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— Reggie Siriwardena

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## CAMPUS ERUPTIONS

Was it spontaneous combustion or engineered provocation? While that's the main question to which any 'Probe' team must address its mind, the outburst of racial violence at Peradeniya University is troubling for many reasons. Especially after we witnessed a repeat performance, on a much smaller scale of course at the Medicos hostel, Bloemfontein, in Colombo.

Blessed with better facilities than most other campuses, Peradeniya is still regarded as the 'elite' campus. More significantly the racial 'mix' shows a quite evenly balanced Sinhala-Tamil undergraduate community. Divisions in the past were always political-ideological rather than ethnic or religious. Any subsurface racial antagonisms and prejudice was largely contained. When it erupted some years ago, a spirited battalion of Sinhala students took the initiative to deal with the rabble-rousers. On another occasion a Warden found that the trouble had been caused by the rude and provocative racist remarks of a minor employee. He was promptly disciplined.

Unless he was a certifiable lunatic, no Tamil student would have used a tar brush on Sinhala name-boards in the heart of the Peradeniya campus. Who then was the provocateur?

## PRESS AND PREJUDICE

In the late 60's a paper entitled "The Three Voices of Lake House" was presented at an international seminar on "Reporting Racial Tensions". The essay examined news items, columns and commentaries, features and editorials in the period immediately preceding the riots of 1958. The Sinhala papers were heavily pro-Sinhala and often openly racist. The Tamil press was markedly defensive but mildly sympathetic to the Tamil viewpoint. The English newspapers were proudly liberal, open-minded and preachy.

Trends today show not only a strong surfacing of racial prejudice but a gradual breakdown of professional standards. Carrying "Eelam Literature" has become an offence; some books become "subversive"; a Tamil student found with "Eelam literature and a rubber seal" became a "kottiya" in a banner headline and remained there until the police released him. (The rubber seal had something to do with his Union Society!)

The word "alleged" is being over-worked while words like "links" etc are being pressed into service. In such circumstances, the DAILY NEWS, Sri Lanka's best known English daily is a welcome exception. Its frontpage reporting shows a commendable moderation in language some respect for facts, and concern that the headline is a fair reflection of the story. Most of all, there's a healthy absence of communalism.

## AID AND DEBT

Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel's aid odyssey is nearly over. Soon he will go to Paris for the Aid Sri Lanka Consortium meeting. "RONNIE SEEKS RS. 18,100 million Aid" screams a headline. Actually the figure is not all that staggering. It is almost three hundred million dollars less than what we have been receiving in the recent past.

And that's the reason why our total outstanding foreign debt has kept swelling in the 1978-82 period. If you count IMF drawings and borrowings, and suppliers credits given to State corporations, then the long-term debt amounts now to Rs. 42,500 million. This is a 22% jump over the 1981 figure!

## Tamil Problem

I want to state my opinion on your presentation of views of Mr. Sanmugathasan of Maoist CPC on the Tamil problem with the hope that it would lead to polemics in your journal from various circles.

Mr. Sanmugathasan has been urging the Tamil militant youths to drop their extreme demand of separation, for years, if they are to gain the support of the Sinhalese masses (particularly the progressive forces among Sinhalese). Abandoning the demand of separation seems to be a problem of dignity for some astigmatic politicians in the North.

But, in order to take a clear stand on this issue, I would like to

(Continued on page 4)

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# The 'whys' of the Mini-polls

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

**T**he first question to ask about the May 18th by-elections in 18 constituencies is the most obvious: WHY?

To use the most neutral phrase, it was such an extraordinary experiment that it is bound to find itself a small niche in parliamentary history. On Oct. 20, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene becomes Sri Lanka's first elected Executive President by beating his nearest rival by almost a million votes and about 53% of the total poll.

An analysis of the figures showed that a general election due by August 1983 and held under P. R. will give the UNP the largest number of seats and possible a majority but deny it a two-thirds majority. This magical two-thirds is now regarded as the essential symbol of political stability, and the central control-mechanism of an assembly in which when an MP dies, resigns or is sacked, the party leadership (i. e. the Executive President, in the case of the ruling UNP) nominates his successor. Such stability is all the more vital as the government moves into the second, and visibly, the more difficult and painful phase of its IMF-IBRD supported "open economy" strategy.

And so a referendum — a highly controversial one which a thoroughly and miserably disunited Opposition unites in denouncing and continues to do so to this day as it persists in its **common** demand for a general election in August 1983.

And so to the mini-poll in May for 18 electorates which the UNP, by its own three-point test, had found to be 'hostile' or 'unpopulated' on the basis of the October and December statistics. Why?

\* to test the pulse?

\* to recapture the lost seats and thus recover both lost ground and morale?

\* To allow the South and South-western coastal belt where the party fared poorly to let off some steam?

\* To give a grossly under-represented Opposition a chance to increase its numbers in parliament, without in anyway disturbing the UNP's two-thirds majority?

\* To strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of a parliament which in the eyes of the Opposition certainly, and perhaps in the eyes of dispassionate observers, here and abroad, lacks the legitimacy Presidency? (The referendum, it must be remembered, not only postponed polls until August 1989 but froze the 1977 parliamentary situation in which the UNP with its 52% share of the vote commanded a 5/6 the majority in the House).

\* to give the SLFP a chance to win enough seats to claim the post of Opposition Leader (the Amirthalingam thesis) and thus remove a 1977 anomaly (a quirk of the old British electoral system) and an embarrassment in the shape of Mr. Amirthalingam, leader of a separatist T.U.L.F. who now holds that office? (The "Eelam" issue has become the UNP's major **political** worry)

\* Finally, to head-off the Opposition's campaign for a general election?

In the event, the UNP won 14 out of the 18 seats, and to confirm its electoral dominance, swept the boards at the municipal and urban council elections. How does one read this result?

Trade Minister Athulathmudali on whom the mainstream media increasingly relies as a government and/or campaign spokesman has described the UNP victory as a mandate against the Opposition's agitation for a general election i.e. an endorsement of the Referendum result.

The SLFP's deputy leader, Mr. Illangaratne who led the campaign, spoke of a "civil war rather than

an election". Mr. Dinesh Gunawardene who makes his parliamentary debut highlights the use of the State machine, thuggery and intimidation etc.

Independent commentators add other reasons:

(a) the SLFP'S factional and family squabbles

(b) Opposition disputes over seats and accompanying conflicts in the campaign itself.

(c) Voter opportunism-cum-cynism founded on the certain knowledge that whatever the mini-polls result, the UNP will rule until 1989, and that there is hardly any point in antagonising a regime on which he must depend for patronage and protection.

(d) The electorate is still "hooked" on the consumerism nurtured by the free economy and sees no better alternative, in the conspicuous absence of a credible Opposition counter-program.

Since none of these explanatory factors can be quantified, the analyst must give weightage to each in terms of his own comparative assesment.

It was Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, I think who used the phrase "a special brand of guided democracy". In striving to place this event in the larger context our own parliamentary and political history, imported labels may be too loose, premature or misleading. **At this stage, it is wiser to see it in the even wider perspective of Third World processes. Even as Sri Lanka's economy is caught in the grip of chronic Third World pressures, the country's pluralist democracy, always a notable exception in any case, is seen struggling to retain some institutional features of its past as it tries not to succumb totally to those pressures and surrender to Third World norms.**



# Can the SLFP survive ... and how?

Out of the mouths of rivals etc etc ... Mr. Kamal Jayakody (UNP), victor in Mahara's prestige battle and other battles, took the trouble to mention that his opponent, Mr. Vijay Kumaratunge was certainly not the favourite choice of the Bandaranaike leadership of the SLFP. If this is true—and there's little doubt that this sentiment is widely shared—Mr. Kumaratunge has a somewhat unique distinction. As Mr. Kobbekaduwe's most spirited supporter and campaign organiser, Mr. Kumaratunge is also the **bete noire** of a UNP which has identified him as the live-wire in the "Naxalite" group of Party radicals.

The unusual position in which Mr. Kumaratunga has been placed (and he has never entered even a Municipal Council) is a reflection of the crisis that has overwhelmed the SLFP from the time Mrs. B. was deprived of her civic rights, and the party split the next year.

The SLFP has played the historical role of the alternate government and, in doing so, helped the growth of a virile multi-party system. In the most classic sense, it has been the indispensable twin pillar of parliamentarism.

The party has been sustained by the increasingly steadfast loyalty of

at least 25% to 30% of the national vote.

The supporters have kept the faith because the party (a) stood for policies and programs **different** from the UNP and (b) offered the lively hope of capturing governmental power. The second factor assumed a special importance as Sri Lanka, affected more and more by external economic circumstance, saw social welfare politics growing into 'patronage politics', the politics of the chit-system, high unemployment, and the desperate quest for jobs in burgeoning public sector.

The electoral map, as the President prophesied, is being rolled up for at least twelve years—from 1977 to 1989. And there could be another referendum in 1989, as the President again noted.

Mrs. B. cannot be 'active' until 1987, and in any case, there'll be no general election until 1989. **The parliamentary path has been (temporarily) closed to a party which is inherently parliamentarist. What is it to do? Pursue extra-parliamentary paths? If so, it may have to work with others more radical than the SLFP or at least its traditional leadership. This path means a leftward direction to SLFP politics.**

## The Left : Doing JR's job

"Opposition disarray and mathematics" boasted J.R. after his presidential triumph. At the mini-polls, one suspects that J. R. must have concentrated on mathematics, confident that "Opposition disarray" will be guaranteed by the Opposition.

The JVP which parades itself as the major Left party made a major mistake in deciding to teach the SLFP and all others a lesson. Its only cause for satisfaction was that Comrade Vijitha Ranaweera, indirectly supported perhaps by Mr. Ekanayake (Ind) ensured Mr. Jinadasa Weerasinghe (UNP) the Tangalle seat and comrade Jayantha Gunatilleke made a good

contribution to the defeat of the "renegade" Mahinda Wijesekere (SLFP). An aggrieved and infuriated LSSP found sweet revenge at Kalutara by denying the SLFP's Indrapala Abeyweera an easy victory.

Messrs Wijesiri, Piyasiri and Suriyaratchi SLFP deserters lost another three seats to their old party, and Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara (NSSP) may have won his seat if he had helped the LSSP candidate at Kalutara and attacked the SLFP which accommodated him as a joint Opposition candidate. And all of them SLFP, NSSP, CP, etc may have given the UNP a good run at the local polls if they had not fielded different lists.

If it rejects that it must move Right or stay-put. A dormant party with a large following has no future especially if mass issues and demands arise.

To move Right is to move into the shadow of the UNP, the much stronger and more authentic Right-wing party. That would only lose the SLFP its own character, the political personality and style which makes it **different** from the UNP, and therefore its mode of survival its vital source of sustenance. The SLFP will survive ... but how, and in what form, is the question.

## Letter...

(Continued from page 1)

draw your attention to the following fact.

