

Pravāda

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Pravada in contemporary usage has a range of meanings which includes theses, concepts and Propositions.

FAREWELL TO NATIONALISM

Do ethnic questions have ethnic solutions? *Pravada* posed this question in a previous issue and suggested that a solution, at least for Sri Lanka's crisis, ought to be democratic and non-ethnic.

We wish to return to this question once more, particularly in view of the failure of the Parliamentary Select Committee to arrive at a consensus framework for a political settlement. What the Select Committee managed to produce at the end of 1992, after one and half years of deliberations, was not a consensus, but a majority agreement among Sinhalese political parties. The Tamil leaders hastened to cry foul at this unanticipated development and the somewhat intemperate language in which the Tamil response to the Moonesinghe report was couched clearly indicated that the Select Committee had not evolved, even over its long period of existence, into a forum where ethnic minds could meet. It demonstrated quite clearly that if these minds continue to be ethnic ones—Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim—, any negotiating forum was certain to turn into a mere colloquium for the exchange of extravagant rhetoric.

We have repeatedly critiqued the ideologies of Sinhala nationalism and argued for the crucial need to abandon Sinhalese sectarian positions, if Sinhalese society does want to find a way out of the abyss of the present war. At the same time, we feel strongly that a critique of Tamil nationalist politics, re-formulated in a secular and democratic idiom, is required so as to create room for the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people.

As evident in recent statements issued by Tamil political parties presently based in Colombo—otherwise known as the 'democratic' Tamil groups—one crucial problem of their political behaviour is that they have allowed the LTTE to define their own political agenda. It is quite understandable that they have to be mindful of the inevitable wrath of the LTTE if they accept a political package which would be perceived by Prabhakaran as a 'sell-out.' However, this should not necessarily imply that they should try to be more 'Tamil nationalist' than the LTTE. If they want to remain 'nationalist' and find a framework for a solution within the general parameters of Tamil aspirations, they have to be moderate and pragmatist nationalists. Moderation and pragmatism in politics imply, in this context, a political agenda sensitive to political realities that may not accommodate fundamentalist negotiating positions.

Nationalist fundamentalism is a formulation that can capture the essence of the angry outbursts of purer-than-thou rhetoric that some Tamil political leaders deployed when the Moonesinghe and Sirinivasan proposals were being debated. The formulation that 'Merger is Non-negotiable' is the concrete manifestation of this state of political mind. Sitting at the negotiation table with firm and seemingly unbargainable positions could well be a tactical posture; but, when some long-awaited movement begins to occur in a compromise process, continuous resort to original firmness and harping on the original sins of



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others can amount to intransigence. It can very well result in the closing up of openings that do not come by everyday.

This criticism is by no means intended as justifying the parochial Sinhalese arguments being presented to oppose extensive devolution and regional devolutionary autonomy to a unit acceptable to the Tamil masses. What we are really concerned with is the need for a **compromise** that should be located somewhere between the maximalist stands of all parties at the table.

Let us take the crucial issue of merger/non-merger. If Sinhalese and Tamil political parties remain inflexible on their respective exclusivist positions on this issue, then no compromise can conceivably be made. As much as Tamil parties can say that non-merged units would not meet the Tamil people's aspirations and honour, Sinhalese parties can also say that a merger

would not be accepted by the Sinhalese people. This can go on *ad infinitum*. That is precisely why negotiations should work for, and not close the door to, a compromise.

Political compromises, by definition, are made by moderates, not by maximalists. For compromises to be possible, those who negotiate cannot represent the extremisms that have so far haunted our polity. That is why the UNP, the SLFP and other Sinhala parties, if they seriously want a **negotiated settlement** worked out, should denounce and separate themselves from the whole bunch of Sinhalese extremists—*Hela Urumaya*, *Jathika Chinthanaya*, the *Bhumi Putras* and the Sinhalese Defence League. That is also why democratic Tamil political parties should not allow themselves to be inhibited or governed by their own past rhetoric of the maximalist Tamil nationalist discourse. If political parties, to whom history has entrusted the responsibility of finding a negotiated settlement, fail in this endeavour, they will have no one but themselves to blame, because ultimately *bhumiputras* from all ethnic groups will monopolize even the little political space yet available.

Since we are here addressing mainly the democratic Tamil political parties, we wish to point out that their political task should not be confined merely to securing greater devolution within an acceptable spatial unit. Whether they like it or not, their task now encompasses the democratic agenda of the entire Sri Lankan polity. It would certainly be a mistake for them to think that the North-east question is politically enclosed within the Tamil ethnic formation. The real meaning of both the unit and the extent of devolution to North-east will ultimately be determined by the degree of democratization in the structures of the Sri Lankan state and in the entirety of Sri Lankan society. During the separatist project of Tamil nationalism, its exclusive focus was on the Tamil polity. Any post-separatist Tamil project cannot, and should not, be separated from a broad democratic reform agenda which

would invariably include drastic reforms at the center.

Paradoxically, the initiative for a pan-Sri Lankan democratic project too has fallen on the shoulders of democratic Tamil parties, because the Sinhalese parties, as contemporary Sri Lankan political processes testify, have already abdicated that task. Instead of preparing society for a democratic transformation, Sinhalese parties in the opposition are engaged in short term political enterprises that have no significant bearing on the democratic tasks of the day.

The backwardness of the Sinhalese polity is in a way being constantly reinforced by the political indigence of its party, religious and intellectual leaders. This was amply demonstrated by the sheer unwillingness of political leaders to take a clear and unequivocally positive stand on a federalist alternative for Sri Lanka at a time—i.e. November-December, 1992—when Sinhalese society would have been ready to welcome, with relative ease, such a broad reform package. The Sinhalese parties allow themselves to be intimidated by each other and terrorized by minuscule groups of zealous racists, whenever a solution to the ethnic question is in sight. Similarly, certain religious and intellectual leaders, whose professed task is to 'defend the nation'—have come out with the most primitive arguments against a political settlement, thereby exposing the appallingly low depths of their own intellectual destitution, political ignorance and resultant racism.

The question of re-thinking ethnic nationalism thus comes to the fore, over and over again. It is time that Sri Lanka's political debate concerning a solution to the ethnic question liberates itself from nationalist debates. Let ardent nationalists of all ethnic groups debate the primitive arguments that make no contribution at all to Sri Lanka's future. Let democrats among nationalists bid farewell to nationalism in a search for democratic alternatives. **P**

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Unrest Among Professionals

Political astrology is usually a part-time vocation indulged in by many informed individuals, as a new calendar year dawns. No 1993-watcher in Colombo would have failed to include in his predictions his response to the signals sent out by trade unions of professionals during December 1992, or to project their effects into 1993.

First, government surveyors launched a work-to-rule campaign; then, university teachers' unions began to make plans for trade union action commencing in the new year. In the public sector, reports said that professionals' unions were in the process of formulating their demands. All this activity and agitation had one common objective: to demand substantially higher salaries.

Outrageously low salary standards are the hallmark of professional services in Sri Lanka's public sector. Indeed, professionals in the education sector, from universities to government schools, constitute the most ill-paid category of the salaried strata. The unrest among state employed professionals is now developing against the backdrop of a widening chasm, between remunerative returns for employment, in the state and private sectors.

It was not a mere rhetorical point that the university teachers' union made when it contrasted the salaries of university staff with those of private sector executives. Granted that profit-making private enterprises can and do offer attractive remuneration to their management and administrative cadres, still, these wage discrepancies do acquire an added and more visible dimension in the context of privatization and free-market economic reforms.

In the conventional welfare state, which Sri Lanka was until recently, variances between private and public sector salaries were not very wide. Moreover, the numerous welfare measures that were available across the board—in health, education, food, transport and consumer needs—did tend to off-set some of the effects of sectoral disparities of income. These conventional safety nets are no longer available to middle-class salaried groups. In health care for example, while the state hospital system has deteriorated, the expansion of hospital enterprises, run by private capital, caters primarily to the moneyed classes. Private sector employees' hospital bills are met either by employers or subsidised insurance schemes. State sector employees are generally not entitled to such facilities and their incomes hardly meet staggering private hospital bills.

The expansion of the private sector has also given rise to the spread of an affluent executive class, working for private capital. In Colombo, a state sector executive or a university academic can easily be distinguished from a private sector executive; the latter will always carry symbols of affluence—a flashy new car provided by the company with access to unlimited amounts of petrol, expensive clothes and a certain pattern of behaviour that underlines a new sense of social snobbery. On the other hand, university academics with Ph Ds could be seen travelling by bus, usually in a demoralized mood and invariably wearing demodé clothes bought abroad during the previous sabbatical!

Ayodhya! Ayodhya!!

The Hindu fundamentalist onslaught on the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya has sent tidal waves of violence throughout the sub-continent, engulfing neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh as well. In India, the quick denunciation of this act of vandalism by the Rao government and by political parties outside the fundamentalist stream prevented the spread of further mayhem, but peaceful Hindu-Muslim ethnic relations will not be easily reconstituted. The entire Indian polity is no longer that which existed before December 6.

What is immeasurably disturbing in contemporary Indian politics is the rise among Hindus of a majoritarian fundamentalism, which is exceedingly intolerant of and aggressively hostile to other religious and ethnic communities. Such fascistic groupings as the RSS and VHP, and the religio-racist BJP, which had until recently been in the political periphery, have now succeeded in gaining a crucial position in shaping India's political agenda. The BJP is vying for governmental power. The slightly unstable Rao regime may survive with the help of the Communist parties. However, if Advani succeeds in forcing new parliamentary elections, the spectre of ultra-sectarian Hindu parties capturing power at the Centre will haunt the Indian electorate.

The events of Ayodhya are a grave challenge to the secular foundations of the Indian polity. Apart from the fact that a religious place of worship belonging to Muslims was demolished, what was yet thoroughly disturbing is how mobs—so-called volunteers—in their thousands were mobilized to take pride in this utterly insane spectacle. As *India Today* reported: "If there were no implements, the frenzied hordes would have used their bare hands to the same effect, so powerful was the poison that coursed through their veins in those few hours of madness." News photographs of delirious mobs, led by ecstatic demagogues in saffron robes, amply testify to the



deadly combination of religious fanaticism and political villainy.

What is equally disturbing is the fact that Indian society and its political leaders have been unable, over the last few years when the mosque issue has been repeatedly raised, to discuss this on a rational, democratic basis and to arrive at a solution. In fact, all political parties, excepting perhaps those of the Left, have been prevaricating on this issue; they have been afraid to totally alienate the *Hindutva* vote. The recent decision of the government - to rebuild the mosque and to build a temple - is a symbol of this prevarication; even after the catastrophe, the government hesitates to stand firm on its secular basis and seeks instead to placate Hindu mobs. In essence, the assault on the Ayodhya mosque by the BJP and its allies, in defiance of court rulings, was an assault on the secular and democratic foundations of the Indian state.

In Sri Lanka, the majoritarian fundamentalism of Sinhalese-Buddhist extremists has repeatedly raised its head whenever attempts towards a political settlement

of the ethnic question are being seriously discussed. The *Sinhala Lakuna* or the *Dharmadvipaya* of today's Sinhala fundamentalists is exactly what the *Hindutva* of the RSS-VHP-BJP alliance means: the creation of a theocratic state for the ethno-religious majority through anti-minority violence.

It is perhaps due to some resilience in the secular political behaviour of the Sinhalese polity that the Buddhist *bhumiputras* have not yet managed to create religious mayhem in Sri Lanka, despite the inflammatory frenzy with which some Buddhist leaders have been appealing to Sinhalese masses. Some Sunday Sinhalese newspapers—notably, *Divayina*—have been in the forefront of spreading inflammatory propaganda, intended to create ethnic and religious hysteria among Sinhalese Buddhists. One may perhaps feel relieved to note that not a single political party has so far opened its doors to these messengers of ethno-religious hatred—the Amarasekeras, the Iriyagollas, the Jayasuriyas, and the Pannasihas.

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MESSENGERS OF PEACE OR CREATORS OF CHAOS

The Role of Teachers in the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict

[Part Two]

Sasanka Perera

Class Presentation of Teacher # 2:

The review session in the 'tutory' at Nugegoda, Colombo, followed a similar pattern—two one hour sessions per week. The content of the lessons and the purpose of the review was the same as in the previous class in Kandy. I retained the same interviewing rights and permission to sit in while the class was in session. The origins of Sinhalese and Tamils were established from the very outset, and as in the class in Kandy the myths of origin were based on the contemporary popular interpretation of the *Mahawamsa*. The exclusive nature of North Indian ancestry for the Sinhalese and the South Indian ancestry for Tamils was stressed.²⁰ Without much difference from the class in Kandy the establishment and destruction of the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa kingdoms were described while blaming the destruction on the Tamils, and reference was made to the present conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese as a continuation of a historical process of enmities.

At this point the only incidents of student participation occurred. Once again the students' contributions were mostly accounts of anti-Sinhalese atrocities committed by Tamil guerrillas which the students claimed they heard from personal sources and newspapers. The teacher also recounted some stories related to him by refugees he had met in a temple at Kotte. He observed that it was a pity that people who had led good lives had to become refugees in their own land. He also told the students that if the Tamils had genuine grievances they had to be looked into, but that the demand for a separate state as well as equal rights were out of the question. As the majority, the Sinhalese had a legitimate right to a larger share of the country's resources, Sinhala must always be the state language while Buddhism was now in its rightful place as the state religion, as in ancient times. Significantly, he stressed that it was not practical to pack off all the Tamils to Tamil Nadu as they have lived in this country for a long time. But he especially noted that the government must repatriate all estate Tamils and bring back the prosperity of the Kandyan Kingdom.



In the closing stage of the second session a student brought up the question of Indian intervention. The teacher made the following statements in regard to this observation:

This is simply a matter of history repeating itself; the Tamils destroyed our ancient cities, now at their instigation the Indians are repeating the process in the north and east of the country... Recent research has established that the grandfather of the founder of the Sinhala nation was a Sri Lankan and not a lion as the *Mahawamsa* claims or a North Indian with lion strength as others have interpreted (this revelation took me by surprise!). But for examinations you should abide by the *Mahawamsa* interpretation.

Interview with the Students of Teacher # 2:

My interview with this group of students was conducted on similar lines as the earlier interview. My revelations about the South Indian migrations of the Sinhalese were treated with distrust and the students told me that they had seen no such thing in any of their textbooks or in any other sources. One student noted that whether the Sinhalese originated from North India or the south was immaterial in the present context. He noted that today the North Indians and the Tamils in South India and Sri Lanka were enemies of the Sinhalese. While most students murmured agreement, one noted that the teacher's statement regarding new research proving that Prince Vijaya's grandfather was a Sri Lankan was quite significant. Two students mentioned that they had seen an article regarding this in the Sinhala newspaper *Divayina*.

The students were unanimous in their opinion that the Tamils were responsible for the troubles the country faced. Some even claimed that the upsurge in JVP activity was due to Tamil massacres in the north and that the JVP was a Sinhalese response to those atrocities. They also thought that the government and the military were not doing a competent job eliminating the Tamil problem. One female student mentioned that the army was also responsible for a large number of Tamils' deaths. Her cohorts retorted by saying that the army had no option and that if Tamils hurt Sinhalese, the army had a duty to retaliate. In response to my question whether that was not against the principles of Buddhism, one student said confidently that King Dutugemunu, who had killed many Tamils to reunite Sri Lanka and save the Buddhist religion, had apparently descended directly to heaven after his death. No one knew about Dutugemunu's purported respect for Elara (a Tamil). They were also not aware of the controversy that raged in Sri Lanka over the

alleged tomb of Elara ten years ago when it was claimed to be the tomb of Dutugemunu.

Concluding remarks made by the students were similar to those of the students in Kandy. They considered that Tamils have historically been the major cause of most problems Sri Lanka faced.

Interview with Teacher # 2:

As in the previous interview the teacher was interviewed in the absence of students. I reproduce below the relevant parts of the interview in translation:

Q: Do you accept the accuracy of history lessons without question?

A: Generally speaking, the accuracy of those lessons seems quite acceptable. But I wish new research findings such as the one about Prince Vijaya's grandfather being a Sri Lankan were included in the texts. That would make the lessons more interesting and show that we do not blindly follow the *Mahawamsa*.

Q: You can't be serious; the story in the *Mahawamsa* about Vijaya is a myth. The present argument is simply a new version of that myth made in the context of Indian aggression towards Sri Lanka.

A: You cannot disregard these things out of hand. Have you read the report of this new historical revelation?

Q: No. Where can I find it?

A: It was in all the papers. Perhaps you should read these things before calling everything written by Sinhalese historians myths.

Q: In addition to discussions in terms of the social studies lessons do you talk about your views regarding the ethnic conflict.

A: Of course, this is a problem that touches us all. As true patriots we have to tell the younger generation how these things started. Tamil people have grievances and they must be resolved. But they have to be realistic in their demands. This is our country. The Sinhalese came to this land first. They cannot expect to divide it. On the other hand, since we are the majority, we have to have a larger share in resource allocation.

Q: Do you think the security forces are doing a good job in Tamil areas?

A: Yes. There are a lot of deaths. But that is a consequence of war. They (Tamils) started it, they will also have to end it.

Q: Can you remember the Anuradhapura, Kent and Dollar farm massacres?

A: Oh yes. How can one forget those. One of my neighbor's relatives died in the Pettah bomb attack. You may not have been in the country when the Tamils bombed an Air Lanka jet and the Telecommunications Office. A lot of people — our people — died in these attacks.²¹ The terrorists had forewarned all the Tamils in these places to leave before the attacks. Some of our students saw the aftermath of these attacks. Those days, that was all we talked about. Everyone was very angry. Some students even assaulted Tamil employees in my school. I am not a violent man. But I couldn't blame them. You have to understand their emotions. It's their people who get killed.

