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GUARDIAN



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Trends

Understanding the Tamils

There are signs that more and more Sinhalese opinion-makers who were either unconscious victims of racial prejudice or simply indifferent to the Tamils' deep-felt sense of grievance are experiencing the first stirrings of conscience and a new intellectual awakening.

At a seminar in Peradeniya, Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, an able student of political science before he became a padre who played a prominent role in 'nativising' Christian ritual, argued that the new constitutional status for Tamil was an advance but not far enough. He urged genuine devotion to meet the aspirations of the Tamil people.

Even more interesting were the observations of Dr. Havanpola Ratnasara, a Buddhist monk who was joint secretary of the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna, one of the organisations which spearheaded the Sinhala Only movement and the 1956 "cultural revolution". In 1956, the slogan was historically correct and necessary, he said. But today there is great need to pay serious attention to the grievances of the island's biggest minority.

The 40,000 strong Ceylon Teacher's Union went much further at its annual conference. It passed a resolution (moved by a Moslem teacher) which recognised the Tamils' right to self-determination.

The not-so green valley

Conventional wisdom holds that the party system in Sri Lanka is deep-rooted. Is it really? At least in the case of the two major parties, the UNP and the SLFP, the party machine seems to be active only in opposition. Once the party wins the machine grinds to a halt. The state machine takes over. The SLFP's General Secretary was a Cabinet Minister. The UNP's today is the Chairman of a Corporation. This was true of the Left parties too but their machines, well-greased if small, work with reasonable efficiency, day-to-day.

A brilliant organisation man who brought the UNP back into action in

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Cover Picture:

A shot from "Bambaru Avith"
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1956 and to near-perfection organisationally in 1973-77, President J. R. Jayawardene has already sensed that something's going wrong with the UNP. Forty branches, he told the Ex-Co recently, had not sent delegates this time. Their registration had lapsed. Those who saw the Kandy meeting (the first anniversary of the spectacular UNP victory) found the mass participation and the enthusiasm in striking contrast to last year's. The hills of Kandy were green as ever but not the town nestling among them. Where have all the green shirts gone?

State audits

Will private audit firms be allowed to audit the accounts of State Corporations? It has been traditional practice in Sri Lanka for the Auditor-General's Department to be the sole auditor for the State. The Auditor Generals who have acquired a reputation for integrity are answerable only to the legislature.

The Steering Committee on Control of Finances of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Sri Lanka Republican Constitution of 1972, recommended an 'Audit Act' that would give wider

powers to the Auditor General, enabling him to audit the accounts of private firms, where this was in the public interest.

At present 90 State Institutions have their accounts audited by the Auditor General while 60 Corporations are audited by private firms under the supervision of the A. G. While the A.G's expenditure on the 90 audits plus those of local authorities amounts to Rs. 3.4 million; the private firms charge Rs. 3.6 million to audit 60 Corporations.

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Letters

Martin Wickramasinghe

I read with interest the article on Martin Wickramasinghe in your issue of July 1.

I entirely agree that it is important for the development of Ceylonese literature that we should try to form a just assessment of his work.

Attempts were being made not long ago to make out that Martin Wickramasinghe was comparable with Tolstoi, and at the recent anniversary celebrations Prof. Needham made some polite remarks that gave some people the impression that Martin Wickramasinghe was a sage.

It is of course natural that an English Professor who has been invited to a tropical island should make some polite remarks about the natives. But such remarks should not be taken too seriously.

I wonder whether Prof. Needham or anyone else can quote a single sentence, or longer passage, from Martin Wickramasinghe that has anything of much value to say.

Neither Martin Wickramasinghe nor Tolstoi are my favourite writers (with all due apologies to Mr. Reggie Siriwardena) but even so I do not think there is any comparison between the two.

There is an objective fact that supports this impression. All encyclopaedias, anthologies dictionaries of world literature etc have long references to Tolstoi and his works, but not to Martin Wickramasinghe and his works. Most of them don't even mention his name.

I find Martin Wickramasinghe's writing mediocre at best, and at worst almost unbelievable. For example, his short story "Kiri Ka Hati" describes how a man was very fond of eating curd; one day somebody brings him a pot of curd and he looks forward to eating it after lunch; but when he opens the pot he finds that it is not curd at all, but **Jadi** (dry fish)! Surely, a man who could conceive,

write and actually publish such a short story must be diporably lacking in both intelligence and taste.

Indeed I find almost the whole of Ceylonese literature and drama diporably lacking in both intelligence and taste.

Perhaps this would be an interesting subject for discussion in your columns.

Douglas Amarasekera

Euro-communism

Mr. Shanmugathasan has got hold of a typist's error "that Bernsteinism, Kautskyism were revisionisms of Marx's time," and has gone to town on this "error", stating that I do not deserve a reply.

The sentence should have read:—

Bernsteinism, Kautskyism and Menshevism were revisionism of Marxism in Lenin's time. Really Bernstein embarked on this course at the Stuttgart Congress in 1898.

In going off at a tangent Mr. Shanmugathasan had not denied— (1) That even the great leader Lenin though a Bolshevik, held Menshevik views about the coming Russian Revolution i.e. of its bourgeois character. (2) That Trotsky alone disagreed with both Lenin's and the Menshevik position.