The demand of separation was spelled out firstly by the Tamil leaders like C. Suntheralingam and S. J. V. Chelvanayagam who never in their political life, followed clever tactics or staged any meaningful struggle other than some hunger strikes and satyagraha, to win their demand whether it was Chelva-Banda pact or federal state.

These Tamil leaders dealt hand in hand with the right-wing Sinhala leaders who oppressed the minorities. Now Mr. Apapillai Amirthalingam is also doing the same in a different way.

Never, in the 35 years after so-called Independence from Colonialism did Tamil leaders come to work on a Common programme with the re-volutionary left in the south.

It must, thus be clear, that in no way are the militant youths responsible for this unfortunate demand. They have fallen prey to the call of the reactionary leaders.

So, why shouldn't the Tamil militant youths struggling and dedicating themselves for an unfortunate cause reassess their aims and policies as demonstrated by Mr. Sanmugathsan?

**V. Thanabalasingham.**  
Colombo 13.



# JAFFNA — TOWARDS DUAL POWER ?

To fortify his argument that the UNP's worst-case scenario (a clear SLFP majority) had a silver lining in that it would allow the SLFP to claim the Office of Opposition Leader, Mr. Amirthalingam pointed out that had the UNP applied its 'test' rigorously there should have been by-elections in the Eastern province. By-elections in the E. P. would have increased TULF numbers, argued its leader.

So, only local polls in the North and East.

Jaffna. History in a rapid repeat performance, the pattern as before. Polls campaign, shootings and killings, reinforcements and Task forces, violence and guns again and a soldier dead, arson and looting, a demand for a Commission of Inquiry and a promise of compensation.

With a few differences, though. The voting takes place, smoothly.....

all too quietly, in fact. But no missing ballot boxes. No TULF boycott of parliament, no demand for an 'International' Commission.

The TULF sweeps the polls. Point to the TULF. The turnout is the lowest in history — a stunning 1% and 4% in two places! Top marks for the armed hard-liners.

Max Weber identifies the basic components of power as influence, authority and coercive control. Just as TULF influence and authority steadily waned or lost the capacity to control affairs, so did the civilian authority, and then the police, who had to make way for the armed forces. Now we are in the stage of coercive control — the clandestine armed rebels on the one hand, and the security forces on the other — and an emerging condition of dual power.

It is at this critical stage that both the government and the TULF

appear on the verge of another dialogue. The name of the game is 'political solution', a phrase that now recurs in the conversations of educated Sinhalese, even as the temperature at the mass level and in some areas seem to be rising. (See Trends).

Even those who support a 'military solution' harbour many misgivings about the cost factors — human, political, economic and international. In any case, such a drastic solution (if solution, it is) requires a Sinhala consensus. From Referendum to minipolls, the "civil war" which Mr. Illangaratne talks about has made such a consensus extremely difficult. That situation may offer some solace to an embattled TULF which produced a comparatively mild statement on the Jaffna events, despite its touch of bravura in drawing a parallel with the US army in Vietnam.

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# ANATOMY OF THE MAY DAY

Laksiri Fernando

**H**aving read and studied the many reports and comments that have been published after May Day, I have been provoked into putting down my own impressions which are quite contrary to those appearing in many newspapers. What is more it is my view that these reports completely missed some highly significant features of this year's May Day processions, slogans and speeches. The readers of the *LANKA GUARDIAN*, both here and abroad, would therefore be interested, I feel, in the impressions I gathered after attending almost every rally, and the notes I made of the slogans.

Contrary to the opinion common to our leading newspapers the rallies and marches of the Left parties showed **more** militancy, attracted **more** people and had **more** political substance than the 1982 May Day. If the reports in two (non-governmental) newspapers that May Day enthusiasm was tepid are correct, they are right only in the case of the UNP and SLFP. With all its carnival gimmicks, the UNP tamasha didn't evoke the enthusiastic participation of the past. Even at its peak, I put the attendance at the SLFP meeting at less than five thousand.

What was the most significant feature of this May Day. It was the slogans sympathetic to the Tamil cause which were to be heard at every rally and procession of the Left. The GCSU-led trade union demonstration and the NSSP march supported the right of the Tamils to self-determination. In the LSSP and CP processions demonstrators chanted slogans against State repression in the North and stressed "Sinhala-Tamil unity in struggle". At a somewhat lower pitch, the JVP demanded the restoration of peace in Jaffna and the grant of Tamil rights. The demand to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act was prominent in many demonstrations.

The LSSP May Day was basically a home affair. The party had managed

(The writer is senior lecturer in Political Science, Peradeniya University.)

to muster a little over one thousand five hundred faithful Samasamajists from their trade unions and local party branches. However, there were not much spectators either for the demonstration or for the Hyde Park rally. The demonstrators were more militant and spirited than the previous year when the party chose to march at the tail end of the SLFP. The women contingent was the most militant section of the demonstration — a person from Kantha Handa taking a prominent part in slogan shouting. The independence, or rather, the isolation from the SLFP has perhaps done some good. However, the slogans were pathetically introvert, shouted more at themselves. The speeches of the rally revolved mainly around the issue of the break-up of the by elections pact with the SLFP. Considering their many debacles in the recent past, the LSSP May Day was not a bad show. It showed a certain determination in isolation.

The NSSP had a good location for their rally and for their demonstration. They had definitely **increased** their numbers for the demonstration despite the Mahanama — Sumanasiri split from the party which took the GCSU from the NSSP orbit. There were nearly one thousand five hundred for the demonstration. The Eheliyagoda contingent was prominent in the demonstration shouting nothing else but "apedeva — Vasu deva. In general the NSSP demonstration was impressive and their slogans were appealing to many spectators. The leaders tried their utmost to keep the spirit of the demonstration high from start to finish when they reached the De Mel park they were hoarse. From their "boycott" position at the Referendum the NSSP seems to have taken a 180 degree turn to gear up their whole party apparatus for the by elections.

The CPSL had a well attended, a well-organised and a colourful demonstration from Cotta Road to Dematagoda Park. The demonstration was well regimented at the head with uniformed columns marching smartly but was quite loose at the

tail with demonstrators giving expression to spontaneous slogans reminiscent of United Front (SLFP-LSSP-CP) processions in the 70's. When the demonstration entered the Dematagoda Park the tail end was near the Campbell Park. It took about 40 minutes for one to cover the whole demonstration from a single vantage point. Well over four thousand five hundred participated in the CPSL demonstration this time. The main slogan of the CPSL was the reinstatement of the 1980 July strikers. The demonstrators expressed quite a militancy and confidence. Compared to other left parties based on trade unions it seems that only the CPSL had managed to maintain their trade union cadre intact while expanding its popular base quite significantly. However, the student contingent was poor both in numbers and militancy.

There were about 1500 at the Newnham Park at 2.00 p. m. getting ready to demonstrate their May Day spirit under the CMU banner. There were many young girls and boys from factories in and around Colombo. The changing composition of the CMU membership — from white collar to manual workers — was apparent this May Day.

The GCSU-led demonstration from Lake House corner to Newnham Park had about 1000. **These people had the most enlightened slogans** in hand but they seemed somewhat reluctant to shout out perhaps because there were not many spectators lining the route. The veteran left leader Edmund Samarakkody was marching in this demonstration. This demonstration had been a rallying point for all the far Left groups in the country in addition to the twelve trade unions who organised the event. In short there were many leaders in this gathering but not many followers. 'N. L. Perera's Workers and Peasant's Liberation Front was the most militant and impressive section of the March. At the rally very valuable sermons were delivered but unfortunately only few people were there to listen.

(Continued on page 13)



# Reagan on the importance of Central America

FOREIGN  
NEWS

A number of times in past years, Members of Congress and a President have come together in meetings like this to resolve a crisis. I have asked for this meeting in the hope that we can prevent one.

It would be hard to find many Americans who are not aware of our stake in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, or the NATO Line dividing the Free World from the Communist Bloc. The same could be said for Asia.

But in spite of, or maybe because of, a flurry of stories about places like Nicaragua and El Salvador and, yes, some concerted propaganda, many of us find it hard to believe we have a stake in problems involving those countries. Too many have thought of Central America as a place way down below Mexico that can not possibly constitute a threat to our well being.

That is why I have asked for this session. Central America's problems do directly affect the security and well being of our own people. And Central America is much closer to the United States than many of the world trouble spots that concern us. **As we to work to restore our own economy, we cannot afford to lose sight of our neighbours to the south.**

El Salvador is nearer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts. Nicaragua is just as close to Miami, San Antonio, San Diego, and Tucson as those cities are to Washington where we are gathered tonight.

But nearness on the map does not even begin to tell the strategic importance of Central America, bordering as it does on the Caribbean—our lifeline to the outside world. Two-thirds of all our foreign trade and petroleum pass through the Panama Canal and the Caribbean. In a European crisis, at least half of our supplies for NATO would go through these areas by sea.

For several years now, under two administrations, the United States

*It is not often that a President of the United States goes before Congress to present his administration's case for Congressional and public support for a particular foreign policy—in this instance to resolve in Mr. Reagan's word the "crisis" in Central America. To underline how little he was in fact asking for as 1984 aid to Central America, President Reagan translated the 600 million dollars requested as "less than one-tenth what Americans will spend this year on coin-operated video games".*

*In the event, the US Senate cut the aid to the embattled regime in El Salvador by 70 million dollars.*

*Most of Mr. Reagan's speech was aimed at demonstrating to the US public the crucial importance of Central America to US interests. We publish excerpts from his speech, and two other views—one by the former US Ambassador to El Salvador, Mr. White and the other by Mr. Galo Plaza former Secretary-General of the OAS.*

has been increasing its defense of freedom in the Caribbean Basin. And I can tell you tonight, democracy is beginning to take root in El Salvador which, until a short time ago, knew only dictatorship. The new government is now delivering on its promises of democracy, reforms, and free elections. It was not easy and there was resistance to many of the attempted reforms with assassinations of the reformers. **Guerrilla bands and urban terrorists were portrayed in a worldwide propaganda campaign as freedom fighters representative of the people.** Ten days before I came into office, the guerrillas launched what they called "Final Offensive" to overthrow the government. Their radio boasted that our new administration would be too late to prevent their victory. They learned democracy cannot be so easily defeated.

El Salvador has continued to strive toward an orderly and democratic society. The government promised free elections. On March 28th, little more than a year ago, after months of campaigning by a variety of candidates, the suffering people of El Salvador were offered a chance to vote—to choose the kind of government they wanted. **Suddenly the so-called freedom fighters in the hills were exposed for what they really are—A small minority who want power for themselves and their backers—not democracy for the people.** The guerrillas threatened death to anyone who voted. They destroyed hundreds of buses and trucks to keep the people from getting to the polling places. Their slogan was **Brutal: "Vote Today, Die Tonight"**. But on election day, an unprecedented 80 percent of the electorate braved ambush and gunfire, and trudged for miles, many of them to vote for freedom. That is truly fighting for freedom. We can never turn our backs on that.

