

**TIGERS AND EXTRADITION BATTLES — *M de S***

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

Vol 5 No 21

March 1, 1983

Price 3/50



## **WHY THE LEFT FAILED**

— **LESLIE GOONEWARDENE**

**S. B. de Silva's Political Economy**

— a major work

— Leslie Goonewardene

**SLFP, Education, Communalism**

— Reggie Siriwardena

**JVP and Campus Polls**

— Lionel Bopage



**UNP fissures,  
SLFP despair**

● **CRM ON REFERENDUM**

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## FIFTH HORSEMAN

Haven't the SLFP rank-and-file and Opposition supporters who have twice demonstrated in the short space of two months both their commitment to anti-UNPism and their desperate need for a stronger voice in Parliament suffered long enough at the hands of petty-minded and mulishly arrogant leaders? This is the question which has become the focus of concerned discussion at grass-roots level throughout the island. This mounting anxiety will produce new pressures on the Opposition leadership as Nomination Day for the mini-election approaches.

The mini-election, true enough, will never give the combined Opposition even the remotest chance to gain fair representation in the Assembly. The Fourth Amendment has seen to that. Even if the Opposition sweeps the twenty-odd seats it will remain grossly under-represented precisely because the UNP with its slightly above 50% vote (July '77, October '82 and even December '82, with all its skullduggery) will continue to have a secure 3/4ths majority.

The LSSP General Secretary, Mr. Bernard Soysa, put the issue ably when he said that the mini-election was no substitute for the general election for which the Opposition should continue to demand. But, anything so juvenile as a "boycott" is best left to Trotskyist mathematicians who are far more adept at engineering than electioneering. Without abandoning the fundamental and principled demand for a general election, the Opposition parties, Mr. Soysa argues, should use the Fifth Amendment to maximum advantage.

All depends, naturally, on the SLFP leadership which, ruined by personal vanities, family and factional feuds and petty succession squabbles, have helped wreck the anti-UNP front. It is precisely the pure-bred "democrats" in the SLFP as distinct from noxious Naxalites) who are given to apocalyptic visions of "Dictatorship" that should realise this quickly.

The South, anyway, has rarely been traditional SLFP terrain. So compromise with different Left parties should not be difficult. Otherwise the latest amendment may turn out to be the Fifth Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

## DIALOGUE DEADLOCKED ?

Is Wilsonian diplomacy at a dead-end? Prof. A. J. ("Gaullism in Asia") Wilson, the UNP's Philip Habib and Prof. Jeane ("moderately repressive autocracy in Latin America") Kirkpatrick's fellow-thinker was in Sri Lanka some months ago but there was no progress whatever on the UNP-TULF front. The government, in the eyes of the TULF, is simply unprepared to give any real power to the DDC's.

A sign of the rapid deterioration in UNP-TULF relations is the highly selective manner in which the UNP has applied its own criteria for picking electorates for by-elections. At the referendum, the UNP fared poorly in the Eastern province. But the TULF will have no chance of ousting the UNP in places like Mutur, Batticaloa or Kalkudah. Clearly the UNP is not keen on increasing TULF representation in parliament, though the TULF is pledged to withdraw en masse by August.

## B. T. T.

Prices would go up across the board by over 20%. That's the consensus view in Colombo's business circles. The figure is based on devaluation since last month, the new import duties plus BTT.

A foreign banker meanwhile says that inflation would top 30% by the Sinhala-Tamil New Year or, more appropriately, May Day.

## TRENDS + LETTERS

### Press freedom

Are capitalist proprietors as dangerous or more dangerous than governments when it comes to freedom of the press? During the emergency times of Mrs. Gandhi seven years ago, press magnates and editors screamed noisily about the death of the free press in India. Now it's a different story. Editors are getting the boot from their masters. I am quite sure your readers have heard of what happened to the most courageous and independent editor of the 'Express', Mr. Arun Shourie who was exposing big time rackets every month. Another sad case is that of Mr. Kushwant Singh. Everybody is talking about it here, and we all know the real reasons.

(Continued on page 2)

## LANKA GUARDIAN

Vol. 5 No. 21 March, 1, 1983

Price 3/50

Published fortnightly by  
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,  
COLOMBO-2

Editor: Mervyn de Silva

Telephone: 5 4 7 5 8 4

## CONTENTS

News Background	3
Decline of the Left	5
Foreign News	7
Watergate and Judiciary	9
Dr Udagama	12
Lanka's Agriculture	13
Book Review	16
Correspondence	19
Sri Lanka's Agricultural Future	23

Printed by Ananda Press

82/5, Wolfendhal Street, Colombo-13.

Telephone: 3 5 9 7 5



So many bad reports have appeared in the Indian papers about the press in Sri Lanka especially after the October election and during the referendum. We are disturbed by this because many educated Indians had always a good opinion about our educational standards and our newspapers. A Sri Lankan journalist has written to the *Times of India* and frankly admitted the situation is so very bad. Mr. Gamani Navaratne has written that only the *EELANADU*, the Tamil daily published in Jaffna, and the Jaffna weekly '*Saturday Review*' also published in Jaffna and the fortnightly '*Lanka Guardian*' can call themselves independent.

**N. Sri Kantha**

Delhi.

### Referendum analysis

I have just seen the letter of Lal Wijeyanayake on the above subject in your issue of January 15th, 1983. Mr. Wijenayake's statement "lastly at Eheliyagoda which was represented by Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara, the 'pot' won inspite of his campaigning

vigorously for a boycott of the elections" is gross misrepresentation of fact.

As a voter from Eheliyagoda I not only am aware of what happened at the referendum but also have some knowledge of political developments in that electorate (before '77, Kiriella) over the past two and a half decades.

Mr. Nanayakkara did not campaign (vigorously or otherwise) for a boycott in Eheliyagoda or anywhere else as far as I know. What he did was to point out the fraudulent nature of the referendum. Having failed to get other opposition parties to reject the referendum he and his party called upon the masses to agitate and continue to agitate for general elections notwithstanding the result, even if they decide to vote for the 'pot'.

Mr. Wijeyanayake fails to point out that the victory for the 'pot' in Eheliyagoda was in sharp contrast to the defeats in every other "Left" seat in the Ratnapura and Kegalle districts where the "Lamp" won inspite of vigorous campaign for the 'pot'

by both Red and Blue leaders! Perhaps it is Mr. Wijenayake's contention that they should have campaigned vigorously for a boycott!

The reason for the singular situation in Eheliyagoda is obvious to anyone with even a nodding acquaintance of the politics of these districts. That seat is the only one in which the Left has increased its 'base' over the past. In the March, 1960 General Elections the L.S.S.P. came second with a lead of a few hundred over the S.L.F.P. candidate. In the 1977 General Election Mr. Nanayakkara had a lead of nearly nine thousand over the S.L.F.P. This growth of the Left vote is in sharp contrast to what happened in the rest of the country where the Left 'bases' were taken over or eroded by the S.L.F.P.

This is entirely due to the militant, revolutionary, Marxist leadership, given by Mr. Nanayakkara to the masses of Eheliyagoda in contrast to the utterly opportunistic policies of the leaders of Mr. Wijenayake's party.

**V. Suluman**

Kiriella.

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# Tigers, extradition and political dilemmas

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

**M**r. Amirthalingam's visit to Madras was announced when the Commonwealth Law Ministers were flying in to Colombo for their annual conference. Since extradition was on its agenda was the TULF leader's trip a "blocking move"?

Though Sri Lanka was expected to press fellow Commonwealth governments to tighten up the extradition laws, a conference source told the L. G. that no delegation appeared to have received firm instructions. "The discussion was general" he said, admitting however that a decision had been taken to continue "consultations" to examine the feasibility of declaring murder (all forms of it) as an act which was **outside** the ambit of "politics." More precisely, the murder of a Head of State, Government or Minister was NOT a political act affording protection to somebody who had been given sanctuary in another country or sought asylum in a Commonwealth country. If some "movement" was registered on this issue it was that some governments may at least pay more attention to the problem and adopt a course that would try to "close the loophole" on politics.

What happens when a man kills a ruler universally or widely regarded as a tyrant and flees to another country, while the tyrant's government continues to hold power? The question posed by the Indian delegate underlined the moral-political dilemmas involved in an issue which has troubled many nations for at least a century and intrigued judges and lawyers.

**But the crux of the matter and the heart of the predicament lie in the increasingly common discovery that one man's terrorist is another man's liberator, somebody's cold-blooded murderer is somebody else's hero. So, it is not just govern-**

**ments but peoples and popular opinion which enter the controversy.**

The British know that best though the whole extradition issue as a legal question was more a Franco-German problem of the 19th century.

Two Englishmen murdered an Irish nationalist leader and found refuge on British soil. They became heroes overnight. Even if the British government was prepared to send them back to face trial, the people and the press would not. In Canada, Britain and Australia, the legal issue is recognised but so is the moral-political predicament. In 999 cases, extradition may be justified but what of the 1000th? Couldn't extradition mean the judicial murder of a possible innocent?

What worries the Sri Lanka government of course is not merely Messrs Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran but many others who have found sanctuary in Britain and Canada. In one case, official sources insist that a man guilty of three killings has fled to North America — US or Canada or both?

When Colombo asked for the extradition of the six arrested in Madras it ran into both a legal and political problem. The men involved in the Pondy Bazaar shoot-out were also guilty of offences on Indian soil and therefore open to conviction under the Indian law.

But more importantly, the "Tigers" became local heroes, with both the ADMK and DMK outbidding each other to play the political patron to their Tamil brothers. Though MGR is Mr. Thondaman's friend, the pressure of his opponents and local sentiment forced him to identify himself with the Eelamites.

In today's India, centre-periphery relations are extremely sensitive. After all, the Congress has lost several states, and Tamilnadu is an important factor in Congress (I) calculations. So, Jaffna puts pressure on Madras and Madras puts pressure

on Delhi, while Colombo, stymied by Tamilnadu, can only appeal to the Centre, Delhi, for understanding and cooperation. It is a curious jumble of Sri Lanka's north-south conflict and India's South-North relationship.

Will President Jayewardene take up this matter in his talks next month with Mrs. Gandhi during the 7th summit?  
**M. de. S.**

## CRM on Referendum

**I**n a 5000 word statement the Civil Rights Movement has posed the question whether the referendum was "free and fair". Reminding the public that in pre-referendum statements, it had "expressed grave doubts" on this matter, the CRM says that it cannot share the official view that government supporters were "overconfident" and that this accounts for the poor turn-out (the 10% drop from the Presidential poll and the poor performance of the government in certain areas.

The CRM then argues that the "following factors, among others, militated against the people's freedom of choice":

1) The continuance throughout the campaign of a state of emergency despite a statement by the Minister of State on 15/12 that the conditions had returned to normal and the emergency would be allowed to lapse on 19/12.

2) The banning of 2 important opposition papers and the sealing of several presses under emergency laws. Opposition leaflets were also seized. This must be contrasted with the government's "control of the media".

3) Detention of a number of SLFP organisers under emergency laws, the raid on the SLFP headquarters and the seizure of party documents, including membership registers.

(Continued on page 4)



# THE VANISHING OF A METEOR

"Meteors are not uncommon in politics. There is the sudden incursion of some dazzling personality. Sparks fly in all directions — ideas, tactics, polished oratory. Abruptly the display is over. After much smoke and confusion, the meteor vanishes and is soon forgotten . . ." — (A. J. P. Taylor quoted in the L. G. Dec. 15, 1981 in an article on Upali Wijewardene titled "The Making of a President—Or Will you Vote for 'U' "?)

The "STOP UPALI, NOW.!" campaign within the U. N. P. can now stop. But what effect it has had on the unity of the United National Party, nobody can say for sure. Any damage-assessment inquiry must face a question that will remain a dark unknown in the annals of Sri Lankan politics of the 80's. Would he have won nomination for one of those many Southern seats which will be contested at the mini-polls in May? Upali had only to make first base, as the Americans would say or place his foot on the first step on the ladder. The rest would have been an easy ride on the escalator. Such were his near-matchless credentials (age, birth family connections on both sides of the political fence, money, education, proven capabilities) that nobody could have "stopped" him.

