

**DEVOLUTION — THE MUSLIM CASE**

**BANDARANAIKE HALL TO BATTLEFIELD**

**Mervyn  
de Silva**

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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**Ganja, Hard Drugs and the Syndicates**  
— Manik Sandrasagara

\* **Hundred Years of Ethnic Conflict** — Kumari Jayawardena

\* **Taking Race Personally** — Jenny Bourne

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## THE DISCONTENTED ELITE

UNTIL the GMOA took to trade union activism, the professional elite in this country — doctors, engineers, scientists, and accountants — was always regarded part of the privileged class. Not always wealthy, unless endowed with massive dowries, but generally well-off, the professional saw to it that his trade unionism never became "political". Trade unionism was more confined in the past to very specific grievances (promotion, training, foreign scholarships, qualifications, facilities and perks) rather than to aggressive pay demands.

The iron laws of economics are fast ending all that. The professional in the State sector is neither a privileged person nor comfortably well-off. Nor does he always receive the respect he was long accustomed to. He is harassed by the politician, abused by the politician's agents and acolytes.

Last week, 12,000 doctors and para-medics decided on trade union action unless the government concedes their basic demands which are economic. It was the same week in which the two major plantation unions, both of which have Cabinet ministers as presidents, announced a one-day token strike and a prolonged nation-wide strike if their wages were not raised. (Evidently, the government has made an offer to the UNP-controlled union, the LJEWU, which will cost the Treasury 500 million rupees per year.) But plantation workers have remained the most disadvantaged and exploited. What of the engineers in the public sector, surely an elite band?

Their dissatisfaction is all too strongly voiced in the Annual report of the Public Service Engineers' Union:

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

"It was a rather uneventful year for trade union activities due to the disruption of normal life consequent on the serious breakdown of law and order in the country arising from among other things the failure of the government to check widespread indiscipline in the forces and the law enforcement agency through most of 1983, and also due to the government ignoring the contribution potential of trade unions in the development effort."

The once sheltered elite is getting restive and more vocal as their old life-style is disturbed by both economic pressures and political developments.

## OTHER VOICES

THE Buddhist clergy speaks with many voices on the current national crisis. There were five wellknown monks associated with the "campaign for lifting the ban on proscribed parties and the emergency, and the holding of a general election to guarantee the democratic rights of the people." They are: Rev. Batapola Anomadassi Thero, Rev. Madoluwawe Sobhita Thero, Rev. Ithipane Dhammalankara Thero, Rev. Pohodaramulle Pemaloka Thero, and Rev. Muruthettuwa Ananda Thero.

The other signatories to the appeal were Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra, Revd. Fr. Yohan Devananda, Professor Carlo Fonseka, Dr. Vijaye Kumar, Mr. R. Thirunavukarasu.

On the holding of a general election, this campaign will probably have the support of the S.L.F.P., and judging by Mr. Anura Bandaranaike's speech in the House, the SLFP is also for the lifting of the ban on the 2 parties, plus the withdrawal of the emergency in the south.

## TRENDS + LETTERS

### Fighting Drug Addiction

Scapegoats are easy to find. Usually, scapegoats are found in a group or idea that does not have any defendants. "The Island" of the 28th February 1984 contains two articles that demonstrate the danger inherent in the creation of scapegoats.

The Minister of Trade and Shipping recommends laws to make the "mere possession of Narcotics" punishable by death. In the same speech he states that "we cannot escape the influence of the world — like television. We cannot ban the young going abroad as sailors or ban the drinking habit"; but these very people will be influenced by the trends of the world and the information on Television to acquire a narcotic habit. Then it becomes perfectly alright to kill them.

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Another startling statement is: "The problem of drug addiction has other deep-rooted links. Of three and a half million Buddhist students I am told that only 2.3 million attend any Daham Pasala, 9 lakhs do not attend". This seems to imply that the non attendance in Daham Pasalas is due to drug addiction. How much data exists to substantiate such a statement? Further, may the non attendants of the Daham Pasalas be actually due to the change in our values and traditions brought about by our so-called economic development? If it can be proved that advertising, violence and desire created by the Media or a liberal social value system helps to bring about a change of stance towards Buddhism and contribute to the non attendance of Daham Pasalas, will the people responsible for the change in our values face the death sentence too? If the promoters of the death sentence are honest in their intention of protecting this country, they should, otherwise these proponents of the death sentence may seem to be seeking scapegoats for the social damage wrought by a permissive, consumerist society.

In the same issue of "The Island" the Assistant Drug Advisor is reported to have made a similar statement. He states that "As a preventive method, the Government should enforce a law that the death penalty would be the punishment of a person identified in the possession of dangerous drugs". In the same speech he states that "There are 15,000 opium addicts, 130,000 ganja addicts and 1000 to 2000 heroin addicts in Sri Lanka" and this Drug Advisor has chosen to identify all these materials as dangerous drugs. If this Drug Advisor's advice was to be followed we would have to kill about 146,000 citizens of this country. For an addict will not be cured just by the passage of a law and the addict will sooner or later be found in a situation of possession.

The fight against drug addiction and drug dependency must be carried on by removing the causes that make people turn to drugs as an escape from their situation. The killing of people for a personal weakness does not constitute any cure. The statements presented above should probably be examined by the Human Rights Commission and if irresponsible and untrue statements can be demonstrated they should move to have these advisors replaced with more intelligent, humane people.

A. C. de Silva

Colombo 5.

### Evolution of the Tamil Question

It seems to me that Prof. K. Sivathamby is being disingenuous with his assertion that the events of July 83 were not only predictable but also inescapable (LG. 15 January). In a "democratic socialist republic", the ordinary citizen expects the Govt. to enforce law and order effectively in an orgy of face to face criminal violence. It is true that there was a concerted plan to attack the Tamils but no meaningful steps were taken by the Govt. to bring the offenders to book on the spot. The writ of Govt. failed when the authorities turned a blind eye to the rampaging mob. A word about Colombo based leadership. Sooner or later a Tamil parliamentary leader becomes Colombo — oriented when he achieves sovereignty in his profession.

In 1934 when G. G. Ponnambalam entered the State Council he had 'dormitory' status in Colombo in the same way that Amirthalingam was roughing out in Colombo before he became leader of the opposition. With a lucrative practice at the bar and a matrimonial alliance with a wealthy Malayan family, it was easy for Ponnambalam to set up a permanent, well furnished home in Colombo with a retinue of servants and a cocktail cabinet. When he became a cabinet Minister in 1947, nobody accused him

of nepotism as he had no distinguished relatives at that time whom he could place in the judiciary, the administration, in the commercial sector or elsewhere. In fact he picked on an 'outstation' lawyer (not a relative) to be his private Secretary. As he became more affluent and influential, he improved his coat of arms by acquiring a son-in-law from a feudal class in Jaffna. In course of time, an aristocratic lineage became associated with his name, although his origins were middleclass.

This was quite a common feature with the Sinhalese counterparts — young men of wealthy low country Sinhalese families married the daughters of Kandyan chiefs. It helps them to rule. With the passage of time, Amirthalingam too would have joined the elite in Colombo. This is a tricky thing in the art of the possible and it is imperative for a successful politician to have happy rapport with the ruling few in Colombo, without compromising in any way his own community interests.

(Mrs.) Malathi Rajasingham  
Jaffna.

### Thank you

Please extend to your staff a German journalist's thanks and appreciation for keeping up high informative standards while sailing troubled waters in troubled times.

Wulf Roehnert  
Frankfurt, Germany.

### On Repentance

Mr Basil Fernando seems determined ('Repentance — true or false — L. G. 1/4) to have his pound of flesh. Fr Tissa Balasuriya alleged in an earlier article on Repentance that the Catholic Church had contributed to the events of July 1983 by its identification with the colonial power and indifference to local culture. He felt that the Church should make an act of repentance. But Fr Balasuriya's act of repentance — 'adaptability and a

(Continued on page 12)



# End of jaw-jaw — and a requiem for the T.U.L.F. ?

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

**J**aw-Jaw is better than War-War'. Even before the Roundtable Conference was convened, the Churchillian maxim had gained wide currency in Colombo as a sensible way-out of the post-July breakdown in UNP government — TULF contacts and Sinhala-Tamil dialogue. By what could be a pure coincidence Tamil youth rebel guns became silent and a sort of unrecognised, unofficial "cease fire" appeared to come into operation between the clandestine armed groups and the armed services in the north.

There was, of course, plenty of armed robberies, hijacking of vehicles attacks on public institutions and even killings but in none of these was any serviceman gunned down. And then just as the RTC went into long recess (May 9th) Colombo received the alarming news of two SLAF men in civvies dragged out of a bus and bumped off. It was this incident which resulted in a sudden rise in tension in certain parts of Colombo and suburbs, the subsequent 'rumours' and a July-type panic on a much smaller scale. The background to these rumours is now being studied by the police. The March 21 events did expose the vulnerability of a Colombo, not open to armed attack but to its dread of hysteria and mob violence. It is not a physical threat for "**Kotiya Enawa, Kotiya Enawa**" (Tiger is Coming, Tiger is Coming) of Friday July 28 was soon exposed as the explosive outburst of a massively inflated fear. The resultant embarrassment over our own infantile silliness was the best antidote for that kind of fear-induced mass behaviour. **The vulnerability is home-bred and in-grown ..... Colombo's re-active, knee-jerk**

**responses to bad news from the north and its likely impact on mass (urban) emotion. This state of mind is the enemy within.**

The virtual collapse of the Roundtable Conference and its evident failure to achieve its main purpose — the basis of a political settlement on an all-party consensus — has also lost us the sympathetic support of our friends outside. "Black July" (the L. G. coinage is now the accepted label) is "an aberration" So said the Foreign Minister Mr. Hameed to the U. N. Human Rights sub-committee in Geneva. And Sri Lanka's Ambassador in Washington, the capital of a country increasingly important to this government in its search for aid, uses the same word 'aberration'. The international community, especially the aid-giving group, is prepared to accept that but the matter does not rest there. **What are you doing about it? That is the choric question of the diplomatic community. Well, Sri Lanka could reply with some self-assurance, if not an entirely clean conscience, we have convened an all-party conference. A fair answer, and a strong one, depending on how productive the result proves.**

There's no question about it. The UNP government's initiative was not only a bold move but in many ways unique. In Lausanne today, the main feuding factions involved in the sectarian strife that has marked Lebanon's tragic modern history are all meeting to seek "national reconciliation". An utterly embattled President Gemayel has gone to Geneva as just one participant in which Syria, the big neighbouring power is a "concerned

observer". Almost the entire world community watches Geneva with anxiety, hope and silent prayers for success.

What President Jayewardene initiated was a political-diplomatic exercise for which there are few parallels in contemporary history. Certainly, this writer does not know of any similar exercise aimed at a "peaceful settlement" of a critical domestic issue, with such an obvious external aspect, where ALL the major external powers shared a common interest in the success of that exercise.

The most important and proximate external actor in the drama was already committed — to put it bluntly, in Annexure 'C'. The United States and its allies together with India's superpower friend, the USSR, the Commonwealth countries, the other Asian neighbours, influential aid givers from Scandinavia, western Europe to Japan, all showed the utmost keenness in the RTC's proceedings in the genuine hope of a consensus formula for reconciliation and amity.

The steady pressure from outside (hardline Sinhala-Buddhist opinion) the SLFP's in-out, cat-and-mouse tactical games (SEE SIRIMA : BLOOD IN THE WATER?) the altered composition of the conference and its loose modalities, and finally the repudiation of Annexure 'C' (basically, the Delhi deal) paved the way to all but formal collapse.