Q: What about the entire Tamil villages the security forces have wiped out?

A: Well, that is a consequence of war. Besides, most of the military massacre stories in the north are exaggerated versions. I have talked to some people in the army and they say nothing of the sort has happened.

Q: You seem to have a lot of influence over your students. Do you feel that influence is a positive one?

A: They have to be shown the path. It is our duty.

As can be seen, overtly negative ideas are communicated by teachers while discussing Sri lankan history or contemporary politics. History as a subject has not been taught in Sri Lankan schools since the 1960s. Some observers have seen the teaching of history in social studies as inadequate, and there were rumors that the then Minister of Education had intended to re-introduce history as a subject to schools.²² Commenting on the issue, Premachandra Alwis noted that the teaching of history should not simply be the teaching of Sinhalese history.²³ However, so far history has not been re-introduced to schools, and discussions on history in Sinhala medium schools are incorporated within the subjects of Buddhism, Sinhala language and social studies. Buddhism and Sinhala language are taught from grades 1 to 10, whereas social studies are taught from grades 6 to 10.

In this context some writers have argued that students "mature" after grade 11 (inclusive of grade 12 and university) and hence subjects dealing with history should be taught only in these classes. This argument suggests that such a policy would minimize the negative effects of sectarian and incomplete history lessons as students will be able to evaluate facts themselves. This is not a sound argument. First, students do not suddenly "mature" from grade 11 upwards. Maturity is achieved as the result of a long process that is constantly influenced by what stu-

dents have learned before, in school and from society. Second, even after grade 11, and throughout university they remain in a segregated environment. Their teachers who lack proper training also come from similar backgrounds. If teachers play a negative role in inter-ethnic relations, that role does not cease at grade 11.

The Hidden Agenda of Teachers

In addition to teachers who teach Social studies, Buddhism and Sinhala language, others who teach sciences and Mathematics can also transmit signals detrimental to inter ethnic relations. Considering their lack of specialized training and will in handling the challenges of multi-ethnic Sri Lanka, all teachers are capable of transmitting potentially negative signals irrespective of the subjects they teach. These teachers may not get the opportunity to talk about Sinhalese-Tamil conflict in relation to what they teach, but regardless of what they teach, they can always talk about it. In many ways, the influence of this category of teachers is difficult to trace. The influence they exert on their students (in extra- academic matters) will be referred to as the "the hidden agenda of the teacher." With the intention of tracing this source of influence, teachers teaching mathematics, science and economics in grades 11 and 12 were interviewed.²⁴ Forty randomly selected students from their classes were also interviewed.²⁵ All interviews were conducted on an individual basis. The primary focus of the interviews was to determine the following:

1. What are the socio-political views of teachers regarding the ethnic conflict and history in general?
2. Do they discuss their opinions with students during classes even though lesson content has no relation to ethnicity and history?

Of the total sample of 20 teachers interviewed only one accepted that he was a Marxist. This information is significant for two reasons. First, given the brutal government campaign against the JVP in Particular and Marxists in general, This acknowledgement established that the teacher was not suspicious of me and likely to be more forthcoming in his/her answers. Second, except for JVP sympathisers, Sinhalese Marxists are generally sympathetic towards Tamil grievances and hence this teacher's interpretations were likely to be different from those prevalent in the Sinhalese society. He acknowledged that the Tamils had genuine grievances and the armed struggle was the result of not addressing those grievances. He stated that in theory the Tamils had the right of self-determination, but the creation of a separate state for them in Sri Lanka was not practical for security and economic reasons. He also thought that the government should immediately stop the military repression unleashed on Tamils (and Sinhalese in the South) and

open serious negotiations. He viewed the Sri Lankan education system as a 'capitalist' one which perpetuated the ethnic religious and caste differences which made it easier for corrupt regimes to govern the masses (as they were divided). Even though his ideas were quite different from the main-stream thinking he acknowledged that he did not discuss 'politics' in his grade 11 and 12 economics classes. His ideas were generally unpopular among his colleagues and students. Even in times of increased ethnic tensions he did not encourage discussions unrelated to the subject he taught. This was confirmed by the students in his class who claimed that while the other teachers discussed events of national importance, this teacher only concentrated on the lessons. If during times of tension some questions regarding the ethnic conflict or associated problems were raised, the teacher would reportedly say, "this is not a political science class. You learn economics here" and "we don't discuss these things here, go home and read the newspapers." The reluctance to discuss these issues obviously derived from his inability to express his opinions freely without facing severe state repression. This apparently "unfriendly" attitude had also made him one of the most unpopular teachers in grades 11 and 12.

The teacher candidly accepted that expressing his "honest" opinions would "get me into trouble with the authorities." So rather than airing some "dishonest" opinions he preferred not to discuss them at all. Here was a teacher who could have made a difference in at least one class in a minor way. But due to the unsettled nature of the times he had to put his ideals and beliefs on hold while the negative impact of the segregated education system increased. He mentioned that most of his friends in rural areas were also in the same predicament. A number of teachers and at least one university lecturer (as of September 1990) in the south have been arrested, killed or "disappeared" for allegedly indulging in subversive activities (This is in addition to others in this same professional category who had been victimized by the JVP itself).

Of the remainder of the sample (19), 15 discussed "politics in his class regularly. The remaining four said that they express their opinions on issues like ethnic conflict only when such things are brought up in class. Both students and teachers in grades 11 and 12 accepted that almost every day a certain amount of time is spent discussing some politically significant issue or incidents that have emerged recently. Students and teachers have easy access to Sinhala newspapers which publish reports of real or perceived atrocities committed by Tamil groups, various conservative opinions regarding the ethnic conflict, and status reports of successful military operations. There is more than adequate material for discussion. Both students and teachers showed a keen interest to add something new to these stories, heard from a friend or a relative.

The 15 teachers (teaching in Sinhala-medium Buddhist or Christian schools) who acknowledged that they discussed 'politics' regularly in classes regarded it their duty to enlighten students about what was happening in the country. They thought spending some class time on such discussions was justified. The Socio-political views of these teachers varied from hardline (unsympathetic) Sinhalese to marginally moderate (moderately sympathetic) Sinhalese views. However, the majority seemed to be hardliners. It is interesting and even disturbing to note that most opinions between hardliners and marginally moderates were consistent and similar. The only difference was that marginally moderates accepted that Tamils **might** have some grievances and that some military excesses could have contributed to the growth of terrorism in Tamil areas. The similarities in the ideas of hardliners and marginally moderates can be summarized as follows.

1. Tamils have to realize they are a minority; a minority cannot have the same rights as the majority.
2. All our problems are the results of terrorism by Tamil guerrillas and the separatist demand by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). All Tamils have sympathetic feelings towards terrorist and anti-Tamil riots are a national (Sinhalese) reaction against terrorist action.
3. This is the country of the Sinhalese. If Tamils want to live here, they must abide by the rules of the Sinhalese.
4. Tamils are group oriented and do not mix with the Sinhalese. This is another reason why they became a target of attacks. They help themselves and not us.

The four teachers who did not discuss politics unless the subject was brought up by students had similar ideas. The difference was that they were not enthusiastic or forceful in pushing their ideas on extra-academic matters. However, when they did, their ideas had an obvious Sinhalese bias. Interestingly, Catholic-Sinhalese teachers thought that their Tamil counterparts were using religion to de-stabilise the country, a practice which had given Catholicism a bad name among Sinhalese-Buddhists. This view symbolised the growing sensitivity among Christian Sinhalese about the definition of their ethno-religious identity.

The influence of these teachers (of mathematics, economics, sciences) is quite obvious. All students interviewed thought it necessary for teachers to share their opinions with them, and considered it part of the teachers' role. Students found it easier to relate to their teachers if they shared similar opinions on issues like ethnic conflict and religion. Two students from Matara claimed that their



mathematics teacher advised them to join the army to fight terrorists as a "patriotic duty". Two former students who were in grade 12 in 1983 said that their chemistry teacher commented that it was "unpatriotic" of the people in Galle (Galle and Matara are both towns located in the deep Sinhalese South and a traditional source of Sinhalese nationalism) not to have hit the Tamils as hard as in Colombo. A number of former students from a prominent Sinhalese Buddhist boys school in Colombo said that their physics teacher (in 1983) refused to teach (when the anti-Tamil riots began in July) and asked them to show their "jathyalaya" (patriotism) by going to the streets and attacking their enemies, the Tamils. I found at least eight students who heeded the advice of the teacher and joined in the riots. I personally encountered many students from Buddhist and Christian schools in Colombo who participated in the riots of July 1983. In one prominent Buddhist boys school a Tamil employee (a man who had been cleaning the school's toilets for over 14 years) was accused as a spy and assaulted. School authorities made no attempts to control the situation. The former students from a Catholic school in Colombo acknowledged that one of their teachers encouraged them to "take revenge" during the July 1983 riots.

It is quite clear that regardless of what they teach, certain aspects of the hidden agenda of all teachers have the potential to perpetuate ethnic animosities. While some teachers are known to have encouraged "passive tolerance" of other groups, such teachers were relatively few and hence the effect of their work could not be widely felt. The negative role Sinhalese teachers play in perpetuating and enhancing ethnic differences and animosities is doubly effective in the segregated environment in which they teach.

Tamil Teachers in the Ethnic Conflict

Interviewing Tamil teachers and students in the northern and eastern areas was not possible due to the prevalent state of war in those areas. Therefore some teachers and students who had fled to Colombo and Kandy in the Wake of increasing Indian assaults were approached. In addition, Tamil students and teachers from schools in the districts of Kandy and Colombo were interviewed. Overall these interviews proved to be more difficult and less systematic than the ones conducted in Sinhala. Some reasons were:

1. My inability to communicate in Tamil and the inability of most of the students and teachers to communicate in Sinhala or English.
2. Lack of interpreters or their inability.
3. The fact that I was a Sinhalese asking "awkward" questions made the interviewees uneasy.

For these reasons (especially the third) most interviews were conducted in groups which I thought would give the subjects more confidence to be as expressive as they could. Twenty five students and fifteen teachers were involved in these initial interviews. As a follow-up, four teachers and ten students were interviewed individually. This group was selected on two grounds; students and teachers who appeared to be comfortable in group interviews and individuals who were directly and personally introduced to me by mutually trusted friends. While the latter interviews were more penetrating, they also helped me verify the validity of group interviews.

My basic intention was to assess the teachers' opinions about the historical development of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, its present state and how the teachers transmitted their ideas to students. One of the four teachers taught Hinduism to grade 8 students while another taught 11 and 12. Of the ten students, Three were from grade 8 and four from grade nine. These seven students and two teachers (teaching Hinduism and Social studies) were from the Kandy area. The remaining two teachers were from Jaffna and Batticaloa. The remaining three students were all from grade 12 science classes in Jaffna. However, none of them were students of the last two teachers. The grade 11 and 12 teachers and students were not interviewed to ascertain whether the teachers directly influenced this specific group of students. But rather, these interviews were intended to demonstrate what other matters teachers discuss in classes other than their designated subjects, and how much teachers can help students in forming the ideas they had about the ethnic conflict and Sri Lankan history. Under conditions of war it is not always easy to find teachers and students from a single class or school because a refugee population is necessarily scattered.

In the group interviews both teachers and students (without exception) thought that learning Sinhala by Tamil students (and teachers) was a good idea. They also suggested that Sinhalese students should learn Tamil so that the two groups could communicate easily. Soon it was apparent that these positive ideas were expressed in group interviews only because people did not want to be labelled "racists" or "narrow minded." The initial idealism underwent some clear changes in individual interviews when opportunities were available to express one's ideas without restraint. Some Tamil students from the Kandy area were already familiar with some basic Sinhala. They considered that knowledge adequate for their daily needs. Those from Jaffna spoke no Sinhala at all. They considered that Sinhala was useful only if it would lead to economic benefits. When it was pointed out that they were refugees living in a Sinhalese area, I was told that they were with their relatives and there was no pressing need to learn Sinhala. Their main argument was that no Tamil should learn Sinhala if the Sinhalese showed no interest in learning Tamil.



Tamil teachers also changed their views between the group and individual interviews. Their final opinion was that it was not practical to teach Sinhala in Jaffna and Batticaloa schools (meaning schools in the north and east). They thought that students could learn it by themselves but that it should not be part of the curriculum. This was one of the most disturbing aspects to emerge from the research. The majority of Sinhalese and Tamil teachers did not like the idea of teaching Tamil and Sinhalese students each others' languages. Moreover, most students were not interested in learning anyway. This I believe will remain a major hurdle in any attempt to find a reconciliation. If teachers change their hardline attitude towards languages, it will be easier to persuade students to learn each others' languages. The indifference of teachers and educators has been one of the major problems confronting the minor attempts that were made to teach Tamil and Sinhala to students of opposing ethnic groups (Schwarz 1983: 13, Nadesan 1971:91). The refusal of Tamil teachers and educationists to introduce and teach Sinhala in Tamil schools (Nadesan 1971:91) has contributed significantly to intensifying ethnic conflict.

The teaching of history in these schools has played a similar role. This is mainly the result of misconceptions that have been transmitted in the name of history. We have already seen how this process takes place in Sinhala-language schools. Interestingly, or perhaps predictably this same process is duplicated in Tamil-language schools with the same negative consequences. However, there is one significant difference. Tamil-language lesson plans and textbooks designed by the Ministry of Education and published by the department of Educational publications (like their Sinhalese counterparts) contain no specific anti-Sinhalese sentiments. They simply avoid talking about Sinhalese culture and people with very few exceptions. This applies in teaching the Tamil language and Hinduism. When it comes to Social studies what is mostly presented is a Sinhalese version of Sri Lankan history despite some allusions of moderation... a history of conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils. It is here that Tamil teachers make their most significant contributions to building prejudice. By their own admission (according to both students and teachers) the most intense and extended discussions and teaching sessions are centered around the history sections.

All students and teachers without exceptions observed that the official history lessons (in social studies) which

had to be learned and which the teachers had to teach, were biased. But these lessons had to be learned and taught for the simple purpose of passing examinations. For both students and teachers this was a bitter experience and it was not surprising that all teachers interviewed thought that it was their duty to show the students reality as it was.²⁶ In this light the time spent and the interest shown in reinterpreting Sri Lankan history, even though it had no practical value in terms of formal education (eg. passing examinations) and employment generation, is not unusual.²⁷ Given the background of the teachers, (products of segregated education and segregated social existence) this reinterpretation was not objective but rather a biased Tamil version (Like the Sinhalese version). Tamil ethnic pride, cultural superiority and bravery were glorified. Most reinterpretations told of a history of violent conflict with the Sinhalese and a history of brave Tamil kings who valiantly fought against Sinhalese repression. The contemporary ethnic conflict was seen as the latest phase of a two-thousand-year tradition of fighting for Tamil independence.

The majority of Sinhalese and Tamil teachers did not like the idea of teaching Tamil and Sinhalese students each others' languages. Moreover, most students were not interested in learning anyway. This I believe, will remain a major hurdle in any attempt to find a reconciliation.

Within such a context of Tamil students, like their Sinhalese counterparts, do not get a rational picture of history or contemporary social existence. What is intriguing here is the remarkable consistency in the myths and symbols that teachers transmit to students. Unlike Sinhalese teachers, Tamil teachers do not have any "official" books to guide them. By their own admission they did not rely on any particular source for their information.

The students admitted that they learned some aspects of their history from their parents, but they made particular note of the fact that the ideas based on "new research" came mostly from their teachers. What has consistently been called "new research" contains some of the most ethnocentric elements in the process of Tamil reinterpretation of history, and helped most young Tamils to perceive their Sinhalese counterparts as enemies.

It is important to understand the nature of this "new research" and the significant role teachers have played in transmitting these ideas to students. From their parents, family and society in general the students have already learned of a "conflict-filled past" and they personally experience a violent present. The teachers give life, color and added respectability to these generalised notions. Similar to the Sinhalese claim based on the perception that they were "the first to arrive in the island," the Tamils also claim the whole island for themselves and assert that they were in Sri Lanka long

before the Sinhalese. All the students from Jaffna and the majority from Kandy explained that the Mahawamsa description of Devanam Piyatissa (who welcomed Buddhism to Sri Lanka) being a Sinhalese was wrong. It was claimed that he was a Tamil Hindu king called Devanapriya Theesan. Eight students claimed that the information came to them via their teachers. The remainder claimed that they read it in book as well as in Tamil guerrilla literature.²⁸ They also stated that these revelations were discussed among themselves as well as with their teachers. This particular trend indicated the pattern in which most materials relevant to the ethnic conflict were transmitted to the students. While some had access in the outer society, most learned about them from their teachers.

Upon enquiring what difference it makes whether Devanam Piyatissa was Tamil or Sinhalese, the opinions expressed by most students and teachers were mutually consistent. Their opinion was that it was important to establish the fact that Tamils were in Sri Lanka long before the Sinhalese, thereby gaining legitimate grounds to assert their rights.

Of the four teachers who were closely interviewed, three said the matter regarding Devanampiyatissa was Tamil or Sinhalese, the opinions expressed by most students and teachers were mutually consistent. Their opinion was that it was important to establish the fact that Tamils were in Sri Lanka long before the Sinhalese, thereby gaining legitimate grounds to assert their rights.

