the hold of collective allegiance. The Maha Sangha has greater impact than the world's great powers, and their attention and energies anyway are

directed to conflicts nearer home or of greater strategic significance.

Apart from the bipartisan blessings of this rare resolution, the U.S. Congress, it should be noted, must approve the economic aid programs of the administration. A powerful Congressman or an influential "lobby" can certainly block or delay American aid programs. No Sri Lankan party in office can afford to ignore this since Sri Lanka relies so heavily on the IMF-World Bank sponsored consortium for project or commodity aid, tied or untied. Hence the pilgrimage to Paris each April, though the facts and figures are known to officials and the minister long before the ceremonies. The donor group usually pledges between 700-800 million dollars, and the U.S. is quite often the No. 1 donor.

The nearer Big Neighbour, India, was the **other** country which influenced Sri Lankan decision-makers — the powerful and the proximate, the U.S. and India. There was a time, when the policies of the Indian government, ran counter to Washington's South Asian policy. That was obviously true in the Indira Gandhi years when there was what American commentators called a Delhi-Moscow axis. There may be a Moscow but there is no Soviet Union any more. The Soviet dis-union has in fact left President Yeltsin's Russia so weak and lonely that the US-led NATO ignored Moscow in the recent Bosnian operation.

During the last years of the Cold War, the years in which an organisation called the LTTE became news in Colombo, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was deeply suspicious of the foreign policy of the pro-US President Jayawardene. The hostility was strong enough for Mrs. Gandhi to order covert assistance (training and weapons) to anti-Colombo guerrilla groups in the Tamil north. No such problem faces President Kumaratunga who has the unequivocal support of the Congress administration in Delhi.

The Violence in Galle (2)

Mr. Burke continued: "The people were coming from the roofs; that there were no iron gates to keep people out; and that the attacks were so well organized. Furthermore, Mr. Burke stated that the police were unable to contain the fires because they lacked proper apparatus for putting out the fires. In an effort to disperse the crowds Mr. Burke reported that the police opened fire, away from the crowds, and used large amounts of tear gas.

Although the police were unable to protect the common sundry shops, Mr. Burke stated that they did protect the jewelry shops.

When asked about the anti-Tamil posters that had been reportedly hung throughout the Bazaar, Mr. Burke admitted that there had been posters that the police removed at the request of the shopkeepers.

In regards to the reason for the attacks, Mr. Burke stated that Galle is a very sensitive place, with a history of racial tensions. Although stating that investigations were still under way, he believes that the wholesale trade monopoly of the Tamils and Muslims may have provided the motivation for the attacks. He also stated that some Muslims were responsible for the attacks on individual homes in Thalapitiya.

Mr. Burke confirmed that the police had arrested people in connection with the attacks. However, he clarified that they had not arrested the arsonists. Rather, the arrests were of secondary actors — those who had looted the stores subsequent to the attacks.

Mr. Burke reported that after the Galle attacks, at the request of the Minister of Education, three police officers had been transferred to different stations.

ACCOUNTS OF THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE GALLE ATTACKS NOW LIVING AT THE SIVAN TEMPLE

Mindful of the fact that the affected individuals with whom the Committee spoke have already been targeted by violence, and in an effort to respect the

privacy of these individuals and to ensure that this report does not lead to further victimization, the names of those interviewed have been replaced by their initials.

Mr. P.S.:

About a week ago there was a poster in front of my shop advocating that the Tamils be killed. Some Sinhalese themselves told me to inform the police about it and to get it removed. There was talk among the people that if there was any trouble the army and the police would not intervene. We did not take that seriously. After 4.30 p.m. on Friday we felt uneasy and told the police. The police told us that there would not be any trouble and if any trouble occurred they would see about it. After 5.30 on Friday we decided to close the shops. I closed both my shops, advised the employees to go to their residences and I went home. Because it was Friday I went to the Kovil to worship. There were a large number of Sinhalese there and I was glad because I thought it was an indication that there would not be any trouble.

At about 7.30 p.m. I went home from the Kovil. When I was at home a big commotion was heard from the town. We were living in a house rented from a Muslim. When the noise was heard I got onto the road. The Muslims told me that some trouble was going to take place and asked me to get into the house, and to go to a still more secure place if possible. We went to a nearby house and hid ourselves. Then a group came and asked whether the people of our shop were there. They were Sinhalese. Then we came to know that our two shop were being burned. But because there was no security we did not go to see them. When such things happened on other days the police used to come and take us there, and help us to put out the fire. However, it did not happen this time.

On the third, a group of some people informed the police and the MPs about what had happened. Thereafter the police provided security. The police turned the two Kovils into refugee camps and got all the Tamil people to stay there. By that time I had noticed that both of the shops had been burned down. The stores of the shops had been broken into and the

goods — rice, sugar, milk powder, chili, etc. — looted.

Our request is that facilities be provided for us to continue our business in the same places. I have sustained losses amounting to about 25 lakhs.

Mr. A.T.

(as told through an interpreter):

I have lived here for 45 years. My son is a shopkeeper in Galle. He lives in Thalapitiya. My son is in the hospital now. Before the attacks many people were coming into my son's shop, threatening my son and telling him to leave. We did not take the warnings to heart. But then five or six days before the attack a placard was hung on a tree at a prominent juncture in the Bazaar, for all Tamils to see, that said the Tamils should not be in Galle and that the Tamils will be harmed if they don't leave. There were other placards too. We informed the police about the placards around the 29th or the 30th of May and they removed them. We then went on with our business. The shopkeepers asked the police for protection but the police just told us not to worry. They did not provide security for the shops. On the 2nd of June, as my son was closing the shop, a mob came to his shop. The people were armed. They told us to leave and they looted the shop. There were four groups of people who went to different shops. The mobs were only going after Jaffna Tamils. We were afraid they would harm us so we left the shop and went home. This happened at 6.00 p.m.. I know the police were called about the attacks by 8.00 p.m..

I didn't feel safe in my home so I went to my son's home in Thalapitiya. The mob came to my son's home. They went into his home, looted it, and set his things on fire. They also assaulted my son. They had weapons. One of them used a spear-like weapon and stabbed him — they stabbed him in the arm. Now he is in the hospital. Also when the mob came into his home, one of them picked up one of my son's children and threw the child on the ground, injuring the child. My son's wife took the children and ran to the house next door for protection.

I came to the refugee camp on the morning of June 3. When I got here there was no security at the camp. But then, that

night, a group of parliamentarians visited the camp. After that, security was provided.

(NOTE: On 18 June 1995, Mr. A.T. was physically assaulted by a group of ten people in front of the Galle Police Station. Prior to the incident, Mr. A.T.'s son, who was assaulted in the Galle attacks, reported the names of his attackers to the police who subsequently arrested and released the individuals. According to his son, Mr. A.T.'s attack was retaliation for the arrests.)

Mr. T.T.:

On June 2, around 10.30 p.m. a mob of 150 people came to my place shouting. They were armed with shot guns, galkattas and swords. Some of them carried a petrol can. Realizing the danger, I ran out through the back door. I wanted to go to our Muslim neighbors house for protection. Since I could not go there through the main road I had to climb the roof. Some members of the mob spotted me while I was on the roof. They dragged me down, assaulted and stabbed me several times.

Then somebody shouted 'the police is coming' and the attackers fled. By that time my house had been damaged and our belongings were on fire. Our Muslim neighbors took me inside their house and arranged for medical care. I stayed with them until the next morning when the police took me to the hospital around 8.30 a.m.. The doctors could not treat me until 10.30.. I heard some of the hospital employees were saying that I should not be given medical care. I was given a bed only after surgery. The hospital environment was very tense. I was given police protection.

I know at least fifty of the attackers. The person who led the attack was known as "three-wheeler Ukku". I know him very well. In fact, he bought 60 sacks of onions from my shop that morning. The names of those who stabbed me are Fahim and Sakir. Most of the attackers were from Galle town. There were some from Rathgama too. I never had any fights with these people. Most of the people who came to attack me were either supporters or members of the United National Party. I have made complaints to the police about the identities of the attackers.

Mrs. C.T.:

On Friday the 2nd of June at around 10 p.m. a mob of about 50 men carrying

swords, knives and 'alavangu' (iron rod with tapered end) came to our house. They were shouting and making a loud noise. When we heard the mob coming towards our house, my husband and I took our baby and five year old son and ran to our Muslim neighbor's house. The crowd stood outside our house and shouted my husband's name 'Rajah', demanding him to come out. They threatened to attack the Muslim house if he did not come out. Fearing that the neighbors would be hurt as well, we came back into our house and my husband came out. The mob attacked my husband. One attacked him with the sword, cutting his arm through the bone, and another hit him on the head with the 'alavangu'. Another person took hold of our five year old son and threw him. My son was injured on the head and elbow. Then they set fire to our house. We have lost everything. We have only what we were wearing at the time of the attack. We hid again at our neighbor's house. We were scared to even take my husband to the hospital. We hid in our neighbor's house until the police came the next afternoon at 5 p.m.. They took my husband to the hospital and brought us to the Sivan Temple. My husband is at the Karapitty hospital.

Mr. S.S.:

The fires started around 8.30 p.m.. By 8.30 I had already called Franklin Burke and informed him about the fires. I live with my mother, father, older sister and her three children. After 9.00 p.m. we heard a mob of about 100-150 people coming down the lane. They were shouting and making a loud noise as they came. We all ran to our Muslim neighbor's house through the back door and hid in their bathroom. We heard the mob calling for the Pettah Agency people. We had got word that our shops had been burned by the mob. They stood at the gate and shouted and threw arrack bottles and stones at the house. A crowd of Muslim boys from the neighborhood gathered in front of the house and tried to prevent the mob from entering it. We rent our house from a Muslim family. The foot of one of the boys was badly cut by glass pieces from the broken arrack bottles. After what seemed like an eternity the mob left saying that they will be back in an hour. The Muslim family was frightened to hide us and asked us to leave. We were terrified, not knowing what to do. We hid until the police came the next day at 5.00 p.m. and took us to the Sivan temple.

Mr. S.

(as told through an interpreter):

I own a hotel and a grocery store, both of which were fully damaged in the attack. On June 2, sometime before 6.00 p.m., a group of people came into my store and told me to leave. They said they were going to burn it down. I took them seriously so I left. I called the police but they didn't come. When I left my shop I didn't see any police in the area. This is because the police are anti-Tamil. After I left my shop I went home.

