

1981 — Year of the Lion's Roar or of the Untamed Tiger?
— Mervyn de Silva

LANKA

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MANAME, REKAWA — 25 YEARS LATER

— Reggie Siriwardena

JVP — Bopage answers Uyangoda

Education and social injustice — Premadasa Udagama

Sirilal Kodikara's "Oleanders" — H. A. Seneviratne

Fanon and the liberation struggle — M. Jayatilleke

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UNEQUAL EXCHANGE

Save the poor elephant. Save our trees, and our 'ruins'. All worthy causes, all worthwhile public campaigns. But who will save our children?

"The Baby Trade" has been the favourite front page story of the Sunday press in recent weeks. And when it cropped up in Parliament, we heard the story of the childless European couple who paid Rs. 100,000 for a Sri Lankan toddler. In another case an agent collected a cool Rs. 25,000/- but the mother was fobbed off with Rs. 1,000/-. Most pathetic of all is the story of the woman who came to the Big City, found it wasn't paved with gold, traded her new-born child and returned to her village loaded with cassettes and other goodies of the new trinket culture that has descended upon us by the grace of the "open economy", the IMF and the Singapore 'model'.

Ban the Baby Trade was the backbenchers' spirited demand. Will the government legislate? The philosophical might call it a comment on the human condition. It does seem also a particularly poignant example of the unequal exchange that characterises commerce between the Rich and the Poor Worlds.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

The CDN was sufficiently smart to spot the difference between the "NATION" and the "DINAKARA" in their treatment of the SLFP "unity talks" but it failed to underline the real significance. For the NATION (English) the door was wide open for dialogue between the factions but the DINAKARA (Sinhala) banged the door rudely in the face of the more hopeful negotiators. The NATION is under the editorial supervision of Sunethra Bandaranaike while sister Chandrika is the real guiding spirit of the Sinhala daily. The JANADINA (LSSP) used the chance to carry a front page item that Sunethra stood with Brother Anura.

A Trotskyist academic who belongs to a party that has been ringing the Rosmead Place bell for

months but not too successfully, commented a little dolefully: "Unity was dead when the Chandrika group finished what JR had started".

TOURISM—TROUBLED THOUGHTS

Sri Lanka, the tourist authorities have announced, is now ready to welcome another friendly invasion of about 350,000 tourists. Though the "V" has now been cheerfully excised from the once familiar "VFE" (Valuable Foreign Exchange) of the exchange-starved UF era, tourism is still touted as the great foreign exchange spinner of a prosperous future.

Yet, leading local tour operators have begun to harbour nervous doubts about this future. Sri Lanka was never in the "up-market" business. The vast majority of tourists, mostly from western Europe, came from low income groups and on "package tours". It was the foreign tour operator who really made the money. The question now being asked is whether this kind of tourist can afford the higher air fares. Will the bottom drop out of the tourist trade? Will we become another Seychelles?

"No" reply the experts. In their carefully planned programmes, they have given due weight, they say, to the fact that we share an advantage enjoyed by the Caribbean, Portugal etc. The Caribbean, has the US for a hinterland while Portugal has Europe. We, they argue, have India.

ANOTHER PARADISE

Sri Lanka may offer the tourist a taste of paradise, as the Air Lanka advertisement has it. It is also a smuggler's paradise for a well organised Indian "operation", reports the influential Indian journal "India Today". TV sets, radios, electrical goods etc, smuggled from Sri Lanka, are fetching fancy prices in Madras, reports that magazine. The modus operandi, claims India Today, the bogus "pilgrimage-cum-tourist" traffic to this island. Before the year closes Indian and Sri Lankan officials (Police, Customs, Immigration) will meet in Colombo to discuss preventive measures.

'Better Fewer... or the more the merrier?'

Reading Vasu's article on working class unity in the L. G. of Nov. 15th, I recalled something I had read in a British Trotskyist journal I recently picked up. Called INQABA YA BASEBENZI, it is the journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress (ANC). Deciphered, this tendency is that which supports Ted Grant's Militant Group in London. Predictably, its activists were suspended from ANC membership by the ANC National Executive which has also banned them from attending even the public meetings of the ANC.

The inaugural issue of INQABA, which came out in 1981 contains a long interview with two members of the NSSP leadership on the subject of the 1980 General Strike in Sri Lanka. They are Sirithunga Jayasinghe, who is the

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party's organizing secretary and Gunasena Mahanama, who is Gen. Sec. of the GCSU. INQABA claims that the GCSU has 17,500 members out of the 22,000 clerical workers in the public sector.

Most interesting of all, is Mahanama's own estimate and projections of the NSSP's strength. He says, "we now have a layer of sympathisers of about 100,000. The trade unions supporting the NSSP have more than 80,000 members altogether, about 30 — 35% of the organized workers. Our target for membership of the NSSP by the end of 1981 is 10,000 card-carrying members."

INQABA also carries a picture of the mammoth funeral procession of comrade Somapala, with the caption "NSSP leaders head the funeral march through Colombo in June 1980".

Those of us who watched the NSSP/GCSU May day demo must wonder where those tens of thousands of NSSP members, supporters, and sympathisers were. I've heard of Stalinist falsification, but the Trot ones are really funnier. At least comrade Wijeweera can permit himself a chuckle or two upon reading this. He probably needs it anyway.

Dayan Jayatilleka
New York

Mad Hatter's Tea Party

Your correspondent Jayantha Somasunderam, to say the least, has a very interesting sarcastic style of his own. Unfortunately he seems to be ignorant of the past history or the present conditions of our neighbours, may be for the sake of convenience. It is a well known fact that they treat their minorities much worse than we do. He should also study the latest Nationality Bill in Britain. After all unlike in Sri Lanka people were allowed in by their own Governments. The situation here had much more explosive possibilities at that time than what is in Britain today. I think Mr. Somasunderam should tour Tamil Nadu and find out how

they treat their own long lost compatriots when they return home. Don't they fleece them right, left and centre?

In an earlier article he ridicules some of our past leaders who imitated the British. This is not peculiar to Sri Lanka. Ours being a small country, could be easily culturally conquered and the low country was under the sway of European powers for about four centuries. How about Goa in India or Amboina in Indonesia? Aren't we more fortunate?

It is strange but true that in a short time in the United States even his Soul seems to have been conquered by the Yankees. Tut, tut Mr. Somasunderam you have been much faster than our forefathers! All credit to the Americans, they are a great Democracy except when dealing with the Blacks and the Red Indians. Please don't forget a Roman Catholic became the President of USA only after one and half centuries, and Roman Catholics are thirty per cent of the population. However, their Democracy is not for export. They prefer dictatorships overseas, since they bring higher dividends.

The very title of this article is a futile attempt to equate the Boston Tea Party to the fact finding tour of the President. What a childish comparison it is? Furthermore why brandish these famous European names and phrases in irrelevant situations? We lesser mortals are really stunned by them.

V. P. A. Abeyasinghe
Rajagiriya

Schizophrenia

Just a small point. Why are so many dons dialectical skeet-shooters? They toss up clay pigeons and solemnly proceed to shoot them down. e. g. Prof. Dissanayake writes: "Dr. de Vos says that he was not suggesting that NM was mentally ill." (This is of course a quite impermissible distortion of what I did say.) He then scoffs: "As if anybody would have taken him seriously if he

did." I think that if the professor had a good case it would hardly have been necessary for him to resort to this kind of artifice.

As for good and bad puns, this is very much an area where one man's "viande" is another man's "poisson". Personally I thought "Dr. Jekyll Perera and Mr. Hyde Park" a hilariously appropriate sobriquet.

Costain de Vos
Kollupitiya

Sri Lankan Paradoxes

Mr. Jayantha Somasuntharam's piece on Sri Lankan paradoxes is quite interesting — the colonial integument continues to exhibit considerable staying power. Kipling's famous adage is obviously false in Sri Lanka where East & West have met for centuries and have produced a way of life which is neither exclusively oriental nor exclusively accidental. The idea of kingship is very dear to us. Some people have a reverence for the colonial order because the old days were better when Britain ruled the Empire but allowed the colonials few silly pretensions. It is a view declared openly by a few people quite impudently these days.

As for political leadership, during the colonial era the best men opted for the Civil Service, medicine, engineering. They rationalised politics as dirty business so much so that the profession of politics passed into the hands of the landed gentry and lawyers. Soon after independence there came a day when the civil servants woke up to the fact that politics far from being a dirty business was a deadly serious affair. The political masters could now do what they wished with the meritocrats. There is an agonising reappraisal of the situation. The public service is now at the cross roads as it finds itself on a collision course with the politicians. Maybe the public servants in future opt to plunge into the political field. The proportional representation system makes it less inhibitory for the best men

(Continued on page 24)

Year of Racial Violence or Cash Crisis ?

Mervyn de Silva

Presidential Awards for Exporters, JAYCEE Trophies for the Ten Outstanding Sri Lankans of the Year, and Pulitzer Prizes for Journalists (proposed by the Trade Ministry!) . . . laurels for all sorts and conditions of men and manly endeavour set the fashion for 1981 as the UNP readies itself for what its Leader has now nominated as "Election Year '82" at the December party conference.

If a convention of political pundits met in secret Yuletide session what would it have elected to call "the most important event" of last year? The SLFP split? The police rampage in Jaffna? The racial violence in the South? Or, in the manner of the Chinese calendar, would it be the Year of the Roaring Sinhala Lion? Or, the Year of the Untamed Tamil Tiger?

Certainly, the SLFP's unseemly squabbles, often in public and its eventual split into SLFP (S) and SLFP (M) became big news and a running front-page headline-making story because it is the kind of news that newspapermen love and their readers relish. In this island which has just completed celebrations, of 50 years of universal franchise (the first 3rd world country to do so) politics has long been the major spectator sport, with each general election an Olympics-style show with magnificent and maximum audience participation. An average turn-out, with no ASEAN-type rigging, of 80%).

Whether cricket, essentially a middle-class venture, will rob politics of some of its traditional attractions now that we have been crowned with ICC status, or T.V. will capture the mass mind and the market, are questions for the future. Meanwhile the SLFP remain-

ed firmly in the limelight for it lacked little of the dramatic—walkouts, rival conferences, public polemics, suspensions and sackings, occupation of the party office, eviction, requisition by government, writs and court cases, de-requisitioning and expulsion en masse. Besides there was the personal factor to add piquancy, and politics here has been dominated by personalities more than somewhat. Thus, mother and son and daughter, and their conflicting roles in a drama of political conflict, contributed a near-classical element.

But the tempting thrills of pursuing each week this factional feud down some of its more byzantine paths can blur the vision while leaving us breathless. What matters is its significance in the wider context of Sri Lankan politics.

