

SLFP — No Alternative ; No Discipline ; No Money

LANKA

# GUARDIAN

Vol. 5 No. 23

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ASEAN, U. S., PEKING

LINE SHATTERED

Havana

consensus

holds

— Mervyn de Silva



Marxism — New frontiers — 'Samudran'

Why the Left failed — N. Sanmugathan

Tigers on PLO, Namibia

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## STUDENT SCORE CARD

In its own dry manner, the **Ceylon Daily News**, perhaps affected by the "Big Match month" ambience, presented its readers an "In and Out" score card which is a telling report on the student unrest that has swept the island's eight campuses. In **Colombo**, ALL students, except the Medicos; in **Kelaniya** ALL students in sympathy strike with their colleagues at Jayewardenapura; at **Jayewardenapura** ALL students except 306 (10%); At **Peradeniya** the CDN says "no information" but in fact both **Pera-deniya** and **Dumbara** saw clashes between students and police, and students and "outsiders" (goons). **Ruhuna** closed for vacation; at **Batticaloa**, CDN says "all quiet" but in fact, 5 students were suspended after a strike. At **Jaffna**, the CDN says "all quiet" (obviously on that particular day) but the Jaffna campus, after sporadic bursts of agitation, wrested some concessions from the authorities. They also got 4 students in custody released.

The SUN (March 24) was closer to the whole truth when it reported that the "unrest in the country's universities — in the form of protests, demonstrations and boycott of lectures — moved into its second tense month yesterday".

The SUN gave the 'main issues' as "police harassment, suspension from classes and cutting down of loan facilities". It all started however when students protested against the admission of external students for fee-levying special courses, a step which they described as an "attack" on free education.

## POLICE, PRESS

"Pressures on the press" is now a familiar phrase in any discussion of the varied attacks and threats against the media in the Third World. But the phrase acquires an ominous and grotesque ring when pressmen and photographers invited by the Mahaveli Ministry for a 'dagaba ceremony' and then become the victims of the high blood pressure of sundry policemen whose

actions require the cover-up artistry of their higherups.

At least one journalists association has shown sufficient concern and solidarity to send a letter to the Minister of State. Even in countries where journalists are flogged, demonstrations and strikes follow physical assaults on pressmen. All that Sri Lanka's journalists can now hope is that the inquiry instituted by President Jayewardene will be thorough and impartial.

## EELAM AND N. A. M.

The Eelamites seized on two opportunities to internationalise their campaign — the summit in Delhi, and the Tourist Fair in West Berlin. Since the President of the Tamilnadu Kamaraj Congress wanted the NAM to give the Eelam Liberation Front "observer status" like the PLO (the PLO is in fact a member) western journalists into whose lockers at the Press centre Eelam literature had made a 'sneak entry' found the references to Palestine and Namibia particularly interesting. One document read:

"Our liberation struggle, as an oppressed nation fighting against the oppressor, constitutes an integral part of the international struggle, the struggle of the revolutionary forces against the forces of reaction, the forces of imperialism, neocolonialism, zionism and racism. Though each liberation struggle has its own historical specificity and its unique conditions, in their essence they articulate a universal historical tendency of the human aspiration for freedom from all systems of oppression and exploitation. In this context, Tamil Eelam national struggle is similar in content to that of the Palestinian struggle or Namibian struggle or any national struggle of the oppressed people based on their right to national self-determination."

"The language of an earlier passage in this document reflects the increasing radicalization of their thinking. It reads "The struggle for national freedom having failed in its democratic

(Continued on page 2)

## TRENDS + LETTERS

### Why the Left Failed

I agree with Dr. R. W. C. Thambiah that the objective of a left party, specially the revolutionary Left, is to make revolution. The Left in Sri Lanka failed precisely because it failed to do this.

But I do not agree with him when he says that the left has failed because it has not yet mustered enough courage to stand on its own legs. The need for the left to unite with other anti-UNP forces arises out of the necessity to isolate our main enemy. Not to want to unite with other anti-UNP forces can only result from a serious under-estimation of the strength of the enemy.

Chairman Mao Tsetung taught: "Make use of contradictions (among the enemy), win over the many, isolate the few and defeat your enemy one by one.

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"This is sound advice and is a matter of tactics of the united front. In both the Russian and Chinese revolutions, the working class had allies. Ofcourse, whether the working class leads or is led in a united front is an organisational question which would vitally affect the outcome of the united front.

But whether one is for or against revolution is a matter of strategy which is fundamental to any left party. I hold that the major section of the Left in Sri Lanka, which is today referred to as the old Left and with which our Party completely disassociates itself, betrayed and abandoned revolutionary principles and practice.

It worshipped at the altar of parliamentarism and constitutionalism, entered bourgeois coalition governments, sunk to low levels of opportunism e. g. worship of the Buddha, the masala vadai line etc., repressed the working class e. g. the 1972 Bank strike, spilled the blood of hundreds (or, is it thousands?) of youth who were misled into starting an insurrection in 1971 precisely because of the failure and the betrayal by the left.

It was the fiasco of the attempt by the old Left in 1970, along with the SLFP, to run capitalism better than the UNP that was responsible for the parliamentary rout of 1977 when, for the first time, the left failed to win a single seat in parliament.

Only an honest self-criticism and admission of past mistakes and return to revolutionary principles and practice can enable the Left to go forward.

But, alas, the left — both the old left as well as the so-called new left is begging the UNP to hold elections in 1983.

**N. Sanmugathan**

Colombo

### **Not cricket, Sir!**

The simultaneous out break of the University students' agitation on the one hand and the Big Match revelry on the other is a classic expression of our uneven econo-

mic development reflected in social classes having differential access to social wealth. On 8th March, the Police did not permit the students to hold a demonstration leading to Hyde Park. In Kandy on the 17th, the Police did not allow the University students to use loud speakers at their meeting held at the George. E. de Silva Park. On 9th March however, the Police provided an 'escort' and permitted the Royal-Thomian parade to move through the streets of Colombo which consequently created a massive traffic-jam and the public was treated to some choice lyrics depicting nothing but the decadent culture of the urban elite.

While this revelry is on, the University students are fighting a front line battle with the authorities to salvage what is left of political, educational and economic rights for the future generation. The politicians in power today praised the 1977 student unrest as a progressive expression against an unpopular regime, and used it as the catalyst to topple the previous government. Today they are trying to crush the same student movement, that is genuinely expressing the reality of bankrupt policies launched by the present regime. This is just not cricket, Sir!

Kandy.

**'Darshana'**

### **A simple matter**

In your perceptive News Background comment (LG Feb. 15) you say that a possible reason for the UNP opting for PR was that, knowing that PR would prevent any party from getting a 2/3 majority, it wanted to make the presidential constitution immune to change. Whether this was consciously thought of by the UNP as a reason for PR or not, it is certainly true that President JR has frequently claimed that no future government would get the requisite 2/3 majority to tamper with the constitution. It is therefore ironical that it was JR himself by his Referendum (held following a four to three split decision

(Continued on page 20)

## **Trends . . .**

(Continued from page 1)

popular agitations, having exhausted its moral power to mobilise the masses for peaceful campaigns, gave rise to the emergence of armed resistance movement in Tamil Eelam in the early seventies. Armed resistance as a mode of popular struggle arose when our people were presented with no alternative other than to resort to revolutionary resistance to defend themselves against a savage form of state terrorism. The armed struggle, therefore is the historical product of intolerable national oppression; it is an extension, continuation and advancement of the political struggle of our oppressed people. Our liberation movement which spearheads the revolutionary armed struggle in Tamil Eelam is the armed vanguard of the national struggle. The strategy of revolutionary armed struggle was formulated by us after a careful and cautious appraisal of the specific concrete conditions of our struggle, with the fullest comprehension of the historical situation in which masses of our people have no choice other than to fight decisively to advance the cause of national freedom. Our total strategy integrates both national struggle and class struggle, interlinks the progressive patriotic feeling of the masses with proletarian class consciousness to accelerate the process of socialist revolution and national liberation.

"The armed struggle of our liberation movement is sustained and supported by wider sections of the Tamil masses, since our revolutionary political project expresses the profound aspirations of our people to gain political independence from the autocratic domination and repression of the Sri Lanka state. To achieve the revolutionary tasks of national emancipation and socialist revolution, our project aims at the extension and transformation of our protracted guerrilla warfare into a popular war of national liberation."



**IMF**

# Rs 26 to the dollar ?

**NEWS  
BACKGROUND**

**T**he Sri Lanka government will have a final round of talks with the IMF early this month on a standby credit of 200 million dollars. The *Financial Times* reported that there is still a "gap" between the two sides on the parity rate of the rupee. Mr. Ronnie de Mel, the Finance Minister has told Alain Cass, Asia Editor that Rs. 23 to the dollar was "as far as we can go".

Earlier Alain Cass interviewed President J. R. Jayewardene in Colombo. He reported:

JULIUS Jayewardene, Sri Lanka's 76-year-old President emerged yesterday from the non-aligned summit in New Delhi and confided to reporters that his country had reached agreement with the International Monetary Fund on a standby-credit of about \$ 200 m (£ 130 m) as part of Western efforts to prop up his free-market policies.

Contacted in Colombo, Mr. Ronnie de Mel, Mr. Jayewardene's able Finance Minister, who presents what may be the country's toughest-ever budget, said: "It isn't quite that."

His version is that there is still a gap between the IMF and Sri Lanka and that the two sides will meet in three weeks to tie up the loose ends.

There is little doubt that the Fund and Sri Lanka will reach agreement. Mr Jayewardene was no doubt applying some of his cunning to give the process a little nudge on the way. Or perhaps, he was merely prejudging the outcome.

Either way, he was demonstrating the self-confidence of an old fox who, having achieved at least some of what he set out to do and acquired a virtually unassailable political position, doesn't mind what

he says as long as the record speaks for itself.

In similar vein he recently fired nearly 20 MPs from his ruling United National Party (UNP) in order to get more opposition members elected. Mr Jayewardene's curious move followed the controversial referendum held at the end of last year which he won handsomely, and which amended the country's constitution, allowing the President to extend the life of the present Parliament by six years.

Under considerable pressure from many, including members of his own party who questioned the morality of his move, he agreed that the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the main opposition party, was grossly under-represented in Parliament and set out to do something about it. Mr Jayewardene has assumed the aura of a national father figure who guides, reprimands and hands out consolation prizes as he sees fit.

"You're right," he said in a recent interview. "I want a pet Parliament and a pet opposition. But want it to be democratic and I want to get things done. All I have said to the people is 'give me time' and that is what they have done".

Since taking over from Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's SLFP five years ago, Mr Jayewardene has steadily built up his personal position while gambling heavily that his programme of economic liberalisation — which includes dismantling part of the welfare state as well as the stringent controls which have strangled economic growth — will eventually succeed. Both policies are inextricably linked.

The initial results were spectacularly successful. Economic growth doubled, unemployment was halved and foreign investment began to

trickle in. Recently, there have even been enquiries from "Hong Kong money" looking for a safe haven in the event of a collapse in confidence during the talks between Britain and China.

Helped by foreign aid — Sri Lanka has the highest per capita receipt of U. S. and World Bank assistance in Asia — this strategically-placed island of 8.1 m people was transformed from a holiday retreat where Sri Lankans had to queue for bread, to one where they jostle around the latest imported television sets. The free market has far from eradicated poverty, and has certainly generated corruption — but there is less of it.

It has also, however, brought more familiar problems which come with too rapid industrialisation, soaring inflation and large deficits. Coupled with a slump in world demand for Sri Lanka's traditional exports — coconut, rubber and tea, which suffered its worst year in 1982 — Mr Jayewardene's administration is having to slam on the brakes.