At about 9.30 p.m. a mob came to my home. They took my things from my home. They damaged my things and my home. It wasn't safe there so I had to leave. I don't know how the people knew where I lived. The address of my home is not listed anywhere except with the police. I think the fires started around 8.00 p.m.. I came to the Sivan Temple on June 3rd.

Ms. R.S.:

I make cigars at home and sell them to raise my three children. On Friday the 2nd of June around 9.30 p.m. a lorry load of men came to our house. There were about 100 of them. They were Sinhalese and Muslims. They attacked our house and broke the windows. We ran to our neighbor's house and hid until the police came the next afternoon and brought us to the Sivan temple. I rent my house from a Muslim family. On the 4th I went to my house to see how it was. The owners of my house scolded me and told me not to come back and that they can't rent the house to Tamils anymore. We hear that there are posters threatening death to anyone who gives houses to Tamils.

Ms. S.V.:

On the 2nd of June, around noon, some of my Sinhalese friends came to the stores and informed me that there were plans to attack Tamils in Galle. There had been rumors to that effect earlier. Posters by a group called Deshapremy Sangvithanaya called its members to kill Tamils.

We have informed the police several times. The answer we got was 'mokuth karanna bai' (nothing can be done). On the 2nd I closed the stores at 7.00 p.m. and went to the police station to make another complaint. I returned home around 8.00 p.m.. Minutes after, a group of people — I could not count them — walked into my house shouting. We immediately ran through the back door. They removed all our belongings including my motor bicycle, heaped them on the road and set fire.

A year of ups and downs

Despite a year in office, PA government's peace plans remain mired, says Pearl Thevanayagam

The 17-year-long rule of the United National Party had vexed the voting populace so much that the People's Alliance (PA) was in a plum position where the masses were hungry for a change in government. Hence it managed to swing 63 per cent of the votes to gain power on the election pledges to bring a solution to the ethnic crisis, abolish the executive presidency, eradicate bribery and corruption, protect fundamental human rights, adopt free market policy and increased measures among other things.

The PA was full of washed-behind-the-ears enthusiasm with its several intellectuals as key ministers much to the chagrin of seasoned politicians; but the end of one year term report cannot give it a definite 'pass' or 'fail' if one goes by its mixed bag of broken pledges, rising cost of essential commodities, workers' unrest and on the other hand to its credit a sincere effort to devolve power to the regions and institute constitutional reforms, bringing malpractice in state departments before commissions of inquiry and most of all ending the fear psychosis which prevailed during the UNP government.

The PA promised to abolish the executive presidency within months of coming into power. The issue is in cold storage with the LTTE's unilateral resumption of hostilities on April 19. The information, tourism and aviation minister Dharmasiri Senanayake said that the PA's performance so far has been quite good. "The extremist forces are trying to bring us back to the 1983 era, but we are not deterred. Tourism has shown a growth of five per cent and there is a positive approach to investment opportunities. The right to life has also been firmly established". Constitutional affairs minister G.L. Peiris said the PA has achieved some positive results in solving the ethnic issue and it was regrettable the hostilities resumed with the unilateral declaration of war by the LTTE.

The government's peace proposals offering substantial autonomy to the minority Tamils by way of eight regional coun-

cils are interpreted by Sinhala extremists as detrimental to the unitary state of the island. However, the central government would still have the power to dissolve the regional councils should there be an armed rebellion or insurrection.

Analysts interpret this as a violation of the constitution and feel that in such circumstances the devolution would cease to have any meaning.

Recently LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingam had expressed desire for holding talks with the government. Mr Peiris dismissed this as not conducive at present since it would be unfair for both the armed forces and the people as a whole especially when the LTTE repeatedly refused opportunities to arrive at a negotiated settlement despite four rounds of peace talks.

A Tamil MP S. Sivasithambaram said although it has been difficult period for the PA, its devolution proposals are a favourable change for democracy. "The government should take on the LTTE's suggestion to hold talks and reach a settlement with them. Also it should not have reimposed the economic embargo and caused immense suffering to the civilians in the north and east", he said.

The MP while refusing to comment on the military offensive of the government forces said the civilian casualties were unfortunate.

Vasudeva Nanayakkara, the pro-Tamil Marxist Sinhala politician summed up the PA performance as not meeting the expectations of the people who voted for them. "Expectations were high among activists and the people. The cost of living has gone up considerably. Plunder and looting of public property go on unabated. Hope of ending the war and arriving at a peaceful settlement has been jeopardised by the government's knee-jerk response to the LTTE's resumption of hostilities", he said.

Taken as a whole, Nanayakkara said the performance of the PA has been poor for the first year of any government. He added the government has taken some

purposeful and meaningful steps. "The proposals it put forward this month should have been made at the beginning and taken up for discussion and debate. Although Workers' Charter was promised in the election manifesto, nothing has materialised. Instead we saw a proliferation of workers' unrest", he pointed out.

The positive achievements of the government has been the eradication of fear among the people of violence, arbitrary arrests and harassment of civilians. The only exception is the recent discoveries of bodies of purportedly Tamil youth found floating in rivers in the last two months. Amnesty International has requested a report on these incidents and despite inquiries by the special investigating team, there had been no developments or clues to the identity of either the murdered youth or the murderers.

Operation Leap Forward, the major offensive of the government forces, started few weeks ago following Tiger attacks on the army base in Mandativu island in Jaffna also caused random civilian casualties. Particularly when almost 165 civilians died in air-raid bombing as the church they sought refuge in was bombarded by eight bombs. To this day, the government denies air force or military involvement although the International Committee of the Red Cross issued a statement of an eye-witness account of the incident as being an air-raid bombing.

Intelligence reports from the East reveal the LTTE to be getting ready for a major offensive. The LTTE had issued a circular warning the Tamils in the police and military forces to vacate their posts. Wide spread shelling and air-raids and the Tamils in the area are fleeing their homes during the night fearing attacks.

In the North the LTTE is said to be procuring goods meant for civilians by paying retail prices in Colombo regardless of transport charges although only a fraction of goods are being allowed into the North. Therefore, it remains uncertain whether the one-year rule of PA has made any substantial progress on peace front.

— Times of India

The writer is a staff writer of the *Sunday Leader* and Colombo Correspondent of the *Times of India*.

President Kumaratunga's Devolution Proposals: An Assessment

S. Sathananthan

The Peoples Alliance (PA) Government took office about one year ago. Since then numerous individuals and organizations have urged the Government to submit a proposal which could form the basis for a negotiated solution to the Tamil Question. On the 3rd of August, after almost nine months in office, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga announced her "Devolution Proposals" (*Daily News*, 4/8/95).

The Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Prof G L Peiris, explained that the President's Proposals are her "basic ideas with regard to devolution that is almost in the form of a Green Paper. The next stage is for the draft chapter of the new constitution on devolution to be presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on Constitutional Reform. Within about two or three weeks we will try to finalise that document and that will be placed before the PSC.... we will have full discussion to reach a consensus within that forum. Thereafter it can be presented to Parliament where we would need a 2/3rd majority. And having obtained 2/3rd majority we will be in a position to place these proposals at a referendum. That's basically how we will work" (*The Island*, 6/8/95).

Given that the President's Proposals contain merely her "basic ideas" and are incomplete, it is difficult to reach firm conclusions about the merits of the Proposals. Clearly there is a long way to go before the Government's proposals are finalised through the various stages described by Prof Peiris. Therefore it is necessary to stress that the PA Government has still NOT formulated its proposals for conflict resolution.

On the face of it President Kumaratunga's Proposals appear to set a framework for a negotiated solution to the Tamil Question. And they appear to reveal some of her views on the nature and scope of political reform needed to re-establish peace.

The present assessment begins on the above stated assumption and it will examine the President's "basic ideas" and assess their suitability as a basis for conflict resolution in Sri Lanka.

A. The "Devolution Proposals"

1. Nature of decentralization

(a) The term "Union of Regions" in the

Proposals (sec 9.1(a)) is an adaptation of the term "Union of States" applied in the December 1985 Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) Proposals (part I) presented to the Prime Minister of India, Mr Rajiv Gandhi. In 1985 the term "Union of States" created the illusion of federalism whilst retaining the unitary State structure. Similarly the term "Union of Regions" today create the impression that the Regions will enjoy a higher level of autonomy than the Provinces do under the 1987 13th Amendment. But this too is an illusion. Because substantive power-sharing imputed by the term "Union of Regions" is absent in the Proposals, as will be shown below.

(b) The terms "Region" and "Regional Councils" were first applied thirty-eight years ago, in the 1957 Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam (BC) Pact (Part B).

There is a well known precedence for the deceptive use of the word "Union". It must be remembered that the country is named the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The word "Socialist", has no meaning or relevance whatsoever to the country.

2. The centre

(a) The President's Proposals envision an extra geographical unit, a "Capital Territory" (sec 1.5) which will be separate from any of the Regions. This is ostensibly based on the Union Territories in the Indian model; and it implies that the Central Government would be reformed.

(b) However the Proposals nowhere envisage a structural change in Central Government to allow power-sharing between ethnic groups in the Centre. In contrast,

— the 1972 Model Constitution of the Federal Party (FP) had recommended the introduction of a second chamber, the "Chamber of States" (art 82);

— the 1984 All Party Conference (APC) Statement of the President proposed the establishment of a second chamber, a "Council of State";

— the 1985 TULF Proposals recommended that "membership in Parliament shall reflect the ethnic proportions of the Union", and that "no Bill or Resolution or part thereof affecting any nationality shall be passed unless a majority of Members

of Parliament belonging to that nationality agree to such a Bill or Resolution or part thereof" (part I); and

— the 19 December 1986 Proposals suggested the creation of the office of Vice President (para V).

Thus many previous initiatives went far beyond the President's Proposals by at least partially recognising the national questions. They envisaged a degree of power-sharing in the Centre between Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Up-Country Tamils. This reform of the Centre is the absolute pre-condition for a successful devolution of power.

3. The region

(a) The President's Proposals refer to "Regions" (sec 1.1) but do not indicate how many such Regions are to be identified. Evidently the intention is to rename Provinces and Provincial Councils (PCs) as Regions and Regional Councils (RCs).

