

**SHOULD INDIA INTERVENE ?**

— *An Indian opinion poll*



**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

Vol. 6 No. 11 October 1, 1983 Price Rs. 3/50

Registered at the GPO, Sri Lanka Q1/75/N/83

## **SIRIMA SPEAKS**

— *AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW*

— Mervyn de Silva



- Lawlessness was institutionalised
- UNP must look within
- [Political solution needed
- Serious negotiations, no preconditions
- India's "good offices" useful

## **SOUTH ASIA ON THE BOIL**

**Zia's tottering dictatorship**

— Bhabani Sen Gupta

— John Elliott

**India - Sri Lanka : the Parathasarathi visit**

— G. K. Reddy

\* **EXCLUSIVE** **WALLERSTEIN ON NATIONAL LIBERATION**

\* **SUSAN ECKSTEIN ON SEXISM AND THE PRESS**

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## ECONOMIC BACK-DROP

The explosive events of July have tended to "obscure" the economic realities which threaten to overwhelm Third World countries like Sri Lanka. This was a point made with commendable force by the LSSP in its recent statement on the current crisis.

A few facts and figures from the World Bank's annual report on the world economy in 1982 dramatises the gravity of our present discontents better than most.

Firstly, economic development in the Third World last year registered its deepest plunge since the last war. As a Washington Post summary puts it: exports fell, development projects had to be abandoned, and debt re-scheduling continued to climb.

Secondly, it is likely, says the Bank, that Third World growth in 1983 will be considerably less than the average in the 1970's and perhaps less than the increase in the population.

Describing himself as a realist rather than a pessimist Mr. de Mel said he refused to think of 1983 as the beginning of the "parting of the ways" between the rich and the poor nations. In his speech to the annual IBRD/IMF meeting however, the Finance minister's realism was laced with grim thoughts. "We should wait and see whether the current euphoria of world recovery led by the resurgence of economic activity in certain industrial countries will be borne out by reality and spread to the developing world, as well. We have serious reservations on the current forecasts and are inclined to believe that we are reading too much into the rather fragile recovery observed in a handful of industrial countries. Also we have doubts whether such a recovery will spread its wings across the globe because of rigidities that have emerged in the international economic mechanism in the form

of protectionism and massive debt overhang . . . . Must we wait until the world financial system goes into complete chaos, a situation out of which none of us will emerge unscathed.....?..... An impoverished population is potentially an unstable population. Suffering breeds bitterness, bitterness breeds anger. . . . and anger leads to violence."

\* \* \*

## C. W. C

The CWC has made some interesting moves recently. Its role is of political significance for several reasons — (a) it is by far the largest plantation union and probably the biggest in the island (b) it is politically associated with the government in the person of Minister S. Thondaman and (c) it is the representative of one section of the Tamil-speaking population here.

The CWC participated in a conference of leading trade unions held at the SLFP headquarters at Darley Road. Among other things, it joined the rest in calling for an end to the ban on three left parties. Then the CWC presence was strongly felt at an in-gathering of estate unions which called for a international inquiry into the July events. A notable absentee was the UNP organisation. Finally, Mr. Sellasamy issued a press statement in which he said that the CWC held the view that separatism did not address itself to the problem of the plantation workers. Thus, the CWC did not support nor oppose separatism.

\* \* \*

## NON-PARTY

Here's a silver lining! Political scientists of all schools from UNP to RMP have been left quite puzzled by the SARVODAYA formula for national unity. What is meant by a "non-party Executive President" and a "non-party democratic system". Plainly some clarification is called for before our political parties join together in mass hara-kiri.

## Foreign Policy Decision Making

From time to time your popular journal spotlights the infirmities and inadequacies of the Foreign Office and diplomatic representation abroad — maybe with the objective of ensuring that the taxpayer gets value for the Rs 148 million spent annually by the Foreign Ministry (1981 Estimate). Dr, Shelton Kodikara should be congratulated on his monograph (L.G. 1st July) which stripped of jargon displays a measure of understanding of the intricacies of the Foreign Office at work.

We must first draw the distinction between foreign policy and diplomacy. Foreign policy is what you decide to do or  
(Continued on page 2)

LANKA

# GUARDIAN

Vol. 6 No. 11 October 1, 1983

Price 3/50

Published fortnightly by  
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,  
COLOMBO-2

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Telephone: 5 4 7 5 8 4

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Printed by Ananda Press  
82/5, Wolfendhal Street, Colombo-13.  
Telephone: 3 5 9 7 5



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to attempt; diplomacy is how you set about it. Decision making is an elusive concept at least in the eyes of the minor fauna in the world of diplomacy. It may be debated in the matter of religion but no one seems to question the doctrine of immaculate conception where policy questions are involved. Apart from this, there is continuity in decision making as the present incumbent in the office of Perm Secretary had enjoyed a long innings in that office for well over 10 years. He has beaten Shirley Amerasinghe's record at the UN, although it is sound policy to change the nappies once in five years.

One of the major constraints vis a vis foreign policy decision making is the silence it imposes on the Ministers, perm Secretaries and Ambassadors. It is treated like a sacred cow and all the natural opponents are silenced by tradition plus the myth of bipartisanship. The questioning of the Foreign Minister is rare in Parliament and there is hardly a debate on foreign affairs. The first priority is the appointment of a Select Committee of Parliament with a top dressing of Cabinet Ministers to conduct a probe into overseas representation. As a first step a Chair for International Relations including Trade Promotion should be created as a matter of urgency in the University of Colombo to promote the study of international policies and events. It could be a subject for the Arts Degree Course.

In diplomatic as in monetary affairs is a kind of Gresham's law which sees bad money driving out the good. The Foreign Ministry was established as a separate entity under the new constitution without any dramatic ostentation or fanfare. If its image is to be improved, it should be uprooted from its present ambience and transplanted in a less constricted atmosphere to disabuse the public of the erroneous impression that it is an appen-

dage of the President's Secretariat Sri Lanka was fortunate in the past in its choice of Ambassadors — men who had established a reputation for intellectual eminence and exceptional skill — Wilmot Perera (Peking), Sir Claude Corea (Washington & New York), Sir Susantha de Fonseka (Tokyo), Shirley Amerasinghe (UN) and Herbert Hulugalle (Rome). They made on the spot decisions when the Foreign Ministry was dragging its feet in cabling out instructions. They also had their moments of despair or pique when Sarath Wijesinghe (then Parl Secretary) was appointed by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike to lead the delegation to China to negotiate the Rubber-Rice Pact when Wilmot Perera was ruling the roost in Peking. Shirley Amerasinghe was in a huff when G. G. Ponnambalam a towering personality with his usual flamboyance and panache was appointed by Dudley Senanayake to lead the delegation to the UN in New York on two occasions. Shirley Amerasinghe's style was cramped by the very presence of G. G. Ponnambalam who was casting a longer shadow than that of any other member of the delegation. That was not all. Shirley Amerasinghe had another setback when the Presidential gavel was wrested by his Foreign Minister — perhaps rightly so — at the concluding sessions of the UN when Sri Lanka held the Presidency on a rotational basis. Old stagers in the Foreign Office will recall how D. S. Senanayake pulled up Sir Susantha for wearing a sarong in Burmese style at the Independence Day celebrations in Rangoon in 1949. When you come to think of it Mr Editor, decisions on foreign policy all over the world are based on Palmerston's famous remark that Britain has no permanent friends only permanent interests, although in the closing decades of the 20th century it can be construed as the acme of cynical realpolitik.

**H. N. Ahangama**

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# THE MOOD CHANGES BUT...

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

“National unity talks are on...” reads a banner headline in the SUNDAY OBSERVER, a semi-official paper. But where? In the BMICH where Sarvodaya leader, Dr. Ariyaratne sponsored an impressive gathering of ecclesiastics from all religious groups, and several hundred well-intentioned men and women of influence? In private drawing rooms or party headquarters? Between politicians at a personal level?

It is true that the mood has changed with a growing sense of grief, guilt, shame and the gigantic proportions of what almost every thinking Sri Lankan now calls ‘our national crisis. This has prompted a strong feeling (not always clearly articulated) for “dialogue”, another key word in today’s vocabulary. Dialogue, however, with whom? Yes, many an influential Tamil from various segments of the community (professionals, politicians, businessmen, clergy etc) are not only responding to this change in mood but also participating in the search for a settlement.

However a “break-through” (yet another key term) can only come when there is a formal exchange with the TULF. This was the first point in the LSSP statement which provided us with the broadest and most perceptive analysis of the situation so far. The LSSP called for a “commencement of a dialogue with the political parties representative of the Tamil people”. That crucial breakthrough still remains, it would seem, in a somewhat shadowy and uncertain future.

## Unity Call

President Jayewardene’s speech to the UNP Executive Committee. “Hitler policies won’t work” was the headline chosen by the SUN for its report of this forthright and hard-hitting speech in which the UNP leader reminded the ruling party’s upper echelons that “nobody can come to power only with Sinhala Buddhist votes”. Mr. Jayewardene went further. Those

who think on communal or caste lines are free, he said, to form their own party because they have no place in the UNP.

Alluding to an observation of Trade Minister Lalith Athulathmudali that nobody had benefitted from the events of “Black July”, the President remarked: “the acts of a few had resulted in shame to the entire nation”.

Less than a fortnight after the UNP’s Executive Committee met, the SLFP’s All-Island Committee held its special session. The significance of the Darley Road meeting is that it effectively ends two years of bitter factional feuding with the restoration of Mrs. Bandaranaike’s full authority. Racked by factional and family squabbles, it was a divided, demoralised and disintegrating SLFP that went to the polls in October (presidential), the referendum (December) and the by-elections in May. And yet did surprisingly well enough to demonstrate that its mass base had not been destroyed either by the UNP’s protracted warfare and concentrated assaults periodically nor by the suicidal lunacies of its top and mid-level SLFP leadership.

## SLFP Recovery ?

Precisely because of that fact, and the convulsive events which have rocked the UNP administration, the SLFP can make a spirited return to national politics to confound the UNP calculation of “freezing” party politics for 6 years after the dubious referendum victory. The general crisis and the particular tribulations of the UNP whose several (discordant) voices can be heard clearly by any reader of the mainstream press (especially those who notice the significant differences between the English and Sinhala newspapers even in the state-managed ones) is certainly a heaven-sent political opportunity for the SLFP.

If the dialogue-cum-reconciliation line of the UNP leader holds, then SLFP cooperation is a ‘must’ for the

Sinhala consensus that is a *sine qua non* in any initiative aimed at serious and productive negotiations with the Tamil leadership. The restoration of Mrs. B’s authority in the party could not have come at a more auspicious time for her. What is most in evidence is the return of Mrs. B.’s old and tested instincts to read a crisis-situation correctly and the skill to respond to it with measured caution and maturity. She has resisted the temptation to go on a chauvinist rampage and kept the door open to talks with the TULF. (See Mrs. B.’s interview in this issue) As a reciprocal gesture perhaps, the TULF leader Mr. Amirthalingam has been busy abroad not only presenting his case and ridiculing the attempt to pin the blame on the Left, but praising Mrs. B. for moderation, maturity and most of all, her consistency.

The twin advantages arising from the UNP’s need and the TULF’s respect, find support from a third factor — Mrs. B.’s personal relationship with Mrs. Gandhi, who simply cannot be eliminated from the equation, especially if the domestic crisis-management operation fails

While a presidential pardon has been bandied about in the press Mrs. B. herself is too shrewd to make her civic rights a bargaining chip. Quid pro quo will expose her to attack from the chauvinist *ultras* who dare not criticise her now because of her almost impregnable position in the Sinhala-Buddhist constituency and with the monks. If the UNP High Command does not have to face the risk of an open split, a “magnanimous gesture” could be in the offing.

## Civil Rights

What will certainly not be risked is what the LSSP, and other opposition parties, are demanding — a restoration, in the LSSP’s statement, of the right to democratic changes of government, meaning of course elections. The former New York Bar Association President, and current chairman of the American Watch



Committee on civil rights, Mr. Orville Schell has placed the "Tamil issue" in the same perspective in an interesting article published in the OP-Ed page of the *NYK Times* of August 24th. He writes:

**"While world attention has focussed on violent conflict in Sri Lanka between mainly Buddhist Sinhalese majority and largely Hindu Tamil minority, insufficient attention has been paid to the government's civil rights record. Yet it is precisely at a time when the government has sought a return to the rule of law and a reduction in ethnic conflict, in a country often cited as a model of Third World democratic development, that a demonstration of its respect for rights would take on heightened importance..... Clearly, the government faces serious internal security problems. It has a responsibility to bring to trial those responsible for violent acts. In addition it has a responsibility under the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights..... There is still hope that the government will respect the tradition of upholding the rule of law."**

Mr. Scheel is in fact re-emphasising the point made by Professor Virginia Leary who studied the situation here in late 1981 on behalf of the ICJ and observed in her report:

**"The tension between the ethnic communities creates an extremely dangerous situation which may escalate into major violence in the island and negate all efforts to develop economically. Despite long standing tension, grievances and insecurities, the leaders of both communities should be prepared to undertake major efforts to resolve the ethnic conflict. The long-term solution to the ethnic conflict in the interests of the entire population can only be achieved on the basis of respect for the rule of law and relevant human rights standards."**

While underlining other aspects of this grave situation (the incessant racial propaganda in the media, the intrusion of the security for-

## Indian polls and the Lankan issue

**W**ill there be mid-term polls in India? If the answer is 'yes' then the immediate importance of Tamilnadu to the ruling Congress and the Delhi power-centre becomes obvious. Mrs. Gandhi, for her part, has described the growing speculation about polls in early 1984 as a deliberate propagandist move by the Opposition parties to help them "come together quicker". In her *Times of India* interview Mrs. Gandhi does not say anything of her own plans.

Analysing current developments on the electoral front, Dr. Bhabani Sen Gupta writes:

**"The most remarkable aspect of the new-forming electoral alignments is that much of the leverage belongs to the chief ministers who rule in the non-Congress (I) states, six in number."**

One of the six named by this highly reputed Indian commentator is M. G. Ramachandran of Tamilnadu, of whom it is then said "Mrs. Gandhi can hope to have this kind of an arrangement (in Tamilnadu) only with the AIADMK". (MGR's party).

Sen Gupta then adds:

**"If she is wooing the caste Hindu voters of the North — as some believe she is — she may lose a lot of Harijan votes. She is probably right in denying that the North is turning to Congress (I) merely because the South has slipped out the party's grip"**

ces into politics etc) the LSSP statement has one additional, and major virtue. It places the events against the background of "the economic-financial crisis that is gathering momentum". The budget is next month, and Finance Minister de Mel has not yet returned to tell us what it has in store for the masses.