The democratic political parties and factions in El Salvador are coming together around the common goal of seeking a political solution to their country's problems. New National elections will be held this year and they will be open to all political parties. The government has invited the guerrillas to participate in the election and is preparing an amnesty law. The people of El Salvador are earning their freedom and they deserve our moral and material support to protect it.

Yes, there are still major problems regarding human rights, the criminal justice system, and violence against non-combatants and, like the rest of Central America, El Salvador also faces severe economic problems. But, in addition to recession-depressed prices for major agricultural exports **El Salvador's economy is being deliberately sabotaged.**



Tonight in El Salvador — because of ruthless guerrilla attacks — much of the fertile land cannot be cultivated; less than half the rolling stock of the railways remains operational; bridges, water facilities, telephone and electrical systems have been destroyed and damaged. In one 22-month period, there were 5,000 interruptions of electrical power. One region was without electricity for a third of a year.

I think Secretary of State Shultz put it very well the other day: “unable to win the free loyalty of El Salvador’s people, the guerrillas are deliberately and systematically depriving them of food, water, transportation, light, sanitation, and jobs. And these are the people who claim they want to help the common people.

And let me set the record straight on Nicaragua, a country next to El Salvador. In 1979, when the new government took over in Nicaragua, after a revolution which overthrew **the authoritarian rule of Somoza, everyone hoped for the growth of democracy.** We in the United States did, too. By January of 1981, our emergency relief and recovery aid to Nicaragua totalled 118 million dollars — more than provided by any other developed country. In fact, in the first 2 years of Sandinista rule, the United States directly or indirectly sent five times more aid to Nicaragua than it had in the 2 years prior to the revolution. Can anyone doubt the generosity and good faith of the American people?

No sooner was victory achieved than a small clique ousted others who had been part of the revolution from having any voice in government. **Humberto Ortega the Minister of Defense, declared Marxism-leninism would be their guide, and so it is.**

The goal of the professional guerrilla movements in Central America is as simple as it is sinister—to destabilize the entire region from the Panama Canal to Mexico. **If you doubt me on this point, just consider what Cayetano Carpio, the now-deceased Salvadoran guerrilla leader, said earlier this month. Carpio said that after El-Salvador falls, El-Salvador and Nicaragua would be “arm-in-arm**

**and struggling for the total liberation of Central America”.**

President Truman’s words are as apt today as they were in 1947, when he, too, spoke before a joint session of the Congress:

“At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

“One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

“The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority”.

Must we just accept the destabilization of an entire region from the Panama Canal to Mexico on our southern border?

Must we sit by while independent nations of this hemisphere are integrated into the most aggressive empire the modern world has seen?

Must we wait while Central Americans are driven from their homes, like the more than a million who have sought refuge out of Afghanistan or the one and a half million who have fled Castro’s Caribbean utopia? Must we, by default, leave the people of El Salvador no choice but to flee their homes, creating another tragic human exodus?

I do not believe that a majority of the Congress or the country is prepared to stand by passively while the people of Central America are delivered to totalitarianism and we ourselves are left vulnerable to new dangers.

Now, before I go any further, let me say to those who invoke the memory of Vietnam: There is no thought of sending American combat troops to Central America; they are not needed — indeed, they have not been requested there. All our neighbors ask of us is assistance in training and arms to protect themselves while they build a better, freer life.



We must continue to encourage peace among the nations of Central America. We must support the regional efforts now underway to promote solutions to regional problems.

If Central America were to fall, what would the consequences be for our position in Asia and Europe, and for alliances such as NATO? **If the United States cannot respond to a threat near our own borders, why should Europeans or Asians believe we are seriously concerned about threats to them?** If the Soviets can assume that nothing short of an actual attack on the United States will provoke an American response, which ally, which friend will trust us then?

The Congress shares both the power and the responsibility for our foreign policy.

Tonight, I ask you, the Congress, to join me in a bold, generous approach to the problems of peace and poverty, democracy and dictatorship in the region.

What the administration is asking for on behalf of freedom in Central America is so small, so minimal — considering what is at stake. The

(Continued on page 13)



# Questioning U. S. intentions in Central America

Robert E. White

WASHINGTON

**P**resident Ronald Reagan's speech last week to Congress signals his determination to pursue the course — based on a disastrous self-fulfilling prophecy — that he has followed in Central America since coming to office. Instead of trying to contain unrest in Nicaragua and El Salvador, the Reagan administration apparently is going to continue to spread upheaval through the region.

The administration has made a definitive break with the diplomatic principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and nonintervention. Instead, it has directed its resources toward strengthening the Central America military and fighting an ill-defined "communist threat" with CIA stations and military advisers. The result has been to encourage precisely the threat that the president hoped to stop.

To grasp why the administration sponsored an invasion of Nicaragua from Honduras, look to El Salvador. Many key foreign policy aides understand that the brutal and corrupt Salvadoran government is falling apart and that no amount of military assistance will enable it to contain the revolutionaries. Yet the White House firmly rejects any direct parleys with guerrillas. Instead Washington is determined to create a region-wide military battle — hoping in the end to negotiate a regional solution on its own terms.

The campaign began in earnest this spring when the Pentagon conducted joint military exercises with Honduras along the Honduran-Nicaraguan frontier and the Honduran military strongman, General

Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, announced that coexistence with Nicaragua was no longer possible. By the time, several thousand Nicaraguan counter revolutionaries, trained armed and funded by the CIA, occupied camps on the Honduran side of the border. In early March these forces, known as contras, invaded Nicaragua.

The true intent of the administration in supporting the contras may have been neither to overthrow the Sandinists nor as Mr. Reagan claimed to interdict the negligible trickle of arm Nicaragua to El Salvador. Rather, I believe, the invasion was part of a systematic plan to provoke the Sandinists to cross the Honduran border and attack the counterrevolutionaries base camps Honduran troops were poised to repel the invaders and enter Nicaragua in hot pursuit—creating a border war. But even the hot-headed and inexperienced Sandinists refused to fall into so obvious a trap.

It is in Honduras, the poorest country in the region, that the worst effects of the Reagan Policy may be seen. In the face of widespread misery and despair, many Honduras opposed their government's militaristic policies demanding deep political, economic and social changes. The dissidents are now treated as subversives and for the first time in its history, the Honduran military has begun to abduct and kill labor union leaders, intellectuals and others who dissent from official policy.

The administration accuses Nicaragua of exporting revolution to Honduras. In fact, the opposite is true. In obedience to our policy, Honduras has become embroiled in militaristic counterrevolution—and is attempting to export it.

The administration must learn that counterrevolution is precisely the wrong response to a people determined to take power and transform their countries. U.S. policy toward the

(Continued on page 10)

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*The writer, a senior fellow at the Center for Development Policy, was ambassador to El Salvador under President Jimmy Carter.*



# Meeting the deeper needs in Central America

Galo Plaza

WASHINGTON

**P**resident Ronald Reagan's speech last week before Congress emphasized the seriousness with which the president justifiably views the Central American crisis as a threat to the security of the United States.

As he outlined plans to meet the immediate emergency, it was disappointing that he did not also present a long-term program for economic development of the area as a prerequisite for solving its problems.

Last fall, Ambassador Sol Linowitz and I, deeply concerned with the deterioration of inter-American relations, which had come to a head with the war over the Falkland Islands, decided to bring together independent, concerned citizens from throughout the hemisphere to discuss the major issues involved in our North-south relations.

Our "Inter-American Dialogue" explored the problems in four areas: economic issues; social and political issues; security issues, and the task for inter-American institutions.

The problems of deepest concern was the explosive situation in Central America. Except for Costa Rica, and now Honduras, most countries on the isthmus have known little but dictatorial rule. The civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala have claimed more than 100,000 lives over the last five years and one million people have been displaced.

Although the history of these upheavals may be different in each of the countries, there is one common denominator in the hopes and aspirations of the opposition. In Nicaragua there was a drastic reaction

after the overthrow of a family that owned the country for two generations! in El Salvador there was and is a struggle against a small, privileged group with extensive land holdings and great wealth in a small country. In Guatemala a reactionary government went to cruel extremes in successfully thwarting change. The common denominator among many opposing these various governments has been a demand for social justice for respect for human rights and for a return to democracy, although there is a danger that the dictatorships of the right could be replaced by dictatorships of the left such as in Nicaragua.

In seeking solutions, Americans should not forget the past history of U. S. involvement in Central America, something that is much remembered in Latin America. Any future action should be framed within the principles of sovereignty self-determination and nonintervention.

Undoubtedly the situation in Central America is a matter of security concern, whether it is looked at from an East-West viewpoint or as a North-South question. There are complicated differences in perspective. What one country considers vital for its defense may well be viewed as threatening to its neighbors. What one country regards as the legitimate protection of its security may be viewed by the affected country as intervention in its domestic affairs.

It is evident that security is at the heart of international relations. However, the basic problem of security in the hemisphere is primarily social and political, not military. Even when there is a military dimension to a conflict the solution ultimately lie in economic and social development and political dialogue, not in weapons or military advisers. And even when external support for insurrection is present

as in El Salvador, the underlying problems are domestic.

In Central America our group recommended dialogues; between the governments in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua and the respective opposition movements in those countries; between Nicaragua and each of its neighbors: between Cuba and all the countries of Central America; between the United States and Cuba and United States and Nicaragua respectively; and between the United States and the Soviet Union, Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela have offered to join in the talks.

For Latin America, this approach would reinforce the tradition of selfdetermination and nonintervention. For the United States, it would help meet the central security goal of limiting the most threatening forms of Soviet and Cuban activity, including both strategic and conventional military presences. Cuba Nicaragua and Grenada would gain some assurance that they would not be the objects of external destabilization efforts, provided they refrain from similar activities. And Cuba would achieve the recognition it seeks.

(THE WASHINGTON POST)

## Questioning . . .

(Continued from page 9)

region must, of course take into account the security interests of the United States. But where is it written that the people of Central America must remain in bondage so that the United States can remain free?

Do the Reagan policy-makers truly fear that Nicaragua will end up identified with the Soviet Union and Cuba? Or do they fear precisely the opposite—that if the United States pursued a less aggressive policy Nicaragua might emerge not as a Soviet lackey but as a nonaligned country?

Do we perhaps reject the consistent offers of good offices from Latin American democratic leaders to help bring peace to Central America because we seek primarily military solutions to political, economic and social problems?

(The New York Times.)

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*The writer is a former president of Ecuador and former secretary-general of the Organization of American States.*



# Mitterand's France as arms supplier

**D**espite the fall in oil prices, the Middle East arms business is booming. According to a report recently published in London by Frost and Sullivan Ltd. the Middle-East will import 33 billion dollars worth of military hardware in the next six years, while spending another 26.4 billion dollars on services, maintenance and construction.