A brilliant and brilliantly successful businessman, he was nonetheless an "innocent" in politics. Sri Lanka's First Ty-

coon, the 'Lanka Guardian's' legend, has now been appropriated by a section of the official media. But the Scott Fitzgeraldian title could prove misleading. It was Scott Fitzgerald who told Hemingway: "You speak with the authority of success, I with the authority of failure". Upali spoke with the authority of success so over-confidently that he signalled his ambitions too early, and too openly — Sri Lanka's Ludwig Erhard and then perhaps President, after J. R.

Two other consequences of the impact of the Upali phenomenon need to be noted. There has been a tremendous groundswell of public sympathy and admiration bordering on hero-worship. Now at the receiving end of blow after blow from the north, Sinhala nationalism has fastened on Upali, the man who flaunted the Sinhala banner in a world of high finance too long dominated by Pettah "foreigners" and gem mudalalis.

When senior editor Louis Kraar wrote him up in FORTUNE, this journal had Upali on the cover. We asked "FORTUNE SMILES, WILL THE UNP?". The UNP didn't. But Kraar said that Upali's business technique was to buy up "sick companies" with a great potential for recovery. Was Upali buying up shares in the SLFP and taking the Sirima-Anura option, the L. G. inquired. The concern and grief in a section of the SLFP leadership today is

## CRM on. . .

(Continued from page 3)

(4) Detention, short term arrests and repeated interrogations of opposition organisers on apparently insubstantial grounds or in relation to events that had taken place much earlier (e.g. the conspiracy in 1980)

(5) The blatant disregard of the law relating to the display of posters. Massive nation-wide displays of the "Lamp" ('Yes') with no posters or hardly any posters seen of the "No" (POT) symbol.

The CRM statement then goes on to comment on "events on polling day" with a summary of reports received by it alleging illegal symbol display, prevention of access to polling stations, intimidation, impersonation.

The concluding section of the CRM statement analyses some voting patterns, comparing the Oct. 20 result with the December 22nd result in Attanagalla, Yapahuwa, Dompe, Kekirawa, Matale etc.

genuine and deep, as the destinies of dynasty are determined not only by the laws of contemporary politics but by ordinary misfortune and private tragedy.

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# The decline of the Left — Why?

Leslie Goonewardene

In recent times it has become fashionable to refer to the collapse of the Left in the politics of Sri Lanka. Sometimes more disparaging words are used to describe the position of the Left in the period after the 1977 parliamentary elections. However, let us not quibble over words. Let us frankly admit that the Left has been pushed back in a more serious manner than has happened in the entire preceding period following the conclusion of World War 2.

How has this situation come about? While it is always of value to sort out the various factors that may have contributed to a historical phenomenon, and even to try to estimate their cumulative effect, it is vastly more important to uncover—if this is indeed possible — the basic or underlying reason for the development or phenomenon that we are examining. The writer of this article believes that this is particularly relevant to the question we are considering.

One of the most popular explanations put forward particularly by members and supporters of Left Parties is that the cause of the failure of the Left to advance has been the absence of Left Unity. It is not unnatural that leftist elements, especially after a defeat, should initially seek to discover reasons which they could persuade themselves might have converted defeat into victory. However, it is difficult to agree with such facile explanations. Not only are the forces of the Left numerically too weak to make a significant difference by their coming together, but practical experience itself has demonstrated that their getting together does not generate new forces in an important way. As an illustration, even taking into account the numerous drawbacks that certainly existed, the ULF in the 1977 Parlia-

mentary General Election never at any state showed the capacity of developing a mass movement behind it.

Perhaps the problem of the Left can best be understood by examining the success and vicissitudes of the LSSP with its long history. Unlike what many people suppose, the LSSP was not always a party with mass acceptability even in the restricted South Western areas of the country. In fact, during the war years, few people were prepared to be associated with it, and it would not be incorrect to say that it bore many of the characteristics of a hunted sect.

However, it was the only party that took the position of revolutionary defeatism in relation to the war of the imperialists, and decided that struggle should be pursued regardless of its adverse consequences on that war.

That is why, at the end of the war when the Government ban on the party and its activities was lifted the LSSP increasingly emerged in the eyes of the masses as the rightful leader of the national struggle for independence. And even in the post war working class upsurge that followed, the LSSP was able to wrest the leadership of the workers from the Communist Party in spite of the trade union following the latter had succeeded in building up in the war years when the LSSP leaders were jailed, and its party and Trade Unions illegalised. That was the real reason for the growth of the LSSP in the early post-war period and the basic cause of its attraction for political elements seeking a progressive solution to problems. To make political assessments unmindful of this fact can lead to grievous political errors.

However, this situation was not to continue for long. Thanks to the struggles of the colonial peoples in the surrounding region, political power was substantially transferred to Ceylon in 1941. The transfer of Military, Naval and Air bases to Ceylon under the Bandaranaike Government of 1956 — 1959 and the New Constitution of May 1972 which severed all constitutional

connections with the British Crown, completed the process of the gaining of political independence. Henceforth other developments and other questions came to occupy the centre of the political stage.

In 1951, there took place the birth of the petty bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party, under the leadership of Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who broke away from the UNP. It presented itself as a "middle of the road" party midway between the capitalist Right and the working class Left and declared that it stood for a "mixed economy", by which was meant, presumably, that a mixed economy was the aim of the party and not just a necessary stage in the journey to socialism.

Particularly in view of the fact that, since the granting of universal franchise in 1931, politics in Ceylon was divided into groupings, Left and Right, many political observers, including the writer of this article, were not certain of the viability of this newly formed SLFP. However, subsequent developments have clearly shown that not only has it established its viability, but it has developed into the second largest party in the country.

With the growth of disillusionment in the UNP Government it cannot be denied that disillusioned elements have been turning principally in the direction of the SLFP. To content ourselves with the explanation that this is due to the fact that the SLFP is the largest opposition party presenting the best opportunity of defeating the UNP, is only a part of the explanation. It far from exhausts the question, and does not explain, how the SLFP came to be in that position or how long it is likely to remain in this position.

True, the leading role played by the SLFP after the end of 1955 in relation of the status of the Sinhala Language, Buddhism, and a Sinhala cultural renaissance, enabled it to consolidate its position in a relatively short period as a nationwide party in the Sinhala areas. However, it would be a mistake to suppose that these factors continue

The author is a founder member of the LSSP, the first Marxist Party in Sri Lanka. He was its General Secretary for many years. He was Minister of Communications in the United Front Government of Mrs. Bandaranaike. A leading party theoretician, he is the author of several booklets including a recent publication on Euro-Communism.



today to be the source of its attraction for the Sinhala masses.

Not only is there the fact that the LSSP and the CP changed their position on the language question as far back as 1964 when they formed the United Left Front along with the MEP of Philip Goonawardene, there is also the undeniable fact that economic issues have increasingly been occupying the centre of the political stage, and appear more than likely to continue to do so in the period ahead.

There are still incurable Leftist optimists in the country, who advance the view that it is the Left Parties by their association with the SLFP who have been really responsible for building the SLFP! They refuse to recognise that the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie of Sri Lanka see in the SLFP a party built in their own petty bourgeois image, so to speak embodying not only their radical and progressive hopes and aspirations but also the ingrained backwardness and weaknesses of their varied petty bourgeois structure.

Let us not forget that all the machinations of a UNP in power with a 5/6 majority has not succeeded in destroying the SLFP. The mass defection of the leaders of the SLFP to the UNP has weakened the SLFP, but its members and supporters by and large have not abandoned their party.

All the above is not to say that the left parties did not commit mistakes while they were associated with the SLFP in the United Front Government. But the mistakes, even the more serious ones, were essentially of a marginal nature and did not detract from the basic correctness of the policy followed. Suffice it to say that the result of a basically different policy would probably have been the continued presence of the UNP in power, or in the alternative a complete turn of the masses away from the Left Parties and to the SLFP in order to achieve their objective of the defeat of the UNP.

There is no reason, therefore, to be surprised at the relative decline of the Left, after the period immediately following the War had

ended. The Left, generally speaking was compelled to swim against the stream. And the growth and consolidation of the petty bourgeois SLFP in contrast with the Left can be understood still better if we examine the economic conditions which nurtured this development.

The quarter century following the conclusion of the war witnessed an economic growth under capitalism unparalleled since the dawn of capitalism referred to in the Communist Manifesto of 1848. Though to a lesser extent than in the advanced industrialised nations, Ceylon too was able to establish a welfare state along with free education, extensive free medical services, and the state subsidising of essential commodities. Successive governments whether they were Right, Centre, or Centre supported by the Left, were able to grant concessions to the masses of Sri Lanka to an extent not seen before.

All this worked to the advantage of the petty bourgeois SLFP. In addition to the advantage over the Left that the SLFP enjoyed firstly by catering to not a few of the prejudices of the petty bourgeoisie and secondly by providing an insurance against social changes that were too radical and might injure some of the privileges of the petty bourgeoisie itself (in particular, its upper layers), there existed the favourable economic situation outlined above. This enabled the SLFP to offer the petty bourgeoisie — and substantial sections of the workers — improvements in their economic conditions that appeared bearable if not completely satisfactory. This can be seen in the reforms and improvements that took place under the Government of SWRD Bandaranaike (1956 — 1959), the Sirima Bandaranaike Government (1960), the SLFP — LSSP Coalition Government (1964 — the beginning of 1965) and the United Front Government of the SLFP, LSSP, and CP (1970 — 75).

But with the first signs of the world economic crisis in 1972, this situation had begun to change. Indeed the root causes of the defeat of the Centre and Left Parties and

the sweeping victory of the UNP in the elections of 1977 lay in the economic situation which had commenced to take a turn for the worse.

This downward trend has continued and burdens in a really serious way have begun to be imposed on the masses. If the reaction of the people against the UNP Government has not been as marked as one might have expected, it should not be forgotten that on the other hand, there have been new sections of the masses, like small traders, hawkers of imported goods, construction workers, relatives of employees in the Middle East, and large numbers engaged in infamous trades, who have benefitted from the policies of the Government.

Looking at the developing world economic crisis which today has already shown the first signs of developing from a recession to a world depression, with soaring unemployment, and over production in the production of grain, dairy products and several industrial products, it is clear that the downward trend referred to above must accelerate, affecting most of all the third world countries. That the leaders of the UNP themselves see this is illustrated by their desperate moves in the direction of a dictatorship. A much stronger turn against the UNP than has been shown up to date appears to be inevitable.

As started earlier, the first reaction of the masses is likely to be to turn in the direction of the SLFP. But it is exceedingly unlikely that the SLFP can find the solution. Both the vanquishing of the UNP tiger at bay, as well as facing up to the issues that will arise afterwards, are not tasks easy of accomplishment. And it is here that the Left can once again come into its own. If the leadership of the left proves equal to the task of developing such a relationship with the SLFP which, while not isolating the Left from the anti-UNP masses following the SLFP, will at the same time preserve the identity and policies of the Left, the vistas that will open up will be truly incalculable.



# Salvadoran Leftists put Army on the run

FOREIGN  
NEWS

**W**hile Washington and San Salvador were focusing on factional manoeuvring within El Salvador's military and Reagan's meaningless certification of slaughter the civil war in this tiny Central American country has entered a potentially decisive phase. The successful October offensive of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) already resulted in sharp losses for the U. S.-backed government in terms of personnel military supplies and territory. Now with a January offensive advancing on several fronts, the FMLN is in a position to take and hold entire provinces and to grind up elite units of the Salvadoran army. A rout of government forces in turn could set off a chain reaction making all talk of negotiations futile. Thus the perspectives of military victory for the leftist rebels vs a compromise "political solution" with the military butchers have become *immediately and directly counterposed*.

The splintering of the Salvadoran officer corps as revealed in the recent week-long rebellion of Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa Perez, comes from the realization that government forces are losing the war. The last two years have been an uninterrupted series of defeats for the bloodthirsty protectors of oligarchical domination. The Army, National Guard, Treasury Police and right-wing death squads have managed to kill or "disappear" almost 50,000 Salvadoran civilians since 1979, but despite a half dozen offensives they have been unable to dislodge rebels dug in on Guazapa volcano only 25 miles from the capital. In the face of these defeats, Ochoa, represents an ultra-rightist faction (headed by cashiered major Roberto D'Aubuisson) which would eliminate even the pretense of concern for "human rights" and institute a scorched earth policy. Ochoa and his cohorts appear to have come out on top against defense minister General

Guillermo Garcia. But whether a bloodier reign of death will save

the Salvadoran butchers is another matter altogether.