The relevance of Sri Lankan issues is made clear by one of the concluding remarks in the same report:

**"Mrs. Gandhi's Sri Lankan diplomacy must show up some concrete gains for the Tamils in the island republic before MGR will cast his electoral lot with Congress (I)".**

Meanwhile the Bombay journal *GENTLEMAN* has invited former Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (now BJP leader, Subramaniam Swamy, Janata MP, Madhavrao Scindia (Congress MP) and Dr. Sen Gupta for their views on a possible solution to the Tamil problem. Some excerpts:

**PROF. SEN GUPTA:** The Tamil population of Sri Lanka, or a majority of it, is asking for a separate Tamil state. Whether it is going to be a sovereign Independent state is a question on which the Tamils are themselves divided. India cannot appear to give the slightest encouragement to this kind of a political agitation in a neighbouring country — or in any country whatsoever India has never supported activists or terrorist activities or an armed struggle between a minority and a majority in a state over the question of political rights. Therefore India has to adopt a policy of non-involvement in the domestic affairs of Sri Lanka.

**DR. MUTHU:** Any drastic action taken by the government at this stage, to my mind, will make the situation worse and tempers will flare up again. President Jayewardene should meet the leaders of the Tamil population and iron out the problems. He should come down from his ivory tower and try and see things from the point of view of the Tamilians. He must try and understand their feelings, their woes and their ambitions. He must then announce concessions to the Tamilians and assure them that they are part of Sri Lanka and not a separate entity. He must ensure their safety and welfare. Some safeguards in the Constitution need to be incorporated. India, I am certain, is in a position to be of assistance. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has reacted correctly to the situation by sending Mr. G. Parthasarathy as an emissary to seek a permanent solution to the problem.

(Continued on page 7)



# MRS. B ON THE CURRENT CRISIS

**Q).** In official pronouncements, party statements, editorials and commentaries in the press, and other opinions expressed by organisations and individuals, various factors have been identified as the causes of the recent wave of violence. Naturally each factor has received varying emphasis in different statements. The government has finally argued that it was a "plot" and banned three left parties under the emergency laws. While there was also reference to a "foreign hand", other explanations have ranged from a Sinhala backlash to events in the north, particularly the killing of 13 soldiers in an ambush, to pro-UNP gangs, to indiscipline and indifference in the security forces, and a general breakdown of law and order. Where do you, Mrs. Bandaranaike, place the emphasis?

**A).** Up to a point there is some truth in attributing the immediate cause of the outbreak of violence to Sinhala anger, frustration and so on but this is not the main reason. Because even if mobs got into the streets, why didn't the government and its security forces put down the violence, or at least control it within say two or three days? In my view, we have to look at the past 6 years, from the first outbreak of post-election violence. Was there any serious attempt to put down such lawlessness? No, lawlessness was institutionalised. Why is that? Because it was unleashed on the defeated opponents of the UNP. Well, there has been post-election violence before. UNP supporters will argue like that.

But what happened afterwards, right through these 6 years? I can give you dates, places and the details of what happened because our party has documented all these things, but I'll make one general observation which is from one of the statements issued by the SLFP sometime ago, long before this recent violence. Students, workers, intellectuals, monks, political organisers, and trade union organisers,

all of them have been assaulted by gangs of thugs, using bicycle chains and so on. One worker, Somapala died, Professor Sarachchandra, one of most eminent Sri Lankan scholars, was put into hospital. Buddhist monks were beaten up. But no action has been taken, no one punished. The last incidence of course was the case of the Supreme Court judges. No one is punished. Why? Because that is the way the UNP deals with its opponents, with anybody who criticises it. What is the effect of all this? It means that the party in power is promoting lawlessness and the authorities the police, whose duty is to maintain law and order, are ignored. Sometimes when these unlawful acts are committed with the help of a police officer, and when he is found guilty by a court of law, he is rewarded with a promotion.

Any government anywhere which permits such a situation is asking for trouble because it is undermining all the institutions which must maintain law and order. The UNP is reaping the trouble and the violence and the lawlessness, the seeds of all that, which the UNP sowed.

Some people, not important people, associated with other parties, may have joined the law breakers, especially after the first two or three days, just as the criminal elements and the wellknown gangs which are associated with some prominent persons, also jumped in...looters and so on. But to say that anti-government parties planned this is pure nonsense. As I said as soon as these parties were banned, they are looking for scapegoats... the UNP must look within, not outside. Every Sinhalese in the towns and villages where this happened knows the truth, because in these places, everybody is known by his face and his party loyalties are well known.

The Tamils also know the real culprits. In fact, Mr. Amirthalingam when he came to see me, told me

that himself. And of course the world outside also knows the facts. We all know how many people arrested by the police and kept in custody for these activities have been released. And everybody knows their connections. So we are not fooled. The people are not deceived.

**Q).** While the government and the opposition will disagree and continue to debate about the causes of the violence, you will agree that what's more important now is the political situation, the problems which arise from these terrible events?

**A).** Yes, of course.

**Q).** On behalf of your party, you have said that you have been and will remain opposed to terrorism and separatism, and yet you have a different stance on the question of negotiations. The UNP position is that the TULF must renounce separatism BEFORE any talks are held. But in a statement published in the SUN you disagree.

**A).** Yes, that the TULF must finally renounce the separatism but that need not be before negotiations. Amirthalingam explained his problem and I must say that I found the position was understandable. Rightly or wrongly, though we do not endorse their views, the people of the North voted for a separate state. Of course it was good election slogan for the T.U.L.F. But that is the TULF's mandate, as he told me. If he were to turn back on that mandate, he must get the approval of at least his party at a conference. But what are they to tell the conference? If they get some concrete offers, some practical alternative proposals, then they can tell their people, let's consider this, let's discuss this, this is what is offered...we are going to have an all-party conference with all the major parties, UNP, SLFP etc and let us at least



negotiate. The TULF can try to persuade their people. If you are interested in negotiations, you cannot ask one party to come to the table after giving up their main demand...that's not the way to open talks, if you are serious. We are all interested in a political solution and settlement,...not for the sake of the Tamils...but for the sake of the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and the whole country. If you accept that attitude, then you must approach in a different spirit. This is a serious crisis and those who lead the people must think very very seriously and act with courage and sincerity you must be bold and take the people, the whole country, into your confidence. The Government's recent conduct has not inspired any confidence among the Sinhalese or Tamils.

**Q).** One final question, madam...a controversial issue...this is about India's role. How do you see the Indian role?

**A).** I see a limited role but at the same time an useful one. Of course this is **our** problem, basically a problem for Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, you can't expect India not to be concerned. How can we? First there are the Indian citizens and the stateless people who may or may not become Indian citizens. You know that in the two agreements I signed after long and hard negotiations—at one stage I wanted to leave Delhi at once because nothing was happening...but Lal Bahadur Shastri intervened because of my talks with him in Cairo. Subsequently we found a solution... but what I am saying is that the future of several thousands was still

left in doubt. So India has a stake in that problem. Then there is the question of TamilNadu... there is strong feeling there, and we must realise that Mrs. Gandhi is very concerned about that... naturally...we are all politicians, and we must accept political facts. The Tamilnadu situation is a reality...we in Sri Lanka must realise that. What we must also realise is that Mrs. Gandhi is against separatism and terrorism...therefore on those fundamental problems, Mrs. Gandhi and we agree. If the position here is such that both parties, the government and the TULF, will not budge, and nobody here is strong enough to break what I can see is a deadlock, then it is useful to get the good offices of Mrs. Gandhi to break the deadlock. That is the role she can play. And I think that is what she is trying to do.

—Mervyn de Silva

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# Sri Lanka suffers diplomatic setback

**S**ri Lanka suffered a severe diplomatic set back when the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of discrimination and Protection of Minorities voted 10 to 8 on a resolution that the UN Human Rights Commission should ask the Secretary-General of the United Nations to seek information from the Government of Sri Lanka and other sources on the recent incidents of communal violence and to Submit a report to ECOSOC, the UN Economic and Social Council.

The UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of minorities was earlier considering sending a rapporteur to Sri Lanka to prepare a report and this was strongly opposed by the Sri Lanka Government. According to informed sources, a report of the Secretary-General of the UN will be worse as such investigations by the highest international civil servant would give a stamp of credibility to accusations that had been levelled against Sri Lanka.

The committee deliberated this issue in Geneva during the past few days.

According to sources, Sri Lanka could have stopped such interference into its internal affairs had a strong diplomatic contingent been sent to Geneva. Only three professionals were included in the eight-man team. The professional diplomats being Tissa Jayakody, Sri Lanka's representative in Geneva, Ben Fonseka from New York and Lal Kurukulasuriya, our Ambassador on Stockholm.

The Human Rights Committee of the UN is scheduled to meet in Geneva in February next year and if they decide to ask the Secretary-General to submit a report to ECOSOC (the United Nations Economic and Social Council) it would result in a very bad image of Sri Lanka being projected internationally.

Had there been strong lobbying the result could have been different sources said.

The countries who voted for the resolution calling on the Secretary-General to make a report on Sri Lanka were: Egypt, Belgium, Greece, Norway, France, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, the USA and the UK.

Those who voted against the resolution in accordance with the Sri Lanka thinking were: Iraq, Sudan, Pakistan, Syria, USSR, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.

Four countries had abstained. They were Zambia, Ghana, Argentina and India. Those who were not present at voting time were: Nigeria, Morocco, Romania and Panama.

While the countries of the Communist bloc and those of the Third World usually represent the point of view of their governments in this Committee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the delegate from western countries are not government representatives and are from non-Governmental organisations. These delegates often express points of view quite contrary to the views of the Government.

Sources said that this was the reason why countries like the UK and the US had voted against the line of the Sri Lanka Government.

The Soviet Union, according to informed sources, strongly supported Sri Lanka's point of view and had said that this action would amount to interference of the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, sources said. Their representative had also told the sub-committee that Sri Lanka had an excellent record on human rights and that communal problems were a legacy of colonialism.

The surprises came from Egypt and India, sources said. Sources also indicated that India, which had at the start taken a very strong-line against Sri Lanka had agreed to support it during the course of the talks when the Sri Lankan delegates wanted to raise issues like Assam. However, India later decided not to support Sri Lanka but to abstain from voting sources said.

— 'ISLAND'

## Indian polls . . .

(Continued from page 4)

**VAJPAYEE :** We sympathise with the people and the government of Sri Lanka as they have just passed through a grave crisis. But no country will allow its integrity to be undermined. And to describe President Jayewardene as a Ravana or to burn his effigies in India or to suggest military intervention are expressions of anger which cannot be justified and which will not help bring about lasting peace between the Tamilians and Sinhalese. The situation needs statesmanship in the interests of a long-term solution. Statesmanship on all sides.

**DR. SWAMY :** I think Sri Lanka will have to be very clearly told that it has now reached a cross-road. We might also tell them that if they take a false step, the danger is that either Sri Lanka will inevitably be annexed by India or it will get partitioned. Even partition will be a temporary solution : for once it gets partitioned Sri Lanka will cease to be viable because much of its technical staff comes from amongst the Tamilians. So either Sri Lanka acts in cooperation with India to solve the Tamil-Sinhalese problem or in the long run, accepts the risk of being annexed by India.

**SCINDIA :** The Sri Lankan government must act soon and arrive at a long-term political solution instead of isolating the Tamilians further. The Sri Lankan government must start immediate talks with Tamil leaders, and we must try and persuade them to initiate these talks, particularly with the TULF which talks of division of power and not of division of the country.

Mr. K. Subramanyam, Director of the Indian Institute of defence Studies and analyses, was asked for his comments on the Sri Lankan situation by another Indian journal THE WEEK. In an answer to the question whether there was deliberate attempt to "scare the people" in the island that India was about to attack, and whether this was "taken on the advice of the Americans", Mr. Subramanyam replied :

"I am not prepared to accept this view. There is a difference between the situation in the seventies when Sri Lankan forces sought our help militarily . . . . and now . . . . The Sri Lankan government appears to be not in control of the armed forces in the recent killings . . . ."



# UN resolution does not condemn Sri Lanka — Tyronne

**Mr. Tyronne Fernando (Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs)** told Parliament yesterday that the government had nothing to hide in regard to human rights in Sri Lanka.

He was replying to a question on the adjournment motion by Mr. Lakshman Jayakody (SLFP-Attanagalla), who asked for information about the resolution adopted by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of Geneva.

The acting Minister said that member was trying to make a mountain of a molehill.

1. "The resolution referred to was adopted by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in Geneva last Monday. The members of the Sub-Commission function as individuals and not as delegates of their Governments. (For instance Britain was represented by Labour MP).

Mr. Fernando said the resolution adopted was as follows:

(a) **Deeply concerned** about the recent communal violence in Sri Lanka, which cost severe loss of lives and property,

**Recalling** that Sri Lanka, has ratified both the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

**Recognizing** that the Government of Sri Lanka has sought to reduce ethnic tension and to foster national harmony,

**Noting with concern** that despite this, the relationship between the ethnic communities seems to have deteriorated,

1. **Requests** the Secretary-General to invite the government of Sri Lanka to submit information on the recent communal violence in Sri Lanka, including its efforts to investigate the incidents and to

promote national harmony, and to submit any information received from the Government of Sri Lanka to the Commission on Human Rights at its fortieth session;

2. **Recommends** to the Commission on Human Rights that it should examine the situation in Sri Lanka in the light of all available information.

3. Members from the following ten countries voted for the resolution:

(b) Egypt, UK, France, Peru, Belgium, Norway, Greece, USA, Mexico, Costa Rica.

Members from the following eight countries voted against the resolution:

(b) Yugoslavia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iraq, USSR, Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia.

Members from India, Zambia, Argentina and Ghana abstained.

4. Sri Lanka does not have a member on this Sub-Commission but the Sri Lanka Permanent Representative in Geneva participated in the proceedings and addressed the Sub-Commission.

5. Sri Lanka was able to modify the original resolution which was for the appointment of a special rapporteur to examine the relations between the ethnic communities in Sri Lanka. The original resolution stated as follows:

Requests the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights to appoint an individual of recognised international standing as special rapporteur with the mandate to examine the relations between the ethnic communities in Sri Lanka with a view to formulating proposals which could contribute to ensuring full protection of the Human Rights of all residents of the country,

Authorises the special rapporteur to seek relevant information from Inter-Governmental organisa-

tions, specialised agencies and Non Governmental organisations,

Urges the Government to co-operate with and assist the special rapporteur in the preparation of his report,

Requests the special rapporteur to submit a comprehensive report to the commission at its forty-first session.

6. The call to appoint a special rapporteur was dropped and the resolution finally adopted merely invites the Government of Sri Lanka to submit information on the recent communal disturbances in Sri Lanka.

7. I wish to stress that the resolution adopted does not condemn Sri Lanka or cast aspersions on our records of Human Rights.

In fact, it accepts the position the present government has sought to reduce ethnic tension and to foster national harmony.

8. The resolution adopted however is inoperative until and unless it is accepted and endorsed by the Commission on Human Rights which is the parent body of the Sub-Commission which is due to meet in Geneva next February. Even the request to the Secretary General will not be operative unless the commission so decides.