Slightly strengthened District Development Councils, the furthest that the prevailing consensus is ready to travel by way of devolution and de-centralisation, is too far away from Annexure 'C' to offer the TULF any hope of convincing its own northern constituency that a "solution" has been

(Continued on page 5)



# Sirima : Smelling blood in the water

**T**he announcement of the SLFP's list of newly appointed district organisers so soon after the return of the breakaway Maitri faction came as no surprise.

Places on the national list had to be kept open to accommodate the prodigals, although Mrs. B. and her Central Committee had more or less approved a final list some weeks ago.

What must have come as a surprise was what the SLFP leader told the District Organisers who gathered at Horogolla. **"The political situation in the country was such that the party organisers must get ready for a snap general election"** she said.

It has been well known that at least 2 or 3 key members of the party's politburo — reportedly Ratne Deshapriya Senanayake is the main proponent of this 'line' — have planned recent party move on the basis that a general election will become increasingly inevitable, perhaps before the end of this year or early next year. The reasoning is influenced more by the mounting economic crisis rather than on any seriously alarming deterioration of the situation in the north.

However, Opposition Leader, Anura Bandaranaike and to some extent, Mrs. B. herself have made the UNP's "failure to combat terrorism" a main target of propagandist attack. The SLFP believes that the economic hardships of the people are so severe that there is no need to make that issue No. 1 in its present anti-UNP campaign. The SLFP wants to make maximum use of the anti-Tamil sentiment which has been whipped up **before** July by basically pro-UNP groups, and **after** July by wider non-UNP sections of Sinhala opinion.

But the SLFP does not wish to be brazenly anti-Tamil for fear of losing the Tamil vote it has received since 1982, and for fear that it will be charged with racialism. Thus, its propaganda cleverly picks on "terrorism" thus satisfying Sinhala hardline opinion while exposing

UNP ineffectiveness in "combating terrorism".

The calculation that the UNP will be forced to call a general election, it seems clear now, has more or less determined SLFP moves in the past 3 months, particularly on participation in the RTC.

Using each and every occasion to embarrass the UNP and to make things difficult for the government

has become the SLFP's paramount consideration. Thus, the SLFP, which wasn't too sympathetic to Delhi diplomacy 3 months ago (inspite of the personal intimacies involved in the Gandhi-Bandaranaike relationship) acted with great enthusiasm and alacrity in presenting, if not actually championing, the Delhi view in the heated parliamentary exchanges on the *INDIA TODAY* report on military training camps in Tamilnadu.

## The monk on political stage

**B**hikkus in politics" — a controversial subject at all times, with the UNP and UNP apologists traditionally decrying the practice of political parties 'making use' of monks and monks playing politics. Of course, the UNP could always count on the conservative clergy in the post-independence period. This was particularly true of the Senanayake led UNP, until Sir John, at his quixotic best, warned politically-minded monks that he would do unto them what some of the less respectful Sinhala kings had done unto to all dissident Bhikkus!

The UNP criticism was first levelled against radical or left-minded monks, one of the most eminent among these was of course Ven. Walpola Rahula now much in the news. Then it was the SLFP's turn to be attacked for using 'political bhikkus'. UNP propaganda did not stop the MEP victory over Sir John or the 1956 'cultural revolution'.

The dramatic entry of high ranking monks as well as several young militants into the political scene in the pre-July period and more so in context of the roundtable conference is a phenomenon which serious students of Sri Lankan politics are now debating. Searching as usual for parallels, the higher buddhist prelates and monks at lower levels in the ecclesiastical hierarchy are now being described as "ayatollahs" and "mullahs" in an obvious recognition of the clerics role in the Iranian uprising. Those inclined to use Christian analogies speak

of Cardinal Sin in the Philippines or Archbishop Romero in El Salvador but neither of these examples seem sensitive to the fact that the Buddhist clergy does not work within a rigidly institutionalised and tightly disciplined order. There is also the fundamental difference of the total or unquestioning obedience of the faithful.

*"When the Ayatollah wants his people, even kids, to take up arms and fight the enemy, they do so in the serene knowledge that it is Allah's will and martyrdom is ensured. The monks do not command that kind of absolute power"* said a distinguished Buddhist scholar at a discussion recently. He added *"For decades, Buddhist associations fully supported by the clergy have launched nation-wide campaigns against slaughter of animals or against liquor or gambling but all these failed. It is only when the people believe or are led to believe that language, race and religion are in peril that a space opens in the political field for the bhikkus and then their influence is considerable"*.

A few years ago, this journal conducted a discussion on a question posed by one of its regular contributors, Reggie Siriwardena who asked "Where are the Buddhist radicals?". Later, the LG noted in its *TRENDS* column the emergence of what was called a 'new Dutugemunism', and mention was made of one powerful orator and dynamic personality, Ven. Elle Gunawansa, a striking symbol of a resurgent Sinhala-Buddhist militancy. (See also *TRENDS*).



# Muslims opt for provincial assemblies

In the intense, rancorous and unabated Sinhala-Tamil debate it does look as if the Muslim case has gone by default. This is not true. The truth is that the mainstream media has subjected the Muslim community to the sort of "benign neglect" of which the more articulate Muslims now bitterly accuse successive (Sinhala) governments. The Council of Muslims, led by the veteran Sir Razik Fareed, has presented a well-prepared case.

## VOA and Indian Security

For the fourth time in a matter of weeks, a senior US official has flatly denied that the US is interested in any defence treaty with Sri Lanka. (Daily News 25/3). The official was making the point in what he called 'the backdrop of President Jayewardene's June visit'. A top State Dept. official Mr. Howard Shaffeur (L.G. 1/3) said the same thing in Colombo and Delhi.

But Delhi's concern is obviously not confined to any "defence pact". On March 15 (ISLAND 19/3) several MP's expressed concern over the move to set up powerful transmitters by the VOA in Sri Lanka, and argued that this was a "security threat".

External affairs Minister Mr. Narasimha Rao said that Sri Lanka had given a copy of the agreement to the Indian government. It was true, he said that the transmitters could beam to any part of Asia. But the site had yet to be decided on. Delhi was examining the agreement and would take up with Colombo 'any disagreeable points'. While Sri Lanka's position was that the earlier facilities were only being expanded, Mr. Rao said that Sri Lanka was aware of NAM support for the New Information Order.

The MP's said they were not satisfied with Mr. Rao's answer.

In terms of 'practical solutions', the Muslim choice falls between the Sinhala consensus (DDC's) and the Tamil (TULF-CWC) demand for Regional Councils with substantial powers. As Dr. Badiudin Mahmud explained to the L.G., the Muslims think that the most equitable and workable solution is Provincial Assemblies. Dr. Mahmud, former Education Minister, was spokesman of the Council at the RTC.

Claiming an ancestry as old as the Sinhalese, the Muslims emphasise their occupational core-interest as 'trade' and underline the fact that their arrival was not accompanied by "military subjugation", and that there is no historical legacy of hatred and conflict between Muslims and Sinhalese or Muslims and Tamils.

The Council of Muslims is conscious of the commonly expressed Buddhists' fear that "Buddhism is in danger". Throughout history, the Muslims, the Council states, has worked hand in hand to 'preserve the Sinhala race and their national and cultural aspirations'. (It stressed this fact because "some quarters" have directly or indirectly alluded to them as "new comers".)

As to grievances, the Muslim plight, according to the Council, is "the most grievous". From Sir Razik Fareed to the lowliest member, the Council feels that each government has taken the Muslims for granted. Despite the fact Dr. Mahmud was Minister from 1970-77, education is one of the main grievances, with illiteracy among the Muslims second only to the plantation workers.

Considering that the Muslims are 8% of the population representation in the public service is less than 4%. As a result the Muslims want ethnic ratios introduced to all state sector recruitment. Another grievance is land and land set-

tlement. Policies have worked to their disadvantage, demographically and economically, the Council claims. Muslims, a trading community, have suffered by the extensive expansion of State organisations in the import-export trade and internal distribution. In the rural sector, the lowest per capita income is that of Muslims. The "ugly" exhibition of wealth by a small few does not conceal the 'vulgar' exhibition of poverty by the Muslim majority.

A specific grievance is the Amparai district and the demographic changes there. The Council is totally opposed to the TULF position that the northern and eastern provinces be allowed to merge. It is equally opposed to the merger of Trinco and Batticaloa to the exclusion of Amparai. The Council is for a Provincial Assembly in each of the 9 provinces with "maximum autonomy".

## End of . . .

(Continued from page 3)

found. The talks can resume but if the conference thinking cannot break out of the DDC straitjacket, little tangible progress can be achieved.

If the RTC is doomed, does this in effect mean a requiem for the TULF? For the first time in 50 years, the Tamil community of the north will be unrepresented in Parliament, a sad development and a dangerous one. By the logic of the Churchillian dictum, the end of jaw-jaw opens the way to the unhappier choice, war-war. Last week a new Ministry of National Security was created, and first holder of that office will also be Deputy Minister of Defence. Let 1984 be 'the year of Amity' prayed President JR. The new Minister, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali has also promised that the desire of 99% of the people for a "peaceful day-to-day life" will be ensured.

"Parliament goes to the BMICH" the L.G. said when the RTC opened. All Sri Lankans must hope that now it won't be a case of "from Bandaranaike Hall to battle-field"



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# Diversiory movements against Christians and Muslims

Kumari Jayawardena

## The Anti-Christian Movement and the Sinhala Bourgeoisie

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS conflicts in Sri Lanka were among the factors which retarded the formation of a strong anti-imperialist consciousness, capable of uniting all ethnic groups in a joint liberation struggle. During the colonial period, such conflicts also, on many occasions, weakened the class consciousness of the working people, directing their energies in wrong directions—against minorities, rather than against the class enemy. While religious and cultural revival have often been the basis of incipient nationalist movements in the Third World, Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka (in the late 19th and early 20th century,) used slogans of religion, culture and temperance, to mobilise people in anti-Christian agitation; attention was focussed on the privileges and alleged misdeeds of the Christian minority, instead of the colonial regime itself. Since in addition, the majority of Christians were poor people, both Sinhala and Tamil the movement became a distorted expression of 'national' sentiment, directed away from the real problem.

However, it is a fact that in colonial Sri Lanka, while foreign and local Christians (Catholic and Protestant) formed less than 10% of the population, the Christian elite dominated the political life of the country and held very privileged positions in society. To give a few examples, in the Legislative Council, from 1833 to 1912, the Low-Country Sinhalese representatives, who were appointed by the government, were (with one exception)

Protestant Christians; a high percentage of the Sinhala and Tamil entrepreneurs, professional people and government servants were also Christians — the products of missionary schools. The economic, political and social advantages held by Christians were especially resented by the newly-emergent Sinhala Buddhist bourgeoisie, who financed the movement of Buddhist revival. The Buddhist petty bourgeoisie of small traders, white-collar workers, writers, journalists and teachers, with the support of the Buddhist monks also opposed the hegemony of Christians in colonial society. These groups spearheaded the revivalist movement to promote Buddhist education, challenge missionary influence and to arouse national and patriotic feelings among the Sinhala Buddhists. Bureaucrats and missionaries were attacked for their religion and the campaign was directed against the 'Christian' power rather than against British colonialism. Even if this was a tactic to avoid charges of sedition, it had the effect of arousing the Buddhists to a 'holy war' instead of an anti-colonial struggle.

The anti-Christian movement was also linked with the rise of religious fervour and the belief that Sri Lanka was the 'dhammadvipa', island of the faith, with a historic destiny to protect Buddhism, this mission having been entrusted to the 'Aryan' Sinhala people by the Buddha himself. In this context, one can note that the creation of an ideology based on 'traditional' values, emphasising the ethnic, religious and cultural identity of the Sinhala Buddhists, resulted in an

aggressive campaign against Christians. The battles, both non-violent and violent, were fought at several levels.

