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# 3 ANNIVERSARIES AND A CRISIS

Mervyn de Silva

J. R. AT 90

**I**f one accepts Ralph Waldo Emerson's rather romantic view that "there is properly no history, only biography" it is quite clear that the historian of post - independence Sri Lankan politics must concentrate on the career of Junius Richard Jayawardene. Neither D. S. Senanayake, the "Father of the Nation" nor S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, hero of the 1956 "Cultural Revolution" made such a lasting impression on the national political process nor introduced changes in the economic structure which are irreversible. In short, the Executive Presidency and the 'free market' or open economy. But the biographer must ask himself whether Junius Richard, introduced as "Junius the Genius" by a Sunday columnist, is a student of Machiavelli or Kautilya. Though some of his manoeuvres suggest a fine Italian hand, he is more the oriental despot with a clear conscience. As he told this writer, he is sound asleep a few minutes after he goes to bed.

But watching him the other day at BRAEMAR, Ward Place, on his 90th birthday, I noticed he paid special attention to a group of Buddhist nuns from a provincial monastery in Japan. The reason is quite well known. At the historic San Francisco conference of 1951, Mr. Jayawardene, then Minister of Finance, relied on Buddhist scriptures to reinforce his appeal on Japan's behalf: 'hatred will not end by hatred but by compassion'. On behalf of his country, Sri Lanka, he waived reparations for the damage caused by Japanese air raids.

But Jayawardene's approach was by no means personal. "My leader shared this view", he is quick to point out. The reference of course is to Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake. While Jayawardene was addressing the San Francisco conference, Mr. D. S. Senanayake was telling a B. B. C. interviewer in London (1951) that Ceylon would follow a "middle way". He cited Buddhist scriptures to explain Ceylon's neutral stance in what Walter Lippman called "the Cold War".

But it is the "Japanese connection" rather than the British (or the American) which has influenced Jayawardene's attitudes, in a manner not very different from Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's "special relationship" with the Peoples Republic of China.

The most self-assured leader we have produced, J. R. 's confidence rests partially on the certain knowledge that no politician will freely surrender the enormous power that the Executive Presidency represents. To make his point he calls for a copy of the "Policy Statement" by Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in Parliament on Jan. 6, 1995: "My government is committed to the abolition of the Executive Presidency as the centerpiece of Sri Lanka's constitutional system and its replacement by a Parliamentary and Cabinet system of government".

What else is irreversible? The former President does not need to borrow the three memorable words which decorated Candidate Bill Clinton's 'War Room': "The Economy, Stupid". Yet J. R. 's response can be equally brusque. No Sri Lankan leader will be

# CARNAGE IN LITTLE ROME : DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION UNDER THE GUN

By our Political Desk

**F**or those whose only creed is violence and only motivation is power, there is no day that is too sacred and no place too holy. The JVP began its campaign of terror by murdering the leader of the Independent Students Union of the University of Colombo, Daya Pathirana, on Unduvap poya day in 1986. In the last few days the country witnessed the commencement (or perhaps more correctly, intensification) of another terror campaign which violated the sanctity of two holy places: first the attack on St. Mary's church, Negombo and the threatening of the priest and nuns in an attempt to disrupt the UNP's golden jubilee celebrations; second, the carnage near the Negombo base hospital which resulted in the death of 5 unarmed people and riddled with bullets the glass panel enclosing the statue of St. Sebastian.

Then the perpetrators of this violent anti- UNP campaign took another step in the well worn path charted by the JVP during the dark days of '87 - '89 i. e. they forbade the families to honour the dead. Consequently the funeral of one of the victims, trade unionist and UNP Vice Chairman of the Katunayake - Seeduwa town council, Silvan J. Perera was held in Colombo on Sunday, 22nd September.

Since Friday the death toll has risen to 7 - the latest victim being Charles de William, 67 year old UNP Katana Pradehiya Sabha member and a father of five, who was shot point blank range by a lone gunman on a motor cycle.

## A Political Culture of Sadism

These assassinations are only the latest incidents in a campaign of violence which targets UNP members. The most gruesome of these killings took place on Aug 14th '96 at Yakwila, Paragammuna. The victim was a 24 year old UNP member, L. M. Padmasiri Shantha. He was attacked with a spade and a katty, his skull was split open and wine spirit poured into the wound; when the dying man asked for a drop of water, the assassins put sand in his mouth. His crime - refusal to put up in his house, the PA's second anniversary 'skull' poster, condemning the 'UNP terror'! The assassins then refused to allow the family to bury the murdered man in the public cemetery. This psychopathic act was followed by another murder - this time closer to Colombo. A UNP candidate at the Piliyandala Cooperative Society election was shot and killed, allegedly on the orders of a well known young PA politico in the area.

What is perhaps only a little less appalling, in a moral sense, than these brutal attacks on unarmed members of a democratic political party, is the UNP's lackadaisical response to this campaign of murder directed at its elected members and activists. Apart from a few lukewarm statements, the UNP has done nothing either to protect the lives of its embattled party men or to resist this



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stupid enough to return to the S. L. F. P.'s "socialism", he told this writer.

J.R.J. was exceedingly unlucky. His leader was several years younger. Besides "Dudley was my friend", he would remind his audience. And D. S. doubtless made sure that the son took to politics.....Robert Senanayake's business was Big Business.....and would someday lead the party he founded. In South Asian politics, family first. Thus the region's many dynasties from Nehru to Indira Gandhi and Rajiv; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir and of course the Senanayakes and Bandaranaiques .....and right now, in Bangladesh, the political culture must accommodate the ladies' taste for power.

#### UNP at 50

At 50, the U.N.P. seems to recognise the dynastic idea, but prefers to place youth before family. Ranil Wickremasinghe, the son of a newspaper magnate and the grandson of the illustrious founder of the Lake House press, an institution well known in the sub-continent, is a lawyer. He is trying to retain the party's mass base but adapt it to the values and tastes of a new generation.....the children of "the open economy". Cash, not cooperative store coupons. The direct outcome of the market economics, introduced by his uncle J. R. Jayawardene is not merely accepted but welcomed by an educated young electorate.

#### The SLFP at 45

Five years younger than the U. N. P., its traditional opponent, the S. L. F. P., alas, is in serious trouble, largely because it looks tired, confused, introspective and compulsively self-destructive. Why?

First, broken promises. To contain inflation, partly by cutting defence spending after a negotiated resolution of the 13 year ethnic conflict; in short, the 'peace dividend'. Far from peace, we have watched Mullaitivu, a military defeat that claimed more lives than any battle since the end of the last war! The army needs at least another 100 million dollars, says a P. A. minister.

"The public sector can provide a comprehensive social safety net. This is embodied in the Government's Samurdhi Program, which will consolidate and target existing welfare and poverty alleviation programmes to those in genuine need...." President Chandrika Kumaratunga told Parliament in Jan. last year.

The P.A. has certainly "targetted" the existing welfare poverty alleviation programs when it should have targetted the L. T. T. E.

"We set in motion some carefully structured negotiations with the L. T. T. E....." said the President speaking on the 96th birth anniversary of her father, the revered S. W. R. D.

An end to the war and relief for the wage-earner and the lower-middle class were Candidate Kumaratunga's most powerful rallying cries. Betrayed, the loyal S. L. F. P. voter retreats into a sullen silence; the lower middle and middle - class trade unions search for a credible cause to strike; the S. L. F. P.'s leftwing allies and perhaps the party's own populist reformists pray for an issue on which they can say farewell to the P. A. and retreat, preserving the last traces of self-respect and honour. (The trouble is so do the Rightwing DUNF..... and the PA's Tamil allies!)

But the Sri Kotha leadership, cunning as ever, is in no particular hurry to push the P. A. over the edge. And it is this which makes the mounting crisis so disturbing.

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tide of lethal violence. It must be emphatically recalled that if democratic political parties took a consistently firm stand vis-a-vis the JVP after the murder of Daya Pathirana, the subsequent killings, including the assassination of Vijaya Kumaratunga, could have been prevented. The UNP's no - show will only embolden its enemies into escalating it's (one sided) war.

There are two points of importance which should be borne in mind. Firstly, these killings are not the result of PA - UNP 'clashes' as some newspapers reported. They are cold blooded serial killings perpetrated on unarmed activists of the country's largest democratic political party - and one which has deliberately refrained from taking a strident anti - govt. stand during its two years in the opposition. Secondly these murders are not taking place in the context of an election campaign or an anti - state rebellion or its immediate aftermath. They are taking place during a period of normalcy. If this is how power - wielders resolve their political differences with the opposition during a time of normalcy, it doesn't need much imagination to figure out how they will treat their democratic political opponents during a keenly fought election campaign.

What we are witnessing today is the true Latin/Central Americanisation, of Lankan politics. Violence has always been an integral part of Sri Lankan politics, particularly from 1970 onwards.

But except during the two insurgencies of '71 and '87 - '89 (and their immediate aftermath; the war in the North East, and one incident during the Mahara by - election in 1983, this violence was almost always non lethal and hardly ever involved firearms, let alone automatic weapons. This new terror campaign, replete with automatic weapon and handgrenade ambushes, therefore is qualitatively different from the political violence Sri Lanka witnessed in its turbulent and often bloody past. And the violence is no longer peripheral; it is creeping towards the centre and it will not be long before UNP's, trade union activists and prominent dissidents are assassinated in broad daylight, in the capital city itself. What has to be understood is that if this campaign of violence is allowed to continue

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THE IDEAS MAGAZINE



**I**t is a four letter word most detested by Indian strategic experts. Mention the word, and their nationalistic, moralistic, spiritualistic passions hit the roof. The CTBT (Or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), a word that united the Indian left and the Indian right; the communists and the communalists. And look at the irony, this is an issue which unites India with Pakistan at the United Nations! Pakistan too, like India has refused to sign the draft CTBT.

If there is an issue which brings all political parties together, from the leftist CPI (M) to centrist parties like the United Front or the Congress (I), to the radical BJP, it is the nuclear bomb. If China can have a few bombs, why shouldn't we, they say. They almost appear to sing in a chorus: 'We must have our nukes.'

Even among the Indian elite, who make or shape the country's defence policies, there is almost a complete consensus, that India should not sign the CTBT. Successful veto of the treaty at Geneva has injected in them a sense of pride that they can make the 'haves' realise that there are the 'have nots' who must have their nukes too, including the 'micro' and 'mini' nukes-with or without sophisticated testing.

'We shouldn't give up our 'option' to have nuclear weapons. Never. This is the sentiment that unites the over 900 million Indians today' Arr..well...If not all the 900 million people, at least the few million who matter.

What will we do with this 'option'? Have it for break fast? Use it as 'dressing' for our conventional arms salad? Nobody is quite clear about it. For 22 years, India has been having this 'option'. The 'option' has begun to get stale. After its underground nuclear explosion for 'peaceful purposes' in 1974 India has not felt the need for exercising this 'option' again. Indian policy makers fully realise that India is better off without using it; it is indeed much safer for Indian and South Asian security if India does not have a nuke.

But Indians feel good and perhaps even secure, with the 'option' in the South Block locker in New Delhi, and therefore, they say India should not sign the CTBT. Their argument is weak. For India, even after signing the treaty, can exercise its nuclear option by invoking the withdrawal clause of the CTBT which allows any country to withdraw from the treaty if it is faced with issues paramount to its national interests.

# May I have my nukes please?

**Neeraj Kaushal**

(Senior Editor, Economic Times, New Delhi)

Indian defence hawks, of course, give several other reasons for hating the CTBT. One, they argue that it is not an equal treaty. Which is true. It lays down a different set of rules for the 'nuclear haves' and a different set of rules for the 'have nots'. But it is a very unequal world. And no sensitive international agreement is equal. The CTBT, if passed, will ban nuclear explosion for testing. With underwater testing and testing in the air already banned, this will be a significant step towards banning nuclear explosion completely. Of course, this does leave out nuclear testing on computers.

Two, India would like the nuclear powers of the world to announce a time bound nuclear disarmament programme, which the latter are not inclined towards.

Most Indians disregard the view that the CTBT is an important step towards nuclear disarmament. Indian defence hawks would rather have a completely civilised world. Alternatively, they accept a world which is full of rogues, each making plans to destroy the other completely. Indian strategic experts would wish to sign the CTBT only to violate its provisions to make new generations of nuclear weapons, when they can do it without signing the treaty.

The stand taken by India's cold war ideologues and defence hawks has caught the nation's imagination. There is almost a feeling of exultation among most Indians that their country has taken on the western weapon states which are forcing on the nuclear 'have nots', a very unequal treaty.

The nuclear debate makes one wonder what happens to India's pledge towards nuclear disarmament. What about the fact that India was the chief architect of the CTBT not only in 1950 but even in 1990? India's nuclear hypocrisy may ruin the chances of another small step towards the world's nuclear disarmament.

Having blocked the treaty at Geneva, India has three options at the United Nations General Assembly where the issue has now come up. One, the great option of not doing anything at all. After having blocked the treaty at Geneva, just sit idle.