On January 13, Guillermo Ungo, leader of the opposition Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), announced in Managua that the civil war was entering a final phase. A bulletin of the Salvadoran insurgents declared that the current offensive is aimed at escalating to a "strategic defining phase of the war" that would create "conditions for the general insurrection of the masses."

## Guerrilla Offensive Advances

The FMLN took advantage of the government crisis over the Ochoa mutiny to put the butchers on the run in two northern provinces. In Morazan the advance has netted four more towns, bringing to 18 the number of liberated towns in that province and adjacent La Union. Rebels now control more than half of Morazan and are tightening the noose around the provincial capital, San Francisco Gotera. A dispatch from Gotera in the *Washington Post* (20 January) by correspondent Chris Hedges captured the desperation of the government forces in its headline, "Salvadoran Rebels Control in Morazan Starts on Edge of Town".

"Army helicopters, fearful of guerrilla fire, no longer fly over the area. The 300 special commandos here, who model themselves after the U. S. Green Berets regularly put on a show for local residents, most of whom are civilian employees of the Army. They run around the town plaza with dead vultures in their mouths, or tromp through the streets shouting. The commando never dies, but rarely make forays into the surrounding countryside. When they do leave the barracks it is usually to suffer a disastrous defeat by the guerrilla forces who control much of the surrounding countryside.

"The Army prefers to hold its garrison and the movie theatre and municipal swimming pool which it expropriated from the town, rather than deploy troops. The subversives are trying to draw us out, said

## FMLN FORCES CAPTURE CITY OF JEJUTLA

On January 10, Radio Venceremos confirmed the capture of Tejutla, a town 64 kilometers from San Salvador, (Population 12,600) by the FMLN guerrillas.

The rebels captured 43 rifles a 90 mm field gun one M-79 grenade launcher and an M-60 machine gun along with taking 23 soldiers prisoner.

The FMLN had begun the Revolutionary Heroes of January campaign the day before Tejutla was captured following three violent battles and a series of ambush attacks in the vicinity of the town the roads between San Salvador and Chalatenango and the road between Tejutla and El Paraiso.

Radio Venceremos called on the people to join the People's Militia and urged the regime's soldiers to join the revolutionary forces.

## SAN FRANCISCO MORAZAN FALLS TO GUERRILLAS

FMLN forces have occupied San Francisco Morazan, 75 kilometers north of San Salvador, in Chalatenango department.

The rebels entered the town — of a population of 5246 — on January 10 after four hours of battle that led to the dispersion of the troops at the town's garrison.

The FMLN forces inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and captured 27 including eight soldiers and 19 members of paramilitary groups. They also captured 29 rifles and a PRT-77 radio.

Besieged and practically overpowered by the guerrillas, the regime's troops asked for instructions from the command post of the 4th Infantry Brigade in El Paraiso. They were given orders to don civilian clothes, hide their weapons and abandon the town without offering resistance, Radio Venceremos reported.

San Francisco Morazan is the second town captured by the FMLN since the beginning of the new campaign.

— (GRANMA)



one recruit on guard duty outside the garrison so they can take the town".

The government has dispatched some 6,000 troops, including several elite units, to shore up its crumbling position in Morazan. But on January 24, the FMLN took the town of Meanguera, only eight miles from Gotera.

Sixty miles to the west in Chalatenango province another capital is under siege. The rebels control 20 towns in Chalatenango, most of these held since the October offensive. In the recent fighting a key crossroads town, Tejutla, was overwhelmed and a reinforcement column ambushed while en route to bolster its defense. On the same day, FMLN guerrillas attacked every garrison in Chalatenango city (UPI dispatch, 9 January). The fall of Chalatenango would leave the country's major source of electrical power, the Cerron Grande hydro-electric plant, open to rebel attack.

These victories, along with the FMLN policy of turning prisoners of war over to the International Red Cross, has led to an accelerated rate of surrenders by government soldiers. "The policy of releasing prisoners is having a serious impact in the ranks, and the high command is now sending former prisoners of war back to their families because they are such a bad influence on morale," reported the *Latin American Regional Reports* (19 January). Parents of government soldiers have reportedly taken to listening to the FMLN's Radio Venceremos to learn of the whereabouts of their sons.

Meanwhile, the social and economic situation of the country is deteriorating. Guerrilla bombings of bridges have essentially divided El Salvador in half, and even the makeshift bridges over the Lempa River have been damaged threatening to cut off cotton and sugar transport during the harvest. In the cities there is increasing labour unrest including the first strikes in two years, by government employees in San Salvador. On the huge agribusiness estates, disgruntled cane cutters struck back in early January in the traditionally radical stronghold of Aguilar. They set fire to some 5,000 acres of sugar plan-

tations, both private and government-owned at the height of the harvest. El Salvador is coming apart.

Colonel Ochoa, the gung-ho warlord of Cabanas province, has been relieved of his command and sent to Washington for further grooming. Defense minister Garcia will reportedly "retire" after a few weeks. In Washington, liberals complain about President Reagan's "hypocrisy" in signing the empty "human rights" certification they introduced as a fig leaf for continuing military aid to the Salvadoran junta. In Honduras, the on-again off-again joint military exercises with U. S. forces along the Nicaraguan border have been rescheduled for February 1.

#### **Morazan—Dien Bien Phu ?**

It is the fear of another Vietnam-style debacle for American imperialism which inspires the liberals call for a negotiated settlement. As U.S. Representative Stephen Solarz told the press while on a "fact-finding" tour of El Salvador, "For us to continue to support a Government that is likely to end up losing unless we send in the Marines is an unproductive strategy" (*New York Times*, 17 January).

But Reagan and his Salvadoran generals want to be hard cops. In response to the FMLN offensive the government has thrown a quarter of its entire army into Morazan. About half of this counter-attacking force is comprised of the U. S.-trained Atlacatl, Atonal and Ramon Belloso Brigades, who are now bottled up in the pocket around San Francisco Gotera. The rebels have started using 120 mm heavy mortars and have also captured artillery during the recent offensives. With Honduran troops standing by on the border a major battle is shaping up over Morazan.

It could be a *Dien Bien Phu*: a large part of the government forces, including elite units, trapped in a mountain valley where the guerrillas can easily cut off access or retreat; an army already demoralized by steady defeats. In Vietnam the destruction of the outpost of the French Expeditionary Corps in May 1954 broke their will to fight.

**(This is a slightly edited version of an article appearing in WORKERS VANGUARD).**

## **Nuclear Weapons**

### **GDR agrees to Swedish idea**

The following letter has been sent by the General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic, Mr. Erich Honecker, to the F.R.G. Chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl.

"PERMIT me to inform you that the Swedish government asked the government of the German Democratic Republic to set forth its views on the proposal to create a "zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons extending from central Europe to the outermost northern and southern flanks of the two alliances".

"The Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic, having closely studied this Swedish proposal, have arrived at the conviction that the creation of such zone could be a useful move to strengthen peace in Europe and to advance detente.

"In that light it was resolved to support the Swedish initiative. Meanwhile, the Swedish government has been officially informed that the German Democratic Republic, going beyond the Swedish proposal, is ready to assign its entire territory to such a zone, if the principle of equality and equal security is observed.

"Considering the importance of the Swedish initiative as well as the responsibility of both German states for peace and the concomitant obligation to assist actively in preventing a nuclear catastrophe, it would be of great significance if the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, too, supported that initiative.

"I should be very much obliged to you, Mr. Federal Chancellor, for being notified of the decision of the Federal Republic of Germany.

"Enclosed please find the note of the Swedish government and the reply of the government of the German Democratic Republic."



# Watergate and the need for an independent judiciary

A. C. Alles (Former Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka)

On the night of June 18, 1972 five persons broke into the Headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate office building at Washington and were arrested carrying with them sophisticated electronic equipment. The leader of the gang was one McMurdo, an ex F. B. I. and C. I. A. agent who was on the pay roll of the Committee of Re-election of President Nixon (C. R. P. also vulgarly called CREEP). This incident was the precursor to a series of events which ultimately resulted in the downfall of President Nixon and the subsequent conviction on serious charges of conspiracy of a number of powerful men in the Nixon administration.

This article is not intended to draw attention to the facts of the Watergate scandal which are too well known to need repetition but to high-light the important role which the judiciary of the United States played in the case, which earned for it the regard and respect of the democratic world for the firm stand it took in upholding the Rule of Law. In the central role was District Judge John J. Sirica, the Chief Judge of the District of Columbia. A member of the same political party as President Nixon, a former boxing champion, a friend of Jack Dempsey and a person who embraced the law mainly due to the insistence of his devoted parents. It was this son of humble parents, who traced his ancestry to his Italian immigrant forefathers, who was the king pin of the judicial circle which took a bold stand against overwhelming odds in maintaining the independence of the judiciary.

In his well-documented and excellent account of the Watergate scandal which has been challengingly entitled **'To set the record straight'**, Judge Sirica has given his version of the facts and deals with the

Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon confessed that he was "intrigued" by the notion of "independence of the judiciary by statute", a theme at the recent Commonwealth Law Ministers Conference in Colombo. Laws he added, could not help, if individuals were not prepared to maintain their independence.

If in the course of deciding a case, a judge's spine bends, under pressure no orthopaedic surgeon in the country could straighten it. And if he did injustice, not all the water of the Indian Ocean would wash his hands clean.

The Liberty of the subject, (an idea on which various views are expressed from time to time by both politicians, lawyers and judges) and his constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression, were both upheld when 5 judges of the Supreme Court made order in the "Pavidi Handa" case. The "Pavidi Handa" (see L. G. Dec. 15) is an organisation of Buddhist and Christian clergy which publicly opposed the referendum. The Police seized several thousand pamphlets published by the organisation. Its sponsor, Ven. Ratnasara Thera, the Chief Incumbent of the Sama Vihare, Gampaha went to the Supreme Court arguing that the Superintendent of Police, Gampaha had violated his fundamental rights. The Court held that there was a violation and ordered the Superintendent to pay Rs. 10,000/-

entire proceedings of the Watergate case. The book contains the particulars of the break-in; the trial of the burglars which included two members of the White House staff; McMurdo's letter which demonstrated

the close link between the burglars and White House; the battle for the tapes and the writ issued on the President for their production; the claim of executive privilege which was disallowed by Judge Sirica and confirmed by the Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court; the shoddy attempt by the President and his aides to avoid a compliance with the orders of the Courts; the sordid episode where two vital tapes were reported to be missing and a third tape containing a vital conversation between Nixon and his chief aide erased and the feeble attempts to explain the erasure: the impeachment proceedings and the resignation of the President and subsequent pardon by his successor, Gerald Ford; and finally the conviction on charges of conspiracy to obstruct justice of the White House aides Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Attorney General Mitchell. All those proceedings took over five years to be concluded.

The first brush which the Courts had with the Executive took place when Judge Sirica, in his anxiety to discover whether White House had a hand in the attempted burglary, questioned in detail the suspects who pleaded guilty as to who put them up to do the job. In support of his action Judge Sirica stated —

'The basic strength of our system of government is tied to the continuing independence of our judicial system from political and social pressures. As a trial Judge. I found the greatest pleasure I derived from my work was that very independence. And I offer no apologies or regrets to anyone for the action I took in the break-in trial. I owed it to the Court, to our system of justice and to the country.'

This high degree of independence displayed by Judge Sirica was approved by the District Court of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals when it stated —



'The precepts of fair trial and judicial objectivity do not require a Judge to be inert. The trial Judge is properly governed by the interests of Justice and truth and is not compelled to act as if he were merely presiding at a sporting match.....'

Two observations from eminent sources support Judge Sirica's stand. Edmund Burke stated —

'it is the duty of the judge to receive every offer of evidence, apparently material, suggested to him, though the parties through negligence, ignorance, or corrupt collusion, should not bring it forward. A judge is not placed in that high situation merely as a passive instrument of the parties. He has a duty of his own independent of them, and the duty is to investigate the truth'

Again according to Thomas Aquinas' definition of Justice it consists of a 'certain rectitude of mind whereby a man does what he ought to do in the circumstances confronting him'.