SLFP ROLE

Since its inception in 1951 (we had many interesting anniversaries this year, 1931, 1951, 1956 and 1971—L. G. May 1st) the SLFP has played the crucial historical role of the "alternate government". In doing so, it performed an indispensable function in the evolution and operation of the British system we inherited. The SLFP's historic victory in 1956 was not 'system-change' but system perfection. Hence Sri Lanka's almost unique position in the Third World as a viable democracy. By the same token, it was a Third World aberration.

Once the advent of the SLFP in 1951 and its 1956 victory helped complete the system and, by its own functional rules, its relatively smooth performance, what was to mature into a true two-party system easily assimilated and adjusted to specific challenges, such as the

electoral decline of the established Left. The major Left parties the LSSP and CP became allies in a united front, under SLFP leadership, and later partners in government. The expulsion of the LSSP (1975) and the withdrawal of the CP (1977) have not really changed the system or the pattern of electoral politics it dictates.

Last year saw the emergence of the 5-party 'bloc'. The only significant differences from the old pattern were the participation of the TULF, and the non-participation of the CP. Otherwise, the SLFP-TULF-LSSP-MEP-CP (maoist) bloc represented re-emergence of the conventional (anti-UNP) pattern.

The CP was out, and of course the JVP, but others like the NSSP are knocking at the door.

TULF TROUBLES

The long drawn-out factional fight reduced the Left to a condition of near-paralysis, and made the 5 party bloc moribund. With problems of its own threatening to overwhelm the leadership—mainly the rising militancy of the clandestine bands of Tamil youth manifesting itself in armed actions, with increasing frequency and spectacular effectiveness—the TULF, which had given Mrs. B. a grand welcome in Jaffna, withdrew quietly from the 5 party bloc, and in fact withdrew physically to its troubled home-base, the northern peninsula. There, it took time to work out its tactics—under mounting pressure on two fronts, the Tamil youth and their guerrilla arm, and a resurgent Dutugemunuism identified with such leading UNP personalities as Mr. Cyril Mathew, and a phalanx of backbenchers whose authentic voice was

Dr. Neville Fernando, now expelled from the UNP. (In the face of an expulsion motion he resigned from parliament on Dec. 23).

Significantly, when the TULF returned to Colombo it was not to re-enter the 5 party bloc or to talk to Mrs. B. or Mr. Senanayake, but to President J. R. The police had gone on the rampage in Jaffna and the "Lions" had ravaged several areas in the South.

Caught in the crossfire of youth militancy and Sinhala chauvinism the TULF has made the Wilson-Tiruchelvam formula its fall-back position. Thus, the vital negotiations on expanded powers for the DDC's. This disguised devolution, the TULF hopes, will be sufficient to appease at least the middle-class and the moderates. But it can hardly feed a ravenous tiger.

As this issue of the LG is being prepared, three headlines on consecutive days make a dramatic intervention. "ANTI-UNP FRONT IN THE OFFING?"; "CASH SITUATION CRITICAL-RONNIE"; "TERRORISTS STRIKE IN TRINCO — HALF A MILLION ROBBED FROM BANK".

Immobilised by its own agonising indecision over which SLFP to support, the LSSP was forced into 'watch-and-wait' policy. Then it came out with a proposal for an 'alternate program'. But symptomatic surely was the LSSP's discussions.... on Monday, with SLFP (M) and on Tuesday with SLFP (S).

STABILITY FACTOR

If an anti-UNP front does get going will the pre-election situation conform to the old pattern? And will the election produce a clear result and a straight winner? On the old pendulum theory, an undivided SLFP would certainly have carried the day. Will two "SLFP's" produce a new parliamentary configuration and what effect will it have on 'stability'?

It was precisely to ensure such stability that we installed an executive presidency. In the words of its architect, a stable executive "free from the whims and fancies of parliament" and therefore able to "take hard, unpopular decisions".

This was Sri Lanka's distinctive answer to the common Third World problem of power. This contemporary Third World phenomenon has in practice meant a relentless authoritarian drift as Third World elites found it increasingly impossible to respond to the challenge of rising mass expectations and to cope with the pressures thus generated.

In Sri Lanka, a 5/6th parliamentary majority legitimised the centralisation and concentration of power. So Sri Lanka entered as the L. G. noted in a previous commentary "an intermediate stage" ... not quite what we were and not quite what the majority of Third World countries are.

The Presidential form of government and the accompanying changes in the electoral law (PR and party list) will face a real test only in 1983/84. What if these changes, the SLFP split and other factors disturb the old lines of demarcation and the traditional formations, and new alignments, new constellations come into being? Again the basic question will be "stability".

And this, finally, has to be seen against the backdrop of economics and the grim international environment. The Finance Minister (only three years ago the very picture of buoyant self-assurance) confesses he does not know "how the Treasury is running..!"

Many western economists agree that the money market crash, like the increasingly frequent downturns (the small cycles) and the intensification of the crisis in the international (political) system, is a by-product of the New Depression. The direct political consequences could be anybody's (educated) guess. Certainly, a deteriorating US-USSR relationship. What of a limited regional war with indirect superpower involvement? In our area? Again, the US, as the whole world can see, is itching to have a bash at some favourite enemy for demonstration effect. Libya, Cuba, Central America?

Much more to the point of course is the impact of this crisis on our own politics.

(To be continued)

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VITAL STATISTICS

At last some official (reliable?) figures on unemployment. According to the Department of Census and Statistics the number of unemployed is 860,000 which is 15.1% of the total workforce. The same survey claims that 708,000 new jobs have been created between 1977-80. The Census chief states that these statistics have been confirmed by the Central Bank's findings.

Since unemployment has always been one of the most contentious issues in the political debate, these hard facts, probably based on a more scientific computation than 10 years ago, are indeed welcome. On public platforms, the politicians

have been engaged in a juggling act with unemployment figures for the past two decades. In 1975-76 for instance, the widely accepted figure was 1.2 million (government) and 1.5 million (opposition) with the percentages ranging from 20 to 25% of the workforce. The Census Dept. now places the 1976 figure at 1.07 million.

The commonest boast today is that the 'open economy' has helped reduce the problem by 50%. While there can be little doubt that the huge flow of money and liberalisation have greatly contributed to the expansion of job oppor-

tunities, what does this signify politically?

The UNP's polls blitzkrieg was certainly led by an army of job-seekers. But it was a once cock-a-hoop but greatly chastened Finance Minister who reminded us last year that more governments have been buried by inflation than unemployment. And some weeks ago, the Great Guru himself, Dr. Witteveen, late of the I.M.F., sent a chill through many Establishment spines by talking of spiralling living costs and the dangerous disparity in private sector/state sector wages.

Ultimately all armies march on their stomachs.

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The inevitable confrontation

A week before the imposition of martial law in Poland, Mr. Lech Walesa, the Solidarity leader told a gathering in Radom that "confrontation was now inevitable". Mr. Walesa's ominous prediction followed a call from some Solidarity leaders for an overthrow of the Polish government and the establishment of a "provisional government". Identified as the 'hardliners' in the organisation this leadership group had outmanoeuvred the enormously popular but ideologically unsure and wavering Mr. Walesa at the critical meeting of Solidarity's Supreme Council on Oct. 6, at Gdansk where it had all started sixteen months before. Reporting to the *TIMES* from Gdansk, Christopher Bobinski wrote that these hardliners had "swept to position of power in the national leadership, weakening the authority of the moderate Mr. Walesa".

The steady shift in Solidarity's tactics and demands, the general hardening of positions all round, and the spreading chaos in Poland put paid to all those efforts aimed at what

UNABLE TO GOVERN

By Alan Friedman

"What I am saying may be a bit brutal, but I think the Polish Government was no longer in a position to govern the country.

"Coal production was down significantly, exports were only at a level of 20 per cent compared with this time last year, the country was at a standstill.

"I now see the chance for Poland to return to a more normal working schedule and this could be a good thing for the banks."

These were the cynical words of a senior banker in Frankfurt last night, reflecting on the developments in Poland over the weekend.

—(Financial Times)

MORTAL DANGER

Our country is threatened by mortal danger. Anti-state, subversive activities of forces hostile to Socialism have pushed the society to the brink of civil war. Anarchy, lawlessness and chaos are ruining the economy, render the country powerless, endanger the sovereignty and existence of the nation.

The open preparations for a reactionary coup, the threat of terrorism, can lead to bloodshed.

The efforts of the Sejm (Parliament) of the Polish People's Republic, the Government and organs of the state Administration have proved ineffective. Appeals for patriotic prudence and all acts of good will are emotional principles of the system, torpedo national agreement. The forces from under the banner of Solidarity are deliberately boycotting the initiatives which can contribute to leading the country out of the crisis.

It is time to abandon the road of disaster, to prevent national destruction. Discipline, law and order must be immediately ensured.

— (Official Statement)

some of the leading participants in the protracted tripartite negotiations (government, Church and Solidarity) had described earlier as 'national accord' or 'reconciliation'. To be effective, such an accord would have had to be founded on economic reforms and other changes designed to meet the widespread charges levelled at a Giereck government responsible for the chronic ills of latterday Poland. The removal of Mr. Giereck and of several senior government and party officials was an admission that these charges were well-founded.

Such reforms in no way raised the question of state power.

CAPTIVE WALESA ?

That is probably why many European analysts of the fast moving (and fast deteriorating) Polish situation

suggest that the most charitable view is to see Mr. Walesa as a captive of circumstance — a conjuncture of events in which they accord a crucial importance to the changing character of Solidarity, under pressures both internal and external.

Originally conceived a trade union organisation and a voice for workers' grievances and demands, Solidarity's ever-widening embrace soon included what the US (Trotskyist) journal *SPARTACIST* called a coalition of 'peasant small-holders, rural petty capitalists, priests and bureaucrats'. Secondly, what seemed at first a loose working alliance with the Church became an integral and active link. As the traditional and unrepentant defender of the faith in private property, the Church has had a decidedly uncomfortable co-existence with the State in a Catholic county where property has been socialized.

CHURCH AND STATE

Perhaps the roots of the crisis lie as much in Poland's failure to resolve the basic question of Church and State as in the government's equally conspicuous and catastrophic neglect of the problem of the peasantry and land. The disruptive consequences of these failures were greatly aggravated in recent times by the monumental mistakes in economic planning, by mismanagement, inefficiency and corruption. Colossal investment (on foreign commercial loans) in export-oriented industry, and on extravagant projects (See *'Spending Spree'*) became an unbearable burden when the export markets collapsed (the recession in the West) and the banks began the squeeze. (It would be interesting to watch, in this connection, the economic malaise evident now in nearby Yugoslavia).