Of the four teachers who were closely interviewed, three said the matter regarding Devanam Piyatissa was brought to their attention by some of their colleagues. One said he read about it in the "new research findings" of Satchi Ponnambalam.²⁹ However, Ponnambalam had not presented any "new research findings." He, like most Sinhalese and Tamil nationalist writers, compiled a variety of new myths and reinterpreted old ones. Myth-making is the most vibrant aspect of the Tamil reinterpretation of history. The nature and reasons for myth-making has to be understood in the context of Sinhalese nationalist writings and the making of Sinhalese myths. Sinhalese myths appeared much earlier. The preponderance of Tamil political myths since the late 1970s was a political and nationalist ideology. By their very nature Tamil myths were created in opposition to Sinhalese myths. These myths were articulated and popularised by a

number of expatriate Tamil writers in the 1980s. What is surprising is that most of these writings appeared in English. Yet, Tamil-medium students and teachers are well aware of them. Even though I could not find any Tamil translations, it seems reasonable to think there were many, given the widespread knowledge and belief in these myths among students and teachers. It is also clear that teachers were a significant channel of spreading myths.

Let us return to the topic of Devanam Piyatissa. I pointed out to those who were selected (teachers and students) for the extended interviews that no clearly defined Sinhalese or Tamil ethno-cultural identities evolved until the 9th or even 12th century A.D. But Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka (probably) in 247 B.C. So one cannot with any degree of accuracy claim that the king was specifically Sinhalese or Tamil. I was politely reminded that this simply could not be. A number of defensive arguments (based deeply in myth and not fact) were introduced to defeat my arguments. I reproduce below (in summary) the collective arguments put forward by these teachers and students:

Myth-making is the most vibrant aspect of the Tamil reinterpretation of history. The nature and reasons for myth-making has to be understood in the context of Sinhalese nationalist writings and the making of Sinhalese myths, which appeared much earlier.

arguments (based deeply in myth and not fact) were introduced to defeat my arguments. I reproduce below (in summary) the collective arguments put forward by these teachers and students:

1. Tamils always had a distinct identity though the Sinhalese did not. Tamils of Sri Lanka are heirs to a great Dravidian³⁰ civilisation which has its roots in Mohenjodaro and Harappa civilisations. This civilisation spread to South India and as far as the whole of Sri Lanka. As examples they claimed that Sinhala place names like Matara and Panadura were corruptions of the Tamil names Maturai and

Panadurai. Sinhalese are seen as later invaders of the island or Tamils who changed their identity after adopting Buddhism. Whatever the variation, the Sinhalese are considered to lack pedigree as well as cultural refinement.

2. The Mahawamsa is generally considered a collection of myths. It has however been used by Tamil writers when expedient. Students and teachers also regularly exhibited this rather strange double standard. Ramayana and Mahabaratha are used as historical sources which they clearly are not. Like the Sinhalese in relation to the Mahawamsa the Tamils have used legends as empirical fact. The Ramayana is supposed to show an early Tamil presence long before the Vijaya (Sinhalese) invasion. King Rawana is described as a "Tamil Yaksha King."³¹

3. Kings generally accepted as Sinhalese (eg., Parakrama Bahu I) by most Sri Lankan historians are considered Tamil. This apparently shows the manner in which the Mahawamsa has distorted facts.

The knowledge of "history" as summarised above and transmitted to Tamil students does not discuss the cultural similarities between Sinhalese and Tamils or the long periods of cooperation which have existed between the two groups. This is consistent with Sinhalese historiography and myth-making.

Within the framework of this "knowledge" there is no reason or any way for young Tamils to relate to their Sinhalese counterparts except in opposition. To them in addition to the Sinhalese's lack of pedigree, they are seen as arch-enemies of the Tamils who have constantly tried to destroy the "great Dravidian race and culture" for over two thousand years. No reconciliation is seen possible with them in the present conflict. All these negative transmissions are made by teachers who have no training in handling the challenges of a plural society in the highly charged atmosphere of the segregated classroom. Given the hardened attitudes prevalent in their society, these teachers, like their Sinhalese counterparts, also do not have the will or much needed moral support to deviate from building prejudice.

With the type of knowledge outlined above, the average Tamil students assessment of the ethnic conflict and his conclusions are fairly predictable. Most students and teachers thought that the massacres of Sinhalese peasants in the north and east were regrettable. They thought

that it was an unavoidable consequence of the war. They pointed out that the Northern and Eastern provinces were the last remaining traditional homelands of the Tamils (the rest have been colonized by the Sinhalese and that no Sinhalese had any right to be there. So if the only way to reclaim the traditional homeland was to eliminate the colonisers, it had to be done. Tamils living in other parts of the country had a right to live in those areas because "all of Sri Lanka was former Tamil territory." Once again, as with Sinhalese teachers and their students, ideas among Tamils varied from hardline to marginally moderate. It must be borne in mind that in both groups hardliners predominated.

It is clear then, regardless of their respective ethnicities, Tamil and Sinhalese teachers play an active role in deteriorating relations between the two groups. It is equally clear that they have achieved this singularly inglorious achievement by defining and interpreting biased history, myths and symbols and communicating these ideas to their students. Finally, teachers have been helped in their negative role, by the school structure, the social background of teachers, lack of will and training, and the absence of national policy to use teachers as promoters of inter-ethnic understanding. Until Sri Lankan policy makers accept the reality of this predicament and evolve a rational and coherent national policy to reverse this trend, teachers will happily continue to play the negative role they play at present. It is a pity that Sri Lanka uses one of the most potent weapons against ethnic and other sectarian conflicts for precisely the opposite purpose.

Notes

20. Interestingly, the *Mahawamsa* itself does not refer to such a geographically or ethnically exclusive myth of origin for the Sinhalese. For what it is worth, the original myth connects the Sinhalese with the Veddahs (through Vijaya's first marriage to Kuveni) and South Indians (through Vijaya's second and "legitimate" marriage to a princess from **South Madurai**).
21. This has been claimed by many Sinhalese even though I was unable to find evidence to corroborate it.
22. *Divayina*, November, 13 1983/ H.G. Charles, *Divayina*, November 21, 1983.
23. *Divayina*, December 1, 1983.
24. The sample of 20 teachers was selected from Christian and Buddhist schools from the cities of Matara (Southern Province), Colombo (Western Province) and Kandy (Central Province).
25. The 40 students included both Christians and Buddhists.

26. The interviewed teachers thought that all their colleagues agreed on this matter. While this may sound like an exaggerated statement, on the whole I believe that it has more validity than would appear.
27. However, these reinterpretations would have been extremely useful for parallel examinations conducted by the LTTE!
28. While many statements could be traced in press releases and in foreign newspapers attributed to rebel sources, I was unable to locate organised reinterpretations of Tamil history among rebel literature.
29. See S. Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: National Question and the Tamil Struggle*, London 1983. p. 20.
30. Like the Sinhalese nationalists using the term "Aryan", the Tamil nationalists use the term "Dravidian" to denote an ethnic group rather than a linguistic group.
31. Twenty years ago in Sri Lanka Rawana was no one's hero. Today the Sinhalese also claim him as their own.

The following is the text of the T.B. Davie Academic Freedom lecture delivered at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, May 22, 1991, by Edward Said, Parr Professor of English Literature at Columbia University.

IDENTITY, AUTHORITY, AND FREEDOM: THE POTENTATE AND THE TRAVELLER

Several weeks ago, as I was reflecting on what I might say at this occasion. I encountered a friendly colleague, whom I asked for ideas and suggestions. "What is the title of your lecture?" he asked. "Identity, Authority, and Freedom," I replied. "Interesting," he responded. "You mean, therefore, identity is the faculty, authority is the administration, and freedom . . ." Here he paused meaningfully. "Yes?" I asked. "Freedom," he said, "is retirement."

This prescription is altogether too cynical, and in its flippancy reflected what I think both of us felt that the issue of academic freedom in a setting like this one here in Cape Town is far more complex and problematic for most of the usual formulas to cover with any kind of adequacy.

Not that academic freedom has been a great deal easier to define, discuss, and defend for North American intellectuals. I hardly need to remind you that discussion concerning academic freedom is not only different in each society but also takes very different forms, one version of which in American universities today concerns the nature of the curriculum. For at least the past decade, a debate has been going on between those on the one hand who feel that the traditional curriculum of the liberal arts - in particular the core of Western humanities courses - has been under severe attack, and those on the other side, who believe that the curriculum in the humanities and the social sciences should more directly reflect the interests of groups in society who have been suppressed, ignored, or papered over with high-sounding formulas. For it is a fact that everywhere in the United States, which is after all an immigrant society made up of many Africans and Asians as well as Europeans, universities have finally had to deal with non-Western societies, with the literature, history, and particular concerns of women, various nationalities, and minorities; and with unconventional, hitherto untaught subjects such as popular culture, mass communications and film, and oral history. In addition, a whole slew of controversial political issues like race, gender, imperialism, war, and slavery have found their way into lectures and seminars. To this extraordinary, almost Copernican change in the general intellectual consciousness, responses have often been very hostile. Some critics have reacted as if the very nature of the university and academic freedom have been

threatened because unduly politicized. Others have gone further; for them the critique of the Western canon, with its panoply of what its opponents have called Dead White European Males (for example, Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth), has rather improbably signalled the onset of a new fascism, the demise of Western civilization itself, and the return of slavery, child marriage, bigamy, and the harem.

In most cases, however, the actual changes in the canon that reflect the interests of women or African or Native Americans have been pretty mild: Western humanities courses now often include Jane Austen or Toni Morrison, and they might also have added novels by Chinua Achebe, Garcia Marquez, and Salman Rushdie. There have been a few extreme cases of silliness: younger teachers and scholars publicly attacking more senior scholars as racists, or pillorying their peers for not being "politically correct." Yet all of this discussion and controversy underlines the general fact that what goes on in school or university is somehow privileged, whether on the one hand it is supposed to appear "above" parochial interests, changes in fashion or style, and political pressure, or on the other hand, whether the university is meant to be engaged intellectually and politically with significant political and social change, with improvements in the status of subaltern or minority populations, and with abuses of power and lapses in morality, which the university must remedy, criticize, and align itself in opposition to.

Search for Academic Freedom

Although a thousand qualifications and conditions can enter into a discussion of either or both sides, one assumption is common to both: the idea that the status of university or school as well as what goes along with them intellectually and socially is special, is different from other sites in society like the government bureaucracy, the workplace, or the home. I believe that all societies today assign a special privilege to the academy that, whether the privilege exempts it from intercourse with the everyday world or involves it directly in that world, says that unique conditions do, indeed ought to, prevail in it. To say that someone is educated or an educator is to say something having to do with the mind,



with intellectual and moral values, with a particular process of inquiry, discussion, and exchange, none of which is encountered as regularly outside as inside the academy. The idea is that academies form the mind of the young, prepare them for life, just as - to look at things from the point of view of the teacher - to teach is to be engaged in a vocation or calling having principally to do not with financial gain but with the unending search for truth.

These are very high and important matters, and for those of us who have made education our life, they testify to the genuine aura surrounding the academic and intellectual enterprise. There is something hallowed and consecrated about the academy: there *is* a sense of violated sanctity experienced by us when the university or school is subjected to crude political pressures. Yet, I believe, to be convinced of these genuinely powerful truths is not entirely to be freed of the circumstances - some would call them encumbrances - that impinge on education today, influence our thinking about it, and shape our efforts in the academy. The point I want to make is that as we consider these situational or contextual matters, the search for academic freedom, to which this occasion is so manifestly dedicated, becomes more important, more urgent, more requiring of careful and reflective analysis. So whereas it is universally true that contemporary societies treat the academy with seriousness and respect, each community of academics, intellectuals, and students must wrestle with the problem of what academic freedom in that society at that time actually is and should be.

Let me speak briefly about the two parts of the world that I know most about. In the United States, where I live and work, there has been a distinct change in the academic climate since I was a student a generation ago. Until the late 1960s, it was assumed by most people that what took place within university precincts was removed from any steady, or collaborative, or - in the worst case - collusive association with the world outside. Yet because the experience of war in Vietnam was so powerful, and because there was so much traffic between the academy and the institutions of government and power, the veil was rent, so to speak. No longer was it taken for granted that political scientists or sociologists were sage-like theoreticians or impartial researchers; many of them were discovered to be working, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly, on such topics as counterinsurgency and "lethal research" for the State Department, the CIA, or the Pentagon.

Yet after the university's apartness was seen as an idea to have been abandoned, an equal and opposite set of reactions set in. It became almost a cliché that the university was to be regarded only as an arm of the government, that it reflected only the interests of corporations and establishment power and should therefore be

wholly transformed into a place where students would be educated as reformers or revolutionaries. Relevance was the new watchword. And while a new set of materials was introduced into the academy for the first time - I refer once again to women's studies, minority studies, studies that deal with the effect of war, racism, and gender oppression - there did in fact seem to be a new worldliness in the university that denied it the relative aloofness it once seemed entitled to.

As a reaction to all this, academic freedom was the phrase given to the movement that claimed to want to return the university to a now very much regretted sort of impartiality to, and distance from, the everyday world. But here all sorts of exaggerations and polemical distortions were introduced. During the 1980s, the American university was portrayed as being in the possession of a Marxist revolutionary conspiracy. This of course was a ludicrously false notion. Also, the argument put forward in the name of academic freedom claimed that because so many new courses and ideas had been introduced into the traditional curriculum, the university's age-old standards had diminished, had fallen prey to outside political pressures. To restore the university's true freedom from everyday life meant returning to courses, ideas, and values that derived exclusively from the mainstream European thinkers - Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Descartes, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Bacon, Locke, and so on. One of the most famous and commercially successful books of the past decade was *The Closing of the American Mind*, a long diatribe against an assorted set of villains, including Nietzsche, feminism, Marxism, and Black Studies; the author of this work, who had been a professor at Cornell University when for a short time the university had been shut down by a group of armed African-American students, was so embittered by his expedience that his book argued quite frankly for the university's freedom to educate not large numbers of the deprived and disadvantaged but a small, carefully prepared and instructed elite. The result would be, as the book was quite explicit in explaining, that only a small handful of works by the Greeks and some French Enlightenment philosophers would survive the rigorous tests of inclusion in the newly "liberated" curriculum.

This may sound funny to your ears. I think it does happen to be funny because the prescription for curing the university of its woes, for liberating it from political pressures is in a sense worse than the malady. Surely one would have thought that to use the concept of freedom about the academy is not on the face of it to talk mainly about exclusion but about inclusion, and surely it would seem to be true that the university ought to be the place not where many vigorous and exciting intellectual pursuits should be forbidden but where they ought to be encouraged on as wide a front as possible. I will grant, as everyone



must, that the concept of freedom cannot be a license for, as Matthew Arnold put it in another context, entirely doing as one likes. But it must be the case, I think, that advocates of freedom for university communities to undertake intellectual pursuits cannot spend most of their time arguing that only a handful of approved books, ideas, disciplines, and methods are worthy of serious intellectual attention. The realities of social life are viewed in this perspective as sordid and demeaning, although it needs to be noted that professors such as the author of *The Closing of the American Mind* have no difficulty accepting money from corporations and foundations outside the university who happen to espouse their own deeply conservative views. To say of such practices that they represent a double standard is no exaggeration. For you cannot honestly impugn people as enemies of academic freedom just because they welcome worldly concerns into the academy while, when you do more or less the same thing, you consider yourself to be "upholding standards."

Universities as Political Institutions

An altogether different challenge to the concept of academic freedom is found in national universities in the Arab world, which is where I originally come from. I speak here of most of the large public universities in countries like Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states. Most of these countries are in fact run by secular governments, although some - like Saudi Arabia - have secular governments with a religious mandate. What is important to understand, however, is that with few exceptions Arab universities are not only nationalist universities but are also political institutions, for perfectly understandable reasons. For several centuries, the Arab world has been dominated by Ottoman or European colonialism. National independence for countries like Egypt and Syria, say, meant that young people at last could be educated fully in the traditions, histories, languages, and cultures of their own particular Arab countries. In my own case, for instance, I was educated entirely in British colonial schools in Palestine and Egypt, where all study focused on the history of British society, literature, and values. Much the same was true in the main British and French colonies, such as India and Algeria, where it was assumed that native elites would be taught the rudiments of intellectual culture in idioms and methods designed in effect to keep those native elites subservient to colonial rule, the superiority of European learning, and so forth. Until I was about sixteen I knew a great deal more about the eighteenth century enclosure system in England than I did about how the Islamic *waqfs* operated in my own part of the world, and to me - irony of ironies - colonial preconsuls

like Crome and Kitchener were more familiar to me than Haroun al-Rashid or Khalid ibn al-Walid.

When independence was achieved as a result of anti-colonial struggles, one of the first areas to be changed was education. I recall, for instance, the after the Revolution of 1952 in Egypt a great deal of emphasis was placed on the Arabization of the curriculum, the Arabization of intellectual norms, the Arabization of values to be inculcated in schools and universities. The same was true in Algeria after 1962, where an entire generation of Muslims were for the first time entitled and enjoined to study Arabic, which had been forbidden except as a language in mosques while Algeria was considered and ruled as a department of France. It is important to understand, therefore, the passion that went into reclaiming educational territory that for so long had been dominated by foreign rulers in the Arab world, and it is equally important to understand the tremendous spiritual wound felt by many of us because of the sustained presence in our midst of domineering foreigners who taught us to respect distant norms and values more than our own. Our culture was felt to be of a lower grade, perhaps even congenitally inferior and something of which to be ashamed.