Commenting on the report, Patrick Cockburn (*Financial Times*) says that the U.S. can be expected to be the top supplier for 2 main reasons: (a) it is the chief supplier to 3 high-spending countries, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia and (b) because of "the aggressive arms export policies of the Reagan administration".

Another interesting point he notes is that "non-US defence contractors have also reacted to the depression in the west by stepping up arms sales efforts." The most telling example, the report gives, is that of France which sold two thirds of its total arms

exports (5.3 billion dollars) to Middle East and North Africa, mostly to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is backing Iraq to the hilt in the Gulf war and correspondent Paul Betts wrote that both Mr. Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy prime minister and the Saudi Arabian Defence Minister Prince Sultan ben Abdul Aziz were in Paris at the same time week last month.

Iraq owes French companies over 2 billion dollars for military supplies last year. "One intriguing solution to the current Franco-Iraqi payments problems is believed to involve Saudi Arabia... the idea would be for Saudi Arabia to advance the Iraqi payments owed to French contractors by supplying France with Saudi crude" writes Betts.

However France would like to have oil supplies from Iraq at reduced prices in exchange for payments due on arms sales. This desire is particularly strong since France has been

increasing its arms supplies to Iraq steadily and hopes to triple Iraqi oil supplies this year.

Supplies to Iraq cover the full range of sophisticated armaments, according to the London report — different types of missiles, Mirage fighters, "Puma" and "Gazelle" combat helicopters, AMX-30 and AMX-50 tanks, and artillery pieces. The FT reported that the Iraqi army has 30 Mirages, over 100 AMX-30 tanks and 'Exocet' missiles. France has also bust up an attempt by Italian firms to outbid their French rivals.

Soon after the Socialist party's M. Mitterand became President, his Foreign Minister Cheysson told a leading Middle-East paper that France doesn't sell weapons to totalitarian or despotic regimes who can use it for aggressive purposes or to those countries confronting other states".

The socialist Mitterand has now responded to the old French saying that money has no smell.

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# FEMINISM AND SOCIALISM

## Rebecca West — a tribute (1892–1983)

Susan Eckstein

One of the most stimulating and informed writers of the twentieth century, Rebecca West was a novelist, poet, critic, historian, political commentator and journalist of the highest order. Her journalistic writings from 1911–1917, which were originally printed in *The Freewoman*, *The New Freewoman*, *The Clarion* and the *Daily News* have been recently collected in a book called “*The Young Rebecca*” edited by Jane Marcus who writes that “her intellectual curiosity, her passionate responses to political and literary events brought forth a profusion of newspaper articles, clear, highly polished, often uproariously funny”

Writing as a convinced socialist and dedicated feminist Rebecca West has been called “a Bernard Shaw in petticoats”, and Shaw himself wrote that “Rebecca can handle a pen as brilliantly as ever I could and much more savagely.” It is the boldness which is her strength. “She polished the weapon of invective and denunciation into the tools of a fine art. She was never afraid of her own anger if it was justifiable. She turned its force against the enemy, not against herself. The deepest difference between Rebecca West and most women lies in her ability to express anger directly, the power to shout curses and laugh at folly and persecution, with no damage to her own Ego (Marcus). Of the Labour party’s treachery in 1912, when it “sold itself to the Liberal party” she wrote “to be wiped out by the Liberal party is a more inglorious end than to be run over by a hearse”. Of Sir Almroth Wrights “Unexpurgated case against woman suffrage” she declared “it is the worst book ever written and distressing. I have horrible nightmares of Sir Almroth Wright’s limp sentences wandering through the arid desert of his mind looking for dropped punctuation marks. They have a brooding look in their eyes like childless women, for every sentence ought to have a little meaning clasped in its arms, but these have none”. She ridiculed

*Rebecca West, who died in London last month at the age of 91, was best known for her later works which had conservative bias. But the writings of the ‘young Rebecca’ in the phase of her life when she was a socialist and a feminist, have a new audience today, especially among women. They find her work not only brilliant and perceptive, but also extraordinarily relevant in the context of the new wave of feminism of the 1970’s and 1980’s. In this review article for the Lanka Guardian, Susan Eckstein, who is presently in Sri Lanka teaching English literature, assesses the early writings of Rebecca West.*

Harold Owen’s theory that before Mme. Curie and Mrs. Ayrton could receive any credit for their discoveries, it would have to be proved that they “would not have been made by a man, if not thereabout, then very shortly after” She turned his arguments upside down, until his argument becomes that a man is always more of a hog than is a woman. For Rebecca West, savage wit and anger were necessary weapons. “A strong hatred, the best lamp to bear in our hands as we go over the dark places of life cutting away the dead things men tell us to revere...when woman came out of the home she came bringing not peace but a sword.” She wrote that it was strange that “women who are independent and fearless in private life should not introduce their independence and fearlessness into their public life... but what is the explanation of the meekness which makes such impositions on women possible...let women make haste to become lions.”

This “meekness”, and the feminine ideal of self-sacrifice was, for Rebecca West, a sin against life. Feminism was “something more than a fight for the vote. It was a fight to grow in art, in science, in politics, in

literature; it is a fight for a place in the sun.” Women had to stop being the woman **behind** the great man stop “the sacrifice of the development of their own personalities for the sake of men and children”. All this self-sacrifice amounts to a claim to halos for women: for a halo “is the only thing...that gives outlight yet needs no fuel”. One can only gain wisdom by “the vibration caused by collision between (ones) nerves and external things but women are denied this stimulation, being forced to “remain tinged with no clearer light than the reflection of the kitchen range...”

Rebecca West denounced all work in the home as “domestic slavery to be shunned like rat poison.” Household chores are tricks that a performing dog who could count his change might pull off just as well”. Domestic work is “the most elementary form of labour...suitable for those with the intelligence of rabbits”, involving a high degree of solitude and demanding no moral or intellectual qualities at all. She denied one claim that most women would **choose** to do this kind of work, stating that most women refuse domestic work. The working class women will turn her hand to anything rather than becoming a servant, and “the first thing a woman does when she gets a little money in her hands is to hire some other poor wretch do her housework.”

She denounced all anti-feminists who would have women “debarred from all activity save the organisation of her home life”, living either the life of “a prize pedigree pig”, or “a pet pony” depending on her husband’s wealth. In response to Dr. Tayler’s “*The Nature of Women*” in which he suggested girls should only be taught “the 3 Rs.” and domestic economy — cookery hygiene, home decoration etc. she wrote that this was more than “comic quackery”. It was “rather disgusting...simply an attempt to stimulate the sexual and



maternal instinct in children." She was adamant that "there is no study mastered by men that women cannot master" and deplored the way that a girl must not be educated lest she should learn that there is a world beyond four walls. She must be debarred from the labour market and treated with contempt if she remains unmarried. And once she is a wife and a mother she must lay her soul in the scullery. It sounds a little dull and the growing revolt of women against marriage under such conditions shows that it is."

Rebecca West could be highly critical of marriage which "eats like a cancer into the artistic development of women! Marriage could create a situation whereby "with a small capital, the most impotent man...can tyrannize until death over a woman and her children. The unsuccessful bully can always become the father of a family". She felt that "the desire to conserve the unhappy marriage is vicious" and that "to submit to unhappiness is the essence of the surrender of personality which is ...the unpardonable sin against the the spirit". Divorce may "easily be not an indulgence, but a duty", and in many situations "every extension of the divorce law is a victory for the child" as "the child needs happiness for its spirit just as its wants milk for its body". She wrote that the recommendation in the Reports of the Royal Commission on the Divorce law in 1912, which suggested women should be allowed to divorce her husband for adultery, was "not merely the opportunity of release for many unhappy women, but...a revolutionary proclamation that women have souls and that men are not as beasts of the field." Hitherto it was assumed that women did not mind their husbands committing adultery so long as they did not have to put up with spiritual indignity and that men should not be punished "when in the gutter" as they are only fulfilling the law of their being. Thus "men ought to feel the deepest gratitude for the adoption of this feminist reform."

Women as well as men were criticized for their anti-socialist, anti-feminist behaviour. Our poverty may be measured by reflecting how small a proportion of the nation is kept in comfort and how still smaller a proportion is kept in luxury by

the poverty of these 4/5 who are never lifted clear of subsistence level. So we may assume that if middle class women are to remain parasites, these 4/5 must remain at subsistence level. It is not only a question of which slaves will submit to supporting women, but whether women will submit to being supported by slaves. "The rich woman, the world's most expensive luxury, may feel "the tragedy of her in completeness but she is proud and "the poor woman" is too weak, too tired, to shift the blame to those who ought to bear it, and feels humiliated."

For Rebecca West, Charity was "an ugly trick. It is a virtue grown by the rich on the graves of the poor", unless accompanied by a sincere revolt against the present social system. She criticized the rich who "resort to purify themselves in the waters of charity", detecting the zoo spirit, the benevolence that offers buns through the bars on an umbrella point. "Women know the true damnation of charity because the habit of civilisation has always been to throw them cheap alms rather than give them good wages. A businessman gives up his seat to a woman on the way to work, but when she gets there he under pays her."

Many of the issues Rebecca West raised in the early 1900's seem as relevant today. In 1912 she wrote that "it is a fact...that the present structure of society automatically compels women to be oppressed by men. The social liberty of a respectable woman is circumscribed by the vices of men. A woman who wishes to go about at night or to look in shops windows in the afternoon encounters unpleasantness due to the accident of the man made social system. There is even an idea that women should regulate their dress according to men's lack of self control rather than their own comfort". Some of her fiercest invective was directed at those responsible for the persecution of suffragettes — men who then, and indeed now, hide behind their titles and exercise control over issues they are ill-fitted to judge.

"Twenty-five years ago London was sick with fear because one maniac crept through the dark alleys of Whitechapel mutilating and murdering unfortunate women. In those days people cursed him.

They tried to hunt him out of his black hiding place and make him pay for his crime. But today Jack the Ripper works free-handed from the honourable places of government: he sits on the Front Bench...or...in Whitehall, and works not in secret but through Home-Office orders and scarlet-robed judges. Scotland Yard is at his service, the medical profession...places its skill at his disposal, that his mutilations may be more ingenious ...To him, before the dull eyes of the unprotesting World, fall the finest women of the land. How times can change in a quarter of a century!"

Or rather—how times can change in a single century!!

## Anatomy . . .

(Continued from page 6)

The mammoth JVP demonstration entered the Town Hall premises at about 5.45. The people who waited for hours to see the spirit of the radical young were enthusiastic. "The Referendum was a Fraud — Hold the General Elections Immediately" was the JVP's main slogan. The demonstration was well organized as in previous years but less colourful. It was obvious that JVP had spent less money for the demonstration this time. One estimate was that there were well over twelve thousand for the demonstration. There were many more for the meeting. While all the other parties attracted more people for their demonstrations than for their meeting the JVP had been able to attract more people for their meeting than for their demonstration.