9. Finally, may I say that we have nothing to hide in regard to Human Rights in Sri Lanka. We have kept our Missions abroad and Foreign Governments fully informed, even during the disturbances. Journalists were permitted to visit Sri Lanka and see for themselves the situation. It is well-known that Sri Lanka is one among a handful of democracies in the world, where the fundamental Human Rights to choose once rulers regularly is preserved".

The Minister said the SLFP was trying to exploit the situation

(Continued on page 11)



# Press view of India's "good offices"

The international climate is in favour of an early settlement of the Sri Lanka crisis through India's good offices, writes G. K. Reddy, in a commentary on the front page of "The Hindu", of September 7.

G. K. Reddy, the Indian newspapers political correspondent who echoes the official line of the so-called "south bloc" (Foreign Ministry) in New Delhi, states that TULF leader A. Amirthalingam, will be proceeding to London to brief ministers and officials of the British government who have been closely following the Sri Lankan developments.

According to "The Hindu", western countries including the United States which have political, economic or strategic interests in Sri Lanka, do not want to alienate the Tamil community by identifying themselves unduly with the Sri Lankan problem.

"So it is quite understandable that they are keen on keeping an open line of communication with the Tamil community through Mr. Amirthalingam" adds The Hindu.

The report states :—

The Secretary-General of the TULF A. Amirthalingam, will be paying a brief visit to London later this week for explaining the Tamil community's point of view to senior Ministers and officials in the British Government who have been closely following the Sri Lankan developments.

He is due go back to Madras for a day or two before going to London and then get back to India in time to be able to reach Colombo for consultations when the Prime Minister's special envoy G. Parthasarathy, arrives there to resume talks with Sri Lankan President, J. R. Jayewardene, and his colleagues.

If he can find time, Mr. Amirthalingam may pay a flying visit to Bonn from London to meet the leaders of the West German Govern-

ment and appraise them of the Sri Lankan situation. He has also Invitations from several Scandinavian countries which have been greatly concerned over the recent holocaust in Sri Lanka which had been widely reported by the press, radio and television in Europe.

## Open communication line :

The Western countries, including the U. S. which have political, economic or strategic interests in Sri Lanka do not want to alienate the Tamil community altogether by identifying themselves unduly with the Jayewardene Government. So it is quite understandable that they are keeping an open line of communication with the Tamil community through Mr. Amirthalingam.

A more significant development is that almost all of them have been privately advising Mr. Jayewardene and his colleagues to utilise India's good offices in finding an amicable settlement of the Tamil problem. So none of the countries that the Sri Lanka Government had approached for assistance has in any way encouraged it to imagine that foreign military aid would be forthcoming in the event of a scrap with India as a result of renewed violence against the local Tamil people.

## Appreciation of India's effort :

There is greater appreciation abroad now of India's well-meaning initiative to lend a helping hand in resolving this tragic tangle in Sri Lanka and nobody is accusing Mrs. Gandhi of interfering in the internal affairs of the island in stressing the need for a lasting political settlement. The foreign diplomats in Delhi who have been keeping their government's informed of Mrs. Gandhi's efforts have not been giving any credence to the Sinhalese accusation that in pressing for a fair and equitable settlement of the Tamil problem India was in effect trying to impose its hegemony on this neighbouring nation.

The Western countries also realise that a prolongation of this tragedy in Sri Lanka, through a failure of

the current Indian efforts to assist the two communities in finding a reasonable settlement would embitter feelings further and inflame passions to such an extent that it would end up in a much bigger upheaval leading inevitably to a Cyprus type situation They are keen on averting such a development since any polarisation of this kind would render Sri Lanka highly vulnerable to superpower involvement because of the island's strategic importance.

## Good relations with TULF :

It is because of these complexities that countries like Britain have shed their earlier inhibition and are now ready to establish good relations with the TULF leaders in a balancing effort to preserve their influence. The hardliners in Mr. Jayewardene's Cabinet would be sadly mistaken if they continue to rely on the support of these powers in resisting the Indian pleas for a political solution to meet the legitimate demands of the Tamils.

The international climate is thus in favour of an early settlement of the Sri Lanka crisis through India's good offices. So the Government of India has welcomed Mr. Amirthalingam's decision to make a brief trip to London to create a better awareness abroad that the Tamil community was ready for a reasonable compromise that enables it to live with dignity and security on a footing of complete equality with the Sinhalese majority as a single nation.

The TULF leader, who will be accompanied by his wife, will have an opportunity to meet their elder son who has been living in exile in London.

— "SUN"



# Signs of hope on Sri Lanka issue

G. K. Reddy

NEW DELHI, Sept. 2.

The Prime Minister's special envoy Mr. G. Parthasarathy, has returned from his week-long visit to Colombo with the distinct impression that there might be some encouraging developments in the near future opening up the possibilities of negotiable basis for meeting the substance of the Tamil community's demands within the framework of a united Sri Lanka.

But in reporting the outcome of his mission to Mrs. Gandhi today, he did not minimise the many hurdles that still remain to be overcome before the Jayewardene Government and Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leaders could get down to detailed discussions.

As an emissary of the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Parthasarathy did not put forward any proposals as such for resolving this complex problem but in helping the Sri Lanka Government and the leaders of the Tamil community to formulate their ideas of what would be a reasonable basis for a settlement, he tried to establish some common ground for negotiating a settlement.

It was however made quite clear to the Sri Lanka President, Mr. Jayewardene that his concept of a settlement within the present unitary Constitution for limited local self-government at district level through development councils with some enhanced power would not meet the requirements of the present situation.

The TULF leaders could not be persuaded to give up their demand for a separate State unless they were assured of real regional autonomy with full executive legislative and judicial powers to safeguard their interests.

The Sri Lanka President continued to maintain that the island was too small to be divided into separate States with a federal set-up and that the same purpose would be served by reactivating the district

councils and expanding their powers to give the local communities an adequate sense of participation in the developmental activities of their respective regions. But he was totally averse to the very idea of granting the Tamil community local autonomy in areas where they were in majority in the name of a federal form of Government.

One of the ideas under consideration was to convene an informal meeting of all party leaders to exchange views on what would be a widely acceptable basis for finding a lasting settlement of Sri Lanka's ethnic problem.

If the Sinhalese leaders arrive at a consensus on what should be done to meet the substance of the Tamil community's demand for an adequate share of power at various levels of Government, then a proper round table conference could be held at an appropriate stage to negotiate a broad-based political settlement for satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people.

The question of the remaining stateless persons of Indian origin was discussed during Mr. Parthasarathy's visit and he was assured that the Sri Lanka Government would grant them full citizenship in due course. There were some 150,000 persons in this category and Mr. Jayewardene had promised when he came to Delhi for the non-aligned summit in early March that to start with he would grant them full civic rights.

The question of restoration of the damaged properties taken over by the Sri Lanka Government to their rightful owners was also discussed. but Mr. Jayewardene and his advisers seemed to be toying with the idea of diversification of trade by reallocating some of the business premises in the course of returning the rest to the Tamils who owned them. Mr. Parthasarathy was, however, given a general assurance that the rights of the original owners would be respected, without defining to what extent it would be done in

consonance with the new policy of economic diversification.

There was also some reference during these discussions to the harassment of Indian fishermen in the Rameswaram area by the Sri Lankan navy and Mr. Parthasarathy was told that the detained fishing boat with the eight missing fishermen would be released soon. He was also assured that complaints of harassment would be looked into and suitable steps taken to prevent them in future.

According to official sources who summed up the outcome of Mr. Parthasarathy's visit, it helped to make the leaders of the Sinhalese and Tamil communities at least to start thinking of a lasting political solution to their ethnic problems without going through the trauma of recurring violence. Though it was too early to think in terms of a breakthrough in bridging the gulf and opening up the possibilities of an early settlement, the visit had certainly helped to open the way for some movement forward in the near future.

And when Mr. Parthasarathy goes to Colombo in another fortnight to resume his talks with both sides, they would have mulled over the ideas emerging from the earlier discussions and come to some tentative conclusions how far they could go in narrowing down their differences and exploring the possibilities of a compromise without giving up their rigid positions in advance. The most important and perhaps the only positive gain for the time being is a slight abatement of the inflamed passions in the wake of a general expectation of a renewed effort to settle this tragic problem before the island is rocked by yet another convulsion.

## PAC briefed

The Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet, which met here today, is understood to have been apprised of the talks Mr. Parthasarathy had with Sri Lanka leaders, reports PTI.



# THE SRI LANKA ISSUE

AS G. PARTHASARATHI prepared to leave for Sri Lanka to meet President Jayewardene, **INDIA TODAY** commissioned Marketing and Research Group (MARG), a leading independent market research agency, to conduct a poll on the Sri Lanka issue.

Over three days (August 22–August 24), MARG interviewers spanned out over three cities, Delhi (the national capital), Bombay (the commercial capital) and Madras (the Tamil capital) and conducted a total of 832 interviews. The interviews were divided almost equally between men and women in each city. The number of interviews conducted in each city were — Delhi : 278 : Bombay 304 ; and Madras : 250.

The 832 detailed interviews were conducted with adults who claimed to be aware of the Sri Lanka issue. It is worth noting that around 50 per cent of the people in Bombay and around 30 per cent in Delhi were not aware of the Sri Lanka problem. The level of ignorance, surprisingly, did not vary significantly between men and women. As may be expected, the level of ignorance was very low in Madras.

## The Indian Government's reaction to the Sri Lanka situation :

Between 41 per cent and 58 per cent of the respondents in the three cities felt that the Indian Government's response was 'just right'. More respondents in Madras and Bombay (than in Delhi) thought that the Indian Government had reacted 'too mildly'. While 45 per cent of the women in Madras accused the Government of acting 'too mildly', only 35 per cent of the men did so. Only around 10 per cent in the three cities believed that the reaction of the Indian Government was too strong.

## The return of the Tamils :

All respondents were asked : "Do you think that all Tamils settled in Sri Lanka should be allowed to return permanently to India or do you think they should continue to live in Sri Lanka?"

There was a very strong feeling that the Tamils settled in Sri Lanka should continue to live there. In Madras, this view was held more strongly by men (89 per cent) than by women (66 per cent).

## Did Sri Lanka make and appeal for foreign military aid ?

In Madras, opinion is fairly evenly divided on this question, though the clear majority of the men (72 per cent) think that Sri Lanka did ask for military aid, while 24 per cent disagreed. Among the women, a majority (55 per cent) felt that Sri Lanka had not appealed for military aid, 24 per cent said that Sri Lanka had asked for military aid, while 21 per cent were unable to comment.

According to the MARG poll, between 32 per cent and 51 per cent of the respondents in Delhi and Bombay did not offer a comment on this question. Among those who did, the balance of opinion was fairly even in Bombay, but in Delhi, the general feeling was that Sri Lanka had not asked foreign powers for military aid.

## Is the demand for a Tamil nation (Eelam) justified ?

The MARG poll shows that in Delhi, the overwhelming feeling (86 per cent) is that the demand is not justified. While this view is shared in Madras (62 per cent), surprisingly in Bombay, a bare 50 per cent feel that this demand is not justified, while 40 per cent back the demand for a Tamil nation on the island of Sri Lanka.

## Should India have intervened militarily in Sri Lanka ?

In all cities, the answer is a clear 'No' — India should not have intervened militarily in Sri Lanka. It is only among the women in Madras that the interventionists (43 per cent) are more numerous than the non-interventionists (36 per cent).

## Does India have the moral right to intervene in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka ?

All respondents covered on the MARG poll were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with two statements :

1. The Government of India should play an active role in the Sri Lanka situation since the affected people are Tamils and there is a very large Tamil community in India.
2. Given that India has similar problems in Assam and Panjab and resents foreign intervention, it has no moral right to intervene in Sri Lanka.

The balance of opinion clearly suggests (particularly in Madras) that the Indian Government should play an active role in the Sri Lanka situation as the affected people are Tamils. In Delhi, respondents clearly agree that India has no moral right to intervene in Sri Lanka. In Bombay, opinion is evenly balanced but in Madras, the balance of opinion suggests that, even if India resents foreign intervention in her affairs, she is morally justified in intervening in Sri Lanka.

To sum up, it appears that the Indian Government's response to the Sri Lanka situation has been 'just right'. There is little support for the Tamil Eelam or for the return of Sri Lanka Tamils to India. While India should play an active role in the Sri Lanka situation, India is not justified in intervening militarily.

## UN Resolution . . .

(Continued from page 8)

today and tarnish the Government's image but they would never succeed.

**Mr. Ananda Dassanayake (SLFP –Kotmala)** objected to the acting Minister referring like that to the SLFP.

**Mr. Fernando :** I am glad the the member for Kotmale is dissociating himself with this.

**Dr. Nissanka Wijeratna, Minister of Justice** accused the SLFP of claiming to put the country before themselves but did not give any specific solution to problems.



# Reflections on the national crisis and conflict resolution

Cassandra

The hard questions which emerge after the shocking events of Black July have little to do with whether one wants a separate state or a unitary government, whether one wants ethnic quotas or land resettlement, whether Marx approves of the instrumental use of the communal issue etc. "The Crisis of Civilization" which really faces us is integrally linked to how we as a society have chosen to resolve our fundamental political conflicts. A hundred years may pass us by but the Sinhalese will never agree with Tamils and the Left will never agree with the Right. What then is the process which has to be adopted at the highest levels to ensure the proper framework for resolution of disputes? What values have to be learnt and taught to ensure that the channels of deliberation expose falsehood, mitigate violence and leave maximum leeway for debate, negotiation and resolution. Unless we are all willing to unite around a process which is non-violent, and rational, any political end which we seek to enforce must necessarily be the result of ceaseless violence.

Black July may be the last sign post of a fledgeling democracy. Every value of a liberal society was definitely flaunted by the frenzied mob, their actions, tacitly approved by an alarming majority and rationalized by a political Establishment hostage to the forces of confrontation. It is said that the "art of civilization is the art of drawing lines". As a nation we have collectively lost the ability to distinguish between terrorist and civilian, nationalist and hooligan. We have lost the capacity to be rational and sensitive. To display such qualities is in itself "suspect". As the Lanka Guardian hinted in its last issue, 'terror' and 'tiger' have become a national state of mind; the "GONIBILLAS" of contemporary Sri Lankan consciousness.

How then do we even try to emerge from this state of moral paralysis? At present national guilt is expressed in one of two ways. The first are expressions of shame and guilt—though these are few and far between limited to certain English newspapers. This lack of reaction is perhaps the most disheartening aspect of our present crisis. For eg, whatever may be said about the criminal acts of the bloodthirsty Begin regime, it must be accepted that forty thousand Israelis took to the street protesting the fact that their troops looked the other way or actively encouraged the massacre of Palestinians even though the refugee camps were well-known as breeding grounds for guerrilla activity against Israel. The dearth of such a spontaneous outcry in Sri Lanka from even the liberal establishment is a testament to how hatred and irrationality have dehumanized any sense of values.