Now it would be wrong and even absurd to suggest that a national education based on Arabic norms is in and of itself either trivial or impoverished. The Arab-Islamic tradition is one of the great cultural contributions to humanity, and in the old universities of Fez and al-Azhar as well as the various *madrasas* throughout the Arab world, a rich educational experience has been provided to uncounted generations of students. Yet it is also true to say that in the newly independent countries of the Arab world, the national universities were reconceived, I believe, as (rightly or wrongly) extensions of the newly established national security state. Once again it is clear that all societies accord a remarkable privilege to the university and school as crucibles for shaping national identity.

Yet all too often in the Arab world, true education was short-circuited, so to speak. Whereas in the past young Arabs fell prey to the intervention of foreign ideas and norms, now they were to be remade in the image of the ruling party, which, given the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli struggle, became also the party of national security - and in some countries, the only party. Thus adding to the vastly increased pressure on universities to open their doors to everyone in the new society - an extremely admirable policy - universities also became the proving ground for earnest patriots. Professorial appointments were, as they are in many places in the world today, civil service appointments. Alas, political conformity rather than intellectual excellence was often made to serve as a criterion for promotion and appointment, with the



general result that timidity, a studious lack of imagination, and careful conservatism came to rule intellectual practice. Moreover, because the general atmosphere in the Arab world of the past three decades has become both conspiratorial and, I am sorry to say, repressive-all in the name of national security-nationalism in the university has come to represent not freedom but accommodations, not brilliance and daring but caution and fear, not the advancement of knowledge but self-preservation.

Not only did many brilliant and gifted people leave the Arab world in a massive brain-drain, but I would say that the whole notion of academic freedom underwent a significant downgrading during the past three decades. It became possible for one to be free in the university only if one completely avoided anything that might attract unwelcome attention or suspicion. I do not want to make a long, anguished recital of how badly demoralized and discouraged a place the Arab university, in most of its contemporary aspects, has become, but I do think it is important to link its depressed situation with the lack of democratic rights, the absence of a free press, and an atmosphere bereft of well-being and confidence elsewhere in the society. No one can say that these things are not connected to each other, because they so obviously are. Political repression has never been good for academic freedom, and perhaps more importantly, it has been disastrous for academic and intellectual excellence. My assessment of Arab academic life is that too high a price has been paid in sustaining nationalist regimes that have allowed political passions and an ideology of conformity to dominate-perhaps even to swallow up-civil institutions such as the university. To make the practice of intellectual discourse dependent on conformity to a predetermined political ideology is to nullify intellect altogether.

Education and Identity

For all its problems, however, the American academy is a very different place than its counterpart in the Arab world. To suggest that there are any obvious similarities at all would be to misrepresent each seriously. Yet I do not want to celebrate the greater manifest freedom of inquiry, the generally higher level of intellectual attainment, the quite extraordinary range of interests demonstrated in the American academy at the expense of the much more obvious constraints and difficulties in Arab universities, which after everything is said share the fate of many other universities in the Third World. That sort of almost bullying praise of the virtues of Western education today would be too easy and far too simple.

Nevertheless it is important to show the connection between such different circumstances as those that

obtain in the Middle East and in the United States by remarking how it is that in both a very great premium is placed upon the cultural and national *identity* of the education being offered. I spoke earlier about the debate between upholders and opponents of the Western canon in the American university; I also spoke of how in the post-independence, post-colonial Arab universities a great degree of emphasis was placed on the *Arabness* of what was being offered. In both cases therefore, ordinarily so different and so far removed from each other, one idea - that of national identity - shines through. It is precisely this idea, American and Western in one case, Arab and Islamic in the other, that plays an astonishingly important role as authority and as point of reference in the whole educational process. I want to raise the question of how the central importance and authority given the national identity impinges on and greatly influences, surreptitiously and often unquestioningly, academic freedom - that is, what transpires in the name of academic freedom.

When I discussed earlier how the specific social and cultural circumstances of the academic situation in each society define the problem of academic freedom, national identity was very much what I had in mind. Certainly this is true of a society like that of South Africa, now undergoing particularly difficult and stressful transformation. But as one looks elsewhere in the world, one finds that many places are experiencing much the same contest of what the national identity is or ought to be. This contest, almost more than anything else, defines the political and cultural situation of the late twentieth century: that as the world grows smaller and more interdependent economically, environmentally, and through the revolution in communications, there is a great sense that societies interact, often abrasively, in terms of who or what their national identities are. Consider on a global level the importance today of the Western European community as one large cultural block interacting with the Eastern European community and the Soviet Union, with Japan and the United States, and with many parts of the Third World. Similarly, look at the contest between the Islamic world and the West, in which national, cultural, and religious self-images and self-definitions play to powerful a role. To speak of hegemony, attempts at domination, and the control of resources in this global struggle is, I strongly believe, to speak in very accurate (if also melodramatic) terms.

But that is not all. Within societies such as this one and those in other parts of the Western, African, Asian, and Islamic world, there is also a contest as to which concept of national identity ought to prevail. Although this question is principally of philosophical and historical derivation, inevitably it leads one to the urgent political issue of how, given the definition of identity, the society is to be governed. To look closely at the recent history of imperialism and



decolonization is to grasp the centrality of the debate. In Algeria, as the works of Frantz Fanon eloquently testify, Algerians were viewed by the French as a subordinate race, fit only for colonial and subaltern status. Even the distinguished humanistic writer Albert Camus, who was a native-born member of the French settler population, embodied the Algerian in his fiction as an essentially nameless, threatening creature; during the late fifties Camus explicitly said in his *Algerian Chronicles* that there was no Algerian Muslim nation. Of course there was. After the liberation in 1962 one of the principal tasks of the FLN was to re-establish the integrity, the centrality, the paramountcy and sovereignty of the Muslim Algerian identity. With the creation of a new governmental structure of Algeria came an educational program focused first on the teaching of Arabic and on Algerian history, formerly either banned or subordinated to programs stressing the superiority of French civilization.

Surely in South Africa much the same dynamic will be and doubtless already is embodied in the nature of the educational program, as the country moves out of apartheid into a new system of democratic, racially unbiased government. However, there are some further points I wish to make about all this, as it has a bearing on the question of academic freedom.

Authority to Cultural Hostility

The first is that in a condition in which cultural conflict is, to all intents and purposes, universal, the relationship between the national identity and other national identities is going to be reflected in the academy. The question is how. All cultures teach about themselves, and all cultures naturally assert their supremacy over others. To study the tradition, the masterpieces, the great interpretive methods of a culture inclines members of that culture to reverence, respect, loyalty, and even patriotism. This of course is understandable. But my point is that no culture exists in isolation, and since it a matter of course that the study of one's own tradition in school and university is taken for granted, we must look at what of *other* cultures, *other* traditions, *other* national communities also is communicated as one's own culture is studied. I should like to argue that if the authority granted our own culture carries with it the authority to perpetuate cultural hostility, then a true academic freedom is very much at risk, having as it were conceded that intellectual discourse must worship at the altar of national identity and thereby denigrate or diminish others.

Let me explain. Historically, every society has its Other: The Greeks had the barbarians, the Arabs the Persians, the Hindus the Muslims, and on and on. But since the

nineteenth century consolidated the world system, all cultures and societies today are intermixed. No country on earth is made up of homogenous natives; each has its immigrants, its internal "Others," and each society, very much like the world we live in, is a hybrid. Yet a discrepancy exists at the very heart of this vital, complex, and intermingled world. I have in mind the discrepancy between the heterogenous reality and the concept of national identity, to which so much of education is in fact dedicated. If we recall once again the two examples I gave earlier of debate about what is Western in the American university and of politicization of the Arabness of the Arab university, we will note that in both instances a faltering and outdated concept of a single national identity more or less lords it over the true variety and manifold diversity of human life. In both cases a kind of supernational concept - that of the West in the United States, and that of the Arabs or Islam in countries like Algeria, Syria, and Iraq (each of which has large minority populations) - is pressed into service. This scarcely improves things, since in both a combination of authority and defensiveness inhibits, disables, and ultimately falsifies thought. What finally matters about the West or the Arabs, in my opinion, is not what these notions exclude but to what they are connected, how much they include, and how interesting are the interactions between them and other cultures.

I do not have an easy way of resolving this very serious discrepancy. I do know, nevertheless, that the meaning of academic freedom cannot simply be reduced to venerating the unexamined authority of a national identity and its culture. For in its essence the intellectual life - and I speak here mainly about the social sciences and the humanities - is about the freedom to be critical: criticism is intellectual life and, while the academic precinct contains a great deal in it, its spirit is intellectual and critical, and neither reverential nor patriotic. One of the great lessons of the critical spirit is that human life and history are secular - that is, actually constructed and reproduced by men and women. The problem with the inculcation of cultural, national, or ethnic identity is that it takes insufficient note of how these identities are constructions, not god-given or natural artifacts. If the academy is to be a place for the realization not of the nation but of the intellect - and that, I think is the academy's reason for being - then the intellect must not be coercively help in thrall to the authority of the national identity. Otherwise, I fear, the old inequities, cruelties, and unthinking attachments that have so disfigured human history will be recycled by the academy, which then loses much of its real intellectual freedom as a result.

Now let me speak personally and even politically if I may. Like so many others, I belong to more than one



world. I am a Palestinian Arab, and I am also an American. This affords me an odd, not to say grotesque, double perspective. In addition, I am of course an academic. None of these identities is watertight; each influences and plays upon the other. What complicates matters is that the United States has just waged a destructive war against an Arab country, Iraq, which itself had illegally occupied and to all intents and purposes tried to eliminate Kuwait, another Arab country. The United States is also the principal sponsor of Israel, the state that as a Palestinian I identify as having destroyed the society and world into which I was born. Israel now administers a brutal military occupation of Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza. So I am required to negotiate the various tensions and contradictions implicit in my own biography.

It should be obvious that I cannot identify at all with the triumphalism of one identity because the loss and deprivation of the others are so much more urgent to me. There is some irony in the fact that as I speak as an American to South Africans at a South African university on the subject of academic freedom, the universities and the schools in Palestine are closed and opened by willful and punitive decree of the Israeli military authorities. This situation has obtained since February 1988: during that time, the main universities have been kept closed. When you consider that well over two-thirds of the population in Occupied Palestine is made up of people under the age of 18, the sheer massive brutality of denying them school and college or university by systematic edict is extraordinary. At the same time, Jewish children and young people freely attend classes in their schools and universities, which are of a decent standard. There is now a generation of Palestinian children virtually being made illiterate, again by Israeli design and programmatic vision. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no really systematic campaign by Western academics and intellectuals to try to alleviate this situation; of course individuals have protested, but Israel continues these and other practices intended to deny, if not altogether to obliterate, the Palestinian national identity, and it does so with little Western objection. Certainly the subsidies from the United States continue and celebrations of Israeli democracy also continue. More to the point I am trying to make here, the Israeli practice of attempting to deny, efface, and otherwise render impossible the existence of a Palestinian national identity except as nameless, disenfranchised "Arab inhabitants" of "**Judea and Samaria**" (as the West Bank and Gaza are known in official Israeli parlance), this practice is carried out not just by modern colonialists, but by the descendants of a people, the Jews, themselves the victims barely a generation ago of such practices. For the victim to become the

victimizer of another people is a reversal of history quite awful to ponder. That this new victimizer has persecuted the very people it dispossessed and exiled, all the while benefitting from munificent Western moral support for Israel, is an appallingly cruel truth.

Why then is it carried out, if not in the assertion of a new national identity and a new nationalism, the Israeli, that decrees the absence of a conflicting (and pre-existing) national identity and nationalism, that of the Palestinian? I cannot and will not try to explain why Israel does this to the Palestinian people. But I can say with understanding and compassion that most Palestinians today who suffer such tribulations naturally long for the day when they can practice their self-determination in an independent state of their own, when Palestinian universities and schools can instruct young people in the history and traditions of Arab culture and in those of the other cultures that make up human history. Surely a majority of South Africans feel the same pain that we do, feel the humiliation and the oppression of seeing our representatives denied their right to represent their people, of our struggle labelled only "terrorism," of our political rights denied, our self-determination endlessly postponed, our collective punishment enacted on a minute-by-minute basis. Is it not a fact that what makes all these things more intensely painful is that they are carried out very often in the name of Western as well as Biblical morality, with its magnificent lineage of sagacity, learning, advancement, and technological proficiency to back it up? How delinquent, how morally repugnant are natives made to feel, that they dare to resist so compelling a cultural identity, that they have the effrontery to call such actions as the closing of schools and universities carried out by such authorities cruel and unjust practices.

To anyone who knows a little about the history of colonialism in the non-European world, these things too will pass. It took dozens of generations, but the British finally did leave India, and after 130 years the French left Algeria, and after a time apartheid will pass. So too for us Palestinians, our oppression will end, and we will have our self-determination, not at the expense of another people, but through a Palestinian state alongside Israel. The challenge is what intellectually and academically do we do with our earned liberation? I pose the question as perhaps the most serious one to be faced not just by those of us who have been on the bottom but by those of us who belong to the side that will at last win liberation.

The conclusion of this lecture will appear in the next issue of *Pravada*.

THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION AND POPULATION CONTROL

Sharon Stephens

The decade of the 90s, many have argued, will be known as 'the environment decade.' Environmental language pervades not only alternative movements, but also the official proclamations of states, multinational corporations and international organisations like the United Nations, UNICEF and the World Bank. While the increasing centrality of environmentalist claims—at least partly the result of increasing public concerns about the deteriorating quality of our everyday environments—opens up new possibilities for effective political action, it also brings new dangers. The 'transparent wisdom' of environmental rhetoric can also be used to legitimize new forms of social repression and control.

It is put forth as common sense environmental wisdom, for example, that "the responsible planning of births is one of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving the quality of life on earth"—of reducing human demands on an increasingly overburdened earth, while also improving the quality of women's lives, child care, family life and education and contributing to social and economic progress. (These official statements, from UNICEF'S 1992 report on "The State of the World's Children," are representative of many others.) Effective population policies, the argument goes, give people more control over the everyday conditions of their lives, while also easing global environmental pressures.

Unfortunately, Third World population reduction programs have often had very little to do with increasing poor women's control over their lives. In First World countries, the rhetoric of individual 'reproductive choice' obscures how narrowly defined the life choices of many women (and men) actually are.

These issues are boldly addressed in the Action Agenda drafted by the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, November 8-12, 1991 (reported in *Klassekampen*, 29 Nov., 1991). In the section on 'Women's Rights and Population Policies,' the authors affirm that the major causes of environmental degradation are 'industrial and military pollutants, toxic wastes and economic systems that exploit and misuse nature and people.' They continue: "We are outraged by suggestions that women's fertility rates (euphemistically called population pressures) are to blame." Forms of 'common sense environ-

mental wisdom' that see environmental problems simply in terms of numbers of people putting pressures on limited environmental resources open the way for top-down population policies that threaten human rights and restrict, rather than expand, people's control over the conditions of their lives. The Action Agenda emphasizes that it is the number of people living particular lives, consuming resources and generating wastes in specific ways, that determines environmental impact. There is nothing profoundly new in stating that a person living in the privileged sectors of the industrialised world has a far greater negative impact on the environment than a person living in a poor country (or in the swelling ranks of the First World poor). Unfortunately, there is also nothing new in the fact that the most coercive programs are among the poor—for example, the testing of newly-developed Norplant contraceptive implants in rural populations in Egypt and Brazil without the informed consent of the 'acceptor populations.' (In these cases, program aims included not only the reduction of 'excess populations' in the Third World, but also the production of scientific data necessary to develop reproductive technologies for marketing to individuals in the First World.

How a society organizes its reproductive decisions, technologies and policies has a great deal to do with the sorts of persons it wants to produce, the sorts it wants to be rid of, and the kind of society it wants to produce, the sorts it wants to be rid of, and the kind of society it wants to maintain and develop—in other words, with politics and not a politically neutral environmental logic. The current global 'Politics of Reproduction' was the topic of a conference (organised by the American Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research) that I attended in November 1992 in Teresopolis, Brazil.

Twenty-three participants from around the world came together for a week to discuss the ways that seemingly distant global power relations shape and constrain local reproductive experiences and decisions. Topic ranged from the effects of introducing Western medical practices into non-Western contexts (resulting, for example in the outlawing by British colonial powers of the Egyptian 'birthing chair,' only to return as folk wisdom among present-day upper classes in Britain returning to 'natural childbirth'), to the impact of new reproductive technologies on conventional family relations (profoundly challenged by a world where a woman can give birth to the genetic offspring of her own daughter), to international flows of adoptive babies and child care workers and

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to social movements focusing directly on reproductive issues like abortion rights and sterilisation abuse. Here I note the conference presentations with the most striking implications for our understandings of current population policies, 'transparent environmental wisdom,' and new forms of political control.

Ann Anagnost, an American social anthropologist from the University of Washington, discussed her research on China's stringent one-birth policy, which makes strikingly clear that state discourses on 'overpopulation' are not just about reducing human demands on overburdened environments. Anagnost had gone to China to study recent transformations in local village politics, but changed her focus when she found that, over and over again, it was China's one birth policy that people wanted to discuss, defend, and occasionally obliquely criticize. People expressed to her their pain and sense of profound loss at being limited to one child, even as they emphasized the enlightened rationality of current programs, involving large fines, social stigmatization and sometimes coerced abortions for non-complying families.

Inasmuch as China's birth rate had been going down even before the current policy was implemented, we must ask, what else is going on here? Why did the state demand such a drastic and rapid reduction in China's 'excess population?' According to Anagnost, part of the answer lies in the current intense state concern that China should attain its 'proper place in the world.' Achieving this goal demands that China drastically reduce those traits perceived as impeding progress and development—the backwardness, peasant mentality and inflexible traditions associated with its 'excess population.'