1. Through public debates between Christians and Buddhists, as occurred in Panadura in 1873, when bhikku Migettuwatte Gunananda aroused Buddhist popular opinion by confronting Rev. David de Silva, and launching a searing attack on Christianity.

2. Through popular agitation, invective against Christians in the press, pamphlets, some 'blasphemous, others scurrilous and novels where the heroes were virtuous Buddhists and the villains were Christians. Christianity was ridiculed, missionaries were referred to as 'enemies' teaching a 'degrading superstition' and complaints were made against 'ignorant catechists who infest our streets'.

3. Through the formation of Buddhist organisations, especially after the arrival in Sri Lanka, in 1880, of Colonel Olcott and Helena Blavatsky, who launched the Buddhist Theosophical Society to promote Buddhism and Buddhist education. In this period, the works of British radicals and free-thinkers (Annie Besant, Charles Bradlaugh and G.W. Foote) were also circulated and the first issue of the 'Ceylon Free-thinker', which appeared in 1883, had an article on 'The Evil Results of Missionary Education'.

## Violent Clashes

This ideological climate and the emotions generated by the revivalist movement, led to the first violent communal riot in Sri Lanka's



modern history — the riot between Buddhists and Catholics in Kotahena Colombo in April 1883. The militant bhikku, Migettuwatte Gunananda whose temple was close to St. Lucia's Cathedral, had organised Buddhist ceremonies which coincided with Easter Week. The Catholics took this as a provocation and a serious riot occurred; the street fighting caused one death and 30 were injured, including 12 policemen. The resulting Commission of Inquiry claimed that the causes were the conflicting religious festivities, the leadership of Gunananda — "a bitter opponent of the Christian religion" — and the failure of the Catholics to control "the more ignorant of their flock".

In the next phase of anti-Christian agitation during the early 20th century, revivalist leaders such as **Anagarika Dharmapala** and **Walisingha Harischandra** took the lead. Christianity was said to be the cause of a multitude of evils affecting society and a 'golden age' of Sinhala Buddhist culture was described, where there was no crime violence or drunkenness. As Dharmapala wrote in 1902:

"This bright, beautiful island was made into a Paradise by the Aryan Sinhalese before its destruction was brought about by the barbaric vandals... Christianity and polytheism are responsible for the vulgar practices of **killing animals, stealing, prostitution, licentiousness, lying and drunkenness**... This ancient, historic, refined people, under the diabolism of vicious paganism, introduced by the British administrators are now declining and slowly dying away. The bureaucratic administrators... have cut down primeval forests to plant tea; have introduced opium, ganja, whisky, arrack and other alcoholic poisons; have opened saloons and drinking taverns in every village; have killed all industries and made the people indolent."

Dharmapala and Harischandra also led a campaign for the protection of the Buddhist sacred sites in Anuradhapura and in June 1903, during the Buddhist poson festivities, they organised a protest against restrictions on Buddhist processions. There was anti-Christian rioting and Harischandra was arrested for incitement. The subsequent court case and his acquittal were the stimulus for an increase of religious fer-

vous among Buddhists. Dharmapala petitioned the British King on this issue, stating:

"The Sinhalese Buddhists are being persecuted by the subordinate officers of Your Majesty's Government... they resent interference where their holy historic religion is concerned... liquor opium and beef are given to the village people by the administrators... the removal of liquor saloons, butcher shops and foreign churches from the Sacred City is what the Buddhists demand".

The struggle against Christianity was thus, not a movement of the Sri Lankan masses against the foreign rulers of the country, but was rather a campaign led by sections of the Sinhala-Buddhists, who in their attempts to gain a greater share in the power and privileges of colonial society, aroused and articulated the hostility of the masses towards the privileged Christians.

Anti-Christian feelings have continued to break out into open agitation and conflict at various times in Sri Lanka. One important instance was in the late 1950's, when the Buddhist Commission was set up by a number of Buddhist organisations to look into alleged acts of discrimination against Buddhists and the Buddhist religion. Many of the old debates were revived and even scurrilous pamphlets of the turn of the century, like *Kanni Mariyage Hati* (The Truth about the Virgin Mary) were republished. While in recent years the people have been distracted by attacks on other minorities, it is nevertheless true that the anti-Christian prejudices, though dormant, still remain strong in the consciousness of Sinhala Buddhists.

### The Anti-Muslim Agitation of the Sinhala Merchants

Competition in trade is a key element in understanding ethnic and communal rivalry in Sri Lanka. By the last quarter of the 19th century, the colonial economy was dominated and controlled by British as well as North and South Indian merchant capital. A bourgeoisie of Sinhala, Sri Lanka Tamil and Muslims had also arisen. While the economic base of the Muslim bourgeoisie was trade, the Sri Lankan Tamil bourgeoisie derived their wealth from plantation cultivation

and from services, mainly financial to the commercial sector; their Sinhala counterparts accumulated wealth in liquor renting, graphite mining and plantations. However the Sinhalese and Sri Lanka Tamils were not strong enough to compete with the British, Borahs, Sindhis, Parsis, Chettiars and Muslims in the export-import trade and in the large retail trade. Thus, as an alternative members of these two economically weak groups, competed for entry into the professions and government service. However, the small Sinhala traders were to become a vociferous pressure group which directed its hostility against 'alien' traders.

The weakness of the Sinhala and Sri Lanka Tamil entrepreneurs can be seen from the following figures taken from Fergusons Directory. In 1863, there were 33 leading merchants, exporters and importers of whom 27 were Europeans, 4 were Indians from Bombay, the only Sri Lankans being P. B. Fernando and E. Nannytamby of Jaffna. By 1880, 54 leading merchants were listed of whom 50 were European, 2 Parsis from Bombay and 2 Sinhalese (Charles de Soysa and Jernis Pieris). In the local commercial quarter, (the Pettah), the trade in 1863 was dominated by 75 Nattukottai Chettiar firms (of South India) who were in the rice and cloth trade and 35 Muslim traders, who dealt in various goods. No Sinhala and Sri Lanka Tamil firms are mentioned for this year. By 1880, the Pettah trade was dominated by 86 Chetty and 64 Muslim firms, with only a handful of Sinhalese traders such as H. Don Carolis (furniture) and N. S. Fernando (stationery). By the 1890's new groups of Muslim traders from Gujarat — the Borahs, Khojas and Memons — broke into the import-export trade, and became the new merchant princes who played a collaborative role as junior partners of the British.

### Anti-Muslim Propaganda and the 1915 Riots

The hostility to this foreign domination of trade was expressed by the smaller Sinhala traders; the animosity, while being against all 'merchants from Bombay and pedlars from South India', as Dharma-



pala called them, was particularly against the Muslim traders of South India (known as Coast Moors) who were ubiquitous, being found in urban as well as rural areas, however remote. There was not only keen competition between the Muslims and the Sinhala shopkeepers and traders, but consumer hostility was also aroused against the Muslim shopkeepers, when as in 1915, wartime shortages and inflation led to a general rise in the price of essentials.

During the early 20th century, the concept of 'alien traders' as opposed to 'sons of the soil' was popularised in the Sinhala press, the main proponent being **Anagarika Dharmapala**, whose father, H. Don Carolis, was one of the few Sinhala shopowners in the Pettah; numerous Sinhala writers, dramatists, journalists and monks of this period wrote extensively, glorifying the heroic deeds of Sinhalese kings, recalling the victories against foreign invasions and also denouncing foreign traders and urging the Sinhalese to boycott their shops. In 1906 Dharmapala wrote;

"Aliens are taking away the wealth of the country and the sons of the soil where are they to go? The immigrants who came here have other places to go to the Sinhalese has no place to go. Is it just that the sons of the soil should suffer while the alien enjoys? England... has an Alien Prevention Bill to prevent paupers coming to her shores and the ignorant helpless Sinhalese villager is made a victim by the alien sharper who robs his ancestral land."

During this period, Dharmapala's attacks were specifically directed against Muslim traders: in 1915 he wrote;

"The Muhammedans, an alien people... by Shylockian methods became prosperous like the Jews. The Sinhalese sons of the soil, whose ancestors for 2358 years had shed rivers of blood to keep the country free from alien invaders are in the eyes of the British only vagabonds. The alien South Indian Muhammedan comes to Ceylon, sees the neglected villager, without any experience in trade... and the

result is that the Muhammedan thrives and the son of the soil goes to the wall."

Several other ideologues of the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie made provocative statements. The novelist **Piyadasa Sirisena**, who edited the '*Sinhala Jathiya*' urged the Sinhalese to "refrain from... transactions with the Coast Moor, the Cochin and the foreigner": *The Lakmina*, (a Sinhala daily), writing of the Coast Moors, said 'A suitable plan should be adopted to send this damnable lot out of the country', and the *Dinamina* condemned 'our inveterate enemies, the Moors'. Some editors of papers which carried such inflammatory statements were prosecuted and in 1915, the *Sinhala Jathiya* and Dharmapala's *Sinhala Bauddhaya* were banned.

It was against this background that the first serious riots between Sinhalese and Muslims occurred in 1915 in many parts of the country, ostensibly sparked off by religious provocations, but in reality reflecting the economic and political tensions of the period. Many hundreds died in the rioting or in the 'summary justice' meted out by British troops against civilians under martial law. Several middle-class Buddhist temperance leaders were imprisoned, including family members of Sinhala traders in the Pettah. D.E. Pedris (son of D.D. Pedris, the wealthy Pettah merchant) was court marshalled and shot on a charge of inciting crowds in the Pettah to attack Muslim shops; **Edmund Hewavitarna** (son of H. Don Carolis) died in jail after his death sentence was commuted, and **N. S. Fernando Wijesekera** (Pedris' brother-in-law) and son of the Pettah stationer, N. S. Fernando also received a death sentence, which was commuted.

The reaction of Anagarika Dharmapala to these riots was revealing writing a month after the events, he said:

"What the German is to the Britisher... the Muhammedan is to the Sinhalese. He is an alien to the Sinhalese by religion, race and language. To the Sinhalese without Buddhism death is preferable. The British officials may shoot, hang, quarter, imprison or do anything to the Sinhalese but there

will always be bad blood between the Moors and the Sinhalese. The peaceful Sinhalese have at last shown that they can no longer bear the insults of the alien. The whole nation in one day has risen against the Moor people. The causes are economic and spiritual".

In subsequent years, open conflict between Buddhists and Muslims died down, but the anti-minority feelings of the Sinhala traders persisted in the consciousness of the Sinhala Buddhists. This was recently seen not only by largely localised outbursts of violence against Muslims, such as occurred in Puttalam and Galle in 1981, but also by the content of much Sinhala chauvinist propaganda of recent times. However, it is noteworthy that antagonism has continued to be less on religious lines and more on the basis of trade rivalry.

We see that many of the themes of the anti-Tamil propaganda of the 1970's and 1980's had their origin in the consciousness of an earlier period, when they were used against Christians and Muslims. The most persistent have been the assertions of Sinhala racial superiority and the special role of the Sinhalese to protect Buddhism, the hostility to 'alien traders', the concern for the 'sons of the soil' and the much-repeated lament, which was voiced in the '*Ceylon Nation*' at the turn of the century, that "the Sinhalese are isolated; they are between the Devil and the deep sea; they have no other land to go to, they have no ethnological relationship with any other existing race or country."

It will be observed that the ideologies on which antagonism towards the Christians and the Muslims were nourished primarily served petty-bourgeois interests. But such ideologies, in specific circumstances, become the dominant ideology and attract other classes as well. In spite of the growth of solidarity and joint action by its different ethnic components, the emerging working-class in Sri Lanka also at times fell prey to this Sinhala Buddhist ideology. The conflicts with minorities in which the working-class, as a result, became involved, will be discussed in the next article.