(b) The Proposals make reference to the re-demarcation of only the North-East Province (NEP) (sec 1.1). In other words, the Proposals envisage the de-merger of the NEP but along new borders which have yet to be defined. It follows that the unit of decentralization in the north-east has not been determined.

(c) The Proposals are silent on the question of a RC or other institutional arrangements for Muslims and Up-Country Tamils. In contrast,

— the 1957 BC Pact provided for the division of the then Eastern Province into "two or more areas" (part B);

— the 1972 Model Constitution recommended the demarcation of the Amparai District as a "Muslim majority state" (page 3);

— the 1985 TULF Proposals provided that "special provision shall be made to ensure the representation of Muslims and Tamils of recent Indian Origin who do not occupy contiguous areas" (part I); and that an Assistant Government Agent (AGA) Division for UP-Country Tamils should be demarcated (part IV);

— the Sri Lankan formulation at the 1986 Bangalore Discussions suggested that "three Provincial Councils shall be created for the Eastern Province.... One for the Tamil people, one for the Sinhala people

and one for the Muslim people" (para 10.2);

— the 1990 Amplified Proposals, jointly made by the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC), Democratic Peoples Liberation Front (DPLF), Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), recognised the need for weighted representation for the Muslims within the NEP (paras 2,5,7,8); and

— the 1991 Thondaman Proposals suggested that "Pradeshiya Sabhas with a substantial Muslim majority in the Eastern Province.... may form a Union of Pradeshiya Sabhas" within the NEP (page 7).

(d) The Proposals do NOT contain provisions which empower the Central Government to Unilaterally dissolve a RC. Thus the Governor could dissolve a RC only on the "advice" of its CM (sec 1.3.2). Consequently, they appear to offer a high degree of autonomy for each Region as implied by the term "Union of Regions".

However, Prof Peiris clarified that "in exceptional cases if a regional council embarks on a course of action that is clearly incompatible with the sovereignty and united character of Sri Lanka, in those circumstances the Centre can intervene.... We will incorporate such a provision in the Draft Chapter on Devolution when we present it to Parliament" (*The Island*, 6/8/95). The words "sovereignty" and "united character" are open to extremely wide interpretations. If adopted, such an amendment will water-down the promised autonomy; and so the extent of decentralization is in doubt.

4. Legislative power

(a) The President's Proposals will delete Article 76 of the Constitution (sec 9.2) and vest legislative power within each Region in the respective RC (sec 1.2.1).

(b) The Proposals provide for the establishment of a Permanent Commission on Devolution to address Centre-Region and inter-regional disputes (sec VIII). This is an improvement on the previous initiatives.

(c) On the other hand the Proposals make a murky provision that RCs "will exercise exclusive legislative and executive competence". The meaning of the word "competence" is not defined.

(d) However, contradictions between the subjects on the Regional List and those on the Reserved List were examined by the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC). They show that in most instances

powers which are offered in the Regional List are neutralised or superceded by provisions in the Reserved List (*Sunday Times*, 6/8/95).

(e) Moreover, the Proposals are silent regarding conflicts between legislation enacted by the Centre and the Region.

The unavoidable conclusion is that the RCs are empowered to enact only subordinate legislation; and that in Centre-Region conflicts of laws the legislation of the Centre will prevail. This is characteristic of the unitary State structure and is contrary to practice in a "Union of Regions".

5. Executive power

(a) The President's Proposals vest executive power in the Governor of each region who would act on the "advice" of the Chief Minister (CM) and the Regional Board of Ministers (sec 9.1(d)). But it does not specify that the advice of the CM will be binding on the Governor. Similar provisions were made in the 1987 13th Amendment (art 154C). In contrast, more progressive suggestions had been made to vest executive power in regional bodies. Thus,

— the 1972 Model Constitution vested executive power in the "state assemblies" (art 7);

— the 1985 Draft Framework of Accord and Understanding formulated in New Delhi vested it in the "Chief Executive of the Provincial Council" (para 10); and

— the 1985 TULF Proposals vested executive power in the "Chief Minister and Council of Ministers" (part III).

(b) The Proposals empower the President to appoint the Governor with the "concurrence" of the CM in each Region (sec 1.3). This provision is an improvement on

— the 1985 TULF Proposals which required mere "consultation" (part III); and

— the 1987 13th Amendment which allowed the President to appoint the Governor without even consultation.

Moreover it is in keeping with the 1991 Thondaman Proposals which required the "concurrence" of the CM. However, no provision was made for the respective Governor to be elected by the people of each Region.

(c) The Proposals empower the Governor to appoint as Chief Minister "the person who commands the confidence of the majority in the Regional Council" (sec 1.4). This clause is a throw-back to the 1985 Draft Framework, which provided that the Chief Executive of a PC shall be "one of the members who in the Presi-

dent's opinion is most likely to command the confidence of the Council" (para 10). In contrast, the 1986 Chidambaram Proposals were more progressive and provided that "the leader of the party which commands a majority in the Provincial Council shall be appointed as the Chief Minister" (annexure 1). It was substantially reproduced in the 1987 13th Amendment (art 154F).

(d) The Proposals allow the Central Government to appoint a Regional Public Service Commission (RPSC) "in consultation with the relevant Chief Minister" (sec 7.1). Since the "concurrence" of the CM is not required, it follows that the Centre is free to impose its will on the Region; thereby denying the extensive autonomy imputed by the term "Union of Regions".

The formation of a RPSC had been recommended by the 1984 Annexure C (para 8) and the 1985 TULF Proposals (part III).

6. Judicial powers

(a) The President's Proposals envisage the setting up of "a High Court in every Region" (sec 6.1). Similar provisions had been made in

— the 1984 Annexure C (para 7),
— the 1985 TULF Proposals (part III),
— the 1986 Chidambaram Proposals (annexure I),
— the 1987 13th Amendment (art 154P) and
— the 1991 Thondaman Proposals.

(b) The Proposals provide for a Regional Judicial Service Commission (RJSC). This is an improvement on the 13th Amendment. The only previous instance where such a provision was made was in the 1991 Thondaman Proposals.

(c) The Proposals allow the Governor to "appoint a Regional Attorney General who will advise the Governor on the constitutionality of laws passed by the Regional Council" (sec 6.4). However the Regional Attorney General would in practice become the Centre's "regional policemen". This will undermine the extensive devolution promised in the concept of a "Union of Regions".

7. Official language

(a) The President's Proposals intend to recognise Tamil and Sinhala as "official languages" and English as a "link language" (preamble).

(b) However, the Proposals do not indicate whether Tamil will be an official language of Sri Lanka. Because, although the 1987 13th Amendment made both Sinhala and Tamil official languages, it

specified only Sinhala as the official language of Sri Lanka (art 18).

8. Land

(a) The President's Proposals declare that "Land will be a devolved subject and State land within the Region will be vested in the Regional Council" (sec 4.1). This is an improvement on the August 1985 Draft Framework (annex 2) and the 1987 13th Amendment (list I) which vested State land in Central Government. However, the term "State land" is nowhere defined in the Proposals. It is unclear whether or not "State land" includes land vested in State agencies, such as the Mahaveli Development Authority.

(b) The Proposals are silent on the subject of Land Policy. In contrast, the 1984 Annexure C had allocated "Land Policy" to the RC (para 5).

(c) The Proposals allow the Central Government to take back State lands vested in the RC after the formality of "consultation" with the relevant RC (sec 4.1). No provision was made to secure the "concurrence" of the RC.

(d) Modifications in the selection of allottees in land settlement schemes are restricted to "future" schemes (sec 4.2). Thus present schemes and extensions of present schemes are excluded.

Provisions in (c) and (d) undermine the extensive devolution promised in the concept of "Union of Regions".

9. Law and order

(a) The President's Proposals empower the CM to appoint the Regional Police Commissioner "in consultation" with the Governor (sec 3.1). This provision offered the CM wide discretion. But the offer was neutralised by authorising the National Police Commission (NPC) to transfer police officers into and out of a Region merely "in consultation" with the Regional Police Commission (RPC) (sec 3.4). In addition, use of the word "concurrence" was avoided.

(b) The Proposals allocate the functions of "recruitment, transfers within the Region, dismissal and disciplinary control" of members of the Regional Police Service (RPS) to the RPC (Sec 3.3). This empowerment was undermined by the provision that the RPC will be appointed by the Central Government "in consultation" with the relevant RC (sec 3.5). Again use of the word "concurrence" was avoided.

(c) The creation of national and regional police services was provided for in

— the 1986 Chidambaram Proposals (Annexure II),

— the 1987 13th Amendment (list I) and
— the 1991 Thondaman Proposals (list I).

(d) The Proposals are silent about the composition of the armed forces. However,

— the 1984 Annexure C specified that "the armed forces of Sri Lanka will adequately reflect the national ethnic position" (para 9);

— the 1985 Draft Framework suggested that "recruitment to the Armed Forces to be carried out so as to ensure that the Armed Forces reflect the ethnic ratio as far as possible within a specified time frame" (para 17); and

— the 1985 TULF Proposals required that "the composition of the armed forces shall be brought in line with the national ethnic ratio within five years" and specified that "the creation of a separate Tamil and Muslim regiment shall be undertaken" (Annexure II).

(e) The Proposals are also silent on the composition of the RPS. In contrast,

— the 1984 Annexure C required that "in the Northern and Eastern Regions, the Police forces for internal security will also reflect the ethnic composition of these regions" (para 9);

— the 1985 Draft Framework specified that "at least 80 per cent of members of the Police Force serving in Police Stations within any Provincial Council Area, will be those recruited within the Provincial Council Areas" (annex I); and

— the 1991 Thondaman Proposals provided that "the National Police Force shall reflect the national ethnic proportions" and "the Provincial Police Force shall reflect the provincial ethnic proportions" (list I).

10. Finance

(a) The President's Proposals provide for a National Finance Commission (sec 2.1). A similar provision had been included in

— the 1972 Model Constitution (art 16);

— the 1984 Annexure C (para 6);

— the 1985 Draft Framework (para 11);

— the 1985 TULF Proposals (para III); and

— the 1987 13th Amendment (art 154R).

(b) Some previous initiatives went further than Proposals and specified the ethnic composition of the Commission. Thus

— the TULF Proposals, which required the Commission to consist of the Governor of the Central Bank and three mem-

bers "one of whom shall be a Sinhalese, one a Tamil and one a Muslim" (para III); and

— the 13th Amendment, which specified that the Commission should be "composed of the Governor of the Central Bank, Secretary to the Treasury and three other members representing the three major communities" (art 154R).