One of the primary assumptions of any civilized society is that an individual cannot be punished because he shares the physical or cultural characteristics of a specific group. He can only be punished if he has in fact defied the law and only after a hearing. In any event the death penalty remedies for the property are only meted out in the most extreme cases and in a rational manner. Burning houses in Wellawatte cannot be justified in any way as a retaliation for killing of thirteen armed soldiers on patrol in the Jaffna peninsula. To even begin to do so is not only to defy logic but to engage in a crude and irrational process of justification which if done on a large scale will have major political implications. We will soon become the society described in V. S. Naipaul's analysis of Uruguay.

"There is no middle way. Political attitudes have grown simpler & harder; and it is impossible not to take sides. Parricide or reactionary, left wing or right wing each side now

finds in the other the enemy he needs. Each side now assigns a destructive role to the other, and as in Chile, people grow into their roles. Those who can, get out".

The second way in which national guilt has manifested itself is with the search for "the greater enemy" usually embodied as... the foreign journalist. In this time of crisis for the national press and patriotic individuals to give nationwide publicity to a quibbling about the wrong picture placed in a foreign newspaper by an ill-informed sub-editor, is down right ludicrous. Such irritations of misrepresentation will continue before and after the events. On the other hand, after the Assam massacre, Indian pressmen like Arun Shourie began in-depth investigations researched police and army communications, studied inter-governmental memoranda and wrote scathing exposed of their national government. Their objective was simple this must not be permitted to recur. If our press is instilled with a similar type of commitment and guilt turned activist and not defensive, we may in fact prevent future excesses. Whatever we think of the foreign press we cannot pretend that people were not burnt alive or that property was not destroyed. Instead of quibbling and appearing even more callous and insensitive in the eyes of the world we should accept our shame and honestly search for the truth. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi captured the imagination of the world not by screaming loudly in defense of ignominy but by honestly confronting the ugliness which exists in their society. If our present state of guilt is to result in positive action we must learn to look inward, to expose the very real crisis of conscience.

In this light, we must also learn to re-examine the underlying political issues. A historian researching ethnic issues in Asia said at a



recent seminar, "Ethnic problems in Asia cannot be solved, they can only be managed". Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims will never agree on the roots of ethnic conflict and its proper resolution; Mutually conflicting perceptions will always keep us apart. The fundamental problem is therefore to outline an approach which will provide for a *modus vivendi* regardless of conflicting beliefs. This is really our greatest challenge.

The question of Terrorism still remains a major stumbling block to rational discussion. A hackneyed military rule of thumb has always been that the one thing worse than underestimating the strength of the other side is to overestimate it. In many ways the so-called Tigers have dealt a severe psychological blow to the Sinhala nation if the average man in the street can actually believe that a handful of Tigers will be able to capture the city of Colombo and keep it under siege! Shouting "Tiger" in a crowded street in Colombo has now the same effect as shouting fire in a crowded theatre. If we are to overcome the problem of "terrorism", which we must if we are to remain a democracy, we have to deal with it rationally and scientifically. The first step in that process must be to delink in the national consciousness the connection between the violent espousers of a cause and its general beneficiaries. The JVP expounded the cause of the poor in 1971 but it would be ludicrous to suggest that the systematic punishment of poor people is the means of combating JVP activities. No spokesman for any Sinhalese party has really helped in making this distinction. Whatever grievances Tamils may have, they have not, and do not, automatically support the specific means of Terrorism for the realisation of political goals. That terrorism is brutal and misguided is a self-evident truth. The movement will only grow if legitimate, non-violent channels for airing views, and achieving rational consensus have been closed. Military successes against terrorists can only occur alongside a campaign for gaining the hearts and minds of the populace. Any other strategy will always

be self-defeating, creating more problems than answers. Laws such as the Prevention of Terrorism act have built in abuses. Their extensive use coupled with an overpowering, youthful and barely trained army presence can only accelerate the vicious cycle of violence and destruction. There will always be marginal groups in society who will engage in acts of violence in pursuit of certain causes. However, existing governments must also bear full responsibility if they legitimize these extreme activities by action or over-reaction. The refusal of government to manage the conflicts of a modern society in an enlightened and restrained manner will only throw us back into a primitive era of tribalism and perpetual violence.

As for immediate solutions it still strikes me as somewhat strange that a rational policy of effective decentralization which will benefit all parts of the island should be refused because of primeval fears even in a society committed to rapid modernization. In North-East where the disgruntled Tamil population is 92% and 60% respectively surely it can only be enlightened self-interest to promote such decentralization. Such action will naturally lessen the onus on the central government to plan and develop the areas as well.

If the Sinhalese are convinced that the Tamils have a "greater share of the pie", it is important to rationally and collectively examine this argument and to devise creative instruments which will remedy this imbalance. A glance through the Central Bank Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey seems to show that not all Sinhalese suffer from economic backwardness. It is really the Kandyan Sinhalese and the Tamil plantation worker who appear to receive the least. Nevertheless, all these grievances can be effectively handled through economic policy and special programmes for nation development. In the end it is poverty which we wish to eradicate. Whatever it occurs Socio-economic figures are not fixed ends in themselves. The challenge to policy-

makers in this area is to devise policies which remedy any imbalance without naming specific ethnic groups as beneficiaries or victims. Such policies have been tried in diverse countries such as Singapore, The People's Republic of China, and the USA with some measure of success. University admissions, education, employment, economic privilege are all issues which are negotiable and manageable. They are not flags of identity transfixed in time and place symbolising unalterable truths. To approach them as such is to create unnecessary psychological impasses which are unwarranted and self-defeating. As the Sinhalese control the national legislative process they have nothing really to fear for they have absolute control over national economic policy. It is only imperative that they exercise this control rationally and fairly, not only with regard to the Tamils but with regard to all sectors of society.

As I said earlier, the pervasive problem we face today is not one of "ends", it is really a problem of means — how a civilized society should resolve conflicts inherent in its social structure. We cannot predict the conflicts of the future — they may infact have little to do with communities — but we have a duty to set in motion the proper process by which these conflicts are resolved without savagery and violence. Pervasive lawlessness on the part of individuals, governments and political parties and indifference by the public has contributed to this "crisis of civilisation". We have become so insular and parochial that the larger realities of geo-politics and world-history have given way to the rule of the village bully. It is perhaps imperative that we begin to take a deep hard and honest look into ourselves and where we are heading. As Jose Diokno often puts it "fear is contagious, but courage is not less so".



# PAKISTAN : ON THE BOIL

Bhabani Sen Gupta

FOREIGN  
NEWS

**N**O DICTATOR in history has ever known when exactly the bells begin to toll for him. In June and July, Pakistan's third military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq was masquerading at home and abroad as one the timber of whose six-year-old regime was as durable as mortal minds could fathom. Came the ides of August, and a political storm burst over Pakistan taking everyone by surprise.

In less than a week the entire province of Sind was aflame, and there was hardly any major city in all Pakistan where large knots of people did not march protesting against military rule and demanding that democracy be restored. Outside Sind, rural Pakistan was quiescent until the last days of August, but no one knew if it would be so in September. Exceptionally largely attended protest meetings in Lahore enabled leaders of the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) to decide that September be the month of reckoning for the Zia regime in Punjab. Punjab dominates Pakistan with 59 per cent of the country's population, the cradle of its army and its bureaucracy.

In the second week of the MDR agitation, there were signals of a larger storm brewing. The main Baluch parties had stayed away from the civil disobedience movement, still licking the wounds that Bhutto had inflicted on Baluchistan in the '70s. But on August 18, one of the major Baluch organisations, the Pakistan National Party, banned and defunct like all other parties in Pakistan but all still mysteriously functioning, decided to join the movement and called for a general strike in Quetta on August 23. The call was heeded by a surprisingly large number of people. Much of the city downed its shutters. In Peshawar, the aged Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, had asked his followers to keep their distance from the MDR movement. His son Wali Khan was holidaying in London and had been recently joined by his wife. Begum Wali Khan flew back to Pakistan on August 17, went immediately into a huddle

with her father-in-law, from which two events followed: she took over leadership of MRD, and was at once taken into custody by the police, while Ghaffar Khan reversed his previous stand and asked his supporters to join the movement. He was put under house arrest, but the antimilitary regime movement quickly spread to the college and university campuses.

## Protest Toll:

In the first 10 days of the unrest, Zia's police carried away well over 1,500 political leaders and workers. More than 30 Pakistanis were killed in "police" firings, all in Sind; at least 300 were wounded, some of them identified in the Pakistani press as students. Only once before during Zia's rule were mass arrests made in Pakistan — in 1981-82 in the wake of the hijacking of a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane to Afghanistan. In those fearful months, by arresting 20,000 Pakistanis (or 2,000, according to the regime), Zia was able to pre-empt a political challenge from the newly-constituted MRD. In the next 15 months, most Pakistanis resigned themselves to a long spell of military rule. The regime remained alienated from the people. But there was no air of confrontation in Pakistan. There was, instead, a vapid air of cynicism amongst the Pakistani elite. And a sharp loss of credibility in MRD as a viable vehicle of political change in Pakistan — from arbitrary and corrupt military rule to representative government.

For the cynicism and loss of credibility, leaders of the MRD were themselves to blame. A coalition of nine "defunct" political parties. MRD is a *khichri* of left, right, centrist and moderately Islamic elements. Its leaders belong to the same social class and the same age-group — sporting famous Punjabi or Shindhi surnames that carry a feudal odour. Politics for most of them is, or has long been, business and pleasure by other means. They live in richly furnished houses, ride imported cars, fly out of Pakistan every now and then, disagree on most issues

when they huddle "secretly" in Karachi or Lahore. Most of the smaller parties nurse old scars inflicted by Bhutto; they are more afraid of than in love with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) presided over by the "Bhutto women", Bhutto's wife Nusrat (now under medical treatment in Europe), and his daughter, Benazir, long under house arrest. Above all, the PPP leaders are afraid of the political workers of their own parties, younger men of militant orientation, chafing to go into action against military rule which they passionately hate. While the PPP leaders remain unreconciled to Zia, leaders of other groups occasionally meet him privately, even counsel him on how to run the country. Thus, when MRD decided to launch a civil disobedience movement to coincide with Zia's much-flaunted "new political structure" to be launched on August 14, Pakistan's 36th anniversary, few people expected anything big to happen, least of all Zia himself.

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ALL DICTATORS make one fatal mistake from which history takes its own course and there's no turning back. Zia is a nimble politician. Perhaps his fatal mistake was to allow a certain constitutional process to be revived in Pakistan. If he had kept to himself the task of handing down to the people a "new political structure", king-like, he would not have faced the confrontation that suddenly erupted in mid-August. Anxious to carry some kind of a popular sanction with him, Zia appointed three special committees, one of the hand-picked Majlis-e-Shoora, one of the Council of Islamic Ideology which backs him the whole hog, and a third, of the Cabinet. The 30-member special committee of the Shoora presented its recommendations to the Shoora itself and there was a debate for more than a week in which a large number of members took part and which was reported in the mass media. The result was an animation in Pakistan on what the "new" political structure should be,



a public debate the like of which never took place since Zia pushed Bhutto out of power and seized the reins of government in the summer of 1977.

The highlights of the Shoora recommendations that caught the imagination of broad sections of the Pakistani people were:

- that the 1973 Constitution be restored in its basic essentials, including the fundamental rights and a totally independent judiciary;

- and that there be a balance between the powers of the President and the prime minister, which ruled out a presidential system of government.

The Shoora also approved certain amendments to the 1973 Constitution to allow for freer play of Islamic values. During the debate in the Shoora, a majority of some 70 participants asked for the "full restoration" of the 1973 Constitution. Extract from a typical day's report of the debate in an Islamabad newspaper: "A majority of the members taking part in the debate on the report of the special committee on the system of government on the fourth day in the Majlis-e-Shoora strongly pleaded for the restoration of the 1973 Constitution and the parliamentary system as well as holding of general elections in the country." In fact, in a matter of mere two weeks, a national consensus emerged in Pakistan around two demands: restoration of the 1973 Constitution with minor modifications to suit Zia's Islamic preferences, and a cabinet system of government through parliamentary elections contested freely by the political parties. This was more than Zia had bargained for.

### High Expectations

Pakistanis were agog with expectations and fears as they waited impatiently for Zia-ul-Haq's "new political structure". Wrote the *Muslim* of Islamabad. "Never in recent memory have people looked towards August 14 with such anticipation and apprehension as this year". Echoed *Dawn* of Karachi, "From the foreign diplomat to the civil servant, down to the average citizen, almost everybody appears to be looking

forward to the August 14 pronouncement." Apprehending a groundswell of popular feelings, Zia made known through his Information Minister, Raja Zafarul Haq, that the Delphic voice would be heard two days in advance, on August 12. The newspapers went on feeding the great white hope of the masses. *Dawn* reported that the President was about to offer "something concrete" if only to defuse a possible popular protest under the auspices of MRD. *Dawn* also warned the regime that "anything half-hearted or lukewarm, any scheme short of total restoration of democracy" might turn out to be "counter-productive". The *Muslim* tuned in, "A hope-ful factor, insofar as political parties of different leanings and persuasions are concerned, is that there is a clear consensus on 1973 Constitution as providing an agreed framework for the country's governance. The Government too, appears to be basically in agreement with this position."

Whether the newspapers were playing the game by their own rules or were ignorant of Zia's intentions, when the presidential commandments were handed down a pall of gloom descended on Pakistan and soon it turned into a red film of anger. Taking refuge behind the fig-leaf of "differences" among the three special committees on what kind of political system would suit Pakistan best, Zia gave his country men a post-dated cheque on a nearly insolvent bank. His great design envisaged a presidential form of government in which the prime minister would be chosen by the President enjoy limited powers and rule at the President's pleasure. The President would be indirectly elected by an electoral college which remained undefined; he would be commander-in-chief of the armed forces as well as head of the Government with power to veto legislation passed by Parliament.

Zia promised step-by-step election to a national Parliament, beginning with partyless election to the local bodies in September, followed by provincial elections in March 1984, and then, in March 1985, parliamentary election. Since there was a lot of time between now and the two later polls, he

remained mum on the role of political parties thereby giving an impression that the parties would be kept outside the political process. Candidates would be screened for their Islamic credentials by bodies that remained undefined. Zia made only two concessions to public opinion: the 1973 Constitution would be restored in a symbolic form, and there would be no integral role in the political process for the armed forces.

### Subtle Machination

At a press conference on August 15, Zia was asked if he would run for President. With characteristic modesty, Zia replied that he had no "political design", but hastened to add that his only goal was to take the "process of Islamisation to its logical conclusion from where there will be no turning back". Then, with characteristic ambiguity, he remarked that it was a "lifetime process" though he had not decided to invest "my whole life" in it. He had only announced a 500-day programme in which he would try to "complete the process".