As a result of the growing suspicion against the White House administration two separate investigations commenced, one by the Senate Select Committee and the other by the Watergate grand jury which was probing the conspiracy to obstruct justice and the link up between the Nixon administration and the attempted break-in. It transpired in the course of the investigations that large sums of money had been paid by the C.R.P. to the burglars who had pleaded guilty and that there was an extensive tape recording system operating in the President's office which indicated secret conversations between the President and his aides, which according to some of the White House witnesses who testified at the proceedings pertained to the break-in and the subsequent cover-up. The prosecutor considered that the tapes might be relevant in the cover-up trial of the accused on the charge of conspiracy to subvert the course of justice. Each member of the grand jury expressed a desire to examine the tapes and the prosecutor politely asked the White House lawyers to make the tapes available for inspection. They however maintained that the tapes were

privileged and refused the application. The battle for the tapes had begun, but when the grand jury expressed its desire to examine the tapes, Judge Sirica had no hesitation in issuing a subpoena on the President requesting him to produce the tapes initially for his examination to consider the relevance of the evidence. Subsequent events proved the wisdom of Judge Sirica's action. After listening to the tapes the Judge felt that 'we did have a dishonest man in the White House, a President who had violated the law, who had conspired to obstruct the very laws he was sworn to uphold. It was a frightening thing to know'.

By this time the country was in a turmoil over the Watergate crisis, the President himself had been accused of illegal acts by his former counsel and Nixon had refused to turn over the tapes and was obviously going to fight the scandal every step. Judge Sirica gave expression to his own feelings when he said 'Here was I, an obscure judge, facing the President of United States...I was approaching the most momentous decision of my life, and it made me extremely nervous'. But the Judge faced the issue boldly and after a long and bitter battle in the Courts in which the President's lawyers raised the issue of executive privilege he signed his opinion on August 29, 1972 ordering the President to turn over the tapes to him for his private inspection. It was a cautious order. The Judge held that 'The President was entitled to some protection for his privacy and the nation was entitled to some protection from unnecessary publication of national secrets but he felt that no privilege existed for matters of a criminal nature whether they came from White House or elsewhere and that if they (the tapes) were important in the investigation, if they may safely be heard by the grand jury, if only in part, would it not be a blot on the page which records the judicial proceedings of this country, if, in a case of such serious import as this, the Court did not at least call for an inspection of the evidence in chambers?'. The President's lawyers lodged an appeal to the Court of Appeals but the Court of Appeals upheld Judge Sirica's

order with certain directions as to how the tapes should be made available for inspection.

In the course of the cover-up trial another opportunity arose for a judicial decision in regard to the subpoenaed tapes. When the case was remitted from the Court of appeals to Judge Sirica for a decision that the subpoena should be enforced, the prosecutor sought a ruling from the Supreme Court 'since an important issue was involved in regard to the President's assertion of his sole right to decide the limits of executive privilege'. The President's lawyers must have secretly hoped, that with a majority of Nixon appointees including Chief Justice Warren Burger, on the Supreme Court, a decision in favour of the President was possible. The Supreme Court however upheld Judge Sirica's ruling. The vote was 8-0, with one of the Judges, Justice Renquist, a Nixon appointee and former associate of Attorney General Mitchell disqualifying himself because of his close association with a principal in the case. The remaining Nixon appointees, and five others voted against the President. The Supreme Court's ruling was the final demonstration that the judiciary was in fact 'a truly independent branch of the government'.

The Nixon administration was now in shambles; the waning popularity of Nixon was evident and strong public opinion was growing against the President who was named by the grand jury as an unindicted accused indicating their view that he too was responsible as a conspirator, but they had decided not to indict him because of constitutional problems and because of the pending impeachment proceedings before the House of Representatives. The resignation of the President was inevitable.

On August 8, 1974 after a tearful farewell to his staff, Richard Nixon boarded his helicopter on the south lawn of White House for Florida on the first leg of his flight to his lovely home at San Clementine on the Pacific coast. The search for justice and truth which had been initiated by Judge Sirica after the break-in trial had finally been concluded and that goal had been achieved in no small measure as a



result of the bold and forthright attitude of independent judges who were determined that the Courts of law would not tolerate a defiance of the law even if it emanated from the most powerful person in the land. The final episode in the Watergate scandal was concluded when the verdict of the jury was reached on New Year's Day, 1975 which found three of the most powerful men in the Nixon Administration—Mitchell, Haldeman and Ehrlichman guilty of conspiracy to subvert the course of justice. The Watergate case is an apt illustration of those memorable words of Justice Louis Brandeis in 1928 —

'In a government of laws, existence of the government will be imperilled if it fails to follow the law scrupulously...if the government becomes a law-breaker, it breeds contempt for the law, it invites every man to become a law unto himself, it invites anarchy'.

The prestige of the judiciary in the United States has always been of a high order but never more so than at the time of the Watergate crisis. We too in Sri Lanka have inherited a strong tradition of an independent judiciary which has now crystallised to an acknowledgement of that independence in our Constitution. The order of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka in the pre-Independence era in the Bracegirdle case, the ruling of the Judges in the first coup trial, the bold stand taken by the Constitutional Court over the Press Bill and the decision of the Court of Criminal Appeal in the Bandaranaike Assassination case setting aside the death sentence imposed on the chief conspirator, are some of the shining examples of a strong and independent judiciary in our country. It is to our Judges that the peoples of this country look forward with respect to safeguard their lives and liberties in consonance with the Rule of Law. The Watergate decisions are therefore appropriate and the lessons enshrined in the conduct and decisions of the Watergate judges should be learnt, digested and followed by all persons interested in the administration of justice. As Judge Sirica observed in the Epilogue —

## PROTEST ON P.T.A.

As anticipated in a statement issued by me after my last visit to Jaffna in late November 1982, the UNP Government's oppression of the "Tamil Speaking People" has escalated. According to Press reports. Father Singharayar said that he has been tortured. A Tamil District Judge has been held up on the highway and intimidated and insulted by the Armed forces personnel.

The students of the Jaffna University held a mammoth demonstration last week through the streets of the Jaffna Town along with students drawn from the various schools. The undergraduates have since started a continuous fasting campaign with effect from 01/02/1983. Their demands are:—

1. Withdraw the Prevention of Terrorism Law.
2. Release the lecturer, the students, the priests and others held in custody under this law or try them under the normal law.

Our party fully supports this struggle against what constitutes a serious infringement of fundamental human rights. All other Universities, Trade Unions, progressive forces and individuals who cherish democratic freedom and civil liberties should unreservedly support this campaign, bearing in mind that the Government is most likely to launch similar or greater oppression all over the country to crush oppositional campaigns that are bound to arise in the context of greater economic burdens which the Government will heap on the people in the near future.

**Vasudeva Nanayakkara,**  
NSSP.

'It was the courts and the law that throughout the crisis could compel the truth be told. Despite efforts in our executive branch to distort the truth, to fabricate a set of facts that looked innocent, **the court system served to set the record straight.**

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# Dr Udagama — Past and Present

Reggie Siriwardena

I read with great interest Dr Premadasa Udagama's article "Anti-Establishment Literature in Education in the Seventies" (LG, February 1). The purpose of this communication is to contrast the critical and radical views regarding education that Dr Udagama expresses in that article with some of the practices of the educational establishment of 1970 — 1977 of which Dr Udagama was himself a guiding member. Of course, I am aware that Dr Udagama initiated many well-intentioned reforms in the content and methods of education during that period. **But the partial, timorous and inconsistent character of those reforms needs to be emphasised today, when there is a tendency among 'progressives', in the light of the educational counter-reforms of 1977 and after, to look back idealisingly to the Udagama era.** It is for that purpose, and not with the intention of making a personal critique of Dr Udagama, that I offer these remarks, in which I shall confine myself to what I can affirm from personal observation and study.

1. During the period of the United Front Government, I was a member of a committee which was asked to prepare a text-book for the study of English Literature at HNCE level (the exam which was intended to replace the A-level). We prepared an unorthodox text-book, titled "Reading with Understanding"; and when we submitted it, it met with numerous objections from Ministry officials. Finally a conference was arranged, to which these officials and members of the committee were called, with Dr Udagama as Ministry Secretary in the chair. The material in our text-book was arranged thematically, and the officials objected particularly strongly to the section entitled "School and Learning", in

which we had selected writing which made a radical critique of formal and institutionalised systems of education. In fact, three of our selections were taken from books which Dr Udagama lists in the references in his LG article — **How Children Fail, Letter to a teacher and The School that I'd like.**

Dr Udagama listened to the contending arguments from the officials and from us, and said he would put in something into that section "to redress the balance". When the book came out, we found that (without any further consultation with us) the extract from John Holt's **How Children Fail** had been taken out, and in its place there had been substituted a piece of conventional wisdom on "The Use of Examinations", emphasising their value. (During the conference the Ministry officials had argued that students who were preparing for the HNCE would be demoralised by reading the criticism of examinations in the book, and we had replied that the fact that students were perforce required to take an exam made it all the more necessary that the institution should be discussed critically in the classroom). Some of us were furious on seeing the published book, not only because of the reactionary content of the passage introduced by the Ministry, but also because it was written in a stuffy bureaucratic prose which violated the character of the book as an anthology of good writing. I note with special interest that Dr Udagama now observes in his LG article: "If the purpose of the school is to select for social rewards, then the use of examinations for selecting the rulers and the ruled is justi-

fied." Was it with this end in view, I wonder, that he secured the intrusion of a passage on "the use of examinations" in the HNCE book?

2. My second point concerns the divergences between the Sinhala and Tamil readers produced during the UF — Udagama era in education, as brought out in the study published by the Council for Communal Harmony through the Media of which an account has already appeared in your columns. I am personally aware that during Dr Udagama's tenure of office the advisory committees for Tamil texts were manned by "Progressive Tamils" (like the late Prof. Kailasapathy), with the result that the Tamil readers — as our study has shown — reflect a broad concern with a national identity, transcending communal particularities. **However, the administration that Dr Udagama headed clearly made no corresponding endeavour to keep Sinhala racism out of the texts in that language; on the contrary it has been freely propagated and promoted through the Sinhala readers, infecting a whole generation of children.** I feel particularly strongly about this because in the HNCE — English text to which I have referred, we were not allowed to include a sociological piece of writing criticizing the caste system. Perhaps caste, like Sinhala — Buddhist communalism, was one of those "props of privilege" to which Dr Udagama refers in his article which had to be maintained and protected.



# Some disturbing matters

S. N. de S. Seneviratne

If the self destruction of the previous Government is a cause of satisfaction for the Government that followed it, a warning about complacency is not out of place. Corruption and political patronage have continued in the organisations and systems affecting the land and the people. In the Corporations. Chairmen and Directors have come and gone — abroad, and home. In the Ministries, heavy weights have fallen from their chairs. They have for the most part only withdrawn from the prestige spots to live in comfort on the benefits they had secured for themselves. No one has received a charge sheet; no one has lost his civic rights; no one is in prison. A stench emanates from tenders and imports — fertilizers, potatoes, seeds. Massive sums of money are involved. There are rumblings that private sector undertakings in the agricultural sector are securing benefits through politically influential connections. The writing is on the wall. It is not too early to read it.

It will now turn to some of the more disturbing matters relating to agricultural development, to the cancerous growths. Good, sincere and able men at the top have made bad mistakes. They often rely on their advisers — local and foreign — experts and consultants. More than a few of these advisers are professional con men. They mislead the decision makers. Yet, neither the responsibility for these ill-conceived decisions nor their disastrous consequences can be avoided.

The forest is an invaluable resource. It is a most important factor in agricultural development. The irrigation schemes that have been launched are dependent on the flow of water in the rivers. All major rivers have their origin in the central hills. The forest determines the flow in them. The importance of the forest and the

need for forest conservation and protection cannot be overemphasised. Yet, what devastation it has been subjected to. During the past 25 years, the forest cover has dwindled by three million acres and is now estimated to be only about 25% of the total land area. Well stocked forest has been reduced from about 550,000 acres to about 200,000 acres. In terms of the country's agricultural development, this rape of the forest is a cause for alarm. The forest will not regenerate because a foreign expert mouths a guli that we have a youthful Minister! The forest has received too little attention. We are playing with fire and unless development and rehabilitation of forest resources are accelerated, the consequences can be catastrophic. With our amazing capability to destroy and vandalism now almost a national trait, stringent penalties must be enforced to protect what remains from further destruction. Sinharaja and Horton Plains bear evidence of the destruction caused by disturbance of their delicate ecosystems.