(c) The Proposals allowed the RC's powers of taxation in "specified areas" as defined by Central Government (sec 2.2) and enumerated in the Regional List. Similar powers were granted in

— the 1957 BC Pact (part B);

— the 1984 Annexure C (para 6);

— the 1985 Draft Framework (para 11);

— the 1985 TULF Proposals (part III); and

— the 1987 13th Amendment (list I).

(d) However, powers to tax "income, capital and wealth of individuals, companies and corporations" are retained by the Central Government. The basis and extent to which powers of taxation will be shared between the Centre and the Region are unspecified.

(e) The Proposals empower RCs to "set up their own financial institutions" (sec 2.3). This provision is an improvement on previous initiatives, none of which granted this power to Regions. However the nature of these institutions and their relationship to national financial institutions are unspecified in the Proposals.

(f) The Proposals authorise RCs to borrow money and impose a "prescribed limit" on their international borrowing. Above this limit "the concurrence" of the Central Government is required (sec 2.3). Nevertheless, this is an improvement on previous initiatives, none of which permitted international borrowing by the Region.

(g) The Proposal authorise the RCs to "regulate and promote foreign direct investment, international grants and development assistance, subject to such conditions as may be specified by the Centre" (sec 3.4). This is an apparent advance on previous initiatives. However, "National Planning" is a reserved subject; and RCs cannot receive and disburse grants and development assistance.

The "specified areas" of taxation, the "prescribed limit" on international borrowing and the "conditions" imposed on mobilising foreign investment, funds and development assistance, and the criteria of Centre-Region interaction between financial institutions are unspecified. Therefore the scope of power-sharing is unknown.

Chandrika's Federal Package: A Political Analysis

Partha S. Ghosh

The Sinhala-Tamil ethnic strife is now about four decades old. Still, there does not seem to be any ray of hope at the end of the tunnel towards its peaceful management. The war between the government forces and the LTTE is becoming more and more fierce and no one knows what would its final outcome be. How this point of no return has been reached is a long story but it would suffice here just to underline the harsh reality that successive Sri Lankan governments and Tamil leaderships have missed one opportunity after another to address the problem from a realistic sense of judgement. Their succumbing to all kinds of pressures of existential politics is now making them bear an unacceptable cost which the present strife has brought in its train.

This, of course, is not peculiar of Sri Lankan politics. All societies suffer from similar myopia. Only when matters go out of hand do the leaderships realise the gravity of the situation. But by then it is already too late. What Machiavelli had said about half a millennium ago sounds as valid today as it sounded then:

Physicians say of consumption (tuberculosis), that in the early stages of this disease it is easy to cure but difficult to diagnose, whereas, later on, if it has not been recognised and treated at the beginning, it becomes easy to diagnose but difficult to cure. The same thing happens in the affairs of state.

Against this perspective of philosophy of history, the two-pronged strategy of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga aimed at resolving the ethnic problem of her island-state deserves some careful analysis. The strategy is two-pronged because on the one hand there is an all out effort to deal with the Tigers militarily while on the other to address the deep-seated political grievances of the Tamils through striking a political deal with the latter on a long-term basis. Empirically speaking, she cannot be faulted as this is a time-tested tactics

of extending the arms of friendship while keeping one's powder dry. But the problem with the LTTE militancy is much more serious than just deterring them by displaying the big stick. Even the mighty Indian army had failed to tame them. But before discussing the LTTE let us see what Chandrika has to offer in terms of politically empowering the Tamils of the North-Eastern province.

* * * * *

On August 3, Chandrika announced her federal package. (Incidentally, the *Reuters* had leaked the news about a week earlier). In the package she took cognisance of all the major grievances of the Tamils, namely, the question of language, land settlement, law and order, and the overall issue of regional autonomy. She virtually conceded on every point to the fulfilment of the Tamil demands. Without mincing words she confessed that her primary task was to find,

a new approach predicated on unqualified acceptance of the fact that the Tamil people have genuine grievances for which solutions must be found.

I do not recall of any Sinhalese politician to have ever made such a categorical remark in favour of the Tamils. Objectively speaking, it was probably a bit of an over-statement.

The package contains all the conceivable provision necessary for granting autonomy to the Tamils. Pending the redemarcation of the boundary of the Tamil-majority North-Eastern province, it has been proposed to divide the island into eight autonomous regions (hitherto, called provinces). Thus, instead of being a unitary state Sri Lanka would now be a Union of Regions. The territories comprising the cities of Colombo and Sri Jayewardenapura-Kotte would be excluded from this arrangement and although geographically within the Western region they would be directly administered by the Centre.

The regions would be fully autonomous both in terms of executive and legislative

powers. Article 76 of the Constitution which gives absolute power of legislation in the country to the Parliament is to be abrogated as the same power is now to be shared by the Regional Councils as well. The respective powers of the Centre and the regions are contained in the Reserved List and the regional List respectively. The former has 58 subjects while the latter 45. There would be no Concurrent List. To ensure that the centre does not meddle in the affairs of the regions it has been clearly provided that the Chief Ministers cannot be removed from office so long as they enjoy the confidence of the Regional Councils. The Governors are not supposed to be the watch dogs of Central interests as is the case in India and their appointment by the President will be strictly with the concurrence of the Chief Ministers.

To resolve disputes between the Centre and the regions or between and among the regions there will be a Permanent Commission on Devolution appointed by the Constitutional Council. The Commission would have powers of mediation as well as adjudication. There will be a National Finance Commission entrusted with the job of allocating grants to the regions keeping in view balanced regional development. The Regional Councils will have the power to borrow as well as to set up their own financial institutions. International borrowings beyond a prescribed limit will, however, require the concurrence of the Centre.

In short, the package is the most ideal devolutionary arrangement one can think of. But all good things do not necessarily work, least of all, in the realm of politics. It is surmised that the very genuineness of the offer itself could become its liability. There are forces both within the Sinhalese and the Tamil populations which have reasons to oppose the move. In respect of Tamil response to the proposals the very fact that the latter tend to receive the approval of the majority of Tamils it would be opposed tooth and nail by the LTTE. In a recent article published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay, June 24, 1995), I have explained the underlying

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cause thereto. It would suffice here to reiterate that since the proposals have the potential to wrest from the LTTE their own constituency, that is, the Tamils of the North-Eastern province, they cannot agree to them.

It is also apprehended that the more the Tigers sharpen their teeth against the package, the greater would be the distance between the latter and the moderate Tamils, if not for anything else but at least for their personal security. The LTTE is capable of driving such fear into the spines of all Tamil politicians, notably those located in the North-East. To politically compete with the Tigers for the same hearts of the North-Eastern Tamils the moderate Tamil parties would be obliged to pose as if they are equally on guard against the possibility of being taken for a ride by Chandrika, a game which according to the Tamils, the Sinhalese politicians have been playing ever since the days of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (1956-59). In this kind of a situation their demand for the "Tamil homeland" would come in handy to them thereby raking up the issue of permanent merger of Northern and Eastern provinces without any tampering of the existing boundaries. The TULF leader, M. Sivasithamparam, has gone on record to say that this is one thing which is "non-negotiable". To any student of Sri Lankan politics it is elementary knowledge that the matter is politically loaded and all kinds of ethnic sensitivities are intricately intertwined.

Then there is also the problem of dealing with the Sinhala hardliners. Since the package warrants constitutional amendments which require two-thirds majority of the Parliament and then a popular endorsement through a referendum, the possibility of their running into rough weather is high. In the 225-member Parliament the two arch rivals, the UNP and the SLFP (the present ruling coalition, the PA — People's Alliance is dominated by the SLFP), are more or less evenly balanced with the UNP having 94 members and the PA 105. The Tamil parties account for 14 and the Muslims for seven. The remaining five seats belong to the small parties. It has been Sri Lanka's experience that the party in power is generally accommodative of the Tamil demands but the one in Opposition gathers all its strength to sabotage it. This has been true right from

the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam (BC) Pact (1957) through the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam (DC) Agreement (1965) through the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (1987). In the last case it was opposed even from within the UNP Government, most notably by Prime Minister R. Premadasa. It is indeed as well true that much water has flown the Mahavali river in the intervening period and everyone has learned from experience the danger of procrastination and obstinacy. Still, as noted at the outset, existential *realpolitik* know no logic, and sanity is always the casualty.

* * * * *

The UNP which is virtually leaderless after all its prominent leaders, Lalith Athulathmudali, Ranjan Wijeratne, R. Premadasa and Gamini Dissanayake, have been killed by the LTTE is likely to grasp the opportunity of projecting itself as the defenders of the majority Sinhala-Buddhist interests. The revolutionary recommendation in the devolution package to declare the state as a Union of Regions in place of a unitary state would provide it the necessary handle to excite the Sinhala masses against the package. Though the UNP Parliamentary Party leader and the Leader of the Opposition, Ranil Wickremasinghe, has been discrete, Susil Munesinghe, another prominent UNP leader, has gone on record to say: "You cannot have anything other than unitary state". It is general guess that a significant section of the Buddhist clergy holds this position.

The other point that the Opposition parties would use to embarrass the government is with regard to the suggestion to make the post of the Chief Minister of a region inviolable. As mentioned above, according to the package the Chief Minister cannot be removed by the Centre as long as he enjoys the confidence of the Regional Council. Given the tradition of Sri Lankan Tamil politics which has veered round the demand for a "Tamil homeland" the spectre of partition of Sri Lanka looms large in an average Sinhala mind. The UNP would exploit this fear to its political advantage. No wonder that the Chandrika Government has already mellowed its tone. G.L. Peiris, the Justice Minister and the chief architect of the package, has clarified that the Central

Government would have the powers to dismiss a Regional Government if it threatened the integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka.

There are also some conceptual problems with the package insofar as the basics of a pluralistic democracy are concerned. There has been no effort to distance the state from religion. On the contrary, Chandrika has tried her best to woo the Buddhist lobbies to support her scheme. One of the subjects in the Reserved List is "Buddhism", meaning thereby that there is no intention to do away with the special status clause for Buddhism in the Constitution. Religion is always a divisive political symbol which a democracy can ill-afford.