Two, to see if the P-5 are willing to negotiate 'entry into force' clause of the CTBT. Approval of P-5 (five nuclear powers - the US, France, China, Russia and the UK) and the T-3 (countries with the capability to make nukes - India, Pakistan and Israel), is necessary if the treaty is to come into force. So the treaty is at the mercy of the EIF clause. If India can talk the P-5 out of this clause, the CTBT will come into force without India becoming a party to it.

The third option before India is to join with like minded countries to work for an alternative CTBT mostly with non-aligned countries. Indian ambassador at Geneva, Arundhati Ghose did give such a hint to work for an alternate CTBT last week. However, it did not seem that she was very serious. Indeed, there is no possibility of such a treaty being accepted by the P-5.

So it will be good for India to use the second option. External affairs minister, I. K. Gujral recently said that India is willing to negotiate the treaty. Indeed, P-5 should have negotiated the treaty with India, as it did with China before the draft CTBT was made. This would have given India the importance that it wants.

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unhindered, before long the victims can very well include top leaders of the UNP and any prominent independent personality who opposes the politically powerful. The killing of Murtaza Bhutto in Pakistan is a grim pointer.

## **Salami Tactics ?**

Let the following statement contained in a hitherto uncontradicted report in the wide circulation mainstream 'Lankadeepa', made by none other than President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge at a public meeting in Patalagedara, serve as an eye opener to all those who are still unwilling or unable to understand the significance of this new phenomenon of lethal ambushes of unarmed democratic political opponents: ".....truly, if there were guns available at that moment, not just shooting but even slicing up would have been all right. Our people are not cowards; and the people of Attanagalla know whether I am a coward or not" (Lankadeepa - 17.9.96)



# A 1000 Frontlines

Indra de Soysa

PhD Research Intern, The United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan

**D**uring the bleakest hours of World War I, when German forces had broken through Allied lines and were within a few miles of Paris, the commander of French forces, Ferdinand Foch, repeated those immortal words of Alphonse Karr — "plus a change, plus c'est la même chose". This adage, "a more a thing changes, the more it remains the same", is quite simply the only way in which to describe what is currently going on in Sri Lanka. The military and political implications alluded to by Foch are not lost on the Sri Lankan situation either. The election of the Kumaratunga government and the Peoples' Alliance coalition was expected to bring about change for the better. The Alliance's promise of peace, bread, and fair government offered the voters an alternative to the abhorrent UNP government. Today it is quite apparent that not much of the grand promises, both in terms of politics and the war, are going to materialize before the end of the P A's term — "a more a thing changes the more it remains the same".

If people were skeptical about the sudden materialization of peace and bread, many expected that at least fair and just government would characterize the new era. After all, the UNP was narrowly defeated primarily because the people wanted to do away with political thuggery, blatant corruption, state violations of individual civil liberties, and the seemingly pointless loss of life in the North. Moreover, despite the great euphoria that peace, and hence peace dividend in the form of "bread", would become a reality, we have seen in the past few months what has perhaps been the bloodiest period in Sri Lankan history, and the costs keep mounting. The great "battle for Jaffna" that elicited such optimistic statements from the Deputy Minister of Defense, Anurudda Ratwatte, that the war would be over by the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, have proved to be fallacious.

Soldiers and civilians are continuing to die, while enormous resources are being expended pointlessly. Events following the great conventional victories on the battle front such as the Mullaitivu debacle prove adequately that the "battle for Jaffna" was nothing more than Pyrrhic victory. I hate people that say "I told you so", but is it time once again to point out fatuous policies and suggest alternatives.

## Post - heroic Warfare

I had suggested earlier, in two successive articles in the *Lanka Guardian*, that the best option for the government was to follow a strategy of "low intensity containment". I outlined the strategy by focusing on the difficulties of fighting a guerrilla war against the Tigers. I argued that guerrilla wars cannot be "won" unless the government attacks the center of gravity of the Tigers which lies mainly in the "hearts and minds" of the populace — big battles are merely ground clearing operations that do not prevent the weeds from growing again. I had warned that after much expense, we would find ourselves at square one again. The big battle mentality against guerillas has a logic of its own, and these kinds of confrontations lead invariably to wars of attrition that have their own logic, leading to costly stalemates. Today such conflicts are beginning to be identified as "unending wars" (Richard Haas, 1993), wars that have degenerated into apolitical warfare where killing innocents becomes the aim. They quintessentially characterize the conflicts of what has been called the era of "post-heroic warfare". The fighting itself becomes divorced from political objectives — a point at which we are in the war in the North. In general, the PA's mistakes may be conceptualized as stemming from asymmetries between tactics and "grand strategy".

In fairness to this government, it is quite

evident that blatant corruption and the abuse of individual civil liberties that the UNP government was guilty of are no longer a factor in politics. Except for the Sri Lankan politicians' penchant for being hyper-sensitive to press criticism, and thus resorting to the most extreme measures to muzzle the press without giving irresponsible reporting the attention it deserves, the P A can harp on its relatively clean approach to politics. In fact, the President's speeches are thoroughly boastful of this distinction; however, this is a distinction that, given time, will be inconsequential to the voters at the next election. Moreover, despite this government's boasts, the resolve of cleaning up politics rings hollow because no one has been brought to justice for the crimes of the past era, nor much done to prevent the subversion of civil rights in the future. Who else but a new government is responsible for policing the actions of its predecessor? The voters, after all, can only pass judgment by getting the "rascals" out, after which it is the duty of a new government to see that justice is meted out. Instead, what we have seen in thorough disregard for these concerns, sanctioning political thuggery and the flaunting of the land. Things have changed but remain the same.

The crux of the problem for the country and the P A, however, is ending the war and reaping the peace dividend. Addressing this problem is at the very foundation of the P A's "grand strategy", or for that matter, should be of any successive government. The events of the past half year, however, show an asymmetry between the grand strategy of bringing about peace and the tactics employed by the government for achieving this end. In order to understand the fatuousness of the government's tactics in the war, one must analyze the so called victories in the battle front in terms of cost-benefit calculations. First, it



is abundantly clear now that the decision to launch an attack on the Tiger strong-hold was purely a political one (Air Vice Marshall Harry Goonetilleke, *Weekend Express*, July 27, 1996). Having had the olive branch rejected by the Tigers, the government felt that it had to "do something" to save face and convey the sentiment to the public at large that it was sincere about peace — if politics has failed then surely the only option must be a military one. In US military parlance, this political phenomenon is aptly named the "do something syndrome" which allowed the US military to get involved in places of little strategic significance in the US government's crusade against the communists, incurring great cost (such as in Vietnam) for very little gain. In Sri Lankan terms the political exigency is created by the highly popular sentiment expressed in Sinhalese as "iwarakaralla danna". On the political front, the P A has gained many points by ostensibly liberating Jaffna, a rather hollow claim in light of the larger picture, and these gains will prove to be inconsequential come election time. What will be the judge of the matter ultimately is "what gains at what cost?" I point out again the difficulties of "finishing off" the war militarily.

### Hostile Will, Hostile Ability

In conventional wars, where two nations represented by their armed forces fight, one or more conventional battles could decide the issue. However, any one battle is not necessarily decisive. If that was the case the "Schlieffen Plan" would have been a success for the Germans in W. W. I and the Japanese would have been victorious after "Pearl Harbor" during W. W. II. Thus, battles that decide conventional wars are only "straws that break the camel's back" because already the losing side is losing. What, however, defines loss? In purely military parlance, one side gives up because its "hostile will", or the will to carry on fighting, is eroded as a result of eroding "hostile ability" — the gradual erosion of the means to carry on the fight. For those who decided to make peace or surrender, the costs of continuing now outweigh any benefits they expect to gain, especially given the slim likelihood of success. Peace-feelers in terms of a compromise solution are after all attempts at bargaining for the best deal — they are attempts at gaining the most favorable outcome despite loss on the battle field.

Thus, one side gives up because its hostile will is destroyed as a result of its inability to harness the means to carry on the fight. In the current crisis in Chechnya, the Russians have been unable thus far to affect the hostile ability, and therefore, the hostile will of the Chechens — the Russian willingness to compromise is an example of cutting losses and avoiding the worst possible outcome — outright Chechen secession, or a costly protracted conflict. All this, however, is only relevant when thinking about conventional wars in the sense of two armies meeting on the battle field and fighting to decide the ultimate fate of one or more political issues. In a conventional sense thus, affecting your enemy's hostile ability and hostile will is merely a matter of inflicting intolerable pain on your enemy. **When the**

**The center of gravity of guerrilla movements is located primarily within three sources; in sources of funding, or off shore, remote war machines (ORWMs), the guerrilla leadership, and among the population within which it operates and depends on for recruits.**

**level of pain you inflict on your enemy exceeds his pain tolerance level, then one might expect hostile will to give way.** The classic recent example of this principle in action was the Iraqi desire for peace after the relentless bombing they suffered at the hands of UN forces during Gulf War II. It becomes clear thus that in conventional wars, the side that is able to inflict the most pain is likely to win — the UN (thanks to the US's Cold War hardened forces) was clearly able to bring to bear more pain more effectively on the Iraqis than the other way around.

Bringing to bear more firepower on ones enemy is purely a matter of who commands the most "goods". Thus began strategic bombing as an important feature of modern warfare where the objective is to deny the enemy its ability to bring more "goods" to the battle field. Militarily, therefore, conventional battles are won by the side that commands the most firepower. Battles for Jaffna will

always be won by the government's forces so long as it commands more men and materiel. In military parlance, firepower destroys the "center of gravity" of the enemy — the center of gravity in conventional wars thus is tied to its ability to carry on, i.e. run factories, produce war goods, supply population, maintain morale etc. All of this, however, has very little bearing on the war in the North because by its very nature it is not a conventional war. This is not two nations with distinct borders fighting each other where one or both sides can sue for peace and retreat to their own sides after hostilities have ended. The situation here will merely seesaw between conventional confrontation and guerrilla war. The Tigers can only amass in strongholds or disperse into the jungles, which brings me to an analysis of guerrilla warfare, which is where we are after the battle for Jaffna. **Dislodging strongholds, however, is not the same as attacking the center of gravity of an enemy such as in conventional wars outlined above.**

In guerrilla warfare, affecting the "hostile ability", and thus the "hostile will", of the guerrilla movements requires a completely different approach in a military sense. "Guerrilla", meaning "little war" in French, is warfare on the cheap. It is a strategy that is adopted by the weak. Therefore, from the outset one knows who controls more "goods". Governments will always carry more firepower into battle — in a conventional sense, thus, the outcome of the conflicts is clearly evident. Governments will always win battles (When told by an American general that the US had never lost a battle during the war, one North Vietnamese counterpart is supposed to have retorted, "that is true but also inconsequential"). In this instance, therefore, winning battles rarely affects the hostile ability of guerrillas. By their very nature, these movements do not depend on factories and massive industrial machines to deploy more firepower on the battlefield. Their military objectives are quite simply to stay intact as much as possible — in other words, their centers of gravity are not based simply on the basis of war production. The center of gravity of guerrilla movements is located primarily within three sources; in sources of funding, or off shore, remote war machines (ORWMs), the guerrilla leadership, and



among the population within which it operates and depends on for recruits. Thus, there is very little gain for armed forces in wholly conventional style operations that do not affect fully the centers of gravity of these movements and thus do not have an impact on the hostile ability, nor the hostile will of the guerrillas. These conventional operations are a waste of men and materiel with nothing to gain.

Put simply, "guerrillas win by not losing, and governments lose by not winning". In classic mobile-guerrilla warfare, the principles of which are enunciated by Sun Tzu and Mao Zedong and are being practiced rather flawlessly by Prabakaran, battles will be fought purely on the terms of the guerrillas. In Mao Zedong's terms, never fight unless you are sure of winning. In other words, fight only when you have more "goods" at the battle lines and avoid fighting when confronted by superior forces. For conventional forces, this type of warfare, especially among a population deemed hostile, is extremely difficult, requiring rather flexible battle field-tactics. Contrary to this wisdom, most conventional forces confront guerrilla movements in the ways that they are trained in — conventionally. Unfortunately, conventional tactics, such as strategic bombing and attriting the populace, do more to strengthen the guerrillas' center of gravity vis-a-vis the population and hardens hostile will rather than weaken it. In this instance, none of the sources of the center of gravity of the guerrillas can be affected militarily, so pain tolerance and acceptance hardens.

### LTTE's Sources of Strength

If, as Clausewitz enunciated, conventional wars are fought militarily for achieving political ends, then guerrilla wars must primarily be fought politically for achieving military ends. Consider for a moment the three centers of gravity of the LTTE: 1. The ORWMs of western countries where the bulk of LTTE funding and materiel comes from 2. the leadership, especially the supremo Prabakaran 3. the populace of the North and East. On the first source the Sri Lankan armed forces cannot be brought to bear effectively against the ORWMs. I do not have to elaborate on this point. Stopping the flow of funds is purely a political war that has not been waged intensely enough by successive Sri Lankan governments. On the second

source, affecting the political leadership is perhaps possible militarily only if the guerrilla leadership is dumb enough to be captured. The JVP managed this twice (effectively killing off the movement), which brings me to the last source, which is the populace. The military's chances of affecting the leadership is greatly enhanced only if the populace is inhospitable to the guerrillas and is hospitable to the government forces — was this not the case with how the JVP leadership was caught? This point is perhaps the reason for the iron law of counterinsurgency enunciated by Sir Robert Thompson: there is no instance where foreign troops have prevailed over local guerrillas. Foreigners just have a harder time making friends while shooting at local boys — ask the US forces that went to feed children in Somalia, or perhaps the Indians that landed in

As someone once observed, the solutions to some of the most complex problems are so simple that they are often dismissed without consideration.