Mr de Mel said: "I am proposing to suspend all new projects for at least two, possibly three years. We want to complete and consolidate what we've got under way." He recognises that "we have gone too far, too fast."

The massive irrigation and electrification Mahaweli River scheme, while still on course, is short of funds. The £ 65 m Victoria dam, one of four being built simultaneously to boost the country's generating capacity, cannot be finished until Britain agrees to a further loan of £ 30 m.

Equally vital, if not more so, is the proposed \$ 200 m IMF credit. Sri Lanka faces a record budget deficit this year of around \$ 1.5 bn. Receipts (net of foreign aid) amount to no more than \$ 1 bn.



# SLFP's agonizing re-appraisal

**T**he Jayakody — Udagama — Bulegoda report on a future program of work for the SLFP begins with the interesting admission that Politics and society in Sri Lanka have undergone far-reaching changes since the founding of the party by Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. Urgent attention must be paid to these changes, says the three-member committee, if the SLFP is to be re-organized.

The problems of re-organization, elections etc should be examined against the background of the UNP's relentless campaign of harassment and intimidation of its political opponents after 1977.

The committee highlights the

following :

- (1) Lack of party discipline.
- (2) Failure to convince the masses of its ability to defeat the UNP and govern the country.
- (3) The party became a victim of the plots of the UNP and other reactionary forces.
- (4) The delay in forming an anti-UNP front together with the Left parties.
- (5) The lack of active provincial organizations and the weakness of the provincial leadership.
- (6) Lack of coordination between the Centre, the party headquarters and its provincial level branches.

(7) The alienation of the party from the rural poor.

(8) The lack of a program to win over the Tamils and Moslems.

(9) Declining support from certain caste groups.

(10) Lack of a modern, and attractive propaganda campaign.

(11) Confused attitudes within the party's upper echelons about the popular socialist ideas clearly enunciated by the founder of the SLFP.

(12) Lack of funds.

(13) Criticisms and challenging questions directed at the party by the UNP and other opponents were not answered promptly and effectively.

**The next issue of the Lanka Guardian will appear on May 1.**

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# TRIUMPH Of THE RADICALS

Mervyn de Silva

**T**he regional tensions and threats produced by the main centres of **political** crisis today (Lebanon and the Middle East, El Salvador and Central America, Namibia and Southern Africa) together with the acute, all-pervasive impact on the poor nations of the global **economic** crisis determined the tone and content of the Delhi debates, the deliberations and the final declaration. Infuriated by the N. A. M. Foreign Ministers' discussions in Nicaragua in January but relieved and cheered by the draft declaration prepared by India, which had drained much of the blood from the Managua document, the West, and the U. S., in particular, concluded that the physical shift from Havana (1979) to Delhi (1983) would also represent a political-ideological 'advance' from radicalism to moderation in the N. A. M. as a whole.

Assessing the situation in this manner, Washington adopted the third option in its approach to the now 101 strong Third World movement. In the Dulles era and immediately thereafter, open castigation and public contempt characterised its attitude to this fledgling group of 21 states. (Belgrade). Alignment rather than non-alignment was the central goal of western strategy vis-a-vis the Third World in a period in which the U. S. was seeking to duplicate NATO in other vital areas of the world in an attempt to 'contain' not only the USSR but China.

The military alliance system and the co-optation of Third World countries was the foundation of western strategy and diplomacy.

In the late 60's and early 70's, the second phase, western attitudes leaned towards a superior indifference. The N. A. M. was little more than a "talking shop"; so let them talk, no real harm would come of it. That was more or less the Western posture. In western capitals, the dominant trend of opinion

tended to regard the N. A. M. as a parallel and junior U. N., a U. N. which the western alliance still effectively controlled in the last resort.

Several developments, institutional and political, recommended other approaches. The alliance system had collapsed or become moribund — Baghdad pact, SEATO, CENTO etc. A vastly enlarged U. N. saw such a significant change in the balance of forces within it, that Ambassador John Scali could speak of the "tyranny of the majority" and Ambassador Moynihan of the U. N. as "the theatre of the absurd". What is more every new U. N. member was simultaneously joining the N. A. M. which was now approaching a two-thirds majority in the U. N. Perhaps more important than numbers was the political complexion of the new entrants to the N. A. M. Many of them had attained political independence not through a polite transfer of power (a neo-colonial transaction) but armed struggle. They were strengthening the ranks of the radicals and activists already in the movement. Though still a minority, this group was soon to confirm — as they certainly did at Delhi — the "quality over quantity" thesis contained in Castro's message to the Colombo summit in 1976.

## Third option

Hence the third option. The N. A. M. could no longer be ridiculed or ignored. The move to Delhi from Havana was particularly propitious. It was an ideal opportunity to strike a non-antagonistic posture, affect understanding and sympathy, strengthen the hand of the moderates, pressure, isolate and weaken the radicals, and if possible, turn the whole movement in an anti-Soviet direction to serve what remains the basic unalterable aim of U. S. global strategy.

So, President Reagan's message to Mrs. Indira Gandhi was not merely

warm and complimentary personally, but almost adulatory in its apparent commitment to the ideals of non-alignment as enunciated by Mrs. Gandhi's illustrious father.

The soft, affectionate approach was accompanied by an offensive manoeuvre, founded again on a western assessment that the physical distancing from Havana would enable the N. A. M. to follow the Yugoslav prescription of equi-distance from the super-powers. When the Indian draft was circulated in New York, U. S. commentators were quick to note with pleasure that the numerous anti-U.S. references in the Managua communique had been reduced by the editors in the Indian Foreign office to a bare, acceptable six. Not quite equi-distance but undoubtedly the sure signs of an improving situation.

As usual, the western media telegraphed the attacking moves which the West had decided to launch at Delhi. The pre-summit propaganda blitz was directed at two issues, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. In the advance publicity, a smart Madison Avenue type advertising gimmick was the usual 'Coming Shortly or "Coming Soon' — in this instance, Prince Sihanouk's" Second Coming'.

## Sihanouk

In this, naturally, Peking was called upon to play a hand, a supporting role to ASEAN. If Peking is the patron of the genocidal maniac Pol Pot, it is also the manager, perhaps temporary, of Prince Sihanouk. It is Peking which came out with the "founder member theory", that is, Sihanouk should be invited at least because he was a founder member, in that he had come to Yugoslavia in 1961 for the inauguration. Now he will descend on Delhi. That's why I called it 'Sihanouk's Second Coming'.



'Personalising' an issue is hardly a trade secret in the advertising and newspaper business. A face, a name helps to jazz up the issue. Sri Lankan readers will doubtless recall how foreign journalists visiting Peking were privileged to have special audiences with the Prince arranged for them by the authorities a few weeks before the curtain went up for the Seventh Summit.

But Sihanouk was only a publicity device. More important is to understand what lies behind the choice of Kampuchea and Afghanistan as the exclusive topics recommended for Delhi debaters, to the evident neglect or down-grading of issues surely as important, urgent and dramatic — the massacre in Lebanon, and Israel occupation; the occupation by South Africa of Namibia and its brutal attack on helpless Lesotho, and of course the raging conflicts in Central America, to mention a few topics.

The reason for the choice of Afghanistan is plain enough. It opens the propaganda front against the Soviet Union, the main enemy. The focus on Kampuchea is a little more complicated and subtle in its intent and implications. It was in Havana that the "consensus" (supported, incidentally by Sri Lanka, India, Yugoslavia and others) recommended an empty seat in the Hall for Kampuchea. So keeping the Kampuchean issue alive involves a two-pronged attack — on Vietnam and Cuba, the outgoing chairman. And Cuba and Vietnam, as are in the lexicon of western critics, the proxies or surrogates of the Soviet Union.

Thus, Afghanistan and Kampuchea was really a three-in-one shot aimed at the Soviet Union, Vietnam and Cuba. The propaganda build-up and the conscious effort to prod or nudge the N. A. M. to occupy itself with these two issues had a double motive — a frontal assault on the Soviet Union and its two fraternal (communist) friends and a diversionary move leading the conference away from those areas in which US

involvement would expose it to severe censure, Israel, Central America, South Africa. Singapore, the hard Right ideologue and articulate spokesman, led the attack, with strong support from Malaysia and assistance, up to a point, from Indonesia.

### Counter-propaganda

Singapore's exercise proved disastrously counter-propaganda for several reasons. First, its style was hopelessly out of place in the NAM — Madison Avenue P. R. tactics outside the Hall, barn-storming inside, intemperate language and boorish manners annoyed even friends and supporters. Second, its linkage theory (Kampuchea and Afghanistan) was **not** backed by even Pakistan, the country most concerned with the Afghanistan problem. (Pakistan played a realistic, shrewd and even wily game on this issue for reasons I shall give later). Thirdly, Indonesia, the only ASEAN member which has some clout in the NAM, has a somewhat different perception of the Indo-China situation, coloured by its deep suspicion that China, not Vietnam, is the "main danger". Commenting on the recent visit of Chinese Chief of Staff, Yang Dezei to Bangkok, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* noted "the Indonesian view is that China constitutes a bigger long-term threat to ASEAN than does Vietnam ..... the Indonesians seem to be stressing that the Thais are under-estimating the influence Peking could have over the ethnic Chinese in Thailand".

The Chinese in Indonesia may be a small fraction of the total population but the business community has a stranglehold on the private sector, provoking periodic anti-Chinese race riots.

Finally, Vietnamese foreign minister Thach who had great fun with Singapore made a deliberately low-key aside to East Timor, the Portuguese colony occupied by Indonesian troops — an issue likely to crop up now that Australia has a Labour government with a strong East Timor lobby.

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# Report on Rupavahini Corporation Audience Survey

**T**elevision first came to Sri Lanka in April 1979 in the form of a private commercial station—the Independent Television Network (ITN)—which was later taken over by the State. The ITN is now administered by a Competent Authority and transmits programmes for approximately five hours a day, 81 per cent of its output being material produced in foreign countries. ITN's coverage is theoretically limited to about 30 miles radius, but there are reports that the programmes are being received in Kandy, Hatton and Kurunegala. The Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) with its transmitters covering the whole island commenced transmission of programmes from 15th February 1982. Audiences in Colombo and its environs have now a choice of two television channels.

Although this survey is limited to the audience for SLRC programmes, reference to ITN output would necessarily figure (however obliquely) in the reactions of Colombo audiences to SLRC programming. In this context, it would be necessary to examine the earlier assumption made by critics of television that ITN programming with its strong orientation to entertainment material produced in foreign countries would create the taste by which the more sober SLRC programmes would be judged by audiences.

In any case, since the main focus of the survey is on the audiences for the programmes transmitted by SLRC, it should be recorded at the outset that when the field work for our survey commenced in mid-May 1982, the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation had been only three months in operation. The limitations inherent in a survey of a television service which has been operating for just three months are obvious. The Board of Directors of the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation who commissioned Marga Institute to carry out this survey took cognisance of this fact in the brief set out for the survey.

“...In the absence of data for a full survey regarding the new service, what is possible now would amount to a ‘Benchmark survey’ which will prove very useful to programme planners of the S.L.R.C.”

## Objectives of the Survey

- To assess responses of viewers to current programmes and to rate their preferences for specific programme types.
- To identify as far as possible the programme needs of the audience as perceived by them and to obtain suggestions for new programmes.
- To obtain data relating to (a) the quality of technical reception, (b) viewing habits of TV households, (c) the type and size of TV sets in use.
- To obtain views on the placement of programmes, times of transmission, etc.
- To examine TV viewing in its social setting.