The most vexed question of all would, however, be the redemarcation of the North-Eastern region, an issue which Chandrika's detractors would exploit to the hilt. She has proposed the redemarcation "in full consultation with a view to reconciling Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim interests". If the Muslim and Sinhala majority areas of the present North-Eastern province are excised from it and added to other Sinhala majority areas than effectively what it would mean is that there would be an almost exclusive Tamil-Hindu area in the North-Eastern region but there would be two or three Sinhala majority regions with Tamil-Muslim or Estate (Indian) Tamil districts where they would predominate locally. Far from palliating the symptoms of ethnic distrust it may exacerbate them. From a long term perspective it is unwise and dangerous to freeze the geo-ethnicity of the island. It would divide the communities for all time to come. In that situation it would never be possible to think of a North-Eastern Tamil becoming the President of Sri Lanka. Both ideally and realistically speaking if a minority Tamil or Muslim community can stay in a Sinhala-majority region what is so sacrosanct about Tamil ethnicity that it cannot accommodate a Sinhala minority within its territory. These are serious matters and must be so treated lest the price may be too high for the state in the long run.

* * * * *

Let us now discuss the real issue for everything else is secondary without its

solution — the million dollar LTTE question. However might the Chandrika Government claim to address the Tamil problem without the Tigers, the hard reality is that no solution can be possible without either accommodating them into the system or breaking their backbone completely. The way the war is being waged against the LTTE it seems that the government wants to talk to them from a position of strength. But the problem is that seldom a regular army has been able to overpower a guerrilla force and that too in a jungle terrain of the variety available in the North-Eastern province.

The Indian Tamil (CWC) leader S. Thondaman's suggestion that the LTTE should be offered to form the government in the North-Eastern region under the new scheme deserves mention in this regard. Indirectly what Thondaman has meant is that the Tigers should join the political process. But is this not exactly what the Chandrika Government tried to achieve by initiating the peace process in the first instance? It has been the experience of all, whether it is the Sri Lankan Government or the Indian Government, that the Tigers are too wily in their political deals and once they weather the current difficulties they go back to their old demand of *Eelam*. As such, even if it is hypothetically agreed that the LTTE joins the political process, but given the military power that it commands is it not likely that in the elections they would use that muscle to browbeat the voters to fall in line. Some kind of "booth-capturing" may be introduced to Sri Lanka's electoral process which the nation is still mercifully free from. Would not an LTTE Government so installed in power become a greater liability to the state?

But granting that Thondaman has proved himself to be the most seasoned Tamil (estate) politician who has extracted maximum benefit for his community from Sri Lankan Government by sheer pragmatism, one should be advised against pooh-poohing his suggestion as mere gibberish. But in the present case his advice does not seem to have many takers, neither in the government nor in the Opposition. Probably he wants to play the role of a go-between to revive the peace process. It is not unlikely that his ulterior motive could be to emerge as a politician of national stature particularly against the

background that of late his hegemony in the estate areas has been seriously challenged by a couple of up-and-coming politicians.

The conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan state has reached such a bind that it is extremely difficult for either party to extricate itself from the mess. For the LTTE they have reached the end of the road. Even if it is hypothetically conceded that they carry the day and overpower the Sri Lankan army in several decisive battles, it does not follow that their dream of *Eelam* would be achieved. Without external recognition a new state is never created in the modern world. Given the success of Sri Lankan diplomacy lately it is almost certain that they would not get international recognition which is one of the most important ingredients of a modern sovereign state. One may recall that almost immediately after the breakdown of the peace process in late April the international aid donors pledged an unprecedented US \$850 million. This underlined the fact the international community was in favour of a negotiated settlement of the ethnic problem and had full confidence in the Chandrika Government.

To add to the complication is the request of the Indian Government to extradite the LTTE supremo, Velupillai Prabhakaran, the prime accused in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, although everybody knows how childish is the demand in the real sense. But herein lies the danger of Sri Lankan decision making becoming a hostage to the ups and downs of Indian politics. There should not be any doubt in any body's mind that the real shots in the LTTE are called by the one and the only man — Prabhakaran — and it was for the first time that the real and substantive one-to-one exchange had taken place between him and the head of the Sri Lankan state. There was an exchange of more than forty personal letters between Chandrika and Prabhakaran prior to the breakdown of talks. Imagine a situation that the talks succeeded and Prabhakaran came out of his jungle hideout to form a government in the North-Eastern region! And then the demand for extradition is renewed.

* * * * *

From the foregoing, the following conclusions may be drawn although in the

Sri Lankan situation all conclusions have to be tentative only.

One, it must be conceded that whatever misgiving one might express about Chandrika's federal proposal it is a bold step for which she deserves kudos. Even her staunchest critics do not see her as a wily Sinhala chauvinist politician who does everything keeping the next election in mind. This is her biggest asset.

Two, this asset is her liability too for it forecloses the LTTE dream of an *Eelam* coming true resulting in prolonged military and state repression. The danger is that any slightest mishandling of the situation can lead to anti-Tamil riots putting the clock back to the position of 1983.

Three, the war between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE would have to be a war of attrition. In any war of attrition the state has the natural advantage. It all depends on how long it is able to drag it without of course causing hardship to the Tamil people of the North-East and violating human rights of the variety as has surfaced recently — the killing of several Tamil youth in Colombo by the Special Task Force (STF) and throwing their bodies in a lake adjacent to the Parliament house.

Four, India has a very responsible role to play. It must be able to view the success of the Sri Lankan army, if any, with equanimity and steer clear of the pressures of Tamil Nadu local politics to intervene as it happened prior to the food-drop in Jaffna by the Indian Air Force in June 1985. Such temptations must be resisted keeping in view the larger regional security interests of the country.

Five and last, let us all agree that in any case no political solution can be foolproof at the first instance itself. What is indeed is a healthy debate in the press, pulpit and platform so that some of the more obvious holes in the package can be plugged. But ultimately that would be possible only if the present government remains stable and the disruptive potential of the LTTE is curbed. Together the door must be kept ajar for the latter to come back to the negotiating table. India may have to seriously reconsider in that case at some point of time its demand for Prabhakaran's extradition.

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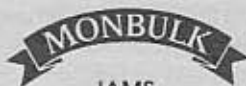
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Regional Factors

K. M. de Silva

Forging relations with the countries of Asia was another strand of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. After the British withdrawal of military bases from Sri Lanka, Bandaranaike's government accorded a high priority to a regional balance of power strategy. He genuinely attempted for an enlarged Colombo Powers organization, to be established in Colombo, to jointly voice their common concerns.⁵⁵ Having received scant response from the potential members of the proposed political organization, Bandaranaike repeatedly called in 1958 and 1959 even for regional economic conferences⁵⁶ to be called to deliberate on various regional economic problems, and devise means to overcome them to the mutual benefit of all concerned. Although these attempts were not crowned with success, the essence remains that he made efforts to redress the balance against India through seeking a regional counterpoise.

As part of its regional balance of power strategy Sri Lanka also attempted to forge close relationships with India's rivals, such as Pakistan and China. In the context of Sino-Indian power rivalry in Asia, China appeared to Sri Lanka as a natural counterbalance to India. Under Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike Sino-Lanka relations became more extensive, cordial and purpose-oriented.

An apprehensiveness of potential danger from India continued to condition the foreign and security policy of Mrs Bandaranaike's government. Felix Bandaranaike, Parliamentary Secretary to Mrs Bandaranaike, stated in Parliament that Sri Lanka's security did not "depend merely upon goodwill towards and friendliness towards India and an assumption that we will never get into difficulties with India..."⁵⁷ Writings and pronouncements of Nehru, Panikkar, Appadorai and other leaders and opinion makers continued to be quoted in the Sri Lankan Parliament,⁵⁸ as these still contributed to Sri Lankan leaders' threat perceptions. So, from a strategic point of view, China's importance to Sri Lanka continued to be considerable. Sri Lanka further developed its trade relations with China involving rice and rubber, the island's two major import and export commodities respectively.⁵⁹

In the light of the above views and

compulsions, Mrs Bandaranaike offered her good offices to seek an end to the Sino-Indian border war that broke out in October 1962 and refused to brand China as the aggressor. Instead, she took the initiative in summoning the Colombo conference of six non-aligned nations with a view to exploring ways and means of bringing India and China to the conference table and settling the boundary dispute. The proposals which emerged from this conference, together with their clarifications, were personally explained in Peking by Mrs Bandaranaike and Subandrio of Indonesia in January 1963, and in New Delhi by her and representatives of Egypt and Ghana the same month.⁶⁰ India accepted the proposals in toto, while China did so with reservations.⁶¹ Although no concrete achievement resulted from these proposals, Mrs Bandaranaike's initiative displayed her skill in avoiding giving offence to India while not condemning China as the aggressor.