(To be continued)



# CRD's reply (2) to Chandra de Fonseka — “with humility”

In replying to Mr. Chandra de Fonseka's latest contribution to the debate on the CRD documents (LG. March 15), we are very much aware of the dangers of this controversy declining into a series of polemical exchanges between Mr. de Fonseka and ourselves, in which the real and substantial issues affecting the National Question which it was our purpose to clarify, may be obscured. If, therefore, in our present reply we pass over some of the points made by Mr. de Fonseka in his last article, it isn't because we have nothing to say on these points but because we have concentrated on the main issues so that readers may not miss the wood for the trees.

## Rationality :

First, a word about our designation and declared objectives. Mr. de Fonseka says that he understood these to mean that we were going “to discuss our ethnic problem in a wider, holistic perspective”. “Holistic” is Mr. de Fonseka's own importation: we didn't use or imply the term in the statement of our purposes, nor do we believe that “rational” is equivalent to “holistic”.

We should have thought that what we meant by “rational” was perfectly clear from the context in which we began our activity. We were trying to bring a rational approach to bear on questions which, following on the explosion of collective irrationality and insanity in July, continued to be talked about pre-dominantly in an atmosphere of emotionalism and prejudice. We must reiterate that our starting-point (as the title of our first document indicated) was this prevalent national context. We were endeavouring to examine rationally and critically, ethnic myths that were currently in circulation. We were not trying to offer solutions to all national or global problems:

CRD (The Committee for Rational Development)

the limits of our immediate endeavour were set by the priorities of the time.

## Banking and ethnic myths :

Mr. de Fonseka's indifference to these considerations probably accounts for his extraordinary claim that when he used banking figures “to point to the fact that, next to Colombo district, Jaffna district (for whatever reasons) is the most developed district in the country”, he was saying “a GOOD word..... about the Tamils”. We wonder in what ivory tower or, on what mountain top, Mr. de Fonseka has been living in recent times that he is oblivious to the implications and effects of such “good” words. Can he really be unaware that one of the forces fuelling racist hatred and violence is the propaganda that Tamils have a stranglehold on the economy? Doesn't he know that in relation to the specific area of banking, the charge has been made that Tamils have been favoured in respect of loans? Surely, after the experience of the Jews in Nazi Germany, Mr. de Fonseka must be aware that these are myths that kill.

When the CRD draws attention to the explosive potentialities of Mr. de Fonseka's “good words”, it is not asking that facts be distorted or suppressed. On the contrary, it wishes to underline the grave responsibility that rests on people like Mr. Chandra de Fonseka (whose statements will naturally carry more weight than those of some racist demagogues) to verify whether the professedly objective statements they make are factually sound. That is why, in respect of banking figures, CRD was particular about their sources and their interpretation and continues to be so. Our critique of Mr. de Fonseka's statistics and of the conclusions he draws from them stands — in particular, our point about the imbalance caused by the exclusion of head office loans and the failure to re-

cognise that a high level of bank credit, whether in Jaffna or in Anuradhapura, is a **result** and not a **cause** of the high level of economic activity and thrift by farmers in both districts.

Mr. de Fonseka now pleads that he was not asking that his banking figures be “accepted”. He says he was submitting them as **prima facie** evidence of a hypothesis which he hoped that CRD, not subject to his “limitations of time, competence and access to data”, would follow up for purposes of verification. Modesty won't permit our acceptance of Mr. de Fonseka's compliment in respect of competence (which in any case seems disingenuous in the light of what he has says elsewhere): And what makes Mr. de Fonseka think we are any less limited than he is in regard to time and access to data? CRD does not have any full time researchers. All CRD members give of their time voluntarily after working hours. In any event, the factual basis of Mr. de Fonseka's hypothesis seems to us, as we have indicated, so flimsy and unsound that we regard it rather as a red herring than as “**prima facie** evidence” worthy of being investigated.

## Sinhala populism :

The terms in which Mr. de Fonseka states his hypothesis are as unacceptable to us as his “**prima facie** evidence”. He speaks of “the expropriation and transfer of the rural surplus through the commercial branch bank system to the urban sector for urban credit creation and disbursement, resulting in the increasing impoverishment of the areas where such surplus is generated”. There is a **simplistic assumption** here of an urban-rural polarity, with the urban sector as the exploiters and the rural as the exploited, which needs to be critically examined. Mr. de Fonseka ignores the fact



that class stratifications and class contradictions cut across the urban-rural divide. Nor does the surplus generated in the village flow entirely to the city: it is partially absorbed in the village itself by privileged and exploiting classes, to whom a large measure of banking credit also goes.

Mr. de Fonseka's obliviousness to these social realities is a pointer to the ideology which underlies his approach — the ideology of Sinhala populism, which is the new **Volkgeist**, and from whose pressures many Sinhala liberal and even radical intellectuals today are unable to free themselves. Its symptoms are the romanticisation of the rural sector and of the Sinhala peasantry, the idealised utopia of a decentralised village community as the unit of society, and the substitution, for the class conflicts of our society, of a city-country opposition. In this worldview, there are no poor people in the Jaffna district, no exploited Tamil peasantry. All these symptoms are to be found in Mr. de Fonseka's articles, and accompanying them is the failure to grasp the crucial significance of political power.

### Politics and economics :

We have already in an earlier article (LG. Feb. 1) noted Mr. de Fonseka's tendency to slide from an urban-rural polarity to one of Sinhala vs Tamil to Sri Lankan Tamil vs others to Jaffna district vs the rest. Given the fact that the mobs rampaging through the streets of Colombo in July were not particularly interested in whether one was Indian, Ceylon or Jaffna Tamil, Mr. de Fonseka's deep concern for Tamil social structure is particularly touching.

In his latest article Mr. de Fonseka's heart bleeds for Indian Tamils and he reproaches us (unwarrantedly) with paying too little attention to them, but his solution for them is one of "local level institutions of worker self-management". Characteristic of his indifference to the significance of political power is his failure to confront the crucial issue of citizenship as well as his counterposing of what he calls "sub-district decentralisation" to the "larger unit supra-district decentralisation of regional and provincial units, favoured by the Jaffna Tamil leadership". A structure of local level institutions of worker self-

management, unaccompanied by a transformation of the centralised political character of the State, would leave unchanged the fundamental political power relations between State and people and place very severe constraints on the limits within which local level institutions could exercise their functions. Moreover, in the case of the Batticaloa Tamils and Muslims, we note that Mr. de Fonseka regards as just the "fears regarding Jaffna Tamil hegemony", but his rejection of regional or provincial decentralisation implies that he regards Sinhala hegemony as preferable! The assumption of a **benevolent Sinhala paternalistic role** in respect of all minorities other than the Jaffna Tamils is in fact one of the familiar ingredients of Sinhala populist ideology. **Though we hold that institutional arrangements should protect the respective interests of Indian Tamils & Batticaloa Tamils, the record of Sinhalese dominated governments in uplifting the conditions of these communities has been rather dismal, as evidenced by Mr. de Fonseka's own statistics.**

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In spite of Mr. de Fonseka's professed attachment to "holistic" approaches, his article is in fact pervaded by a downgrading of politics and a simplifying economic reductionism. **The National Question is primarily a political one.** Not only does Mr. de Fonseka ignore the decisive issue of citizenship when he speaks of the problems of Indian Tamils: his whole approach to decentralisation is developmental (in the economic sense) and oblivious to the questions of sharing political power. Very revealing is the contrast offered by Mr. de Fonseka when he speaks of "manipulation of issues and political expediency practised by Tamil as well as Sinhalese politicians with less than the interests of their constituencies at heart ... in disregard of the economic and social interests of the great majority within both communities". In other words, politics is the sordid business of politicians, the real interests of the masses are "economic and social"! That these interests can only be assured by the people, nationally as well as regionally, having real control over political power, Mr. de Fonseka fails to understand. **Also, when he lumps together Sinhala with Tamil politics under the obtusely using term "manipulation", Mr. de Fonseka fails to see the gulf between a non-institutionalised minority nationalism (that is the nationalism of a subordinated ethnic group) and a majority nationalism in control of State power — the armed services, the legislature and the executive.**

The particular paragraph in Mr. de Fonseka's article from which we drew our last quotation is noteworthy also for a moral lapse into which his Sinhala populist bias has led him and which we would not have expected from somebody of his known intelligence and sensitivity. He writes:

"One wholeheartedly condemns the appalling events of last July and the subsequent suffering and hardship undergone by the Tamil community. Nevertheless, at the risk of sounding inhuman or callous, the point must be made that these events have a history which includes..." (Mr. de Fonseka goes on to refer to what he considers to be the failings on both sides).

Inhuman or callous? Not quite, perhaps, — but that there is a **moral obtuseness** here is all too evident. We invite Mr. de Fonseka to ponder such parallel formulations as "Auschwitz was awful, but...": "My Lai was monstrous, yet...": "Sabra & Shatila were shocking, ... however", (these and similar apologies can easily be found). The point is that if one "**wholeheartedly condemns**" (really and genuinely), then no further sentence beginning, "Nevertheless..." is possible! Nothing — absolutely nothing — can extenuate July or lessen the guilt of those who perpetrated it.

#### **Anonymity:**

Why, finally, is Mr. de Fonseka so concerned that we should disclose the personal identities of the members of CRD? Neither as individuals nor as a group are we accountable to anyone except in respect of the validity of our ideas and arguments, and these can speak for themselves. Does Mr. de Fonseka reveal the name of the bank source from which he obtained his figures? Does he know the names of the team that produced the Marga document he praises? Does he know the names of the individuals who carried out the Socio-Economic Survey, etc? As for the Marga document cited by Mr. de Fonseka, we would like to point out that it **does not** contradict the CRD report. Mr. de Fonseka is enamoured of the "tone" of the Marga document — that is his prerogative. But, respect obviously does not lead to imitation, for Mr. de Fonseka's own "tone" is a far cry from "Margese".

However, we are gratified that in spite of our anonymity, and in spite of his unsubstantiated accusations of "an impetuous premature leap into the ethnic mud", "school-marm hysteria" etc. Mr. de Fonseka thinks well enough of us finally to propose a series of activities extending as far as acting "as a people's collective ombudsman"! We shall take his advice and "scrutinise" these suggestions "with humility". ●

#### **Letter . . .**

(Continued from page 2)

little bit of weeping', according to Mr Fernando, does not go far enough. It is in fact not Christian.

Christian repentance, according to Mr Fernando, must be accompanied by a genuine attempt to restore the other (the sinned against) and it must be a voluntary and unconditional rejection of the sinful past. None of these signs are evident in the Catholic Church today. "Apologies" he says "don't suffice, beating the breast and shouting mea culpa".

While all these things are true, yet it must also be remembered that these considerations operate within a context, the context of a relationship between God and man. As in other relationships, for instance between husband and wife or parent and child, offences are attended by penalties; yet if the relationship is sound these are not strictly enforced and in some instances they can be waived. There is the remission of a sin (like the remission of a cancer, when all traces of the disease disappears). Hence Christian repentance can manifest itself in (although it is odious to Mr Fernando) in "adaptability and a little bit of weeping". What is involved here is not a contractual but a personal relationship.

The whole controversy seems to me pointless because the initial premise of Fr Balasuriya is wrong. Many besides the Catholic Church contributed to the deculturation of the country in the wake of the colonial invasions. And if the book "Crippled Minds" by Dr Susantha Goonetilleke makes one important point it is that this process was universal, deep and pervasive and some of its agents were, ironically, even the custodians of the local culture. The problem is far too complex and not to be solved by finding scapegoats. What churchmen and all men of goodwill should do now is to address their minds to the problems of the country, chief of which is the moral decline manifesting itself not only in the July Riots but also in the general indiscipline, waste and corruption, instead of conducting agonising appraisals of the past.