Jaffna. Only an inhospitable populace can cause guerrilla movements unacceptable pain.

Clearly, the three centers of gravity of insurgencies are best addressed politically, a point often referred to as "hearts and minds" wars. To begin with, insurgencies do not crop up where there is fair government. The best antidote to guerrilla movements, therefore, is simply good government. However, the state of the current crisis in the North and East is such that it would require a gargantuan effort by the government and the armed forces to win the "hearts and minds" of the majority of the populace in the North and East. This task however is enormously complicated in the midst of a conventional war against guerrillas who fight unconventionally — the Americans in Vietnam and the Russians in Afghanistan never figured out the right balance of strategy to cope with this problem, and I am afraid the SL forces will not be able to either. By ousting the Tigers

from their self imposed exile in Jaffna town, the government has committing the LTTE to carry on the war in mobile guerrilla style, which will frustrate our forces and the peace process indefinitely.

As someone once observed, the solutions to some of the most complex problems are so simple that they are often dismissed without consideration. The best strategy for the government, as I had argued in the *Lanka Guardian* earlier, was to contain the Tigers. I used the term "low intensity" to distinguish this tactic from that of the global strategy the US followed against the Soviets during the Cold War, just very much smaller in magnitude. However, while containing Prabakaran in self imposed exile, the government must embark on an intensive and sincere program of winning hearts and minds both here and abroad (devolution packages and the like), a task made much easier from a defensive position — one cannot make war and expect peace! Moreover, capital that is now being used on fancy war materiel largely useless in fighting the Tigers could be utilized in rebuilding and consolidating the "idea of peace" in the East — compared to Jaffna, the East is far more valuable strategically. This same approach must be utilized abroad for affecting the LTTE's ORWMs, its bread and butter. The Tigers should be marginalized politically (which automatically weakens them militarily) and territorially — this is a political and diplomatic task.

Today, however, from fighting a war conventionally where the battle lines were few, the forces now face a thousand front lines. What's more, the hearts and minds war has taken a back seat to the military exigencies, a development that does not portend well for peace in the long run. Ultimately, we will have to consider the classic Litmus test when fighting guerrillas that is used by US counterinsurgency forces — the old man at the fork test: Does the old man at the fork point in the direction of the fleeing guerrillas or send the armed forces on a wild goose chase? It may be concluded that hearts and minds, and ultimately the war, is being won when the old man at the fork helps the forces. How far away from this are we today? What is abundantly clear is that the government's politico-military strategy is not employing tactics that are really designed to win the war, nor will it be able to bring about peace — the more a thing changes, the more it remains the same?



# Lanka's **Alternativist** Lessons

Some reflections on pro poor policy development in housing and poverty eradication

Susil Sirivardana

## The First Policy Shift (1983 - 1989)

In the context of participatory development, the first strategic shift in development policy took place within the housing sector, more particularly in housing by the rural poor and the urban poor. This initiative was embodied in the Million Houses Programme (MHP) which started in 1984 and ended in 1989, with 1983 being a transitional preparatory year.

The Million Houses Programme was a radical and one hundred and eighty degree change from conventional provider-based housing to innovative support-based housing, where the poor builder families were at the centre of their own housing development process. The Implementation Guidelines of the Rural Housing Sub Programme of the Million Houses Programme (MHP) put out in 1984 announced this 'New Path' in these terms:

*"The MHP is founded on the Mainstream of Sri Lankan house-building — a tradition of house-building by individual families.*

*Home-building families occupy a pivotal position. Like the farmer who grows our food, the home-builder will be taking the vital shelter decisions. The key decisions regarding costs, technologies, standards, infrastructures, siting and environment — the where, the how, the what and by whom — will be taken by the community of homebuilders....*

*The MHP caters to a great variety of different needs and priorities: new housing and upgrading, water supply and sanitation, infrastructure and utilities, land and loans, skill training and technical information, decentralised decision-making and unified village / district development. While the public and private sectors*

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Susil Sirivardana graduated from Oxford University, attended Dr. Henry Kissinger's prestigious Harvard seminar and entered the Sri Lanka Administrative Service with flying colours. He then voluntarily served for 3½ years as a teacher in a remote school in a rural area. He was one of the accused in the main political trial, together with Rohana Wijeweera, the JVP leader, following the abortive insurrection of April 1971. Upon release from incarceration, he founded a radical literary review, 'Mawatha' and worked at Amnesty International in London. In 1979, the then Prime Minister of the UNP administration, Ranasinghe Premadasa, invited Susil Sirivardana on to his team. Having been at the core of the innovative Premadasa effort of Housing for the poor — the Million Houses programme — Sirivardana helped draft the Rasaputra report on poverty and the winning Premadasa manifesto — 'New vision, New deal' — for the 1988 presidential elections. The chairman of the National Housing Development Authority as well as the commissioner of the Janasaviya poverty alleviation programme under President Premadasa, he was, in 1992, an adviser to the Independent South Asian Commission on poverty alleviation. Following the assassination of President Premadasa, Susil Sirivardana is now with the South Asian Perspectives Network Association (SAPNA) in Colombo and is Senior Advisor of the Premadasa Centre.

*unite to realise a national shelter programme, it covers the three vital sectors of our human settlements — villages, towns and plantations.*

*What does the state do in this programme? It supports, strengthens and complements the Mainstream. It facilitates and supports both individual home-builders and communities, informs builders and trains both participants and staff. It will intervene only when individuals and communities cannot solve problems on their own. So while the state is the supporter and facilitator, the individual families will be doers and decision-makers.*

*Our new slogan: MINIMAL INTERVENTION MAXIMAL SUPPORT BY THE STATE: MAXIMAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE BUILDER FAMILIES"*

Basic to this radical policy and perceptual shift was a more correct appreciation of the role of the poor in their own development, and its corollary, the fundamentally altered role of the state as a pro-poor supporter. The poor were being made subjects: hitherto they had been objects. Indeed roles were reversed. Government's role was to support and underwrite the initiatives of the poor without reserve.

The MHP itself was an umbrella concept which incorporated all housing being done in the country, including housing done by private individuals. The



target of a million houses really meant a million families who satisfied one or more of their basic shelter needs through the Programme. The MHP was made up of six sub programmes. Each sub programme was derived from the main house producing constituencies. Of the six, the Rural Housing Sub Programme (RHSP) and the Urban Housing Sub Programme (UHSP) were targeted on the rural and urban poor.

The RHSP and the UHSP were the cutting edge of the new participatory policy and methodology. They were both operationalized by means of a simple, direct and transparent chart in the form of what was termed the Housing Options and Loans Package or HOLP for short. The HOLP-Rural was designed in 1984 and the HOLP-Urban followed in 1985. (The two HOLPs are dropped — Editor).

The HOLPs set the loan limits and conditions. They were devices to facilitate individual choices in relation to individual needs and affordability. They conferred variety, flexibility and freedom of choice in a non-bureaucratic mode. Most importantly, their diversified loan responses meant that the counting of housing improvements would be in terms of families benefitted and not units constructed.

The RHSP and UHSP had many achievements. They encompassed exceptional coverage. In fact, practically every one of the 4500 smallest administrative zones in the country at the grassroots level had several families participating in the programme. In terms of distributive equity, its achievement is unsurpassed. The numbers are impressive.

Its cost effectiveness was equally noteworthy. The direct cost to the state was minimal, but the value added component of family labour and the expansion of asset bases were almost exceptional. Above all, was the factor of human satisfactions. Each of these houses was different and distinctive, because it had the user family's individual needs, priorities and taste stamped on its design and appearance.

Another unique achievement of the small housing loan process and public recognition of household rights to land was a massive motivation to save and invest those savings in creating new housing and housing-related assets (e.g. furniture), most notably amongst the very poor.

From 1984-89 it was estimated that an average of more than 2.5 times the loan issued was mobilized and invested in housing constructed through the MHP.

It is correct that loan recovery was not equally impressive. From 1984, the initial year, the average monthly loan recovery in both sub-programmes progressively rose to 60% in 1988. But a political expedient introduced in 1989 as an election compulsion, was perceived as a write-off, and thereafter recoveries plunged to practically zero.

From the specific perspective of participatory development and mobilization strategy, the importance lay in the fact that the praxis of the RHSP and the UHSP was being continuously sustained and deepened. The proof of this coming of age is, that the processes of implementation accompanied by critical examination of the experience, was

generating a series of unusually propitious innovations and experiments, which only helped to further legitimize the validity and catalyze the demand for the new participatory values. Equally important was the fact that while terror and mayhem were rapidly distancing development workers from the field and their responsibilities from 1987 onwards, development workers in housing among the urban and rural poor, found themselves being received by the people with an overwhelming degree of trust and credibility.

From 1977 to 1988, Ranasinghe Premadasa was the Minister of Housing and Construction, and also the Minister of Local Government, in addition to being the Prime Minister. First, housing and then poverty alleviation played a strategic role in his vision for Sri Lanka with human development, economic growth, equity and national unity being the cornerstones. It was his unique role to lead politically. He invested his leadership task with qualities of morality, creativity, daring, accountability and scale, which were quite exceptional.

### Systemic Crisis, Challenge Setting and the Second Policy Shift (1987-1988)

1987-89 were watershed years in Sri Lanka's post-independent process of democratic governance and development. During them, there were two separate insurgencies, both led by youth, one in the south and the other in the north. The Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth, Sessional Paper 1 of 1990, aptly documents the process leading to the crisis of confidence. The southern insurgency was the second in a line, the first having been the historic April Insurrection of 1971. The crisis embraced a spectrum of issues such as a ruthless use of political power by the Executive Presidency and the regime, the loss of a minimum inter-ethnic majority-minority consensus, serious lapses in the rule of law, conspicuous overpoliticization in favour of the party in power, the withdrawal of the civil rights of the former Prime-Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the near loss of a bipartisan bottomline consensus between government and opposition, the hegemony of exogenous forces in the sphere of research and policy, serious external strains with our closest neighbour India and a perceived sense of inequity in social terms, all of which led to a crisis of credibility and legitimacy.

### MILLION HOUSES PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE (1984-1989)

Sub-Programmes	Families Reached	Families Completing	Disbursements (Rs. mns.)
RHSP	258,762	231,752	1,301.1
UHSP	38,125	33,664	313.4

- RHSP Loan ceiling = Rs 7,500.00
- Actual average RHSP loan disbursed per completion = Rs 5,614.00
- UHSP Loan ceiling = Rs 15,000.00
- Actual average UHSP loan disbursed per completion = Rs 9,312.00

(Source: NHDA)



These were invariably the symptoms of deeper causes, which have to do with the insensitive, mechanistic and imitative manner in which the country liberalised the economy in 1977 — being the first country in South Asia to do so. The results of rapid structural adjustment were indeed mixed — rises in exports, huge quantas of foreign aid, an upsurge of the private sector, a sharp drop in unemployment from 24% in 1976/77 to 12% in 1981/82, with average growth of nearly 6% a year during 78-84 compared to only 2.9% in 70-77 on the positive side, while consumer prices rose by over 200% between 77 and 84, real wages deteriorated, income distribution got more skewed, purchasing power of the poor declined, and school drop-outs increased, on the negative side. The negative impacts have been concretely analysed in *Sri Lanka: The Social Impact of Economic Policies during the last decade*, UNICEF, Colombo, 1985.

It is all to the credit of the then Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa, that confronted with the burgeoning systemic crisis, he set a challenge to himself of searching for a **transforming strategy rooted in development policy itself**. His intuition and wisdom served him well to suggest that what was needed was a **political approach** to the problem.

It was in November 1987 that the next significant event of the pre-1988 phase took place. It took a unique challenge-setting form. That was the appointment — on a proposal of the Prime Minister to the Cabinet — of a Committee of eight High Level Officials, chaired by the then Governor of the Central Bank, to prepare within one month, **An Action Programme on Poverty Alleviation through People-Based Development**. (Sessional Paper No. XII of 1988). The report was prepared within six weeks. Its role is quite strategic in relation to subsequent policy developments for nationwide poverty alleviation. For one thing, it further clarified the methodological principles of such a demanding but necessary issue of poverty alleviation, by critically focussing on the participatory content of the housing experience. This was conceptualized under the label **People-Based Development**, which was defined as being fundamentally different in form and content from conventional development. "In essence, it:

- considered human beings as the primary resource;
- was self-reliant and bottom-up;
- was culturally harmonious;
- could realize truly national scale and stability.

*So People-Based Development invested primarily in human beings and mobilized their wisdom and skill to the full".* (The Report, p.8)

The Committee further defined a set of Operational Principles. Some are

- "1. The household/family is the starting point — of the poorest of the poor and the poor.
2. Need, and need alone, is the criterion.
3. Party politics — the programme must totally rise above it.
4. Women, youth and children — are critical target groups.
5. People initiate and decide: the State supports."