A new, unusual factor came into play in a rather dramatic fashion with the election of a Polish Pope, a move

in which the US and Mr. Carter's top adviser, the pathologically anti-Soviet Polish emigre, Dr. Brzezinski, took a part by no means insubstantial. Since his elevation the Polish Pontiff's 'messages' to the Polish Church and his compatriots have been as loud and clear as any broadcast from the US-owned **Radio Free Europe** which, according to BBC monitoring reports, has increased its Polish-language bulletins 5 times over in the past year.

CONSERVATIVE PEASANTRY

The psychological effect of this on the conservative layers of Polish society, especially the tradition-bound peasantry, is not difficult to divine.

British correspondent Garton Ash (*Spectator*, London) put it quite colourfully: "It is the conservative Catholic peasants of south-eastern Poland who would overthrow communism at the drop of a Cardinal's hat".

It should not be forgotten, nevertheless, that the Church was historically a rallying point of nationalist resistance in a country at the crossroads of a continent so prone to war for so many centuries. The propaganda war that the West so buoyantly

unleashed on Poland after Solidarity's birth not only exploited the historical role of the Church but also another emotional legacy of the past — the anti-Russian sentiment nurtured by the centuries-old conflict between Poland and Czarist Russia.

Finally, Solidarity established close links with AFL-CIO, the powerful conglomerate of US union bosses, and actually opened a New York office in the premises owned by a man called Albert Shanker, a person whose 'connections' are well known to the American Left, and the radical American press. The silences and non-committal answers of Zigmund Przekiewicz, Solidarity's New York representative, to questions about Solidarity's own US "connections" make extremely interesting reading in such US journals as "*Workers Vanguard*" and "*Spartacist*".

In its newly acquired character as an 'alternate government' Solidarity leaders began to speak about their objectives openly.

Mr. Jacek Kuron, the acknowledged, if slightly shadowy, 'theoretician' of Solidarity spoke of a new coalition — Solidarity, the Church and 'moderate' Communists which will "suspend the operation of all authorities,

including the government" (UPI). Another leader, Mr. Bogdan Lis was asked by the *New York Times* what would happen if the Polish parliament refused to accept Solidarity's terms. He replied: "We'll dissolve it". (NYT 13/10).

This was a very far cry indeed from the original Gdansk resolution that spoke of the "leading role" of the party and "respecting Poland's fraternal alliances". No wonder Mr. Walesa spoke of an 'inevitable' confrontation.

UNMANAGEABLE CRISIS

While the contending forces advanced towards confrontation, the average family moved from hardship to privation and near-despair. The cry for the bare necessities of daily life encouraged protest, Solidarity-Cum-Church sponsored protest and demonstrations contributed to the further dislocation of normal life, including the distribution of the limited supplies. Thus, the vicious circle. The administration was manifestly unable to cope with a crisis of these proportions.

(See "*Unable to Govern*"); a crisis which now produced three irreducible fundamentals — the need to provide the people with the barest essentials, especially with the advent of winter; the need to prevent disorder from sliding into anarchy; the need to meet the challenge to state power. Came the fateful decision of December 13.

It was George Kennan, architect of 'containment' who recently reminded students of post-war history that the heyday of US paramountcy fathered such Cold War strategies like "roll back" (the Iron Curtain) and "the magnet and the wedge". Superpower parity or rough equivalence opened the door to detente. Having declared detente dead, Washington has returned to the doctrine of military superiority. Is Poland to be the 'wedge', the beginning of a second attempt at "roll back"?

The immense significance of this external factor should not of course tempt any observer to deny the stark reality of the struggles and strivings of the Polish people. Nor should a total preoccupation with the domestic discontents blind us to the other dimensions.

(Continued on page 24)

SPENDING SPREE

"As a matter of policy we don't interfere with the banks unless there is evidence of a collapse," a senior administration official told me in Washington. "If the banks choose to extend credit to Poland, then that's their business. And if they choose to withdraw it, then that's their business too."

And there are some influential figures both in London and in President Reagan's Washington who are quite prepared to take this argument to its logical conclusion. "Setting my own feelings aside and speaking only as a banker" said one London bank official, "it would be a good thing if Russia invaded, because then she would be obliged to honour Poland's debts." Whether the Russians would see it this way is quite another matter.

Most bankers do assume, however, that if it comes to the crunch, Russia will pick up the tab. It is this assumption, known as the "umbrella theory," which persuaded the banks to pour so much money into Poland in the first place.

And so, the great lending spree began. During the seventies, under the now discredited First Secretary, Edward Gierak — who saw western technology as Poland's salvation — the banks even competed with each other to offer loans to the Poles. Western governments offered encouragements and guarantees. The money poured in.

THE GIEREK experiment has been a disaster. In and around Warsaw stand dozens of half-finished or under-used factories, like the \$400 million colour TV plant, built by RCA and Corning Glass, financed with a \$75 million credit from the US Exim bank. It is at present operating at 20 per cent capacity because there is no hard currency to pay for imported components and raw material.

In the city centre, across the street from the central railway station, stands a half-finished \$76 million glass tower that was to have been an airline terminal and luxury hotel. But the British contractors, Cementation, pulled out when it became clear that the national airline, Lot, could not keep up its share of the payments.

— (Sunday Times)

Fanon and National Liberation

Marguerite Jayatilleka

Taking up Fanon's work, 'A Dying Colonialism' we discover the radical psychiatrist in the midst of the Algerian Revolution. The Fanon of 'Black Skin White Masks' has undergone a development, evolving towards the revolutionary that he was at the later stages of his life. It is the "free citizens of Algeria" whom he talks about. With elation he describes the many changes that have taken place in Algerian society as a result of the revolutionary war. The colonized man is no longer alienated. He identifies himself with the nation and with the struggle for national liberation. He recovers his personality and overcomes all complexes that had been engendered by colonialism.

With the inception of the national liberation struggle, the life of the colonized acquires a new meaning, and his attitudes change the black man and his culture are no longer the ossified objects of an appressure colonialism. Fanon portrays how the experience of the revolution changes the oppressed man and makes his culture dynamic and living. It is with great originality that Fanon shows how a peoples culture can be made use of a in the struggle for liberation. He makes it explicit here that true national liberation is achieved only through armed struggle. The armed struggle gives birth to the new society whose relations Fanon focuses attention on. Violent resistance caused a change in the national consciousness of the people, and independence achieved through non-violent means would not therefore be genuine independence.

Liberation of the individual could only come through the total liberation of society. Fanon has grasped the integrative effects of the struggle. The struggle for national liberation is the struggle of the masses. In his Preface to 'A Dying Colonialism' Fanon states "This war has mobilized the whole population". For him the independence struggle was no less than a social revolution. However, it is only in 'The Wretched

of the Earth' that his total commitment to a specifically socialist revolution crystallizes the essence of 'A Dying Colonialism' is the power of armed resistance of an oppressed nation which had hitherto been "backward, ignorant, and obstinate".

Fanon's interpretation of psychiatric cases he had to deal with at Blida Hospital and also his close contact with the Algerian revolutionaries provided the basis of this book. As his commitment to the Algerian revolution grew greater, that is, as his transformation into a political militant was accelerated, he realized that his revolutionary activity could no longer be limited within the confines of a psychiatric hospital. Thus his resignation in 1956 was inevitable. Having thrown himself into the vortex of revolution, he could now feel the pulse of this transformed society in reality and describe its mutations with credibility.

THE WOMEN QUESTION AND THE FAMILY

Fanon's contribution to the Women Question is of vital significance. Though orthodox Marxism accepts the importance of the Women Question, and states that true emancipation of the woman would be achieved only through total change in the social structure, that is, socialist revolution, the issue has not been given the serious consideration it deserves. Now that movements for womens liberation have become increasingly assertive in the metropolis, Leftists in those societies have been forced to focus attention on this issue. Likewise, they have had to take cognizance of the rights and demands of other social groups like homosexuals, children, the aged, movements for safeguarding the environment etc. Turning towards the peripheral societies, we find that there has been almost total negligence of the Women Question. Concentration of the study of the National Question in these societies has been a welcome, if recent, development. But, the Woman Question is still overlooked

The 20th anniversary of the death of Fanon fell last month.

or not given due consideration by Leftists of the 'third world'. Most revolutionaries in colonial and neo-colonial countries tend to adopt a male chauvinist attitude towards this question, sweeping it deftly under the rug of socialist revolution.

In the light of this overall neglect, it is very interesting indeed to see Fanon, (who was writing in the late 1950's), taking up the question of women and their role in the struggle with utmost perspicacity and seriousness. Through his involvement in Algeria, he was able to witness the major role that women could play in a struggle for liberation and as such, he treats it as an **autonomous subject**, devoting an entire chapter to it. He describes the place that women had in traditional Algerian society and how during the revolutionary struggle she breaks through all these archaic structures and enters into new social relationships.

Throughout this book, we observe that Fanon is very critical of the views, 'theories', 'discoveries' and 'scientific studies' of sociologists, ethnologists and other Western social scientists in relation to the native society. In the chapter "Algeria Unveiled" he directs our attention to the 'discoveries' of sociologists concerning the Algerian woman. Their 'theories' purported to show that beneath the patrilineal structures of Algerian society, there existed a structure of matrilineal essence. They said that it was the desire of all Algerian women to be 'free'. Thus, colonial administrators came to champion the cause of the poor, oppressed, Algerian woman and demand and improvement in her conditions! However, Fanon points out that their ultimate aim was to penetrate the entire Algerian society by first conquering the Algerian woman. "After it had been posited that the woman constituted the

pivot of Algerian society, all efforts were made to obtain control over her," says Fanon. The French colonialists thought that by unveiling the Algerian woman, all the contours of Algerian society would be laid bare for systematic rape.

As opposed to this forced 'modernization' Fanon shows how during the liberation struggle the woman adopts herself to the new situation and undergoes tremendous change. On the one hand, age-old traditions were jettisoned, and on the other, ancient forms of culture were made use of in the struggle. For instance, the wearing of the 'haik' (veil) became a matter of choice. The veil becomes an instrument in the struggle, stripped of its traditional dimension. Fanon writes, "the veil has been manipulated, transformed into a technique of camouflage, into a means of struggle." As the struggle intensifies, the woman comes to play an increasingly more important role, fraught with physical danger to herself. She sheds her veil when it becomes necessary to appear 'Europeanized'. Now she would be accepted as one of 'them'. In Fanon's words:

"Carrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs, the unveiled Algerian woman moves like a fish in the Western waters." (Algerian woman unveiled).

No longer is the woman afraid or tense. She has been radically transformed and is supremely confident in herself. This is when she is "wholly" and "deliberately" immersed in the revolutionary action. There are other occasions where the 'haik' would be worn to conceal weapons and serve as a screen.