## The Research Methodology

### (A) Design of the sample

The frame for selection of the sample consisted of households who had applied for and obtained TV licences. According to data available in the post offices and other licence-issuing points as at April 1982, this amounted to 74,256 in the Colombo District and 26,741 in the outstations.

In 1980 and 1981, the licences were issued only from certain locations. These had a mixed collection of licence applications which had not been quantified or classified by the authorities at the time the survey operations began. These applications totalling 38,712 were first sorted out by our investigators to separate those belonging to the different districts. Thereafter, the applications belonging to the Colombo District were stratified by sector (i.e. urban or rural). Applications belonging to each sector were then stratified by ethnic groups — (1) Sinhalese, (2) Tamil, (3) Muslim,

*This report was prepared for the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation by Mr. C. V. Rajasundaram under the general guidance of Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke, Director, Marga Institute. The assistance of Mr. G. I. O. M. Kurukulasuriya and Mrs Myrtle Perera is acknowledged.*

(4) Others. This ethnic stratification was purely on the basis of name and the obvious limitation was that the name would not always offer clear indication of an ethnic group.

The selection of the sample from each sector and ethnic group was carried out by the methods of ‘systematic sampling’ using a random starter and thereafter selecting a predetermined application until the quota for each group was completed. This system ensured a reasonably wide coverage since the applications were found to be suitably ‘non-systematic’. The 2 per cent sample thus worked out from each sector and ethnic group amounted to 800 TV households in the Colombo District.

The issue of TV licences was decentralised with effect from January 1982. Consequently, applications in respect of licences for 1982 available at other post offices in the Colombo District had not been included in this frame for the Colombo District. To leave those out would have meant an under-representation of those who had obtained licences from January to April 1982. Since it was not operationally feasible for the investigators to visit every single post office in Colombo to obtain a complete frame for 1982 licences, five major post offices were visited to select a further random sample of 200 TV households. In this manner, a sample of 1,000 TV households was selected for the district of Colombo.

It must be noted here that a deviation from the system of sampling adopted earlier had to be made in respect of the additional 200 TV households selected for the Colombo District. It was not possible to stratify the applications in respect of these households by



sector or ethnic group since proper facilities for sorting were not available at the post office premises. However, a complete random sample (using random number tables) was selected from a mixed bundle of applications affording a fair coverage of sectors and ethnic groups.

The sampling methodology for the selection of households in the districts other than Colombo was changed to facilitate field operations. Data relating to the number of TV licence applications for the period January to April 1982 were obtained from 324 post offices in 23 districts. A 3 per cent sample for each of the 23 districts was then worked out. Where the sample size so determined for any district was below 10, a minimum of 10 was allocated to each such district. Since there was no response from the post offices in Moneragala and Mullaitivu districts for our enquiry about the number of television sets in those areas, a sample allocation of 10 each has been made for those two districts. Each district total was then apportioned equally to post offices selected from each district. The selection of post offices was based mainly on the quantum of applications. However, those post offices which had a negligible number of applications but were situated in key developing areas (e.g. Kotmale) were also included in the sample.

The applications in respect of licences issued to outstation TV owners at issuing points in Colombo were then added on to the list of outstation applications in the respective locations. No stratification by sector or ethnic group was carried out in working out the sample for the outstations due to lack of facilities for sorting in the post offices. However, the systematic random sample of 594 TV households selected by using a random starter would have ensured that variables such as sector and ethnic group were adequately represented in the sample.

It must be admitted that the frame for the sampling had obvious limitations. At the time the survey operations began, the post offices from which we obtained data about TV licences had not properly quantified or classified the number of TV licences already issued. It is quite possible that a number of TV applications had been left out in the data supplied to us by the various post offices. If we add to this the large number of unlicensed TV sets in use, the deficiency of the frame becomes obvious. This would naturally be reflected in the sample, preventing it from being fully representative of all TV households in the country. However, within the available frame, the methodology used for the selection of the sample ensures that the

findings reflect the views and opinions of a sufficiently wide spectrum of TV viewers in the country.

It must also be recorded that field operational problems necessitated the alteration of some of the selected sample households as for instance, when a house had been vacated or the TV set in a household had been sold to some other household. In such instances the household in the sample was replaced with another belonging to the same ethnic group and as far as possible in proximity to it and with a similar level of income.

### A note on Table I — Profile of Respondents

#### Occupation

'Professional and Management' includes the academically or professionally qualified persons in higher levels of employment as well as those not endowed with specific academic qualifications but who on the basis of experience and training have risen to managerial positions, e.g. business executives, managers of owned businesses, etc. 'Middle' includes those in the middle grades of employment, e.g. teachers, nurses, clerical, secretarial and other skilled personnel and those engaged in small business and agriculture. 'Lower' includes unskilled and other employees with relatively lower levels of income.

#### Sector

The urban sector covers the areas of Municipalities, Town Councils and Urban Councils. The rural covers the non-urban areas including 'estates', but is predominantly non-estate, i.e. villages.

#### (B) Data collection

A standardised questionnaire (prepared in Sinhala, Tamil and English) was used by the 27 investigators engaged for the survey to record data and responses. These were obtained through personal interviews conducted at each of the 1,594 TV households in the sample on the basis of the questionnaire. (Vide Appendix I for specimen questionnaire in English).

It must be recorded that responses to questions bearing on programme preferences and the quality

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**TABLE I — PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

(Percentages are based on a total of 1,594 respondents)

A. Race	Colombo	Outstations	Total	%
Sinhala	714	455	1,169	73
Tamil	118	91	209	13
Muslim	122	43	165	10
Others †	46	5	51	3
	<u>1,000</u>	<u>594</u>	<u>1,594</u>	
B. Occupation	Colombo	Outstations	Total	%
Professional and Management	194	92	286	18
Middle	608	432	1,040	65
Lower	52	40	92	6
Retired	38	19	57	4
Unemployed	14	3	17	1
Non-respondents	94	8	102	6
	<u>1,000</u>	<u>594</u>	<u>1,594</u>	
B. Sector	Colombo	Outstations	Total	%
Urban	733	334	1,067	67
Rural	267	260	527	33
	<u>1,000</u>	<u>594</u>	<u>1,594</u>	

† Malays, Burghers and foreigners



# New debates within Marxism

'Samudran'

**I**t is a hundred years since Marx passed away. When Engels made his short but very moving speech at the High Gate cemetery where Marx's body was buried, there was only a small gathering of comrades and friends. But the salvoes of the Great October Revolution announced to the world the dawn of an era in which Marxism in its creatively applied form would become a living force of history. When Marx proclaimed that philosophers had only interpreted the world but the point was to change it, he was actually redefining philosophy itself. Although he said that men made history not as they pleased but under given conditions he saw clearly the prospects of conscious and organised human action to influence historical development in particular ways within the given limits. No wonder almost all great revolutions of this century have openly stated their allegiance to Marxism. Do the practical relevance and vitality of Marxism need any further proof?

The bourgeois academic world wishfully hoped to liquidate Marx's theory by a conspiracy of silence for a long time. Its deafening silence, however, was occasionally broken by an insulting foot note or a proclamation that marxism was obsolete. These were actually the manifestations of the agonies of an academia which was beginning to feel its own inadequacies against a rising force which challenged the capitalist order. Marx made the struggle between labour and capital the core-content of political economy. This was anathema to bourgeois apologetics. Nevertheless, the more enlightened economic thinkers of the academic establishment attempted to come to terms with Marx. Most of them who read Marx seriously recognised him as a genius, although they disagreed with the revolutionary theory of Marx. Joseph Schumpeter, for example, a non-Marxist and acknowledged as an original thinker by many, paid glowing tributes to Marx on many occasions. He once said of Marx, "the totality of his

vision, as a totality asserts its right in every detail and is precisely the source of intellectual fascination experienced by every one, friend as well as foe, who make a study of him." So it is not surprising to find Paul Samuelson, who displayed his illiteracy about Marxism in the early editions of his widely used text book of economics, adding an appendix on "Rudiments of Marxian Economics" in his latest edition. He even pleads that "Marxism may be too valuable to leave to the Marxists" and advises his students that Marxism "provides a critical prism through which mainstream economists can—to their own benefit—pass their analyses for audit."

So Marxism has become 'fascinating' and 'beneficial' to bourgeois academics. But "mainstream economics" has not adequately acknowledged its debt to Marx. After all Marx's main work, though incomplete, was devoted to a study of the laws of motion of the capitalist system. Anyone familiar with Marxist economic theory cannot fail to discern the technical applications of some concepts developed by Marx in today's sophisticated quantitative economics in the capitalist world. One good example is input-output analysis. The present day input-output table may be traced to Quesnay's Tableau Economique Via Marx's schema of reproduction. As Paul Mattick observed in a lengthy review of Wassily Leontief's main work "... Quesnay anticipated Marx, Marx certainly anticipated input-output analysis, albeit in the form of highly abstract model of the capitalist production process". The celebrated American bourgeois economist Leontief, widely believed to be the father of modern input-output analysis, was not only a Soviet citizen until his departure from the USSR as a young man in the 1920's, but had some practical experience in central planning. He was intimately familiar with the great Soviet debate on industrialization which took its points of departure from Marx's Capital. In

his own way Leontief has referred to Marx as the great character reader of the capitalist system. One wonders whether this was actually meant to be a compliment because in the article concerned Leontief devalues Marx, who was a great theoretical political economist, to the level of an empirical observer.

**The most fruitful developments in Marxist theory have been through the ever widening, ever deepening debates within the world Marxist camp itself. For any debate to be creative and sustained rigorously it must be conducted within a broadly accepted premise. "Philosophies that are incompatible cannot debate one another" (Finkelstein.) When there is no shared premise a debate is bound to end up as a reiteration of different premises as it happens often between Marxists and anti-Marxists.** Thanks to professional revolutionary thinkers and actors like Lenin, Mao, Cabraal, and others like them Marxism has been made a living theory. They gave Marxism new practical and theoretical dimensions and brought it into the daily lives of millions of people. **As a result Marxist enquiry has spread into almost every sphere of intellectual praxis ranging from philosophy and epistemology to aesthetics; from anthropology to historiography; from racism to feminism and so on and so forth.** Lively debates go on in all these fields and many others among Marxists from the advanced capitalist and third world countries.

Among the ongoing controversies in Marxist economic theory are those concerning the law of value, the transformation problem and capitalist crisis. Some Marxist scholars keep fighting over the issues of "purifying" Marx's theory from Ricardian influence. In the politically more important realm of social change the debates are addressed to capitalist and socialist transitions, the character of third world revolutions, working



class movements and anti-racist struggles in the western countries, emancipation of women, the national question and such issues. We are also witnessing a veritable explosion of literature on the real class character of the existing socialist societies. In the field of culture Marxism has established its own tradition of creative writing and criticism. **Such are the diverse fronts on which Marxism is engaged and moving forward:** All these debates and enquiries have also exposed certain ambiguities and logical inconsistencies in the classical Marxist theoretical system and contributed toward their rectification.