## Reagan . . . (Contd. from page 8)

total amount requested for aid to all of Central America in 1984 is about 600 million dollars; That is less than one-tenth of what Americans will spend this year on coin-operated video games.

**In summation,** I say to you that tonight there can be no question, the national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. **If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere, our credibility would collapse,** our alliances would crumble and the safety of our homeland would be put at jeopardy. — (USIS)



# The sign : arena of struggle

Reggie Siriwardena

‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being,’ wrote Marx in a famous passage ‘but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.’ The first half of that sentence represents Marx’s negation of the idealist position, according to which human consciousness is the free, autonomous source of being (‘I think, therefore I am.’). However, the second half of the sentence preserves the dichotomy between ‘social being’ and ‘consciousness’ inherent in idealism, but inverting the relationship between the two terms. ‘Consciousness’ remains, in Marx’s formulation here, something distinct from ‘social being’, which being determined by it. How then does ‘determination’ take place?

Classical Marxism never provided a clear answer to this question, though Marx and Engels trembled on the verge of it in a passage in **The German Ideology** in which they spoke of language: ‘From the start the “spirit” is afflicted with the curse of being “burdened” with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well. . . Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.’

What this remarkable passage points to is the fact that the dichotomy between ‘consciousness’ and ‘social being’ is false: consciousness is itself a socially constituted form of being, and it is constituted primarily (as Marx and Engels correctly saw here) through language, which is a social creation. However, Marx and Engels were unable to develop these insights further, for a very good historical reason — that

the science of linguistics was insufficiently developed in their time to permit them to do so. Today, the structural linguistics of Saussure and the theory of sign-systems (semiology or semiotics) that has grown out of it make it possible to unravel the social process of the formation of human subjectivity — a problem that classical Marxism was unable to resolve.

Marx’s account of human, as opposed to animal, labour in **Capital** implies that man is a sign-making animal: ‘A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.’ (Vol. I, Ch. 7) This ‘structure raised in imagination’, whether in the form of words, or of a drawing or blueprint, is a complex of signs. Modifying Marx and Engels’s formulation in **The German Ideology**, we can say that consciousness cannot exist except in and through socially created sign-systems — language, spoken and written, visual representations, gestures, rituals and other forms of communicative behaviours, all of which (as we have seen in the first article) are material practices. Language is, the most comprehensive and the most complex of all these sign-systems, and for convenience I shall base my analysis of sign-systems in this article on language.

Since a child doesn’t invent language for himself, his original induction into language within the institution of the family represent a process of insertion in a pre-existing order. In refutation of the idealist assertion of the primacy of human subjectivity (the Cartesian ‘I think, therefore I am’) it must be said that the very consciousness of subjectivity reaches definition

only when the child grows into language and is able to speak and think of himself as ‘I’. It is dependent, in other words, on his incorporation into a socially constructed sign-system.

It was the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, in the first half of this century who made possible a correct understanding of sign-systems by characterising the sign as a union of a **signifier** and a **signified** (in the case of language, the ordered set of sounds constituting a word and the concept linked with it, respectively). Saussure stressed that, in actual language use, the signifier doesn’t exist without the signified, and vice versa. Though Saussure himself didn’t realise the full implication of his intellectual discovery, this position serves at one stroke to dispel the fallacies of idealism, since thought is seen to exist always in inter-dependence with the materiality of the sign. Marx and Engels affirmed the material character of language in terms of its — ‘agitated layers of air’ — but it is necessary to go further and point out that the primary form of language is the act of speech, which is a material **activity**.

Verbal thinking is derivative from speech, as the Soviet psycholinguist, L. S. Vygotsky, demonstrated in his studies of the growth of the child’s linguistic faculties, which progress from external speech to egocentric speech to inner speech. Having acquired language through social interaction in the first stage, the child in the intermediate stage begins to talk to himself, aloud, because he has not yet dissociated thinking in words from articulating them. In the final stage, this dissociation has been made. However, the medium of verbal thinking (‘inner speech’) consists of signs of signs, whose source-form is the spoken word. It is the inter-dependence



of the material signifier and the mental signified that serves to answer idealist objections to the argument of the first article — that ideological communication is a form of material production. No communication can take place without and outside the material media of sounds, shapes, colours and movements.

Though Saussure recognised the inter-dependence of a signifier and signified in the unity of the sign, he also described the relation between them as 'arbitrary' — which doesn't mean that it is random or haphazard. What it does mean is that the relation is not naturally given, but socially determined by the usage of a particular speech community at a particular time. Also, according to Saussure, no sign in a sign-system, no word in a language, has meaning as an independent entity; it acquires meaning only by virtue of its place in the structure of the sign-system as a whole. There is, therefore, a certain distortion involved in speaking of 'the meaning of a sign'; actually, meaning is a property of the relations between signs.

These two principles of Saussure have been criticised by some orthodox Marxists (notably by Sebastiano Timpanaro) on the ground that they represent an idealist tendency 'to detach signs from any relationship with extra-linguistic reality' (Timpanaro, **On Materialism**, p. 151). It is true that Saussure, in some aspects of his thought, was prone to the danger, common to structuralists, of thinking in terms of self-contained, self-regulating and static structures. However, it is possible for a Marxist semiology to correct these tendencies, while utilising and re-interpreting what was valid in his thinking. And it does seem to me that, re-interpreted in this way, the two principles I have just enunciated can serve as the cornerstones of a Marxist semiotics.

Against Timpanaro and other critics, it must be pointed out that there is no simple correspondence between 'extra-linguistic reality' and the semiotic structures of a language. What a linguistic system does is to carve out a set of semiotic spaces in the world as represented by it, and

the boundaries of these spaces and their relations with each other are determined not by external reality in itself but by the refraction of that reality through the social practice of a particular speech community at a particular time. This is true even of denotative meaning: there is no one-to-one correspondence between one language and another in respect of their vocabularies of reference to things and qualities in the world. However, the divergences between languages, as well as between different states of the same language in time, are even greater in respect of connotative meaning, which includes the emotional associations, attitudes and values carried by language.

Let me illustrate what I mean by reference to the English word **black**. Denotatively, the word seems to refer to an objective physical phenomenon which is constant for all human beings with normal faculties of perception. However, it is well known that the structure of colour-terminology varies considerably between languages, so it is possible that there are languages in which there is no exact equivalent for the denotative use of the English **black**. Whether this is so or not, however, the word **black** has connotative meanings which are peculiar to English-speaking cultures in a particular phase of their history.

In dominant usages in English there is a polar opposition between **black** and **white** (a good example of the relational character of the meaning of signs in a sign-system). White is good and black is evil; white is pure and black is impure; white is superior and black is inferior; white is beautiful and black is ugly; white is clean and black is dirty; white is the colour of angels and black is the colour of devils. These connotative meanings are not given naturally by extra-linguistic reality: they are products created by specific social practices, and are part of specific, historically originated ideologies, which serve to reproduce specific social relations.

The great importance of the two principles of Saussurean linguistics under discussion is that they help us to see that ideological practice (which is always mediated by signs) is ceaselessly open to change, and this recognition is of profound value for a Marxist theory of ideology. If the

relation between a signifier and its signified was not arbitrary, if a signifier was necessarily tied to a constant signified, if this relation was determined not by social practice but by an independent and external reality, the structure of language (and therefore of our conceptual and ideological practices) would be fixed and eternal. But what one set of social practices has created, new social practices can transform. This is what makes it possible, for instance, for Black American liberation movements to evacuate the word **black** of the meanings given it by the oppressors and to invest it with new significations through the slogan 'Black is beautiful!'

The Soviet theoretician of language of the 'twenties, V. N. Voloshinov, wrote in his book **Marxism and the Philosophy of Language**: 'Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle.' I would qualify this only to the extent of saying that emergent signifying practices, challenging those which are dominant, may come not only from subjected classes but also from oppressed ethnic groups, dissident cultural movements, and other rebellious social elements such as women and youth. A sign-system, therefore, is neither static nor unitary even at a given point of time: it is always both diverse and dynamic.

**To conclude: The three levels of ideology.**

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# The crisis of the high growth Third World countries

James Petras

In the seventies a number of writers (let us refer to them as the "neo-developmentalists") began a frontal attack on neo-Marxist 'dependency' writers. They argued that all the premises and assumptions, implicit and explicit, in the dependency perspective had been overtaken by events. They attacked the dependency and stagnationist thesis by pointing to the rapid growth rates of many third world countries; they argued that industrialization and growing capitalist homogenization of the world economy, not underdevelopment were the outcomes of integration in the world economy. These critics were a peculiar amalgam of conservatives and radicals, disciples of Chenery and the World Bank approach, and **self-styled orthodox Marxists**. While they drew different sets of political conclusions regarding the consequences of these global patterns, they agreed on the economic diagnosis (and the methodology).

The profound economic crisis which has undermined the dynamic growth of the countries selected and cited by the neo-developmentalists has called into question the analysis and methods that sustained their central arguments. However, it is not merely the deepening and continuing stagnation and even negative growth rates that are central issues of contention. Rather, the crisis has exposed these countries' vulnerability to "external factors" — the deep structural **dependence** on outside financing, markets, technology. This dependence is illustrated by the frequent and frantic negotiations to refinance spiraling debts to avoid a catastrophic collapse of the financial and industrial structure of these "dynamic countries". If there has been any question regarding

the essential quality of this dependence, the regimes themselves (confirmed as well by the directors of international and private banks) have pointed to the centrality of financial assistance (loans, renegotiations, rollover of debts, etc.) to avoid massive bankruptcy, loss of international creditworthiness, etc. The neodevelopmentalist arguments put forth about national growth ("decline of imperialism, rise of capitalism"), state autonomy, the positive results of capitalist market integration were grossly exaggerated at best and at worst (and more to the point) failed to recognize the contradictory nature of that growth and the deep structural constraints that were inherent in the relationships. The spectacle of the world bankers dictating economic policy to Mexico, Brazil, Argentina (among other countries) — specifying trade, investment, budgetary, wage, foreign exchange, etc. policy, is reminiscent of the "custodial" control that fruit companies exercised over the Central American republics.

In the midst of the worldwide depression, these crisis ridden "national regimes" operate within the extremely narrow policy limits established by the multinational banks—constraints that are **essential** conditions for receiving financial assistance. These externally imposed conditions and the policies implemented by regimes reveal the double 'dependence' of the state: its dependence (and not autonomy) on international capital; its dependence and ties to local capital.