In the elliptical language of Pakistani police under military rule, what Zia said was immediately interpreted to mean that if election were held under the scheme pronounced by General Zia-ul-Haq, the first President to rule Pakistan "constitutionally" would be Zia-ul-Haq. For how long, nobody knew, for the August 12 announcement did not define a presidential term. The *Guardian* read a sombre meaning in the presidential design: "Zia is not sure of himself". Why else should he, after six years of military rule, set a date in 1985? Why else should he "hug a quaking Constitution to his chest"?

MRD had called for civil disobedience for a week; its leaders did not expect anything more than small knots of political persons courting arrest in most cities of Pakistan thereby registering a symbolic mass protest against Ziaulhaqisation of Pakistani Politics. In the lazy morning of August 14, the military Government went ahead with officially sponsored celebrations of Pakistan's 36th Independence Day. The military-bureaucratic-landlord-industrial



complex that rules Pakistan did not even notice the deep anguish written on the faces of the people who gathered in surprisingly large numbers in Karachi and Lahore, chanting anti-military regime slogans and demanding return of democracy. What newspapers merely described as a "big gathering" assembled at the Mazar-e-Quaide-Azam in Karachi and listened for 90 minutes to MRD leaders denounce the military rule and tear apart Zia's "political structure". The leaders and an indefinite number of political workers were whisked away by policemen dressed in civilian clothes. After the meeting the protesters marched towards Islamia College. The police burst teargas shells and made a lathi-charge. Thus began the great confrontation between the regime and the people in Karachi and Sind.

### Police Action

The police succeeded in preventing a protest rally from taking place in Rawalpindi. But in Lahore, despite a police cordon thrown from Iqbal Park to Kila Lachman Singh and the presence of a contingent of mounted police, a "large number of political workers" entered the Minar-e-Pakistan. Reported a major Pakistani daily, "The presence of such a large number of political workers at the Minar was beyond the expectation of political circles." Protest demonstrations were held in Peshawar also, where a former speaker of the North West Frontier Province Assembly, Mohammad Hanif Khan, and two former ministers, Abdul Razik Khan and Abdul Mastan Khan, were among the leaders picked up by the police. More significant was the participation in the movement of two leaders of the Jamat-ul-Islami (JIU), Maulana Binouri and Maulana Abdul Bari Jan, because only a day before JIU had announced that it would not join the MRD protest.

The first clash between the people and the police occurred in Karachi on August 16. Undaunted by the presence of a large, police force, a big crowd gathered near the Regal bus stop in the hot and humid early afternoon. Exactly at 3.15 p.m a public bus halted at the stand and from it ali-

ghed two MRD leaders, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and Meiraj Mohammad Khan. As soon as the crowd spied them, they rushed to greet them shouting slogans against martial law. Policemen, again wearing civilian clothes, grabbed them by the collar and pushed them towards a waiting van. The van was chased by the crowd for a distance, and then the crowd was chased away by the police. Among the protesters were seen four women who were quickly taken away by the police. Shops and hotels in the busy area of the port city closed down. The "people and the police stood face to face". The police began to pick up people at random. They set a government bus on fire on M.A. Jinnah Road.

On the third day, the agitation spread all over Sind, and the first police firing occurred at Dadu, a town north of Karachi, where frenzied masses stormed a jail and released 100 prisoners, ripped away several metres of rail track, buses and damaged a passenger car at the railway station. In the police firing one man was killed, while a DSP and three policemen were injured by missiles hurled by protesters. Protest meetings were held in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Quetta and Peshawar. At Dera Ismail Khan, in the Frontier Province, among those arrested were a former president of the Peshawar University, Azam Afidi, and a former principal of the degree college at Mardan, Said Kamal. MRD circles in London claimed that the police had arrested 5,000 Pakistanis and that Pakistan was in complete turmoil.

A BBC NEWSCAST in the evening of August 18 said. "On the fourth day of the civil disobedience campaign, thousands of supporters of MRD again defied martial law to hold protest meetings and marches. MRD supporters were reported out in force in many of the towns and cities along the Indus Valley and disturbances appear to be intensifying in certain areas" The BBC correspondent in Pakistan said the agitation had a profound impact on Sind. Troops were moved into Dadu. There was a "confrontation" between the

Sind police and "paramilitary forces" in which one policeman was killed. In the next three days some 15 towns in Sind were placed under army control. The Voice of America (VOA) reported on August 20 that troops "are remaining in alert all over Pakistan. The movement had left at least 10 dead and more than 1,000 people arrested". Judges were handing in "strict sentences", including hard labour, heavy fines and lashes.

The MRD limit of July 22 passed, by which date most of the MRD leaders were in jail. But the agitation appeared to be spreading rather than tapering off. A remarkable feature of the campaign was the huge masses that turned out for protest meetings and demonstrations. What Pakistani newspapers described as "large numbers" was quantified in BBC and VOA broadcasts as 20,000, 40,000 and in Western wire services as even 50,000! The police fired several times at different unruly crowds in Sind.

What do the disturbances portend for Pakistan? Soon after the disturbances started, *The Guardian* of London asked the question that was gnawing at the minds of foreign offices the world over: "How long has Zia got?" Pakistan's own chequered political history offers no clue except that when a military dictator totters, his fall cannot be far away. When a scuffle between students and policemen broke out in Rawalpindi Polytechnique in 1968, few saw it as a great mishap; yet by March the same year, Ayub was out. A helplessly cornered Yahya Khan ordered the first one-man-one-vote election in Pakistan in December 1970 as a possible way out for himself and his regime; one year later he was a nonperson and Pakistan lay dismembered.

Diplomatic circles in New Delhi saw three possible scenarios developing in Pakistan in the coming weeks and months. If the movement snowballs to Punjab, Zia will have no alternative to talking with MRD leaders and setting a timetable for orderly election and transfer of power. Scenario two would be the ouster of Zia by another general if the agitation



goes on gathering momentum and if it threatens to break up the unity of the military-bureaucratic *biradari* (community). The third possibility is that Zia, with united support from the generals and the top brass of the bureaucracy, suppresses the movement with severe use of ruthless coercive force.

The crucial factor in all these scenarios is the momentum of the anti-Martial Law agitation. If the movement spreads to Punjab, the Frontier and Baluchistan, and draws in larger sections of students, industrial workers and the peasantry, Zia will probably have to step down, either in favour of another general or after an early election. If another general replaces Zia, he would like to continue Pakistan's foreign policy, but will have to work out with the political leaders an agreed transition to civilian rule. The army in Pakistan is not like the army in Turkey, a country that Zia-ul-Haq apparently holds in high esteem. The Pakistan armed forces are too stretched and too much a part of the people. In a sustained political struggle between the people and military rule, the sympathies of the *jawan* will be with the people.

### Possible Repercussions

Whether MRD will be able to offer a viable, stable representative government to Pakistan is a question that must disturb a lot of people within and outside the country. Its lack of a charismatic leader may turn out to be its greatest advantage. If the PPP has learnt the correct lessons from the excesses and follies of Bhutto, it will respect the other opposition parties, try genuinely and honestly to work with them, and keep the army strictly confined to its legitimate role: defending the frontiers of Pakistan. Only one issue would PPP leaders insist on having their way: the fate of a fallen Zia-ul-Haq

What would be the regional and world repercussions of a regime change in Pakistan? The West, especially the US, placed high stakes in the stability of the Zia regime. If it crumbles, the disaster for America in the Persian Gulf-South Asian region will be completely comparable to the fall of the late Shah of Iran. The US will have to overhaul its strategies for the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and South Asia. The great American "loss" will be a significant Soviet gain.

Even if Zia does not fall in the near future, any perceived weakness of his regime, wobbling of his political grip of Pakistan will affect at least two major diplomatic processes ongoing for some time. The USSR will not be over-anxious to negotiate and conclude a political settlement of the Afghan issue with a Pakistani regime that may not last next year. It would rather wait for the political parties to get back to power because most of the MRD constituents are committed to pursue friendly relations with Afghanistan and the USSR.

There is a hubris in most human affairs, but none as menacing as it is for a dictator. He is the monarch of all he surveys as long as the going is good. Something snaps somewhere and an entire edifice, built with so much glitter on crushed hopes and aspirations of millions comes down like a house of cards.

The remarkable thing of the hubris of dictators is that they never learn from the hubris of one another. Zia-ul-Haq only learnt two wrong lessons from his two predecessors: not to hold election to a sovereign parliament and not to allow the political parties to come back to Pakistan's political life. Even if he survives, neither he nor his regime will be the same again. The days of both now seem to be numbered. Whether the date is 1984 or 1985 the coming months will tell.

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# Zia faces his greatest test

John Elliott

PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ'S reputation as the agile military dictator of Pakistan is facing its severest test. The country has been hit by 10 days of often violent demonstrations that have undermined the authority of his six-year-old regime. Now he has to find a way of quelling the troubles before they develop further without sparking an even more explosive reaction which might just remove him from power.

The President has always claimed that his actions and the success or otherwise of his martial law regime are in the hands of Allah. He sees no reason why the country should not peacefully accept the plans for a "Muslim state and a truly Islamic system" which he outlined on August 12, involving gradual moves towards parliamentary elections and the ending of martial law by March 1985.

But leaders of the country's banned (or "defunct" as they are officially dubbed) political parties think otherwise. Eight of the parties have turned their loosely organised Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) into a surprisingly successful country-wide campaign. The key issue at stake is the future of General Zia's army-controlled regime and the freedom that he should have to dictate when and how elections are to be held. This relatively arid subject has been given a new dimension by political activists in the southern province of Sind who want more autonomy from the Federal Government, traditionally dominated by the major province of Punjab. They have turned a moderately peaceful campaign of civil disobedience into a series of increasingly violent riots, which have seriously dented President Zia's image as a smooth power broker.

The organisers' aim is to step up fairly low-key activity in the internationally sensitive North-West Frontier area of Peshawar near Afghanistan and more importantly, to spread violence to the Punjabis which has been relatively peaceful.

Then they reckon President Zia and his fellow generals will begin to panic, fearing especially that the army, which is manned and run by Punjabis, will be loth to quell the riots. "We've proved the fallibility of the Zia regime for the first time. Now we need a dead body and a great funeral to spark a wider response", one political activist said to me in Karachi.

There have already been more than 20 deaths, but the impact has been limited, mainly in Sind towns on the Indus upstream from Karachi such as Dadu and Naushahro Firoz. This is the area of the family of ex-President Bhutto, executed by General Zia in 1979, and of Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, a rich landowning leader of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party who was recently put under house arrest.

Since the demonstrations started in fairly festive mood during Independence Day celebrations on August 14, there have been up to 2,000 arrests. Martial law courts have been handing out punishments ranging from 90 days house arrest to one year's imprisonment plus 10 lashes and a Rs 50,000 (£ 2,500) fine.

"We have got to get the people to lose their fear of martial law punishments like flogging and prison torture — then we'll really spread the action," commented an activist.

The civil disobedience takes two basic forms. From the start politicians have been defying the law by addressing unlawful political meetings and carrying placards. Police are now increasingly trying to arrest the activists — all of whom have left their homes and gone to ground — in advance of the meetings, attended by anything from half-a-dozen to 30,000 people.

The arrests often lead to rocks being thrown at the police, who respond with baton charges, tear gas and rubber bullets. The crowds sometimes then spread through the towns, causing damage to banks, court houses, railway stations and

other buildings. Buses have also been set on fire and railway lines have been damaged.

These are the most persistent and widespread riots since General Zia came to power, surpassing the troubles of 1979 when the U.S. embassy in Islamabad was burned down, the riots of 1981, and more localised disturbances such as the Muslim riots in Karachi and women's rights protests in Lahore earlier this year.

Sind landowners like Mr. Jatoi, who was briefly invited by Gen Zia to become Prime Minister in 1980 but was arrested seven months later without taking office had hoped earlier this year to negotiate a settlement with the President that would avoid a violent eruption.

In the political activists' view, Gen Zia has now failed to produce an acceptable plan, six years after seizing power. Frustrations over this among both the landowners and the younger activists have combined with the Sind province's traditional but bottled-up political frustrations to lead to a series of events in the past 10 days that no one appears to have foreseen.

Whether there is enough dissatisfaction with the Zia regime to fuel a full-scale rebellion is a question that is constantly being asked. Although the economy is propped up by foreign aid and by the remittances of Pakistanis working abroad the country's balance of payments has been improving. There is a general air in most towns of a developing consumer society. World Bank figures show the average annual per capita income as \$ 350 per person compared with \$ 300 in Sri Lanka \$ 260 in India, and little more than half that figure in Bangladesh. There is widespread resentment that defence spending takes up almost half the annual budget (Rs 57 bn for 1983-84). But General Zia's regime has been blessed with five successive good harvests that have protected him from economic downfall.



God has made us self-sufficient in food grains", he explained in his "Muslim state" speech. He also summed up other achievements of his regime some of which at least this week seem no longer true: "Today by the grace of God there is peace and tranquillity in the country. People are earning their livelihood with their hard labour and have a peaceful sleep. There are no midnight knocks on the doors. The sanctity of women is no longer unsafe at the hands of the custodians of the law, and women are no longer kidnapped by goondas (armed robbers) under official patronage".

Those remarks were intended to draw a sharp contrast with the harsh Bhutto regime that Zia replaced. But when Zia executed Bhutto, he created a martyr who is extolled by his PPP members for the good he did for the poorest people rather than for the violence of his final years in power.

Zia's overwhelming emphasis on the Islamisation of Pakistan irks

many people particularly lawyers and other middle and upper classes of Karachi and to a lesser extent Lahore (although the business community does not want the Zia regime disrupted). His critics dismiss his Islamic zeal as little more than a ploy to divert public attention from the military aspects of his regime. Many people, however, recognise him as a devout Muslim. Many also admire the way he balances his extreme Islamic pronouncements with a far more cautious approach to actual policy innovations.

Indeed, he is so cautious that some Islamic right-wing groups oppose him. He has been attacked by mullahs from pulpits and even the basically loyal Jamaat-I-Islami party wants him to speed up his hand-over of power.

Like the parties in the MRD, it harbours the suspicion that he does not want to allow political parties to have any role in the coming elections. The parties and their senior activists have been banned from municipal elections now about

to take place, and it seems that no active member of Bhutto's PPP is likely to be allowed to stand in the provincial and national elections if Zia has his way.

The constitutional changes that General Zia outlined on August 12 would retain Pakistan's 1973 constitution now in abeyance but would strengthen the power of the President over the Prime Minister. Many diplomatic observers believe this is sensible for a developing country. But any impartial evaluation is upset by a widespread suspicion that President Zia himself intends to remain in the job.

Behind all the argument there is the fear that Zia may have announced his ideas merely to placate domestic and international opinion and that as has happened in the past, he will try to find reasons later for not going ahead. His opponents are determined that if this is his plan, he will become yet another leader of Pakistan to be removed forcibly from office in the country's 36 years of independence.