While such lively developments are taking place on a growing scale in the capitalist world including the underdeveloped countries the state of intellectual discussion and debate within and between the "actually existing socialist societies" (to use a term of Bahro) can be satisfying only to the apologists of particular lines imposed from socialist capitals. Marxists who uphold the spirit of Marx and the ideals of the socialist revolution cannot condone the suppression of free debate on how to create a new society under the banner of proletarian democracy. At the level of theory the peculiarities of the post-revolutionary societies have forced many Marxists to re-examine their position, taken for granted for a long time, that socialism as conceived, though vaguely, by Marx is feasible in a backward economy. A complete and convincing characterization of post-revolutionary societies as a new form, neither capitalist nor socialist, has yet to emerge but the enquiry has advanced remarkably. **Any Marxist pursuing such a project must face one important question. What is his own political stand today on these societies in world politics? One cannot call himself a Marxist and remain aloof like a pure academic under the guise of a never ending investigation.** In a world dominated by Imperialism and in the midst of struggles, repression and turmoil in his own country (if he is from an underdeveloped country like ours) one cannot seek for theoretical purity and under that facade keep out of everything connected to revolutionary practice. **Most post-revolutionary societies have remained staunch allies of the national liberation**

**struggles of the third world. They have given enormous material and moral support to revolutionary movements against corrupt despotic regimes and imperialism.** So one's critique of these new societies should not stray away from political objectivity and must not at any cost be disruptive of national movements against the main enemy of the working class and its allies. This is far from singing apologia for the undemocratic internal policies and practices of some post-revolutionary states. **The critical attitude must be preserved in the interest of the future revolutions and socialist societies.**

It can be said without any hesitation that Marx himself would have subjected the existing socialist societies to his characteristically searching, critical scrutiny. Those who have begun to question the sanctified pronouncements of ruling communist parties that everything they do is Marxist-Leninist are simply upholding Marx's passionate commitment to communism as man's mission and Marx's scientific method of enquiry.

Those who wish to believe that Marxism has long become outdated cannot but be blind to see the varied and vigorous developments of Marxist theory, some of which have been touched upon here. The experience of a century of theoretical development through revolutionary practice, filled with victory and defeat, has made Marxism the single most powerful philosophy in history so far. It clearly shows that Marx laid the foundations of a holistic theory and began to build an edifice which he left unfinished not only due to his death but due to the relatively poor level of available knowledge in many fields of science. Being aware of this he allowed for future diversification, development and even re-examination including revision of his system on a continuous basis through a dialectical interaction between theory and practice. The capacity of Marxism to grow depends precisely on its power of assimilation of new knowledge. This is at times stifled by bureaucratic communist leaderships which attempt to make a dogma, a religious faith, out of their own versions of Marxism. But the organic relationship of Marxist theory to practice will not permit such an ideologization permanently. This is in fact the unique strength of

Marxism which no other theory has.

The Marxian system may someday give way to a superior one but we can say one thing with certainty. Only a theory which is more total and internally more organically integrated than Marxism and inseparably wedded to practice is capable of succeeding Marxism. Such a new theory is bound to retain a strong Marxian flavour.

## Report on Rupavahini . . .

(Continued from page 8)

of technical reception were very vague in respect of 1 per cent of the total respondents in the sample. These respondents were found to belong to the lower income group and had purchased their TV sets just a month before they were interviewed. About 6 per cent of the respondents in the age group 25-40 were reluctant to name their occupation.

We realise that the categorisation of television programmes in relation to the question designed to find out viewers' preferences for particular programme types may have been less than perfect. Besides, not all viewers could be expected to have the capacity to distinguish between one category and another. For instance, the category 'educational' may mean different things to different groups of viewers. The problem was further confounded by the Sinhala and Tamil translation of the categories and the more delicate philosophical assumptions involved in working out the categories. However, these factors have been taken into consideration in assessing the replies to the question under reference.

Response error occurred in respect of one specific question regarding placement of programmes. This arose out of a semantic confusion. The error however, did not vitally affect our findings regarding attitudes to programme placement, since most respondents had utilised the general question "any further comments you would like to make on present programmes on TV" to declare their views on this matter.

These limitations apart, the investigators reported excellent cooperation from the respondents.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



# A State Ravaged

**I**T WAS beyond the ken of a civilised society, a bloodspattered vindication of a heartless government's sudden constitutional piety. The carnage began with a few deaths on February 2; during the next three weeks, it rose every day with dreadful ferocity: a dozen at Chamaria on the 12th, a hundred at Gohpur on the 14th, and then at least a thousand at Nellie on the 18th.

Amid the stench of rotting corpses wafting down the Brahmaputra valley, the Congress(I) in Assam won an overwhelming majority in the new Assembly. But the victory was Pyrrhic, and every legislator's path to his seat was trailed by a thickening stream of blood. Not since the passions of Partition had the nation seen such senseless death.

As the election week ground cruelly toward its finish, every community in Assam turned upon every other community. The Assamese, the tribals, and the immigrant Bengalis figured as both attackers and victims. The toll exacted would forever stain the election results — vast stretches of countryside mutilated by arson and violence, hundreds of villages ravaged by fire and turned into silent graveyards, a total of at least 1,500 people killed, and the firm flowering of hatred and blood-lust from the compost heap of botched history.

## Virulent Hatred

Above all, Assam's image as a multi-cultural and secular state now lay shattered; there could be no solace for the lakhs of panic-stricken villagers who had fled their homes with whatever belongings they could collect. Worst of all, the state now seemed to be poised for a cathartic breakup along communal lines.

The carnage also changed — possibly forever — the very nature of the Assam problem. Until the elections the Assamese had been agitating against the existence of

large numbers of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in their midst. Now, the Assamese, the Bengalis and the tribals were all separated by chasms of anger and virulent hatred. Over-night, a movement that had remained largely non-violent and secular for more than three years had been transformed by the elections into one of history's bloodiest confrontations — and the foreigners' issue was swept aside by the tide of blood that engulfed the state.

The results were clear. From a passive line of civil disobedience and non-cooperation, the agitation was now irrevocably transformed into a violent movement that would not abjure direct and brutal action. Such intransigence immediately polarised the attitudes of the Bengalis and the majority of the tribals, who had been resolutely opposed to the agitation from the beginning. Every side of this bitter triangle now toed a hard line in which reason and logic would play no part.

## Hawkish Stand

It was clear also that the moderates in Assam had been pushed to the sidelines. The entire pre-election strategy of the agitation was decided by avowed hawks within the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). Most ominous of all, however, was the sudden awakening to ferocity of sections that had earlier lain dormant, chiefly the tribal population.

Until now, the tribals had been on the periphery of Assam's problem; but the agitation, and their own increasing isolation within the rapidly polarising society around them had forced them into a new militancy. The agitation itself had succeeded in bringing the tribals' long-festering resentment about shrinking land and poor economic development into sharper focus — for, while the Assamese perceived the agitation as vital for their survival, the tribals on the other hand felt that

their own survival within the Assamese context was in jeopardy.

Suddenly, therefore, the bone of contention was no longer the illegal immigrant, not even the growing enmity between the Assamese and the Bengali. The tribal outrages at Gohpur and Nellie introduced a new and volatile element, and the resulting chemical reaction could not but have led to a cataclysmic explosion.

## Social Contradictions

Gohpur and Nellie also brought out the contradictions within Assamese tribal society, which had until now been lumped together as a homogeneous unit. At Gohpur, the Boro tribals who attacked Assamese villages were in favour of the elections, and owed allegiance to the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), which has all along been fighting for a consolidation of the tribal identity, politically and territorially. But at Nellie, the Lalung tribals who slaughtered immigrant Bengalis were opposed to the elections — and their anger stemmed more from the Bengalis' steady encroachments upon what had traditionally been tribal tracts along the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

Where the Government miscalculated the most was in assuming that three years of the agitation had drained support for the movement, in assuming that prolonged negotiations would ultimately wear out the militancy of the students. Another mistake was to believe that the agitation was restricted to the urban Assamese elite. Said AASU's acting president Nurul Hussain. "The violence has been created by government agents. Now the agitation has become a people's movement in the real sense. It no longer depends on specific leadership; nor do I think our leaders can be categorised. Now the people of Assam will no longer tolerate the Government's deviousness."



Added Satananda Deka, member of the Mangaldoi District Students Union: "Study the violence closely and you will see how it erupted after Mrs. Gandhi's visit to the state. By inciting ethnic clashes, the Government wanted to divert our attention from our resolve to thwart the elections. It is wrong to say that the movement has turned communal. There are Hindus and Muslims in both the Assamese and Bangladeshi ranks. The Government also thought that we had no reach in the countryside, that the villagers could be bought with promises. The success of the anti-election movement shows how strong our hold is in the countryside, and if the Government thinks it knows exactly how we think, let me tell you we know much more intimately how the Government thinks and works, and we can swiftly and effectively counteract its plans."

### Growing Alienation

If the elections were to be taken as a referendum on the Assamese-Bengali schism, they brought out the total alienation of the Bengalis, too, from the Assamese mainstream. In 1980, the Bengali area of Cachar was the only one in Assam to vote in the Lok Sabha elections. This time too, the overwhelming turnout of Bengali voters (as high as 80 per cent in Cachar) showed how determined the Bengalis were to protect their own interests politically.

Obviously, they are interests no government can ignore, but there was another significant development. Traditionally, Bengali Muslim voters had preferred the Congress (I) while Bengali Hindu voters tended to favour the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). This time around, the Bengalis congregated

along purely lingual lines and voted Congress (I), leading to a communist wipe-out. Yet another explanation was offered for this twist by a Bengali voter in Gauhati who had been unable to exercise his franchise on February 20. "Already we are the targets of Assamese attacks," he said, "and if we had voted for the Marxists then we would also have been victims of Congress (I) hostility. It is better to vote for the party that is ruling at the Centre — our interests can be better looked after by the Congress (I)".

### Hollow Victory

In the end, the Congress (I) won as many as 88 of the 108 seats for which polling could be completed. But the victory was morally and legally hollow. The elections had been held on the basis of electoral rolls as on January 1, 1979,

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R. K. TRIVEDI

## 'There Was No Option'

RAM KRISHNA Trivedi, 62, took over as the chief election commissioner in June 1982. He has attracted nationwide criticism for having decided to go ahead with the Assam elections. In an exclusive hour-long interview with INDIA TODAY's CHAITANYA KALBAG in his office at Nirvachan Sadan on February 23, Trivedi explained his fateful decision. Excerpts:

**On avoiding the elections:** There was no option but to hold the elections under the existing provisions of the Constitution. The only alternatives could have been if an amendment had been passed to Article 356 to extend President's rule, or an emergency had been declared in Assam under Article 356 (5). Even in case emergency had been declared, Parliament would have had to approve of it, and the Election Commission would have had to certify that the continuance of President's rule was necessary.

**On constitutional deadlines:** I had four compelling deadlines before me — on January 6th the Central

Government sent a communication to the commission saying it proposed to revoke President's rule by February 28, thereby implying that the commission should take steps to hold elections before that date; constitutionally, one year of President's rule expired on March 18, after which there would have been a crisis; under Article 172 (1), the life of an assembly, from the day it is first convened, cannot extend beyond five years, and this five year period in Assam's case expired on March 21; finally beyond March 31, if there was no elected government in Assam, the state or Central Government could not have authorised any expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State.

**On the Garhwal precedent:** A lot of criticism has been levelled, saying that the commission had earlier countermanded the Garhwal Lok Sabha by-election because of induction of outside police and voter intimidation. But people have not understood the nuances. Garhwal was a by-election to the Lok Sabha, extends until January 8, 1985. If I had similar leeway in Assam I would

have had no hesitation in postponing the elections. The commission has repeatedly stressed that conditions in Assam were not ideal for elections.