China's current population policy is aimed not only at reducing numbers of people, but at transforming the sorts of persons who are produced. While the official explanation for the one-birth policy is to reduce demands on a dangerously overburdened environment, many people also told Anagnost that such a policy was important because it is not possible to nurture more than one child to the level of 'quality' necessary to make 'progress' in the present world. State policies have led to tremendous parental investments in the one allowable child, often fed special foods believed to raise intelligence and supplied with special toys designed specifically to 'open up' the child's mind, to make it more active, flexible and creative. (In this, China is following Japan and other rapidly modernizing countries, where children are under enormous pressure to become consumers at very early ages of an increasingly commoditized childhood, in order to develop the requisite capacities for success in adult society.)

In patriarchal China, where the one birth policy aims at locating all parental hopes for the future in the body of one small child, there are also strong pressures for that

one child to be male. It is no accident that the first pre-natal sex selection technologies were developed in China. It is at least conceivable that future Chinese society will be differentiated into upper classes of elite families producing male children, with lower classes 'strongly encouraged' to produce the female bearers of elite sons.

For Anagnost, China's stringent one-birth policy has a great deal to do with state desires to re-tailor the Chinese population for central participation in the current world market, not as mass reserves of unskilled laborers (the role of 'backward, undeveloped countries'), but as central players (a vision that draws on centuries of Chinese dynastic ambitions). China's current population policy—aimed at increasing 'quality' while decreasing 'quantity'—can be read as one dramatic consequence of China's turning away from the socialist dreams of its past and turning towards the capitalist world market. When Anagnost asked a local Party secretary about a blind peasant child, who spent days by herself, sitting alone, with no social programs to help her, the secretary responded: "We have no use today in China for people who can't care for themselves and who make no contribution to national progress." In China, there is essentially no longer any health care program for peasants. Instead, birth control, coerced abortion and the production of 'quality children' are seen as the solutions to current social problems and as the means of economic progress. Anagnost describes widely reproduced charts outlining how many more commodities (refrigerators, stereos, etc.) ordinary people will be able to afford with every level of population reduction. Quality labor, Western commodities and economic progress are the promised fruits of China's 'environmentally rational' population program.

Anagnost's discussion of China's one birth policy resonates in remarkable ways with the work of another conference participant, Emily Martin (a social anthropologist from Johns Hopkins University). Martin's research focuses on America's new 'nurturant corporations'—"leaner, more flexible corporations" that frequently portray themselves as new sorts of 'families', giving birth to 'new persons.' These corporations differ greatly from earlier capitalist enterprises, in which working masses were seen as interchangeable and disposable, as bodies that could be used and used up in daily labor and that were expected to get their nurturance at home (where unpaid 'reproductive work' in the private sphere provided an invisible subsidy for 'productive work' in the public domain).

Now, Martin argues, the American home is increasingly penetrated and fragmented, with increases in two career families, young children in day-long care facilities, and the rise of small-scale corporations that become 'total institutions,' providing both work and leisure time opportunities for their employees to become more flexible,



creative and able to take risks. (Martin documents special workshops aimed at breaking down outmoded ways of thinking and developing people's capacities for creative risk-taking. A popular workshop involves getting corporation employees to jump off high poles attached to elastic cords, in order to open the way for entrepreneurial 'leaps into the beyond').

These corporations are engaged in what they call 'total quality management'—'TQM,' for short. The aim of these state-supported programs is to produce higher quality 'human capital' in order to increase American competitiveness in the rapidly changing global market.

But what of the others—the increasing numbers of 'excess' workers who are being laid off in the process of corporate restructuring? There are fewer and fewer social safety nets for these excess populations, many of whom live in conditions that resemble the worst situations in the 'underdeveloped world.' The Third World has come home to American inner cities. (In Harlem, a poor black section of New York, the rate of survival for men past the age of 40 is lower than in Bangladesh.) The deterioration of social services, at the same time that the new 'nurturant corporations' are receiving state support to give birth to new kinds of employees, indicates that the American state may be as interested as the Chinese in 'sloughing off' its excess, unproductive population and increasing the quality of those who remain, in order to produce flexible, multi-skilled workers capable of competing in the new global order. If such goals can be accomplished using the progressive language of environmental concern, so much the better.

The increasingly competitive economic situation has a great deal to do with the reproductive choices of many two career First World families. Today we hear frequently of the infertility problems of certain groups of women in industrialized countries—what *Time* magazine calls the current epidemic of infertility in the developed world (at least partly attributable, many suggest, to the career choices of women who postpone childbearing until ages when it is more difficult to conceive). While technologies of population control are developed to deal with the 'fertility problems' of the poor, a vast array of high-technology 'cures for infertility' are being developed to make possible the reproduction of privileged groups.

Many of our conference discussions centered on the nature of these new 'cures for infertility' and the extent to which they really increase women's choices. These technologies involve new modes of visually invading women's bodies (for example, sonogram fetal imagery techniques) and highly technical manipulations (such as in vitro fertilization), carried out in both inside and outside women's bodies by groups of scientific elites. We can recognize that these technologies have helped some women to have the children they desire, at the same time

that we question the social implications of technologies that increase possibilities for genetic screening, selection and manipulation. How do we imagine the 'perfect babies' promised by our new reproductive technologies? According to those visions, in whose interests, and for what ends will these new children be created? (In Europe and the US, lobby groups of variously disabled populations, those who might have been identified and 'screened out' by many currently available technologies, are beginning to protest the sorts of 'brave new worlds' being created in the increasingly manipulated bodies of our children).

In contrast to the language of 'individual choice' (and the often invisible machinery of social control connected to reproduction in the First World, social control is frequently all too apparent in Third World population programs. Carmen Barroso (a Brazilian social scientist now heading the MacArthur Foundation population research program in Chicago) discussed heated debates about the use of Norplant contraceptive technologies in Brazil. These devices, implants under the skin allowing regular release of contraceptive substances, are considered ideal for the poor, uneducated women who can't be counted on to take regular responsibility for their own 'fertility problems.' Such technologies figure prominently in the population control programs supported by international aid agencies and foundations (for example, the United Nations Population Fund, Intentional Planned Parenthood Federation, and United States Agency for International Development), who see population control as a crucial element in the structural re-adjustments called for within debt-ridden Third World countries.

Barroso told of the ultimately effective resistance to the Norplant program in rural Brazil—a resistance made possible by political coalitions of local women, Brazilian feminists and academics, some state officials and Catholic Church groups. One of the most serious charges against the program was that it bypassed procedures for 'informed consent' of Norplant-treated groups. The issue of informed consent becomes all the more serious, in the light of recent claims that Norplant substances may later alter a woman's body chemistry in such a way that she is more susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. Nevertheless, Norplant technologies continue to be used in many Third World population programs, while scientific reports of possible dangers have been judged too preliminary and potentially alarmist for publication in major medical journals. The question must be asked whether the same degree of scientific caution would be in order if the primary recipients of Norplant technologies were not "excess populations" and generators of 'fertility problems.'

There is no easy road from 'common sense environmental wisdom' to politically acceptable population policies. To argue, for example, that 'responsible and effective family planning' will automatically improve people's lives, while



also saving the planet is at best naive—and very dangerous when such thinking becomes the basis for social policy. Simply having fewer children will not improve the lives of many poor women, for whom child-bearing remains a primary source of their value as people and for whom infant mortality is a daily reality (with surviving children being the only hedge against an uncertain future). Nor will simply reducing the number of people on the planet automatically save the environment, as long as we do not rethink the logic of a profit-driven world system that treats large populations as expendable, smaller chosen populations as ‘human capital,’ and the environment as something to be exploited in the interests of continued capital accumulation and concentration.

Debates about ‘environmental rationality,’ the means by which it should be implemented and its acceptable costs will intensify in times ahead. These issues will certainly be at the center of debates at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil next June, where feminists will come up against hard-line environmentalists, advocates of technical solutions to environmental problems against those demanding radical social changes, representatives of Northern countries against those from the South. The challenge, for those concerned with both environmental quality and social justice, will be to develop effective population policies that treat women (and men) as subjects, rather than as the targets or objects of programs and services.

Letter

Dear Sirs,

I am encouraged by the appearance of a letter or two in your September '92 issue. So I venture to make this short offering.

“Ethno-nationalism” is referred to as a post-World War II phenomenon. It is much older. After 300 years of guerilla warfare it broke the British state into two in 1922, making its first triumphant 20th - century entry into the world-scene. Since then it has not looked back. Guerilla wars of national liberation have produced the states of Israel, Indonesia, Zaire, Kenya, Algeria, Viet-nam, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Afghanistan and Eritrea. Bangladesh and The Turkish Cypriot Republic were helped on by powerful neighbours. No guerilla war of national liberation has failed to produce its separate state- those which have not done so as yet are still in progress. (Sudan, Philippines, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, India). It is to avoid this fatal prospect that the Soviet Union dissolved into separate independent states.

The closest parallel to the Eelam movement this century is the Zionist movement; the same militaristic rigour, the same worldwide diaspora lobbying internationally and funding from deep resources.

To believe that some constitutional tinkering will “solve the problem” is to take our leave of the realities of 20th century history. The problem to be “solved” lies not in the north-east of the island. It lies in the Sinhala psyche and in Sinhala ignorance of the realities of the situation.

I am, dear Sirs,
Yours heretically,

Adrian Wijemanne

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA : DECEMBER 1992

Sunila Abeysekera

Arriving in Phnom Penh, one is struck by the similarity in landscape, with that of Sri Lanka, and the empathy with the country continues to grow. The city presents us with a variety of faces as we drive in. There are streetside kiosks selling loaves of French bread and liters of petrol and kerosene. Advertisements for foreign cigarettes and beer line the road. The road is crowded with motor cycles and scooters; there are no buses in sight. Later on we learn that public transport is virtually non-existent.

Moving on to the heart of the city, we come on to broad tree-lined boulevards with large French style villas on either side. The wooden shutters and decorative wrought iron work on the buildings lend them a particular grace that is associated with the colonial era in our part of the world.

The UN presence is one which is ever-present in the Phnom Penh of today; the city seems to be one which is, literally, being jolted out of the '50s into the '90s, with the UN acting as catalyst. To a city which does not provide even the barest of basic amenities at the disposal of its inhabitants, comes this modern monster with its dish antennas, mobile telephones, air conditioners and dollars galore.

This disjuncture is everywhere. UN salaries at the very lowest levels are in hundreds of dollars, if not in thousands; in Phnom Penh, a government Minister is said to receive an average of fifty dollars per month while a doctor would be lucky to earn thirty; a factory worker takes home one or two dollars, at the end of the month.

The contrasting lifestyles are most clear when one compares the many little street restaurants where Cambodians eat their rice and vegetables, with a fashionable restaurant called La Masson, at which French cuisine served in an elegant setting costs a minimum of fifty dollars per head.

It is a dollar economy. At most places including the market, a foreigner is always quoted dollar prices. For 5 US dollars one receives a bundle of notes of the local money, the real, almost 200 reals for a dollar. While one is appreciative of the many complex forces that put the UN forces in place in Cambodia, one wonders at the social dissonances that are invariably bound to occur in such a situation.

The country is now formally controlled by the Supreme National Council which consists of the four major groups that negotiated the Paris Agreement in 1991. The State of Cambodia (SOC) with Hun Sen at its head, controls the greater part of the country; FUNSINPEC, the monarchist party under Prince Sihanouk's leadership, and the Khmer Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party, led by Son Sann, both control small areas, while the Khmer Rouge is strong in the north, particularly in the areas which border on Thailand.

While we were in Cambodia, the UN Security Council approved a resolution which was calling for a ban on the

supply of petroleum products to the Khmer Rouge. However, as long as gemming and logging in Cambodia remain a lucrative investment for the Khmer Rouge and its associate entrepreneurs, it seems unlikely that such a ban could be imposed. The Thai government too is adopting an extremely vacillating and ambiguous position in this regard, in spite of the fact that Thailand is a signatory to the Paris Peace Accord. Although the mandate of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) is to create a neutral environment in which free and fair elections to the Constituent Assembly may be held in May 1993, there seem to be no signs of permanent peace in the country at present. And given the gross social and economic anomalies that exist there right now, it is extremely unlikely that stability will be reached in Cambodia anywhere in the near future.

The lack of a middle-class and professionals such as lawyers, doctors and teachers has created a situation in Cambodia where the simplest of operations, such as the establishment of a system of law and order, becomes a major undertaking. At the moment, Courts sit infrequently, and there is no accepted pattern of criminal prosecution or litigation. If arrested for an offence, and if unable to bribe one's way out of the Police station, the average Cambodian confronts the prospect of literally years in jail for the slightest misdemeanour.

The visit to Cambodia was a nostalgic one for me. I recalled the heady days of 1975 when, with the victory of the Vietnamese people, many of us had a vision of a socialist segment of Asia. I also recalled the debates, which later became quite acrimonious, on the 'true nature' of the Pol Pot regime; one of my earliest recollections of an ideological encounter with Rohana Wijeweera, is on the Cambodian issue.

Walking around the Tuol Sleng Museum for Victims of Genocide, through hall after hall lined with photographs of men, women and children killed during the height of the repressive Pol Pot regime in the late 1970s, one was overcome by an appalling sense of human failure, by our inability to prevent season after season of genocide, atrocity and brutality.

Walking out of the halls of death, the sky was blue, two little Cambodian girls smiled and said 'Hello'. The cycle-rickshaw driver who took us back to the hotel told us of his ambitions to go to university and study. Members of the four Cambodian human rights organisations that have become active in the past year, and which already have a membership of over 15,000 persons, spoke of their commitment to develop a respect for human rights and human dignity in their country. And I thought, "may be there is still some hope for something positive to emerge out of this colossal mess."

THE WORLD BANK AND THE NEW POLITICS OF AID

[Part One]

Peter Gibbon

The 1980s and 90s have been a period of significant change in the international development assistance scene. This paper attempts to sketch the main structural features of these changes and to use this as a background for examining the interrelations between some actors and issues which have been central in the period 1985-92. The actors which will be paid special attention are the World Bank and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the issues those of poverty, the environment and 'governance'. It will be argued that the central feature of the period has been a continuation in the rise in the influence of the World Bank, and that this is partly attributable to the institution's ability to successfully politically manage new issues while leaving underlying realities undisturbed. Finally, some structural reasons will be suggested for the success of these political management exercises.

Aid Regime in the 1980s

Prior to 1980 there was very little in the way of regulation of the aid scene—a laissez-faire situation prevailed with various actors, private and public, bilateral and multilateral more or less competing with each other to lend to the less developed countries (LDCs).

Behind this situation lay a variety of conditions including the long post-World War II boom in the developed countries, large petro-dollar deposits in northern private banks, and a common conviction amongst lenders/donors that LDCs were worth investing in. This in turn reflected rising primary commodity prices and a general conviction that LDC industrialization was sooner or later inevitable. Also important for the public donors was the international superpower conflict, which led to aid being seen as an instrument of changing or maintaining LDC political alignments.

Between 1979 and 1982 most of these conditions underwent sharp modification. The long post-war boom turned into an international recession, made deeper by a second oil price rise and the application of deflationary economic policies in the main northern countries. A decline occurred in demand for primary commodities, and the

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latter's prices began to rapidly fall. On the basis of a 40 year low in LDC terms of trade and a 50 year high in variable interest rates, a number of LDC countries with very high levels of debt threatened to default. Moreover, in the U.S., Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany governments came to power which were both unsympathetic to the recognition of aid "obligations" and which adopted more narrowly self-interested foreign policies.

A consequence of this situation was a crisis of aid generally and of multilateral project aid in particular. The latter which had been expanding rapidly, was threatened by declining contributions by northern governments, by an increasing inability of recipient countries to mobilize local 'counterpart' funds, and by the visible hostility of the incoming U.S. government to multilateral institutions in general. Probably the institution most under threat in this situation was the World Bank, a multilateral agency whose profile was almost exclusively identified with profile lending.¹

It was against this background that a (new) aid regime first emerged.

(a) Norms Regarding Levels and Forms of Assistance

The early 1980s witnessed a sharp decline in the real value of both bilateral and multilateral aid flows and also a decline in the relative value of government to government aid. The latter was eroded by a rise in aid direct to the private sector [Toye, 1987:152] and by increasing levels of aid to the NGOs. Aid channelled through NGOs was in fact one of the only categories of development assistance which registered a real increase in the 1980s (up to around 10 percent of all ODA by 1985 (Cernea, 1988:61)), although most of this was raised by private contributions.

A second form of aid which registered relative and absolute levels of increase in the early 1980s was 'programme' or non-project aid. Most of this increase was accounted for by increased volumes of World Bank lending to LDC governments for balance of Payments and commodity import support. Such aid accounted for only about 6 percent of World Bank lending in 1980 but was subsequently to double or treble in the first half of the decade.



The initial justification for greater volumes of non-project aid was that they could be disbursed quickly and with a minimum of fuss to recipients requiring sudden infusions of foreign exchange to compensate for, for example, the sharp rise in cost of oil imports [World Bank, 1980]. However, apparently as a result of a strategy devised by two senior World Bank officials, Sidney Please and Ernest Stern, non-project aid was to become the centre of a strategy to provide the institution with a secure and eventually hegemonic role in the donor community.