However, it would be a mistake to return to the **earlier** dependence perspectives to understand the dynamic political and social developments that unfold from the present crisis. First, the crisis does not

emerge from a static set of immutable dependency relations — rather the forms and linkages that define the current relations are very different than those set out in the 1950's and 1960's. Second, the economic expansion that **did** take place (which the earlier dependency approach failed to acknowledge) established a whole new set of class and political actors that emerge to contest and pose alternatives to the current policy resolutions posed by the regimes and their counterparts among the international bankers. Thirdly, the adverse consequences that result from the overt control manifested by international bank dictation will directly impinge on the wage-salaried classes and strata. The central issue behind the 'debt' is political: the capacity of the (local) state to impose the new economic policies and formulas on the labor force. The dependency approach with its focus on the mechanisms of surplus extraction between regions is inadequate to examine the crucial political developments that are taking place. Between the point at which foreign banks dictate policy and the point at which the financial resources are siphoned out of the country major political confrontations are in the making. The critical relations between the local state and the internal classes, between state coercion and popular mobilization (in responding to the initial policy imperatives) can seriously affect the direction and consequences of the overall debt payment relation.

The central problem with both the neo-developmental and dependency approaches is the "empiricist methodological style" that extrapolates **growth** or capital flow data from their structural-historical



context. The class relations that control the possibilities for market expansion and the realization of profit are ignored by the neo-developmentalists. For the conservative variants of this approach the existence of surplus labor is considered a positive asset (favorable labor market) to attract capital, presuming also that the labor market operates unhampered by unwarranted state intervention or class struggle. For the radicals, the class-relations (and class struggle) are discussed as a future outcome of prolonged capitalist development, or at best in the process of formation. For this school the key problem is not capitalist exploitation but its relative absence. On the other hand, the dependency analysts extrapolate data from the downswings of the economy and then hook it up to a pseudo-structural analysis, which identifies foreign control with economic stagnation — a dubious proposition which conveniently and absentmindedly omits any consideration of the preceding period of expansionary upswing. Theoretical closure is arbitrarily assigned to the low point in the economic downturn, with the explicit assumption that this is the chronic condition henceforward.

Both apparent adversaries are theoreticians of the conjuncture — each chooses a time frame and data that fits with the presuppositions of their perspective. Neither has looked at the process of capital accumulation and realization within the **class anchored conditions** that have stimulated and constrained growth. At best, these theoreticians of the conjuncture have identified 'negative' qualities of the class relations and assigned them a larger political economic meaning. At worst, they have ignored class relations and have simply focused on the role of markets and capital — assigning each a positive or negative role — according to their political preference.

In our approach, class relations are viewed as the essential basis governing the conditions for expansion and contraction of the world economy. More specifically, the conditions of capital accumulation and realization create wage

labour relations which constantly need to be reproduced, first on a national and then international level. The class relations that create surplus value become the barriers for the realization of profit and subsequently for the accumulation of capital: the crisis in exchange relations between regions finds its roots in the crisis of production, i.e., in the relations between classes.

Class relations in the advanced capitalist countries with their increasing labour costs hastened the outflow of capital toward large labour reserves precisely in those regions and during those historic moments when emerging local capitalist and state forces were developing the capacity to promote new industrial development. The combined movement of finance capital from Japan and the West and local entrepreneurship provided a dynamic expansion of capital rooted in the massive transfer and conversion of surplus labor into surplus value. The continued dynamic reproduction of capital in multiple sites in the world economy led to a geometric increase in the volume of goods, while the class relations in the advanced and developing capitalist countries remained frozen: the continued pressure on profits in the advanced countries and continuing constraints on labor in the other regions limited the markets for expansion. The uneven development of class relations between the two regions led first and foremost to efforts by capital to reduce the cost of labour by transferring investment to areas of lower wage levels. 'Realization' of profit occurred elsewhere — outside the local economy. This process of redeployment, however, was not sufficiently dynamic — not enough capital in productive areas did or could move. The second step was to reduce the labor costs of capital — first through large-scale conversion from productive to speculative activity and later through large-scale reduction in productive activity — the depression of wages through massive unemployment.

In the first instance, the conversion of productive to non-productive capital led to the massive growth of the so-called "service sector"

in the U.S. and to the growth of overseas lending. The growth of overseas capital led to the expansion of productive activity abroad, which appeared to compliment the expansion of the services at home. According to superficial observers, the U.S. economy was becoming based on an 'information industry', while the developing countries were becoming industrialized. In actual fact, U.S. capital was increasingly becoming a rentier exploiting unit. The first result of this shift was the displacement of significant sectors of unskilled 'minority' and young people from the labor force of the industrialized countries. In the industrializing countries, rural migrants, mostly young people, were being incorporated into the wage labor force. Deproletarianization and proletarianization became two prominent outcomes of global economic changes. These changes facilitated the process of capital accumulation and did not block the process of realization. But the crisis deepened as productive capital continued shifting into speculative activity, reducing capital available for employment of wage labor. This increased the cost of productive activity and precipitated and deepened the crisis of industrial capitalism. The increasing pressure of rent and interest payments added to wage squeeze on profits provoked a chronic crisis within the sector of productive capital. This found expression in an accelerated decline in activity. At the same time, increasing overseas flows of capital augmented the availability of goods and services in the industrializing countries at a time when world markets began to shrink. The dynamic alliance of overseas loan capital and local productive investors began to disintegrate: the crisis in the realization of sales in the world market occurred when the overhang of debt payments was increasing. The repressive class relations necessary to secure low wages and facilitate accumulation in the developing capitalist countries blocked any effort to substitute local markets. The financial institutions tightened their grip on the productive systems. As a means of securing their interest payments, they dictated policies depressing wages, increasing exports and cutting state expenditures. These very conditions



stipulated by the banks to secure interest payments deepened the depression of industry and hastened conflict between the productive forces in different regions since all nations cannot simultaneously increase their exports and decrease their imports. Increasing competition among nations and the increasing share of income accruing to banking and rentier capital led to a reconcentration of capital toward the advanced capitalist centers. Within these areas, the economic depression and the downward pressure on wages — reconcentrates income in the hands of capital. The massive retreat of the trade union bureaucracy in the advanced capitalist countries (led by the U. S. AFL-CIO) sets the stage for productive capital to reconstitute a new basis for the organization of its productive base. New machinery, technology and a smaller labor force at lower wages leads to selected 'economic recovery', i.e., return of profitability and increases in production, while massive long-term unemployment remains.

The regression of wage payments to labor and the decline of environmental and welfare standards resulting from the concessions conceded by the U. S. trade union bureaucracy create competitive advantages for U. S. capital in the world economy. Business leaders in Europe, Japan and developing countries seek to follow suite — leading to a general assault on the standards of living of labor worldwide. The incremental changes and improvements that characterized the previous period of labor-capital collaborative expansion give way before the deepening decline and sharpening competition of the present period. The most dynamic industrializing third world countries whose growth was linked to expanding overseas mass markets, long-term, large-scale loans and continuing flows of advanced capital and consumer goods enter into a profound downward cycle: declining export markets, increasing debt payments, industrial bankruptcies and plummeting standards of living. The appearance of a diversified economy is replaced by frantic dependence on centralized financial consortia. The appearance of powerful new national industrial

power is replaced by widespread underutilized capacity, and near bankrupt industries unable to sell goods or to import critical inputs or to refinance debts. The illusory autonomy of the state and its related enterprises is replaced by a financial mendacity toward major banking consortia and their international banking associates.

Just as the official lending agencies stepped back in the 1960's to allow the private banks to take over lucrative lending markets, so in the 1980's the public and international lending agencies **return to bail out** the private banks. These shifts in banking roles reveal the class nature of banking policies — when high returns on loans and an expanding economy were prevalent, the capitalist states withdrew from the market allowing private banking capital to a mass high profit margins leading to a pyramiding of bank assets and the proliferation of subsidiaries. With the onset of the world economic depression and the threat by debtor countries to renounce payments, the international banks and states are invited by the private banks to provide financial assistance — to allow the debtor states to pay the private banks while the advanced capitalist states assume all the bad debts, delayed payments and prolonged negotiations. In effect, the states are increasing their contribution to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, who increase their loans to the debtor countries which, in turn, use the official loans to pay back the interest and principle to the private banks. Thus while the private banks maximized their interest earnings in the expansive period, the burden of assuming the bad debts in the depression is imposed on the tax payers (mostly wage and salaried employees) of the advanced capitalist countries. Likewise in the developing countries, the costs of

repaying the debts are assumed by the state which, in turn, through devaluations, salary-wage freezes and inflationary squeeze imposes the repayment on the wage and salary classes. Thus externally financed expansion and debt repayment in the depression reveal the two sides of the same class reality within the industrializing countries: the flows of benefits and costs are correlated with property-relations. The continuance of this class based system in the depression is dependent on selling the idea that any refusal by the states (and by inference the wage and salaried tax payers) to refinance the loans and save the private banks would lead to the collapse of the "international banking system". Likewise, the ruling regimes in the developing states argue that an unwillingness of the same groups to sacrifice present living standards will bankrupt "the state". To an extent these dire predictions are true: without heightened appropriation of surplus for payments the private banking system and capitalist states will 'collapse'. The point is nevertheless that the collapse of one set of privately controlled institutions does not usher in a period of anarchy — but rather enhance and make imperative the establishment of a new set of collectively owned and democratically controlled institutions. The fundamental flaw in the rhetoric of the ideologues and experts is to equate existing relations and institutions with any and all forms of economic structures. Thus the threat posed by Washington policy-makers of either sacrificing to save the present class controlled banking institution or face the 'final collapse' of international exchange and the domestic economy is largely an ideological ploy. The disintegration of bourgeois society is equated with organized society in general.

**(Concluded)**



# Social populationist approach

B. A. Kader

**L**astly, they interpret all countrymen, as a nation. Therefore they don't see any difference between national states, formed of homogeneous nations, and multi-national states, which consists of heterogeneous nations. **Thereby they fail to recognise the existence of national oppression within the latter.**

On the whole they are, obviously not racist or chauvinist. Extreme anti-racist theory is a product of those who correctly counter racist theory, but from wrong premises. As in many cases one extreme view serves the other. Thus they become a unconscious instrument of the chauvinists who camouflage national oppression with prettified words. In short, in countering racism this theory plays a progressive role, to a certain extent, and on the other hand it plays a reactionary role in the hands of oppressor nations, especially in the multi-national states.

(2) Diplomatic chauvinists :— The diplomatic and intelligent bourgeoisie and their lackeys, the chauvinist theoreticians, too, preach such theories — and not without reason. On the one hand they make noisy speeches on "Unity", "national harmony" "Patriotism", etc. They pose as the champion of the peoples unity, and eloquently appeal to their countrymen, we must unite together as a nation, to buildup our country irrespective of language caste, creed or religion". On the other hand, they do whatever possible, by all means, to retain the privileges they enjoy as the ruling nation, and suppress all the other nationalities ruthlessly, by denying basic democratic rights to the latter.

\*

**"All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided" — Marx.**

This is more applicable in the social sciences, particularly in the study of the national question which

is artificially complicated by the ruling classes and confuses by the well intentioned but weak theoreticians like the "Populationists".

It was Marxists who, first discovered the historical meaning of the concept nation. Their approach to the national question can be dubbed as "Social Populationist". This approach accepts all the scientific aspects of the "Populationist" theory, and avoids those that are unscientific. It further develops the theory adding the **social** side of human life to the picture.