**On revision of the 1979 electoral rolls:** The assumption is that by revising the electoral rolls the Election Commission would have solved the foreigners problem. I will respectfully submit that this is not correct. Revision of rolls is carried out by electoral registration officers (ERO) whose rank is equivalent to that of a naib tehsildar. The ERO cannot decide who a foreigner is — that question had to be decided by the appropriate tribunals or authorities under the Indian Citizenship Act 1955, or the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act 1950, or the Indian Passport Act 1920. Secondly, the commission had only seven weeks between January 6 and February 28 in which to hold elections; for an intensive revision of electoral rolls at least six to eight months are needed; even a summary revision takes at least six weeks. In Assam even a summary revision would have taken

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### (Continued from page 12)

which had not been revised since no earnest attempt was made by the Government to find ways out of the constitutional impasse it kept holding up as an excuse. The state's Assamese population opposed the elections tooth and nail, and three major national parties boycotted the polls.

In every way the elections had been thrust down the state's throat — with every government employee in Assam refusing to cooperate, massive help had to be rushed in from outside, buttressed by a huge paramilitary force, and a variety of authoritarian laws had to be brought into play in order to keep up a semblance of discipline. As election week progressed, the state's communications network suffered grievous breakdowns.

So busy was the Government in seeing that the elections took place that it blithely ignored the rising tide of violence and death that swept the state. Too late as the administration began to disengage from the imperatives of conducting a "free and fair poll" and turned its attention to the corpses littering this grim arena, the travesty of the elections legitimacy shone through. Polling state-wide was claimed to be at least 20 per cent but this was only because Bengali and immigrant pockets had turned out in large numbers.

Inevitably, in the end, polling in 18 assembly constituencies had to be "indefinitely postponed"; seven of the 12 Lok Sabha constituencies needed repolling, and so did 11 assembly segments and 351 booths. In 12 constituencies polling was below 5 per cent, and in 10 Upper Assam constituencies below 3 per cent. In Dharmapur constituency in Kamrup district for instance only 267 of the 67,341 voters exercised their franchise. One vote was found invalid, and the others all went to independent candidate Dr Bhumidhar Barman. In some constituencies like Sipajhar in Darrang district, the administration was forced to send out "mobile polling booths" in order to try to woo voters.

As late as on February 17 after two observers he had sent to

Assam returned to report on the worsening situation, Chief Election Commissioner R. K. Trivedi asked the Assam Government if it wanted to go ahead with polling on the final day, February 20. Even then, with more violence clearly predictable, the Government said that the situation was all right.

Indeed Chief Secretary Ramesh Chandra's daily 5 p. m. press briefings at Dispur acquired the derisive label "five o'clock follies" — after US military press briefings in the Vietnam War when the generals insisted all was well. The refrain became wearingly familiar — polling was progressing apace violence was "sporadic and minimal", and all was well. On February 14, even as booths in the Dispur constituency registered less than 1 per cent polling, All India Radio said in its news bulletin that polling had been "brisk to moderate".

**MEANWHILE** for 18 days from February 5 a state-wide non-cooperation movement crippled all public services, shut down banks and offices, and led to hundreds of arrests under the National Security Act (NSA), the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) and the Assam Executive Magistrates (Special Powers) Act. Union Home Minister P. C. Sethi told the Lok Sabha on February 22 that 425 government employees in Assam had either been dismissed or suspended because of refusal to perform election duty. Hundreds of others successfully evaded arrest warrants.

Pre-poll violence occurred mainly violent mobs of militant Assamese burnt bridges and government buildings throughout the state and attacked police outposts and stations. Beginning with the Mangaldoi area on February 2, such anti-election violence had claimed almost 100 lives by February 12.

That day, when thousands of immigrant attackers crossed the Marakalahi river near Boko in Kamrup district and fell upon the Assamese village of Chamaria, the violence took on a new and uglier form — senseless and bloody clashes between different communities. In the days following, hundreds of such inter-community clashes broke out

throughout the valley, and such violence further ensured that turnout on polling days would be close to zero.

### Delayed Aid

Hundreds of thousands of people from every Assamese community began to flee their homes during election week, to seek shelter in hastily set up relief camps in government schools or colleges. Tragically, there were fatal delays in rushing police or paramilitary aid to areas ravaged by violence and killing because important road bridges had earlier been destroyed by the anti-election agitators, Rumour and panic therefore gripped the Brahmaputra valley and coupled with crippled communications, they set off even more savage ethnic conflagrations.

What shocked the nation all the more was the fact that the Government could have avoided the bloodshed if it had let humanitarianism override political ambition. Even as late as on February 11, the leaders of non-communist opposition parties in Parliament met the chief election commissioner to beg for a postponement and promised cooperation if the Government wanted to pass an amendment to the Constitution to extend President's Rule. Their pleas were ignored.

During election week itself, the election commissioner could have used his constitutional authority to call a halt to the elections and the carnage, even if it meant forcing the Government to search for legal solutions in a very short period. Legal experts pointed out that as a last resort the Government could even have declared an emergency in Assam by presidential proclamation, thus buying valuable time and extending the constitutional deadline of March 18 when President's Rule was due to end. But gripped by an astonishing indifference the Government bared on towards the inevitably bloody conclusion of its "inescapable constitutional obligation".

### Partisan Campaign

The very nature of the Congress (I) campaign in Assam had laid the

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# Threatened Identities

**N**OWHERE else in India have such sharp divisions along ethnic and linguistic lines occurred since 1947 as in Assam. In the Assamese-Bengalischism, for instance, what struck observers was the fact that both sides included Hindus and Muslims. The 'native' Assamese are estimated to number 48 lakh now — the Draft 5th Five Year Plan calculated that the total population in the state would rise to 210 Lakh in 1983, up from 146 Lakh in 1971 — and are dominated by the upper-caste *kalita* Hindus. The Bengalis, on the other hand, are estimated to number 120 lakh now. Such facts have increased the Assamese feeling that their identity is being submerged in a Bengali deluge.

Traditionally, the Assamese, who dominate in the Kamrup, Darrang, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur districts, are land owning agriculturists. As population has leap-frogged and available land has shrunk, the Assamese have developed a strong anti-Bengali xenophobia. Most of the Bengalis in Assam are immigrants from the Mymensingh and Sylhet districts of the pre-1947 East Bengal and later Bangladesh, and they have settled on prime land along the banks of the Brahmaputra, the *char* areas.

**Rising Resentment :** Assamese animosity towards the Bengalis has historical roots. The British brought in large numbers of Bengalis to man their colonial administration, and the better-educated Bengalis have over the years consolidated their hold over the white-collar jobs. In the countryside, the industrious immigrants grow more lucrative cash crops like chillie, jute and mustard, while the Assamese tend to stick to rice cultivation.

Even today the Assamese derisively repeat a 60-year-old adage: "Wherever there is a carcass, there vultures will gather; where there is waste land, thither flock the Mymensinghians." Today, the immigrant Bengalis completely dominate the populous Cachar district, and parts of Goalpara, Kamrup and

Nowgong districts. Constantly opposed to the anti-foreigners agitation, the Bengalis have now been pushed into a far more militant anti-Assamese posture by the elections.

But the electoral violence threw up a new factor — the latent frustration of the plains tribals. The total tribal population in Assam today is roughly 23 lakh, and almost 40 per cent of them are Boros who dominate Karbi Anglong district, the Kokrajhar subdivision of Goalpara district, the Gauhati subdivision of Kamrup district, the Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang district, and the Dhemaji subdivision of Lakhimpur district; the other tribes are the Rabhas, the Lalungs, the Dimachas, the Kukis, the Garos, the Hmars, and the Mechs. Tribal literacy in Assam has been averaging only 20 per cent against the state-wide average of 28 per cent.

**Tribal Displacement :** Over the years, the tribals have suffered serious shrinkages in their land-holdings, and since most of them depend on the *jhum* or slash-and-burn system of cultivation, dwindling land productivity has added to their economic problems. Says anthropologist Dr. B. K. Roy Burman: "The tribals are losing their control over resources at varying rates, but compensatory functions in the production system are not coming up for them at the same rates."

Tribal unrest has been articulated most by the Boros, who attacked anti-election Assamese villagers near Gohpur in Darrang district. The Boros owe allegiance to the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) which has been clamouring for a separate tribal state called Udayachal — an area which would take in Karbi Anglong district and the northern portions of Kamrup, Darrang and Lakhimpur.

Although agitation leaders in AASU persuaded the Karbi Anglong People's Conference to join hands with the movement — the Conference even participated in the last session of

the Assam Sahitya Sabha at Diphu in January — the PTCA has successfully harped upon the Assamese penchant for suppressing tribal ambitions. The Boros' festering anger exploded at Gohpur on February 14, when thousands of armed Boros clashed with Assamese villagers, leading to at least 50 villages on both sides burnt down and nearly 100 people killed.

**Systematic Slaughter :** Not all the tribals support the PTCA, however, and this was made brutally clear when the permutation of slaughter and ethnic hatred changed dramatically at Nellie in Nowgong district on February 18. Thousands of anti-election Lalung tribals embarked on a systematic slaughter of immigrant Bengali villagers living along the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Overnight, the toll at Nellie took the total throughout Assam to more than 1,500.

Pressure and distrust between the various ethnic groups in Assam have increased also because of growing economic adversity. Almost three-quarters of the state's estimated population of 200 lakh is engaged in agriculture; but only 23 lakh hectares out of a total area of 78 lakh hectares are cultivated. The average size of a land-holding in Assam is only 3.88 acres, against an all-India average of 6.57 acres. While the agricultural labour population has shot up by more than 15 lakh, the net area sown increased between 1971 and 1976 by only 2.79 per cent.

Land pressure — and the passions aroused by the elections — could easily lead to a permanent state of hostility between the Assamese, the Bengalis and the tribals. There would almost certainly be retributions for the thousands of deaths, and revenge would spark off even more violence and bloodshed. All these grim portents were the result of the Congress(I)'s determination to wrest a steamroller mandate from its only vote bank, the immigrants.

— Courtesy "India Today"



(Continued from page 13)

foundation for the holocaust. Union Railway Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury was sent in specifically to reassure the immigrant Muslim voters who constituted the party's largest vote bank. Party General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee who has charge of the North-eastern states and has played pivotal roles in foisting Congress (I) governments in Assam; Manipur and Nagaland; was assisted by Member of Parliament Rajesh Pilot; who comes from Rajasthan and was posted in Assam mainly in order to obtain the financial support of the powerful Marwari traders who dominate commerce in the state.

And Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at her election speeches in immigrant or Bengali constituencies repeatedly stressed her government's commitment to protect the interests of the "minorities". Intelligence sources say her speeches could easily have been construed as inflammatory.

In fact, intelligence reports on Assam had consistently warned against the elections and as the scale of violence escalated, Mrs Gandhi and her advisers were told that continuing with the elections would mean unprecedented violence and deaths. But all the warnings were ignored, and every time a massacre occurred the administration pleaded that it had been unable to rush aid either because bridges were burnt or because the police had been too busy protecting polling stations.

In fact, on February 15 as the death-toll began to shoot up alarmingly, a senior intelligence officer in Delhi sent his subordinate in Gauhati this poignant message. "Your Cassandra voice had been drowned in a chorus of optimism and confidence in Delhi," it said "but now the Government has realised that you were only too correct. But it is too late, and there is no end to the foolishness of governments when they become intransigent."

### Callous Attitude

Ignoring the harsh fact of almost 2 lakh armed paramilitary troops stationed in Assam to ensure a fair

poll, Mrs Gandhi told the Lok Sabha on February 22 that any "normal person" would have thought ten times before casting his vote under the circumstances. "The elections were not held at gunpoint," she said. "The guns were in the hands of those who opposed the elections." Home Minister Sethi, in the midst of the shock and grief that swept through Parliament, congratulated the "people of Assam" for exercising their franchise "undaunted by the odds facing them."