— FINANCIAL TIMES (Lond.)

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# Debt and Democracy

Quentin Peel

**A**fter several months of almost unrelieved political campaigning the re-elected President has a daunting task ahead of him. For the demands of democracy and of his own party supporters in the wake of their victory may prove very difficult to reconcile with the immediate needs of economic management and more particularly, the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"In the National Assembly, each member has to get something for his or her village, but we simply have not got the resources to be Father Christmas," according to one of the President's top civil service advisers. "The people want to enjoy today, but we have to lay the foundations for future economic growth. The two cannot easily be reconciled."

The first priority for the Government is to conclude its negotiations with the IMF, for a three-year extended facility totalling rather more than \$2 bn. That loan is the largest element in a three-part package, totalling almost \$5 bn. and involving the Fund, the World Bank and commercial banks, to tide Nigeria over its current foreign exchange crisis.

The situation has improved somewhat since Nigeria was forced to approach the Fund in May, but it has still not entirely stabilised. The most important factor has been the recovery of oil production, from a low point of only 675,000 barrels a day in February, to an average of 1.45m b/d in the whole second quarter, and 1.7m b/d in July. Since then, production has been cut back to 1.3m b/d, which is Nigeria's production quota fixed by Opec. It looks set to remain at around that figure unless the quota is increased.

At the same time, the sweeping import restrictions introduced by President Shagari in April 1982, and extended last January, have suc-

ceeded in cutting imports from a monthly average of some N1.2bn (\$1.6bn) in the first half of 1982 to around N600m today, according to top officials. Thus for the first time in more than two years, Nigeria's visible trade seems to be roughly in balance. Only the cost of debt servicing — estimated at slightly more than N100m (\$133m) a month — constitutes a net drain on foreign exchange reserves.

However, Nigeria still has to repay the huge backlog of trade arrears it has accumulated over the past 18 months, variously estimated at between \$5bn and \$8bn. The first slice has been dealt with, in the refinancing agreement reached in July with 26 international banks covering arrears on letters of credit, totalling around \$1.7bn. If a further 11 banks join the agreement, the eventual total could be \$2bn. But several billion dollars of trade debts owed directly to individual companies are not affected by the deal.

Nigerian officials hoped to repay a substantial part of the backlog between now and January, during the grace period allowed on the letters of credit debts. But bankers in Lagos say there are already ominous signs that payments on new letters of credit are falling behind, as foreign exchange is allocated to more politically sensitive areas, such as student remittances and advance payments for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.

The IMF and World Bank deals are therefore crucial to getting Nigeria back on an even keel, and the key question is what conditions will be attached. Publicly, Nigeria is adamant that it "will not be dictated to" in the words of President Shagari. Privately, officials admit that "the whole idea of bringing in the IMF is to get the alibis to persuade the politicians of what we need to do."

In addition to the \$2bn Nigeria hopes to get from the IMF as

extended credit, officials here also hope to qualify for a loan from the compensatory financing facility, recently extended to Opec countries because of the sharp drop in their oil export earnings. From the Bank, Nigeria is seeking a structural adjustment loan of up to \$500m, although Washington officials suggest \$350m would be more realistic. Both institutions are clearly taking tough negotiating positions.

"The World Bank is doing the dirty work for the IMF," says one top official, only half seriously. "I think they are engaged in a conspiracy." Nonetheless, considerable progress has been made.

The thorny issue of devaluation — a politically unacceptable concept in Nigeria — is no longer an absolute stumbling block. "We no longer talk about devaluation, we call it exchange rate adjustment," is one explanation. It seems that Nigeria has agreed to something resembling a "dirty float" of the naira, in addition to the 10 per cent downward adjustment against the dollar carried out quietly in July. No figures have been agreed, but a time scale has.

Both institutions are closely concerned with the government budget, relying as it does some 80 per cent on oil income. This is likely to be the major concern of the Fund team due to visit Lagos on September 2. The World Bank is also looking at the whole field of government investment, including the organisation of public corporations.

The Nigerian Government is already committed in principle to sell off some of its holdings in a range of companies, including hotels, breweries and even Nigeria Airways. Whether the 60 per cent government shareholding in all banks is likely to be reduced is not yet clear. The move would be very popular on the Nigerian capital market and, officials believe, with the World Bank.

(Continued on page 26)



# National Liberation Movements and the World-System

Immanuel Wallerstein

One of the great virtues of Amílcar Cabral was that he tried very hard to theorize praxis in order thereby to understand the real historical alternatives before us which might permit us to move in the directions we truly wish to move. Cabral led a struggle for national liberation of a colonized people, and his whole adult life was absorbed as a militant in that struggle. Yet I would contend that the problem that preoccupied him and puzzled him was not how to conduct that struggle (which seemed to him a rather clear and straightforward question) but what to do in the post-independence period.

It is in this connection that he developed one of his most controversial ideas, the prospective or possible "suicide" of the petty bourgeoisie as a class. As he saw it, there was in African colonies only one stratum "capable of taking control of the state apparatus when the colonial power is destroyed," the petty bourgeoisie. It followed that:

The moment national liberation comes and the petty bourgeoisie takes power we enter, or rather return to history, and thus the internal contradictions break out again.<sup>1</sup>

Once these contradictions would "break out again," he argued, this petty bourgeoisie would find itself before an historic choice: becoming more bourgeois, and thus negating the revolution, or strengthening its revolutionary consciousness.

This means that in order to truly fulfill its role in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong.<sup>2</sup>

Paper offered at Simposio Amílcar Cabral, Praia, Cabo Verde, Jan. 17-20, 1983, in commemoration of the tenth death anniversary of Cabral.

It is easy to criticize this concept as faulty and self-contradictory. If a stratum is a conscious class, it is highly unlikely to commit suicide, since its consciousness is defined by the pursuit of its class interests. This being the case, the formulation by Cabral is an unhappy one, and probably an unhelpful one.

However, if we are to use theory as a weapon, as Cabral adjured us, we must not content ourselves with easy debater's victories. For, behind Cabral's unhappy formulation, we can see that he was wrestling with the central problem of the world revolutionary movement in the twentieth century. This central problem is not how to make the enemy retreat (a process we often call "revolution") but how to keep the resilient enemy from regaining power in new guises, thereby aborting the very long process of the revolutionary transformation of the capitalist world-economy into a socialist world order that is egalitarian and democratic.

**Cabral had a sure sense of the components of successful strategic action — patient preparation, bold assault, tactical maneuvers, sure-footed advance, and the struggle to consolidate position. If we are to honor him, we must try to emulate this mode of analysis and of action.**

In the twentieth century, in a long series of countries, revolutionary antisystemic movements have come to power, usually but not always under the aegis of a revolutionary party which had conducted a protracted struggle in a period prior to the actual coming to power. The period of prior struggle, if protracted, was usually one that mobilized popular consciousness, in itself a revolutionary phenomenon.

I do not intend here to trace the complicated histories of all the post-revolutionary states. I wish merely to underline two elements that, it seems to me, have been common to all of them. One is that each revolutionary party, once in state power, has discovered that control of the state machinery gave it a good deal of political power to be sure but less than it had hoped or expected to achieve. That is to say, each party discovered the limits of state sovereignty, the fact that all states, including post-revolutionary states, continue to be part of an interstate system that places very real constraints on the actions of any single state and of a world-economy whose dynamic strength has forced each state, no matter what its ideological commitments, to conform (at least up to a point) to the unpleasant imperatives of the law of value.

The various post-revolutionary states reacted in different ways to this discovery, and indeed their internal histories can be said to debates about how one reacts to this discovery. War Communism and NEP, not as temporary tactics but as long-term strategics, are two of the main (but not the only) modes of action in the case of the realities of the world-system.

The reactions to the discovery, and indeed the seesaw of the national policies of post-revolutionary states, thereupon produced the second common element of all the post-revolutionary states. The atmosphere of heightened collective revolutionary consciousness, of politicization, normally so important in all these states at the moment of revolutionary seizure of power, has tended to decline, to dissipate itself, even to disappear. If one reads the statements of the parties, of the governments, and of the leaders of



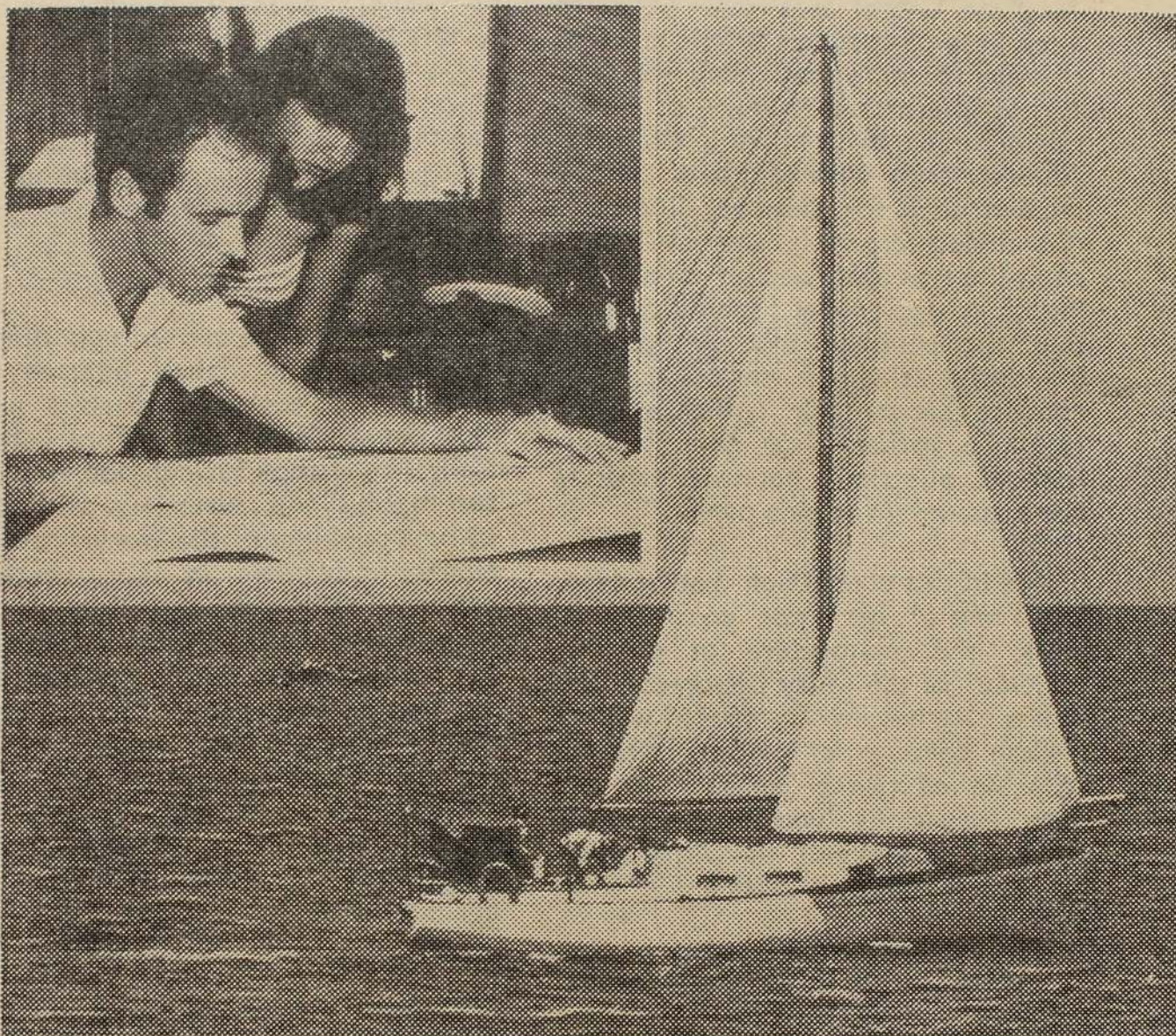
the post-revolutionary states, one sees a constant effort to revivify ideology' to renew enthusiasm, to combat cynicism and fatigue, to maintain the sense of struggle. Disillusionment is widespread, inside these countries and outside them, about them.

If one reflects on why each state seems to go through one or another variety of "depoliticization" of the working classes, one notices that the essential complaint is that the social transformations the working class had hoped for did come about. but not as completely as they had hoped. The old evils of unequal allocations, of corruption, of arbitrariness persist, to degrees that are not acceptable in post-revolutionary states. No doubt, as the parties constantly say, when they acknowledge the complaint, this is because of the first common factor: the insertion of these states in a world-system they do not control, and whose negative pressures they are feeling. But it is also a reality that the working classes are not readily persuaded that this is the whole explanation. They have become suspicious and have often retreated into apoliticism.

It is this depoliticization of post-revolutionary states that has offered the most hope to the defenders of the world capitalist system who have seen in it the crucial weapon with which to deflect the growing strength of world anti-systemic forces in the world class struggle. Furthermore, as we know "depoliticization" is never "apoliticism." Rather, it is a tactic of the politically weak, who are biding their time, until the conditions for political explosion arise once again.

Is there something that the world's revolutionary movements can do which makes it more likely that the explosion of angry workers, will be directed primarily against the world capitalist system and not be deflected into negative feelings about post-revolutionary states and revolutionary movements? This is the question I think Amilcar Cabral would address today, were he here. Let us do it for him, in his stead, and in his honor.

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I think the clue lies in the title of my talk, which was formulated by the organizers of this Symposium: "the integration of the liberation movement in the framework of international liberation."

The capitalist system is a world-system. If we are to understand it, we must start with that fact. If class struggle is to be efficacious, it has to be a world class struggle. It cannot be defined as a series of national struggles, linked by a vague sense of international solidarity. This does not mean that the national liberation struggle is not a meaningful focus of our efforts. It is, but the national liberation struggle is meaningful precisely because it is a form, a modality of world class struggle.

Let me suggest a number of controversial propositions about this world class struggle, which I offer not as a finished analysis but as a basis of discussion among us.

(1) We are presently in the transition from the still-existing capitalist world-economy to the socialist world order which does not yet exist. We have been in this transition for more than 50 years already and we shall be in it for at least a 100 more. We are **all** in this transition, not merely those living in post-revolutionary states. The transition is a phenomenon of the whole world-system, which is in structural crisis.

(2) The world class struggle has never been more intense than now, during this transition. We are all involved in this world class struggle, which is going on in every geographical corner of the world. No country is outside this struggle, or beyond it.

(3) The forms this world class struggle takes are varied, since the modes of appropriating surplus-value are various. This is because the composition of the world's bourgeoisie and proletariat have become complex and disparate and can in no meaningful sense be reduced to the early nineteenth-century English model of the private industrialist versus the male wage-earning factory worker.

(4) The world class struggle is conducted by the various elements of the world proletariat organized in movements. It is these movements and never the states which conduct class struggle. Class **struggle** involves politicized movements with active militants. It is in the struggle of the

movements that political power is achieved.