In this context, when the woman moves out of the house first as bearer of messages, later as carrier of weapons, and finally as revolutionary fighter the authority of the Revolution brother no longer matters. It is the authority of the Revolution which she obeys. This is how she achieves her liberation, breaking away from the traditional confines and subjugation. Fanon's emphasis on the role of women in the liberation struggle is striking and one is made aware of the fact that may be without their participation the revolutionary struggle may not have been possible.

Conversely, it is explicit in Fanon's writings that the 'new women' comes into being only through the revolutionary struggle or in the process of revolutionary combat. This now of a "new woman" should be counterposed to the image of the bra burning liberated woman as put forward by the urban upper middle class females in both the centre and the periphery.

Closely allied to the question of the changed role of the woman, is another of Fanon's themes in this book. That is, the new family relationships that emerge out of the struggle. The old hierarchical order of the traditional Arab family is challenged and sometimes even reversed. It is that family member who belongs to the revolutionary forces who is most respected under the new conditions. Moreover, the total character of the repression inflicted grave traumas upon the family.

Fanon stresses the full flowering of the individuality that is achieved by family members in the course of the liberation struggle. The relationship between father and son undergoes modification. Fanon states that:

"The old stultifying attachment to the father melts in the sun of the Revolution." (The Algerian Family) Similarly, the daughter wrenches herself free from traditional ties and customs. Elder brother would respect younger ones and they would all be "integrated in a specific action and only a single authority."

The relations between wife and husband undergo mutations too. Together in the struggle, the bonds between them are more closely knit and the relationship deepens. Likewise, the feelings of animosity that formerly existed between families are now forgotten and Fanon points out that unity of the people in the struggle, in their suffering, constitutes the "most solid bastion of the Algerian Revolution."

Fanon's sensitivity to the Woman Question and also to other social relationships is something to be appreciated by all those who stand for total social change in our

societies. However, while his emphasis has been on the transformations that take place during the liberation struggle, in the midst of revolutionary combat, he does not specify whether these new roles and social relationships will stabilize themselves once the revolutionary war is over. Is it only in the historically brief moment of the armed revolution that archaic structures are transcended? What happens to the individuality of the women and other family members once the guns of the revolution grow silent and the smoke of the battlefield clears up?

THE NEED FOR COUNTER INFORMATION

Fanon's insights into the role of the means of mass communication in the liberation struggle are quite original and advanced. Today we see that an alternate communication system has become imperative in a world which has been, and continues to be dominated by a handful of powerful western news agencies, Radio station and telecommunication (T. V and satellite) networks. This is expressed most vociferously by the countries of the 'Third World' who seek redress through the establishment of a New International Information Order as a means of ensuing a counter-vailing flow of information. If the nonaligned nations have seen the need for counter-information, having professed themselves to be anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist, how much more so should the need for counter information be felt by revolutionary movements in the 'Third World' who are not only anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist, but also anti-capitalist! It is in this context, that Fanon's writings assume importance. He speaks of the changes that take place in the attitudes of people towards the radio, newspaper, and even the language of the colonizer. But what is most revealing is how these means of communication become instruments, used by the National Liberation Front (FLN) in the revolutionary struggle.

Prior to the struggle, very few Nigerians had possessed radios or bothered to tune in to Radio-Algeria. Once again Fanon disregards

the 'theories' of sociologists who try to give reasons for this reluctance on the part of the Algerians. These sociologists say that listening to the radio would have disrupted the stability and traditional types of sociability of Algerian society., where, for instance, the daughter never appeared when the father was around, or where laughing in the presence of the head of the family (or the elder brother) was taboo. This was why receiving sets were not readily adopted by Algerian society, or so went the theory.

Fanon, however, explains this reluctance in completely different terms. Although there was no organised resistance to this device, refusing to accept this "piece of French presence" meant a subtle rejection of a "means of cultural pressure", of a means of depersonalization. Fanon states:

"The radio in occupied Algeria is a technique in the hands of the occupier which, within the framework of colonial domination, corresponds to no vital need in so far as the 'native' is concerned". — ("This is the voice of Algeria").

The resistance of the native was instinctive. In contrast, during the liberation struggle, when the Voice of Fighting Algeria was on the air the "archaic modesty" and "antique social arrangements" are no longer adhered to. The radio, once considered a technique of the colonizer now becomes the "only means of entering into communication with the Revolution, of living with it". This instrument of the revolution now plays an important role in keeping the people informed of the trajectory of the armed struggle. Consolidating and unifying the people, breathing revolutionary life into them and acting as a vital agent of co-ordination of the struggle.

Like the radio, the newspaper and language too are made use of in the interests of the national struggle. The democratic papers like *L'Express*, *France-Observateur* and *Le Monde* were avidly read by the more literate natives, and buying a newspaper in itself was considered to be a nationalist act. The French Language acquired new

valves, no longer serving as the language of the occupier, but as an instrument of liberation.

We can see that the means of communication, especially the radio, have always played an important role in serving as an alternate source of information. During the Second World War, many of the nations under German occupation maintained their spirit of resistance by tuning in to broadcasts transmitted from B. B. C. London. Radio Rebelde and later Radio Havana, Radio Peking, Voice of the People of Thailand, Voice of Fighting Algeria, Voice of the Combatants etc, have likewise provided counter information and given hope and sustenance to many liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Yet, it is not only during the period of armed struggle that such a device should play a part. Fanon points out that even after the struggle the radio would have exceptional importance.

"The revolutionary instruction on the struggle for liberation must normally be replaced by a revolutionary instruction in the building of the nation." — (This is the voice of Algeria")

Fanon's basic thesis have been to set out the invaluable role that the means of communication could play as an instrument during the liberation war and even after independence has been won. The need for a means of counter information for an oppressed colonial nation has been noted. We could now extend this further and show that **any** oppressed and exploited people or social group should adopt a strategy for counter information through an alternate system of mass communication. This would not apply to revolutionary situations alone. Nor only to periods of nation building. Such a system of mass communication would be very useful in times of 'normality' too.

In the case of an ex-colonial country for instance, where the local bourgeoisie wields political power, all oppressed social groups often find it revolting to listen to or read the blatant lies of the ruling class. In a period of crisis, like during a strike, the real facts

of the situation need to be communicated to the mass of people by the working class. In this way the working class could win the sympathy and support of the rest of society. It is also essential to co-ordinate the actions at different worksites and in different regions of the country. Once on strike, the workers are generally scattered, and maintaining contact with them becomes a problem. A radio transmitter would solve all these problems of communication. In addition, the morale of the strikers could be boosted as could their consciousness. The miners in Bolivia have provided a good example in this respect.

SCIENCE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

The chapter 'Medicine and Colonialism' focuses on the attitudes of the native towards Western medicine. Fanon indicates how, with the experience of the war, the former outlook and attitudes changes. Modern medical techniques which were resisted and rejected when they were brought in by the colonizer are now adopted freely over the Revolution had 'sanctioned' them. In Fanon's words.

"We shall see in the course of the fight for liberation the crystallization of the new attitude adopted by the Algerian people in respect to medical techniques." — (Medicine & Colonialism).

The people came to realize the importance of Western medical techniques when a man wounded in the course of armed struggle had to be treated. Most interesting is Fanon's attitude towards sociologists. Prior to the revolution, the natives had been reluctant to make use of the French medical service in Algeria. They refused to send the patient to the "hospital of the whites, of strangers, of the conqueror." When before a white doctor, the native patient would be extremely reticent and medicines would not be taken as prescribed. Fanon interprets this pattern of behaviour as instinctive resistance on the part of the native. It reveals the colonized native's mistrust of the colonizing technician."

On the other hand, according to Fanon, sociologists would try to explain this behaviour of the native under the heading of "fatalism". The sociological theory also states that the native entertains a hope of being cured "once and for all," and in such a situation, the doctor would always have to heal at a single sitting. This is what Fanon has to say regarding the theory of fatalism.

"The colonized person . . . perceives life not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death. This ever menacing death is experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future". — (Medicine and Colonialism).

Fanon draws our attention to the attempt by these sociologists to "interpret a phenomenon arising out of the colonial situation in terms of patterns of conduct existing before the foreign conquest". This he states is completely misleading since it is "Colonial domination . . . (that) gives rise to and continues to dictate a whole complex of resentful behaviour and of refusal on the part of the colonized".

Fanon also exposes the role of French doctors in Algeria, who are often some of the most ardent supporters of the colonialist regime. They supplied the authorities with information of any Algerian whose wounds were suspicious. They collaborate with the colonial forces in their most inhuman activities. This is in relation to the torture of Algerians. For instance, the doctor "intervenes after every session in order to put the tortured back into condition for new sessions".

Concerning the changed attitudes and modifications of native towards the western techniques and practices, we could say in conclusion that these were rejected at first not because they were modern forms of technology. It was not the technology per se that was rejected. Rather, their aversion to these modern techniques and practices was because these were enmeshed in a

larger web of specified social relations. In other words, they were within the general structure of colonialism. In fact, most of these techniques are instruments of domination. Once these social relations were changed and the structure of colonialism is burst asunder, the modern forms of technology have radically different values attached to them. With new social relations taking shape, the same techniques and practices would be adopted by the people. The modern techniques are soon assimilated into the new web of social relations and become complementary to the emerging new system. Fanon was correct in saying:

"The people who take their destiny into their own hands assimilate the most modern forms of technology at an extraordinary rate". — (A Dying Colonialism).

We have already seen in 'Black Skin White Masks' that Fanon was no Black racist as some have tried to make him out to be. In 'A Dying Colonialism' Fanon makes himself very clear when discussing the European minority in Algeria. His hatred of white racism did not make him hate whites. He makes a sharp distinction between the system and its members. It is the institutions of colonialism and racism that he deplores. His attitude towards the individual members of the colonial society is different. Many Europeans had supported the FLN, for, as Fanon points out, they too were victims of the same oppressive system. Members of the Jewish minority, as well as of the French, in Algeria, found themselves in the units and political cells of the FLN.

Fanon has made clear that it is only through an armed liberation struggle that the colonized could liberate himself. This liberation of the self comes through the collective liberation of the native people. While he contrasts the colonized native, ridden with inferiority complexes, whom we encountered in 'Black Skin White Masks' with the new man who comes into being with the birth of the Algerian nation, he also testifies to the

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Maname, Rekava and 1956

Reggie Siriwardena

Maname and **Rekava** — works whose twenty-fifth anniversaries were recently celebrated — have generally been accepted as turning-points in the Sinhala theatre and Sinhala cinema respectively. I should like to take another look in this article at the reasons which gave these productions their special significance at the time they first appeared. **Maname, Rekava and 1956**: this dual coincidence prompts one to speculation. Is it only a coincidence that these two works which marked a new departure, each in its own field, should have been produced in the same year, and that a year which was important in the political and social history of the country?