And C. M. Stephen summed up the utter callousness of the ruling party when he said that the life and property of millions of minorities and tribals would have been in danger "if elections had not been held". The nation was reeling from the news of the Nellie massacre, but Stephen said: "Instead of the recent disturbances, there would have been a veritable carnage."

Janata Party leader Madhu Dandavat made an impassioned speech in the Lok Sabha, saying that he would quit politics if Mrs Gandhi could prove that the Opposition had refused to cooperate in getting an amendment to Article 356 of the Constitution passed so as to extend President's Rule in Assam. This was a point harped upon by the Government; but the truth lay elsewhere. The non-communist Opposition in Parliament had refused to go along with an amendment in the winter session last November, on the grounds that the final round of talks with the Assam agitation leaders — scheduled then itself for January 4 this year — would first have to be gone through.

### Fruitless Exercise

In mid-December itself, however, the Congress (I) in Assam set up a 15-member election committee headed by the state unit chief Harendra Nath Talukdar. It was clear, therefore, that the January 4 talks were never intended by the Government to be fruitful, and that elections had been decided upon. On January 6, when elections were announced, Chief Election Commissioner Trivedi was informed that President's Rule in the state would be lifted by February 28 — thus making sure that the entire exercise would have to be rushed through in seven weeks, although the cons-

titutional deadline for President's Rule ran out only on March 18.

Constitutional propriety had not weighed with the Congress (I) earlier in Assam. Six days before President Rule ran out on December 12, 1980, the party engineered 38 defections to its ranks, raised its strength to only 46 in the 108-member house (18 seats were unfilled in the last Assembly) and foisted the minority government of Anwara Taimur. Days before the Assembly met in April 1981, the then Governor L. P. Singh signed an Appropriations Ordinance that circumvented the necessity of getting the state budget passed for 1981-82. But Taimur's ministry faced certain collapse, and so President's Rule was imposed again on June 30, 1981 — to be lifted on January 13, 1982 when yet another minority Congress (I) government led by Keshub Chandra Gogoi was sworn in. Gogoi, too, never faced the Assembly and finally quit on March 18 last year — and Governor Prakash Mehrotra, instead of giving the 62-member opposition Left and Democratic Alliance (LDA) a chance to form a ministry, dissolved the Assembly. All through the turbulence of the last three years, therefore, the Government's endeavour had been to keep a Congress (I) ministry in power at Dispur.

### Bankrupt Parties

While the elections brought the Congress (I) the predictably farcical landslide victory, they also exposed the utter bankruptcy of the opposition LDA. In April 1981, the LDA's major constituents — the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI) and the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) — had abstained from a noconfidence motion tabled against the Anwara Taimur ministry because, as CPI-M leaders confessed, they felt safer under a Congress (I) ministry than under President's Rule.

This time, too, the communist parties had hoped that their support from the Bengali population in Assam would have expanded as a result of the anti-foreigner agitation, and so actively supported the elections.

— Courtesy "India Today"





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# Understanding OPEC

*The following address, translated from the original French, was given by the Secretary General of OPEC, Dr Marc Nan Nguema, to the Annual Meeting of the French Association for Petroleum Technicians (AFTP), at the Palais Congress de Porte Maillot, Paris, on January 18, 1983.*

**C**rude oil is vital to the world. Developed and developing countries alike are heavily dependent on this raw material; the latter particularly so, to fuel the development process. In 1981 crude oil provided half of all commercial energy consumed outside the centrally-planned economy countries. The figure was 51.7 per cent in 1980 and 56 per cent in the peak year of 1973. Because of this global dependence oil dominates world trade and, in value terms, is the most traded commodity internationally. Trade in 1979 represented 20 per cent of all world trade, including re-exports, in value terms.

Such is the importance of crude oil and its markets that, to misquote an historic statement from the time of the Wall Street crash: "When the oil market sneezes, the world catches a cold". Faced with this fact, and the ever-turning world cycle of boom and recession with its shortages, gluts and prevailing trade disadvantages, it is in the world's interest to find a solution to the problem of dramatic and painful swings in the oil market. The major hope, if not the only possibility, of achieving this, is through OPEC. For it is now generally recognised that a world without OPEC would have seen a chaotic oil market, widespread waste of vital resources and considerable market instability.

At first glance, the part that OPEC Countries play in world oil trading may appear to be overrated, with Members' oil exports accounting for only 12 per cent of total world trade. But in volume terms, that was about

75 per cent of all internationally-traded crude oil and petroleum products. In terms of reserves, OPEC Countries possess 65 per cent of the world's proven crude oil reserves, with an estimated 436 billion barrels against a world total of 670 billion barrels. Aware of their strategic importance, the Members of OPEC have collectively played a major role in attempting to maintain stable prices for this commodity and ensuring stability of supply. Without their efforts, oil would have suffered the same fate as many other of the world's commodities—with producers suffering dramatically in times of surplus, and consumers suffering equally painfully in times of shortage—but with the added fact that because oil is so vital to the world's economy, the pain inflicted on either side would have been considerably exacerbated. OPEC Countries continue to be aware of this important role which they can play. They continue to do so, and will continue in the future, for the major producing countries hold the key to rational use of the world's oil reserves and the orderly transition to a post-oil era. But it needs to be emphasised that these goals cannot be achieved by OPEC in isolation; it calls for worldwide co-operation between consumers and producers to provide effective regulation of the oil market.

## **Sovereignty**

Historically, those who regard OPEC as a major source of instability in the world have failed to notice the stabilizing role of the Organization's Members in the oil market. When OPEC Countries achieved recognition of sovereignty over their oil resources, it was the beginning of a steady erosion of the control of the major oil companies on world markets. Companies driven by purely profit motives have subsequently been replaced by OPEC Member Countries' national oil companies. The pattern of dealing has changed too: more and more government-to-government deals are being struck, bringing vital oil resources under public control, where the criteria for operation are

based on the wider considerations of social and economic development. Furthermore, the Organization itself has played its part in maintaining the stability of the oil market. In 1979, for example, when spot oil prices soared, the Organization successfully held its official prices below those quoted on the spot markets. OPEC's Members were at that time operating as regulators of the market.

Currently, the oil spot market is unsettled, there is a glut, and demand is suppressed. One pair of factors contributing to this situation is an increase in conservation or the application of alternative sources of energy by consumer countries. Another is the coming onstream of new sources of crude oil or increased production from recently-developed fields. But the major cause of the current market imbalance is an interference with normal market forces caused by the rapid drawdown of massive inventories, built up recently in consuming countries. It is apparent that this mechanism has a direct, damaging effect on the function of the market by creating artificial levels of supply and demand in the short-term. It is also counter-productive. By their very nature, large inventories are expensive to maintain and eventually it becomes economically more viable to release stocks. The actual building of a high stock level creates an artificial demand which can cause a surge in prices, making purchases more expensive. Therefore, any attempt to control the market in this way is not only expensive to achieve and maintain, but is also of a very short-term nature and is accompanied by a destabilizing effect on the market.

Yet it is just such a situation which exists now in the world oil market. The build-up of stocks through over-reaction contributed to the increase in oil prices in 1979 and 1980, and the subsequent drawdown in response to high carrying costs, demand decline and weak prices, has served to slacken the market. These uncontrolled commercial responses cause the market to react in a way which



is not in the interests of either the consumers or producers. It produces exaggerated price adjustments instead of a steady increase towards a level which reflects the true value of the commodity; and it prevents the application of a rational and smooth supply policy as well as undermining the efforts towards stability and predictability of supplies. While OPEC Countries make every effort to ensure stability during this time, they cannot fight alone, and a sensible approach needs to be taken by consuming countries.

### **Vigorous competition**

Furthermore, the oil market has seen the appearance of vigorous competition in the shape of a group of new, non-OPEC oil producers, who have followed policies of securing larger market shares by undercutting OPEC prices. Through OPEC's commitment to a pricing structure, other producers have been able to maximize their export volumes under the security of OPEC's price umbrella. This trend has been led by North Sea producers, particularly. It must be mentioned here, however, that many of these new producers are not foreseen to maintain high production for any great length of time. Indeed, according to one recent report, the UK's North Sea output is expected to halve between 1985 and 1990, and the country to become a net oil importer by the end of that period. When considering the short term nature of these new oil sources, it is obviously unwise to place too much dependence on such limited sources of oil. Many of the OPEC producers, as already mentioned, have significant resources which are foreseen to last for decades with the careful husbanding now being undertaken. Although OPEC's current share of world production is declining, its Members are still by far the predominant holders of world reserves. While in the short term the new producers and small fields can provide some part of current demand, their contribution is limited and unpredictable. In the medium to long term, only OPEC's members have the influence and resources to ensure continued and consistent supplies of crude oil to world markets and, consequently, bring about lasting market stability through effectively balancing supply and demand.

### **Energy source**

Forecasts indicate that a general world economic recovery, combined with retreating real prices for oil, will lead to an upsurge in demand for oil in the 1983 to 1986 period. And it will be the key global energy source for many years to come, despite growing interest in expansion of coal, gas, nuclear and hydro-electric power, and regardless of the more unusual renewable energy sources now being investigated. Indeed, falling real oil prices have already discouraged investment in a wide range of alternative energy sources. The latest reports show that the prospects for synthetic fuels developments in the United States, for example, continue to deteriorate. Recently many synfuels projects have collapsed, and in 1983 more are expected to do so as government cutbacks concentrate particularly on disowning the energy sector.

The world's reliance on plentiful and constant supplies of crude oil gives the commodity a particular importance to consumers. Equally, the extent of the oil producers' reliance on continued efficient exploitation of this resource makes oil and the oil market vital to them. Most OPEC states depend on oil exports for over 90 per cent of their revenues. Without it the development of economic infrastructures would be an insurmountable task. That is why OPEC Countries' emphasis has been placed firmly on the development of sound and broadly-based national oil industries, coupled with the most efficient and responsible utilization of resources. This in itself is some step towards reducing the apprehensions of consumers regarding the continued and stable flow of oil supplies.

In the light of these apprehensions another aspect of supply stability needs to be mentioned here — the possibility of oil's use as a weapon. Historically the only existing example of the use of oil as a political lever, in 1973, was a huge media event. But it had an impact far smaller than it appeared. In fact, the decision was taken in isolation by a regional group of oil producers outside the framework of OPEC. Those OPEC members not associated with the

grouping continued to provide oil supplies to the world market as normal. The true impact was the over-reaction of consumers and the realization of the effects that a real interruption of oil supplies could have on the lifestyle of industrialized countries. Paradoxically, the result to this was economically positive in the longer term. Consumers realized the true value of oil and this awareness promoted greater conservation and energy exploration activities.

In reality, an oil embargo on a scale sufficient to have a significant impact on consumers is not only unlikely, it is also undesirable. It would certainly be difficult to sustain, for producers dependent on a single raw material would face self-inflicted economic suffering equal to, if not greater than, the problems caused to consumers. Considering the spread of oil resources over the world, taking into account the North Sea and other recently-developed areas, supply disruptions from any individual producer country or a regional group would appear to be minimal. Furthermore, the panic reaction by consumers of building huge inventories and their subsequent release onto the market when the pressure eased, has such undesirable effects for producers and consumers alike that the embargo/stockpile pattern might be ruled out as a serious possibility for political action.

### **Price line**

Whenever the oil market has been weak, OPEC has responded by holding the price line, as happened in 1975, in 1977 and 1978, and as is happening today. This action has prevented the usual response of primary commodity prices to declining demand, which is a collapse to acutely low levels. But this ability to administer prices depends on market shares. The recent shrinkage in OPEC Members' share of the oil market has had a consequent effect of reducing this ability to administer prices.