Marxism treats people as "social animals" and gives first place to Man's **social** characteristics while recognising and giving due place to his biological characters. It differentiates people not according to their morphological feature and not as geographical groups but as social groups. Thus it provides correct scientific meaning to the concept nation; provides solid ground for exposing, criticising and fighting all sorts of "typologist" and other unscientific theories; provides moral encouragement to all oppressed nations, irrespective of their size and provides a guide line to the working class for its internationalism.

Let us deal with this last point.

## Dogmatist Approach

Marx and Engels constantly emphasized that "our teaching is not dogma, but a guide to action". Genuinely revolutionary Marxism is creative Marxism, continually enriching itself by means of new data. It is the theory of the working class for the emancipation of society. It is the summing up of the practical experiences of revolutionary movements.

But, "Dogmatists" apply marxism mechanically and undialectically without regard to changing circumstances and concrete surrounding conditions. There are also those who repeat the memorised slogans or

quotations without knowing the scientific meaning of it. They convert Marxism, the developing science of society, into blind faith akin to religion.

We have both types of dogmatist theoreticians in the left politics of Sri Lanka. Those who themselves have not understood the national question but preach to others; those apply mechanically the definition of Stalin on the Nation and seek a "separate economy" for each nation etc, fall into this category.

The harmfulness of this approach is that, firstly, it is advocated by certain personalities who are still in a position to influence, at least a section of the working class. Their "dogmatism" never guides the workers for action. Instead it confuses the latter. Secondly, it serves the chauvinists of the oppressing nation. Lastly, since they proclaim themselves "Marxists" the distrust of the oppressed nationalities towards these individuals, turns against Marxism itself!

**Origin of race :—** When man was powerless to overcome the **natural barriers**, in the early stages of human history, he was walled in, in limited areas and nature impressed its stamp on him. This stamp became that of race.

Natural barriers, such as mountain ranges like Himalayas and Alps and the associated plateaux and highlands like Tibet and Pamirs, ice covered polar areas, deserts like Sahara, oceans, seas and the largest rivers and lakes, isolated and disconnected the human groups by limiting their mobility. It is noteworthy, that besides these major boundaries, lesser obstacles also acted as barriers between neighbouring populations. Such stations were the various parts of forests, steppes, tundra, savannas, jungles and swamps as well as valleys and canyons in mountainous areas, oases in deserts and small islands in seas, lakes or even large rivers.



This geographically isolated human groups had to live stationary for many thousands of years without any intercourse with other groups within the disconnected areas. The long **isolation** enabled the natural environment to impress its stamp on this geographical human groups cruelly.

The **colour** of the skin, hair and eyes was determined by the **climatic conditions** especially the solar radiation, moisture in the atmosphere and temperature. (eg The skin of the human groups isolated in the hot climatic zones changed black, the skin of those that lived in the colder, regions white etc.) **Chemical composition in their diets** also varied from area to area since they had to satisfy themselves with the ingredients available in those areas. **Labour activities** in the process of production of food, shelter, clothing, tools etc. too differed, to an extent from place to place. These latter two factors played the decisive role in adopting their bodily shapes, strength and growth.

Here another factor also played its significant role — **genetics**. Genetic barriers conditioned by geographical isolation transmitted these external physical features from generation to generation through DNA of the reproductive cells within the isolated groups since mixed marriages among different geographical groups were impossible. Hence from generation to generation this external physical features among these groups became more and more explicit, developed and preserved. Thus geographically isolated groups were moulded into races !

New we can define, quite easily, a race. What is a race? **A race is a geographical group of people who have explicit common external physical features.**

Anthropologists differentiate human races into several categories according to the racial characteristics, such as colour of the skin, hair and eyes, type of hair, facial features, height, shape of the skull etc... It was the Swedish natural scientist Carollus Linnoyus (1797—who first divided in semi-scientific manner, the human races according

to racial features, But he also believed that the racial features neccessarily have connections with the psychic srereotype. He wrote that Asian's were brutal, stingy and obstinate ; African's were full of vengence, cunning and lazy ; and Europeans were active, clever and intelligent. Thereby, the attempt to make White people a "superior race"

But Charles Darwin held a contrary view to this. He recognised the uniformity in the functions of the nervous system among all the races. Some authors claim that human races can be distinguished according their "blood group". For eg. Boyd-1950. He observed five races on the basis of genes distribution. V.V. Bunak differentiated human races into four major groups.

According to him there are 48 varieties of races speread in 12 branches. Russian athropologist M. Nesthurh in his "Human Races" (Tamil translation) divides them into three major groups with several branches and varieties. Anyway I am not competent to justify any of these differentiations. Nevertheless, I give below the latter's classifications of major human races to present a general picture:—

I Negoids—(Black) this race forms 10% of the world population. This word negroid is adopted from the Latin word "Neger" which has the meaning black. Its general racial features are:— Black skin, curly black hair, black eyes, thick lips normally with the upper lip swelled wide nose, wide jaw, long legs etc.

II Europeoide:— (White) This race forms 53% of the world population. General features:— With skin, soft hair in various colours, thick moustaches and beard, brown or blue eyes, thin lips, pointed narrow nose, short cheek bone etc. If a line is drawn between two ears via just below the nose, this portion is wider thin that of other races.

III Mongoloids:— (Yellow) This race forms 37% of the world population. General features: out focussed cheek bones which give a flat shape to their face, epicanthiric eye fold, straight thick and black hair, pale eyes, yellow skin etc.

Here we should remember one important point. i.e. although these races lived in differant geographical areas and differed in their external racial features, they all belonged to one species namely Homo Sapiens and all of them were originated from the same ancestor — Neanderthal. Therefore let us just neglect the baseless argument of some racists who hold that "different races" originated from different ancestors.

But this mechanism — geographical isolation and the resultant race formation — was not allowed to continue unchecked. With the lapse of time, man conquered the natural barriers **through labour and human knowledge**. Engels explains this:— "...the animals merely uses external nature and brings about changes in it imply by its presence ; Man by his changes makes nature serve his ends, masters it. This is the final, essential distinction between man and the other animals, and again it is labour that brings about this distinction" (Engels, 'The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man',)

Finally man succeeded in impressing his stamp on nature. With the progress in transport and communication, with the development of migration and colonisation, the natural barriers and geographical isolations diminished. As scientific and technogical progress made headway, natural factors receded more and more into the background. As a result, races started mixing giving impetus to inter-racial **cross breeding**.

"It is obvious that the more crossing takes place in different populations, the more rapidly are **new varieties of races** or geographical races formed, differing from each other both phenotypically and genotypically" — (N. N. Chebok-sarv — Human Race and population.)

The development of capitalism — elimination of feuadal disunity, intergration of the market, formation of nations internationalisation of economy, etc:— furthers this race mixing mechanism. 'Mesitation' or the race mixing process has today even penetrated into the most isolated Eskimos. This process

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# Exploration into colonial culture

BOOK  
REVIEW

Gamini Seneviratne

*CRIPPLED MINDS AN EXPLORATION INTO COLONIAL CULTURE — by Susantha Goonatilake.*

Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.,  
New Delhi. Distributed in Sri Lanka  
by The Lake House Bookshop.  
(Rs. 180/-)

**S**usantha Goonatilake, Director of Research, People's Bank, is an Electrical Engineer and a formally trained Sociologist. He has been a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, and at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. He has published more than 50 papers, the bulk of them in the *Sociology of Third World Culture and Knowledge*.

In his Preface the author states that much of the material in this book has been drawn from paper written by him earlier and which he has re-written and developed further for the purpose of this book. Structuring a book out of material used in such paper "published at various times in various journals" risks the loss of integration of the material used and of coherence in the argument. He offers the further disclaimer that "I often flit from country to country and sometimes from discipline to discipline and often dwell on areas in which I do not claim to have a formal training but only a keen interest". He adds, "In describing the field of world culture such broad sweep and surveys are not only necessary but also imperative even though in the process some inevitable distortion may creep in". Dr. Goonatilake deserves our thanks for having made this attempt although in a review of existing literature in a given field distortions are not "inevitable".

The colonial culture which he sets out to examine refers to that which had arisen from "the imposition of a European derived culture on those areas of Asia, Africa and the Americas that it has dominated over the last five centuries". In order to flesh out that study Dr. Goonatilake opens with a historical survey to the growth of human culture in the

precolonial world, the development of European culture through the colonial period, the process of imposing European values on colonised peoples by undermining their self-respect and destroying the foundations of their societies economically and otherwise. He proceeds to detail the responses of the colonised to these pressures and launches into an exercise in epistemology, following it up with an examination of technology as a colonial culture carrier. He concludes with an account of the attempts made by the colonisers to exploit the knowledge of the colonised and of the colonised to recover their self-respect by detailing such items of knowledge.

This has indeed been an ambitious undertaking and Dr. Goonatilake has attacked the task with admirable energy. He has drawn not only on standard works in each field but has also pursued tasty morsels of information and unusual insight from a variety of sources. Not all such items, needless to add, are valuable in themselves or germane to the argument of this book. Although this is an 'exploration into' in the surgical sense, it has taken the character of an 'exploration of'. The argument tends to meander, particularly in the first five chapters of the book, doubling back upon itself in the dense undergrowth of information and comment quoted with scholarly propriety, from other who have written on these subjects. It is natural that the author would have had his interest aroused by tit bits of fact and comment in areas in which he has had no formal training but presented in this way they do expose the unwary reader to the danger of missing the wood for the trees.

I hope Dr. Goonatilake will go on to digest this material into a shorter essay. The material gathered within the covers of this book is vast and is therefore conveniently available for anybody so inclined to grab a compass and proceed on an exploration of his own.

'Crippled Minds' contains a great many assertions which would be disputed or easily controverted. Not all of them are significant in assessing the orientation of the author.

Some are: e.g., "The ferocity and the use of violence (by 'mercantile barbarians'), contrary to the ideological characteristics of Christianity are more reminiscent of the Islamic concept of religious imposition by the sword". This is reminiscent of the propaganda used to give direction to the pillaging Christian hordes who embarked on the Crusades. In present times the significance of this tendentious statement takes on another character.

In his chapter on 'Sri Lanka: the cultural revolution that failed', Dr. Goonatilake states: "Cultural penetration was also aided by the programme of import substitution industrialisation... (It) resulted in the large scale manufacture of western items of consumption that were earlier consumed only by a few import substitution means just this and as most of the non-food consumption items imported were for the upper middle classes, it was these that were manufactured. They included, among other, ham, bacon, chocolate, whisky, brandy, and clothes". This is a lazy and incorrect analysis — not quite good enough, one would imagine, even for the drawing rooms of Sussex.

An intellectual laziness is reflected in the frequent lack of precision and clarity in the language employed. Perhaps academics who have specialised in these fields are not troubled by such considerations. The problem is compounded for the layman when esoteric material is involved.