(5) The organizing issues of these multiple movements have been many — national oppression, oppression in the workplace, the oppression of socially weaker groups (women, the aged and the young ethnic and racial "minorities"). The themes have varied and will continue to vary in different concrete circumstances. The decisive factor is whether a particular movement in fact constrains the real power of the world bourgeoisie and arguments the real power of the world proletariat.

(6) The control of state machineries is a tactic in the world class struggle, and never an end in itself. It is only one tactic among many, and not always necessarily the one that the one that deserves priority.

(7) The most urgent political need for the movements individually, whether the movements are located in post-revolutionary states, or in other states, is to create a truly trans-state alliance of the multiple forms of movements, which would be based on a clear distinction between the movements and the states.

(8) "Economic development" is a double-edged sword. As long as a capitalist world-economy exists, and we are part of it, the "economic development" of all zones simultaneously is inherently impossible, since the operation of the law of value requires that surplus be unequally distributed over the globe. The development of any one zone is therefore always at the expense of some other. World socialism cannot be defined by the phenomenon of less "developed" zones "catching up" or by the universalization of the law of value under the claim of the development of the forces of production. It involves rather the construction of a radically-different mode of production, centering on production for use in an egalitarian, planned world, in which the states individually and the system of states collectively have both "withered away."

(9) The measure of the construction of a world socialist order is the steady increase during this transition in the real effective power of the working classes to direct their own lives at the workplace, in their homes, and in their com-

munities. Self-direction is not direction by the representatives of the working classes but by the working classes in their own right. It is this last issue which Cabral was talking about when he envisaged the "suicide" of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie, in Africa as elsewhere. Only of course, as we know, they will not commit suicide. The workers must impose it on their representatives in social reality.

(10) The crisis of the capitalist world-economy is also the crisis of the world's antisystemic movements, which are — let us remember — children of the present system and not of the future. We need to rethink our strategy, our mode of organization, and our categories of thought, all of which were molded in the nineteenth-century period of a capitalist system at its most self-confident. We need to reflect on whether our present strategy, mode of organization, and categories of thought serve us well for this period of crisis, of intensified class struggle, and above all of clever adjustment by the world's bourgeoisie who are seeking to survive as privileged strata under entirely new guises. The real danger is that, thirty years from now, everyone may call himself a Marxist or a socialist, and private property may be reduced to a minor role in world production. We will still then be in the midst of the transition and the world class struggle. Such an "ideological triumph" may itself serve as one of the most serious impediments for the achievement of a world socialist order.

Let us remember that nothing is inevitable. We are before an historical choice. The existing capitalist world-system is surely doomed. But a socialist world order is only one possible outcome. A second is the creation of a new class-based (but noncapitalist) system. A third is nuclear destruction. And there may be still others we are incapable of imagining. **A luta continua** is not a mere slogan; it is an analysis that we must bear in mind precisely when we look at post-revolutionary states and at antisystemic, revolutionary movements.

(1) "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea," in Amílcar Cabral, **Revolution in Guinea** (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1969), p. 69.

(2) "The Weapon of Theory" in *ibid.*, 110.



# Politics of religion

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

The hardnosed left shows an increasing tendency to interpret third world revolution and socialism in the same terms as the hardnosed right did all along: as an alternative strategy of accumulation, a development strategy that uses ideological instead of market incentives. However, when carried to the point of the reductionism of revolution, revolutionist Realpolitik may be as unrealistic as counter-revolutionary Realpolitik. Leftwing materialism may be as vulgar and banal as its rightwing counterpart. The very choice of ideological rather than material incentives, woven into the accumulation project, carries definite implications that, depending on the nature of the ideology, and practice, may make for a different social landscape altogether. Among the most important aspects of revolutionary developments in Central America is the bridge built by revolutionary movements between politics and religion, and the active role of Christians in the revolutionary process. This has also turned the region into an arena of the politics of religion.

While Yankee imperialism and aggression are spared no repartee, the Nicaraguan government and media supportive of the Sandinistas display restraint in their attitude toward the churches, the private sector, and minimize confrontation with opposition forces. Opposition parties and newspaper (*La Prensa*), passing skirmishes aside, continue to exist. The catholic church, under archbishop Obando y Bravo, who is interviewed every other day or so in *La Prensa*, has followed a line critical of Sandinismo virtually since representatives of the private sector (nb. COSEP) broke ranks with the regime. The role of the Vatican in Nicaragua must be viewed in the context of its policies in Central America.

The Vatican is faced with two main threats in the region: competition from the **evangelicos** —

part of the upsurge of fundamentalist Protestantism throughout the Americas; and the development of liberation theology. In answer to the first threat, the Vatican tends to adopt a critical attitude toward regimes supported by the rightwing evangelists, as in the case of Guatemala and Gen. Rios Montt's Church of the Word. A pro-human rights attitude here enhances the church's competitive credibility. But liberation theology constitutes another, in the long run possibly greater danger to Vatican hegemony. Encouraged by the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellin 1968, liberation theology has taken shape in Christian base communities, clergy active in opposition from Camilo Torres and Dom Helder Camara to Mons. Romero, priests who take up arms such as Gaspar Garcia Laviana in Nicaragua, progressive lay preaching coordinated by the Delegates of the World and the concomitant development, in Nicaragua, of the **iglesia popular**, the people's church.

Prior to his visit to Nicaragua earlier this year, Pope John Paul II sent a letter to the Nicaraguan church criticizing the people's church as a deviation from the Law of God. This invocation of **Law**, rather than of the **spirit** of Christ, revealed the nature of papal concern. It was in Nicaragua that the Pope showed another face — that of a schoolteacher, angrily reprimanding Fa. Ernesto Cardenal, humbled on his knees before him, for participating as a priest in politics. It is needless to point out the hypocrisy of this attitude on the part of the representative of the Vatican, which has been a pivot of western geopolitics ever since its inception, which has been in the forefront of contemporary counterrevolution since 1925, and plays a leading role in East-West confrontation in Poland.

The popular church, above all, is a church that is not controlled from above. It threatens to alter

the nature of the catholic church, democratizing its structure, undercutting its hierarchy, eroding from within the world's oldest and most continuous empire. In a world where the majority of Catholics will soon be living in third world countries, such a development, if unchecked, could pull the carpet from under the throne of the Bishop of Rome more effectively than anything else. From Brazil and Chile to the Phillipines and East Timor, liberation theology is gathering momentum. It is in Nicaragua that the Vatican "draws the line," and has opted, here also, but for different reasons, for opposition to the regime.

Popular reaction to the Pope's visit in Nicaragua has been twofold: an increasing number of people disappointed by his display of hypocrisy and narrowmindedness, by his ignoring of the relatives of the twenty people who days before his visit had been killed by contras, no longer takes him seriously, while a smaller number of people continues to uphold him, and his posters on their windows, as a point of reference of opposition.

Part of the church's counterstrategy is the promotion of its own "grassroots movement," controlled from above: the **Charismaticos**, in the same hallelujah-style of a political religiosity as the evangelical "sects." The key difference is that the popular church is integrated in the community and the neighbourhood, while the charismaticos, like the rightwing evangelical sects, refuse to take part in community activities. This isolationism leads to frequent local tensions. The words written on a wall in Esteli put it this way: **Charismaticos-Farizeos-Traidores de los Pobres** (Charismatics-Pharisees-Traitors to the poor).

## Honduras

Travelling overland by bus from Managua to Tegucigalpa, there wasn't

(Continued on page 26)



# BROTHER TO THE POETS

Denzil Peiris

It would seem irrational to remark on the death of a man 69—a year short of the three-score years and 10 the psalmist rations out to us — that a branch that would have burst with new blooms had been cut. Tambimuttu left Sri Lanka 45 year ago. When I met him less than a month before he died, the sap of new enthusiasms was rising through him. He was working 18 hours a day on several projects from his office above the October Gallery in Old Gloucester St. in London. One of these projects was to encourage new as well as established but not widely known writers and artists in India and Sri Lanka; another the setting up of new media for the voices of poets in England and the United States.

“Tambi”, as he was usually called, also means brother in his mother tongue, Tamil. Tambi was indeed a brother, who fostered the talent of new writers in England. Kathleen Raine acknowledges in the introduction to her *Collected Poems, 1935–1980*: “I wish to thank Tambimuttu, my first publisher, under whose imprint *Poetry London* my first two volumes were published; and whose faith in my unrealised poetic gift I am grateful to remember now.” Tambimuttu was the first to draw attention to the genius of Henry Moore, reproducing his *Shelter studies*, a set of drawings of figures huddling underground in the tube stations for protection from Hitler’s bombs. An entry in a British War Museum catalogue acknowledges that Henry Moore’s works were only collector’s pieces until Tambimuttu published his *Shelter Sketchbook*.

*Poetry London*, which he edited soon after he arrived in Britain in 1938, was a scintillating publication in those dark times when poets, functioning under oppressive war clouds had few outlets.

At the time of his death, Tambimuttu was mobilising financial and other support for two arts councils, one for India and the other for Sri Lanka. He planned exhibitions and publication of the works of writers

and painters in Sri Lanka and India. In Sri Lanka he had found a novelist; he was also hoping to hold an exhibition of the works of the late Justin Deraniyagala, a painter who he said “had assimilated modern ideas of painting and had caught on to what Picasso was about, and e e cummings (the US poet).”

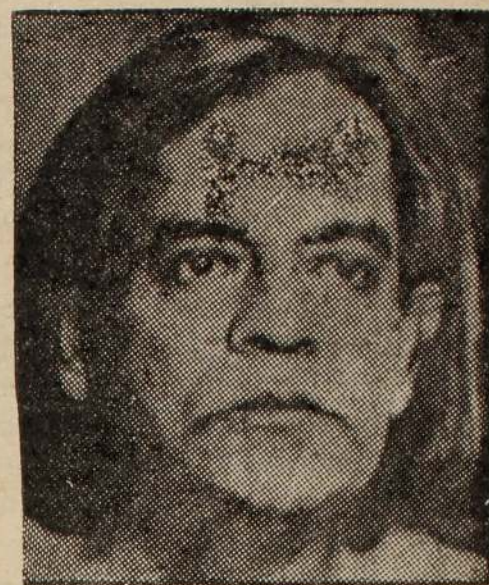
That was back in the 1930’s. e e cummings, then little known outside the US, had inscribed a pamphlet to Deraniyagala. Tambimuttu also intended to organise an exhibition for Ivan Peries, a Sri Lankan painter now living in England. He was a member of Group 43, a cluster of modernists rebelling against the sterile pretty-pretty academists which the British system of education and British inspectors of art were encouraging. The poet also envisaged a great Buddhist Dictionary which would explain what Buddhism was about, its affinities to Jainism and its roots.

Amrita Pritam — “a remarkable Indian voice”, he said — was a writer he intended to publicise. Tambimuttu was exuberant in his appreciation of Raja Rao, author of the novel *The Serpent and the Rope*, who he told me is “the greatest Indo-English writer writing today.”

“Raja Rao’s language is so highly poetic; his mastery of the English language is absolutely unique; it has the resonance of Coomaraswamy’s prose.”

The Coomaraswamy he was referring to was the savant and writer on Indian and Indonesian art, author of *The Dance of Shiva* and other philosophical works. He thought Ananda Coomaraswamy “one of the greatest prose stylists. His language is like poetry.”

Although Raja Rao and Coomaraswamy are creative and felicitous writers of English, Tambimuttu thought a man wrote best in his mother tongue. We were discussing the lack of authenticity — the voice from the guts, as it were — in much Asian writing. Was this not also true of modern Asian painting and sculpture? He had talked, I said, of Deraniyagala absorbing Picasso and other moderns,



but did that make for a unique personal declaration in his works or was not much westernised modern Asian painting merely manifestations of technical competence? In sculpture and painting, Tambimuttu said, there had been a great interpenetration of cultures in India. Gandhara sculptures were of Greek origin; the Mogul miniatures had Persian roots.

In these arts there was a substratum of cultures which was common to all, whether Asian, European or African. So creativity was possible in painting and sculpture. “But when it comes to the word, the *logos*, it is different.” When it came to poetry the language had to be that of the inner man, the writer’s own language, his own environment.

Tambimuttu had ambitious plans for media for poetry in Britain and the US. “I am trying to give poetry a new dimension” he said. “The magazine format is dying. He planned to use sound, records colour. “The artist and poetry go together. There would be poems with accompanying illustrations.”

Stravinsky was excited about one of his ideas. “We were going to produce a combination of music and word, a poem of words colliding, outflexions of meaning — all dancing in consort, as in ballet.”

Tambimuttu said he had worked six months “to crack a theory of poetry” His ideas were contained in his fourth editorial for *Poetry London*. “My theory of poetry defined the poetic process,” he said.

In a lecture to the American Institute of Holophrasis, he tried to provide the academic community with “a yardstick for measuring the poetic content of any single poem, a yardstick for all the elements that go to make any single



poem — apprehension of all the senses". Katherine Raine got it, he said, and proceeded to recite from memory her *Angelus*. It would have been given to him around 45 years ago, but not one word was lost.

As he recited, the mellifluous words washed away the gravel edge age was giving his voice. "Kathleen" he said, "writes from her bloodstream, systematically, having a particular theory about poetry, rather than from her brain."

Which of the poets did he admire most? "Kathleen Raine, David Gascoine, W S Graham. It's all clearly stated there in the fourth letter in *Poetry London*, but I am rolling out names at random now".

What did he think of poetry today? "All of the poets I had rejected... Philip Larkin, I still remember his poems. Pastiche", he said, ejecting the word with great force — "mere pastiche. But then he became kind of Walter de la Mareish. Now he writes good poetry. All the poets I rejected... John Wain, now professor of poetry in Oxford... a mere imitator of William Empson." Tambimuttu thought what was happening now was that poets liked to start movements which would make them more important — "a mere publicity stunt".

He remembers with warm affection and gratitude "Uncle Tom" (T S Eliot) who "looked after me when I was ill, paid my hospital bills. He sent £10 to my wife when I burnt all her clothes". He recalled a letter about him from Eliot to Mary Trevelyan, who read it to him with tears streaming down her face.

Tambimuttu dropped out of sight in the 1960s in the US. "There were rumours in Britain that I had been killed in a bar brawl", he said. (He was a precursor of Dylan Thomas in his boisterous style of living).

"The wheel has turned full circle", he told me. "I have returned to my village" — referring to the London area he now worked in. "Fitzrovia" as the poetic legends of his younger days had it. The last days were spent working; in the evenings he would go to the neighbourhood pub, the Queen's Larder, where he would sit quietly

in a corner, speaking to no one. But the landlord instinctively felt he was a distinguished poet — the sparse figure, slightly bent, the abundant crown of grey hair and the sharp chiselled features.

The landlord has his portrait in the pub.

## Politics of . . .

(Continued from page 24)

too much to be noticed from the road. The *contra* activities apparently are taking place more to the north, around Jalapa and Teotecacinte, and more inland in the mountains. The military presence was light.