An alteration in the existing state of the market depends on a number of factors. One is the willingness of consumers to accept their responsibility for keeping the oil market stable — they must resist the philosophy of "oil for oil's sake"; they must accept that the com-



modity will, and must, find its level of true value to the consumer under normal market forces; they have to realize the finite nature of oil and make a positive contribution to progress towards the post-oil era.

Suggesting that OPEC has the solution at hand by a unilateral lowering of oil prices is too simplistic. Such a reduction would not provide the impetus needed for the revival of the world economy — in any case, consumer governments have shown themselves continually willing to neutralize the effects of any such reduction by increasing domestic taxes of import tariffs on oil in order to boost domestic revenue. It becomes more and more apparent that OPEC, operating in isolation, can do little about oil demand. The price rises of 1979 and 1980 were triggered by a demand increase promoted by the non-OPEC producers, following the signs in the market generated by unprecedented stockpiling. These non-OPEC producers then responded for more quickly and dramatically to the upward trend in oil prices than did the OPEC Member Countries.

#### **Demand sensitive**

The majority of OPEC Member Countries' economies continue to be highly vulnerable and sensitive to fluctuations in global demand for crude oil. Because of their heavy reliance on this resource as a means of national income, even slight fluctuations in demand for OPEC oil have a significant impact on economic and social development. Sharp and extensive downward and upward movements in oil demand, and subsequently production, have a parallel impact on national revenues for Member Countries. Too fast or too steep a rise in demand brings a surge in prices, and because of the volumes of crude involved, the rapid increase in national revenues can threaten to overheat and destabilize economies. The most recent peak production year of 1979 represented a 7.1 per cent increase in OPEC production volumes, compared with a world average of 4.5 per cent.

In contrast, currently depressed OPEC production represents a 40 per cent drop in volume on 1979.

It is estimated that OPEC's current account balance in 1982 will be in deficit by \$ 9.5 billion, turning to a surplus of \$ 6 billion in 1983. It is further estimated that the shortfall in oil exports in 1980 and 1981 has cost OPEC the equivalent of \$ 158 billion in foreign exchange earnings. For 1982 alone, the cost will total \$ 148 billion.

#### **Residual supplier**

Vulnerability to oil market fluctuations is compounded by the Organization's role as residual supplier to most of the industrialized countries. Any variations in world energy demand, to the extent that these are reflected in movements in world oil demand, are greatly exaggerated in their impact on OPEC Countries' production patterns and revenues. Increases in world energy demand tend to bring disproportionately higher increases in demand for OPEC oil; conversely, a general decrease in demand brings a sharper cut in demand for OPEC oil.

Under conditions of expanding energy demand, once all local economically viable energy sources have been utilized, the balance is usually met by imports — generally imports of crude oil. Most of the world's major energy consumers are net oil importers. But rather than drawn oil from the countries of OPEC, preference tends to be given to other sources, such as the North Sea and Mexico, with OPEC sources being used only to meet the remaining balance. Placed at the end of the shopping list, OPEC crude is usually the last to be purchased when the market swings upwards, and the first to be dropped in a downswing. The extent to which the magnification of trends in world energy demand have an impact on OPEC economies is of considerable concern to Member Country governments. From a peak in 1979, average world production declined by 4.8 per cent in 1980, 6 per cent in 1981 and 6.2 per cent in 1982 for the reasons already stated. Globally, this decline has been relatively modest and a fairly stable trend. In contrast, the impact on OPEC has been dramatic, with declines of 15.5 per cent in 1980, 15.7 per cent in 1981 and 18.7 per cent in 1982.

#### **Uncertain atmosphere**

Obviously, in this atmosphere of uncertainty over revenues, continued high investment levels and future directions of investment for OPEC Countries have to undergo constant review. From the oil producers' point of view, the directions of interest are their economies: the development of infrastructure, the increase of technical know-how and skills, and diversification into the downstream operations of the oil industry to broaden their economic base of operations. But there is also a need for investment in exploration and development of other energy reserves. Upstream development is a high-cost operation, particularly as oil becomes scarcer, as heavy oils become economically viable to reclaim and as enhanced recovery methods become necessary. There has also been an explosion in the cost of producing oil, particularly in bringing new supplies on-stream.

Between 1971 and 1980, cumulative extraction rates in the OPEC area outpaced cumulative net additions to reserves, which amounted to the equivalent of 22 per cent of total production. According to 1981 figures, the OPEC average reserves-to-production ratio leaves approximately 53 years of reserves remaining. In general, the rate at which new reserves have been added to the existing resource base has dropped dramatically over the past ten years. The management of reserves-to-production ratios varies widely among OPEC Members. For some, reserves-to-production management of exploration already have significance in medium to long-term economic planning. These countries are in a particularly sensitive position, as they do not have the capital to risk, or the spare resources to tie up in the exploration and development of new fields. Here, too, there is another aspect to consider: the Third World countries, which are dependent on oil for future development and are already facing an energy crunch, despite the talk of glut elsewhere. The imbalance of exploration efforts, which concentrates heavily on industrialized countries, has left the developing world with a huge amount of untapped energy, but a lack of development capital.



## Smooth transition

While OPEC holds an obvious key to future energy developments, the rational use of remaining oil resources and the smooth transition to a post-oil era are to a large extent dependent on developments and trends outside OPEC. Through a regulated market, the oil-based industries of consumer countries would be stabilized and less vulnerable to the violent fluctuations seen recently. It would ensure sufficient capital and economic viability to prevent the erratic progress, or lack of progress, in development of alternative sources of energy and exploration for new oil resources. It would provide an atmosphere of co-operation in which producers and consumers accepted their communal dependence on oil resources and progressed in an orderly fashion towards the post-oil age. And it would also allow the development of fresh and lucrative markets for exports of goods and technology to developing countries as they progress towards industrialization.

It is now well recognized that a fall in oil prices would be to the detriment of consumers too. For if OPEC loses its oil markets, then the industrialized countries of the world lose their markets for export products purchased with this income. It is foreseen that this 'gain' in lower oil prices would in no way compensate for the 'loss' of export income by the developed countries. Here, too, it makes economic sense to sustain a price for crude oil which reflects its real value to the world community. Additionally, if OPEC dropped its prices, the prices of new and lesser producers would plunge too, causing even wider swings in price.

Indeed, it has been said if OPEC had not existed, an organization along similar lines would have to be created to bring about the stability and moderating influence on the oil market that is required. For in the absence of OPEC's moderating influence, the world would have seen plummeting oil prices, coupled with massive over-depletion of scarce resources and a resultant scramble for what little reserves were left. Throughout its history, OPEC has sought to promote an awareness of the finite nature of crude oil supplies. In recent years, more and more consumer countries have come to

realize that oil is scarce and that a rational progression towards a post-oil era is required.

In the immediate future, oil remains with us. But the inherent danger is that fluctuations in market conditions such as those recently experienced will serve to create a false impression of plentiful supplies and breed a complacency among consumers, to the detriment of alternative energy development efforts. This has indeed already happened to some extent with, more and more worthy development projects being delayed or cancelled.

As far as OPEC is concerned, it is clear that the Organization needs to establish both short—and long—term policies as its contribution to market stability. In the short term, the situation can be partly managed, and the market restabilized, through the continued concerted action of OPEC Members, with the maintenance of firm pricing policies, provided that their market share is increased and that increase is maintained. But the solution is also dependent on a sense of responsibility prevailing in the consuming countries and among the non-OPEC oil producers. OPEC cannot achieve this alone, nor should it be expected to. In the past there have been some encouraging signs that oil producers outside the Organization have been following OPEC's example in taking the medium to long-term approach to crude oil production and pricing. It is to be hoped that this trend will grow.

## Production levels

In the long term, one intention of OPEC should be to pin production levels to the requirements of consumers. Pitching the level at exactly the right point to maintain balance over the medium to long term is crucial to market stability. Since the early 1960s, it has been argued in OPEC circles that through careful maintenance of pricing policies, production policies could regulate themselves in line with individual national policies and requirements. It was, there, more a question of pitching prices at the right level, and that this would be in relation to the cost of alternatives to oil. This approach had to be balanced with the concern of some producers that if oil prices increased too rapidly, oil would lose its share of the world energy market, and that such a trend

would eventually restrict producers' earning capacity. Naturally, such an issue is not perceived in the same manner by every oil exporting country because of differences in resource base and revenue needs. OPEC Countries vary widely in their resource base, and these variations are not fixed, yet working within the Organization the Member Countries have always maintained a common ground avoiding extremist action or damaging swings in general policy.

## Moderate adjustments

Future policies will envisage moderate, but consistent and gradual price adjustments aimed at maintaining the real purchasing power of export revenues and providing an incentive for gradual utilization of alternative sources to conventional energy. An implication of this approach is that oil prices would in the long run approximate the cost of alternative energy sources.

Another aspect of OPEC's longer-term policy is the extension of activities downstream. In the past the Members of the Organization have been to a great extent dependent on crude oil exports. Some Members have developed long-term goals of achieving a better balance between crude oil and product marketing, and this in itself will introduce more stability domestically and, consequently, internationally. OPEC Countries' future policies will also take account of market developments and attempt to anticipate events, to prevent producers constantly being drawn into reacting to short-term cycles in the market. A longer-term approach in OPEC pricing and

*(Continued on page 24)*

## Letters . . . *(Contd. from p. 2)*

of the Supreme Court approving it) established the principle that a simple majority of voters could approve a change of the constitution. Obviously once the sovereign people have approved a change a parliamentary 2/3 would be supererogatory. Thus at a future election any party which has reason to believe that it is going to get a simple majority of parliamentary seats can make a mandate to change the constitution its main ticket and should it win that would be the end of JR's constitution. Dehiwela. **Felicity Gonsal**



# CPs — A 'fundamental revolutionary change' ?

**T**he Salvadoran regime is faced with imminent and final defeat, says a news item on the front page of the February 20th issue of *Granma*, which bases its report on a communique issued by the revolutionary guerrilla organizations. The rebel radio, Radio Venceremos concluded a recent broadcast with the words that "although the United States is trying to solve the government crisis by readjusting the forces involved and restructuring the power, this is the prologue to defeat. There is no solution except the triumph of our people in arms".

Meanwhile leftists in Latin America are carefully evaluating a recent pamphlet by **Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS) leader Schafik Jorge Handal**, in which he presents a far reaching self criticism, which encompasses the Latin American Communist Parties and by implication, pro-Moscow CPs all over

the 'Third World'. The pamphlet is entitled **"Power, the Character and Path of the Revolution and the Unity of the Left"**, and discusses two fundamental strategic issues, viz. the stage of the Revolution and the peaceful transition to Socialism.

Handal admits that "in Latin America, two great true revolutions have taken place, that in Cuba and in Nicaragua, and in neither of these two cases was the Communist Party at the head". In particular, he concludes from "the experience of two armed triumphant revolutions and ... the defeat of two attempts to triumph by pacific means, in the two most democratic countries of the continent: Chile and Uruguay," that **"the idea of a peaceful road to revolution in Latin America is, (in my opinion) tied to reformism"**.

Handal writes that "Lenin's theses of April are still the models of

how to judge the problem of power" and even locates the sources of the CP's reformism in their fundamental strategy concerning the class character of the revolution. He remarks **"I don't know where this idea came from, but our Party and it seems to me many other Communist parties of Latin America, have worked for many decades with the ideas of two revolutions. . ."**

"The pacific route is not the path of revolution", writes Handal drawing up a balance sheet of the Chilean experience. Fidel Castro had already said in a speech shortly after the bloody Pinochet coup that "The Chilean example teaches us the lesson that it is impossible to make the revolution with the people alone—weapons are also necessary!" In his pamphlet Handal says that **"power has to be snatched from the bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic military apparatus**

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of the bourgeoisie has to be destroyed”.