Nugegoda.

**Narsada de Silva**



# THE POLITICS OF NARCOTICS

Manik Sandrasagara

I have, from time to time advocated publicly and privately, that the Government of Sri Lanka takes a much more balanced view in its attitude to the use of the medicinal herb, Kansa. This view was based on traditional wisdom, increasingly corroborated by modern scientific research and opinion. Extrapolating from these and many other findings, I also warned that **experience has shown that where this balance is destroyed, an epidemic of hard drug (ie. Heroin, Cocaine, Morphine etc.) usage follows.**

The scale of the current heroin problem has not emerged from Kansa use as such, but rather from its suppression. See Box (Chronology of the creation of the drug scare in Sri Lanka) and Box (Operation Intercept). My warnings of this trend, made 3 years ago, were either misrepresented or stifled by our glorious English language free press.

My study of the patterns of addiction worldwide has led me to believe that the growing use of heroin in Sri Lanka is an extremely negative social development. Hard drug addiction, rising immorality and increased alcohol-fuelled crime must inevitably be blamed on the new lifestyles and attitudes which are showcased in the public media. **Guns, policemen, promiscuity, verbal and physical violence and the doings of criminals (ie. entertainment known to the Television industry as "Police Shows") comprise most of the sponsored programmes on Television. Surveys worldwide have shown that the rise of crime in any given country is in direct proportion to the volume of television product purveying or portraying crime, ie. Police Shows.** Nudity, flagellation etc. are staples in the comic book market in Sinhala and Tamil. As a result, our children have comic book minds. Localised versions of Bruce Lee and "The Hulk" are the new role models! It is the same worldwide, a sign of the times and a finger pointing at the future. The model for policemen, criminals

and supermarket consumers alike, has become the new media image conceived, produced and presented by minds and sympathies alien to everything that our tradition holds sacred.

Herein lies the distinct possibility of the annihilation of our traditional roots and their replacement by a mindless homogeneous bastardy. The appearance of heroin is symptomatic, but the true dangers to our nation lie deeper than their outward manifestation.

Television and the new media image is transforming our society into a model of itself on all levels. Lawlessness, anarchy, narcotic addiction, paederasty, large scale production and consumption of alcohol as the approved drug of our society; and of course, dispensaries bursting at the seams with hundreds of thousands of Western drugs — **many of them forbidden in the country of their manufacture.** These are all by-products of the system known as modern consumerism, the underlying rules and laws of which are supposedly Christian, but certainly not Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim. Yet, it is this de-facto submission to an alien system, despite verbal protests to the contrary, that is causing an increasing number of people to blame the Government for these ills.

In times of great social stress and pressure (and especially with a large growth in population) there is a necessary statistical **increase in the use of all material substances** including narcotics, alcohol and other inebriants and depressants. The volume of increase in the use of such synthetic drugs as Valium, Librium, Darvon etc., is also highly indicative of this anxiety and pressure created syndrome. **Singapore which is famous — or infamous for its rigour in law enforcement, now admits that it has more crime, juvenile delinquency, student rebelliousness and increased general addiction to a wide range of abused chemicals than it had prior to the enactment of Draconian laws.**

While this article is based on research by and conversations with Mudiyanse Tennekoon, Dr Seela Fernando, Ranil Senanayake and others, the main arguments adduced by the author were presented in a memorandum to President Jayewardene.

The creation of further chaos in our already fragile social structure seems to be the whole purpose of the anti-kansa exercise, in which foreign trained and influenced government officials and journalists are among those who have been used to disseminate paranoia and prejudice based upon misinformation rather than science, traditional wisdom, true religion and identifying the options available to us.

I have set these thoughts down for your readers consideration and I have tried to confine myself to identifying some of the options. I feel that there is a nasty problem building here, which effects all of us in Sri Lanka on many levels. **The "Brown Sugar" epidemic that now prevails, while being mistaken by the "experts" for a heroin epidemic, can nevertheless lead to a true heroin epidemic, especially if low cost heroin enters the market.** At Rupees 1200/- per gram, heroin at present is unaffordable except by people with plenty of money. **If however the demand for some kind of social tranquilizer other than alcohol (which is responsible for 97% of all violent crime) is so great, then it is better that the people use the traditional remedy for such pressure situations, namely Kansa, rather than alcohol, heroin, "Brown Sugar" or insecticide,** for there is no doubt whatsoever that the latter poses a far greater threat to public health than kansa. The motivation which links the consumption of alcohol, opium derivatives and insecticide, is the same — desperation.

A great deal of misinformation concerning kansa, moulded by Judeo-Christian "morality" has been fed to all classes of this country since 1928. In the recent years especially, laage sums of money have been spent to influence public opinion. It has been my defence of the eastern ayurvedic view-point concerning kansa in the teeth of this western socio-religious imperialism (masquerading as Dhamma, law and order and of course purity) that has caused me

(Continued on page 16)



# Chronology of the Creation of the Drug Scare in Sri Lanka

DATE	EVENT	PERSONALITY	VESTED INTEREST OR OCCUPATION
18th, 19th October 1973	Statement made at a meeting sponsored by The Colombo Plan Bureau on "Narcotics and Drug Abuse Problems"  "I would like to know what the Government of Sri Lanka's policy is on the phasing out of the use of Ayurvedic Medicines in this country?"	Pio Abarro	Employment in Sri Lanka as a foreign expert on drugs.
18th, 19th October 1973	Statement directing the press on partial reportage, enabling various innocuous substances to be confused and classified with hard drugs.  "Although there are no hard and fast rules as to what shall be published in the newspaper, it would be best if nothing that would emphasize the effects of drug, such as euphoria, for instance is mentioned. Also the names of the drugs need not be mentioned"	Pio Abarro	- do -
18th, 19th October 1973	Statement that seeks to create "the carrots" that will attract people to participate in the perpetuation of the scare.  "These courses are designed to bring together senior law enforcement officers from all parts of the world, so that they could have a look at each other and make friendships"  "Last year the demand was extremely heavy and at the moment there is a long waiting list of candidates to come to Geneva and then spend one week in Paris and go through a comprehensive course".	Tufnell	U. N. Drug Expert based in Geneva.
18th, 19th October 1973	Statement that establishes American interest in the definition and control of the problem along with the offer of suggested remedies.  "With regard to equipment, it should be mentioned, of course, that there is a lot of bilateral assistance given to Governments around the world by the Drug Enforcement Administration of the Central Bureau for Dangerous Drugs and Narcotics in the United States of America.	Mc Gregor	Foreign Expert
18th, 19th October 1973	Statement attempting to dilute national sovereignty.  "The Board has been entrusted with the task of supervising the application of the provisions in the convention and its responsibility is a collective one to all parties of the convention. It has been vested with wide powers to ask for explanations from various countries or territories, and if necessary to suggest remedial action, when the Board has reason to believe that a country or territory has acted in breach of, or in a manner prejudicial to, the provisions of the convention"	Stepcyanski	Foreign Expert employed by the International Narcotics Control Board.
5th May 1981	An attempt to belittle a public discussion on Ganja at a time when media built Paranoia was at its height  "Then began the chorus of praise for Ganja and the tears shed over Ayurvedic practitioners not getting it"  The hero of the denim generation cried  "Give Ganja back to the Ayurvedic practitioners" and retired to the Art Centre Club to watch TV.	Ajit Samaranayake Ceylon Observer	Journalist



DATE	EVENT	PERSONALITY	INTEREST OR OCCUPATION
10th May 1981	An Attempt to degrade the value of Ganja as an ayurvedic medicine. "What stirred us up was the attempt to evoke the name of the most respected and cultured — the Ayurvedic profession — for the promotion of this weed."	Contact in the Observer	Journalist specialises in articles about Alcohol.
21st June 1981	Use of cooked-up statistics to alarm the public. "1.2 Million Kilograms of local Cannabys entered the illicit International market." (If this story was correct it would mean that at current market value as top grade Cannabis (which it must necessarily be in order to sell such a vast quantity) would be generating 7.5 Billion U. S. Dollars. In addition to this it would mean that 2.52 Million lbs Ganja is being grown, harvested, packed and shipped out of Sri Lanka — 99.9% underected).	Ranil Weerasinghe quoting V. Navaratnam in the SUN.	Journalist reputed for stories on law and order.
17th June 1982	Presentation of dubious statistics designed to create public parandia. "On an average 4,000 persons had been arrested annually on drug related crimes and the majority of them were drug users"	V. Navaratnam in the SUN.	Director of the National Drug Dependence Centre in Malaysia.
15th August 1982	Double Standards and Double Talk in a statement made at the YMCA Forum. "Ganja if taken in moderate quantities is harmless and medical studies had not been able to prove otherwise. However until such time the authorities decide to de-legalise and remove, Cannabis offences from the country's statute books, stiffer penalties should be imposed against narcotic offenders.	D. C. Jayasuriya as reported in the SUN.	Member of the Sri Lanka Narcotics Advisory Board.
19th September 1982	The classification of Ganja as a hard drug. More had drugs for Ayurveda.	Article in the SUN.	
18th June 1982	The use of sources lacking stated credentials. "According to authoritative sources about 1.5% of the 14.5 Million population have become addicted to drugs and some of the young ones initiated to the hardcore habit are as young as ten years".	Editorial in the SUN.	
17th June 1982	Generalisation with no evidence to justify claim. "Sri Lanka has become a transshipment point for the movement of Cocaine"	Kenneth Amarasekara and Lalith Allahakoon in the SUN.	Journalist
13th July 1983	An attempt to establish that prohibition is the answer. "The already existent stringent laws in several countries had created deterrent effects on drug peddlars.	PIO ABARRO quoted by Peter Balasuriya in the Island.	Journalist
13th July 1983	An article that faithfully reproduces Abarro's instructions to the press. "Tough New Laws to combat drug menace".	Peter Balasuriya in the Island.	
13th March 1983	An attempt to identify Ganja as the cause of abnormality at a cricket match when the cause was known to be due to the free availability of alcohol from bars open to students on the premises.	Jennifer Henricus in the SUN	Journalist



## The Politics of...

(Continued from page 13)

to be labelled a drug smuggler and anti-social character. I came face to face with this dominant, de-nationalised rump that functions through its media as the national psyche, when it is nothing of the sort. Here lies the total problem of our nation:— **Information control by interests and dynamics alien to the ingrained culture of the vast majority of the people of this country.** Perhaps as a result of the attack upon my character and reputation by this group, I am now stronger in my beliefs, and in my friends and founda-

tions than I was ever before. It is consistency of attitude in this matter that demands my writing this article at this time.

Twelve years ago, I became aware among other things of several vicious inequities at work in our otherwise excellent law. These inequities were so fundamental that I was forced into thinking deeply about them and their implications. I perceived, a social system which sells the addictive and destructive narcotic alcohol by the millions of gallons while imprisoning and disgracing people who chose to use kansa; labelling them as criminal deviants before a "new society" born

### "Operation Intercept" — Nixon's politics of suppression

In the United States during the era when possession of Kansa (Marijuana) was a felony punishable by 2 to 30 years in jail, a series of government programmes were aimed at reducing the importation of Kansa.

"Operation Intercept" concentrated on stopping the flow of Kansa across the US-Mexican border, and the subsequent providing of Mexico with a herbicide called Paraquat to spray on Mexican Kansa Fields.

These measures resulted in the massive price increase of Kansa, and new sources such as Colombia were found. New smuggling routes via the Florida coast with transshipment taking place in the Caribbean using the finest high speed boats became the practice as gangsters entered this new lucrative trade. Till then Kansa attracted only the minorities, and the poorer segments of society.