Honduras is the region's classical banana republic — although dependence has become more diversified in recent times. From a company state (United Brands) it has now become a more regular US satellite. Over sixty five percent of the people find their employment in agriculture — bananas, coffee, cotton, tobacco, and cattle. Out of five men in Tegucigalpa, three wear a gaucho hat. Tegucigalpa seems like an agricultural center, a supply center of saddles, lassos and farm tools, and a marketplace for food crops. Corn is heaped up in the market streets.

Hondurans are a small people, evidencing generations of poor diet. Agriculturally the country is not as well-endowed as Nicaragua with its fertile volcanic lands and abundance in food. Honduran soldiers, muchachos of fourteen or fifteen, seem even smaller. Guarding buildings and bridges, they carry the stamp of a professional army, distinct and separate from the people, noticeable in their attitude.

Although the media produce a steady stream of rhetoric, reproducing the phobias of Washington, casting Nicaragua in the role of aggressor, people don't seem to care much for a war with Nicaragua. Though propaganda and counterpropaganda have distorted mutual perceptions on both sides of the border, and Nicaraguans are extremely nervous about the danger of war with Honduras, here there seems to be no hatred of Nicaragua, or Sandinismo. The war seems to be generated over people's heads. There's an expectation that the United States will reward Honduras

for going to war with economic aid, but many doubt whether this will actually amount to anything. As one deeply worried American, resident in Honduras, confided to me: this people can't handle this war. The political and social tensions generated in the process could well backfire on Washington.

There's more concern in fact over Puerto Castillo being turned into a regional military headquarters and training base for Salvadoran soldiers, over forced conscription and the increasing militarization of the nation. While there is no tradition of enmity between Honduras and Nicaragua, there is with El Salvador since the 1969 war over the presence of the 30,000 Salvadorean migrants in Honduras. There's concern also that, being dragged into a war with Nicaragua, Honduras may see the development of the same guerilla struggle as in El Salvador. The National Congress is examining the situation with trepidation. Not that it necessarily makes too much of a difference, for this is a bought government if ever there was one, hegemonized by the military and Washington. People don't seem to cherish any illusions about this situation, but they do feel an acute sense of powerlessness. For if, as Henry Kissinger believes, a firm American response is needed in Central America to maintain the credibility of the United States in other parts of the world (*New York Times*, July 19. 83), who is going to pay the price for U. S. "credibility"?

## Debt and . . .

(Continued from page 20)

The degree of restraint likely to be imposed, in addition to the current austerity measures, seems certain to be rather more severe than the Nigerian electorate yet suspects. Many capital projects, such as the building of Abuja, the new federal capital, and the expansion of the steel industry, may have to be cut back. But, agriculture and petrochemicals, and the planned LNG project at Bonny will remain top priorities.

— FINANCIAL TIMES (Lond.)



# SEXISM IN THE SRI LANKA PRESS

## English language newspaper coverage of women's issue

Susan Eckstein

“Why play a complementary role!” asked the *Sunday Observer* boldly, giving front page space to the issue of the new Minister for Women's Affairs. The article went on to quote Sunethra Ranasinghe (“the 35 year old mother”) as saying she backed the feminine movement as long as women do not go beyond the traditions and norms of the country”.

During a three — week study of the newspaper coverage of women's issues from June 13th — July 3rd 1983, became increasingly aware of the confused and often contradictory attitudes towards women. These contradictions often appeared on the same page, even in the same article. No one paper seemed to have developed as specific policy towards the reporting of essentially women's topics.

The introduction of a Minister for Women's Affairs in June meant that women's issues were especially topical. At first, press reaction was slow. Rajitha Weerakoon in *The Sunday Observer* noted that mention of the new appointment “came in a mere two — para news story in most newspapers.....The portfolio of women's affairs, as always the case where women are concerned, received secondary treatment even in the news item”. *The Island* reported one of the Minister's speeches but there was little comment. *The Sun*, however, printed some interesting articles, both informed and provocative. In the editorial, the new Minister and her officials were encouraged “to seek ways and means of giving women more decision making opportunities in this obviously male dominated society”. It was the Minister's job to “encourage” more women to participate in political and socio-economic activities in the country instead of restricting their activities to traditional apron strings or rocking the cradle”. Minoli de Soysa maintained the radical tone in her article on the women's page stat-

ing that “Sri Lankan males...have not yet come to regard women as human beings — only as second class citizens who deserve second — class treatment”. She noted that in a free economy situation, women are considered a cheap and exploitable source of labour and that the trade unions run by men hesitate to rock the boat. There was no mention of traditional women's roles — emphasis remained on practical issues such as the need for three months maternity leave, creches and the increasing problem of harassment at work. “The Ministry has to be run at the higher levels by women, Only women can make decisions about women, only women know what is wrong and above all, only women will fight fiercely for their own rights”.

Rajitha Weerakoon of *The Sunday Observer* anticipated some of the criticism the new Ministry will be opened to, such as why women desire to identify themselves as a separate body, why there is no Ministry for Men's Affairs, and why such a Ministry should work here when similar ministries have failed in Indonesia and Bangladesh. Neela Pulle in *The Weekend* also mentioned some of the disadvantages of “sex equality”, citing the case of a British editor who refused one of his female journalists a taxi allowance when she went to a late night meeting during the period the Yorkshire Ripper was at loose, saying that if he did that, he would have to give all the male staff an allowance too. His paper had a policy of sexual equality, he said. Why didn't she go and learn Kung Fu?

It is a shame that *The Sun* which appears to give the best coverage of women's affairs, continues to print the ridiculous “Marriage is. . .” cartoons. Western orientated and highly sexist, they gleefully inform us that marriage is “wishing her beautician the best of luck” or “remembering the night you first met when he rolled his eyes at you, and you picked them up and rolled them back.”

Not a cliché is left unturned — from the interfering mother-in-law, to the beer-swelling macho male and his nagging, cosmetics-crazy, half-witted wife.

*The Daily News* allows as much sexual stereotyping in the advertisements it carries: “Housewives! Relieve your better half from doing additional duties such as schooling, shopping, marketing and etc. by learning to drive!” *The Island's* coverage of the Young Miss Sri Lanka competition was the most extensive, with several full pages given to exhibiting these women in glorious technicolour. *The Island* also picked up the report from London of a course designed to enable married couples to have a mistress or lover or cope with a partner who has one. This theme was then pursued in “This is my Island” where the writer envisaged a Lankan branch of the London organisation. It was not particularly funny, but at least served to highlight the absurdity of both the course and its coverage in Sri Lanka.

Readers of the *Sunday Island* were confronted with a view of blond Julie's contorted backside. On the same page they were treated to an article on “How Understanding Are You” which carried such useful advice as the importance of showing your husband “what a tower of strength a loving and understanding wife can be” even if this “may mean putting his needs and feelings before your own”. You must “learn to be a good listener (whether you go out to work yourself or are at home with the family”) So much for women **not** playing a complementary role!

Much of the “shock — horror” type of reporting is women — orientated. During the study period, *The Daily News*, *Sun* and *Island* all reported cases of desperately unhappy women committing suicide by drinking insecticide, or being hacked up by pruning knives. *The Daily News* also felt that the case of a London woman who was hauled naked from her flat, biting a police-



man, worthy of space. *The Daily News* did however, print several small articles on predominantly sensible issues concerning women, such as the inauguration of a private bus service for women, or the brave actions of the Muslim Women's League, but its policy seemed unclear. Articles on the plight of Sri Lanka housemaids in the Middle East appeared opposite advertisements for the very housemaids whose danger the paper seemed so concerned about. *The Sunday Times* noted that "the same newspapers advertising the virtues of foreign labourers also carry appeals for helping tracking down workers who have run away from the job."

*The Sun's* editorial on housemaids emphasised the confusion that country women feel when transported to a completely alien environment, and suggested the Minister for Women's Affairs should not miss the opportunity to improve the situation-

*The Sun*, reporting on the first U. S. Women astronaut referred to Sally Ride as an "astrophysicist" and mentioned the marital status of the entire crew. *The Sunday Times* however, referred to her as the "attractive, slim brunette", 5' 4", x 108 lbs. and married to Steven Hawley.

Each of the English language newspapers shares a strange concept in "The Women's Page", Article seemed arbitrarily selected and it was quite common to find recipes for spinach soup, the art of growing Bonsai trees, the sacred state of motherhood, bride burning in India, recipes for facial masks and opinions on sex education in Sri Lanka coming under the all-embracing heading of "Woman", "Her World" or "Women and Leisure".

I was surprised to find that during the three week survey of the English language papers coverage of

women's issues, the *Island*, with its reputation of being liberal, even radical, seemed to be the most sexist. Its overall coverage was less than that of *The Sun* or *Daily News* and it was more often blatantly insensitive and chauvinist. One "Miniman" cartoon seemed remarkably inappropriate. It gave the headline "Bride burning on the increase in India" and a picture of a man looking at a morose friend saying "He says he is still hunting for a bride, while others have brides to BURN!!".

It was encouraging to read many of the "women's articles" in *The Sun*, most of them written by women. Comments, when given, were interesting and stimulating and there seemed to be an effort not to reduce stories of rape and suicide to the level of gossip and scandal. It was a shame that *The Sun's* supplement, "Woman and home" had such a "home" bias.

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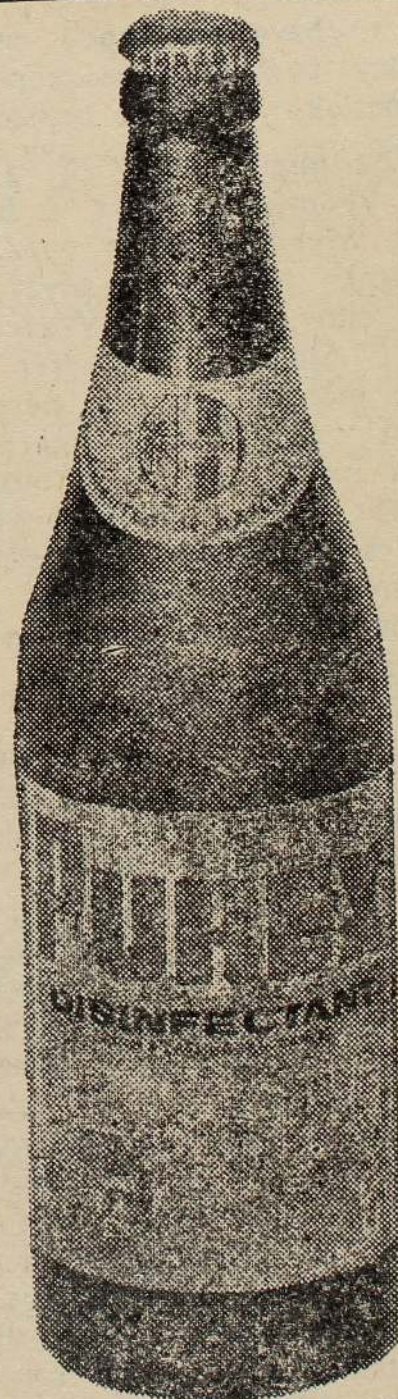
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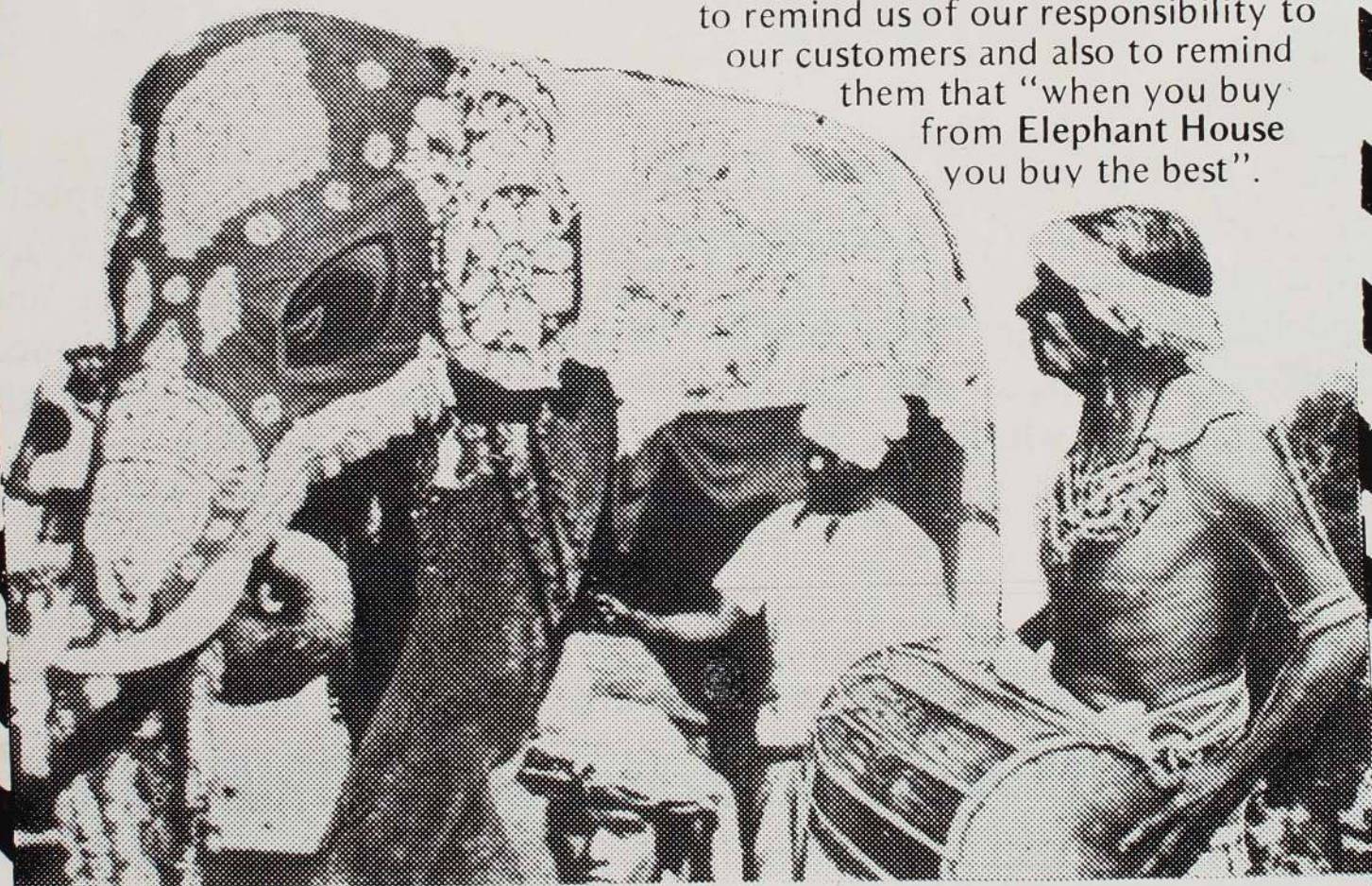
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