Soil conservation which is no less important has also received too little recognition. Land development is often conceived of as the hacking of jungles and the provision of irrigation water for cultivation. Soil conservation and water management in the irrigation schemes have received inadequate attention. Several years ago, Kantalai and Hingurana were "opened up" for sugarcane cultivation. Faulty water management has caused virtual devastation of land in these two projects necessitating "rehabilitation". Why? Because adequate information — which must come from research — was wanting about water management in lands of this particular topography, soil types, etc. So development was quickly followed by disaster. The hopes entertained for sugar

production in these schemes have not been realised. Will this experience be repeated in the massive irrigation schemes now being launched? There is no substitute for reliable research data, and technical competence to interpret that data so that the structure of the soil will not be affected adversely. Information available elsewhere on the irrigation of flat land expanses may be irrelevant in managing water for the undulating dry zone of Sri Lanka.

If the prospect of land destruction by faulty irrigation must await confirmation in the years to come, destruction by submergence is not far off, for the inundation of a large part of the Dumbara Valley is one of the most heart breaking tragedies of the Mahaweli Development Programme for more than a few. This is the sacrifice being made for the high dam of the Victoria Project intended for power generation. Choices are not always easy and unpalatable decisions may be inevitable. Yet, what is the balance sheet for Victoria — what will be lost in exchange for power and what will be the magnitude of these losses? The Dumbara Valley has a unique mild climate and fertile soils supporting intensive cultivation of a diversity of crops including rice, vegetables, fruits, spices, beverages, rubber, coconut and timber. Cropping patterns have been evolved there over centuries. Most of the produce from the luscious market gardens of Teldeniya, Hara-gama and Gurudeniya find a ready market in Colombo. The value of the agricultural produce there exceeds 40 million rupees annually. Dairy farming accounts for about 10,000 pints of milk a day supplied to the Milk Board alone. Because of the high value of the commodities produced, a half acre holding can support a family in relative comfort. Additionally, there are clay and



sand, dolomite and mica, gems, and now copper. About 7,000 acres of prime agricultural land will be destroyed for the Victoria Project. There are several temples of great historical significance and other sites of cultural value. About 20,000 persons will be displaced, over 3,000 families uprooted from their villages and stable communities broken. The value of the land, roads, buildings and installations that would be lost is estimated at over 500 million rupees. Instead of destroying the Dumbura Valley, could not greater use have been made of the Walawe which receives rain from both monsoons and which has the best forest cover of all our rivers and the most uniform flow, for power generation? For the old fashioned, for those who are still committed to agriculture, who value the cultural heritage of this country, who are unwilling to accept all this destruction as the price for electrical energy, Victoria power is an unbearable shock. For the modern-businessman, brokers, bankers and other inhabitants of high-rise air conditioned buildings in the metropolis, power perhaps is all that matters.

Under the various irrigation schemes, vast acres will be opened up. Preventing the introduction of pathogens and pests into them, and the spread of diseases, is an aspect that deserves the highest priority. Who cares to think of the importance of planting stock for the new schemes to be launched, of the devastating effects of diseases and pests that may be introduced with infected seed and planting stock?

For the majority of our planners, pundits and politicians, seed pathology is a subject in the realm of obscurity. Yet, it is a good subject to illustrate the thoughtlessness, stupidity and arrogance so evident in development programmes.

Recent studies in seed pathology have shown that **Macrophomina phaseolina**, a pathogenic fungus catholic in its tastes, is transmitted in the seed of 16 crop plants grown in the country including the legumes that will be widely cultivated in the dry zone — greengram, blackgram, beans and cowpea. This fungus, once introduced to the soil, may persist there. It exerts its

pathogenic effects under warm conditions and the Mahaweli irrigated areas are ideal for its "operation". It is potentially dangerous. **Myrothecium**, another fungus detected seed-borne in eight cultivated species including leguminous and solanaceous crop produces highly potent toxins.

There may even be a liberalised importation of seed to cultivate the new lands (seed importation is good business — there are good commissions and trips abroad as well). Legume viruses, another serious threat to the production of pulses are also transmitted in seed and imported seed may bring in virus strains highly pathogenic to locally grown cultivars. In Brazil, for instance, viruses that spread with a soya bean programme dealt deadly blows to the production of local beans, the nutritious basic staple of low-income social groups in that country. Similar calamities can occur in Sri Lanka.

The production of healthy seed and planting stock deserves the highest priority — it has hardly engaged the attention of our planners and pundits and politicians. Earlier this month, lorries of the Mahaweli Authority were lined up near a plant nursery at Gannoruwa, a site teeming with soil-borne pathogens. Perhaps the migration of pathogens from Gannoruwa to be settled in the Mahaweli new lands has already begun!

Another grave threat to agriculture in this country comes from an aggressive group of plant introducers who seem to wield considerable influence in the name of export promotion strengthened by the magic of foreign collaboration. The modest safeguards that this country adopts — fumigation, post-entry quarantine, limitations on quantities imported, official phytosanitary certification from the country of origin — all these are irritations that must be dispensed with for the pleasure of some plant importers. How quickly the lessons taught by that illegal immigrant, **Promecotheca cumin-gii**, the coconut beetle, apparently invited here by orchid merchants, have been forgotten!

Citrus, strawberry and carnation are some of the candidates canvassed for very special treatment.

It is apparently not realised that citrus has over 15 virus and virus-like diseases, most of which have been observed in Sri Lanka, and which can be transmitted in budwood. Greening, a disease caused by a mycoplasma, has resulted in the devastation of citrus in several countries in the Asian region — Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, India and Nepal. Stubborn is another disease caused by a mycoplasma not known here. Strawberry has several viruses, including some transmitted by nematodes, which can infect other crops cultivated in Sri Lanka. In carnation, one plant raiser mourns that carnation rust is prevalent in the vicinity — it is believed to have come in a consignment for another carnation grower which received the equivalent of VIP treatment at the port of entry.

The well-being of agriculture in this country demands that essential procedures be adhered to and necessary precautions adopted to guard against the introduction of pests and pathogens with imported plant material. Even export promoters and their influential patrons ought to recognise this need.

New crops! A recent craze has been the introduction of new crops for cultivation in Sri Lanka — soya bean, winged bean (dambala), oil palm, pyrethrum, wheat, etc. They are usually pushed by an influential foreign lobby and are accepted without critical evaluation of their relevance for Sri Lanka, or their effects on straining further, scarce resources of funds, facilities and personnel. Fortunately, informed scientific opinion was able to prevail upon the Government against the cultivation of 12,000 acres of Mahaweli irrigated land with oil palm. Regrettably, winged bean got through with better stage management. The shape of things to come was indicated by a dambala show put on at Gannoruwa for the winged scientists who descended on Colombo for a symposium. How much wood (posts, poles, bamboos, stakes, etc.) was used to grow this underexploited tropical plant? How much water and other inputs were consumed in raising this exhibit? What was the harvest from the land occupied by this cultivation,



and over what period of time? How much high protein did it yield assuming that the Sri Lankan mouth is indeed a වංගෙඩිය (vang gediya) capable of extracting this protein? The humbug of it all is apparent. In this context, dambala is like a drug. It induces agricultural hallucinations. This drug is being promoted with high pressure, advertising, international diplomacy and public relations exercises. It appears to have found a market for the moment. Yet, after the hallucinations will come agonising convulsions.

It is greatly to be regretted that agricultural research in this country has been internationalised in a winged bean research institute. Apart from the detraction from national priorities, there is an even more sinister aspect to this international venture — the effects on national scientific institutions and on the scientific work force. Sri Lanka must sustain the morale and commitment of the scientific work force battling on the national front under tremendous strains. With this international institute for dambala, a form of apartheid has been introduced into agricultural research in this country. There will be a new bunch of "international" scientists in Sri Lanka enjoying the salary spiral and the perks of the international system — a few climbing local schemers will enter into that company. Expatriate Sri Lankans might come as consultants "to help their motherland" when it is winter in their money spinning habitats in the western world. What of the national scientists, the locals, the backroom boys, who have laboured in their native land? Their fate, and that of national institutions is predictable. There will be aggressive baiting of capable persons in national institutions to serve the international establishment. International establishments have their pimps. Technical prostitution will receive a boost. Those willing to yield to the irresistible temptations will go. But the vast majority of the scientific work force will remain in the neglected state, devalued. They will not be spectators only of the new international climbing order; they will read the message. The reactions will vary — morale will be further eroded; lack

of interest will increase; resentment will build up. All this destruction to benefit a few manipulating elites who play international games. In a poor Third World country like Sri Lanka, the yardstick is not how many (how few!) live in palatial houses and luxury apartments; rather, how many live in squalour, in slums in sub-human dwellings; how many are homeless; how many exploited by rapacious landlords. So too, in the scientific sector in this country the important consideration is not the small climbing minority of elites devouring the plums of international establishments — "international" salaries, foreign assignments, tax free concessions, duty free liquor, etc, but the large majority of the national scientific work force who are wilting, and the yawning gap of incomes between the two. The institutionalisation of an obscene disparity has been accomplished by SEARCA "trained" Professors. They have laid explosive charges in the basement of the Sri Lanka ධර්මිෂ්ට (dharmishta) mansion. There is an obligation binding on dissenters (all of them are not "communists", not even politicians) to draw attention to the "other side" and to alert our rulers about possible perils from our indiscretions and ill-conceived ventures.

Wheat is another recent diversion. On 3rd December 1982, the SLBC announced that according to officials of the Department of Agriculture, Sri Lanka will soon be self-sufficient in wheat. Hurrah! Wheat has really made it. Prima of Singapore in Trincomalee has to be supplied with wheat to mill 250,000 tons of wheat annually for 30 years. In fact, wheat, is pushing out our rice which will have to be exported! And a crash programme is on to breed a rice variety for export!

Now, wheat is being grown under coconut and Professors are backing the underexploited tropical plant, dambala, and the Government has been persuaded that these are sound propositions. Once, a Professor of Agriculture, a heavy-weight supported by peria dorais and sinna dorais of the University's Faculty of Agriculture, enjoyed the confidence of an earlier Government. At his bidding, rice was grown

under coconut and an unutilised plant in the tropics for the extraction of sugar, sugarbeet, appeared on the agricultural horizon. Sugarbeet has gone, rice under coconut has gone, that Government has gone and the Professor has gone! Will such new crops as wheat and dambala also turn out to be unrealistic diversions which will diminish the credibility of this Government with unpredictable consequences?

There is a real danger that such distractions may reverse the advances which have been made in the production of crops of proven merit in Sri Lanka — rice, chillies, onions, etc.

An encounter with an elderly farmer at the Polgahawela railway station was an illuminating experience. The train was late as we waited on the platform — how often the CGR fails to run a train on time! We started talking and I soon became a listener. Rice farming is not sufficiently attractive he said. The inputs are costly. The returns are poor — insufficient to attract the youth to agriculture, the girls to field work like transplanting. This is hard labour, work in the sun, several months for the harvest, and various hazards. Why, tourists are attracting our young girls to the city. If they service them in the air conditioned comfort of hotels, they get big money and quick. At my age, I will continue to farm my land but what inducement is there for the younger generation? Who will contest the verdict of the wise old villager?

Chillies and onions emphasise the plight of the producer. The northern farmer expends labour and love in raising his crops. He toils. He sweats. Yet, his efforts cannot be rewarded with an attractive income — because "consumers" have to be "protected" with free imports. Will those so concerned about consumers please rise to their defence against the Ceylon Electricity Board which ruthlessly exploits consumers with fictitious bills.

(To be continued)



# First major contribution of Marxist scholarship

BOOK  
REVIEW

Hector Abhayawardhana

**"The Political Economy of Underdevelopment"** : by S. B. D. de Silva: ROUTLEDGE AND KEGAN PAUL. 645 pages (including 116 pages of Notes and 10 pages of Index). £ 20.00.