Sri Lanka's relations with China were consolidated with the signing of a Maritime Agreement on 25 July 1963 between the two countries, granting each other the MFN status. But Mrs Bandaranaike's government did not accede to the request of the Chinese counterpart that Sri Lanka should use only ships approved by China for Sino-Lankan trade.⁶² What follows from the above is that Sri Lanka's policy of building a counterpoise against India is not to be at the expense of the island's national interests, and that the counterbalancing strategy should not be made too obvious to jeopardise Colombo's friendship with New Delhi. This is the essence of the pilot fish policy.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka had common threat perceptions as far as India was concerned. Sri Lanka looked upon Pakistan, a country which had the will if not always the means to challenge India's predominance, as a countervailing force against India. That explains why during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 Sri Lanka was not sympathetic to the cause of Bangladesh; the island-nation was opposed to an eventuality of Pakistan being dismembered. Following India's ban on Pakistan's overflight of its civilian aircraft, which transported Pakistani troops in civilian disguise from Karachi to Dhaka, Sri

Lanka granted air transit facilities through Colombo to Pakistan's commercial aircraft. Such Sri Lankan posturing indeed offended Indian susceptibilities. Under such changed regional circumstances, Sino-Lanka relations acquired a more prominent role in Colombo's strategic calculus. Relations between the two countries during Mrs Bandaranaike's United Front government (1970-77), therefore, became closer than ever before, notwithstanding China's suspected complicity in the 1971 Guevarist insurrection of the JVP in Sri Lanka.⁶³

Nonalignment as Security Strategy

The nonaligned foreign policy of Sri Lanka has been another major plank of her security strategy since 1956. Although Bandaranaike's nonaligned foreign policy was not always to the liking of the West, it was generally intended to ensure security for the small state by keeping itself aloof from both power blocs. With respect to India, Sri Lanka's nonalignment also served as a diplomatic instrument which was used to avoid provoking its northern neighbour. At the same time, this policy was intended to be pursued as a security insurance, as the island's membership in the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) was conceived as a broad security umbrella. This security dimension of Sri Lanka's membership in the NAM was highlighted by Mrs Bandaranaike herself in the NAM summit at Lusaka in 1970.⁶⁴

Demilitarisation and Peace in the Indian Ocean as a Guarantee of Sri Lanka's Security

Due to its strategic location Sri Lanka has always been aware of dangers to its independence and security that may emanate from the Indian Ocean area. All the colonial invasions since the early 16th century by the then major European sea powers, such as Portugal, the Netherlands and Great Britain, came from the Indian Ocean. In addition to extra-regional powers, India, with its strategic aspirations in the Indian Ocean region, has also been a major source of concern to Sri Lanka. The British military presence on the island in the 1950s acted as a deterrent to both these perceived sources of threat. The superpower presence in the Indian Ocean since the 1960s had considerably heightened the tension in the area. Since then

demilitarising the Indian Ocean and guaranteeing peace in the area has been a major foreign and security policy objective of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's Indian Ocean policy has, therefore, been, on the one hand, to remove foreign military presence from the area, particularly its nuclear component, and to ensure, on the other, that the resultant 'power vacuum' was not filled by a regional power. While the first part of this policy objective has been conveniently shared by India, the second part went against its own Indian Ocean policy, symbolising a gap in security perceptions India and Sri Lanka.

In October 1971 the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Mrs Bandaranaike, appeared before the UN General Assembly to present the IOPZ proposal. Here she laid down for the first time what the peace zone would mean in detail.⁶⁵ When the proposal was being considered in the UN First Committee there arose differences between the positions of Sri Lanka and India. Sri Lanka's proposal was fairly comprehensive as it related as much to the naval forces of the littoral states as to the forces of the outside powers. But India was against the military presence of external powers only. Following behind-the-scene pressures from India,⁶⁶ Shirley Amerasinghe, Sri Lanka's permanent representative to the UN, accordingly had to modify his proposal "...in deference to the restrictions expressed by our critics".⁶⁷ On 16 December 1971, the General Assembly passed the resolution on the proposal of the IOZOP.⁶⁸ In the course of deliberations on this issue, India's intentions in the Indian Ocean area became crystal clear to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, therefore, eventually grew lukewarm to the implementation of its own brainchild — the IOZOP proposal. This inhibition of Sri Lanka vis-a-vis India, combined with the fact of India's emergence as more powerful as a result of the break-up of Pakistan in 1971 and the creation of Bangladesh, contributed to Colombo's softening of its attitude towards the West, particularly the USA.

Sri Lanka's fear of India became stronger when the latter went nuclear on 18 May 1974 with a successful detonation of a nuclear device at Pokhran in the Rajasthan desert. The emergence of a nuclear power from among the Indian Ocean littoral states had radically changed the strategic landscape in the Indian Ocean. Consequently, the context of the IOZOP proposal also changed after 1974, and Sri Lanka formally changed her position regarding the IOZOP vis-a-vis that of India. For example, Shirley Amerasinghe stated in the First Committee that: "We do not want any great power there. By the same token, we do not intend that we should

drive out Satan by Beelzebub and allow some other powers within the group of littoral and hinterland states to take the place of the superpowers".⁶⁹ He had also stated on 11 November 1974 that "if a new nuclear power were to emerge in the Indian Ocean region, the denuclearisation and also the demilitarisation of the area would be seriously jeopardised".⁷⁰ Because of her concerns about India's Indian Ocean policy, Sri Lanka gave her support to Pakistan's proposal in 1974 for a nuclear free zone in South Asia, and with the further mellowing of her attitude towards the West she permitted more US ships at Sri Lankan ports. Sri Lanka's Indian Ocean policy is, therefore, concerned not only with the outside powers but also with the ambition and power of India.

It is clear from the foregoing that the position of those scholars who tend to argue that India posed no threat to Sri Lanka and that S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, as opposed to his predecessors, envisaged no threat to his country from the north, is difficult to sustain. To be sure, lack of hostility and at times even surface appearance of friendship between the two countries do not seem to explain away the threat perceptions that the governments in Colombo have held vis-a-vis India. Indeed, Sri Lanka's apprehension and fear of India, caused by their asymmetry in size and power, and by the island's strategic location as well as New Delhi's political ambitions in the region of the South Asia and the Indian Ocean, has been the most fundamental preoccupation in the formulation and prosecution of Colombo government's foreign and security policy. The successive Colombo administrations had differed from each other only in the manner of expressing their threat perceptions and in devising strategies and instruments that were employed to neutralise such threats. The UNP governments were explicit about India as a source of potential threat and depended on the British military presence for Sri Lanka's security. Their successor governments professed friendship with India while maintaining as insurance links with Britain through the Commonwealth, and seeking regional counterbalance against India through regional grouping, and the cultivation of good relations with India's adversaries such as China and Pakistan.

Jayewardene Government's Non-Conformist India Policy, 1977-83

J.R. Jayewardene of the UNP became Prime Minister of Sri Lanka after a landslide victory in the general elections held in July 1977. He later on changed the

country's Constitution and became the first Executive President in 1978. There was a pronounced pro-American tilt in Sri Lanka's foreign policy following the UNP election victory in 1977. This was harping back to the policy of the UNP regimes of the late 1940s and 1950s; this time, of course, the policy being more pro-US and obviously anti-Indian. Jayewardene government's strategic centrifugality took place in circumstances that were vastly different from those prevailing during the post-independence UNP rule. The Sinhala-Tamil ethnic problem then was not at all as acute as it presented itself to be since the late 1970s. Sri Lanka, although a primary products producer subjected for its trade to the vagaries of international market, had up until 1956 a favourable balance of budget and trade. The island's performance on both counts assumed a staggeringly negative turn in the 1970s. In other words, President Jayewardene presided over the affairs of a country that had slid down to a much weaker position as an actor in the comity of nations.

Notes

55. Morning News, Colombo, 13 November 1956; Times of Ceylon, 14 November 1956; The Statesman, New Delhi, 15 November 1956.
56. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike: Speeches and Writings, Information Division, Department of Broadcasting and Information, Government of Ceylon, Colombo, 1961. pp. 419, 421, 456.
57. Ceylon: H. R. Debates, Vol. 53, 29 August 1963, Col. 1012.
58. De Souza, Ceylon: Senate Debates, Vol. 19, 23 January 1964, Col. 2373; Siriwardene, *ibid.*, Vol. 19, 21 January 1964, Cols. 2110-13.
59. See for details, F.R.D. Bandaranaike, Ceylon: H.R. Debates, Vol. 49, 7 November 1962, Col. 2112.
60. For interesting details of the mediation process see Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Anchor Books, London, 1972, pp. 459-65.
61. The Hindu, Madras, 30 January 1963 and CDN, Colombo, 16 March 1963.
62. CDN, Colombo, 20 May 1964.
63. Mrs Bandaranaike was quick to dismiss the allegation of any Chinese complicity by stating in a broadcast to the nation that foreign powers were not involved in the insurrection. CDN, Colombo, 25 April 1971; Ceylon: Senate Debates, 1972, Vol. 32, Col. 823.
64. See Press Release by the Information Ministry of Ceylon on the Lusaka Address of Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, September 1970, p. 2.
65. Ceylon Today, Vol. 20, September, October 1971, pp. 13-14; CDN, 13 October 1971.
66. Philip Towle, *Naval Power in the Indian Ocean: Threats, Bluffs and Fantasies*, The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1975, p. 57.
67. UN First Committee, 1834 Meeting, 23 November 1971.
68. Official Records of the General Assembly (GAOR), 26th Session, Supplement 29, Resolution 2832 XXVI, 16 December 1971, pp. 36-37.
69. UN General Assembly, Doc A/C. PV. 2096, November 1976, p. 36.
70. UN Doc. A/C PV. 2015, p. 12.

The non-formal sector

Kamalika Pieris

A considerable amount of critical attention has been paid to the major genres of fiction, short story and poetry written in English in Sri Lanka. Little attention has been paid to comic writing, political satire and childrens literature. These constitute in a sense the informal sector in creative English writing from Sri Lanka. However, this essay also looks at certain elements within the formal sector of novels, short stories and drama in terms of skill and orientation, and therefore, it must be admitted that the title given this essay, though catchy, does not completely indicate its contents.

Childrens' literature in Sinhala has had a prolific history of about fifty years, and much of it is good. Due to the availability of popular children's literature from abroad, the Sri Lankan writer did not turn to writing childrens literature in English. But in 1970 there appeared the 'Taprobane Readers' approved by the Educational Publications Advisory Board as supplementary readers. This series contains 'stories written for interesting and thrilling reading in language controlled to keep within the vocabulary strength and sentence patterns of the Government readers'. Despite this these stories do not appear to be dedicated to the acquisition of language skills. There is little emphasis on a graded introduction to vocabulary and sentence structure. Nor is there any proper analysis of what should constitute childrens literature in English. For example, the story of the coconut fairy and the magic coconut does not go down very well, because, apart from its derivative nature, there is no tradition of whimsy in our folk literature. What these stories do contain however, are some finely crafted tales on adult themes, which could be considered to be a part of the contemporary creative writing in English.

These stories present an interesting situation for they call for a discipline which does not confront those writing for adults. Firstly as literature for children they are obliged to revive the art of storytelling. Secondly, they have to be written in simple, clear language — a compulsory exercise in the rudiments of good writing. Thirdly, the problem of local idiom is settled even before it can rear its head. These stories are intended to introduce the child to standard English, so local patois and Ceylonisms are out.

The Taprobane readers carry several fine stories by Chitralekha. Her stories have a definite beginning, middle and end, so there is some resolution. The themes deal with the more unlovely qualities of human nature. 'The present' is about greed, 'Sena's friend' is on the loss of innocence, and the introduction to duplicity and dishonesty. 'Two friends' is about village enmity and superstition.