Please [1984] claims credit for the discoveries that the World Bank's real 'comparative advantage' in the new economic and political environment lay not in project aid at all but economic policy issues, and that non-project aid could be used to promote economic policy changes in the recipient countries. These ideas were of course not new at all, but rather were already the animating principles of operation of the World Bank's sister institution, the International Monetary Fund. Such a proposal therefore in reality involved a new division of labour between the IMF and the World Bank, with the IMF continuing to concentrate on policies related to exchange rates, foreign exchange conversion procedures and trade barriers, and the World Bank claiming expertise in the major dimensions of macro-economic policy relevant to the formulation of medium-term investment programmes.

While the official rationale behind the adoption of policy-based lending was the World Bank's supposed St. Paul-like revelation of its true vocation on the one hand and a recognition of the drastic need for recipient macro-economic policy reforms to allow new project aid to be properly utilized on the other, other motives and interests were unquestionably also in play. One was that the adoption of a policy focus would allow an assertion of ideological affinity by the World Bank to the 'new right'-dominated northern governments. Another was that non-project lending promised the private banks a mechanism for recovering their debts, via LDCs' recycling of programme funds.

IMF policy-based lending had been historically characterized by lender conditionality, and this became true of World Bank policy-based lending too. Policy-based loans were transcend and, theoretically at least, recipients could only gain access to significant levels of assistance if they could demonstrate that policy changes had actually been made. This implied a need for cross-conditionality, and aid coordination, for there was little point in the IMF and World Bank setting inconsistent conditions, nor conditions which they agreed were not observed by other important donors.

In this way the foundations were laid for aid forms in the 1980s to become characterized by the closely-related trends of policy-orientation and conditionality. The period 1980-85 was one in which both these trends became conformed and deepened. Involved in these changes was

a general redefinition of roles and relations within the donor community.

(b) Roles of the Main Players

The World Bank's original (1980-82) redefinition of its comparative advantage in terms of policy competence took place, as indicated, as a defensive manoeuvre from a position of weakness. Initially therefore its new relation with the IMF was essentially one of subordination. Only through further extension of the role of policy-based aid was the World Bank able to decisively increase its own status and influence. This did not really occur until 1985.

The main development of the first half of the 1980s was a growth in aid coordination and cross-conditionality, in which the World Bank was involved but which was basically engineered by the IMF. Essentially this involved bringing the main bilaterals into line with an agreement already reached between the IMF and the World Bank, to the effect that institutions would not make new commitments to recipients who had sought non-project funding without IMF stabilization programmes being already in place. Most leading donors went along with these proposals without argument.

From the early 1980s specific aid-coordination institutions emerged, or rather, existing institutions took on this role as a central function. Specifically, a new role for donor country consultative groups emerged. These groups, previously occasional meetings between recipients and bilaterals for purposes of coordinating pledges of new aid with donor lists of new projects, now became mechanisms for the semi-formalized review of recipient's progress with policy reforms. Meetings became regular and the World Bank's role moved from one of basically passive chairing to one of disseminating economic information (country reports) and suggesting options.

Bilaterals were disadvantaged from forming independent judgements on the issues being discussed since the great majority of them had no independent sources of economic information or means of interpreting them. Nor was there any real international forum where proposals could be made for revising IMF or World Bank recommendations, even if a will existed to do so. The new regime thus involved a decisive subordination of the bilaterals, especially evident in the case of the 'like-minded countries' (the Scandinavians, Canada and Holland).

An important change to this set of roles was unveiled in a speech by George Baker to the 1985 joint IMF/World Bank annual meeting. This announced a major extension of policy-based lending around sectoral, rather than merely macro-economic, policy reform. As a result, so-called 'structural adjustment' (SA) lending would rise to 25 to 30 percent of all World Bank disbursements.



A second major element of the 'Baker plan' was that rewards for policy reform by 15 heavily indebted middle-income countries were to be increased to include a package of private debt re-negotiation and new private credit, in other words, also private creditors were now directly brought into the cross-conditionality process. Under the 'Brady Plan' of 1988 coordination of private debt re-negotiation, new credits was further extended to most other LDCs and presumably to a wider range of commercial banks.

The application of policy-based lending to the sectoral level had perhaps more impact on the role of the main actors than changes involving the private banks. From now on the World Bank would have responsibility for a broader and more far-reaching range of policy issues than the IMF. Moreover, the more specific the areas of policy reform which were introduced, the greater disposal of the World Bank and the other donors. Most importantly, a mechanism was now achieved for firmly tying ongoing project aid to policy reform - a demand which certain donors had resisted to this point. The World Bank thus emerged by the middle of the decade as the lead institution in the new aid regime.

(c) Regime Discourses

Part of the basis of the World Bank's claim to exercise a leadership role within the aid regime rested on its elaboration of a new aid discourse, beginning in 1981. This discourse was articulated in its clearest form in relation to Africa, principally in the well-known report *Accelerated Development in Sub Saharan Africa: an Agenda for Action* [World Bank, 1981]. This report identified three main areas requiring policy reform attention: (1) trade and exchange-rate policies (held to have overprotected industry at the expense of agriculture), (2) the range of public sector functions relative to actual administrative capacities, and (3) price biases in agriculture [1981:4]. Correspondingly, its recommendations centered on 'more suitable' trade and exchange rate policies, increased efficiency of public sector resources and better agricultural prices [ibid:5]. The positions adopted by recipients on these issues, which comprised the original agenda of SA, were attributed to opposition from a series of entrenched local interests, namely "consumers and producers, parastatal managers, civil servants and industrialists..." [ibid: 7], i.e. the coalition of interests identified with urban bias by authors like Michael Lipton [1977].

On the part of the World Bank, the limited breadth of this discourse reflected less any sense of caution and more the contemporary pre-eminence of a basically technicalist form of neo-liberalism. It also suggested a high level of confidence in the power of conditionality alone to overcome local 'political obstacles.'

In the years following the adoption of sectoral-level lending, and in a context of rising problems of securing implementation and maintaining inter-donor consensus, a revised regime discourse was inaugurated by the World Bank. This contended that the central problem of LDCs was not a few (or even a series of) individual policy errors concerning prices and public investments but rather the absence of a generally-supportive context for (broadly-based) private sector-led growth. It proposed that the role of LDC governments required fundamental redefinition in the direction of providing an 'enabling environment' for free enterprise on the one hand and helping to supply certain basic solid services (principally primary education and primary health care) on the other. The 'enabling environment' comprised infrastructure, some direct assistance to private farmers and entrepreneurs, and a framework of bourgeois law. As far as social service provision was concerned, this should ideally involve various forms and degree of 'cost-sharing' between the state on the one hand and private individuals and communities on the other. The absence of an 'enabling environment' in most LDCs was attributed to flawed forms of general political management, expressed most clearly in a lack of accountability of government officials and restrictions on the availability of information and the scope of permitted debate [cf. World Bank, 1989].

This new World Bank discourse is significant in a number of ways. It reflects a major extension of the policy concerns of the aid regime. These concerns are moreover articulated in the context of a much more general exposition of neo-liberal political economy. However, there are also efforts to address issues of inter-donor and also donor-recipient consensus, by incorporating certain items from the aid agendas of the LDCs and the 'like-minded countries', albeit in a visibly subordinate way. Above all, however, it reflects a major assertion by the World Bank of intellectual leadership amongst donors.

(d) Decision Making Procedures and Rules

All the main aid players continue to maintain a high degree of autonomy in reaching decisions about aid 'philosophies' (abstract sets of aid intentions) on the one hand and about particular projects on the other. Nevertheless, the past years have seen the emergence of a tendency for the key decisions referring to medium-term aid objections and collective policies, forms and extents of cross-conditionality and the general coordination of resources behind policies to be made by a process involving discussions between World Bank and IMF staffers and representatives of the G7 countries and, as in the case of the Brady Plan, to be formally announced at G7 meetings. Meanwhile, decisions concerning particular countries are increasingly coordinated by World Bank at the



consultative groups and/or 'Clubs'. From the first of these processes some relatively important players (e.g. the like minded countries) are excluded.

(e) Investments of Recipient Enforcement

Please's [1984] manifesto for policy based lending contains a handy summary for the concrete instruments by which donors can supposedly enforce conditionality or recipients. This consists of a series of steps including obliging the recipient to formulate a statement of general objectives with regard to policy and institutional change, followed by obliging them to draw up a list of monitorable actions. Structural Adjustment loans are then released in tranches whose timing and level is tied to the attainment of specific monitored objectives. To ensure that the policies in question are appropriate in the first place, they should be drawn up by task groups including World Bank staffers and/or consultants.

Accompanying the growth of cross-conditionality was a simultaneous expansion of efforts to develop pro-adjustment consensus between them. This gave rise to certain concrete initiatives to form cadres of local technocrats and others sympathetic to structural adjustment (of the African Capacity Building Initiative). It was also associated with the promulgation by the World Bank and its partners of discourses identifying statism with traditions 'alien' to LDCs, and the free market and non-state voluntary associations with 'indigenous' or 'endogenous' LDC values and practices (cf. the World Bank's 1989 Long Term Perspective Study on Africa, which itself seems to have arisen out of a conference held in Nairobi in 1986 on *The Enabling Environment for Effective Private Sector Contributors to Development in Sub Saharan Africa* [Hyden, 1990]). Both were directed to raising the level of domestic 'ownership' of aid policies, as a counterweight to the increasingly intrusive forms of external intervention.

New World Politics 1984-92

The last seven to eight years have been characterized in world politics by a series of trends and events which have dramatically enhanced the significance of certain issues and players, especially in the northern countries. The principle of these has been the decline and disappearance of socialism in its various national and international forms.

The early 1980s already witnessed a sense of serious electoral reverses for social democratic parties in most of central and northern Europe, at the hands of conservative parties with neo-liberal orientation. Simultaneously, a political and ideological crisis of most of the prominent forms of Third World socialism emerged, particularly but not only in Africa. This was joined in 1985 by the initia-

tion of economic and political reform processes in the Soviet Union, which were to set in train a series of popular anti-communist movements, in eastern Europe and eventually the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. This turn weakened further the non-communist left world-wide, through a general shrinkage of the orthodox political space.

The initial phase of the decline of socialism was associated with relative remission in the world economic recession which had been deepening since 1979. Though unconnected, the two trends both fostered an increasing role for the 'new social movements' in the northern countries, which partially substituted for and in some cases surpassed the significance of social democracy. The most important of these were the green movement, the women's movement, and other movements (Band Aid, Live Aid, etc) focussing on the relief of Third World poverty by non-governmental (and preferably direct action) methods. Also significant were movements of ethnic minorities, particularly in the U.S., where they were instrumental in the construction of temporary national alliance of 'new social movements' (the 'Rainbow Coalition' supporting Jesse Jackson's bid for the Democratic Party Presidential nomination). These 'new social movements' and the organisations which they spawned were to develop a political challenge to neo-liberalization with which the latter had some difficulties in dealing, not least because their demands tended to directly cut across the state-market and 'general' - 'special' interest dichotomies with which the new right had appropriated political debate by emphasizing diversity, equality of opportunity, choice and the voluntary.

Each of these types of 'new' political organizations formed an echo in the LDCs. This was however on a much reduced scale, except in the case of relief/development NGOs. Connecting (albeit sometimes opportunistically) with increased levels of Governmental and popular/voluntary funding these acquired a growing importance within the LDC development space, especially at local and intermediate levels and especially as state revenue and capacity to provide services declined. The political roles of these organisations varied enormously within and between LDCs, according to their scale, social base, function, history, relation to local and national politicians and to the state, as well as to their relation with donors.

While the new right experienced a period of defensiveness in the domestic politics of the northern countries, it was to score spectacular successes globally. With first the decline of the international super power conflict and later the complete collapse of communism, time ran out not only for capitalism's classical adversary but also for international third forces (e.g. the Non-Aligned Movement) whose influence depended on their independence from both main camps. The result was 'unipolarism' - a new international relations order characterized by a



single great power and its allies on the one hand and a disorganized mass of small and/or powerless states on the other (leaving aside the increasingly politically isolationist China).

The international political agenda which the newly 'unipolar' superpower has subsequently sought to establish and advance is that of human rights (defined in terms of northern parliamentary democratic traditions) and international law and order, defined mainly in terms of control over the movement of arms and drugs, or well as maintaining the territorial integrity of U.S.allies). The prominence of these issues has been associated with a renewed U.S. interest in the United Nations, or at least in the UN General Assembly, as a vehicle for mobilizing international support for a new global security system.

A final central feature of the new world politics in the period under consideration is that of the rise of struggles for democratic rights within LDCs. The latter has been sharpened by a number of factors, including a growing loss of governmental political legitimacy in the face of international recession, structural adjustment and the intensification of corruption and other essentially extractive forms of accumulation. Also of importance have been the example of eastern Europe and an encouragement of popular opposition in certain countries by growing superpower disinterest in the maintenance of particular cold war partners.

From around 1990, when the international recession reasserted itself, the new international politics were modified in a number of ways. The most important of these was a dampening in the growth of the significance of 'new social movements' in the developed countries and a parallel and related renewed bout of international aid fatigue - extending to almost all forms of aid except that which was dedicated to NGOs or 'governance'-related. On the other hand, the slow movement of the wheels of international agencies meant that the issues which the 'new social movements' had raised were still live ones at an international level. Indeed some, especially the environment, were about to receive their first major official international airing.

There has always been a close interrelation between international political trends and the politics of aid. It is

possible to argue however that as the aid regime of the 1980s took shape, aid politics and international politics intertwined in ever more intimate ways. In particular, the aid regime underwent an increasing political sensitization. One reason for this was its increasing policy orientation, or more precisely its articulation of an increasing range of policy issues - reaching an apogee with the all-embracing doctrine of the 'enabling environment'. This meant that the articulation of almost every political issue under the sun now intersected with one aid policy issue or another.

Alongside this extension of the frontiers of aid discourse was the extension of donor coordination and cross-conditionality. This heightened the political sensitivity of the aid regime to issues of donor unity and consensus on the one hand and to the frontiers between neo-liberal economic policy conditionality and possibly cross-cutting forms on the other.

The effect of this was to push the World Bank, as the fulcrum of the new aid regime, increasingly into international politics. Because of the trends just indicated, in the past five years this has meant intervening in international debates on poverty, the environment and governance/democracy/human rights, and establishing a particular sort of relationship with the increasingly important NGO community. By the early 1990s the latter represented (among other things) the last important remaining aid constituency more or less external to and (partly) 'uncaptured' by, the aid regime. The rest of this paper will examine these interventions and try to provide some very rough explanations for their outcomes.

Notes

1. The problems confronted by the World Bank in 1980 were most pertinently displayed in Ronald Reagan's decision, shortly after assuming office, to order a U.S.Treasury Department review of American participation in the World Bank and regional development banks (U.S. Treasury Department, 1980). The review was instructed to address criticisms made by the heritage Foundation and a personal study team reporting to Reagan, which claimed that the World Bank encouraged socialism, lent without proper reference to rates of return, lent to the 'wrong' countries and insufficiently promoted U.S.business interests (Ayres, R. 1984, *Banking on the Poor: The World Bank and World Poverty*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press).

Chance took me to a priest's cell
And I listened to his holy talk;
From the life of the troubled world I got
Half a day's rest.

(From *Monkey*, a Chinese folk novel, translated
by Arthur Waley)

Mahasweta Devi is a middle-class leftist intellectual in her fifties. She has a master's degree in English from Shantiniketan, the famous experimental university established by the bourgeois poet Rabindranath Tagore....[Her prose] is a collage of literary Bengali, street Bengali, bureaucratic Bengali, tribal Bengali and the language of the tribals. The reception [of her writings] is a general recognition of excellence; skepticism regarding the content on the part of the bourgeois readership; some accusations of extremism from the electoral Left; and a sense of solidarity on the part of the non-electoral left.... Suffice it to say that Mahasweta is certainly one of the most important writers writing in India today.

Bengal has had a strong presence of leftist intellectualism and struggle since the middle of the last century. Before, in fact, the word 'left' entered our political shorthand. West Bengal is one of the three Communist states in the Indian Union.... In the spring of 1967, there was a successful peasant rebellion in the Naxalbari area of the northern part of West Bengal. According to Marcus Franda, "unlike most other areas of West Bengal, where peasant movements are led almost solely by middle-class leadership from Calcutta, Naxalbari has spawned an indigenous agrarian reform leadership led by the lower classes" including tribal cultivators. This peculiar coalition of peasant and intellectual sparked off a number of Naxalbaris all over India. The target of these movements was the long established oppression of the landless peasantry and itinerant farm worker, sustained through an unofficial government-landlord collusion that too easily circumvented the law.

In 1970, the implicit hostility between East and West Pakistan flamed into armed struggle. In 1971, at a crucial moment in the struggle, the armed forces of the government of India were deployed, seemingly because there were alliances between the Naxalites of West Bengal and the freedom fighters of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). "If a guerilla-type insurgency had persisted, these forces would undoubtedly have come to dominate the politics of the movement. It was this trend that the Indian authorities were determined to pre-empt by intervention." Taking advantage of the general atmosphere of jubilation at the defeat of West Pakistan, India's "principal national rival in South Asia", the Indian prime minister was able to crack down with exceptional severity on the Naxalites, destroying the rebellious sections of the rural population, mostly the tribals as well.

This is the setting of "Draupadi".

(Excerpted from the introduction to the story by **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**, who translated it into English. The italicised words in the translation are in English in the original.)

DRAUPADI

Mahasweta Devi

Name Depdi Mejhen, age twenty-seven, husband Dulna Majhi (deceased), domicile Cherakhan, Bankraharj, information whether dead or alive and/or assistance in arrest, one hundred rupees. . .

An exchange between two liveried *uniforms*.