I have no doubt that Professor Sarachchandra and Lester James Peries did not intend consciously to respond to the changes of 1956 but were following their personal creative impulses. I don't know when the conception and composition of **Maname** began, but work on **Rekava** must certainly have started before the political overturn of April 1956. However, it is not to this political event as such that I am trying to relate **Maname** and **Rekava** but rather to the broader cultural and social forces which lie behind the political change of 1956. Moreover, whatever the time of their conception, **Maname** and **Rekava** in the last months of 1956 reached audiences whose consciousness had already been affected by the socio-political changes of that year.

Contemporaneous critical responses to the two works (I was myself among the first-night reviewers) concentrated on the significance of their revolution in form. **Maname** was praised for its success in adapting a traditional form of the folk drama to the contemporary theatre, **Rekava** for the actuality with which it captured the indigenous rural landscape and life on celluloid. Looking back over a quarter-century, I think it is possible to see that the formal innovations of **Maname** and **Rekava** acquired significance

for their original audiences and critics because they corresponded to the quest for national roots than was an important motive force in the Sinhala nationalism of 1956.

In the first part of this article I want to discuss Lester's **Rekava** in the light of this general proposition.

Realism is a notoriously indeterminate and therefore critically perilous word, and when the early critics of **Rekava** praised it for its realism, they may not have been very clear about what they meant by this term. Seeing **Rekava** today, however, when much more has happened in the tradition of Sinhala cinema that the film made possible, one can see both the scope and the limits of the film's 'realism'. The realism of **Rekava** is not in any important sense a social realism, as is evident if one compares the film with what its maker was to achieve seven years later in **Gamperaliya**. Its representation of rural life does not probe deeply the social relations of the village: it does not relate the personal drama of its characters to wider realities as **Gamperaliya** does. There is an unexamined notion of village 'superstition' as that which makes possible the acceptance of Sena as a healer, his later rejection and revilement by the village, and the final reconciliation: that is all.

I have just been looking at what I wrote about **Rekava** in the *Sunday Observer* after the first screening, and I note that this is what I found important in the film.

'And so, in the very first few moments of **Rekava**, you realise that you are in an entirely different world from that of the Sinhalese film up to now. We are no longer watching preposterous puppets animated by synthetic emotions: this is life itself... What Lester Peries has done is to tear down the artificial barriers that the Sinhalese film industry has erected between the screen and the real life of our own people.'

In 1956 probably unaware of the large assumptions I was making in that facile phrase, 'life itself'. However, the response behind that statement was real and, as far as it went, legitimate. For what I was responding to was the formal realism of the film, which in 1956 contrasted so startlingly with the established current of Sinhala film derived from commercial Indian cinema. Instead of painted sets there were real locations; instead of heavy make-up, declamatory dialogue and extravagant gestures there were ordinary faces and naturalistic acting. This was the necessary first condition for the growth of Sinhala cinema as art, for before the film could attempt to grapple with social actuality, it had to be established that the material of cinema was the real world and not one of melodramatic fantasy.

Why was it significant that this cinematic revolution should have taken place in 1956? Looking again at my first review of **Rekava**, I find that I said there:

'The story of **Rekava** is a village story (it is significant that, with only one exception, as far as I know, our "national" film-makers have hitherto ignored the setting in which the great majority of the people of this country live.'

My reference to 'one exception' must have been to Sirisena Wimalaweera's **Podi Putha**. In later years there was a tendency among some 'nationalist' Sinhala critics to claim that **Podi Putha**, and not **Rekava**, should be accorded the title of the first authentically Sinhala film. (That the maker of **Podi Putha** came unlike Lester, from the Sinhala-speaking petit-bourgeoisie was probably not unconnected with this contention.) However, the claims made for **Podi Putha** will not survive a fresh viewing of the film, in spite of its village story. Wimalaweera was still addicted to the larger-than-life styles of acting and even to the

(Continued on page 13)

POEMS FROM EL SALVADOR

Every day the dead are less docile.
What's going on?
These dead are different than in the old days.
Today they are ironic
They ask questions.
It seems to me that they have begun to realize
That they are the majority.

— Roque Dalton Garcia

Prayers of the Fascist

Our CIA that art in the USA
Hallowed be thy initials
Thy invasion come
Thy will be done
In Bolivia as in Viet Nam
Give us this day our daily arms
And forgive us our debts
As we forgive your investors
And lead us not into inflation
And deliver us from the guerillas
For thine is the empire, and our
wealth, and our country
forever.
Amen.

— Roque Dalton Garcia

'Patria Exacta'

Under the shadows of El Salvador del Mundo
One sees the face of the exploiters
Their grand residences with windows that sing
The night illuminated to kiss a
blond in a Cadillac.
There in the rest of the country,
a great pain
Nightly : There are the exploited
and I with them.
Those of us that have nothing
except a scream,
universal and loud to frighten the night.

— Oswaldo Escobar Velado

Maname . . .

(Continued from page 12)

studio sets of the Madras cinema. (I remember a conversation with him when he was interviewed by the Film Commission of 1962: asked why he used painted sets, he said that even a flower artificially made in a studio could be more beautiful than a natural flower.)

The formal realism of **Rekava** as a film made in village locations did not make it immune to questions about the authenticity of its portrayal of village life, particularly by Sinhala-speaking critics, in 1956 and after. It was evident that what upset them (apart from unimportant details) was the unflattering portrayal of the village in its persecution of Sena. I have seen critics saying that **Rekava** inaugurated the idyllic picture of village life in the cinema. That isn't true, in spite of the visual loveliness of the landscapes in **Rekava**, and some of the original critical reactions to **Rekava** confirm this. Three years later, **Kurulubedde** — a film clearly stimulated by the innovations of **Rekava** — presented a view of the village much more in keeping with the idealisations of the Colombo poets.

(To be continued)

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Farmers' Movement in India

Gail Omvedt

“When the English left in 1947 some cunning and selfish people here began to think that though the English have gone their place remains — and we should fill it! There’s no need to send raw materials to England. All the loot which the English used to steal, we should steal! Who is going to throw away this wonderful chance to loot the peasants! And this cunning group built up a second England on their own land. They built up mills and factories like those of Lancashire and Manchester in big cities like Bombay, Pune, Jalgaon and Nasik, and in this New England — let’s call it ‘India’ — these ‘Indians’ continued to drink our blood in the same way the English used to exploit us. ‘India’ began to rule over ‘Bharat’”.

So says Sharad Joshi, a one-time UN bureaucrat who has emerged as one of the leaders of the powerful farmers’ movements surging in much of the Indian countryside. Joshi’s theory is simple: the city (which he calls “India”) is exploiting the countryside (which he calls by the traditional Indian term “Bharat”) with the mechanism of unequal prices. He has, in fact, simply taken the familiar Third World notion of “unequal exchange” and internalized it to India. The thirty-four years of poverty and economic crisis following independence are, according to him nothing but the continuing loot of the peasantry by taking their products at low prices — only now the looters are the industries that have come up in the third world itself. The remedy? let all peasants unite, demand higher prices, and the road toward ending rural poverty and releasing the forces of agrarian (capitalist) development will be opened up.

As an alternative to World Bank developmentalism or working-class led agrarian revolution, this theory would seem to have considerable gaps. Sharad Joshi not only totally ignores the continuing role of impe-

rialism, but denies the existence of classes and of urban poverty generally (he uses “India” to refer to the whole city, not just its ruling class). But there is no doubt that it has emerged as a considerable social force backed by hundreds of thousands of farmers. In the state of Maharashtra alone, where Joshi’s Farmers’ Organization (Shetkari Sanghata) claims leadership as a “nonpolitical organization of peasants, dozens have died in police firings as onion growers sugar cane growers and tobacco growers have gone to battle for higher prices. On November 10 a *rasta roko* or road closing was called for the entire state; in spite of the fact that leaders of all political parties opposed the action, still in several districts all road transport was effectively shut down and in several places police firings against large crowds occurred. The final count: four dead, countless injured.

The “farmers’ movement” has shown its strength not only in Maharashtra but in several other states, including Punjab, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamilnadu where similar agitations and similar firings and deaths have occurred in the last few years. The opposition political parties either support, these democrations of “non-political” organizations such as Joshi’s or organize parallel campaigns of their own. The unifying theme of these agitations is almost always the issue of the higher prices for crops, but other demands — an end to forcible reclaiming of debts owed by farmers, dropping the levy purchase of foodgrains, lower prices for inputs like electricity — have all figured in the movement.

But there is a great deal of debate still about exactly who or what this movement represents. Nearly all opposition parties, including the Communists, support the demand for higher prices and the notion that “peasants” are being exploited by low terms of trade, and leading rural

politicians of the ruling Congress (I) itself are also active in the movements. But the left claims that the movement is being dominated by rich farmers. In fact the very nature of the demands — not to mention the detailed “profit-loss accounts” which leaders like Sharad Joshi offer to show the unprofitability of farming as a business — are impressive evidence of the degree of commercialization of agriculture in the last decades. And it is striking that the movement has found strength in the capitalistically developed agrarian regions of India, not in the more backward states where “semi-feudal” relations often predominate. There is tremendous inequality in rural India. It can be estimated that 10-15% of rural families control 60-80% of the land at one extreme, while at the other end 25% are landless and the next lowest 40% own together only about 9-10% of total land. Up to 60-65% of rural families depend on wages for all or part of their income, and in the areas where the “farmers’ movement” has been strong the proportion of wage-earners is often much higher. Under conditions, it is the emerging capitalist farmers, who work their lands with wage labour and sell their products on the market, who are clearly not only gaining from but organising the movement. While these are often relatively small kulaks, different from the big and parasitic landlords of the past, they are now the main ruling class in most villages. On the other hand, subsistence peasants benefit only to a questionable degree from higher prices, while rural wage labourers stand to lose if the prices of the grain, vegetables and sugar they buy on the market goes up.

Against these objections, people such as Sharad Joshi have many arguments, the most important being that farmers can afford to pay their labourers more only if they them-

selves get higher prices. The parliamentary left parties — the CPI and CPI (M) — have supported the movement and the demand for higher prices because of their attempts to build a “left and democratic front” with the bourgeois opposition parties who are based among the rural kulaks, and because of theory that even “rich peasants” can be allies of the working class and the rural poor against “imperialism and landlordism.” The CPI and CPI (M) see the demand for higher prices as one that can unify the “entire peasantry”, and the CPI (M) has even ferociously attacked the Naxalite focus on tribals, low castes, agricultural labourers and poor peasants as being “splittist.” Others argue that middle peasants, who are currently following behind the kulakas, can be won over only if such issues as price demands are taken up.