Chitralekha's 'Nonchi nona and Kotiya' is a brief account of the life of a firewood seller, and centers on the arrival in

her life of the kitten, 'Kotiya'. This story shows considerable empathy and sensitivity as regards the lifestyle of the rural poor. One characteristic of this life is its routine repetitive nature, with little recreation, food or money. Nonchi's life consists of gathering and selling firewood, buying food, cooking it, and sitting by the fire until it was time to go to sleep.

This story illustrates well the concern with the purchase of and consumption of relatively small amounts of food. 'Sometimes she bought a quarter of a pound of little sprats, or a piece of dried fish. Sometimes she didn't buy any fish. She bought only some keera leaves or a piece of pumpkin'. (p 14) The preparation of this simple meal is described rhythmically. Breakfast was one or two slices of bread with some sambol and hot tea drunk out of a coconut shell. (p 15) A piece of seer fish was a treat. There was to be a grand wedding lunch at Girigoris Appu's with 'good country rice and polished white rice, fish, meat and many vegetable curries, curd and honey'. These references are woven artistically into the story, helped by the fact that the kitten 'Kotiya loved to hear stories about food.' (p 15)

A simple preference for comfort and riches over poverty is indicated. Kotiya, after all Nonchi's loving care, goes away to a richer home. "I like my new name says the kitten, Kotiya," I am Tiger. It is an English name. I like you but I like the children better. (p 24) The themes of poverty and loneliness are intertwined in this story, but it could be interpreted at a higher plane too, in terms of social mobility and self advancement.

There is also the very understandable preoccupation of the working classes with the need to earn small amounts of money. This is well illustrated in Chitralekha's 'Day in the life of Siripala', which is presented as a mini-adventure story. Here she describes the efforts of a school boy to earn money to go to the cinema. He earns six rupees and fifty cents in slow stages by selling sweep tickets, running errands. He loses two fifty to a crook, and gets another seven rupees by running several more errands around Maradana. He sees his film at the Ritz and returns to his parents, father a labourer in the Colombo Hospital and the mother a keera seller at the Borella market.

In 'Vesak lanterns' Chitralekha deals again with the same theme. Piya, whose mother is a servant, needs money to make Vesak lanterns. He sells some mangoes for fifty cents and some garden produce at the pola and he collects one rupee and fifty cents. "His purse was almost full". There is a balance in this story. The mother, though a servant shows depth in dealing with Piya's problem, the Vesak decorations, whether of the poor or rich are equally admired, and the story does not forget to include a visit to the temple and a walk looking at the decorations. There is also a neat juxtaposition of English

and local words. "Piya saw mangoes, oranges and pineapples. Nobody is going to buy my gotukola, my lovis and my jambus" thought Piya sadly".

Punyakanti Wijenaike's 'The betel vine' and 'The call of the sea' could be interpreted didactically, in terms of allegories. They could be discussed in terms of social cooperation and sense of community and sharing and in the case of the 'The call of the sea' perhaps in terms of fate and fatalism. The idiom used is the anglicised idiom, in parts — 'One sunny day when the sky was a bright blue and the birds were singing in the tree tops' (p 4) but the stories have a lilt and clarity. The development of the 'Betel vine' is somewhat unusual, since Suduhamy responds to jealousy by offering friendship and the story ends with the two neighbours sharing their compounds.

The influence of journalism on post independence writing in Sinhala was decisive. The Sinhala newspapers provided space for original writing, particularly short stories and poems. The *Silumina* short story is one example. This helped to create a market for such writing. Many of the major Sinhala writers were journalists to start with, and therefore journalism has, unwittingly, contributed to style. Much of modern Sinhala writing is in excessively simple, unscholarly language, often verging on reportage. There is no parallel influence of journalism on English creative writing and much which is in fact journalistic in style, like the prose of Jean Arasanayagam, goes unrecognised as such.

In the realm of political and social satire, certain journalists writing in English merit consideration. E. M. W. Joseph, who wrote as Sooty Banda produced a 'Political Cookbook'. He coined the characters Ekmon Dirachchalanuwa, Nathaniel Gonthambili, Lady Bempi, Hyacinth de Hoot, Mabel Rastiadu and thus came the nearest to coining anything even remotely resembling 'memorable characters'. Tarzie Vitachchi who wrote as "Fly by night" is best remembered for his political commentary in the series 'Island in the Sun' which went on in the *Sunday Observer* for about 12 years. It was highly praised for the aptness of its allegorical figures such as Electric Eel, Tailor bird, Wise Old Owl. "Fly by night" made fun of the westernised classes and 'relentlessly exposed all that was phony and superficial in the social and political sphere'. He converted 'Colombo 7' from a postal address to an attitude. (1) In the 1980's Lucian Rajakarunanyake in his column 'Light refractions' in the *Island* commented humourously on the political and social scene and showed a remarkable ability to coin names using Sinhala words. Ryp van Winkle, during the run up to the August 1994 elections, started his column 'Voter, voter everywhere'.

There is a small amount of political satire in the form of black comedy. This could be considered a new genre of English creative writing. Rajive Wijesinghe, author of *Acts of faith* has commented on the use of the fantasy mode to provide expositions of third world political situations. "I would argue that the peculiar suitability of this sort of technique to exposition of third world political situations is related to the fact that political reality in the third world can often come close what one might ordinarily think of as the fantastic... Some of the more preposterous pronouncements I attributed to my president in order partly to establish a fictional character now seems to be echoed by

some of the real President's statements' (2) Attention should also be drawn to the very entertaining short pieces by Rajiva Wijesinghe, 'The climax for the Colonel' and 'The juggler' (3) In the latter story, the events are easily recognised by the contemporary reader, and the tensions and rhythms employed are successful and distinctive.

Another area where English journalism has made a distinct, if little recognised contribution is in comic writing. Mention should be made of Tarzie Vitachchi's 'Glossary of Singlish words and phrases' which included words like "Istubistekcuttis". His parodies of Shakespeare, in his weekly columns, make good reading even now, though the political observations have lost their sting. He suggested that Shakespeare was possibly 'Villiong Shakesper-r-ra' Shakesperianayagam' or 'Vilcassim Sheik Sufeer' depending on whether you were Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim. (4)

Sooty Banda merits mention for his rather unique parodies of well known English nursery rhymes and songs, using Sinhala and Tamil words. While it is not possible to equate this sort of writing with serious creative work, they do reflect a certain inventiveness and a decided ability to nativise the language, and as such should not be ignored in a survey of English writing in Sri Lanka. Two examples from Sooty Banda's *Golden Treasury of Trilingual Verse* by Mabel Rastiadu are:

Apoi bung Danny, the pipes
the pipes are calling
From glen to glen and down the
pallamay
When Greesmays's gone and ellaing
kola are falling
It's you, it's you must po and
mung inding gamay

Sanda-ras and roses
bring puduma kalpana of you,
Mage hitha reposes
In lassana adahas so true
June-eli discloses
Loves naaki dreams sparkling pudhu
Nilavu and rose-mal
bring ninavivu of you (5)

Sooty Banda also coined original limericks with local colour. Reggie Siriwardene comments "In his trilingual verse Sooty set off against the poetic diction, formal or romantic, of the English anthology pieces the familiar earthy flavour of the Sinhala and Tamil phrases he domiciled within them, the shock of this collision, sharpened by his unfailing resourcefulness in finding unexpected rhymes across the language barriers is an endless source of surprise and delight as in this immortal couplet:

Golden lads and girls all mus'
As thotakaren come to pus." (6)

It should also be noted in passing that the original compositions in English songs now contain items like "Pretty foxy hen". Therefore the "pop song" genre may be worth watching in time to come.

Generic Drugs ?

The World Health Organization recommends that people should be kept informed about the facts on medication and provided with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from the inappropriate use of drugs.

Public education in drug use will increasingly become a part of mass education via the mass media. The knowledge and skills thus acquired will still not provide adequate protection to the public if the items in doctor's prescriptions are effectively disguised by various brand names and promoted for indications which have not been fully validated.

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BOOKS

India-Sri Lanka Consultation on Devolution, Papers by Ramakrishna Hedge, Ashok Mitra, A.G. Noorani, Nirmal Mukarji, Colombo, I.C.E.S., 1995, 49p. Rs. 50.00

Towards Effective Devolution, Text by G.L. Peiris, Colombo, I.C.E.S., 1995, 8p. Rs. 50.00

Federalism and Nationalism: The Future Status of Quebec, Paper by Charles Taylor, Colombo, I.C.E.S., 1995, 12p. Rs. 50.00

Decentralisation and The Accommodation of Ethnic Diversity, Paper by Yash Ghai, Colombo, I.C.E.S., 1995, 62p. Rs. 50.00

Review by Martha McDougall, Montreal, Summer Intern in Sri Lanka

In a Series of four monographs, the International Centre for Ethnic Studies has published lectures and work it organized this year on international comparative federalism. Of interest to all pluralistic societies, the stated objectives of the series are "to examine the distinguishing characteristics of ethnically based federalism, the utility of the federal device in managing ethnic tensions and the new challenges and demands faced by federal forms of devolution in plural societies".

The subject of two monographs, "India-Sri Lanka Consultation on Devolution" and "Towards Effective Devolution" is, as their titles indicate, decentralisation in both India and Sri Lanka. The first of the two works, transcribed from lectures given at a conference by the same name, has as its theme how Sri Lanka can learn from India. Yet, as the reader soon realizes, the lessons from India are mainly about what not to do to secure a successful federation. For example in India, the central government largely controls — despite an original intent to the contrary — the various state governors, and Indian states often find themselves penniless because of a constitutional provision that does not allow them to borrow from the market if they owe money to the centre. The end result of these and other arrangements (what some would call the 'corruption' of the original Indian federation) is the now widespread disillusionment with government in India at all levels. In one lecture, N. Mukarji poignantly describes this turn for the worse in Indian politics: first how the Indian states turned against the central government as the centre gradually

assumed more control; then how in turn the largely defunct states displaced local government; all of which caused an ever-widening gap between the ethnic communities, the people and government; with the result that all relations between government and governed are distant and rife with misunderstanding and conflict. This is, one realizes, how the ruin of federalism also affects democracy.