The **Introduction** explains that this book began as a university thesis that sought to explain the backwardness of Sri Lanka's peasant sector "in terms of its failure to absorb growth impulses that were thought to emanate from the plantation sector". In the course of preparing the manuscript for publication, however, the author soon found "that the plantations themselves were merely another backward sector with no impulses to spread. The traditionally accepted contrasts (of the plantations) with the peasant sector were superficial." What was attempted originally as a "country-based study" had to be examined "in terms of more generalised analytical categories." As a result the published book has lost affinity with the university thesis out of which it grew.

**"The Political Economy of Underdevelopment"** consists of three parts. Part 1 is made up of five chapters and is sub-titled: "Investment Patterns in the Settler and Nonsettler Situations". Part 2 has six chapters and is sub-titled: "The Plantation System and Underdevelopment". Part 3 has five chapters and is sub-titled: "Towards a Theory of Underdevelopment". Chapter one (Economic Underdevelopment: a Politico-historical Perspective) follows the **Introduction** and precedes Part 1. As distinct from the **Introduction**, which seeks to elaborate essential features of Marx's methodology that contrast it with neo-classical economic theory and certain neo-Marxist expositions of development, Chapter one provides a preview of the argument to be unfolded in the book. Dr. de Silva holds that the technological disparity between what came to be regarded as the developed and

underdeveloped countries is not easy to explain. Prior to the eleventh century the countries were perhaps ahead in the production of consumer items. But having forged ahead thereafter in the manufacture of fire-arms and in metallurgy, the European countries had by the 15th century established their overall lead. However, the decisive factor that put Europe ahead and prevented Non-European countries from catching up was "changes in the socio-political structure (that) provided an appropriate framework for technical progress and were themselves influenced by the latter."

Dr. de Silva makes no attempt to explain the inability of Non-European societies to bring about socio-political changes similar to those which elevated European power and well-being in the world. That would perhaps take him far from his theme and involve him in other controversies. But he notes this inability and underlines it in several places. "I shall locate underdevelopment," he states, "in the character and the interests of the dominant classes and the wider framework of imperialist relations, within which investment and entrepreneurial decisions were made," (p. 37) "...the problem of underdevelopment has to be subsumed under the general question of the failure of countries to effect the transition to the capitalist mode of production..." (p. 45) "...social relations in the village precluded the growth of a rural bourgeoisie and a rural proletariat... what it (precapitalist production) lacked was a social mechanism in the form of an appropriate class structure for capitalising the surplus on an expanding scale." (p. 453)

Eight of the seventeen chapters of the book and considerable sections of other chapters are devoted to the plantation economy. For that reason, at least, it would be true to say that "The Political Economy of Underdevelopment" is perhaps the most comprehensive

and concentrated examination of the plantation economy as a mode of production that has been published. It does not limit itself to the plantation system in Sri Lanka or any one part of the world or one period of its history. The 116 pages of **Notes** list an astounding range and number of books, articles, official papers etc. that have been consulted in the compilation of data on the plantation system and its history. Taken together with mining as representing the production of raw materials, that became the principal development of production in the colonies of imperialism, the examination of the plantation economy is also in a major way the examination of underdevelopment. It would be incorrect, however, to regard plantation and mining production as the totality of production under conditions of underdevelopment. Apart from food, even among raw materials in underdeveloped countries, there is a very large output deriving from peasant production.

Dr. de Silva admits that the plantation mode of production has certain "more obvious economic attributes" that attract the label "capitalist": "exchange relations (involving wage labour and market orientation), the generation of a surplus, the large scale of operation and, finally, the use of capital in production." But he contends that these attributes are not peculiar to the capitalist mode of production. There are other attributes of the capitalist mode that cannot be found in plantation production: increasing organic composition of capital, scope for technological improvement, enlargement of the operational unit of production etc. Such a contention, unfortunately, would refuse to distinguish between industry and agriculture, between large and small units of production, between higher and lower technology and even between rich and poor countries. Capital has attained refinement and high sophistication in



today's environment. But at base, as Dr. de Silva mentions, capital is not a commodity but a relation between employer and worker that finds a wage expression. The workers on plantations may work with bare hands, but so long as they work for a wage and produce for the market, they engage in capitalist production.

One swallow does not make a summer. The existence of plantations in an economy does not give the economy itself a capitalist character. One hundred or two hundred years of imperialist domination have not transformed precapitalist societies in the greater part of the world into capitalist societies. It is true that these economies have been incorporated in the world market. But, as Mandel remarks, "the capitalist world market universalises the capitalist **circulation** of commodities, but not the capitalist **production** of commodities." ("Late Capitalism") In Sri Lanka, for instance, where only about 14% of GNP is contributed by manufacturing and the area of paddy farming is almost double that of export crops (even here a large area is covered by small holdings), the predominance of precapitalist forms of production can be readily perceived. Dr. de Silva states that "the view that the peasant sector is subsistence-based rests partly on the fact that its produce is not marketed in the same way as that of the plantations." The question that is surely material is not how the produce is **marketed**, but how it is produced. The bulk of the peasant producers produce for their subsistence, not for the market. That part of the crop that is marketed is not surplus to the producer's subsistence needs, but has to be marketed so that he may subsist. In the majority of cases, it has already been consumed and is delivered to the usurer/trader to whom it is pledged.

Despite the above, Dr. de Silva declares: "I have shown that the distinction made between plantation and peasant production in terms of capacity to generate a surplus is unreal. Whether such a surplus is unproductively employed or diverted outside the peasant sector is another matter. The diversion of the rural surplus and the forms in which this occurred substantiate fur-

ther the existence of a surplus." (P. 451-2) There would appear to be a failure here to approach the problem of subsistence production historically. It might be useful to recall our reference to Dr. de Silva's reluctance to confront the question of the inability of Non-European societies to make the socio-political changes necessary to provide an appropriate framework for the kind of technical progress that European countries were making. The inability to change derived from the type of society that existed, at least in most Asian countries. "However changing the political aspect of India's past must appear, its social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity, until the first decennium of the 19th century." (Marx: "**The British Rule in India**, 1853) Marx's generalisation about an Asiatic mode of production supplies a key to Asian history where otherwise a void exists.

The lumping together of plantation agriculture and peasant subsistence production is a refusal to set store by the fact that the agrarian revolution has not yet taken place in the countryside. In Sri Lanka, for instance, the fragmentation of landholdings has not only rendered most of them uneconomic, but the bulk of farmers pay rent for their holdings of generally about half their crop. It was the agrarian revolution led by merchant capital that disrupted the feudal order in Europe and paved the way for the consolidation and expansion of capitalism. Without a similar transformation of agriculture in the underdeveloped countries, the historic premises will not be established for any kind of industrial revolution. The attempt to promote the development of industry without the transformation of agriculture, that contemporary governments are making in the underdeveloped countries, is doomed to failure. It is not possible to import the industrial revolution, especially when one has not yet started the revolution in agriculture (Samir Amin).

Dr. de Silva makes the very important point that the plantation system was the result of the activity of merchant capital (as contrasted with industrial capital) in

the underdeveloped countries. "In the colonial export economies," he states, "the dominant groups were the mercantile interests, for whom production served merely as an accessory rather than an independent objective, valued for its own sake." (P. 416) The plantation companies provided absentee capital whose interests had to be managed by special institutions, like the Agency Houses that merchant capital set up. On colonial soil merchant capital functioned as the agent of industrial capital. But it was only interested in products as it found them, not in influencing the way in which they were produced. Disinterested in the development of productive forces, its concern was with monopoly profits based on control over investments and productive facilities in the colonial export economy. In fact, "in the colonial export economies the development of export production required little more than a reorganisation of precapitalist production techniques; and merchant capital, therefore, was able to 'manage' and control these economies, mediating between them and industrial capital in the metropolis." (P. 422)

Whereas in the developed countries merchant capital had paved the way for the development of capitalist production, in the underdeveloped countries it failed to transform itself into industrial capital, on the one hand, and blocked the emergence of an indigenous industrial class, on the other. "Through the device of the managing agency system, the control of the productive organisation consisting of plantations and mines became vested primarily in the hands of merchants and financiers, tending thereby to freeze trading activities into monopolised spheres and to increase the profits to be wrung from the purely commercial operations." (P. 437) In addition to export-import business, foreign merchant capital developed an entire "ramified group of metropolitan interests — manufacturers, shippers, exchange banks and insurance firms and a network of dealers and sub-dealers, commission agents and brokers. . . Yielding surpluses to carriers, commission agents, financiers and distributors, foreign trade became a mould in which economic activity



tended auto-matically to settle... The dominance of trading activities supported numerous commercial and financial interests which were opposed to production for the domestic market..." (P. 437-8)

A question that arises here is whether merchant capital can be saddled with such a large portion of the responsibility for the underdevelopment of the Non-European countries. It was after all an intermediary between industrial capital, that had already become the dominant influence in the metropolitan countries, and the cheap labour and natural resources and market potential of the underdeveloped countries. If there was an antagonism between merchant and industrial capital, there was also a mutuality of interests. Since merchant capital was concerned with the sphere of exchange, it did not create value. The capital that went into production in plantations, mines and elsewhere could not be merchant capital. It was exported from the metropolis, even as absentee capital, in the form of industrial or production capital. That the plantations were managed by merchant capital only demonstrated the identity of interests that underlay their differences of role. Dr. de Silva himself points to this relationship. "When the subjection of industrial capital by merchant's capital ended, there developed a mutuality of relations between them. Merchant capital, no longer in control over production, specialised in distribution and exchange, serving as the agent of industrial capital." (P. 425)

The fact is that both merchant capital and industrial capital are different aspects of capital in general. Beginning as different stages in the development of capital, they have become a division of labour in the functioning of capital in the epoch of monopoly capitalism. While merchant capital was dominant, capitalism was engaged in the wholesale plunder of the non-european countries as the principal means of the accumulation of capital. With the industrial revolution that this plunder made possible, the production of goods leaped forward and substituted the processes of trade. This period was distinguished by the export of goods. But as the play of free competition gave way

to monopoly, a surplus of capital in the industrial countries of Europe commenced the process of the export of capital. Lenin referred to the age that began with the dawn of the twentieth century as the age of the domination of **finance capital**. Underdevelopment was not the product or byproduct of merchant capital alone, but the consequence of the whole development of capitalism, monopoly capitalism and imperialism in the developed countries in relation to the rest of the world. "in this whole system development and underdevelopment reciprocally determine each other, for while the quest for surplus-profits constitutes the prime motive power behind the mechanisms of growth, surplus profit can only be achieved at the expanse of less productive countries, regions and branches of production. Hence development takes place only in juxtaposition with underdevelopment; it perpetuates the latter and itself develops thanks to this perpetuation." (Mandel: "Late Capitalism")

The book ends with a final chapter of scintillating brilliance entitled "The Politics of Underdevelopment." The structure of centre-periphery relations based on the colonial export economies was seriously weakened in the decade and a half following the Second World War. World capitalism sets out to regain its control over a shrunken area of the globe. The multi-national Company displaces the smaller investor as the new institutional basis of relations between the developed countries and the underdeveloped. There begins a "rationalisation in the use of resources on a world scale with a vertical integration of investments over a far-flung empire of production sites." The former internationalisation of markets is now replaced by the internationalisation of production itself. But the relinking of centre and periphery only retards the growth of indigenous industrial capital in the underdeveloped countries. Dr. de Silva's portrayal of consequences defies paraphrasing:-

"Indigenous capital settles like a sediment lower down the investment scale. In the manufacturing sector, it operates mostly on a small-scale basis, independently in

the niches of a highly monopolised economy, or else as subcontractors to foreign firms, supplying components whose production technology favours the small unit. In this role of subcontractor the indigenous entrepreneur makes available to the foreign firms his access to sweated labour. Though stifled industrially, indigenous capital gains new opportunities in the tertiary sector.