What disturbs many observers of the “farmers’ movement”, however, is that a collective force is being built up which is based among the richer farmers in opposition to the agricultural labourers. As one organizer of tribal agricultural labourers and poor peasants said about the November 10 agitation, “There was tremendous enthusiasm — but who were they? All rich farmers’ sons! You know these people have sat for several years and watched the labourers here organize, winning higher wages and asserting their rights, and feeling they were helpless to do much in opposition. But now they’re learning that they too can build a movement. Now this movement is against the government, for higher prices. But next year they may very well take this newly organized strength of theirs and turn it against the agricultural labourers.”

The Indian rural scene occasionally seems like a seething volcano, but it is a very complex one. On the one hand, rich farmers — often themselves from tough, middle-caste “peasant” backgrounds — are taking to collective action to fight the government on the issues of prices and credit and bringing the middle peasants along with them. On the other hand, more sporadic but even more widespread movements of the rural poor have been going on, including intensified organizing on wage issues and demands for land. In

particular, up to two to three hundred tribal poor peasants have been killed in the last two years in several incidents involving claims to land the government is claiming to protect as “forestland.” And into this rural powderkeg, caste and other social issues are injected like an explosive fuse. Rich farmers and their high-caste merchant and intellectual allies have used caste tensions over the issue of reserved positions in Education and government service to provoke massive, region-wide pogroms against the low castes in Gujarat (January–March 1981) and Marathwada (August 1978), riots in which the caste Hindu poor also participated. Rich farmers of Sikh religion in Punjab state, backed by north American money, have raised demands for a separate “Khalistan” (Sikh country) partly motivated by fears of controlling their own low-caste labourers and the huge numbers of migrant low-caste Hindus from other parts of India.

And on the other side, a recent police drive against Naxalite-led agricultural labourers in Bihar, resulting in several deaths, was provoked by an incident in which a landowner who had raped a 12-year old servant girl was abducted by the so-called “extremists.” Both the girl’s mother and crowds in numerous surrounding villages told police and officials, “we have no faith in your justice!” In this case, continuing disputes over wages were a crucial background but just as important has been the bitter determination of these ex-untouchable poor peasants and labourers to win some humanity by ending the long tradition of free use of their women by the castes.

Such rural kulak-labourer tension has had at least one important recent political reflection — in the fall from government power of the “left and democratic” government in the state of Kerala. Here, all the efforts of the leading party in the front, the CPI(M), to maintain its alliance with “democratic” forces could not prevent rising tensions with such parties as the Congress (U) — the non Indira Gandhi wing

of the old Congress — and the Kerala Congress which have their social base primarily among the rural kulaks and urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the front dissolved when the Congress(U) left it. In Kerala, in contrast to West Bengal where CPI(M) power is still quite secure, anti-feudal land reforms have been thoroughly completed, a new agrarian capitalism has emerged, and consequently a sizeable section of the new kulaks (many of whom were previously members of Communist-led tenants’ organizations) have begun to solidify their own class organizations against agricultural labourers and for higher prices. The labourers in the meantime continue to be a highly militant force led mainly by the CPI(M). The kulak’s “farmers’ organizations” have politically supported the anti-Communist opposition, and all the CPI(M)’s arguments about the need for “Peasant unity” and support of farmers’ demands for higher prices in other parts of India could not prevent the split from breaking up their government. The Kerala case seems to show that the parliamentary communists have not yet found a way to push the mass movement forward in areas where considerable amount of capitalist transformations have taken place.

Meanwhile, Sharad Joshi is continuing his farmers’ movement, acting as if no rural classes or caste differences existed at all, and ignoring urban poverty with propaganda that seems designed to drive a wedge between the rural and urban poor. “When there are strikes, bandhs or movements in the cities, then, the police treat people just as they ought to,” he told a rural rally in Nasik district after one police firing. “It’s only about the farmers’ movement that peasants are treated as animals and beaten like this.” But only a month before the farmers’ **rasta roko**, workers in central Bombay had spontaneously staged a **rasta roko** of their own, blacking trains and buses for several hours in protest against being totally deprived of water for three days following a busted pipeline. And two died in police firing.

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Colonial System still the best

Premadasa Udagama

The current White Paper on Education — Education Proposals for reform; General University/Vocational, Technical and Professional — is the fourth such document produced in the last 33 years after independence. It is by any standard a “formidable” document produced by three Ministries and based on recommendations of three Committees. These were the Educational Reforms Committee (Chairman: Mr. Bogoda Premaratne), Committee on Technical Education 1979 (Chairman: Dr. S. Gnanalingam) and Committee on National Apprentice Training (Chairman: Mr. Sugathapala). One more report on Religious Education is expected in the future. The objectives of the White Paper appear to be resolved by the ‘major weaknesses’ of the School and the University systems. The School system’s weaknesses are four in number. The variations in size and facilities of the 9500 state schools; emphasis on examinations leading to competition and therefore the stress on subjects for examinations and the consequent neglect of practical work; the dysfunctionality of the Curriculum; and the low performance of the teaching service. In the University system the weaknesses enumerated are the total dependance of students on lecture notes and the failure of Universities to develop as communities in learning and research. All proposals are meant to remedy these weaknesses.

The document of 165 sections with an introduction and a summary deals with the widest spectrum of the Sri Lanka Education System — Pre-School to University; “Open Schools to Open University”; Curriculum of the School and the University; Formal to Nonformal; Vocational, Technical and Professional Education; Teacher Training and Educational Management.

The White Paper lacks a vision of a man and his society on which

all education reforms should be based. The simplistic analysis of the major faults of the system has, however, strangely ended in formulating proposals dealing with all aspects of education. The consequences of such far-reaching reforms on society, its political and social experience, cultural values and dimensions are left to the imagination of the reader. The White Paper has given itself an impossible task without publicising the three Committee Reports which may have analysed the problems in greater depth. The social consequences of these reforms were neither studied nor perhaps thought to be of any importance.

The total concept of reforms is elitist in design and colonial in direction. It worships the past when education should look to the future. The web it is creating through the reforms is apparently simplistic and corrective. The simplified weaknesses looks purely technical. The total impact of all the reforms proposals if implemented will be to build a society based on neo-colonial themes and ideas.

The White Paper totally ignores the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution. Instead of a “commitment” to the “complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to **Universal and Equal** access to education at **all** levels” (emphasis mine).

As expressed on a number of occasions; the proposed school structure 5-3-3-2 (i. e. of 13 years) hits the poor majority rather badly. In a society where 50 per cent are living below the poverty line, only a small percentage will benefit from this extended schooling. The poor can hardly keep their children in primary school. To expect them to maintain their children in secondary education so long is a myth of

the educational bureaucrazy and the elitist groups which tend to ignore social realities. The tendency the world over is to reduce the formal school years. The Sri Lankan corrective for inequities of the state system is strangely enough to extend the years of schooling.

The proposed school structure has reduced the primary school by one year (5yrs.). This has been added to the senior school—a 13th grade. These must be the consequences of 1977/78 reforms which the present Ministry is bent upon correcting. Pre-Schools are again relegated to the private sector. It will perhaps be advantageous to masses if pre-schools could be run by the state. At least a preparatory year before primary schooling would be useful for mothers and their children in rural areas in the adjustment to a new environment of the school. Financial considerations may have weighed against this enormous undertaking.

The primary school, like the red-brick school house in the US, is a poor man’s school and his hope. Nearly 80% of the rural schools are primary schools. The crux of the main educational problem is here. Over 20% of the children of school going age do not attend any school at all. Of those who attend the primary school nearly 50% drop-out before completing primary school. Our educational academics are rather doubtful even of the oft quoted 80% literacy rate. These realities are ignored in the document. The nation which makes primary education universal is the one ready for modernisation and development as many recent studies of the World Bank have so well documented. But the proposed national education system does not seem to be in harmony with the social realities of the country.

In the present intellectual climate, I can do nothing better than quote the summary of a work **Primary Schooling and Economic Development** (World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 398).

“This paper shows that primary schooling increases productivity in all sectors of the economy and that economic returns on investment in primary education are in many countries considerably greater than those arising from other levels of schooling. In addition primary schooling has other extremely important socio-economic effects: it reduces fertility, improves health and nutrition, promotes significant behavioural and attitudinal changes at the level of both individual and the community. These changes are helpful to the process of economic development. The evidence shows that the benefits of expanding primary schooling to cover all the eligible age groups are very considerable even when school quality is low. It further shows that subsequent efforts to raise school quality by upgrading teachers and school resources are also likely to result in high economic returns in most poor countries. Leading strategies that give primary schooling a central place appear well justified. Such approaches would be more conducive to growth with equity than most available alternatives”.

(The Research Programme of the World Bank, June 1981, p. 42)

The World Bank recently loaned US \$ 100 m. to upgrade primary schooling in the Philippines. India spending annually US \$ 1000 m. for sending every eligible child in the country to school aided by UNICEF, UNESCO and other agencies. But conventional wisdom in education of the bureaucratized bourgeoisie cannot be given up even with research evidence of the World Bank. When universalization of primary education should receive the highest priority in educational development the primary school is given the least importance. The extension of secondary education with the creation of a new collegiate level is a slap on the face of the increasing poverty groups in Sri Lanka.

The schools of the poorest of the rural poor—the isolated small schools 2500 in number—are briefly mentioned into two places. One reference says “separate provision will be made for the administration of these isolated schools”. But the affluent class schools—the Unitary Schools—receive greater attention. Details about funds and management are given in three sections (66-68). Obviously, the the unitary schools and private schools will get a new lease of life to recreate the “Golden Era” of education in colonial times. Education progress in former colonies is still gauged by the old boys syndrome. This is the “Con-mech” (confidence mechanism) so ably developed by Elliott in a book entitled **Patterns of Poverty in the Third World** which suggests that education systems are owned by the affluent class in the third world.

The vertical structuring of the school into a unitary, cluster, small and collegiate system will make the school a more class based system than even at present. Perhaps it is difficult to eliminate class bias in education but it is worth a try. The last fifty years of adult franchise so gradually an element in equity in access to education. This process led to a certain social mobility after the introduction of free education and instruction in Swabhasa. But the proposed structuring of the school system will bring back the colonial system which perpetuated the class system of the time it will be futile to accept a revolution in education in our society. Yet this proposed school structure is counter productive and restores educational privileges back to the “small society” of the urban elite group.