In the chapter on "The Organization" for the new participatory strategy, the Report explicitly outlined the following principles.

- Recognition by Government of the initiatives the poor are continually taking in their struggle for self-improvement, and the need for it to encourage, support and underwrite them;
- Perceptually, the state is supporting the people's process, and not the people the State's;
- The implementation process is basically bottom-up with mediation by higher levels in the form of support;
- Each household, especially of the very poor, is the starting point of the people-based process;
- The planning, decision-making and implementing frame is the 'gamgoda' or 'yaya';

This report was absolutely strategic to facilitating a pathbreaking transition to the post-1988 context. It constituted an exhaustive and fundamentally new search for a **mobilizational and participatory mode of development as an alternative and corrective to a highly disordered bureaucratic and over-politicized system**. It was an act of quite radical analysis and an attempt to draw generalizable lessons from the 'little tradition' of participatory development in housing and other lesser processes like those of committed NGOs.

This was a strategic step in the overall trajectory from a sectoral (housing) understanding of poor-centred Participatory Development, to a holistic and multi-sectoral articulation of a National Poverty Eradication Policy. If the breakthrough in Housing Policy was the 'action' phase, here was the corresponding 'reflection' phase of the process. It was an indispensable transition in achieving intellectual and valuational coherence and clarity. It was highly educative for both the political leadership as well as the technocracy. Without this vital intermediate step, even if the political will was there to design a radical pro poor policy of Poverty Eradication, there would have been neither the self-confidence nor the courage to actually work out the operational details of the Policy and Programme called **Janasaviya** that followed.

### **The Janasaviya Strategy — The Second Policy Shift in Action (1988-1994)**

Janasaviya or "the strength-creativity-capacity of the people" was both the name of the national poverty alleviation programme started in 1989, and also a much larger framework of participatory development (the paradigm) and social mobilization (the central methodology). This was primarily **value-based** and an explicit departure from business-as-usual and conventional top down development. Hence, it was a dramatic break from the past.

It was the special achievement of President Premadasa, that he ultimately evolved to the participatory development paradigm through a critical personal search for more authentic and people-centred values and practices in housing by the poor, which was his chosen passion and school for learning. A very small critical mass of radical

- put people first, especially the poor and poorest of the poor;



thinker-practitioners led by the President sustained their search and practice on the ground, until the systemic crisis of 1987-89 created a new policy compulsion for an innovative poverty alleviation response. The crisis served to massively delegitimise the premises of conventional top down overpoliticized (in party terms) and over bureaucratized development, and thereby demanded a fundamental and sufficient alternative. Janasaviya was that response — both the Programme and its larger framework of pro-poor processes.

The Janasaviya Programme had to pass many searing tests before it was legitimized — the biggest being the 'verdict' of the revolting southern insurgents themselves. The Programme was launched at the height of the insurgency. Deeply conscious of its vulnerability viz-a-viz the insurgents, the Programme took the offensive by seizing the moral high ground. In six pithy principles and valational statements, it projected its radically altered perspective:

1. Trust the people, especially the Poor.
2. The people decide and do: others support them.
3. The poor must be separately organized.
4. Always do what is just and right.
5. A countrywide process of learning by doing.
6. All procedures to be open and transparent.

The programme successfully managed to totally depoliticize the implementation and minimise bureaucratic domination. It sought to invite all those who were morally and personally committed to fighting poverty — the literate and conscious youth were very much a part of this constituency — to come forward and assume responsibility for self-managing what was essentially designed as a people's process. This premise was tested on the ground before long, namely in the vexed issue of identifying the poor.

Here again, breaking from past practice, the Programme innovated by getting the whole community to select their own poor through an iterative process of open public meetings and

public lists, prepared by the community itself on the basis of instantly and directly applicable local criteria (e.g. number of productive trees, extent of crops cultivated, animals and assets owned, gender status and other visible indices of deprivation). In spite of the conditions of civil strife in the countryside, the numbers came down by about 35% during the first year, and continued to diminish through subsequent years. The rethinking had paid off — amidst civil strife, a harder and more equitable identification was achievable.

The programme consisted of two streams of support. First was a Human Development Component of Rs. 1458/= or US\$ 29 a month, distributed through the local cooperative outlets, and which was basically a basket of food plus other essentials-of-living offered in return for productive work for the self-improvement of the family and their asset base. The money came from the budget. This support was for a fixed 24 month period, during which the family was expected to mobilize themselves for subsequent self-development. The Human Development support made it compulsory for the family to put in 20 days of labour, whose benefit was to be for themselves. Also, the Rs. 1458/= came in the form of three tranches — two of Rs. 500/= or US\$ 10 each per fortnight and a third of Rs. 458/= or US\$ 9. The idea was that the family was invited to voluntarily save the Rs. 458/=. The second stream of support was an Investment Component, whereby commercial banks extended credit upto Rs. 25000/= or US\$ 500 in the first instance, if and when the family applied for a loan with a credit-worthy project. This money was to come from the banking system.

As at November 1993, the Programme had covered 99 Divisions or areas (out of a total of 301 in the country), comprising a total of 455, 132 ultra poor families. The total expenditure by the state (excluding bank loans) was Rs. 12,650 mn or US\$ 253 mn. Of the above total families, 238,889 had taken bank loans to the value of Rs. 1314 mn or US\$ 26.2 mn. Total voluntary savings to the credit of the families was Rs. 2163 mn or US\$ 43.2 mn. Repayment rates varied from 30% in weak areas to 95% in good areas. The quanta of private and community assets acquired through the food/goods for 20 days work programme, was astonishing. Private assets were primarily in the form of upgraded/ new houses and

upgraded/new toilets. Community assets included a spectrum ranging from agricultural wells, drinking wells to community centres, pre-schools, improved roads, canals and playgrounds etc. This social infrastructure has been valued at an estimated Rs. 1139 mn or US\$ 27.7 mn for 145,456 private units and Rs. 455 mn or US\$ 9 mn for community ones.

The other key feature of the Programme was its Social Mobilization process, which comprised awareness raising, small and large group formation, building up organizations of the poor, and the numerous other psycho-social aspects of human development and self-management, where the poor overcame their lack of identity and recaptured it, including the very important fact of women attaining a new identity as responsible individuals etc. In fact, as the Programme expanded from year to year, this was the aspect that suffered from a paucity of trainers. Hence, the overall results were uneven. Where there were good trainers, the mobilization was quickly internalised, made meaningful in terms of their own lives and their alienation and delusions were overcome. Where there were no trainers or where they were weak, there was no mobilization commensurate to the need. However, as a result of the large scale of the Programme, certain features of mobilization became normative. Small groups were universal. Larger organizations were being formed. All of them had huge sums of money saved. By and large, a rudimentary process of self-organization had begun to emerge.

The Janasaviya process catalysed a much larger frame of development thinking and action, which went beyond the specific Janasaviya Programme. Some of these, like the 1.5 Million Houses Programme were direct outcomes of the new Premadasa regime. Many others, emerged from the more general perspective. Among them are the Divisional Secretariat attempt at administrative restructuring, devolution and decentralization, the attempt at labour intensive (especially young female labour) 200 Garment Factories Programme located at the periphery, the innovative sub-contracting oriented Free Trade Zone at Koggala, the Janasaviya Trust Fund, which was a new type of bank for the poor with World Bank assistance, a Community Water Supply and Sanitation Project, also with World Bank assistance and the experiment in people-intensive local level development



**"P**ost-Marxism" has become a fashionable intellectual posture with the triumph of neo-liberalism and the retreat of the working class. The space vacated by the reformist left has in part been occupied by capitalist politicians and ideologues, technocrats and the traditional and fundamentalist churches (Pentecostals and the Vatican). In the past, this space was occupied by socialist, nationalist and populist politicians and church activists associated with the "theology of liberation". The center-left was very influential within the political regimes (at the top) or the less politicized popular classes (at the bottom). The vacant space of the radical left refers to the political intellectuals and politicized sectors of the trade unions and urban and rural social movements. It is among these classes that the conflict between Marxism and "Post-Marxism" is most intense today.

Nurtured and, in many cases, subsidized by the principal financial institutions and governmental agencies promoting neo-liberalism, a massive number of "social" organizations have emerged whose ideology, linkages and practices are in direct competition and conflict with Marxist theory and practice. These organizations, in most cases describing themselves as "non-governmental" or as "independent research centers", have been active in propounding ideologies and political practices that are compatible with and complement the neo-liberal agenda of their financial patrons. This essay will proceed by describing and criticizing the components of their ideology and then turn to describe their activities and non-activities, contrasting it with the Class-based movements and approaches. This will be followed by a discussion of the origins of "Post-Marxism" and its devolution and future in relation to the decline and possible return of Marxism.

### Propositions of Post-Marxism

The intellectual proponents of post-Marxism in most instances are "ex-Marxists" whose point of departure is a "critique" of Marxism and the elaboration of counterpoints to each basic proposition as the basis for attempting to provide an alternative theory or at least a plausible line of analysis. It is possible to more or less synthesize ten basic arguments that are usually found in the post-Marxist discourse.

# DECONSTRUCTING POSTMARXISM

James Petras

Prof. Petras, whose early reputation was as the most outstanding radical scholar on Latin America writing in English, is now one of the world's best known political sociologists. In this important essay which he sent us exclusively, in response to our invitation, Prof. Petras engages in a wide ranging critique of both the theory and practice of neoliberal - to - postmarxist intellectuals. In this debunking of the currently dominant and fashionable ideologies, he exposes the links between the neoliberal strategy of the World Bank and the IMF, post Marxism as an ideology, the role of NGOs and academic institutes, concluding with an assessment of the prospects of the left, globally. James Petras is at the Dept of Sociology, State University of New York at Binghamton.

(1) Socialism was a failure and all "general theories" of societies are condemned to repeat this process. Ideologies are false (except post-Marxism!) because they reflect a world of thought dominated by a single gender/race culture system.

(2) The Marxist emphasis on social class is "reductionist" because classes are dissolving; the principle political points of departure are cultural and rooted in diverse identities (race, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference).

(3) The state is the enemy of democracy and freedom and a corrupt and inefficient deliverer of social welfare. In its place, "civil society" is the protagonist of democracy and social improvement.

(4) Central planning leads to and is a product of bureaucracy which hinders the exchange of goods between producers. Markets and market exchanges, perhaps with limited regulations, allow for greater consumption and more efficient distribution.

(5) The traditional left's struggle for state power is corrupting and leads to authoritarian regimes which then subordinate civil society to its control. Local struggles over local issues by local organizations are the only democratic means of change, along with petition/pressure on national and international authorities.

(6) Revolutions always end badly or are impossible: social transformation threaten to provoke authoritarian reactions. The alternative is to struggle for and consolidate democratic transitions to safeguard electoral processes.

(7) Class solidarity is part of past ideologies, reflecting earlier politics and realities. Classes no longer exist. There are fragmented "locales" where specific groups (identities) and localities engage in self-help and reciprocal relation for "survival" based on cooperation with external supporters. Solidarity is a cross-class phenomena, a humanitarian gesture.

(8) Class struggle and confrontation does not produce tangible results; it provokes defeats and fails to solve immediate problems. Government and international cooperation around specific projects does result in increases in production and development.



(9) Anti-imperialism is another expression of the past that has outlived its time. In today's globalized economy, there is no possibility of confronting the economic centers. The world is increasingly interdependent and in this world there is a need for greater international cooperation in transferring capital, technology and know-how from the "rich" to the "poor" countries.

(10) Leaders of popular organizations should not be exclusively oriented toward organizing the poor and sharing their conditions. Internal mobilization should be based on external funding. Professionals should design programs and secure external financing to organize local groups. Without outside aid, local groups and professional careers would collapse.

### Critique of post-Marxist Ideology

The post-Marxists thus have an analysis, a critique and a strategy of development — in a word, the very general ideology that they supposedly condemn when discussing Marxism. Moreover, it is an ideology that fails to identify the crises of capitalism (prolonged stagnation, periodic financial panics, etc.) and the social contradictions (inequalities and social polarization) at the national and international level that impinge on the specific local social problems they focus on. For example, the origins of neo-liberalism (the socio-political and economic milieu in which the post-Marxists function) is a product of class conflict. Specific sectors of capital allied with the state and the empire defeated the popular classes and imposed the model. A non-class perspective cannot explain the origins of the social world in which the post-Marxists operate. Moreover, the same problem surfaces in discussion of the origins of the post-Marxists — their own biography reflects the abrupt and radical shift in power at the national and international levels, in the economic and cultural spheres, limiting the space and resources, in which Marxism operated while increasing the opportunities and funds for post-Marxists. Sociological origins of post-Marxism are embedded in the shift in political power away from the working class toward export capital.