The second monograph, a transcription of the inaugural address given by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Mr. Peiris, to the above conference, is reproduced in English, Sinhala and Tamil. Peiris initially reminds us that the Sri Lankan constitution, a relic from English colonial times, is not able to handle the conflicts that have arisen between ethnic communities in this country. Undoubtedly thinking about the failure of the Thirteenth Amendment, the Minister cautions that future attempts to devolve powers in Sri Lanka must be sincere, clear, cohesive, and enforceable. He adds that future provisions must also include a conflict-resolution mechanism to settle the inevitable frictions in devolved states.

Charles Taylor, a highly renowned Canadian scholar, is the lecturer of another monograph, "Federalism and Nationalism: The Future Status of Quebec". He explains that after emerging from a 'defensive' or inward-looking form of nationalism — bent on the preservation of French culture, particularly the Catholic faith — Quebec in the 1960s developed a modern form of nationalism, what Taylor refers to as a 'citizen' nationalism. Taylor's choice

of terminology is a reference to this nationalism's strong link with popular sovereignty, a modern conception of government. According to Taylor, 'citizen' nationalism parallels many other forms of nationalism based on ethnicity worldwide.

Analyzing the future of Quebec, Taylor formulates the major questions that now face both Quebec and Canada: first, can Quebec find a heightened sense of identification within Canada which is so essential to modern nationalists? Or, must it go its own way by separating from Canada to do so? Secondly, can Canada respond in time to this need for a 'Quebecois' identity, especially now that many Canadians have hardened their attitudes to Quebec and want only to tackle other matters, most notably multiculturalism and aboriginal rights?

By far the longest of the four monographs, Yash Ghai's work, "Decentralization and the Accommodation of Ethnic Diversity" is about the many forms of federalism in the world. Although admittedly very difficult to generalize about these constitutional arrangements (which are intimately tied to the unique history of each federation), Ghai very ably extracts the obtainable lessons of federalism. His study encompasses the topics federalism in communist and developing countries, 'enclaves' or lands reserved for native Indians, 'special status' for regions of particular countries, corporate and spatial decentralization, and legal pluralism or systems of personal laws. By way of a tentative generalization, Ghai risks the idea that federalism does in fact diffuse conflict. But he

circumscribes his statement: for instance, corporate decentralization may indeed create antagonisms, particularly if vetoes are involved; spatial decentralization can cause the problem of minorities within minorities; and, more generally federations cannot always accommodate extreme differences, particularly those between groups with very different beliefs and practices.

Ghai ends his work on a topical note for Sri Lanka: decentralization and secession. Even though he says that the threat of secession is greater in federations that are formed by 'disaggregation' (ie. mainly unitary states that grant federal constitutions after being pressured to do so), he responds to the fears expressed in this country by saying that secession usually results from a failure to implement federal

arrangements than the result of institutions that allow for decentralization.

Together these four monographs present a very thorough study of comparative international federalism. Here the reader will find both the strengths and weaknesses of devolution. Highly realistic, this series is a valuable contribution to a topic of heightened interest to Sri Lankans today.

***Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order* by Donald M. Snow. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993)**

This study, by one of America's leading scholars on United States strategic weapons doctrine, examines the nature of Third World conflict in the post Cold War era and the possible responses to them by the First World, now led by the United States. Snow argues that, with the removal of the Cold War overlay from much of the Third World, the developed countries will face many complexities in dealing with conflict within and among Third World nations. The nature of conflict in the future will not be simple, for as recent events demonstrate, the restraining effect that the Soviet Union and the United States once imposed on much of this region no longer exists, making it possible for the likes of Saddam Hussein to invade a neighbor, and for irredentist movements, spurred by the reemergence of nationalism, to take up arms in defense of their disparate causes. According to Snow, the United States' high-tech military, which has been preparing to fight a conventional war in Europe, will be woefully ill-equipped to meet the new challenges. Snow identifies the emerging trends in the pattern of conflict in the Third World and suggests possible responses, especially by the US military.

Snow argues that nuclear parity between the superpowers made world war impossible, but conventional wars were fought between East and West in the Third World for ideological reasons and strategic interests, the nature of the struggle exemplified by the Nixon and Brezhnev doctrines. This struggle imposed a heavy economic burden on the Soviet Union

while the West enjoyed tremendous economic and technological advances through the 1980s, making fundamental reforms of the communist system inevitable and necessitating a normalization of East-West relations. Gorbachev's *perestroika* resulted in the breakup of the Soviet Union, economic paralysis, and national demoralization, leaving the United States the undisputed superpower upon the world's stage.

The Third World, by and large, is characterized by political instability and economic deprivation, both features being highly conducive to producing conflict. Many of the problems, as Snow correctly points out, are vestiges of the colonial experience. The colonial powers disregarded indigenous cultures, imposing alien ways at the expense of traditional norms. This resulted in the drastic alteration of the structure and makeup of these societies. Thus, many of the states that gained independence were governed by a small, elite class, which often struggled to establish its legitimacy. Needless to say, those who opposed this arrangement found a powerful new religion in Marxist doctrine and a ready ally in the Soviet Union who supplied the weapons and training for carrying out revolution, which often first emerged as disorganized insurgencies.

Here is the crux of this study! The insurgent warfare that was practiced by the various "national liberation movements" will persist even without their sponsors. Snow points out that, while armed movements in the Third World do

not pose a great threat to the national interests of the United States (now that there is no Cold War), transnational problems such as environmental degradation, narcotics trafficking, and terrorism will move to the fore.

Snow dwells on "low intensity conflict" and insurgency, which he dubs "the poor man's warfare", because he seems to feel that counterinsurgency is the "Achilles heel" of the US military. Despite the revolutionary war, which was fought in the classic insurgent style, the US army's psyche seems to have been shaped by the American Civil War and the two World Wars, and it displays a "big battle" mentality. According to Snow, even the US government has not shown much resolve in trying to redress this disparity. The proper course would be to launch a concerted effort by government and the military to build up special forces for counterinsurgency and peacekeeping and promote greater coordination between intelligence organizations, government agencies, and the military. "Ad hocism", as Snow terms current US policy, will not yield public support. The Persian Gulf region afforded the perfect situation to carry out classic US-style warfare, a situation akin to one that the Western militaries had trained for vis-a-vis the USSR, and the danger is that the military might have to face entirely different circumstances in the future.

Counterinsurgency is a difficult task which requires a specialized approach. Insurgency is founded on the principles

set out by Sun Tzu and Mao Tse-Tung and practiced by General Giap in Vietnam which was to "win the hearts and minds" of the people, who ultimately are the support base for carrying out an insurgency. Snow attacks the "brushfire" approach, which is the use of heavy force to quell an insurgency in its latter stages, as inadequate for effectively dealing with the problem, and he advocates an early intervention approach that aims at tackling the underlying issues. To put it in the language of the Vietnam war era, "grabbing by the balls" (President Johnson's retort when confronted with the notion of "winning hearts and minds") is no guarantee that the hearts and minds will follow. It is acknowledged that the intractable nature of some of the enduring problems in the Third World pose significant challenges, but many persist for the want of trying.

In addition to the counterinsurgency problem, perhaps the more serious destabilizing trend, represented by the Iraqi assertion of dominance in the Persian Gulf, itself a result of the ebb of Soviet influence from the region, is the emergence of regional hegemony. Snow identifies Iran, China, India, Pakistan, Brazil, and Argentina as aspirants to regional hegemony status. All of these powers possess Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical weapons (NBC) and missile capability. Non proliferation of nuclear technology will pose a serious problem, and Snow seems to place much faith in the GPALS program, which is the development of a smaller scale SDI for defending against a missile attack, and this system would presumably be made available to any country that feared such an attack. Nevertheless, Snow proposes the nurturing of regional balances of power, overseen by the United Nations. The US will play a major part in the enforcement because of its ability to project power. If the US earnestly will in the absence of a threat to a vital interest such as oil, still remains to be seen. However, all is not gloomy in the Third World. The trend seems to be democratization and economic liberalization, which according to Snow, "may help to alleviate some incipient Third World ills", but he does not seem to be overly optimistic (197).

This study is an excellent analysis of the crises that plague the Third World. Snow masterfully delves into both the low and high politics of this region, elucidating the roots of the problems and offering possible solutions. It is correctly pointed out that the West has, for too long, approached the multicultural Third World solipsistically. The summation of one Vietnam vet, of his experience as, "we were there to help but the Vietnamese are so stupid they can't understand that a great people want to help a weak people", succinctly encapsulates the frustration caused by the interaction of alien cultures (93). This, together with Sir Robert Thompson's statement, "reliance on a military solution will always fail particularly when sought by foreign troops", proves to be enduring when placed in the context of US intervention in Somalia, not to mention the possibility of a dangerous situation in the case of rushing foreign troops into Bosnia. The Somali and Bosnian crises give great credence to Snow's argument for early intervention aimed at solving the underlying problems. His discussion on the *Sendero Luminoso* clearly illustrates this point. Perhaps Snow would have done

well to have mentioned the Tamil separatist crisis in Sri Lanka as an example of a "neglected cancer" that threatens to severely destabilize that region. Further, this study would have greatly benefitted by a more comprehensive discussion on Third World attitudes toward the First, especially on the ongoing debate about the West's human rights crusade which many Third World nations regard as hypocritical and imperialistic. Further, must we not also assign blame on the bigoted way in which many Third World nations were goaded into towing one line or the other in the superpower competition, making it impossible to follow nation-building strategies compatible with their national and cultural experience? Much of the instability in many of the African, Asian, and Latin American states can surely be attributed to this factor. Clearly, there needs to be more understanding by all parties, and the end of the Cold War, it is hoped, will finally facilitate it. Hopefully, Third World leaders will learn to follow the Japanese path for earning respect and dignity — competition in the world market, not on the battlefield — there is a lesson here for the aid-giving First World as well — more butter, less guns!

Waiting — 10

Hakkgala

*Each bloom
Brings pain in its own colour
This searing blue
May be if you were here
I would have asked you
Name its pure, unsullied shade,
Name the flowers too?
Lover's term or botanical, you would have teased.*

*What then was fun brings now sharp pain
Mocking the slanting sun and passing light
On this blue, then others, soft cream to saffron bright
Shy pink, bold candy, mauve and a chaste off-white.*

*Now this consolation makes me calm
That, as a chaste goddess from a happy Realm
At cypress dusk and secret afterglow
You tend these blooms for the Maitri Bosattan.*

U. Karunatilake



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There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

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