It is an irony that the White Paper while condemning the over-emphasis of examinations prevailing now introduces an examination at grade eight. This examination is introduced to “reduce the number of drop-outs in Grade 6 and 7 by inducing pupils to stay on in school to obtain certification”—a strange logic! If drop-outs could be eliminated by having more examinations

many other nations in the Third World would have adopted such a simplistic solution. The scourge of formal schooling in the developing nations including ours is the high drop-out rates at the primary level. This solution is to say the least, ludicrous. The proposed school system will not only be exclusive but isolative as well.

Though the Grade 8 examination is stressed as a non-selective one, however it is proposed vocational English stream, the G.C.E technical stream and level III agricultural education will be selected after this examination. We are going back again to the early colonial schooling system which was a rejecting system.

All proposals in the White Paper in fairness are not as retrograde as the few discussed so far. The proposed decentralization of administration, the reintroduction of curricula developed in 1972 and the recruitment and training of teachers and progressive steps in the right direction.

The total impact of the proposals is to reintroduce a class-based education system. It is worthwhile to quote the modern guru in education “PAULO FRIERE” to be intensified with the reality of the country also requires that education be centered in rural reality”. If these proposals are the products of a bureaucracy doubts seem to a rise about the usefulness of sending our young men and women in the education system for training abroad or for attending seminars, workshops and conferences on education at all levels in all parts of the globe. The proposals contradict every possible progressive measure in education in recent times given in UNESCO and ILO publications and Third World development patterns in education.

Many problems for which White Paper has no solutions

Sunil Bastian

As we have mentioned at the beginning the examinations in a society divided into classes, has a function of grading and classifying the student population passing through it and legitimising this grading as being based on 'neutral objective criteria. The usual mechanism is to have common examinations at national level for students who come from different socio-economic backgrounds, and get educated under widely differing facilities and conditions. In the new proposals of the White Paper one must say that there is a greater emphasis on different assessment methods. In examination at every level more emphasis and importance is given to continuous assessment and to other activities out-side the formal learning process. This is in keeping with more modern ideas on examinations. At the same time as a result of the decentralisation in administration and organization there will be examinations at cluster level, district level and at national level. But unfortunately these will have to be implemented in a society that has inequalities regionally as well as socially. Therefore questions arise about the recognition that will be accorded to gradings from different, clusters, different districts in the job market. The school clusters as a whole will be developed unequally and it will give different values in the job market for grades from different clusters. This unequal development in turn will effect the standards reached in non academic activities like co-curricular activities, work oriented activities that are going to be considered in future in greading students.

If the proposals regarding examinations in the White Paper are implemented there will be more stages when students will be classified, and more criteria will be

used. In contrast to the national level examinations that do most of the sieving out now, there will be examinations at cluster level and district level.

The first such filtering is to take place in grade eight. There is no streaming at this level. But by providing an outlet from formal education in grade eight it is assumed that some will leave the formal system at an age of 13. Major filtering is bound to take place after grade 11 when the Certificate of Education Examination will be held. This will have gradings at cluster level, district level and national level and the discriminations against the underprivileged sectors of the education system will operate. Today the examination system is unjust because students coming from different socio-economic backgrounds are tested with a common examinations. But if they pass they get a certificate with a national validity. In future, students from different socio-economic backgrounds might get certificate that will have differing values in the job market.

After the grade 11 the students will have to go through a collegiate level (i. e. grades 12 & 13) before sitting for the University Entrance. As stated in the white paper The criteria for admission to the Collegiate level courses will be based on the performance at the G. C. E. examination. Other selection instruments too may be used. Eligibility conditions for the Collegiate course are intended to spare a large number of pupils the frustrating experience of pursuing a fruitless academic course and thereby for going technical vocational training or employment opportunities for several years. This means in selecting students for collegiate level which in turn determines chance for higher education discriminatory non academic criteria will be operative. While the presently

existing system result in a frustrating experience of pursuing a fruitless academic course for many students as stated in the white paper, the new discriminatory selection system will stream away those who due to many socio-economic reasons does not have much of a chance for higher education from the beginning to other vocational, job oriented courses, while those who due to their social position have chances for it and who most probably will be in the privileged unitary schools will proceed to higher education.

Objectively speaking there is lot of truth in the government's reasoning in introducing the new examination system. But it does not say much about how it had happened nor is it frank about what the new system might result in. It reflects the under-developed nature of our capitalist system and its inherent inability to educate the population. But in our recent past due to some of the populist political slogans there were demands to make education widespread, egalitarian and open the doors of higher education to all those 'eligible'. While we attained some of those goals to some extent, the system remained unequal, discriminatory and through the guise of free education we educated the privileged using the state budget. But due to the hopes given, many children of the underprivileged tried to "go through the mill" and failed to do so and ultimately found themselves not educated, unemployed and unemployable. The new proposals although it doesn't say so directly, accepts that all cannot go right to the top. Therefore provides avenues to sieve out those who do not have the chance to go up and stream them else-where. What the proposals doesn't talk about is how the existing class divisions of the society will effect the classifying process.

As we have shown the new organisation of schools and the new examination systems, although they have a validity from an administrative and a narrow education point of view, will allow the privileged, who most probably will be in the unitary schools, to go through the full formal system and will stream the others elsewhere.

EXPANSION OF MIDDLE LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

As we have argued above, if the proposals of the White Paper are successfully implemented, there will be many points at which students are diverted from the main formal stream that lead to a university education. Therefore there is a need to develop a middle level education that will absorb them. There is also a dearth of such skill in our labour market and education system can be expected to respond to this need. The

White Paper has given special emphasis to this aspect. For the first time in Sri Lanka the White Paper proposes state co-ordination of the development of middle-level professional education under the Tertiary Education Commission. The Tertiary Education Commission hopes to develop professional courses at various levels. More emphasis is to be given to Science, Technology and Commerce.

In this article we haven't taken on each individual proposal of the White Paper for an analysis. Neither is our analysis limited to the education system. An attempt had been made to relate the proposals that we feel will bring about significant changes in the system to the social reality in which it will function. We have also tried to show how the elements that we have chosen form into an integrated pattern that really reflects the objective course an education system developing within an under-

developed capitalist system of Sri Lanka can take.

There are many problems that we have mentioned at the beginning for which White Paper has no solution. To take just two examples: It will be an illusion to think that the drop out problem can be solved by just having a terminal point in grade eight. The idea of the open school is so vague in the White Paper one cannot come to any idea about how it will help the drop outs, the vast majority of whom are in pockets of poverty like slums, estates or remote villages. They do not even reach grade five. Regarding another problem like the university admissions that had become an acute political issue there is hardly anything that the White Paper tries to offer. There are many statements in the White Paper that should be taken only as ideal objective. Since there is no indication of how these will be achieved it is not possible to discuss them.

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Oleanders for Sinhala poetry

BOOK
REVIEW

H. A. Seneviratne

The unique **Kanavera Jataka** where the Bodhisatva is depicted as a robber who runs away with the jewellery of a harlot, despite the fact that she had saved his life for her love of him, has now been rendered into modern Sinhala verse. This work, "**Kaneru Mal**" (The Oleanders) by **Sirilal Kodikara**, is a remarkable one, for it can make Sinhala poetry open its eyes from the present death-like slumber.

No work of poetry worthy of note emerged after **Mahagama Sekera's 'Prabuddha'**. In the general decadence — economic, social and political — art and literature appeared to be badly affected. Poetry, the mode that was once closest to the heart of our nation, suffered most of all. But in any new situation — and the present one is indeed a new situation of rottenness within the self-same bourgeois one — art takes time to organically assimilate new experience and to give it artistic expression. More so, if intellectual activity is restrictive, backward and inert, as in our country. What was worse was that our artists had not even properly grasped in depth the reality of our 'still born' bourgeois society in order to give artistic expression to its feelings. Our society had taken cover too long under feudal ideas. The real onslaught of capital had to come in order to cut the umbilical cord that still tied our society to feudalism. And it did come with a vengeance. Art is still recovering from its initial shock.

It is in this context that **Sirilal Kodikara's 'Kaneru Mal'** has to be appreciated. But at the same time, this very context appears to have exercised certain limitations on the work thwarting his attempts to rise above the context itself. However, these limiting factors should not be allowed to bury this work in oblivion. Nor should its real strength be allowed to throw this work into a conspiratorial silence, as often happens, here.

The significance, nay the genuineness and openness of the Jataka story that has been the source for the subject matter of **Sirilal Kodikara's** work is not only that the Bodhisatva in that particular birth is referred to as a robber but that, according to the Jataka story, the Buddha himself, narrating the story says that the robber was none other than himself in one of his previous births. Now, our present poet seems to be inhibited by the very thing that is so uninhibitedly expressed in the Jataka story in the real folklore tradition. He has failed to extricate himself from the **bourgeois corruption** and **mystification** of simple and straightforward ideas of even a feudal society about humanity itself as seen in this Jataka story and also from the **confusion** and **over-simplification** in contemporary politics. He tries to make the robber some kind of a petty political leader of the rural masses. This attempt has reduced the impact of the story and of the extremely touching verses that describe the feelings of the love-lorn woman, Sama, who wants to give up the life of a prosperous prostitute for the love of the man who is a robber. In the Jataka story, Sama's life ends in high tragedy of Shakespearean dimensions when she returns to her former profession abandoned by her lover. All this is lost in the present work. The mind of the reader is torn between the man who is at one time a ruthless robber and at another, a kind of a political hero. If the poet had sought at least to indicate that such is today's political reality, again it would have become deeply meaningful.

Nevertheless, in regard to the politics of '**Kaneru Mal**' there are other meaningful aspects such as the Machiavellian intrigue in the King's court and the complete subservience of his ministers to Sama, the foremost harlot in the state. The force of some of these verses leaves **Sirilal Kodikara** without rival in our modern satirical poetry.

It is in expressing Sama's inner life that the poet displays his maturity. He describes, full of human sympathy, the harlot's first night with her lover, the robber, as her honeymoon, and implies that as far as her feelings are concerned she had been a virgin until then :

මසුරන් වලට ගත
විකුණුව ද නො පුදු හද
මදු සමය සාමා කත
ගත කරන දිනය අද

පිළියෙ ලේ සලකුණ
එළියෙ පැමකි බොරු ගුණ
මැයගෙ බිදුණෙ මෙ රැයය
නියම ම කුමරි බමසර

(Page 41)

With a fine understanding of human feeling he describes Sama's frame of mind in 'gobbling up' her own seducers:

'සිතුයෙමි ම ගැන
සෙළොසැවිරිදියෙදි විතර
බැලුවෙමි මට පෙනෙන
බරණැස දෙස ඇසැර
මා කන්නටය බැලු බැලු
හැම අතම පොර
ඉන් පසු මමත්
කැවෙමි උන් ඇසුරු කර'

If not for the artificial dichotomy in the character of her lover, whose attempted murder, robbery and desertion the poet is desperately trying to justify, the love making, the description of the environment of the lovers and the longings of Sama would have been poetry of much grandeur. However, when taken as individual verses they will still remain as some of the best examples of modern Sinhala poetry :

ඇය ගේ සෙළ කය මතු පිට
රතු සළුවක් වියන ලෙසට
කන්තොරු ගස් මල් පිට පිට
පිදී එ ලද පෙම ගරු කොට

(Page 58)

(Continued on page 24)

Analysing Uyangoda – a JVP reply

Lionel Bopage

I respond to a contribution by J. Uyangoda which was published in two instalments in the 1st November and 15th November issues of *Lanka Guardian* under the titles “Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna Since 1977” and “Coming Few Years Crucial For JVP” respectively. As the matters stated in the essay, with what seems to be plausibility require correction, I will endeavour in this rejoinder to clarify the same and lay bare the actual facts for the benefit of the reader who may have been driven towards erroneous conclusions.