FIRST LIVERY: What's this, a tribal called Dopdi? The list of names I brought has nothing like it! How can anyone have an unlisted name?

SECOND: Draupadi Mejhen. Born the year her mother threshed rice at Surja Sahu (killed)'s at Bakuli. Surja Sahu's wife gave her the name.

FIRST: These officers like nothing better than to write as much as they can in English. What's all this stuff about her?

SECOND: *Most notorious female. Long wanted in many ...*

Dossier: Dulna and Dopdi worked at harvests, *rotating* between Birbhum, Burdwan, Murshidabad, and Bankura. In 1971, in the famous *Operation Bakuli*, when three villages were *cordoned* off and *machine gunned*, they too lay on the ground, faking dead. In fact, they were the main culprits. Murdering Surja Sahu and his son, occupying upper-caste wells and tubewells during the drought, not surrendering those three young men to the police. In all this they were the chief instigators. In the morning, at the time of the body count, the couple could not be found. The blood-sugar level of Captain Arjan Singh, the *architect* of Bakuli, rose at once and proved yet again that diabetes can be a result of anxiety and depression. Diabetes has twelve husbands - among them anxiety.

Dulna and Dopdi went underground for a long time in a *Neanderthal* darkness. The Special Forces, attempting to pierce that dark by an armed search, compelled quite a few Santals in the various districts of West Bengal to meet their Maker against their will. By the Indian



Constitution, all human beings, regardless of caste or creed, are sacred. Still, accidents like this do happen. Two sorts of reasons: (1), the underground couple's skill in self-concealment; (2), not merely the Santals but all tribals of the Austro-Asiatic Munda tribes appear the same to the Special Forces.

In fact, all around the ill-famed forest of Jharkhani, which is under the jurisdiction of the police station at Bankrajharh (in this India of ours, even a worm is under a certain police station), even in the southeast and southwest corners, one comes across hair-raising details in the eyewitness records put together on the people who are suspected of attacking police stations, stealing guns (since the snatchers are not invariably well educated, they sometimes say "give up your *chambers*" rather than give up your gun), killing grain brokers, landlords, moneylenders, law officers, and bureaucrats. A black-skinned couple ululated like police *sirens* before the episode. They sang jubilantly in a savage tongue, incomprehensible even to the Santals. Such as:

Samaray hijulenako mar goekope

and

Hende rambra keche keche

Pundi rambra keche keche

This proves conclusively that they are the cause of Captain Arjan Singh's diabetes.

Government procedure being as incomprehensible as the Male Principle in Sankhya philosophy or Antonioni's early films, it was Arjan Singh who was sent once again on *Operation Forest Jharkhani*. Learning from Intelligence that the above-mentioned ululating and dancing couple was the escaped corpses, Arjan Singh fell for a bit into a *zombie* like state and finally acquired so irrational a dread of black-skinned people that whenever he saw a black person in a ballbag, he swooned, saying "they're killing me," and drank and passed a lot of water. Neither uniform nor Scriptures could relieve that depression. At long last, under the shadow of a *premature and forced retirement*, it was possible to present him at the desk of Mr. Senanayak, the elderly Bengali specialist in combat and extreme-Left politics.

Senanayak knows the activities and capacities of the opposition better than they themselves do. First, therefore, he presents an encomium on the military genius of the Sikhs. Then he explains further: Is it only the opposition that should find power at the end of the barrel of a gun? Arjan Singh's power also explodes out of the *male organ* of a gun. Without a gun even the "five Ks" come to nothing in this day and age. These speeches he delivers to all and sundry. As a result, the fighting forces regain their confidence in the *Army Handbook*. It is not a book for everyone. It says that the most despicable and repulsive

style of fighting is guerrilla warfare with primitive weapons. Annihilation at sight of any and all practitioners of such warfare is the sacred duty of every soldier. Dopdi and Dulna belong to the *category* of such fighters, for they took kill by means of hatchet and scythe, bow and arrow, etc. In fact, their fighting power is greater than the gentlemen's. Not all gentlemen become experts in the explosion of "chambers"; they think the power will come out on its own if the gun is held. But since Dulna and Dopdi are illiterate, their kind have practiced the use of weapons generation after generation.

I should mention here that, although the other side make little of him, Senanayak is not to be trifled with. Whatever his *practice*, in *theory* he respects the opposition. Respects them because they could be neither understood nor demolished if they were treated with the attitude, "It's nothing but a bit of impertinent game-playing with guns." *In order to destroy the enemy, become one*. Thus he understood them by (*theoretically*) becoming one of them. He hopes to write on all this in the future. He has also decided that in his written work he will demolish the gentlemen and *highlight* the message of the harvest workers. These mental processes might seem complicated, but actually he is a simple man and is as pleased as his third great-uncle after a meal of turtle meat. In fact, he knows that, as in the old popular song, turn by turn the world will change. And in every world he must have the credentials to survive with honor. If necessary he will show the future to what extent he alone understands the matter in its proper perspective. He knows very well that what he is doing today the future will forget, but he also knows that if he can change color from world to world, he can represent her particular world in question. Today he is getting rid of the young by means of "*apprehension and elimination*" but he knows people will soon forget the memory and lesson of blood. And at the same time, he, like Shakespeare, believes in delivering the world's *legacy* into youth's hands. He is Prospero as well.

At any rate, information is received that many young men and women, *batch by batch* on jeeps, have attacked police station after police station, terrified and elated the region, and disappeared into the forest of Jharkhani. Since after escaping from Bakuli, Dopdi and Dulna have worked at the house of virtually every landowner, they can efficiently inform the killers about their targets and announce proudly that they too are soldiers, *rank and file*. Finally the impenetrable forest of Jharkhani is surrounded by real soldiers, the *army* enters and splits the battlefield. Soldiers in hiding guard the falls and springs that are the only source of drinking water; they are still guarding, still looking. On one such search, army informant Dukhram Gharari saw a young Santal man lying on his stomach on a flat stone, dipping his face to drink water. The soldiers shot him as he lay. As the 303 threw him off spread-eagled and brought a bloody foam



to his mouth, he roared "Ma-ho" and then went limp. They realized later that it was the redoubtable Dulna Majhi.

What does "Ma-ho" mean? Is this a violent slogan in the tribal language? Even after much thought, the Department of Defense could not be sure. Two tribal-specialist types are flown in from Calcutta, and they sweat over the dictionaries put together by worthies such as Hoffmann-Jeffer and Golden-Palmer. Finally the omniscient Senanayak summons Chamru, the water carrier of the *camp*. He giggles when he sees the two specialists, scratches his ear with his "bidi", and says, the Santals of Maldah did say that when they began fighting at the time of King Gandhi! It's a battle cry. Who said "Ma-ho" here? Did someone come from Maldah?

The problem is thus solved. Then, leaving Dulna's body on the stone, the soldiers climb the trees in green camouflage. They embrace the leafy boughs like so many great god Pans and wait as the large red ants bite their private parts. To see if anyone comes to take away the body. This is the hunter's way, not the soldier's. But Senanayak knows that these brutes cannot be dispatched by the approved method. So he asks his men to draw the prey with a corpse as bait. All will come clear, he says. I have almost deciphered Dopdi's song.

The soldiers get going at his command. But no one comes to claim Dulna's corpse. At night the soldiers shoot at a scuffle and, descending, discover that they have killed two hedgehogs copulating on dry leaves. Improvidently enough, the soldiers' jungle scout Dukhram gets a knife in the neck before he can claim the reward for Dulna's capture. Bearing Dulna's corpse, the soldiers suffer shooting pains as the ants, interrupted in their feast, begin to bite them. When Senanayak hears that no one has come to take the corpse, he slaps his *anti-Fascist paperback* copy of *The Deputy* and shouts, "What?" Immediately one of the tribal specialists runs in with a joy as naked and transparent as Archimedes' and says, "Get up, sir! I have discovered the meaning of that 'hende rambra' stuff. It's Mundari *language*."

Thus the search for Dopdi continues. In the forest belt of Jharkhani, the *Operation* continues - will continue. It is a carbuncle on the government's backside. Not to be cured by the tested ointment, not to burst with the appropriate herb. In the first phase, the fugitives, ignorant of the forest's topography, are caught easily, and by the law of confrontation they are shot at the taxpayer's expense. By the law of confrontation, their eyeballs, intestines, stomachs, hearts, genitals, and so on become the food of fox, vulture, hyena, wildcat, and, worm, and the untouchables go off happily to sell their bare skeletons.

They do not allow themselves to be captured in open combat in the next phase. Now it seems that they have

found a trustworthy courier. Ten to one it's Dopdi. Dopdi loved Dulna more than her blood. No doubt it is she who is saving the fugitives now.

"They" is also a *hypothesis*.

Why?

How many went *originally*?

The answer is silence. About that there are many tales, many books in press. Best not to believe everything.

How many killed in six years' confrontation?

The answer is silence.

Why after confrontations are the skeletons discovered with arms broken or severed? Could armless men have fought? Why do the collarbones shake, why are legs and ribs crushed?

Two kinds of answer. Silence. Hurt rebuke in the eyes. Shame on you? Why bring this up? What will be will be ...

How many left in the forest? The answer is silence.

A legion? Is it *justifiable* to maintain a large battalion in that wild area at the taxpayer's expense?

Answer: Objection. "Wild area" is incorrect. The battalion is provided with supervised nutrition, arrangements to worship according to religion, opportunity to listen to "Bibidha Bharati" and to see Sanjeev Kumar and the Lord Krishna face-to-face in the movie *This Is Life*. No. The area is not wild.

How many are left?

The answer is silence.

How many are left? Is there anyone *at all*?

The answer is long.

Item: Well, *action* still goes on. Moneylenders, landlords, grain brokers, anonymous brothel keepers, ex-informants are still terrified. The hungry and naked are still defiant and irrespressible. In some *pockets* the harvest workers are getting a *better wage*. Villages sympathetic to the fugitives are still silent and hostile. These events cause one to think. . .

Where in this picture does Dopdi Mejhen fit?

She must have connections with the fugitives. The cause for fear is elsewhere. The ones who remain have lived a long time in the primitive world of the forest. They keep company with the poor harvest workers and the tribals. They must have forgotten book learning. Perhaps they are *orienting* their book learning to the soil they live on and learning new combat and survival techniques. One can shoot and get rid of the ones whose only recourse is extrinsic book learning and sincere intrinsic enthusiasm. Those who are working practically will not be exterminated so easily.

Therefore *Operation Jharkhani Forest* cannot stop. Reason: the words of warning in the *Army Handbook*.



Catch Dopdi Mejhen. She will lead us to the others.

Dopdi was proceeding slowly, with some rice knotted into her belt. Mushai Tudu's wife had cooked her some. She does so occasionally. When the rice is cold, Dopdi knots it into her waistcloth and walks slowly. As she walked, she picked out and killed the lice in her hair. If she had some *kerosene*, she'd rub it into her scalp and get rid of the lice. Then she could wash her hair with baking *soda*. But the bastards put traps at every bend of the falls. If they smell *kerosene* in the water, they will follow the scent.

Dopdi!

She doesn't respond. She never responds when she hears her own name. She has seen in the Panchayat office just today the notice for the reward in her name. Mushai Tudu's wife had said, "What are you looking at? Who is Dopdi Mejhen! Money if you give her up!"

"How much?"

"Two-hundred!"

Oh God!

Mushai's wife said outside the office: "A lot of preparation this time. A-11 new policemen."

Hm.

Don't come again.

Why?

Mushai's wife looked down. Tudu says that Sahib has come again. If they catch you, the village, our huts ...

They'll burn again.

Yes. And about Dukhiram ...

The Sahib knows?

Shomai and Budhna betrayed us.

Where are they?

Ran away by train.

Dopdi thought of something. Then said, Go home. I don't know what will happen, if they catch me don't know me.

Can't you run away?

No. Tell me, how many times can I run away? What will they do if they catch me? They will *counter* me. Let them.

Mushai's wife said, We have nowhere else to go.

Dopdi said softly, I won't tell anyone's name.

Dopdi knows, has learned by hearing so often and so long, how one can come to terms with torture. If mind and body give way under torture, Dopdi will bite off her tongue. That boy did it. They countered him. When they counter you, your hands are tied behind you. All your bones are crushed, your sex is a terrible wound. *Killed by police in an encounter ... unknown male age twenty-two...*

As she walked thinking these thoughts, Dopdi heard someone calling, Dopdi! She didn't respond. She doesn't

respond if called by her own name. Here her name is Upi Mejhen. But who calls?

Spines of suspicion are always furled in her mind. Hearing "Dopdi" they stiffen like a hedgehog's. Walking, she *unrolls the film* of known faces in her mind. Who? No Shomra, Shomra is on the run. Shomai and Budhna are also on the run, for other reasons. Not Golok, he is in Bakuli. Is it someone from Bakuli? After Bakuli, her and Dulna's names were Upi Mejhen, Matang Majhi. Here no one but Mushai and his wife knows their real names. Among the young gentlemen, not all of the previous *batches* knew.

That was a trouble time. Dopdi is confused when she thinks about it. *Operation* Bakuli in Bakuli. Surja Sahu arranged with Biddibabu to dig two tubewells and three wells within the compound of his two houses. No water anywhere, drought in Birbhum. Unlimited water at Surja Sahu's house, as clear as a crow's eye.

Get your water with canal tax, everything is burning. What's my profit in increasing cultivation with tax money?

Everything's on fire.

Get out of here. I don't accept your Panchayat nonsense. Increase cultivation with water. You want half the paddy for sharecropping. Everyone is happy with free paddy. Then give me paddy at home, give me money, I've learned my lesson trying to do you good.

What good did you do?

Have I not given water to the village?

You've given it to your kin Bhagunal.

Don't you get water?

No. The untouchables don't get water.

The quarrel began there. In the drought, human patience catches easily. Satish and Jugal from the village and that young gentleman, was Rana his name?, said a landowning moneylender won't give a thing, put him down.

Surja Sahu's house was surrounded at night. Surja Sahu had brought out his gun. Surja was tied up with cow rope. His whitish eyeballs turned and turned, he was incontinent again and again. Dulna had said, I'll have the first blow, brothers. My greatgrandfather took a bit of paddy from him, and I still give him free labor to repay the debt.

Dopdi had said, His mouth watered when he looked at me. I'll put out his eyes.

Surja Sahu. Then a *telegraphic message* from Shiuri. *Special train. Army. The jeep* didn't come up to Bakuli. *March-march-march. The crunch-crunch-crunch* of gravel under hobnailed boots. *Cordon up. Commands* on the *mike*. Jugal Mandal, Satish Mandal, Rana *alias* Prabir *alias* Dipak, Dulna Majhi-Dopdi Mejhen *surrender surrender surrender. No surrender surrender. Mow-mow-mow down the village.*



Putt-putt-putt-putt-*cordite* in the air-putt-putt-*round the clock*-putt-putt. *Flame thrower*. Bakuli is burning. *More men and women, children. . . fire-fire*. Close canal approach. *Over-over-over by nightfall*. Dopdi and Dulna had crawled on their stomachs to safety.

They could not have reached Paltakuri after Bakuli. Bhupati and Tapa took them. Then it was decided that Dopdi and Dulna would work around the Jharkhani *belt*. Dulna had explained to Dopdi, Dear, this is best! We won't get family and children this way. But who knows? Landowner and moneylender and policemen might one day be wiped out!

Who called her from the back today?

Dopdi kept walking. Villages and fields, bush and rock-*Public Works Department* markers-sound of running steps in back. Only one person running. Jharkhani *Forest* still about two miles away. Now she thinks of nothing but entering the forest. She must let them know that the *police* have set up *notices* for her again. Must tell them that bastard Sahib has appeared again. Must change *hideouts*. Also, the *plan* to do to Lakhi Bera and Naran Bera what they did to Surja Sahu on account of the trouble over paying the field hands in Sandara must be canceled. Shomai and Budhna knew everything. There was the *urgency* of great danger under Dopdi's ribs. Now she thought there was no shame as a Santal in Shomai and Budhna's treachery. Dopdi's blood was the pure unadulterated black blood of Champabhumi. From Champa to Bakuli the rise and set of a million moons. Their blood could have been contaminated; Dopdi felt proud of her forefathers. They stood guard over their women's blood in black armor. Shomai and Budhna are half-breeds. The fruits of the war. Contributions to Radhabhumi by the American soldiers stationed at Shiandange. Otherwise, crow would eat crow's flesh before Santal would betray Santal.

Footsteps at her back. The steps keep a distance. Rice in her belt, tobacco leaves tucked at her waist. Arijit, Malini, Shamu, Mantu-none of them smokes or even drinks tea. Tobacco leaves and limestone powder. Best medicine for scorpion bite. Nothing must be given away.

Dopdi turned left. This way is the *camp*. Two miles. This is not the way to the forest. But Dopdi will not enter the forest with a cop at her back.

I swear by my life. By my life Dulna, by my life. Nothing must be told.

The footsteps turn left. Dopdi touches her waist. In her palm the comfort of a half-moon. A baby scythe. The smiths at Jharkhani are fine artisans. Such an edge we'll put on it Upi, a hundred Dukhirs-Thank God Dopdi is not a gentleman. Actually, perhaps they have understood scythe, hatchet, and knife best. They do their work in silence. The lights of the *camp* at a distance. Why is Dopdi

going this way? Stop a bit, it turns again. Huh! I can tell where I am if I wander all night with my eyes shut. I won't go in the forest, I won't lose him that way. I won't outrun him. You fucking jackal of a cop, deadly afraid of death, you can't run around in the forest. I'd run you out of breath, throw you in a ditch, and finish you off.