Dr. Goonatilake asserts that this book "has taken an implicit Marxist orientation" but he does not explore Marx's theory of alienation which should surely be central to an

(Continued on page 22)



## FOUND POEM

I have seen what human beings are  
 How could I believe in a formula for human beings?  
 I said to him, oh I said to him a thousand times:  
 Only make no laws, no fine theories, no judgements,  
 And the people may love.  
 But give them one theory, let them invent one slogan  
 And the game begins again.  
 But no, the little boy must have his dream,  
 A new world was to be built  
 Creation, Progress, Power, the whole future of mankind,  
 Shall I not let them in?  
 I shouted at him: Can't you see it's the same?  
 The same guns, the same children dying in the streets?  
 Only the dream has changed, the blood is the same colour.  
 Is this what you want? It's me who lies in the gutter —  
 Will you let them do it to me?  
 He just said: No, this is different.

V. P. Vittachi

## Exploration...

(Continued from page 21)

exploration into colonial culture particularly in its current phase in South Asia.

"Crippled Minds" contains numerous insights which are useful for understanding the process by which indigenous cultures are being wiped out by the Euro-centred cultural plague and outlines in highly literate terms current thinking on the responses possible over the wide range of science, technology, medicine, art and social systems which are the constituents of culture. The final chapter in particular should be placed in the hands of opinion makers throughout the world. They include essays on "Sciences: the European connection", the value base of the social sciences, the 'crisis in Marxist theory', and the 'mapping of the social science' all of which would provide material for a year's debate in the 'LG', while the chapter on 'Foragers and Legitimisers' and 'Points of Creativity' cover issues which are immediately pertinent to the formulation of national policy.

In Sri Lanka, a digest of these essays, suitably translated into Sinhalese and Tamil, would provoke

responses which could be used as 'feedback' for further studies. The over riding Euro-centric perspective of this work brings to mind Mahatma Gandhi's response to the question: 'What do you think of European civilization?' 'I think it would be a good idea'.

A Study of the exploitation of cultural colonisation by academics would provide an appropriate epilogue to the present work. I hope that Dr. Goonatilake, who is familiar with people who float in that orbit, would write that chapter for the next edition of this book.

## Social...

(Continued from page 20)

is taking place not only along the borders of the areas of habitation, but in their centres too.

This race mixing phenomenon is a very progressive tendency functioning towards the elimination of racial differences. Further, scientists believe that the progress in science will in the near future invent devices to influence the genetic flow. If this is achieved the elimination of race will be more accelerated.

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# **TV's impact on cinema attendance and radio listening**

**A** sizeable portion of the respondents (57 per cent) reported that they visited the cinema 'less often' since they had television at home; 24 per cent professed that they do not visit the cinema at all after they bought the TV set. Not surprisingly, cinema industry sources also report a 20 percent drop in attendance at Sinhala films. They think that television may be a contributory factor for this decline.

These findings are of particular interest, because the 'early adopters' of television were found to be among the most ardent devotees of the cinema. This suggests that the cinema industry felt the effects of television quickly, as its best customers were attracted to its 'rival'. Anyway, what should specially interest the programme planners of SLRC is the fact that almost one-third of the respondents in the sample had admitted to buying television sets for the sole purpose of viewing Sinhala and Tamil films. This is supported by the finding regarding the overwhelming preference for Sinhala/Tamil films among the respondents.

There is also evidence that during transmission of Sinhala/Tamil films, "guest-viewing" averages to about 50 to 60 persons per TV household. In one particular household in a rural area, as many as 200 'guests' from the neighbour-hood gather on Thursday nights to view the Sinhala film. It is also not unusual for some households to charge a gate of 50 cents per 'guest'.

Another 'casualty' of television appear to be television's 'plainer sister' — Radio. Our data reveals that the cream of Radio's audience is being skimmed away by television. It is also known that among the first people to acquire television were also those who had previously been the heaviest radio listeners (their staple radio diet being film songs). 84 per

cent of the respondents report that they listen to the radio 'less often' after the television set was bought. 7 per cent report that they had stopped listening to the radio altogether. (This may well be an exaggeration which is more interesting as a report on subjective sensation rather than on actual practice.) 37 per cent respondents have also reported that they are unable to listen to their 'favourite' programmes on radio because the broadcast times of these programmes clash with the transmission of interesting programmes on television.

Attitudes to listening may well change once the novelty of television wears off, but it is about time that programme planners at SLBC reassess their programme philosophy in the light of the obvious dominance of television. The strategy and architecture of their programme planning may have to change considerably. In our view, the radio should not see itself as the underprivileged poor relation of television. Rather, the SLRC and SLBC should set their minds on seeking new ways to support, strengthen and complement each other.

In assessing the impact of TV on Cinema and Radio audiences, we must bear in mind the possibility that the present trends may not necessarily be permanent. Allowance has to be made for the immediate impact of the novelty of the medium. In western countries and in some of the Third World countries, the initial decline in cinema and radio audiences consequent on the introduction of TV has proved to be a temporary phase and a certain equilibrium has been achieved between the different media based on 'division of labour'. We cannot, of course, assume that the same process would be replicated in Sri Lanka. But whether it happens or not will depend partly on the attitudes and

programme policy of the media planners.

## **Some observations**

The finding regarding the overwhelming preference for Sinhala/Tamil films may on the face of it disturb the programme planner committed to making programmes specially conceived for the new medium. A deeper analysis of this preference for Sinhala and Tamil films is called for since this has implications for the future planning of television programmes.

In regard to the question on preference for specific types of programmes, it may be remembered that only 42 per cent of the respondents voted for foreign serials and single feature films, while 51 per cent indicated their preference for Sinhala and Tamil films. This may not allay the fears of those critics of television who are convinced that 'imported material' would bring about cultural alienation'. But it has obvious lessons for the programme planner.

It is quite possible that most viewers who appreciate foreign serials for their slick production values fail to obtain complete enjoyment from these programmes due to the linguistic barrier and their inability to relate themselves to the alien fantasies that have peripheral relevance to their lives. The Sinhala and Tamil films, on the other hand, with their familiar stereotyped situations may be providing them with more opportunity for 'wishful identification'. Another factor is the nature of the viewing situation. It is known that TV viewing in most households is more a social rather than an individual activity. The set-owning families are frequently visited by friends and neighbours who have not yet acquired sets themselves. Their homes become social centres of a kind. Entertainment programmes



received into this atmosphere of social interaction where the viewer considers himself part of an intimate group would naturally raise expectations of some material culturally responsive to his needs, and within a common frame of social reference. The satisfaction of these needs seems better achieved at present through the Sinhala and Tamil films rather than through the foreign serials and documentaries. If the average TV viewer whose visual literacy is based on the culture of the 35-year old local cinema is to be gradually drawn to the aesthetics of the new medium of TV as a separate art form in its own right — the programme strategy for the present may well lie in the production of short, low-budget 'tele-films' in Sinhala and Tamil. There will be naturally be many constraints, especially concerning finance. But what is needed is the Programming Will. The alternative would be the continued incestuous use of television as a mere means of transmission.

It will be recalled that only two-respondents out of the sample of 1,594 expressed preference for the category of 'educational' programmes. This distorts the emphasis which most respondents, especially from the rural areas, have given to instructional/educational programmes in their replies to the question "What other types of programmes, other than those currently shown, would you like to see on television?" (vide Appendix 5). As suggested earlier, this may be due to the semantic problem caused by the word 'educational', with its connotations of drab classroom teaching, etc. But a further explanation suggests itself. There is evidence that the majority of respondents perceive television not merely as a diversion but also as a vital source of information and education. Could the apathy for 'educational' programmes referred to earlier, than be related to viewers' previous experience of programmes labelled 'educational' broadcast on radio and television? Could we reasonably derive from this the inchoate suggestion that educational programmes would be received well if they are interesting to watch?

Which brings us to the reality of the education-entertainment relationship. It would be widely conceded that entertainment and education

need not be in separate, isolated compartments — if a programme catches and holds attention, stimulates interest and arouses enthusiasm, may be even creates a goodly share of mirth (i. e. it contains many elements of entertainment) it does not necessarily mean that it is poor educationally. And the converse is equally true — if a programme is designed specifically for educational purposes (anywhere in the range from informal instruction to background enrichment) it may well be quite entertaining. It is relevant to quote Groombridge's comments on this issue of the education-entertainment link in relation to television:

"When the creative qualities of intelligence, curiosity, wonder, or imagination are at work, then **many programmes in the general output will educate more effectively than a purpose — built educational series.** A producer with imagination, making a programme about a theme that has captured his own interest and enthusiasm may, succeed in education' while denying, perhaps, that he is in a sense an educator."

— Groombridge, B. (ed) — *Adult Education and Television.* (N. I. A. E./UNESCO, 1966).

It is realised that the concept of 'incidental learning' from television and the Education-Entertainment link would in a sense devalue the conventional demarcation of programme material into the categories of Entertainment and Education/Information. Against this backdrop the information that 45 per cent of the total weekly output of SLRC was devoted to 'Entertainment', and 55 per cent to 'Education/Information' may not after all be very useful in determining the actual symbolic content of SLRC programmes — especially its 'foreign' component — unless it is supported by a detailed content-analysis of the programmes.

Admittedly, this is a separate research exercises which may have to be undertaken early, especially in the context of the persistent criticism in some elitist circles that the imported entertainment programmes are a 'threat to the quality and values of our national culture'. The latest warning in this regard comes from two social scientists writing in the

recent issue of *Development Dialogue*. They put it this way:

"Focus for a moment on the information in entertainment programming — Mennix, I Love Lucy, Dallas and Walt Disney. Entertainment or drama programmes represent complex patternings of information in which value judgements and behavioural norms are interwoven in a culturally determined package.

Communication at an Impasse: A Plea Humanized Communication, by Gail M Martin and M Patricia Hendley, in *Development Dialogue*, 1981-1982, published by Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala.

This warning, we are sure, would be taken by programme planners entrusted with the task of 'shopping-for' foreign programme material. But as far as television audiences in Sri Lanka are concerned there is another aspect to this question. It relates to the evidence of a certain selectivity of behaviour in the audience. The bases for this selectivity may well lie in the ethic of inner asceticism deriving from the rich profound vision of life which Buddhist thought and culture gave Sri Lanka. Is it too much to hope then that Sri Lanka audiences will be quite capable of responding from their own cultural and spiritual centres critically and discriminatingly to the 'culturally determined packages' of imported entertainments programmes?

Those of us who have visited AIR Broadcasting House at Delhi would have seen a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi inscribed on the entrance wall:

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any one them. Mine is not a religion of the prison house. It has room for the least among God's creations but it is proof against insolent pride of race, religion and colour."

Sobering thoughts for the Board of Directors of the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, entrusted with the task of resolving the many dilemmas of television policy.

(Concluded)





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