The gist of Uyangoda’s essay seems to rest on the following “personal beliefs” which he appears to have cultivated over the years.

(1) During the six-year period of proscription, the JVP faced a crucial metamorphosis, while the prison became a hive of activity the leaders kept licking the wounds inflicted by the defeat, the colour of the party changed from blood-red to pink, those who joined the JVP after 1977 are mostly youngsters of 15-20 age group etc.

(2) Today, the JVP confines its struggle only to the electoral arena. It does not engage in extra-parliamentary struggle and, it displays a tremendous hatred towards the other left parties and was not able to establish fraternal relations with them. The JVP’s ONE TRADE — ONE UNION policy is a result of political isolation. Present leadership of the JVP is maintaining a detente with the UNP regime, sinhala chauvinism is a determinant element in JVP ideology, JVP is the only opposition party that maintains a deliberate silence over the Jaffna events. The SLFP, if brought back to power, will first of all settle accounts with the JVP and Wijeweera.

Before evaluating the credibility and general acceptability of these “personal beliefs” of Uyangoda, it would be most appropriate to scrutinise his political standpoint and behaviour while in prison, in the University and at the present

time (if any), wherefrom all such beliefs doubtlessly emanate. As Uyangoda implies in his article that he adores and adheres to Marxist-Leninist principles very much, and that he writes in defence of them, a concise survey of the said nature could be considerably instrumental for the reader to pass the judgement on him and his so-called personal beliefs.

WHILE IN PRISON

During the six-year jail-term Uyangoda served, there had been numerous instances where the imprisoned comrades came together in protest of the denial of their right to food, clothing, health, education etc., etc. (Uyangoda himself admits in the article in question that prison became a hive of activity.) Most of the comrades serving many years RI abstained from carrying out the work assigned to them by the prison authorities and boldly entered into fiery arguments with them—verbal wars, as it were. They refused to go back into the prison cells until their rights were duly restored. Meanwhile, there had been days when they rejoiced immensely on account of the novel achievements made by the international proletarian movement. 30th day of April 1975—the day on which the brave people of Vietnam registered a remarkable victory over the US imperialists and their local agents—was, for instance, such a day of din and delirious joy. What had Uyangoda been doing at these decisive and significant moments, one may begin to wonder. The truth is that he did nothing, absolutely nothing in support of the protest and was not the least inspired by the progress of the revolutionary struggles in other countries. He was sitting alone in his cell, withdrawing inwardly into a shell, and nursing his petit-bourgeois notions. This did not come as a surprise to the others in the prison because he had by then quit the JVP and had openly denounced Marxism—Leninism.

After sometime Uyangoda embraced Trotskyism and became a

fervent follower of it. His role as a Trotskyist too, however, met the same fate. Before long he began to develop a liking towards the theories of psychology and made himself a Freudian. The more his upper-middle-class consciousness stirred his thoughts and engulfed the theories of politics he had superficially adopted, the more he believed that man’s actions are determined by his strong tendency towards sex, and that even social development is a result of the psycho-sexual impulses of human beings. (In the book of prison poetry written by Uyangoda, he poetically depicts how his ideas changed!) With the emergence of these changes which had been smouldering within Uyangoda for years, he began to publicly decry the teachings of all the great teachers of socialism including those of Lenin.

WHILE IN CAMPUS

Uyangoda was an undergraduate of the Peradeniya Campus. These were the days when the Students Council of the campus had triggered off picketing campaigns, boycott of lectures, and massive demonstrations in view of numerous issues including those that had direct impact on the students. While all these were in progress with the participation of the vast majority of the students, where was Uyangoda? What was he doing? Well, in theory, he was in the battlefield alongside those hundreds of militant undergraduates fighting the campus authorities, and resisting the brutal attacks of the Police so as to defend the rights of the people and those of their own. But, in practice, Uyangoda was remaining in his apartment within the University premises and thumbing through heaps of text-books in preparation for a degree with a class. A genuine Marxist—Leninist stance indeed!

PRESENT-DAY UYANGODA

Today Uyangoda is happy and content, and more or less set for life of material comfort. He has,

as Lanka Guardian described in its 1st June issue, "quietly reshaped his life." He collected his degree (First class) from Peradeniya some time back and, as near as I can make out, made himself a government servant drawing a four-figure salary. Far away from the anti-capitalist struggle, in peace he rests today in his petti-bourgeois shell. Thanks to his upper-middle-class brainwaves, now he has no troubles in the offing — no demonstrations, no strikes, no picketing campaigns — and the liberation of the oppressed is not in any way his cup of tea. In sum, he is sitting pretty at present with what he has been striving for all along — a rosy existence devoid of commitments, class-obligations and sacrifices. Remember, this is what Uyangoda does in practice. Theoretically, he goes to all lengths to blanket it with what he describes as "rather critical surveys" of the political activities of those who further the struggle. While plunging himself in political solitude, Uyangoda shamelessly claims that the JVP is an isolated party.

Let us now turn the 'personal beliefs' I have quoted from Uyangoda's essay. "During the six-year period of proscription the JVP experienced a crucial metamorphosis" emphasizes Uyangoda, and this emphasis of his is only too right. The JVP really did. The JVP had by then realised that it was having traitors and petit-bourgeois elements within it. As has been the case with the revolutionary movements in other countries, they posed major hinderances to the advancement of the party at every decisive turn. The proscription period was indeed a period of transition for the JVP because it was during this period that the party managed to root out treachery and petit-bourgeois ideology that had gained entry into it prior to the uprising. The JVP has stated as much in its self-criticism. Uyangoda, however, attempts vainly to misguide the people by adding a completely different complexion to this highly significant transition — a change of colour from blood-red to pink! It is time Uyangoda understood that the majority of the people are too clever today to get duped by fabrications of this kind.

It is now common knowledge that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna was almost crushed by the previous regime in 1971. The revolutionary duty of the leadership and the undisputed responsibility of all the comrades who were imprisoned and whose inner reserve stayed was the revival of the movement. They moved self-critically to eliminate the errors committed in the pre-uprising years and, although jailed for a good part of the remainder of life, never allowed the shadows of defeatism enter their thoughts. Their hopes, their aspirations and those indestructible objectives that kept their hearts throbbing were duly reflected in the songs they sang in the poems they wrote on grey prison walls. I might as well cite a few examples to establish this:

(1) "විචුක්කියේ රතු උදර
— කුසුමන් පරසන මදර
නිවහල් බිම පිපෙන දිනේ
— මම සැනසෙන්නම්...."

(The unwithering red flowers
Of nobility and liberation
Upon this land will blossom
someday
And I will be sated and satisfied
On this long-awaited day...)

(2) "අපගෙන් ගිලිහෙන යුතුකම්
දස දහසින් ඒ නම්
දැනින් ගිලිහෙන රතුකොඩි
නැගුමට
ජන අත් එසවෙනම්
අප මල ගම් වෙනුවෙන් ගමනේ
සෝ ගි ගැසුමට අය ඒ නම්
මරු හමුවෙන -- කොතැනකදී
වුව ඔහු
පිලිගැනුමට අප සුදනම්!"

(If tens of thousands stand by
to perform
the duties we leave undone,
If tens of thousands pick up
and raise
the red flags that fall by
our feet,
If after death in the funeral
march, our
dirge by these thousands
is sung,
Then we are prepared to lay
down our lives
Wherever with death we
meet!)

(Continued on page 24)

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Oleanders for . . .

(Continued from page 21)

It is significant that **Sirilak kodikara** achieves so much within the bounds of folklore, and of the imagery and beat of the semi-classical language and metre sprinkled with common usage. It is true that his work has not succeeded, (as Pushkin's 'Ruslan and Ludmila' did in the case of Russian literature), to free our literature from the ties which are keeping it enslaved. That of course requires a Pushkin. Nevertheless, it points towards a resurgence in Sinhala poetry.

Analysing . . .

(Continued from page 23)

They were not afraid, pessimistic or demoralised. Instead, they were all proud to have been revolutionaries, and to have taken part in the struggle. The reason why they thought and behaved in this way was their unblemished faith in the people and in revolution. They firmly believed that the proletarian revolution of a country falls only to rise and that they would ultimately emerge triumphant. Everything that had happened, everything that they had undergone, had increased their hate towards capitalism a thousand-fold and had inflamed their determination to further the struggle.

(To be continued)

Fanon and . . .

(Continued from page 11)

vibrant life of this new society. The process of change we could say is dialectical. In talking of a **dying** colonialism, it is really the **life** of the revolution and **birth** of a new nation of which Fanon speaks. "We witness in Algeria, man's reassertion of his capacity to progress". — (Preface to 'A Dying Colonialism').

The inevitable. . .

(Continued from page 7)

The Military Council is now face to face with all three basic challenges. Will it succeed in overcoming them? It so, at what price? At what human and social cost? And if it does succeed, how soon can it initiate those urgent reforms to an economy which placed such intolerable burdens on the frail shoulders of the Polish people?

Letters. . .

(Continued from page 2)

to face the hustings. When the calibre of the politician improves, it will not be plain sailing for the ruling few in future to enjoy the monopoly of leadership. Of course there is bound to be intense rivalry and infighting. The best man among the lot will emerge right at the top, though the selection will still be confined to the Goigama Buddhist element which constitute roughly 56% of the Sinhalese population. With a party strength of 142 M. Ps the Govt. is in a flat spin to pick an alternative Finance Minister from among the party cadre, should it become necessary to change the present incumbent.

In our current educational system, the best students join the medical and engineering streams. Both these categories are averse to politics. The situation should improve with the passage of time and it is not all that gloomy. There is always a dark horse waiting in the wings to break the mould. Pakistan has done it but India is stuck in the groove with the Nehru syndrome.

Kirti G. Basnayake

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