Let us shift now from a sociology of knowledge critique of post-Marxist ideology and its generally inconsistent view of general theorizing, to discuss its specific proposition. Let us start with its notion of the "failure of socialism" and the "end of ideologies". What is meant by the "failure of socialism"? The collapse of the U.S.S.R., Eastern European Communist

regimes? First, that is only a single concept of socialism. Secondly, even here it is not clear what failed — the political system, or the socio-economic system? Recent election returns in Russia, Poland, Hungary and many of the ex-Soviet Republics suggest that a majority of voters prefer a return of aspects of past social welfare policies and economic practices. If popular opinion in the ex-Communist countries is an indicator of "failure", the results are not definitive. Secondly, if by the "failure of socialism" the post-Marxists mean the decline in power of the left we must insist on a distinction between "failure" due to internal inadequacies of socialist practices and politico-military defeats by external aggressors. No one would say that Hitler's destruction of Western European democracies was a "failure of democracy"!

Today, while it is true that neo-liberals govern and Marxists are out of power, there is hardly a country in the Western Hemisphere where Marxist or Socialist influenced mass movements are not leading major demonstrations and challenging neo-liberal policies and regimes. In Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia, successful general strikes, in Mexico major peasant movements and Indian guerrillas, in Brazil the landless workers' movements all reflect Marxist influence.

Terrorist capitalist regimes and/or U.S. intervention in Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Salvador, Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan played a major role in the "decline" of the revolutionary left. Military defeats are not failures of the economic system and do not reflect on the effectiveness of socialist experiences. Moreover, when we analyze the internal performances during the period of relatively stable socialist or popular governance, by many social indicators, the results are far more favorable than that which came afterwards: popular participation, health,

education and equitable growth under Allende compared very favorably to what came afterward with Pinochet. The same indicators under the Sandinistas compared favorably to Chamorro's regime in Nicaragua. The Arbenz government's agrarian reform and human rights policies compared favorably to the CIA installed government's policy of land concentration and 150,000 assassinations.

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Socialism outside of the Communist bloc was an essentially democratic, popular force that secured major support because it represented popular interests freely decided. The post-Marxists confuse Soviet Communism with grassroots revolutionary democratic socialist movements in Latin America. They confuse military defeats with leftists' political failures, accepting the neo-liberal amalgamation of the two opposing concepts. Finally, even in the case of Eastern Communism, they fail to see the changing and dynamic nature of communism. The growing popularity of a new socialist synthesis of social ownership, welfare programs, agrarian reform, and council democracy is based on the new socio-political movements.

In this sense, the post-Marxist view of the "end of ideologies" is not only inconsistent with their own ideological pronouncements but with the continuing ideological debate between past and present Marxists and present debates and confrontations with neo-liberalism and its post-Marxist offspring.

### The Dissolution of Classes and the Rise of Identities

The post-Marxists attack the Marxist notion of class analysis from various perspectives. On the one hand, they claim that it obscures the equal or more significant importance of cultural identities (gender, ethnicity). They accuse class analysts of being "economic reductionists" and failing to explain gender and ethnic differences within classes. They then proceed further to argue that these



"differences" define the nature of contemporary politics. The second line of attack on class analysis stems from a view that class is merely an intellectual construction — it is essentially a subjective phenomena that is culture determined. Hence, there are no "objective class interests" that divide society since 'interests' are purely subjective and each culture defines individual preferences. The third line of attack argues that there have been vast transformations in the economy and society that have obliterated the old class distinctions. In post-industrial society, some post-Marxists argue, the source of power is in the new information systems, the new technologies and those who manage and control them. Society, according to this view, is evolving toward a new society in which industrial workers are disappearing in two directions: upward into the "new middle class" of high technology and downward into the marginal "underclass".

Marxists have never denied the importance of racial, gender and ethnic divisions within classes. What they have emphasized, however, is the wider social system which generates these differences and the need to join class forces to eliminate these inequalities at every point: work, neighborhood, family. What most Marxists object to is the idea that gender and race inequalities can and should be analyzed and solved outside of the class framework: that landowner women with servants and wealth have an essential "identity" with the peasant women who are employed at starvation wages. That Indian bureaucrats of neo-liberal governments have a common "identity" with peasant Indians who are displaced from their land by the free market economic policies. For example, Bolivia has an Indian Vice President presiding over the mass arrest of cocoa-growing Indian farmers. Identity politics in the sense of consciousness of a particular form of oppression by an immediate group can be an appropriate point of departure. This understanding, however, will become an "identity" prison (race or gender) isolated from other exploited social groups unless it transcends the immediate points of oppression and confronts the social system in which it is embedded. And that requires a broader class analysis of the structure of social power which presides over and defines the conditions of general and specific inequalities.

The essentialism of identity politics isolates groups into competing groups unable to transcend the politico-economic

universe that defines and confines the poor, workers, peasants, employees. Class politics is the terrain within which to confront 'identity politics' and to transform the institutions that sustain class and other inequalities.

Classes do not come into being by subjective fiat: they are organized by the capitalist class to appropriate value. Hence, the notion that class is a subjective notion dependent on time, place and perception, confuses class and class consciousness. While the former has objective status, the latter is conditioned by social and cultural factors. Class consciousness is a social construct which, however, does not make it less 'real' and important in history. While the social forms and expressions of class consciousness vary, it is a recurring phenomena throughout history and most of the world, even as it is overshadowed by other forms of "consciousness" at different moments (i.e., race, gender, national) or combined with them (nationalism and class consciousness).

Hence, the notion that class is a subjective notion dependent on time, place and perception, confuses class and class consciousness. While the former has objective status, the latter is conditioned by social and cultural factors.

#### Capitalism Today

It is obvious that there are major changes in the class structure, but not in the direction that the post-Marxists point to. The major changes have reinforced class differences and class exploitation, even as the nature and conditions of the exploited and exploiters classes has changed. There are more temporary wage workers today than in the past. There are many more workers employed in unregulated labor markets (the so-called informal sector today) than in the past. The issue of unregulated exploitation does not describe a system that "transcends" past capitalism: it is the return to 19th century forms of labor exploitation. What requires new analysis is capitalism after the welfare populist state has been demolished. This means that the complex roles of

states and parties which mediated between capital and labor have been replaced by state institutions more clearly and directly linked to the dominant capitalist class. Neo-liberalism is unmediated ruling class state power. Whatever the "multiple determinants" of state and regime behavior in the recent past, today the neo-liberal model of accumulation depends most directly on centralized state control horizontally linked to the international banks to implement debt payments and to export sectors to earn foreign exchange. Its vertical ties to the citizen as subject and the primary link is through a repressive state apparatus and para-statal 'NGOs' who defuse social explosions.

The dismantling of the welfare state means that the social structure is more polarized: between unemployed public employees in health, education, social security on the one hand and on the other hand well paid professional linked to multinational corporations, NGOs and other externally financed institutions linked to the world market and centers of political power. The struggle today is not only between classes in factories but between the state and uprooted classes in the streets and markets displaced from fixed employment and forced to produce and sell and bear the costs of their social reproduction. Integration into the world market by elite exporters and medium and small compradores (importers of electronic goods, tourist functionaries of multinational hotels and resorts) has its counterpart in the disintegration of the economy of the interior: local industry, small farms with the concomitant displacement of producers to the city and overseas.

The import of luxury goods for the upper middle class is based on the earnings remitted by "exported" labor of the poor. The nexus of exploitation begins in the impoverishment of the interior, the uprooting of the peasants and their immigration to the cities and overseas. The income remitted by "exported labor" provides hard currency to finance imports and neo-liberal infrastructure projects to promote the foreign and domestic export and tourist business. The chain of exploitation is more circuitous, but it still is located ultimately in the capital-labor relation. In the age of neo-liberalism, the struggle to recreate the 'nation', the national market, national production and exchange is once again a basic historic demand. Just as the growth of deregulated employment



(informality) requires a powerful public investment and regulatory center to generate formal employment with livable social conditions. In a word, class analysis needs to be adapted to the rule of unmediated capital in an unregulated labor market with international linkages in which the reformist redistributive politics of the past have been replaced by neo-liberal policies reconcentrating income of power at the top. The homogenization and downward mobility of vast sectors of workers and peasants formerly in the regulated labor market creates a great objective potential for unified revolutionary action. In a word, there is a common class identity which forms the terrain for organizing the struggles of the poor.

**In summary, contrary to what the post-Marxists argue, the transformations of capitalism have made class analysis more relevant than ever.**

The growth of technology has exacerbated class differences, not abolished them. The workers in micro-chip industries and those industries in which the new chips have been incorporated have not eliminated the working class. Rather, it has shifted the sites of activity and the mode of producing within the continuing process of exploitation. The new class structure insofar as it is visible combines the new technologies to more controlling forms of exploitation. Automation of some sectors increases the tempo of work down the line; tv cameras increase worker surveillance while decreasing administrative staff, 'quality work circles', in which workers pressure workers increase self-exploitation without increases in pay or power. The "technological revolution" is ultimately shaped by the class structure of the neo-liberal counterrevolution. Computers allow for agri-business to control the costs and volume of pesticides, but it is the low paid temporary workers who spray and are poisoned. Information networks are linked to putting out work to the sweatshop or household (the informal economy) for production of textiles, shoes, etc.

The key to understanding this process of combined and uneven development of technology and labor is class analysis and within that, gender and race.

#### **State, Civil Society and the Citizen**

The post-Marxists painted a one-sided picture of the state. The state is described

as a huge inefficient bureaucracy that plundered the public treasury and left the people poor and the economy bankrupt. In the political sphere, the state was the source of authoritarian rule and arbitrary rulings, hindering the exercise of citizenship (democracy) and the free exchange of commodities ("the market"). On the other hand, the post-Marxists argue, "civil society" was the source of freedom, social movements, citizenship. Out of an active civil society would come an equitable and dynamic economy. What is strange about this ideology is its peculiar capacity to overlook fifty years of history. The public sector was of necessity instrumental in stimulating industrialization in the absence of private investment and because of economic crisis (world crisis of the 1930's, war in the 1940's, etc.). Secondly, the growth of

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literacy and basic public health was largely a public initiative.

In the century and a half of free enterprise, roughly from the 18th century to the 1930's, Latin America suffered the seven scourges of the Bible, while the invisible hand of the market looked on: genocide, famine, disease, tyranny, dependency, uprootedness and exploitation.

The public sector grew in response to these problems and deviated from its public functions to the degree that it was privately appropriated by business and political elites. The "inefficiency of the state" is a result of it being directed toward private gain — either in subsidizing business interests (through low costs of energy) or providing employment to political followers. The

inefficiency of the state is directly related to its subordination to private interests. The state's comprehensive health and educational programs have never been adequately replaced by the private economy, the church or the NGOs. Both the private sector and the church fund private clinics and education to cater to a wealthy minority. The NGOs, at best, provide short-term care and education for limited groups in local circumstances dependent on the whims and interests of foreign donors.

As a systematic comparison indicates, the post-Marxists have read the historical record wrong: they have let their anti-statist rhetoric blind them to the positive comparative accomplishments of the public over the private.

The argument that "the state" is the source of authoritarianism is and is not true. Dictatorial states have and will exist, but most have little or nothing to do with public ownership, especially if it means expropriating foreign business. Most dictatorships have been anti-statist and pro-free market, today and in the past and probably in the future.

Moreover, the state has been an important supporter of citizenship, promoting the incorporation of exploited sectors of the population into the polity, recognizing legitimate rights of workers, blacks, women, etc. States have provided the basis for social justice by redistributing land, income and budgets to favor the poor.

In a word, we need to go beyond the statist/anti-statist rhetoric to define the class nature of the state and its basis of political representation and legitimacy. The generalized ahistorical, asocial attacks on the state are unwarranted and only serve as a polemical instrument to disarm citizens of the free market from forging an effective and rational alternative anchored in the creative potentialities of public action.

The counter position of "civil society" to the state is also a false dichotomy. Moreover, much of the discussion of civil society overlooks the basic social contradictions that divide "civil society". Civil society or, more accurately, the leading classes of civil society, while attacking the "statism" of the poor have always made a major point of strengthening their ties to the Treasury and military to promote and protect their dominant position in "civil



society". Likewise, the popular classes in civil society when aroused have sought to break the ruling classes' monopoly of the state. The poor have always looked to state resources to strengthen their socio-economic position in relation to the rich. The issue is and always has been the relation of different classes to the state.

The post-Marxist ideologues who are marginalized from the state by the neo-liberals have made a virtue of their impotence. Uncritically imbibing the stateless rhetoric from above, they transmit it below. The post-Marxists try to justify their organizational vehicles (NGOs) for upward mobility by arguing that they operate outside of the state and it "civil society" when in fact they are funded by foreign governments to work with domestic governments.

"Civil society" is an abstraction from the deep social cleavages engendered by capitalist society, social divisions which have deepened under neo-liberalism. **There is as much conflict within civil society between classes as there is between "civil society" and the state. Only in exceptionally rare moments do we find it otherwise. Under fascist or totalitarian states which torture, abuse and pillage the totality of social classes do we find instances of a dichotomy between the state and civil society.**

To speak or write of "civil society" is to attempt to convert a legalistic distinction into major political categories to organize politics. In doing so, the differences between classes is obscured and ruling class domination is not challenged.