Not a word must be said. Dopdi has seen the new *camp*, she has sat in the *bus station*, passed the time of day, smoked a "bidi" and found out how many *police convoys* had arrived, how many *radio vans*. Squash four, onions seven, peppers fifty, a straightforward account. This information cannot now be passed on. They will understand Dopdi Mejhén has been countered. Then they'll run. Arijit's voice. If anyone is caught, the others must catch the *timing* and *change* their *hideout*. If *Comrade* Dopdi arrives late, we will not remain. There will be a sign of where we've gone. No *comrade* will let the others be destroyed for her own sake.

Arijit's voice. The gurgle of water. The direction of the next *hideout* will be indicated by the tip of the wooden arrowhead under the stone.

Dopdi likes and understands this. Dulna died, but, let me tell you, he didn't lose anyone else's life. Because this was not in our heads to begin with, one was countered for the other's trouble. Now a much harsher rule, easy and clear. Dopdi returns-good; doesn't return-bad. *Change hideout*. The clue will be such that the opposition won't see it, won't understand even if they do.

Footsteps at her back. Dopdi turns again. These three and a half miles of land and rocky ground are the best way to enter the forest. Dopdi has left that way behind. A little level ground ahead. Then rocks again. The *army* could not have struck *camp* on such rocky terrain. This area is quiet enough. It's like a maze, every hump looks like every other. That's fine. Dopdi will lead the cop to the burning "ghat." Patitpaban of Saranda had been sacrificed in the name of Kali of the Burning Ghats.

Apprehend!

A lump of rock stands up. Another. Yet another. The elderly Senanayak was at once triumphant and despondent. *If you want to destroy the enemy, become one*. He had done so. As long as six years ago he could anticipate their every move. He still can. Therefore he is elated. Since he has kept up with the literature, he has read *First Blood* and seen approval of his thought and work.

Dopdi couldn't trick him, he is unhappy about that. Two sorts of reasons. Six years ago he published an article about information storage in brain cells. He demonstrated in that piece that he supported this struggle from the point of view of the field hands. Dopdi is a field hand. *Veteran fighter*. *Search and destroy*. Dopdi Mejhén is about to be *apprehended*. Will be *destroyed*. Regret.



Halt!

Dopdi stops short. The steps behind come around to the front. Under Dopdi's ribs the *canal* dam breaks. No hope. Surja Sahu's brother Rotoni Sahu. The two lumps of rock come forward. Shomai and Budhna. They had not escaped by train.

Arijit's voice. Just as you must know when you've won, you must also acknowledge defeat and start the activities of the next *stage*.

Now Dopdi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns toward the forest, and ululates with the force of her entire being. Once, twice, three times. At the third burst the birds in the trees at the outskirts of the forest awake and flap their wings. The echo of the call travels far.

Draupadi Mejhen was apprehended at 6.53 p.m. It took an hour to get her to *camp*. Questioning took another hour exactly. No one touched her, and she was allowed to sit on a canvas camp stool. At 8.57 Senanayak's dinner hour approached, and saying, "Make her. *Do the needful*," he disappeared.

Then a billion moons pass. A billion lunar years. Opening her eyes after a million light years, Draupadi, strangely enough, sees sky and moon. Slowly the bloodied nailheads shift from her brain. Trying to move, she feels her arms and legs still tied to four posts. Something sticky under her ass and waist. Her own blood. Only the gag has been removed. Incredible thirst. In case she says "water" she catches her lower lip in her teeth. She senses that her vagina is bleeding. How many came to make her?

Shaming her, a tear trickles out of the corner of her eye. In the muddy moonlight she lowers her lightless eye, sees her breasts, and understands that, indeed, she's been made up right. Her breasts are bitten raw, the nipples torn. How many? Four-five-six-seven - then Draupadi had passed out.

She turns her eyes and sees something white. Her own cloth. Nothing else. Suddenly she hopes against hope. Perhaps they have abandoned her. For the foxes to devour. But she hears the scrape of feet. She turns her head, the guard leans on his bayonet and leers at her. Draupadi closes her eyes. She doesn't have to wait long. Again the process of making her begins. Goes on. The moon vomits a bit of light and goes to sleep. Only the dark remains. A compelled spread-eagled still body. Active *pistons* of flesh rise and fall, rise and fall over it.

Then morning comes.

Then Draupadi Mejhen is brought to the tent and thrown on the straw. Her piece of cloth is thrown over her body.

Then, after *breakfast*, after reading the newspaper and sending the radio message "Draupadi Mejhen apprehended," etc., Draupadi Mejhen is ordered brought in.

Suddenly there is trouble.

Draupadi sits up as soon as she hears "Move!" and asks, Where do you want me to go?

To the Burra Sahib's tent.

Where is the tent?

Over there.

Draupadi fixes her red eyes on the tent. Says, Come, I'll go.

The guard pushes the water pot forward.

Draupadi stands up. She pours the water down on the ground. Tears her piece of cloth with her teeth. Seeing such strange behavior, the guard says, She's gone crazy, and runs for orders. He can lead the prisoner out but doesn't know what to do if the prisoner behaves incomprehensibly. So he goes to ask his superior.

The commotion is as if the alarm had sounded in a prison. Senanayak walks out surprised and sees Draupadi, naked, walking toward him in the bright sunlight with her head high. The nervous guards trail behind.

What is this? He is about to cry, but stops.

Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds.

What is this? He is about to bark.

Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hand on her hip, laughs and says, The object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me?

Where are her clothes?

Won't put them on, *sir*. Tearing them.

Draupadi's black body comes even closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak simply cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing. Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting, and sharp as her ululation, What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?

She looks around and chooses the front of Senanayak's white bush shirt to spit a bloody gob at and says, There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, *counter* me-come on, *counter* me-?

Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed *target*, terribly afraid.

IN PRINT

Jonathan Spencer (ed.), 1990, *Sri Lanka, History and the Roots of the Conflict*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 246 and index.

A remarkable feature of academic responses to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict is evident in a shift in the investigative focus of Sri Lankan anthropology. With the island in the grip of nationalist violence and conflict, land tenure, marriage and kinship, caste and exotic religious rituals have become past foci for anthropological pursuits. In consequence, a considerable body of literature on Sri Lanka's political conflict has emerged in the past decade, produced by those who conventionally would have been called cultural and social anthropologists (though some would reject this disciplinary appellation).

Jonathan Spencer's anthology appeared in 1990, yet has provoked little response in Sri Lanka. Similar work—for example, by Tambiah, Obeyesekere, Kapferer and Valentine—has also failed to generate any serious discussion. Even debates on Sri Lankan anthropological material and their interpretation appearing in Western academic journals rarely receive attention, except perhaps in the course of casual pre-dinner drinks in the company of visiting scholars.

This is a problem worth investigating. When the phenomenology of hour-to-hour existence is constantly being shaken by myriad forms of violence, one is deprived of that precious little peace of mind needed for reflection on events and processes. All, including trained scholarly minds, are acutely subjective; cynicism, despair and mistrust drive them to parochial and sectarian retreats. Relatively free of these sharp and disabling constraints are expatriate academics who carry out their field-work, recording and reflecting on what they see, hear and read. Spencer's anthology is a marvelous illustration of this debacle of Sri Lankan academia. With the exception of one author, R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, all the other contributors—eleven altogether—are expatriate anthropologists. Even Gunawardana's essay is an updated version of one written a few years before the ethnic war began in 1983!

This book, Spencer notes in the Introduction, "is an attempt to shed fresh light on the sources of the political tragedy that has engulfed Sri Lanka in the past decade" (p.3). What is 'fresh' in the light thus shed, according to the editor, is the conclusion that the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is not the "inevitable outcome of centuries of hostility", nor the "outcome of inherited destiny," but rather "made by the actions of particular men and women" (p.3). Not a great claim, yet a fruitful point of departure for a group of concerned scholars making a collective

effort to grasp and elucidate for themselves and for those of us who are yet entangled in the tragedy, the why and how of Sri Lanka's crisis.

The anthology is organized along three broad themes. Theme I, 'Colonialism, History and Racism,' has five chapters dealing with the 'power of the past' in Sinhala and Tamil nationalist discourses and practices. Elizabeth Nissan and R. L. Stirrat, in their essay on "The generation of communal identities" argue that the Sinhala-Tamil conflict, as ethnic conflict, is a product of modern politics. The delineation of post-colonial specificities of this conflict, differing qualitatively from community conflicts in colonial and pre-colonial Sri Lanka, is perhaps a useful way of moving away from the fatalistic historicist approaches that claim centuries of conflictual relations among the Sri Lankan Sinhalese and Tamils. Similarly, R. A. L. H. Gunawardana's essay on "The Sinhala identity and ideology in history and historiography" is a frontal challenge on the widely-held academic and nationalist view that Sinhalese-Buddhist chronicles provide evidence for a two-millennia long history for Sinhalese nationalism. (Recently, Gunawardana's thesis has been challenged by K. N. O. Dharmadasa, who argues, haphazardly, that the Sinhalese and Tamils have been sworn enemies throughout recorded history!).

Sinhalese-Buddhist chronicles, even apart from their appropriation and interpretation by many users and misusers, are a part of Sri Lanka's problem itself. In the contested terrain of history, the chronicles themselves have been turned into powerful ideological texts. Ideologically constituted pasts—or histories—have thus come into being in a menacingly powerful way in both Sinhala and Tamil nationalist campaigns. Gunawardana's deconstruction of the nationalist historiography of pre-colonial Sri Lanka is followed by two essays, "Historical Images in the British period" by John Rodgers and "The Politics of the Tamil past" by Dagmar Hellman-Rajanayagam. The central point made by Rodgers is that after the official 'discovery' of the *Mahawamsa*—the master-text of Sinhalese nationalist historiography—by British civil servants, it became central to the colonial understanding of the Sri Lankan past and that this colonial understanding itself was appropriated almost totally by the Sri Lankan intellectual elite. Incidentally, even a cursory look at Anagarika Dharmapala's writings would reveal how Dharmapala himself re-produced the colonial/orientalist construction of the Sinhalese past of this island.



Moment of Crisis in Everyday Life

Anthropologists have a disciplinary advantage which historians and political scientists are reluctant to exploit; they observe how people live their lives under concrete circumstances. For example, anti-Tamil violence in 1983: the only available scholarly recording of this horrendous event is an essay written by Gananath Obeyesekere who happened to be in riot-ridden Colombo, when mobs were executing their 'patriotic duty'.

Apart from the recording of, and responding to, concrete events and processes, there is the need to understand how nationalist projects inform and shape ideological and social relations between communities. A multiplicity of nationalist projects and discourses has in recent years introduced to society an array of overlapping identities, agendas, priorities and even courses of action. The state, political parties, anti-state movements, guerilla groups and armed forces, the press, cultural cadres—a host of agents have engaged in enterprises for ideological hegemony. The three chapters under the general theme "History at a moment of crisis" are attempts to examine the multiple ideological constitution of three rural communities.

The bias towards the 'village' or the 'rural community' as a starting point of investigation still illustrates the original sin of social anthropology. When James Brow claims in his chapter to examine "the impact of Sinhala nationalism on a remote and marginal village" (p. 129), one wonders whether there are any 'villages' (or 'islands') in Sri Lanka which can be posited as **ideologically** remote or marginal. If there is any force that has effectively erased the city-country divide in Sri Lanka, and chained the bourgeois and the peasant to a unified world-view, it is that of nationalist ideology. Going to a village in search of roots of the ethnic conflict is a slightly problematic exercise. The President of the Republic, a drop-out of the Lumumba University, a natural sciences Professor in Colombo, an exorcist in Matara, and a school teacher in Sabaragamuwa are intellectual cadres of competing, yet interrelated, nationalist projects.

The chapters compiled by Brow, Whitaker and Woost are nevertheless rich in field material that encapsulate moments in the complex and incessant processes of the re-constitution of nationalist world views and self-understandings by a variety of agents. Whitaker's young Tamil militant in Mandur is motivated by the "desire to redirect nationalist discourse toward a more radically transformative end" (p. 153) and he represents

a community of intensely active thinkers and practitioners of a radical Tamil nationalism. In contrast, Michael Woost's documentation of rural development activities in a Sinhalese village points to the ideological form taken by the ubiquitous presence of the state in rural society and the way in which rural conflicts are subsumed and structured by the dominant official discourse.

The last section, containing three chapters, is on "The politics of the past," dealing with the issue of the re-claiming of the past in present ideological enterprises and political practices. Steven Kemper's chapter on "J. R. Jayewardene, righteousness and *realpolitik*" covers the reign of a man whose manipulation of Sinhala-Buddhist ideological instruments in a project of cunning statecraft has left many disastrous consequences for Sri Lanka to grapple with for many years to come. Kemper's chapter is rather weak in that his documentation and commentary offers nothing excitingly new by way of providing insights into Jayewardene's political project.

A remarkable development in Sinhala nationalist ideology in the eighties was the emergence of some schools that re-articulated old arguments in a militantly new fashion. The late Serena Tennakoon conducted, [before she fell ill], a critical survey of a newspaper debate on Sinhala identity. Spencer's re-production of that essay in this anthology is a tribute to this versatile scholar.

Sri Lanka History and the Roots of Conflict is a valuable addition to the expanding body of scholarship on contemporary Sri Lanka. Its major drawback, which the editor also acknowledges, is the imbalance created by the little space given to Tamil nationalism. In a way, Sinhala nationalism has been privileged by the richness of scholarly attention it has consistently received. The deconstruction of Tamil nationalism is a part of the necessary agenda, too.

Jayadeva Uyangoda

Postscript: Spencer's anthology was later followed by his own book on Sri Lanka's crisis, **A Sinhala Village in Times of Trouble**. A young academic with a genuine commitment to seeing Sri Lanka find peace and democracy, Spencer lost his wife in Colombo last summer. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Julia Swannell.

VIRTUES OF FEDERALISM

The woeful inadequacies of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution have clearly established that devolution of power cannot take place within a unitary constitution. For example at present the central Parliament can legislate even on subjects in the Provincial List; the central Parliament can abolish Provincial Councils without their consent; the Executive President and the central Parliament can override or assume the executive and legislative powers of Provincial Councils; the real financial powers of the Provincial Councils are exercised by the Governor of the Province; there are insufficient checks and balances on organs of the central Government making it relatively easy to withdraw or undermine devolved powers. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that the implementation of the Thirteenth Amendment has demonstrated that given the hierarchy of power in a unitary constitution disputes between the centre and the provinces are resolved by officials and legal advisors in favour of central Government institutions. For example, whenever the central Government has through legislation or executive action undermined the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment, the Attorney General's Department and government and parliamentary officials have consistently supported such initiatives. In such a context, it is totally unrealistic to expect ethnic minorities to be satisfied with the Thirteenth Amendment.

A Federal Constitution on the other hand will strengthen democracy and Liberal democracy in the following ways:

- a) There will be a clear cut division of powers between the centre and the provinces,
- b) There will exist co-ordinate sovereignties of the centre and provinces where powers devolved to provinces cannot be exercised by the central Government.
- c) Powers conferred cannot be reduced or withdrawn without the consent of the provinces.
- d) The excessive powers presently vested in the Executive Presidency will be curtailed.
- e) A comprehensive package of checks and balances which include a bi-cameral national legislature, judicial review of legislation and the supremacy of the Constitution will be introduced.

The assertion of the SAS and other Sinhala nationalists that the adoption of federalism is a first step to separation is totally ahistorical as there are no examples of liberal democratic federal states which have broken up into separate states. On the other hand, there are many unitary and centralised multi-racial states which have broken up into separate states because of the unwillingness of rulers of such states to share power with minorities. The assertion by the SAS and even by Mr. H.L. de Silva that the break up of Yugoslavia constitutes proof that federalism is a first step to separation is totally untenable. Yugoslavia and even the Soviet Union were examples of states which were only federal in name but in fact were highly centralised totalitarian one-party states and it would therefore be absurd to assume that the characteristic features of federal states were ever applied in those countries. Liberal democratic federal states such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Germany and even India have not broken up despite the numerous diversities in such countries because federalism has allowed space for those diversities to be more freely expressed than a unitary space would have permitted. Liberals believe that the SAS and other Sinhala chauvinist groups who proudly proclaim their devotion to a united Sri Lanka, are in fact, its most dangerous opponents, and are truly the allies of the LTTE.

The Liberal Party appeals to national political parties and in particular the UNP and the SLFP to accept the adoption of a federal constitution. Contrary to the Srinivasan proposal that the parties represented in the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Resolution of the North-East Conflict should refrain from campaigning in a national referendum on the adoption of a federal constitution, Liberals believe that the UNP, SLFP, and other national parties should actively campaign in favour of a federal constitution at such a referendum. We also appeal to the UNP and the SLFP to publicly and unequivocally commit themselves to campaigning in favour of federalism at such a referendum. It is only if such a commitment is made that it would be reasonable to expect the Tamil parties to accept the North and East as separate provinces.

It has become increasingly clear that there can be no military solution to the ethnic conflict and that the essence of a viable political solution is a package of constitutional reforms which will meet the reasonable aspirations of Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans thereby marginalising the intransigent LTTE. Since the lesson of the Thirteenth Amendment is that substantial devolution cannot be effected within a unitary framework and that the only reasonable alternative to a merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces is the adoption of a federal constitution, Liberals urge the two main national political parties to accept a federal constitution with effective safeguards against secession by any province.

[From **THE LIBERAL APPEAL FOR FEDERALISM**, statement issued by the Liberal Party in December 1992]