"After the relinking of the economy, the closure of many independent small and midium-scale manufacturing enterprises gives a stimulus to imports. The trade expansion, however, does not wholly benefit the indigenous trading class. First, the increase in imports takes the form partly of intrafirm transactions by the multinationals — the goods do not leave the parent company's own channel but move only 'in one and the same corporate territory'. While the trading interests are generally reactivated, there is also greater competition and lower profit margins. Second, there is expansion in activities catering mostly for the needs of a growing expatriate community. Third, a buoyancy in the real estate market resulting from the urban-centred and extroverted development pattern confers prolific windfall gains on speculators and owners of urban property. A parallel expansion of investment is in residential construction, consumers' stores, recreational and entertainment facilities, tourism and travel, packing and removal services. These rentier and purely commercial activities provide soft options to the indigenous bourgeoisie, leaving foreign capital a free rein over industry, merchant banking and finance." (P. 511-2)

Despite its 518 pages of text, "The Political Economy of Underdevelopment" makes easy and interesting reading. While preserving the highest standards of scholarship, the author's fluency and precision of language, not to mention a certain flair for the picturesque, delight the reader and seldom let down his interest. The weight and seriousness of the thematic material would normally confine the appeal of a book like this only to serious

(Continued on page 24)



# Critical remarks on Stalin's concept of a nation

M. Maha Uthaman

It was a remarkable act indeed for 'Chintaka' to launch an ideological struggle against the national chauvinism that exists among the Sinhala "Marxists". These pseudo-leftists could be divided into three main categories: first, those who are engulfed by the national chauvinist ideology, and, as a result, fail to see the emergence of the Tamil nation and nationalism; the second category are those who, for tactical reasons, pretend ignorance of the Marxist "theory" of nationalism; finally, a category who do not genuinely understand the concept of a nation or the national question. It is the duty of marxists such as 'Chintaka' and Uyangoda to expose the chauvinism and opportunism of the first two categories and to educate the third category, thus bringing internationalist consciousness to the Sinhala progressives.

While appreciating the courage and the intellectual honesty of 'Chintaka' for embarking on this mission, I wish to comment on the Stalinist concept of a nation, on which 'Chintaka' relies heavily to support his thesis that the Tamil speaking people of Eelam constitute a nation. While not challenging the proposition that the Tamils are a nation, I want to point out that in comprehending the concept of a nation and nationalism, we should not however convenient it may be — confine ourselves to Stalin. As Marxists our aim should be to elevate theory to the realm of science rather than subjugate it to political tactics.

It was in his essay "Marxism and the National Question", written in 1913 that Stalin spells out his "theory" of a nation and nationalism. It is true that some of the theses advocated in this book reflected the thinking of Lenin and

the Bolsheviks of the time. It is also true that it was Lenin who sent Stalin to Vienna to write this work; however, when the article was published neither Lenin nor the Bolsheviks were impressed. In fact, Lenin never referred to this book in his numerous writings on the national question except for a brief parenthetical reference in passing in an article dated 28 December 1913.

The criticism on Stalin's concept of a nation is two fold; first, one finds in Stalin's writing an ultimatum and rigid definition of a nation; second, the question of whether a universal general definition is warranted on this subject.

Let us take the first point. Stalin states that only when all the characteristics — common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make up are present together, is a nation constituted. By stating this Stalin gave his theory a restrictive and rigid character which in stark contrast to Lenin who refused to draw an arbitrary definition of a nation: Michael Lowy, a distinguished Marxist, was correct in saying that the Stalinist conception of a nation was real ideological procrustean — Stalin's characteristics of a nation are not only restrictive, but, also, both defective as a definition and as a tool of analysis.

Stalin's introduction of the 'historic' factor in the definition of a nation derives partly from the economic — historical definition of Kautsky and partly from Hegel whose concepts were later used by Engels in his writings on nationalism. Hegel who was the originator of the concept 'non-historic nation' argued that nations which have not succeeded in creating a state, or, whose state has long been destroyed, are 'non-historic' and condemned to disappear. Engels who further developed this

curious theoretical concept cited south Slav nations (Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Rumanians, Slovenes, Dalmatians, Moravians, Rethernians, etc ...) and Bretons and Basques as non-historic nations, claiming that these "remnants of a nation, mercilessly crushed, as Hegel said, by the course of history, this national refuse is always the fanatical representative of counter revolution and remains so until it is completely exterminated or denationalised, as its whole existence is in itself a protest against a historical revolution". This revival of the Hegelian concept of 'non-historic' nations was not only pseudo-historical and metaphysical but also is alien to marxism. The point here, however, is that it presupposed the possibility of defining a true 'historic' nation which unfortunately gave rise to the arbitrary definition that Stalin introduced later. I'm not denying that a specific national consciousness may arise as specific historical phenomenon with specific social and historical content deriving from specific social and historical conditions, but it is difficult to understand the usefulness of introducing 'historic' factor as a universal defining characteristic of a nation.

Stalin's criterion of a common economic structure also faces a problem. The Poles remained a nation through a century and a half of partition. Poland, being divided up among three states, did not have a unity in economic life. Yet Stalin forgot his own criteria and, rightly so, considered Poland a nation. This further substantiates the claim that Stalin's definition could never be applied to any historical situation in a general way, not even to the time that it was written.

The rigid nature of his definitions may have stemmed from Stalin's

(Continued on page 24)

(The writer is Tutor in Social Theory at The National University of Ireland.)



# Some misconceptions in Gail Omvedt's comments on RLU

A. Gowrikanthan (Secretary RLU)

**G**AIL OMVEDT'S article (L. G. Jan 15) contains some incorrect statements pertaining to the "agricultural labourers' union". I wish to correct them. The name of our Union is **Rural Labourers' Union** (RLU) and not "agricultural labourers' union". What we mean by "rural labourers" are the agricultural labourers, poor peasants and other unskilled labourers who are engaged in various agricultural and non-agricultural related activities and are settled in the villages. These three sections, in short, form the rural proletariat and are of identical class character and of almost equal historical responsibilities and perspectives. To my knowledge, it would not be incorrect to say that the RLU is the first Union of the rural proletariat in the History of the labour movement in Ceylon.

Gail Omvedt has in her article commented that our union is engaged in "organizing the mainly scheduled caste agricultural labourers in Jaffna". This is incorrect. The RLUs' target area is not restricted to the Jaffna peninsula; on the contrary, it covers the traditional land of the "Ceylon Tamils". However, it is true that due to certain practical problems pertaining to the building of an organizational network, the RLU is not powerful enough, yet, to work all over the areas of the northern and eastern provinces which constitute the traditional areas of the "CEYLON TAMILS". Mobilizing all the agri-labourers of this traditional land without any national, caste or religious differences under a single organization, is the unions' goal. Although, about 70 percent of the agri-labourers within the Jaffna peninsula belong to the depressed castes, it is not the intention of the RLU to mobilize the rural proletariat of a specific caste character. The task of our union is to mobilize the rural proletariat belonging to all castes under a single banner.

Gail Omvedt has further commented that our union's slogan is "casteless Eelam". This is totally

incorrect. The RLU is not demanding any such thing. The reasons are as follows:

1) Our immediate demand is not for a casteless society, but a society which is free from caste oppression.

2) Caste oppression as hindrance to social development, as a political force and as one of the most important social problems widespread in all social movements is acutely and concretely manifest only in the Jaffna Peninsula. Even then, it has a social and political significance only in the agricultural areas within the peninsula. The RLU is not restricted to the agricultural sector of the Jaffna peninsula. It is committed to the mobilization and the politicization of the rural proletariat of the Northern and Eastern provinces or what could be termed the traditional land of the Ceylon Tamils.

3) The social formation of our traditional lands also contains other forms of social oppression. They are as follows:

a) **Class oppression** which is the basic and fundamental oppression.

b) **National Oppression** in the form of big nation sinhala chauvinism manifest in the attempts at the Sinhalization of our traditional lands. The Tamil speaking people of this land have been converted into second-class citizens in their own lands through the denial of fundamental socio-economic and political rights. The denial of traditional land rights is one such manifestation, thereby, creating an inseparable link between the National Question and the Agrarian Question. Yet another manifestation of national oppression is the violence perpetrated against the people of this land by the armed forces behaving in the mould of an occupying force.

c) The social oppression and exploitation by Multinational Agri-businesses which are now beginning to penetrate this area.

d) The social oppression which is imposed on the upcountry Tamil

people who migrated to the traditional Tamil areas as refugees. They do not have any social position and their economic existence, is precarious. In addition, they have been relegated to the position of second-class citizens even in the traditional lands of the Tamils. This is also in a way another form of national oppression. The oppressors of the Upcountry Tamils or the Tamils of recent Indian origin are not only the state machinery of "big nation Sinhala chauvinism", but also the Tamil bourgeoisie and other sections of the ruling class in the traditional Tamil areas.

e) Caste oppression.

f) The social oppression by "Yarl Chauvinism".

g) Equal rights for the Muslims who also constitute a significant section of the people of this land.

The traditional land of the Ceylon Tamil nationality which has the inalienable rights of self-determination, including the rights of forming a politically independent State, must be free from all these oppressions cited above. It must organize itself in a way that its territorial identity would be safe-guarded, and practice its right of self-determination free from any type of oppression. (This is entirely different from the slogan of 'casteless Eelam'!) The toiling masses of this land must unite with the toiling masses all over Ceylon, without undermining their identity. This is the policy of the Rural Labourers' Union.

Another misconception in Gail Omvedt's article is the characterization of the organizers of RLU as a break-away group from the Pro-Peking Communist Party. Although it is correct that among the organizers are comrades who were once affiliated to the C P (Pro-Peking), it must be mentioned that there are comrades in the organizing committee and among the rank and file who do not belong to this category.



# Explanation for the ISU defeat

Lionel Bopage

(General Secretary — People's Liberation Front)

UNDER the column "Student Affairs" the January 15 issue of the *Lanka Guardian* carried an article entitled "A Mini-National Government on the Colombo Campus?" which, among other things, blames the defeat of the Independent Students' Union (ISU) at the 1982/83 elections of the University of Colombo on a so-called "strange mis-alliance" between the JVP, SLFP and UNP. The article also claims that although in the November 26 elections "the ISU had as many as 36 representatives beating all other rival groups", owing to a JVP-SLFP-UNP coalition, no Students' Council leader could be chosen from the ISU.

These groundless allegations are aimed at concealing the loss of support for the ISU from the student body. Under the false pretext of clarifying the truth, the Independents have resorted to the common tactic of blaming their defeat on all others besides themselves. Such deceit must not go unmasked.

The nine representatives chosen from the Faculty of Education which the Independents claim to be their own, support the Socialist Students' Union (SSU) of the JVP. In addition, the fourteen Pioneers are sympathisers of the SSU. Thus rather than having 36 Independents with 19 representatives as the Independents claim, the results tally at 25 (36-9) Independents for 42 (19 + 14 + 9) SSU representatives.

Further, the article purports that when the pioneers in the Medical Faculty decided to support the group with the majority in other faculties, the JVP-SLFP-UNP groups formed a common front against the Independent Students' Union! Besides completely rejecting this claim which holds no water, it is worth mentioning that a declaration declining any alliance was even given in the Sinhala daily "*Divaina*" by the UNP on December 1st. The JVP has also consistently criticised the formation of a so-called "National Government" and exposed it as a convenient tool with which bourgeois and petty bourgeois formations can be aligned against the workers.

In this context, it is significant that the Independents, claiming to be the largest organisation, nevertheless sought the help of the pioneers. But the pioneers did not respond favourably as the former could not prove their strength. Since the ballot for the December 3rd elections was a secret ballot, no one knows in definite terms who voted for whom.

Finally, while the Independents feign to have "won all posts in the Students' Council (for the 1981/82 academic year) beating all other political groups in the university that were affiliated to national political

parties", they are careful to omit the results of the recent election, which are given below.

Clearly, the JVP fared better than the Independents. Nevertheless, when the Students' Union was formed, the President Deepthi Lamahewa (Independent) received 55 votes after getting only 32 votes at the earlier election. Are we to presume from this that the UNP and SLFP did not support him? Moreover, when forming the Students' Union the Independents claimed that they would give the position of Secretary to the SLFP. But after getting the SLFP votes for the post of President, when choosing the Secretary they did not do so. Needless to say, in return for help given by the UNP, the post of member of the Senate was given to the UNP'er Rohana Godallewatte.