To counterpose the "citizen" to the "state" is to overlook the profound links of certain citizens (the export elites, upper middle class) to the state and the alienation and exclusion of the majority of citizens (workers, unemployed, peasants) from effective exercise of their elementary social rights. Elite citizens, using the state, empty citizenship of any practical meaning for the majority, converting citizens into subjects. Discussion of civil society, like the state, needs to specify the social contours of social classes and the boundaries imposed by the privileged class. The way the post-Marxists use the term as an uncritical, undifferentiated concept serves to obscure more than reveal the dynamics of societal change.

### Planning, Bureaucracy and the Market

There is no question that central planning in the former Communist countries was 'bureaucratic'-authoritarian in conception and centralized in execu-

tion. From this empirical observation, the post-Marxists argue that "planning" (central or not) is by its nature antithetical to the needs of a modern complex economy with its multiple demands, millions of consumers, massive flows of information. Only the market can do the trick. Democracy and the market go together — another point of convergence between the "post-Marxists" and the neo-liberals. **The problem with this notion is that most of the major institutions in a capitalist economy engage in central planning.**

**General Motors, Wal-Mart, Microsoft all centrally program and plan direct investments and expenditures toward further production and marketing.** Few, if any, post-Marxists focus their critical attention to these enterprises. The post-Marxists do not call into question the efficiency of central planning by the multinational corporations or their compatibility with the competitive electoral systems characteristic of capitalist democracies.

The theoretical problem is the post-Marxists' confusion of central planning with one particular historic-political variant of it. If we accept that planning systems can be embedded in a variety of political systems (authoritarian or democratic), then it is logical that the accountability and responsiveness of the planning system will vary.

Today in capitalist societies, the military budget is part of state planning and expenditures based on "commands" to the producers (and owners of capital) who respond in their own inefficient way producing and profiting for over fifty years. While no "model" of planning, the point that needs to be made is that central state planning is not a phenomenon confined to "Communist system". The defects are generalized and found also in capitalist economies. The problem in both instances (Pentagon and Communism) is the lack of democratic accountability: the military-industrial complex elite fix production, costs, demand and supply.

The central allocation of state resources is essential in most countries because of regional inequalities in resource endowment, immigration, productivity, demand for products or for a wealth of historical reasons. Only a decision made at the center can redistribute resources to compensate less developed regions, classes, gender and racial groups adversely affected by the above factors. Otherwise, the "market" tends to favor those with historic advantages and

favourable endowments, creating polar patterns of development or even fostering inter-regional / class exploitation and ethnic conflicts.

The fundamental problem of planning is the political structure which informs the planning process. Planning officials elected and subject to organized communities, social groups (producers, consumers, youth, women, racial minorities) will allocate resources between production, consumption and reinvestment different from those who are beholden to elites embedded in industrial-military complexes.

Secondly, planning does not mean detailed specification. The size of social budgets can be decided nationally by elected representatives and allocated according to public assemblies where citizens can vote on their local priorities. This practice has been successful in Porto Alegre in Brazil for the past several years under a municipal government led by the Workers' Party. The relation between general and local planning is not written in stone, nor are the levels of specification of expenditures and investments to be determined at the "higher levels". General allocations to promote strategic targets that benefit the whole country (infrastructure, high technology, education, etc.) are complemented by local decisions on subsidizing schools, clinics, cultural centers.

Planning is a key instrument in today's capitalist economy. To dismiss socialist planning is to disarm an important tool in organizing social change. To reverse the vast inequalities, concentration of property, unjust budget allocations requires an overall plan with a democratic authority empowered to implement it. Together with public enterprises and self-management councils of producers and consumers, central planning is the third pillar to a democratic transformation.

Finally, central planning is not incompatible with owned productive and service activities (restaurants, cafes, repair shops, family farms, etc.). Clearly, public authorities will have their hands full managing the macro structures of society.

The complex decisions and information flows are much easier to manage today with the mega-information processing computers. The formula of: democratic representation plus computers plus central planning equals efficient and socially equitable production and distribution.

(To be Continued)





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**H**e was charming and reserved. He was tall and good-looking. Having travelled to France and England, studied law in the latter country and been admitted to Lincoln's Inn as a barrister, he had returned home to be a member of the newly formed LSSP. Clad in 'national dress' he was passionately committed to regaining independence for Ceylon. All of these apart, what appealed most to Vivie about Leslie Goonewardene was his sincerity and frankness. They met at a Poster Exhibition on the Spanish Civil War held at the building which now houses the '80 Club. Vivie had gone with Aunt Caro, and Leslie with his friend Philip Goonewardene. After the initial introductions, they were to meet each other often at the many political meetings of the LSSP.

Leslie's father, Dr. Andrew Simon Goonewardene, visited the same exhibition, accompanied by one of his daughters. Seeing Vivie, he had a premonition which he voiced to his daughter. "That is the sort of girl whom Leslie will marry one day", he said. He wanted to know who the young woman was. Her credentials would also have pleased him very much, for he learnt that she was not only the niece of Robert and Philip Gunawardene but also the daughter of his batch-mate at Medical College, Allanson Goonetilleke. After the first meeting Leslie fell into the habit of dropping in at Diddeniya occasionally with Philip.

Leslie was well liked and well-received by the Goonetilleke family. He was greatly admired by the patriarch, not because he came from a well-established family of great wealth, but because despite all of that, he was so simple and so devoid of arrogance. To him, as it was for his daughter, this simplicity in Leslie symbolized honesty and frankness. Often, Dr. Goonetilleke advised his own sons Danny and Rajah to "be like Leslie".

The year Vivie and Leslie met, 1937, was also a significant year for the LSSP. The party was clearly emerging as the most popular party in Ceylon. What came

# LESLIE AND VIVIE

Pulsara Liyanage

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We conclude our preview of the biography - in - progress of the most prominent women personality of Lanka's Left movement, with this publication of the second chapter.

to be known as the 'Bracegirdle incident' was an important contribution to the ascendance of the LSSP in national politics. The party's battle-ground had shifted to the High Court which ruled against the deportation of Bracegirdle. The LSSP was jubilant. To celebrate this victory and to broaden its political implications the party organized a public meeting at Galle Face which turned into a popular protest against the actions of imperial rulers. Vivie attended this meeting with Aunt Caro. At the end of the successful meeting Uncle Philip invited his niece and sister to dinner. With him was Leslie. The venue was the same as the Poster Exhibition. During dinner Leslie passed a note to Vivie declaring his love for her. Given the occasion and the nationalist fervour of the young Sama Samajist, it was written in Sinhala. Vivie replied with a smile.

Leslie continued with his occasional visit to the Goonetillekes at Diddeniya. Much more frequent was the exchange of letters between the two young people. Vivie got to know Leslie to be a very restrained man: "he was not very exuberant in expressing his emotions even to those whom he loved and cared

for very much". She respected and admired him for his sense of loyalty to his beliefs and principles as well as to those near and dear to him. Vivienne had to rely on the good offices of Amarasekara, her father's dispenser, to post her letters addressed to Leslie. Amarasekara was told that these were Vivie's articles to the party paper of which Leslie was the editor. Happily Simon posted them and eagerly purchased a copy of the paper each week to read Haamu's article. They never appeared in print. Suspicion began to grow on Simon. Knowing well his employer's thinking on the subject, fearing for his own prospects given his complicity in the matter, he decided to "tell all" to Vivie's father. Having done this, he also informed Danny, Vivie's brother of what he had just done, so Vivie would also be warned. When the father came home from work that day, the daughter was well prepared. He had only one word to describe the hitherto 'exceptional young man', which he did, having summoned the family around the table: "Bastard" he said. "He is not to step into this house again". "Why?" the daughter wanted to know. "What has he done? You wanted your sons to grow up like him. Why this sudden change?" "He has been writing letters to you, and wants to marry you without my permission". "What is wrong with that?" Leslie belonged to the "wrong" caste. Not all of his good qualities, looks, education, wealth or even the factor of friendship could override the social convention of caste when it came to an offspring's marriage, in the thinking of an otherwise erudite man. Vivie, through previous experience, had arrived at the same knowledge and conclusions as had her mother concerning her father: arguing with him was of no use; he would never accept your point of view and the exercise hardly ever was constructive. Therefore instead of arguing, Vivie, as was now her wont, was determined to overcome this new opposition to her desire.

Knowing well the conventionalism of her father, did she not expect this outcome? She did; but not this vehemence of the patriarch. She had formerly annoyed her father, even causing much embarrassment to the man,



taunting him for his casteism. One such occasion was when the father was dining with a rich friend whose caste was considered "low". Vivie, discovering the man who attended to the household laundry, the *dhobi*, in the house seated on a low stool, invited the man to sit in high chair, saying out loud for the benefit of the father and his guest, that the master was dining at table with a man of the *dhobi's* caste and so there was no problem if the *dhobi* himself sat in a high chair in the Doctor's house; explaining to the poor bewildered man that all of this social 'convention' was a ultimately matter of wealth. While the 'dhobi' frantically declined the proffered chair, the father knew the barb was directed at him. Now she knew this thesis to be faulty, at least as far as her father's consciousness was concerned.

Henceforth there were a new set of rules concerning the young woman. She was not to leave the house on any pretext. She was a virtual prisoner in her own home. The father refused to talk to his daughter. The daughter had nothing to say to the father. If she was seated at table, the father would not eat at table. She took to having her meals in her room; thus avoiding eating with the family and avoiding her father. Irregular meals, unhappiness, etc., caused a drastic loss of weight in Vivie. From 105-107 lbs, which she always was, she became a mere 72 lbs. in weight.

### The Bookman Cometh

Amidst all of the restraints and restrictions, the young lovers had discovered a new go-between in the guise of the 'Bookman'. 'Bookmen' of yore performed the services of a mobile lending library. For a nominal sum you could borrow any number of books, to be returned on his next visit. If you wished to own any of their books you could even purchase them. The particular 'bookman' who frequented the Doctor's residence at Diddeniya would even recommend a particular book to Vivienne, the eagerly awaited piece of writing, namely a letter from Leslie, being concealed within its pages. Vivie would promptly include that book among other to "read and return". When returning the books read, the kind

'bookman' would place that particular book separately — for it contained Vivie's epistle to Leslie. So the correspondence was maintained.

Meanwhile Vivie's father occasionally received anonymous letters. These letters charged that he had shaved the daughter's hair or that she was very sick and he was neglecting her, etc. Upon receiving such a letter the father would take Vivie for an 'outing' in the car for the world to see that she was alive and well and head unshaven. These 'outings' were always those long trips to Colombo when he came to the 'City Dispensary' at Pettah to purchase his supply of medicines. These journeys were always known beforehand and information passed on, courtesy the 'Book man'. Unknown to the

**"Bastard" he said. "He is not to step into this house again". "Why?" the daughter wanted to know. "What has he done? You wanted your sons to grow up like him. Why this sudden change?"**

father, Jack Kotalawala would park his car, with Leslie in it, behind Dr. Goonetilleke's. Leaving the daughter in the car the father would go into the pharmacy to make his purchase. The daughter would rush to the window of the car behind for a glimpse of and a hurried chat with her lover. More than once Jack urged Vivie to go back with them instead of returning home with the father, for, after all, she was over 21, and a minor no longer. She always refused.

The reason she never left with them was her mother. Vivienne loved and cared for her mother who was suffering from asthma. It was she sprayed her mother's throat twice a day, which brought the patient a modicum of relief. The situation the young lovers found themselves confronting was an impossible one. Leslie was determined to change that. He wrote to the patriarch requesting him to let Vivienne go to uncle Philip's house where

he could go and collect her. If within two weeks of the receipt of that letter the request was still denied, he, Leslie, would file a habeas corpus in court. The request was ignored and within a fortnight a case had been filed in the Court of the District Judge, Leslie went to court with his lawyer, J. R. Jayawardene. Dr. Goonetilleke produced his daughter in court. The District Judge was British. He lent a patient ear to the controversy. Vivie herself spoke on her own behalf. The fact that she did so and did it very well impressed the Judge. As his main objection to his daughter marrying Leslie, Dr. Goonetilleke pointed out to the Judge that Leslie was a member of a "treacherous Party". He meant the LSSP which was calling for independence for Ceylon from the British. She herself was already a member of that same party, countered Vivie proudly. The Judge having observed that Leslie and Vivie seemed to be quite 'well-matched for each other' ordered the father to let his daughter, who was no longer a minor, act according to her wishes. The father and daughter parted company in the Court House. Vivie went with Harold Peiris who was a sympathiser of the LSSP and with whose family she made her home for a while. Her father went home alone.

Vivie's sister Tulin recalls eagerly awaiting the outcome of the case in their home. She was seated in the verandah expecting the return of those who left in the morning. Only the father returned. He went past Tulin's chair, gently slapping her on the cheek, to his accustomed planter's chair and there burst into tears. Father and daughter were not to meet again or talk to each other for almost eight years.

From Harold Peiris', Vivie went to Reggie Senanayaka's — also a member of the LSSP. In January 1939 the young lovers got married. The marriage itself comprised of its registration at the Kachcherie. The day of the marriage, Leslie's father hosted the couple to dinner at Panadura. Vivie liked her in-laws very much; especially her father-in-law, who gifted her with a copy of the Bible. The affection between Vivie and Leslie's family was mutual and the depth of it is quite apparent today even to the casual visitor who happens to drop by amidst the visiting relatives.