With sophisticated techniques becoming necessary to beat the laws, organisation and capital were mobilised by the various syndicates that entered the business. Mother ships, planes, guns and even radar was used to defeat and frustrate government attempts to prevent smuggling.

Because Colombia was next to Peru and Bolivia, traditional centres of Cocaine production it wasn't long before the syndicates realised that a kilogram of cocaine weighs as much as a kilogram of Kansa and fetches twice the price. As cocaine smuggling grew rapidly in Florida legitimate banks began laundering syndicate drug earnings.

While all this was going on Heroin and a drug called Phencylidin appeared on the illicit drug market. With Kansa becoming scarce and expensive, PCP was marketed as a synthetic Marijuana

and was an instant hit, although it had been dropped as a human drug soon after its discovery, and its use restricted to horses!

PCP laboratories mushroomed all over the U. S. It was also very cheap in comparison to imported Heroin, Cocaine and Kansa. PCP could be made from industrial chemicals easily available in bulk. Although it was illegal to possess all the ingredients together, it was not so when used separately. Anyone with a basic knowledge of organic chemistry could make PCP, so PCP became the drug of choice to millions of teenagers mostly from working class backgrounds. Up the scale in price was Heroin, and in the absence of anything else, this came into vogue, with those who could afford it. It soon became apparent that the suppression of Kansa was directly responsible for the proliferation of all other drugs.

As Heroin addiction increased by leaps and bounds, scientific findings and intelligent debate was finally forced upon middle America, and media built paranoia, engineered by the famous Harry Anslinger was questioned at last.

Under President Carter, a genuine desire to stop the lies and propaganda and examine the problem rationally was introduced and in as many 11 states, Kansa was effectively decriminalised for personal use.

However in spite of domestic policy becoming liberal, US policy internationally is to finance governments to eradicate Kansa. In Sri Lanka the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Bureau receives with U. S. funds. It is also interesting to note that today the U. S. grows the finest Kansa in the world, which retails at \$250 an ounce, and that this industry in Florida and California has revitalised the economy of both states.

in falsehood, and half truths. It is the claim of this "new society" and its theorists to purity, probity and integrity — in short its hypocrisy — that I fought against. This purity presumably is based on the same social principles that allows of every atrocity in the name of God or "civilization". I believe it is called Manifest Destiny.

It is these systems that rationalised, (and still rationalise) slavery, exploitation, arms manufacture, resources and land theft, and a population drugged by alcohol, television and tobacco. Can we, I wonder, from these systems, learn anything about social purity? Had they anything at all to teach us in terms of mortality and wisdom, sufficient to exchange that which is established by precedent and tradition, for new laws based upon their own pitiful and unsuccessful "ethics"? Pardon my bitterness, but your readership knows I speak the truth. My family and I, have been persecuted by this rump with international connections for 2½ years because of my views and not for any crime.

In general the middle class in Sri Lanka is moulded in values other than our tradition. These people may be many things but they are not entirely just. As for example, how can any judge who eats beef or pork and drinks alcohol sit on a bench and send a man who does neither to prison for 6 months for smoking a kansa cigar? Who is pure here?

Several Governments, Spain being the latest, have come to terms with the fact that it may be necessary for a workless, moneyless, hopeless, radical and angry population to have the option of tranquilizing themselves with kansa (that is locally available, and traditionally prescribed for hypertension) because if not sedated, they are likely to burn the world down to make light for themselves in what they feel is a very dark situation.

I must at this point stress most firmly that I am not advocating sedating the whole nation with kansa or anything else. I feel however that the options should be left open, in case of the worst. The scientific view is that kansa is a medicine that inhibits aggression, and is good for hypertension. It does not inhibit the

(Continued on page 20)



# Is 'the personal' really 'the political'?

The likelihood of building the "new side" now seems more remote than ever. Even the question that is being posed for women has undergone change, from 'how do we fight racism as women' to 'why is the women's movement so white'. Of course, feminists have to question why their own movement is white — it is the area that they have direct experience of and have the power to change. But in the way that they tackle the question, feminists are moving from examining the basis of racism in society, and their complicity in it, to examining an organisational problem in the movement. The line of argument followed — to explain that whiteness — neither takes the WM outward to examine state racism, nor takes it deeper into itself to examine feminist principles. Instead, it treats racism as a moral problem, a defect in sisterhood, and reduces it to an interpersonal issue. To understand how to treat one's black sister, one has to understand one's own prejudiced behaviour. To understand one's own prejudices, one has to become conscious of what they are and where they came from. Hence, consciousness raising (CR) and racial awareness training are being advocated (and taken up) in the WM today.

Advocates of CR on race for women argue that racism dehumanises women (just as sexism dehumanises men). True feminists cannot oppress the black women that they work with. And they cannot expect black women to keep clarifying their racism for them — they must take on the burden of recognising it themselves. CR is a female form of thrashing out an issue; it 'encourages the "personal" change that makes political transformation and action possible'.

Firstly, the argument for combating racism the CR way is a moral rather than a political one — it is

about rescuing white humanity from itself. Second, it suggests that one can parallel the sexism visited by men on women with the 'racism' visited by white people on black. But this does not in fact hold true. Women feel their oppression by men directly and personally in the relationships of the home. Men's sexual oppression of women does not merely reflect society's inbuilt discrimination against women, for men directly benefit from women's oppression and subjugation and individual men hold physical and economic power over individual women in the home. This is not to say that the individual sexism of the man is not derived from the structural sexism of society, but it is to say that what most women feel most poignantly and are first conscious of is the power relationship between the man and the woman in the home. The same is not true of relations between black people and white people. Though most white people hold racist attitudes, they are not engaged with black individuals in a relationship where they act out those feelings, nor do white individuals benefit in a direct personal sense from the oppression and subjugation of black individuals. But white people do benefit indirectly from the fact that a whole system exercises power over black people via institutionalised racism.

CR may be an ideal and tested female form for coming to consciousness of one's own oppression as a woman, but that does not mean it can be extrapolated as a method of dealing with other issues such as racism. (Women have, in fact, told me that it often serves as a way of exonerating racist attitudes — to acknowledge them and discover that others share them has confirmed some women in their racist views.) In fact, CR on race is neither a female innovation

nor a subversive technique. It has become a popular programme with race relations professionals in the US and in Britain. Feminism is borrowing a practice which belongs squarely within the conservative integrationist wing of race relations practice. Its underlying tenet is that bad race relations are caused not by state racism and discrimination but by misunderstandings between people. White people need only to be educated out of their prejudices — black people need only to be allowed their cultural identity. What is essentially a question of power and economics becomes transformed into a personal and cultural question. CR takes us away from a position where we can work with other groups (including black people) on racism and into a discussion about our attitudes, prejudice, etc (*racialism*). Working against racism means tackling political issues. Working on racialism means tackling ideas about black people.

Some feminist advocates of CR have argued that one needs both a political/historical understanding of racism and a personal/political understanding of how it affects one's daily life. But, in allowing that there are two separate understandings and by implying that the first is 'orthodox', the second, 'feminist', they encourage feminists to tackle attitudes without tracing them to their material cause. Rather than integrating the 'personal' understanding with the 'political' understanding, CR divorces ideas from their acting out in a social context, so that it becomes a sort of special therapy through which one mechanistically learns how to relate to people not as normal as oneself. (Are we to have courses on how to deal with the elderly, the disabled and so on?) Instead of relating to black people through practice, CR tries to relate through ideas about them. The world, says CR, is in your head, not out there.



Seeing race as a personal problem rather than a 'structural' one is part of a more general trend within the WM against intellectualising and abstracting issues. The WM has quite rightly stressed that 'the personal is the political' in opposition to the white male left's dogmatic reductionism. But the tendency now, and the WM's attitude to race is only one example of the trend, is to go so far along that road as to reduce the political to the personal. Thus, the personal transformation becomes the be-all and end-all. Sexual politics has come to re-define 'the personal is the political' in reactionary middle-class terms to mean personalising the political, reducing politics to inter-personal relationships, political power to personal power.

CR's route into anti-racism, for instance, is through the instilling of guilt into women for being white — and leads to a kind of confessional situation, with black people (irrespective of class or values) in the position of arbiters of our racism dealing out the mea culpa. It absolves us from the responsibility of making our own judgements or shaping our own course of action and it actually suggests that white women are incapable of developing a practice that is anti-racist. Accepting anything black, promoting the black experience, a sort of cultural pluralism, passes as surrogate for a white feminist anti-racist practice.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the recent 'cult' that has been made of the black female experience. Feminist magazines and bookshops have suddenly 'discovered' the writings of black women. There has been in the last few years evidence of a very strong desire in the WM to include black women within sisterhood — to include black feminist experience in 'their' experience, black history in 'their' history. It is a conscious 'taking account of', reminiscent of the way the white male left 'tags on' race or gender.

#### **The challenge of the black experience**

The irony is that very often the black experience availed of by white feminists in Britain is from American literature and not from

the events transpiring before their eyes. From the early 1970s, black women began to 'defect' from the British WM to address themselves to the issues of race and gender. Black women's groups sprang up all over Britain, with an umbrella organisation, OWAAD, a paper FOWAAD, annual conferences for black women, black women's centres and refuges, black women's marches and demonstrations — a black women's movement. But the WM, so self-conscious about 'hierarchy' and its own disassociation with a male left which had systematically excluded its interests, was conspicuously unmoved by the disaffection and flight of black women. And instead of examining how their sisterhood had in practice been antithetical to black interests and exclusive of black women — instead, that is, of examining the nature of 'sisterhood' itself on the touchstone of 'blackness' — the white WM has resorted to a policy of CR on the one hand and of cultural pluralism on the other. The 'blackness' of the feminist experience is separated off, either for mindless celebration or as an 'odd' experience (like being disabled or an older woman) which ought to be learnt about. But, as Hazel Carby has pointed out, what black women are asking white feminists is not to render them 'visible' but to 'challenge the use of some of the central categories and assumptions of recent mainstream feminist thought'.

Some concession to this view has been made in recent years. The call for 'abortion on demand,' for instance, was changed to 'a woman's right to choose' when black and working-class women pointed out that they were having to fight not for the right not to bear children, but for the right to keep their fertility against enforced terminations, sterilisations and the use of dangerous drugs such as Depo-Provera. Some feminists have refused to take part in protests against male violence in red-light districts, where many black people happen to live, because they feel that the WM marches there give credence to the racist stereotype promulgated by the police and the state that all blacks are muggers and assaulters.

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But even so, there is a reluctance in the WM to really question what underlies such 'errors of judgement'. 'We did not mean to be racist, so we weren't really being so', the argument runs. Adrienne Rich has used the term 'tunnel vision' — literally the physical inability to see beyond a certain narrow range — to explain this inadvertent racism and this has gained currency as a way of letting white feminists off the hook. Explanations such as these, however, pass off the act for the intent, they suggest no anti-racist yardstick to measure feminist practice.

Black feminists have pointed out that behind the WM's 'tunnel visions' lies the inability of the WM to provide policies or programmes which speak to the oppression of the majority of women — which would mean working-class women including black women — or the differential oppression of women according to race, class or history (social formation). What it has done is to universalise the middle-class woman's experience of oppression and her demands which have centred around her sexuality.