The Salvadoran C. P. leader stresses the importance of Left unity and claims that “we strengthened ourselves in expounding and developing our policy of alliance. . . The credit goes to us for having systematically defended the banner of the unity of the left.”

Handal admits that “in the past we saw the Cuban experience as a ‘peculiar exception’”. Most tellingly, he acknowledges that it was a right wing deviation that was the predominant characteristic of the CP’s. He declares that “We reacted so much and so many times against the leftist idea of the struggle for direct implantation of socialism with no prologue. . . we convinced ourselves that the democratic revolution is not necessarily to be organised and promoted principally by us. . .” Handal’s conception of the democratic revolution is such that he says “if we look back after achieving that revolution. . . the democratic anti-imperialist revolution will not look to us like a separate revolution, but rather like the accomplishment of the tasks of the first phase of the socialist revolution.”

Handal reveals that “For forty years our party suffered more from the sickness of reformism than from leftism. . .” and asserts that Salvadoran communist party has undertaken “a fundamental revolutionary change”.

Ironically enough, the P. C. S. has arrived at these positions which were held by its former General Secretary, Salvador Cayetano Carpio who quit the party to found a “politico-military” group in April 1970, that is, 2 years after the party rejected the “armed struggle road”.

Commentators who observe the radicalisation of the Communist Parties throughout the Caribbean basin area point to a Conference in Havana last April on “**Characteristics of the Revolutionary Processes in Latin America and the Caribbean**”. At that conference, a Cuban spokesman Manuel Pineiro

explained that “revolutions (can) advance in an uninterrupted process—albeit in stages—in a **single historical process** to socialism” (*Granma*, 28 April 1982). Much more importantly, another Cuban leader, Jesus Montane, went on to explain at the same conference the next day that “**in this continent we are seeing an inseparable combination of democratic tasks linked to socialist tasks. . .**” (*Granma*, 29 April 1982)

U. S. pressure, the influence of the Cuban and Nicaraguan leaderships, the advances made by the armed left such as that led by Cayetano Carpio and the resultant marginalisation of the C. P. s, the disasters in Chile and Uruguay, are all factors which have lead to the recent redicalisation of the Communist Parties. The Bolivian C. P turned its back on Guevara as he was being hunted down in the jungles. But now, reality itself is forcing the C. Ps to accept the proclamation of Che that “in the Americas the peaceful road is almost liquidated as a possibility”, and that revolutions here “would give rise to regimes with a socialist structure.”

## There Was. . .

(Continued from page 12)

three or four months. But this does not mean that normal revision should have taken place. In fact, with February 28 looming over me. I ordered that all polling would have to end, even if repolling in some places was required, latest by February 21 to enable constituting the Assembly by February 28.

**On existing laws:** I think the crux in Assam is that the agitators do not merely want an enumeration of the foreigners—they want a re-definition of the term ‘citizen’. In addition, with regard to a situation like that in the state during the elections, nowhere else in the last 35 years has such a crisis arisen. Many things are left unspelt; there should be provision for such emergencies. If necessary later, therefore, the commission will press for a reference from the President to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution on these issues.



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# Evaluation of agro systems (Paper III) (Continued)

Jerry A. Moles and James V. Riker

**D**espite the fact that Sri Lanka is changing very rapidly at present with the new government's policies to develop — to become the next Singapore — in as little time as possible, there remains in the countryside many of the practices of the past. These practices, which everyday erode a little more, still offer a rough outline of the structure of a noble and just way of life that has sustained itself for over 2,500 years. We have to capture as much of that past as possible and try to understand its wisdom. However, we will not know if we have made wise and fair interpretations of the past until we apply them in the eternal present. This task remains.

There will be many critics of what we present and so it should be. There is one major point that we would like to speak to in anticipation of critical evaluation. The question is often raised, "Why must peasant agriculture represent such a difficult and marginal livelihood?" To us, the answer came not easily at all. We have spent some time living among Third World cultivators and share the opinion that where there exists freedom from being deprived of the basic needs (there are several ways to define the concept), "peasant" agriculture has much to recommend it. Nonetheless, in our review of the literature and observations of agricultural development, it appears that "peasant" agriculture hasn't been given careful consideration by those who claim the responsibility to plan for the future. A dreadful thing has happened in our pellmell rush into that future as attempts were made to head off the "population-food" crisis. There seems to be a shared assumption among many agricultural planners that most peasant and traditional agricultural systems have less to recommend than most "scientific" agricultures which might be designed to replace them.

With much too great a frequency, the agricultures designed to replace traditional systems have no other reality other than the one that exists in the minds of planners. Designers of agricultural systems "economic" and "agronomic" efficiency" within their hypothetical constructions but this is not the language of farmers nor does it represent the realities which many of them must face on a daily basis. (see Morrison: 633-637). Planners are often entrusted to make plans for an agriculture in which they never participated in as farmers and perhaps never observed intimately.

It is often suggested that sons and daughters of farmers become the most adept planners for agriculture. Of course, there is an easier approach, allow the farmers to participate in the planning. Instead of "selling" the farmers on a "package," the farmer might be asked what some of the needs are that both planner and cultivator have to suggest possible alternatives. Through such processes, true collaboration and deeper understanding of agriculture could be created. While we do not maintain that all of the answers to food production are to be found in traditional agricultural systems, we do believe that there is more than 2,500 years of human effort and learning wrapped up in current Sri Lanka agriculture and that the wisdom of this particular system should be carefully considered before it is discarded.

The current administrations of Western nations, international organizations, and the Sri Lanka government have embarked upon types of agricultural plans which will alter forever the traditional agriculture. While the representatives of these organizations may have selected the correct path, we do not believe that such is the case. We are prepared to lay our case before the largest possible audience including the cultivators and consumers of

Sri Lanka. We will compare past Sri Lanka agriculture in its many manifestation with current patterns and proposed alternatives for the future. We accept contemporary Western scientific standards as the currency of our explanations.

We work with a degree of urgency because of the possible consequences of worldwide dependency upon energy-intensive agriculture. Such a dependency sets the stage for massive starvation and this especially true given the current rationing system for the most valuable resources on Earth. Third World nations will not be able to outbid their more powerful neighbors for the energy required to maintain a "modern" agriculture.

Should there not be, somewhere in the world, a carefully considered alternative system of accepted validity and proven stability based upon low-energy food production? We believe there is such a need. Our theory is represented in the opinions we have and will express. We will share our vision with you and, if we sound reasonable, you are invited to share in the creation of this theory in ways that seem reasonable and rewarding to both you and us. The creation of the theory we are interested in can only be done through participation in processes which lead to sustainable, equitable, and creatively evolving agriculture which has the capacity to maintain its integrity.

## Conclusions

The three position papers represent but a small fraction of the thought and learning that has gone into the formation of what is called National Heritage. What it demonstrates very clearly is that the idea of agricultural sustainability is enmeshed within a very broad range of issues. While there is great concern with the availability of resources and their protection into the indefinite future, there is also



concern with the persons who have it within their power to alter patterns of resource use and the moral and ethical values which guide their behavior. Furthermore, there is an appreciation of the existence of a social-political-economic structure and the importance of understanding social process if one is concerned with creating circumstances in which agricultural sustainability can become a reality.

National Heritage represents a set of Buddhist values rooted deeply within the fabric of Sri Lanka civilization. Over 2,200 years ago King Asoka of India sent his missionary son, Mahinda, to Sri Lanka to introduce Buddhism to the island. From these ancient times until the conquest of the country by the British, the teachings of the Buddha remained the law of the land as expressed through the customs of the people. A major purpose of these teachings was to enable people to escape suffering insofar as possible. Instead of placing their desires upon wealth, power, and prestige, a large number of early Sri Lanka people viewed contentment as a daily and life-long goal. In searching for contentment, the people had to realistically evaluate their circumstances to understand their position within the order of the universe and organize their lives in ways which would minimize suffering. As an agricultural people, they took close note of the world around them, the coming and going of the seasons, and the variations in yearly patterns. They attempted to take a middle path somewhere above minimal subsistence but below the level of production necessary for wealth and power. Buddhism remains a vital force in the daily lives of the people of Sri Lanka.

This agrarian society viewed the m selves as transient trustees of the world around them. Recognizing the death that all of humankind must face, they tried to become as little attached as possible to the material of physical realm of existence. For example, the only permanent buildings were those occupied by rulers and members of the priesthood. The remainder of the society resided in wattle and daub (mud and bamboo) or varichchi (mud walled) homes with thatched roofs. After such homes

had served their human functions, they were allowed to return to the Earth from which they were drawn. Lest we give the impression that wattle and daub houses are little more than hovels, it should be noted that many such homes remain today, that they are spacious and cool in the tropical heat, a majority are multi-room structures, and their costs minimal when compared to other forms of construction.

With the practice of non-attachment to the material aspects of life, it was possible to base the agrarian society upon principles other than the ownership of the elements. Rights of useage were given to those who tilled the soil and assisted in the maintenance of the irrigation systems and roads. The practice of **rajakariya**, in which the people contributed their labor to construct and maintain communal facilities and services, provided the necessary labour. During periods of heavy labour demand, there was the sharing of tasks among the cultivators and their families. It is interesting to note that when people were punished for their failure to live by the teachings, they became outcastes and were denied the right to work and, thereby, were denied access to the elements which could provide a livelihood. If not an outcaste, however, the willingness to work gave access to the elements of production or the subsequent excess.

The surplus produced was shared with those unable to work, the royal family, and the priesthood. The society was divided along the lines of occupational specialization into caste. The cultivator caste was expected to provide food-stuff for the other caste and receive in return the products of the latter groups. The cultivator caste, **goyigama**, were also recognized in a special way in that kings could only be selected from this caste.

Participants in National Heritage view the policies of the current government as a threat to these ancient values. Western materialism suggests that it is better to have more rather than less, that success in life should be judged based upon material accumulation, and that only through competitive capitalism can the "good" life be realized. Rewards are based upon personal income and ownership which often

threatens the right of others to live through access to the elements of production. Thus, both Notional Heritage and the Buddhist clergy have voiced their opposition to the principle of ownership. Furthermore, there is suspicion that acquisitive capitalism as a major value cannot insure a sustainable agriculture. Accumulation rather than conservation is the major value and the former will be maximized at the expense of the latter. Furthermore, those with the greatest power in modern capitalistic agricultural systems are most often the furthest removed from the air, land, and water and may have little appreciation for the resources or the human values that are being lost.

Consequently, the position papers speak of power — that economic-political nexus — which governs resource use. There is also mention of who should decide and who should benefit from agricultural endeavors.

Woven through the papers are statements about process, of ways of moving toward a sustainable and equitable agriculture and an awareness that the participants of National Heritage are a part of that process.

Finally, National Heritage offers a series of challenges in terms of the values which should govern the island nation. As an ideology in action, it will be interesting to follow the debates and action in Sri Lanka. As Westerners, it will be instructive to follow the course of affairs emerging from the conflict of values. Our own agriculture has its inbuilt values which seem to be protected at the cost of the sustainability of our own capacity to produce food. Could we learn something about other values which would protect our own agriculture and the right to live for ourselves, our children, and grandchildren? Like the people of Sri Lanka we to only have ourselves and our values for our own self-protection and direction. **(CONCLUDED)**

### Understanding . . .

(Continued from page 20)  
production policies, that will anticipate developments and flatten market cycles, will bring greater stability and effectively influence the longer-term evolution of the oil market.



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