## Backdrop

Historically speaking even during the middle of the last century there were no temples within the city of Colombo. Under the Portuguese, Dutch, and British rule, the church had established its religious dominance in the city.

The first Buddhist temple within the city of Colombo was established in 1806 at Kotahena by Sinigama Maha Nayaka Thera. This temple which belonged to the Amarapura sect was known as Dipaduttaramaya. The selection of Dipaduttaramaya as his place of residence by Mohottiwatte Gunananda Thera in 1844 made it the center of Buddhist revivalism. In 1806 another ancient temple at Kotahena, the Paramananda Purana Viharaya, was established by Panadura Dhammananda Nayaka Thera. This place remained the residence of Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala Thera for a number of years before he established the Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda in Maradana in 1873. Thus during the course of the nineteenth century a number of Buddhist temples were established within the city of Colombo and land for these places as well as the material support came from wealthy Buddhist leaders, both traditional and newly rich.

Among other such places Mirindaramaya at Modera built on land donated by Samaranyake Appuhamy (1833); Jayasekeraramaya built at Kuppiyawatta, Maradana in a piece of land donated by Mudliyar Arnoldus de Abrew Rajapakse Jayasekera; Tilakaratnaramaya built at Borella on a land donated by Don Magaris de Silva Tilakaratne Arachchi (1855) are worth special notice. In 1855 the Gangaramaya at Hunupitiya was established by Devundara Sri Jinaratana Thera, a leading pupil of Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala Thera. Another student of Hikkaduwa Sumangala Thera, Palane Vajiragnana Thera. Established the Vajiraramaya at Bambalapitiya which was to become a leading center of Buddhist Missionary work both in Europe and Asia.

With the patronage of D. D. Pedris, one of the leading businessman of the time, Abhayaramaya of Panchikawatta (1900) in Maradana, Asokaramaya of Thimbirigasyaya and Isipathanaramaya of Havelock Town were established.

Parallel to the emergence of temples within the city of Colombo was seen the establishment of Buddhist Colleges (Pirivenas) within Colombo and its vicinity, which is another aspect of the Buddhist revivalism of the time. In 1845 Valane Siddhartha Thera established the Paramadhamma Chetiya Pirivena of

# Trends in MODERN POLITICAL BUDDHISM

Ajith Serasundera

*(The writer is a Lecturer at the Dept of Sociology, University of Colombo and a former student militant.)*

Ratmalana. In order to train Bhikkus for higher education, Sri Sumangala Thera of Hikkaduwa established the Vidyodaya at Maligakanda, Maradana in 1873.

One of the common features of Sinhalese Kingdoms was the concentration of political and religious institutions at the same location. The transfer of location of religious activity to Colombo could thus be regarded as a further evolution of the same principle. George Bond (1992) commenting on this situation states that the emphasis of Buddhism and Buddhist education in Colombo during this period was just a corollary of the emergence of a new elite in Colombo as a result of colonial rule as was their transferring Buddhist activities from Kandy, which was the center of political and cultural activity under the Kandyan regime, to Colombo (Bond; 1992 - 46).

Thus it could be seen from the above evidence that the changes that had been taking place in the class structure and caste system within Sinhala society was also expressed in the Buddhist revival as well as in the changes that had been taking place in the practices adopted by the Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Vidyalandara and Vidyodaya Pirivenas, the two most reputed institutions of Buddhist training in Colombo represented the leftist and right wing movements of party politics in Sri Lanka after the country regained its independence from British rule.

## The Gangaramaya Temple: Buddhism and Capitalism

Thus Vidyodaya was more with the United National Party (which represented relatively right wing political ideas) and the Gangaramaya of Hunupitiya belonged to the same Bhikku tradition. Hence it was but quite natural for Gangaramaya to become the religious center of the United National Party. Not only did the Gangaramaya turn out to be a center where new changes were introduced to the practice of Buddhism among the Sinhala people but also it represented a merger of Buddhism with capitalistic ideas more relevant to the economic changes that had been taking place in the Sri Lanka society since independence, and most particularly since 1977. The Gangaramaya introduced the Navam Perahara, a replica of the traditional Kandyan Perahara, which during the time of the Sinhalese Kings of Kandy (as well as when the Capital was in other places) not only enhanced the glamour of the Tooth Relic and the honor in which it was held, but also justified the royal authority of the kingdom as the protector of the Tooth Relic and Buddhism. Therefore one need not have the wisdom of a prophet to see that the newly started annual pageant, the Perahara of Gangaramaya, was designed among other things to justify the power and authority held by the new political elite and particularly their leader, Mr. Premadasa, who had no backing in the traditional system of leadership in the country.

In 1977 the UNP government under President JR Jayawardene began to revise economic policy to favor private enterprise. He removed many of the state barriers which the previous government had imposed on the economy, making profound changes particularly in the urban society. With these economic reforms the country witnessed the development of a new capitalist class. The circulation of new capital started to make an impact not only on the economy but also on religion and politics. New religious innovations could be seen during this period with regard to Buddhism. After 1977, Gangaramaya emerged as a center of Buddhist activities in Colombo with the support of Colombo based leaders. Very soon new and colorful ceremonial and social activities evolved around it. The new procession, the Navam Perahara, a replica of the traditional Perahara in Kandy, and which was patronized by the President, the Prime Minister and other members of the elite and businessmen in Colombo, symbolized this new development. Obeyesekere (Religion; 1984: 4, 15) correctly points out "This new pageant indicates the continuity and persistence of civil religion,



and it also reflects the recent changes in the ideology of civil religion including the role of monks in contemporary political life".

It is stated that the Navam Perahara at Gangaramaya started in 1978 according to a suggestion made by Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa. It is important to note here that Mr. Premadasa had his political base in the city of Colombo. In fact he started his political career as a member of the Municipal Council of Colombo representing a poverty stricken ward at Keselwatta. From that time onwards until his death in 1993 he lived in this locality. In 1978 when the Navam Parahara was started, he did not have the support of the traditional "high class" elite of the country. In Sri Lanka where society has not yet completely freed itself from the traditional caste structure and also which has not yet fully developed to be a class society, the support of the Buddhist sangha is a crucial factor in politics both at local and national levels. Prime Minister Premadasa badly needed such support for he was the first Prime Minister in the country who came from a caste which is very low down in the traditional caste structure. He knew that his next step would be the Presidency. In the final lap of his political career which ended making him the president of the country, Premadasa used Buddhism in a variety of ways, at times introducing various innovations which were designed to contribute towards achieving his political aspirations.

#### Premadasa's 'Religious Engineering'

President Premadasa realized that the blessings of Asgiriya and Malwatta who were the custodians of the Tooth Relic (which symbolized the pinnacle of spiritual authority of the Buddhist leadership in the country), which all the other leaders both during colonial and post colonial periods were lavishly bestowed with, he would never be able to secure because of his humble caste. On the other hand he realized that going against Buddhism would never help him to achieve his political ambitions. Therefore he entered the right track by introducing novelties to Buddhism which would be to his advantage. Introducing a new Perahara, itself a replica of Kandy's Dalada Perahara in Colombo, could thus be seen as one of Premadasa's innovations in Buddhism as practised in Sri Lanka, to bring legitimacy to his political authority. As expected, the novelties he introduced to Buddhism, the Navam Perahara; the institutionalized Bodhi Poojas which were carried out throughout the length and breadth of the country almost everyday in any temple he could contact (he had a special task force for this activity); the renovation of Buddhist temples at every Gamudava (village re-awakening movement); building large Buddha statues wherever he could, all went a long way in

consolidating his otherwise dubious political authority in the country. Galaboda Gnanissara, the chief incumbent of the Gangaramaya, became his supporter and built the required organisation for this purpose.

Since independence there has been no leader in Sri Lanka who brought Buddhism and political leadership so close together. In the case of SWRD Bandaranaike, in 1956 Buddhism was used as a vehicle for political power — and once he attained power during his short period of office as Prime Minister he tried to disentangle himself from it with predictable results. But in the case of Premadasa, once he came to power he used

Gangaramaya at Hunupitiya played a leading role behind the scenes in this religious activity which brought together state and Buddhism to a very close partnership. This obviously put an end to the close link between the state leaders and the Dalada Maligawa, which up to that time claimed unchallenged allegiance of the political leadership in the country. Thus Gangaramaya symbolizes the changes that came over the link between Buddhism and the political leadership in the country, apart from acting as a catalyst in the change itself.

Buddhism to consolidate his power base and never tried to de-link himself from it. Perhaps this led to the erosion of the traditional link between the UNP and the Catholic Church which contributed its share to the decisive victory of the PA in 1994. After Premadasa became the President in 1988 he advanced a further step in the above mentioned activities. Among other activities, the construction of the Golden canopy at the Dalada Maligawa; the construction of Buddha statues at Bahirawa Kanda (Kandy) and Maligawila; construction of Buddhist temples at every annual celebration held for Gam Udaya (re-awakening of villages); identifying impoverished temples and renovating them; making arrangements to admit 2300 into the Buddhist order of monks and organizing Buddhist female lay devotees (Silmata) could be regarded as some further examples of Premadasa's Political Buddhism.

Gangaramaya at Hunupitiya played a

leading role behind the scenes in this religious activity which brought together state and Buddhism to a very close partnership. This obviously put an end to the close link between the state leaders and the Dalada Maligawa, which up to that time claimed unchallenged allegiance of the political leadership in the country. Thus Gangaramaya symbolizes the changes that came over the link between Buddhism and the political leadership in the country, apart from acting as a catalyst in the change itself.

In the final analysis, what does all this mean? From the time of the advent of Buddhism into the Island in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, a close link was established between the Buddha Sasana and the state. Historically, during the relatively more recent past, perhaps over the last thousand years when the country was repeatedly subjected to foreign invasion and domination initially by the South Indians and later by Europeans, the link between the Sinhala leadership and Buddhism thrived — and this was symbolized by the king, the leader of the Sinhala people, becoming the protector of the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. Even the South Indian dynasty which managed to take over the Kandyan throne by marriage links, became devotees of Buddhism and remained loyal to Buddhism to their last days. This link became so close during the Kandyan kingdom that the temple which housed the Tooth Relic came to be known as the Palace of Tooth Relic and was the adjunct to the Royal Palace in Kandy.

Since independence, political parties always used the Sangha to woo the electorate but the state kept a distance from the sangha in order to keep or to gain the support of other religious groups. Therefore the "Palace of Tooth Relic" which symbolizes the traditional unity of state and religion of the Sinhala people, was allowed to remain in the hills of Kandy. Mr. Premadasa was quick to see the capabilities of the chief incumbent of Gangaramaya and the heavy patronage the latter received from the Buddhist business community in Colombo. Even at this stage the chief incumbent at Gangaramaya was involved in activities to promote the material well being of the socially deprived youth by providing them with economically and socially needed skills. Mr. Premadasa was quick to see the opportunities in cultivating a leader who represented the interests of both the rich and poor Sinhala Buddhists and who was no political threat to him. Why not promote him and his establishment so that the unity of state and religion is established without the Palace of the Tooth Relic — the leaders of which never gave Premadasa the blessings that the leader of the country deserved from them?



# THREE SUGGESTIONS TO THE TIGERS

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**T**he ambition of the LTTE is to gain political power over the Tamil people of the North, and retain it by maintaining and consolidating. Can this political ambition be a reality? It cannot so long as it pursues the strategy of war and violence. What suggestions can be openly and fearlessly placed before the LTTE, whose members are all citizens of the State of Sri Lanka? The hope that the LTTE will swing back to the national, democratic mainstream sooner than later, cannot be ruled out.

## Regionalism and the State

The first step that the LTTE should adopt is to see the regional issues and problems of the Tamil people within a national perspective. It was the golden advice that the DMK of Tamil Nadu paid heed to. The strategy that the LTTE adopted hitherto, was to view the regional problem within a global perspective: it constituted the formation of a Eelam, a separate, sovereign, independent state that can command recognition in the global political arena. The international public opinion has always indicated that political strategies of violence and destruction would not be fruitful. The policy option in favour of peace, unity and stability will engender democracy and good governance, and will be appreciated by the international community. The LTTE, too, will gain two significant benefits:

First, the LTTE will earn the support and appreciation of the people of the world. World opinion will swing in favour of the LTTE if they adopt the democratic parliamentary process, and integrate themselves into the mainstream of national parliamentary politics, and become the legitimate representatives of the people. The heads of governments and States will extend them aid and assistance in order to assist the people whom they represent.

Secondly, the people of the native land, too, both the Sinhalese and the Tamils,

will extend their co-operation and friendship. The unity and integrity of the country will be preserved. The region, it seeks represent, will not be marginalised, but integrated and supported, ensuring longevity, rapid growth and integral development.

The State is a unit in the world system, and it exists as a member together with several other states interacting and interrelating with one another in order to achieve a common objective of peace and harmonious co-existence. The LTTE cannot receive the support of other states if it fails to think of resolving regional issues within a national perspective.