That the movement originated in and is still dominated by middle-class women is hardly contentious. But that middle-class and working-class women may perceive their oppression differently and have different ways of fighting it has hardly been examined. Ann Foreman hinted at it when she wrote that 'though the growing contradictions for women in the feminine stereotype together with a structural crisis in the position of women in society' affected both working-class and middle-class women, it was the latter who experienced it as a conflict between 'the traditions of femininity and their aspirations and abilities', and it was they (and not their working-class sisters tied by material necessity to their families) who were free to explore such contradictions. Ann Foreman goes on to point out that working-class women have organised at a different level — struggling over pay and job discrimination. But, as Eleanor Leacock succinctly wrote some ten years ago, there is a very strong tendency in the WM not to deem the struggles of

working-class women as fights for women's liberation at all. This tendency to exclude as 'non-feminist' perspectives too closely bound up with black or working-class struggle is clearly revealed in a recent review of black feminist literature. Ellen Willis attacked Angela Davis as an 'antifeminist' on the basis that in *Women, Race and Class* Davis states that 'black and white working-class women have been the leaders of the real feminist struggle'. Even if this is what Angela Davis says (and she does not), she would only be giving primacy to the activities of the majority of women. Her book is actually one of the first to connect the hitherto disconnected struggles of women and of black people and to analyse them through an understanding of class formation and class struggle.

The movement appears to find it divisive to acknowledge material and historically specific differences between women and relentlessly asserts the commonality of women qua women. In an eagerness to promote the idea of sisterhood, it has ignored the complexities of experience. While claiming to liberate women from biological determinism, it has denied women an existence outside that determined by their sex. And behind the idea that every woman is equally oppressed biologically is the idea that gender per se, rather than a particular system or set of relations, is the primary enemy of women.

And because the Western WM is the most developed in the battle of the genders, it seems to think that it holds the key to women's liberation everywhere. There is, even in the writings of avowedly 'socialist' feminists, a sense that western feminism is more liberated and liberating. Maxine Molyneux, writing on Third World 'socialist' countries, for example, attributes the low level of debate on feminism in these countries' women's organisations to the fact that western WM literature has often not been allowed to penetrate there. Sue O'Sullivan, writing on 'How Cuba doesn't cope with sexuality', manages, despite her expressions of solidarity with the Cuban revolution, to judge Cuba's socialism on western feminism's sexuality scale. She tries

to balance her assertion that 'as feminists, we believe that sexuality, the possibility and struggle for choice around sexual preference and questions about sexual practice, are completely relevant to any questions of revolution', with the view that few feminists 'would deny the crucial importance of class, race, imperialism'. But instead of integrating the two approaches, she categorically throws out the notion that 'the complexity of women's different situations worldwide' should modify our conception of women's oppression which was 'recognised through the emergence of autonomous women's movements during the last 15 years' — in other words, via the recent western WM. And, throughout, her article is permeated with the view that lesbianism (which is forbidden in Cuba) is the highest stage of feminism.

There is nowhere in western feminist writing (save that coming from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague) a sense that Third World women actually have an indigenous history and tradition of struggle from which western feminists could learn. This is the more significant since, in many ways, western feminists often try artificially to recreate the relationships and feelings between women which exist in the non-nuclear, non-capitalist households of most Third World social formations.

But the object here is not so much to point out the cultural imperialism of the WM — though that there is — as to show the absurdity and inappropriateness of the universalist tenets of western feminism and its preoccupation with sexual freedom for women in the Third World. In countries locked in feudal relations, for instance, feminists have concentrated on exposing and attacking one aspect of a complex social and economic relationship, the custom of clitoridectomy; in newly industrialising countries which superexploit all female labour, they have concentrated on prostitution. But this is to isolate and judge sexual oppression outside of its social and economic context and outside the context of imperialism. The increase in prostitution in South Asia for instance is a product of poverty,



of tourism and the absolute (as opposed to relative) exploitation of women by multinational corporations in Free Trade Zones, which renders them unemployable by the age of 25.

By taking a practice out of its socio-economic context, by attributing it to a country or culture, rather than to a historical stage, feminists are well on the way to racial stereotyping. Instead of seeing that arranged marriages, circumcision, dowries and so on have been part of all our histories, they attribute the customs not to an epoch or to a social formation but to a racial group. And by taking customs out of their context, they not only fail to learn about parallels in their history, but also distort the very struggles of Third World women whom they claim to want to help. In the metropolis, the inability to relate customs to their social and economic relations is to range feminists alongside reactionary 'ethnic' sociologists at best, or the Powellite lobby at worst. Such a view omits from consideration the facts of colonialism, the fact that Britain cajoled black labour here after destroying colonial economies, and that black 'customs' appertain to the peasant societies from which black people were wrenched, and that the social relations imported from another economy and society tend to get (defensively) frozen in an alien racist capitalist society.

By examining the position of Third World women from the vantage point of western feminist priorities, feminists often fail to see the role that racial and imperial domination play in the lives of Third World women. At the NGO Women's Conference in Copenhagen in July 1980, Nawal El Saadawi lamented that western feminists were sensationalising marginal issues. She asked how women in Beirut subjected to daily bombardment by Israeli planes could be expected to worry about their orgasms.

The western WM has concentrated on extending individual sexual freedoms as part of liberal democracy rather than on fundamentally changing society. What Third World, black and working-class

women pose is a much more profound and total reorganisation of society itself and the relations within it. The idea of individualism is alien to Third World countries where familial, caste, tribal or national interests are often dominant. And in these countries the separation of women's freedom from other freedoms becomes impossible. Freedom from hunger from dictatorship, from foreign domination — struggles which by necessity challenge fundamental power structures and benefit whole classes or nations — define *their* priorities. But they in turn should tell us about our own and shape our feminism — and point us, once again, towards the holism of which we are the legatees and to which we aspire.

### ***The Politics . . .***

*(Continued from page 16)*

*ability to work and is used by those engaged in hard manual labour, as well as by others, and it does NOT lead to hard drugs like heroin, cocaine, morphine etc. It reduces hunger, and has got many an Indian family through famine when it is taken mixed with milk. Alcohol, heroin etc. on the other hand, will not sedate an exasperated personality. It will inflame them — it will make them mad. We saw this in July 1983.*

Having spent sometime in the last 2½ years with criminals both in England and Sri Lanka, among them I.R.A. bomb artists, Liberation Tigers, Basque Separatists, Iranians supporting Ayatollah and other such dreamers, I venture to predict that the whole world is in for an endless long hot summer for many years to come. There are social forces at work in the world at this time — forces uncontrollable and beyond the conception of theorists. Traditional wisdom alone, as in the past will survive. In the absence of the application of this wisdom, we can expect worse riots, worse droughts, worse forest fires and complete degradation of the environment by the turn of the century — Mahaweli notwithstanding. In the meantime we will continue to kill each other with arms and ideas supplied by new found benefactors.

**(To be continued)**

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# “SOCIALISMO O FASCISMO ?”

Dayan Jayatilleka

**T**he deepening international crisis of monopoly capitalism is the central facet of the contemporary world reality.

According to Samir Amin's periodization, the history of global capitalism reveals the following approximate periods of grave crisis: 1840-1850, 1870-1890, 1914-1918 and 1967 onwards. In this century it is the three and a half decades 1914-1949 that witnessed grave instability within the capitalist world system. These three decades encompassed two world wars, revolutions in both the world's largest as well as the world's most populous countries leading to the emergence of a socialist sector, and the crisis and decay of the colonial system. These phenomena of wars and revolutions were both consequence and cause of the profound crisis gripping the capitalist world economy during this period. The 1950's and the first half of the 1960's for its part, witnessed an upswing in the fortunes of world capitalism, confounding the ossified schemes of orthodox Marxist analysts. From the point of the bourgeois intelligentsia this was the time of the 'Affluent Society' (Galbraith) and the 'End of Ideology' (Daniel Bell).

These and other such myths began to crumble with the end of the 'long boom'. The downswing set in by the mid 1960's (in 1964 the Monthly Review was speaking editorially of 'The End of the Boom'). This down swing slipped into a severe recession around 1973 still shows no significant signs of abatement or of 'bottoming up'. The recession has buried the faithful Keynes whose model of state intervention was used to 'trade off' unemployment for inflation and vice versa, and thereby keep the system going. From the 1970's onwards

however, there has been a combination of high unemployment and inflation coupled with falling levels of production. This phenomena of slow growth moving in tandem with high inflation has been dubbed 'stagflation' by Western economists.

So far, the Western world's strategy for recovering from this most serious of economic crises since the depression, has proved a failure. The US economy has been unable to play its assigned role as the 'engine' of recovery. Furthermore though the Trilateral Commission has achieved a degree of co-ordination among the USA, Western Europe and Japan on several political, economic and strategic issues and succeeded in articulating a fairly unified strategy combining both co-option and confronting vis-a-vis the 'Third World' it has not appreciably reduced the trade and monetary competition among these three metropolitan centres. This competition is further weakening the U.S. economy and, complains the U.S., the Western economic system as a whole.

Far from showing signs of recovery, all the key economic indices exhibit trends which have led prominent Western economists to fear that the present recession enveloping the capitalist world economy will slide into a genuine depression as in 1929-1932. (For example, Professor Robert Heilbrouer, the very well known liberal economist, commenced a lengthy article in the New Yorker magazine some years ago with the dramatic sentence: "Another world wide crisis of capitalism is upon us".)

The present ever-deepening crisis is clearly not only **cyclical** but also **structural**. It is not only a question of the relatively short business

cycle of 'boom' and 'bust' (the existence of which was discovered by Marx and denied by bourgeois economists until fairly recently). Rather, what we are witnessing is a long term down swing.

In the context of the present crisis the strategy of the metropolitan and peripheral bourgeoisies has been a joint one of the further integration of the peripheral economies with those of the metropolitan centres. It is this which enables the developed capitalist countries to ensure that a greater part of the burden of the acute global economic crisis is transferred on to the peripheral masses. (In other words, the burden falls heaviest on to those least capable of bearing it!) Since historically the very development of the richer nations was contingent upon the underdevelopment of Asia, Africa and Latin America, this imposition of an additional burden has sharply accelerated the downwardly spiralling process of underdevelopment.

Looked at more closely, metropolitan capitalism is capable of solving even partially and temporarily its problem of world wide capital accumulation (the present crisis is quintessentially a crisis of accumulation) only by increasing the rate of expropriation of surplus value and thereby maintaining maximum profit. This cannot be carried out principally in the metropolis since it risks grave social upheaval and political turmoil in the 'home bases' of the metropolitan bourgeoisies themselves. Therefore, it is the proletariat and peasantry in the periphery who have to be the primary object of this imperative need to increase the rate of expropriation of surplus value.

Within the periphery itself, the ruling bourgeoisies strategy of



capitalist growth against the backdrop of this global crisis of accumulation implies heightened dependence on the West, grave erosion of national sovereignty by transnationals as well as concentration of wealth in the hands of (and conspicuous consumption by) a parasitic class. The inevitable corollary of this pattern of dependent capitalist growth has been the acceptance on the part of the peripheral bourgeoisie of the terms and conditions imposed by the West. The present global crisis and the West's new strategy for recovery has led to the imposition, through the IMF and IBRD (which are the institutional devices for the financial control and manipulation of the peripheral economies by the metropolitan centres) of terms and conditions that are exceedingly harsh. The transnational corporations and on their behalf, the IMF and IBRD, demand guarantees of labour peace and stability for the reaping of maximum profits. Writing on Latin America in the 1960's, Prof. John Gerassi tells us succinctly what is meant by stability:

"It means more or less frozen wages. It means tight credit, a cutback in government spending, a slowdown on expansion. It means therefore a halt or near halt in government subsidised projects....." (This brings to mind the comments made by President Vargas' Treasury Minister in his address to the Brazilian Senate in 1953 where he said that foreign capital demands guarantees to enter the country, greater guarantees to remain in it and still greater ones to withdraw from it!) This situation has worsened in the contemporary crisis period.