All indications are that efforts were made to form an anti-JVP coalition rather than an anti-ISU coalition within the University of Colombo Students' Union, as a prelude to forming a National Government at the national level. The Independents meanwhile were not ousted because of opportunism on the part of the JVP, but rather, due to opportunism and corruption on its own part. For instance, during the campaign against the White Paper these leaders were busy entertaining themselves. One student was attacked by them with the handle of a knife. Several others had been beaten up. These leaders even went to negotiate with the UNP, and converted bottle lids into small hand bombs. The students know this only too well. Therein lies the explanation for the ISU defeat.

Faculty	JVP	SLFP	UNP	Independents
Arts	11	5	5	9
Science	10	—	—	7
Law	2	—	2	6
Education	2	10	2	—
Medicine	11	—	—	10
	<u>36</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>32</u>





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# **Protection of People's Rights to Resources — (PAPER II)**

Jerry A. Moles and James V. Riker

**U**nderlying this work is a single fundamental belief which we share, that all persons have the right to live. The right to live concerns the doings, the comings and goings, of every person on the face of the Earth. It has an intimacy in that it suggests in unambiguous terms that every person in the world travels life's path as do we and should possess the same rights. If we were born in the circumstances of others, we would be as they are in many very basic manners. When we say that people have a right to live, we mean the right to live without the needless suffering so obvious even to the casual observer in today's world. The suffering appears needless because much of it seems caused by the actions of some people towards others they see as unlike and thereby less worthy than themselves.

We are not suggesting that people be given food, clothing, and shelter as a part of their right to live. Instead we believe that people have the right of access, the right to use, the basic natural and physical resources of their nations in ways which protect the rights of all others and provides adequately for themselves. In this process, people become masters of their own destiny and champions of their own fate. Similar statements concerning the rights of all people have been made by various international organizations. In 1948, the United Nations in its Declaration of Universal Human Rights noted that everyone has the basic right to a standard of living which includes adequate health and well-being in terms of food, housing, and medical care (United Nations, 1948). Later in 1966, the United Nations in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognized the fundamental right to be free from hunger and urged all nations to take the measures necessary to increase food production and distri-

bute it in an equitable fashion (United Nations, 1966). Still later in 1974 in the World Food Conference report, it was stated that every man, woman, and child has an inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental capabilities fully (United Nations, 1974). Christensen (1978b) and Scue (1977) suggest that the emphasis be placed, not on the right to food, but rather on the right to subsistence. Scue has written.

By minimal economic security, or subsistence I mean healthy air, healthy water, adequate clothing, and adequate shelter. Many complications about exactly how to specify the boundaries for subsistence would be interesting to explore. But the basic idea is to be available for consumption what is needed for a decent chance at reasonably healthy and active life of more or less normal length, barring tragic intervention. (as quoted in Christensen, 1978:212).

Christensen (1978b: 10-11) suggest that such subsistence rights carry with them three classes of subsistence duties as follows:

- (1) Duties to refrain from eliminating a person's only available means of subsistence (duties to forebear from depriving);
- (2) Duties to protect people from being deprived by others of their only means of subsistence (duties to protect from deprivation); and
- (3) Duties to provide subsistence for those who are unable to provide for their own (duties to aid the deprived).

We are troubled that none of the above statements of rights speak to the right to use the land, water, air and light, the natural endowment of a nation. We see no other way of insuring that the less powerful are even going to be able to maintain their access to the things necessary to meet the objectives of the United Nations short of controlling the basic resources. Even in Christensen's three classes of subsistence duties, we find no clear statement of the right to live guaranteed through

access to basic resources. Furthermore, in her scheme of these duties, there is no clear indication of who will responsibly ensure that they are enforced short of massive investments in material and personnel. This flies in the face of historical trends in which the investments in enforcement have been made by the wealthy and powerful. While altruistic giving is not unheard of, the magnitude of the changes necessary suggests that such an alternative is not viable. Often those who have wealth in a material sense see it as a basic right to be able to maintain and expand that wealth at the expense of others. Thus, unless you can guarantee everyone the right to live through access to the productive resources of a nation; other suggestions, while correct in their humanitarian intent, offer faint hope of meaningful change. The usual fall-back position is that through self-help, people can pull themselves up by their own "boots-traps." But, as has been shown in far too many cases, those who actually pull themselves up have had access to resources.

The basic question is what are the forces that enable people to have a right to resources or denies them that right. We intend to explore the agriculture of Sri Lanka and compare and contrast the benefits and liabilities of the traditional approaches with the non-traditional approaches currently being introduced, in short, a comparison of different agricultural heritages. Not only are we interested in the physical and biological manifestations of the agricultural system but also equally concerned with the principles which guide the behavior of the people who participate in that system.

We wish to define the right to live a bit more broadly than we have to this point. If people have a right to use basic resources, they must be able to preserve this right into the indefinite future. They must have a right to sustain their agriculture by their own labour and employ methods they can afford.

**(To be continued)**



## I.M.F. Pressure

A group of foreign journalists were recently on a World Bank sponsored tour of Sri Lanka and the Mahaveli project. Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, the Mahaveli minister, told Suman Dubey, Managing Editor of *INDIA TODAY*:

"There is very strong pressure on the part of the IMF and the World Bank to devalue (the rupee). We would like to resist that as much as possible"

## Critical remarks . . .

(Continued from page 19)

eagerness to refute Bauer whose definitions were essentially subjective ones. Objective definitions of a nation in terms of history, economic structure and language are in fact attempts to explain the likely factors that may promote feelings

of nationalities, but they cannot constitute defining characteristics of a nation. Nationalism is a political and social ideology which, when welded into a unity, holds together disparate, logically separable, beliefs and attitudes; as such it must be examined in the light of specific conditions under which it arose and developed.

Nationalism and the concept of a nation are extremely complex and difficult phenomena, and as conceptual tools, they strike political thinkers as impossibly fuzzy. It contains elements of generality and specificity, though each case is associated with specific, temporal material. This is why nationalist ideologies share the common problem of the universal definition and the conception of a nation. As Sami Zubaida has discovered, nations or nation-designates in the modern world almost invariably have a problem of boundary definition in time and space. Hence, it is not necessary to resort to rigid definitions in order to understand what a nation is. The position the

Marxist ought to take is simple; support the national self-determination of the oppressed people; oppose national chauvinism in the oppressing nation which aims at the subjugation of others. This was the position taken by Lenin; he, therefore, was not required to define a nation by providing an essential and general definition, and thus did not end up in the theoretical confusion that results from arbitrary definitions.

## First major . . .

(Continued from page 18)

students of political, economic and international affairs. That Dr. S. B. de Silva's style and manner of presentation have been able to draw even the ordinary reader into his net must be considered a major achievement. Above all, Dr. S. B. de Silva's "The Political Economy of Underdevelopment" is the first major contribution of Marxist scholarship made by a Sri Lankan to the unravelling of the complex problems of our time.

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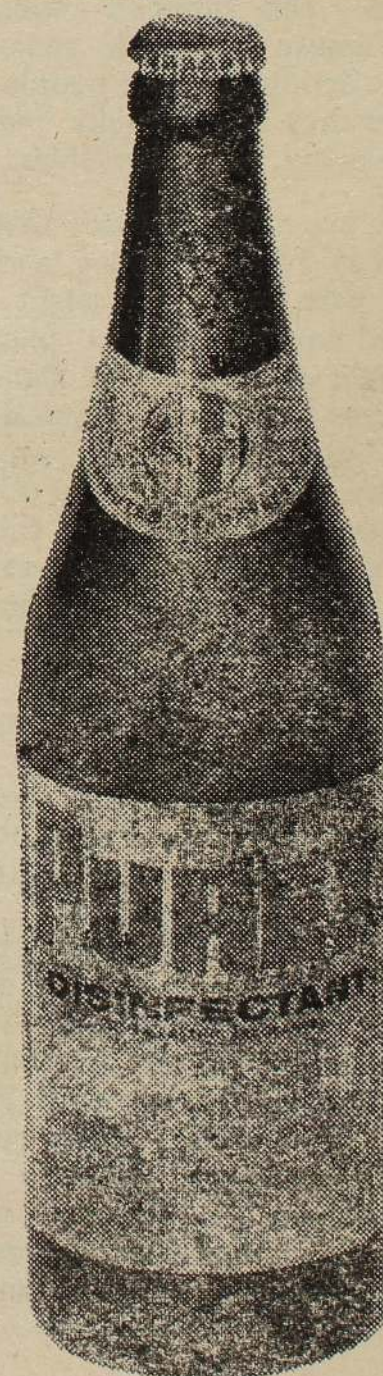
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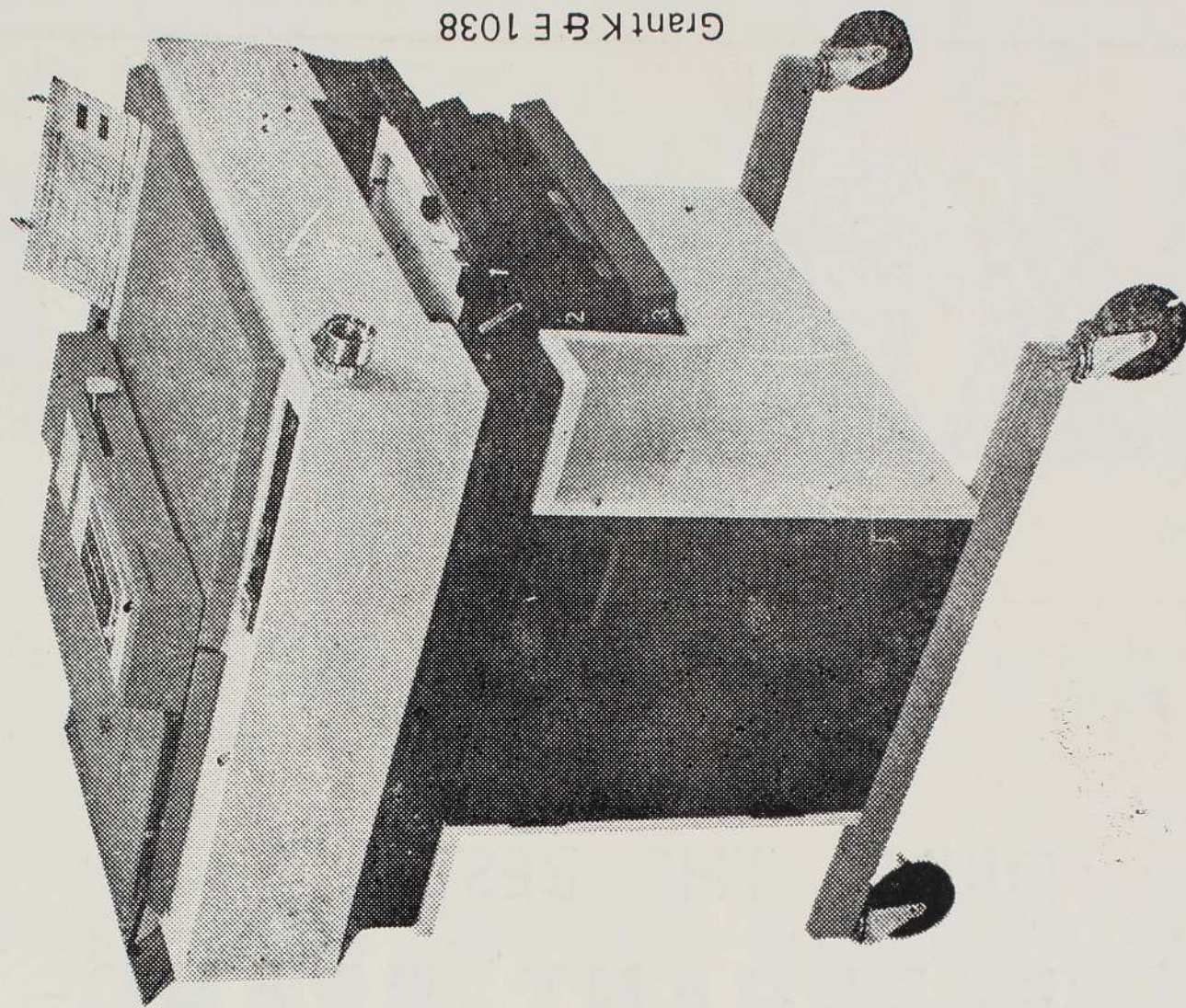
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