## The Tamil-Nadu example

The appropriate example to explicate the need for the resolution of a regional conflict within a national perspective can be derived from the strategy, adopted by the leaders of the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu. The pioneering efforts of creating Tamil Nadu may be attributed to the policy option, pursued by the former Chief Minister, Mr Annadurai in 1962, who succeeded E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar), the founder of the DMK.

Periyar was an atheist, who joined the Indian Congress Party, and subsequently, departed from it to pursue his political interests. He initiated a social reform movement, and campaigned against social injustice: he protested against the Brahmin preponderance in the Indian policy, and believed that the imparting of religious rituals should be open to all. He set an example by officiating religious ceremonies; He did not accept the supremacy of Sanskrit language, but weakened its influence by emphasising the deed for the use of Tamil language and culture. The British rule, in place of the native elite who disregarded the needs of the regions, was acceptable to him, and he was an admirer of the Republic of Soviet Union, owing to its advocacy of values of equality and justice.

Periyar and his successor Annadurai

pursued vigorously the strategy of regional secessionism. It took a long process for Annadurai to realise that a separate, independent state can do more harm than good for the Tamil community of South India. In 1962, Annadurai decided to give up the separatist call, and withdrew the secessionist tendency. He opted to link with the Central Government and function as an integral unit of the political system of India. Annadurai's wise decision engendered an all-Indian identity to the South Indian Tamil Community, and since then, they were able to participate in the joys and sorrows of India, enjoying citizenship and equal rights.

The specific event that opened the eyes of Tamil Nadu leaders, and caused a spark of enlightenment in their minds, was the Indo-China War. It was an externally induced factor that provided the remarkable all-Indian identity. Divided we perish united we stand' was the public opinion that spread towards all four corners of the Indian policy. The Tamil population of Tamil Nadu wished to enjoy the equal status, granted to all Indians. The decision enabled them, in the eyes of the world, to secure recognition as the citizens of all-India, the largest democratic State in the world.

## Relations with the natives

The second policy option that ought to adopt is to direct its eyes on the people of their native land rather than any other states. The LTTE should not regard the Sihala people as their arch enemy, and in effect, try to become friendly with the Tamils of Tamil Nadu, or those of another country. LTTE must pursue creative measures, and adopt constructive and friendly relations with all ethnic groups in the country with whom they are compelled to co-exist. If the LTTE cannot establish friendly relationship with its own native ethnic groups, then it is hard to establish a genuine, friendly relationship with those who are outside. But, even if their relations with the foreign people are cordial and successful, they must be looked at cautiously, because they may be



associated with sinister motives to accentuate their national interest. The Latin proverb, *Timeo danavos ex dona ferentes*, I fear the Greeks even when they carry gifts, can be cited as an illustration to clarify this point. "Charity begins at home"; "What you are now, you will be later"; are other sayings that should enlighten the LTTE. The challenge before the LTTE is to do what is most difficult: to establish cordial relations with all native ethnic groups, an issue that deserves no escape. The LTTE can, only then, achieve what it is hoping. The tasks before the LTTE is to adopt an indigenous, national-oriented strategy of establishing relations with all ethnic groups of the Sri Lankan polity, and try and win them over to its side.

It is gratifying to observe the perspective of the LTTE concerning India and other big states, that it does not intend to be dependent on them, but would rely on their own efforts. This policy option must be expanded so that right relationships with all the people of the native country may be established. The ambition to establish relationship with Tamil Nadu is going to be futile, because Tamil Nadu will not separate itself from the Central Government. After the alleged Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, the prospects of being friendly are remote. The aim of Tamil Nadu is to seek the assistance of the Centre Government to develop its own region. Deve Gowda's government has granted four portfolios to the regional state of Tamil Nadu with a view to eliciting support.

The LTTE can pursue a similar strategy of establishing link with the Central Government of their native country in order to be an integral part of the country in which they were born and bred; they can, then enjoy the same benefits, accorded to all citizens.

### Peace and democracy

The third policy option, is that the LTTE must adopt is to eschew war and embrace democracy and peace. The reason for this option is derived from the historical experiences of other states in the world. The most recent display of the transition from armed struggle to negotiation for a parliamentary strategy is the meeting between the President of the Philippines and the Muslim separatist leader. The reason for the cessation of the twenty four year-old internal war is revealed in the

slogan of the rebel leader "Peace now than NEVER".

In world history and international relations wars, were fought vigorously for a shorter and longer periods. There had been 100 years of war and 30 years of war. But, in the midst of pitch darkness, an oil lamp can be lit to show its light: resolutions were found for the most intractable issues and conflicts. The ethnic problem, in this country, will be resolved one day, sooner or later, but it is not prudent to postpone the birth of the day of light any longer. If it is certain to arrive, let it arrive now, and sooner than later.

The habit of procrastinating the resolution of ethnic conflict is not a mark of a matured politician or political party.

### LESLIE...

(Cont. from page 18)

The newly weds made their first home in De Fonseka place, Bambalapitiya. Apart from politics they shared a love for reading, singing and dancing. Leslie had taught Vivie French songs and they would sing together accompanied by Vivie on the piano. Vivie's love for dogs and her passion for the theatre, however, she could not share with Leslie. While Leslie did not dislike dogs, he was not too fond of them either — even though they always had dogs with them. For drama and the theatre Leslie hardly had the time owing to political activity. Politics were to take up all of his time and all of hers too. Even this initial period of being together was very brief.

In the following year Vivienne was to have their first child and Leslie was already in hiding as the LSSP had been made illegal and its leadership was on the wanted list. The party had also split in Dec/Jan of 1939/40. Several of the leaders were in custody or in self-exile in India. It was a period of great tension. In one of Leslie's hiding places was a couple as caretakers, who also looked after him and took care of him. Leslie's identity was not known to them. The woman was intrigued by the nocturnal habit of the gentleman, for she had observed that he always stayed indoors and never even stepped outside during the day. His occasional visitor and his travel was always at night. One day curiosity got the better of her and on one of Vivie's clandestine visits to Leslie she was asked why the gentlemen had such odd habits. Without hesitation Vivie replied "he has

To procrastinate the resolution, or the perpetuation of the war, means that the hardship, sufferings and destruction, perpetrated on the people and property, will continue for many months or years. The sooner the resolutions arrive, better it is for the progress of the people, whom the LTTE is representing.

The adoption of these three policy options will facilitate the forward march of the LTTE's pursuit of political power. The failure to re-orient its past policies in relation to these three policy options by reflecting upon them profoundly, will lead to the LTTE's disadvantage. If LTTE's main aim is to seek power, and not destruction, then it is wiser for its theoreticians to realize the need for peace, and decided to devise new political strategies in the interest of its people. ■

committed murder". That afforded safe passage for sometime until yet another place could be found for him.

Days prior to her confinement Vivie desperately wanted simply to get a glimpse of Leslie whose movements were now even further restricted because the search for them by the state was intensified. With the police dogging her footsteps for just such an eventuality, the 'meeting' was arranged at a most public place — the Mt. Lavinia beach. The 'meeting' was to be a passing glance at each other, nothing more. On the appointed evening Vivie saw Leslie, face coloured for disguise. Leslie knew Vivie would be upset at the whole turn of events for themselves as they approached the birth of their first child. "Keep your chin up" whispered Leslie as he passed his beloved Vivienne. She never forgot his advice. Thereafter as she braved each and every hurdle in her path, she also remembered to keep her chin up.

For the British Police the birth of Leslie's first child was an event at which they were certain of being able to nab him. For LSSPers like Reggie Senanayake, it was another opportunity to fool the British. Vivie, notwithstanding recent motherhood, was a game. So all tall and 'fair' men — friends, party members, supporters, were asked to visit Vivie on the very day the baby was born, clad in 'National dress'. The police was waiting for just such a man to visit her that day. Instead of one, they saw several who fit the description of the man they came to arrest! Fun and triumphant humour over the British was a good antidote for the pain and loneliness of the young mother with her baby.



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called the Janasaviya 15,000 Projects Programme. All these processes were based on a restructured and revalued set of mainly pro-poor assumptions, which were aimed at complementing or putting in place a parallel process to the hitherto single mainline export oriented open economy industrialization process. All of them were predicated on a new people-centred value frame, with participatory planning and social mobilization as core methodologies.

On reflection, the trajectory of the overall Poverty Alleviation process at putting in place a second macro micro strategy leg side by side with the conventional open economy process, presents a pattern ranging from coherence to incoherence to disarray, during the relatively short (less than five year) period of its heyday. The period lasted only till its proclaimed architect and protector was alive. For no sooner he died — on 1st May 1993 — the pro-poor and **alternativist** parts of the vision and practice, which was fundamentally political, began to be rapidly reversed for lack of committed and sensitive support. The order of governance reversed and reverted back to business as usual, whose values were often the anti thesis of what these innovative programmes and processes were about. But the reversal antedates President Premadasa's demise. This brings us to the next set of issues concerning policy sustainability first, and community-NGO-state relations thereafter.

### Policy Sustainability and Community NGO-State Relations

In the case of both issues, it would be useful to talk in terms of a vertical distinction of base and top or elite. At the level of the poor at the base, both the Janasaviya and the Housing processes were respected and believed in by them. A not insignificant number have internalised the values, perspective and direction of this strategic thrust. After all, they were either full "subjects" and "owners" of those processes, or they were in varying stages of becoming subjects and owners. In other words, they recognize, accept and value the pro-poor content of the policies. They are sustaining the pro poor perspective.

Thus the poor have sustained the processes, **even after** the official state level programmes have altered or been halted. As for the Housing process, since it was consistently and densely sustained from 1984-88 by the original leadership,

the acceptance of its norms by the poor are quite universal. Now they know that there is a proven and credible methodology of house construction by the poor themselves. The only lacunae are the lack of clear and coherent initiatives by the support system. This makes the task of the poor unnecessarily difficult. But they will not give up or lose faith in the paradigm.

In the case of Poverty Eradication, the corresponding developments are quite complex. There is an unmistakable and distinctive stirring at the base by the poor to mobilize themselves. This is observable in many parts of the country. Of course, it is more present in those areas where the impact of the original Janasaviya and/or its pro poor offshoots have been deep and of high quality. These trends were first noticeable in the 1990-91 period. The existence of an explicit pro poor national policy of Poverty Eradication with those six pithy Janasaviya values and working principles, provided inspiration and incentives for more aware groups to self-organize. These are communities of poor women and men, who have organized themselves into societies and are engaged in savings and credit and livelihood activities. A good many of them have **not** received any outside funding. Others have — from IRDPs or the NGOs or the Janasaviya Trust Fund (now called the National Development Trust Fund) or another support agency. Inquiries reveal that many of these originate from 1992, 1993 or 1994. What these show is that the Janasaviya process and its larger pro poor thrust has had a lasting catalysing effect. These community processes are independent and community-led. They have been sustained for periods varying from 2-4 years. They are not static, but are expanding their spatial bases. Interestingly, they are inaudible and invisible from the higher levels. Their is a local and community-wide mobilization.

### Elite Response

The response of the top or the elite was quite a contrast. With regard to housing by the poor, there was a fine opportunity to sustain the initial breakthrough and take it forward to newer reaches of attainment. In terms of policy on paper,<sup>1</sup> this new

potential was clearly articulated in the One Point Five Million Houses Programme (1989-94), which followed the MHP. It attempted to draw the lessons of the MHP and both deepen and broaden the earlier phase. In doing so, there was an explicit requirement to **link** the 1.5 MHP with the Janasaviya. This was attempted upto early 1992, but thereafter the commitment dissipated itself. The result was that the 1.5 MHP was denied the opportunity of realizing its true potential, and therefore, ended up as a lacklustre response, policy and programmewise.

With regard to the Janasaviya Programme and the larger framework of pro poor strategy initiatives mentioned above, the elites had a major problem of orienting themselves to the new participatory, poor-centred perspective. The motions of doing so were quite apparent. The rhetoric was being glibly mouthed by the upper echelons of the polity bureaucracy and technocracy. But neither the resilience nor the creativity were forthcoming. The obvious and vital **linkages** between the new macro micro second leg, Janasaviya, and the other sectoral programmes, were forged only rhetorically. The fate of the pro poor policy perspective rested on there being a clear countervailing nucleus in the form of a determined critical mass. This was in spite of there being a totally committed and convinced head of state as President. In other words, the response of the elite was **merely tactical**. For them, pro poor policy was a convenient expedient.

Sri Lanka as a society, especially its elite, turned its back on the new social and economic thinking almost a year after the Insurgency was overcome in late 1989. As things began to normalize, memories of the recent crisis receded, and more seriously, the residual sensitivity to what the crisis was trying to tell this society as to its compulsions for change. The vibrant messages about revitalizing democracy, especially at the grassroots base, empowering the poor, generating a new accumulation and wealth-creating process by the very poor and the less poor, the immense possibilities of new participatory forms of governance and decentralised development administration, the numerous opportunities available for raising productivity in agriculture and forestry, were in the end repudiated by the small-mindedness of a self-proclaimed elite. Its conclusion seemed to be that the systemic crisis was an aberration which had little to do with themselves. ■

1. See *The New Vision, The New Deal*, October 1988, the manifesto placed before the nation by President Premadasa to fight both the Presidential and General Elections. He continued to use this document as the central policy reference of his government throughout his tenure.





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