We have seen that just as the structural asymmetry of the capitalist world economy causes a disproportionately large proportion of the global crisis to be transferred on to the 'Third World' countries the structural asymmetry within the respective economies of those very countries causes the **working masses** of the 'Third World' to bear the brunt of this burden. This we have said, is how the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the local bourgeoisie **which now stands in a relation of symbiotic dependence to the**

**former**, maintain their living standards in the context of the current crisis. The super exploitation of the proletariat and peasantry that this presupposes and the severe underdevelopment of those countries that results, does not go unchallenged. The working masses resist in various ways and in varying degrees, causing tremendous social and political pressures, to contain which the dominant social classes must resort to massive repression.

This causes a shift in the state form of the peripheral bourgeoisies' domination; a shift away from bourgeois democracy towards authoritarian and fascist forms of rule. In other words, the pattern of dependent capitalist development, under monopolistic and state monopolistic forms, in a situation of acute international and internal crisis, inevitably requires a new political 'shell'. The rights won by the working masses have to be wrested back and the concessions granted have to be withdrawn. All this cannot be achieved within the framework of the bourgeois democratic welfare state, so this framework has to be radically altered and then dismantled. The old superstructure no longer corresponds to the economic base. The process of concentration and internationalization of capital has effected and is effecting a change in the state structures. This began in the 1960's.

Lenin had previously discerned this in relation to the metropolitan centres and had anticipated the rise of European fascism:

"The political superstructure of this new economy, of monopoly capitalism (imperialism is monopoly capitalism) is the change from democracy to political reaction. Democracy corresponds to free competition. Political reaction corresponds to monopoly."

(*Imperialist Economism:  
A caricature of Marxism*)

The operations of the transnationals, the growth of capitalism in the periphery and the assumption of monopolistic and state monopolistic forms by this peripheral capitalism, the links between the trans-

nationals and the bourgeois state have all combined to render Lenin's conclusion even more valid in relation to the social formations in the periphery. (This is specifically a product of the **neocolonial** period, since, in the colonial context, the emerging peripheral bourgeoisie stood for democracy, which is why Lenin was to contrast 'Advanced Asia' with 'Backward Europe'. Robin Blackburn, the British Marxist intellectual was correct when he spoke of "The inability to maintain a social democratic welfare state in a neo colonial context."

("Explosion in a Subcontinent")

Palomiro Togliatti in his '**Lectures on Fascism**' delivered in the USSR in 1935, lays bare the dialectic at work in the process of fascistization, succinctly and brilliantly:

"Monopoly capitalism in crisis, turns against bourgeois democracy. The bourgeoisie must turn against what it itself created, because what was once a factor of its development has become an obstacle to the preservation of capitalist society."

This process of fascistization has taken place in Uruguay, Chile and very many 'Third World' countries. According to the Soviet Academician G. I. Mirsky there have been over 40 successful military coups of an extreme rightist character staged in more than 30 Asian, African and Latin American countries in only the last 15 years or so (G. I. Mirsky — 'The Third World: Society Power, Army'). It is certainly true that not all the resultant regimes could be characterized fascist but the shift away from bourgeois democracy towards right-authoritarian forms of rule is unmistakable. Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene was probably correct when, at a seminar on 'Government and the Opposition' sponsored by the MARGA Institute of Development Studies in Colombo, he identified only **three** countries — India, Costa Rica and Sri Lanka itself — as Third World democracies. (By democracies, he means bourgeois democracies, of course).

In many "Third World" countries democratic freedoms have been



squashed, harsh dictatorships imposed, tens of thousands tortured, imprisoned and slaughtered prior to inviting the TNC's to dominate the given countries economy in conjunction of local big business. A new state form, pioneered in Brazil, is being fashioned in most of the periphery. Known euphemistically as the 'State of National Security', it involves the complete centralization and militarization of the state apparatus. The main organs of the new structure are the Armed Forces, Police, Intelligence units and the National Security Council. G.I. Mirsky, in his study says that the apparatus is dominated by "an anti-national military-bureaucratic ruling caste" whose tacit slogan is "politics without political life."

In their thinking, everything is subordinate to considerations of 'stability' and 'security'. The dominant worldview is that any form of opposition is treason, and treason emanates from civilians. Emphasis is shifted from 'representation' and 'participation' to 'modern' techniques and 'scientific' forms of management and administration. The state's social base becomes steadily narrower and soon a strategy of 'total war' is embarked upon, aimed at the complete elimination of all oppositional social and political forces — left parties, trade unions, peasant unions, student groups, national minorities and even religious associations. Before long, political elimination becomes, in reality physical elimination. Argentinian General **Iberico Saint-Jean** summed up his motto in 1976, thusly:

"First we kill all the subversives then we kill all their collaborators; then all their sympathizers; then those who remain indifferent and finally we kill all the timid."

Thus all existing or potential counterstructures are dissolved and the state's monolithic corporatist structure is imposed. As the ideological apparatuses of its hegemony become increasingly bankrupt in the eyes and ears of the masses, the bourgeoisie relies almost exclusively on its repressive apparatus to maintain its rule. Some Marxists assert

that this model of state (the so-called State of National Security) is the latest form in the development of the bourgeois state since the French Revolution, and are hesitant to characterize it as 'fascist'. We for our part may be satisfied with the ceteris paribus view that this phenomenon is quintessentially fascist, though this fascism possesses important specificities vis-a-vis classical (European) fascism. These specificities are a political reflection of the specificity of peripheral capitalism which bears the structural features of dependence, underdevelopment and in some cases, co-existence with precapitalist residues. (Samir Amin, implicitly disagreeing with Gunder Frank, clarifies that while capitalism is the exclusive mode of production at the Centre it is the hegemonic, though not the exclusive mode of production in the periphery.)

According to the Comintern's classic definition, "Fascism is the open, terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialistic sections of finance capital."

In all essentials this definition remains correct though we may amend, in the neocolonial context, the phrase "most imperialistic" to read "the most proimperialistic or dependent" sections of finance capital.

The massive expansion of the armaments industry and the huge public works programme reduced inflation and soaked up most of the unemployed in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy while not even Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman and his Chicago Mafia can control Chile's unemployment. Indeed, as we mentioned elsewhere average unemployment in the entire nonsocialist 'Third World' runs at 30%—33%. So, in our part of the world "Adam Smith needs Mussolini" (Eduardo Galeano) and gets him, but even in the narrowest economic sense, fascism in the periphery just doesn't work — though it is of course highly profitable for the TNC's and their domestic (junior) partners. This economic failure, even in the short run, results in another specific feature of

fascism in the periphery, namely, a social base that is much narrower in terms of petty bourgeois support, than that which was possessed by its metropolitan predecessors.

These specific features of fascism in the periphery (there are also specificities in the process of fascistization)<sup>1</sup> render the use of the term 'dependent fascism' (Dos Santos) or 'neofascism' necessary.

How then, to combat the 'impending catastrophe'? Lenin's writings on the National Question and his polemics with Luxemburg and Bukharin on this issue bear testimony to the importance he placed on the struggle for political democracy as a component part of the proletariats struggle for social liberation. Today, more than ever before, the struggle for political democracy, like the struggle for national independence, has devolved into the shoulders of the proletariat. This has created a "deep, wide and durable community of interests" (Gramsci) between the proletariat and the popular masses inclusive of the intermediate social layers, endowing the proletariat with the historic opportunity of assuming the role of 'nation-class'. (Engels, Cabral)

Since the very structure of peripheral capitalism, in the present context of global and national crisis, inevitably engenders the tendency towards fascism, the struggle for democracy, the struggle to resist and reverse the fascist threat, is indissolubly linked with the struggle to smash the dependent capitalist structure itself. The struggle for democracy is now conceivable only as a component part of the socialist project. The presence of national and democratic tasks high on the agenda of the peripheral proletariat in no way prevents the characterization of the present stage of the revolution as 'socialist'. The fact that the native bourgeoisie wields state power and has established politically independent nation states, taken together with the fact that capitalism is the dominant mode of production in the social formations 'enclosed' within those nation-states, means that the stage of the revolution is no longer 'New Democratic' or 'National Democratic' as



it was in the colonial period when state power resided in the hands of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. (Lenin's 'Letters on Tactics' demonstrate clearly that the stage of the revolution is determined primarily by which class wields state power.) On the other hand, the peripheral reality is not only **post** colonial, but also **neocolonial**. This means that owing to the specificity of peripheral capitalism, important national and democratic tasks remain to be fulfilled unlike in a metropolitan capitalist context.

It does not imply however, that the stage of the revolution is not socialist, since, as Lenin pointed out:

"In not a single one of the most advanced countries in the world, have the questions of the bourgeois democratic revolution been completely settled on bourgeois democratic lines.....The socialist revolution is not separated by a Chinese Wall from the bourgeois democratic revolution..... The first develops into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first."

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Lenin himself had explicitly posed the question:

"And will not the future socialist revolution still have to complete a great deal left undone in the field of democratism?"

And answered it thusly in the post revolutionary period:

"We solved the problems of the bourgeois democratic revolution in passing, as a byproduct of our main and genuinely proletarian revolutionary socialist activities. We have always said that reforms are a byproduct of the revolutionary class struggle. We said and proved it by deed — that bourgeois democratic reforms are a byproduct of the proletarian socialist revolution."

What this means is the stage of the revolution in the periphery has 'grown over' from the New Democratic (in the colonial period) to the Socialist (in the neocolonial period). Indeed only two mutually exclusive and contradictory historical

paths emerge from the vortex of the current structural crisis, namely that of fascist forms or socialist transformation. That is why Theotonio Dos Santos' identification of the Latin American dilemma as one of 'Socialism or Fascism?' holds true for Asia as well. Thus the presence of national and democratic tasks does not invalidate the identification of the stage of the revolution as socialist. What it does render necessary however, is the correct **articulation** of the struggle for national independence and democracy with the struggle for socialism. These national and democratic tasks can and will be solved in the contemporary period only as by product of the Socialist Revolution.

It is necessary to reject any and all blocs with the national bourgeoisie, to specifically exclude the national bourgeoisie from any Front, to make a **socialist** intervention in mass mobilizations thereby splitting off the petty bourgeoisie from the national bourgeoisie, because this class is no longer 'national'. This bourgeoisie has become allied with imperialism in the context of the crisis. The general crisis of capitalism has accelerated the integration of the world economy as a result of which the so-called national bourgeoisie has in fact become structurally linked to foreign capital and acts as the instrument of the latter. As the dominant class in society, it has become the direct enemy and exploiter of the people, while imperialism is the main enemy. The national bourgeoisie has in the present period ended up by becoming irreversibly counter-revolutionary.

Why belabour this point? Because,

(1) The neo-fascist danger is utilized by both pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese revisionists to enter into unprincipled compromises with, and subordinate the interests of the working class to, this or that fraction of the bourgeoisie.

(2) The New Left refuses to recognize the neo-fascist threat precisely because they think that such recognition inevitably entails a block with the hated 'national' bourgeoisie. Even if the New Left does recognize this threat, it makes

the mistake of relying exclusively on its own forces to combat it, because the traditional Left is seen to be irredeemably tainted by its policy of compromise with bourgeois parties.

These errors of the Old and New Left are reinforcing while their misperceptions are mutual. Taken together they prevent the formation of a social bloc comprising the proletariat, the peasantry; the petty bourgeoisie, and some sectors of the middle bourgeoisie, under the hegemony of the proletariat and directed against imperialism and the dependent bourgeoisie. This is not a question of theoretical hair-splitting, for the revisionist errors on the question of the character of the revolution and its class alliances have been paid for in blood throughout Latin America.

1. George Dimitrov stressed the importance of studying these.

(To be continued)

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