Mr. Shanmugathasan says that the Peoples Front has nothing revisionist about it. It was an attempt to build the unity of the working class in action as the core and leading force of a broader Anti-Fascist Peoples Front to curb Hitler's Fascism. It did not succeed. Needless to say that such "Fronts" with the bourgeoisie (Big or Liberal) never succeed. A local example would be the United Front between the C.P. L.S.S.P. & the S.L.F.P.

Amaradasa Fernando

Reflections

Reference the article entitled 'The gadflies' by Arden in your issue of June 1, I have done a

lot of thinking on our lack of civilization and its relationship to a lack of knowledge of English. One has only to read the daily newspapers in Sri Lanka to be convinced that Mr. Douglas Amarasekera is perfectly correct. The proceedings of the Sansoni Commission would show us as to how many of those atrocities were committed by people with a good knowledge of English.

Mr. Douglas Amarasekera is perfectly correct in stating that in not a single Sinhala play is there one memorable line—unlike in the plays of Shakespeare, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes. Real nationalism consists of being aware of one's shortcomings. George Bernard Shaw said, "Science is concerned with the truth of hypothesis and not whether some conceited people like it or not." What Sri Lanka needs today is more people of the calibre of Mr. Douglas Amarasekera.

Gampola.

Hector De Zoysa

The double dactyl

I beg your pardon,
my dear Arden,
but when you talk of
Vla-DI-mir Na-BO-kov
as a dactylic double,
you're in trouble.
It's amphibrachic, like Lo-LI-ta,
his *otrokoviitsa*.

I haven't read Nabokov's own translation of his *Lolita* into Russian, but *otrokoviitsa* was the nearest approximation I could think of to *nymphet*, and it was close enough to a rhyme. VLA-dimir NA-bokov is a horrible Americanisation of the name, at which he himself must have shuddered. Incidentally, the *Random House English Dictionary*, in its entry against *Nabokov*, gives the Russian pronunciation of *Vladimir* correctly, and for *Nabokov* lists the Russian form, followed by the Americanised distortion of it. But then there are people who also say LO-lita, destroying the poetry of Nabokov's first paragraph. Colombo 5. Reggie Siriwardena

(Continued on page 23)

New Constitution : pros and cons

And so, we have the Second Republic. Or is it the Third? Before Section 157 was withdrawn, Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, Director of the Centre for Society and Religion (surely the most lively intellectual forum in a country which has no intellectual community despite a plenitude of intelligence and where the University has been drained of all vitality by careerism, petty politics and mediocrity?) told a seminar "this is a constitutional coup d'etat".

Constitutions can be properly judged only by the way they work and serve in practice declared objectives which are invariably clothed in familiar pieties. Constitutions do not solve problems but can better equip the rulers to deal with the myriad problems of the people. However, constitutions could enshrine serious negative features—a denial or restriction of basic rights rather than a guarantee and reinforcement of such rights. In that sense, Section 157 was a frightful piece of draftsmanship. Any person who advocated or agitated for an amendment or an alteration of the constitution (except in the strictly ordained manner) would commit an offence that carried ten years jail and confiscation of property.

It was, as Dr. Colvin R. de Silva put it with characteristic pithiness, constitutional change which made all constitutional change impossible in any meaningful sense.

The government was wise to withdraw it and its action certainly deserves a small hurrah. Government spokesmen say that it was another sign of how responsibly the administration responds to considered criticism and bows to public opinion. Its opponents say that the exercise was a typical tactic—three steps forward in order to take one step back

in a pre-planned demonstration of democratic conduct. Whichever the motivation or mixture of motives, the government has dispelled widespread fears that it was attempting to stifle all dissent.

Investment

The SLFP, TULF and the ULF, in varying degrees of conviction and horror, see something more sinister in Section 158, the constitutional protection given to foreign investors. To these critics, it represents a surrender or erosion of national sovereignty. Going deeper in their analysis, some of these students of the new constitution see the constitutional change and some of the laws already in force and some others on the way as part of a pattern in which the new development strategy is the informing principle. Economics first, they would say. And in the new strategy, foreign capital is the motor of 'development'.

Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, one of the more articulate advocates of these changes (particularly of P. R.) gives the government's answer. At a press conference last week, he said that there was a debate, largely ideological, on the basic issue of foreign capital. According to him, every country was inviting and accepting foreign capital and what really mattered were the conditions under which it operated and how much benefit the national economy actually derived. It was the responsibility of each country, and its supreme legislature, to safeguard national sovereignty. He for one could not see a majority of any National Assembly, dominated by the UNP or SLFP, consciously agreeing to an erosion of sovereignty.

The debate on foreign capital, anyway, was settled by the UNP's declared policy. It welcomed foreign capital. The question was 'under what terms?'

But foreign capital, in turn, required guarantees. Their investments were already protected by international law. This was in effect "municipal law" fortifying such guarantees. An ordinary agreement or law could give the investor a greater sense of security. But if he required more, Section 158 could be cited as a further token of Sri Lanka's bona fides.

Section 158 was an enabling provision, he added. Not every foreign investment would be guaranteed under this provision. Recourse to this constitutional provision would be on a case-by-case basis.

Electoral system

The government has refused to give in on the question of by-elections. The Opposition would have preferred if this old system had been abandoned after 1983. But the government argues that the abolition of by-elections is a logical consequence of the introduction of an entirely new system of elections. How then can public opinion be tested? How can the unpopularity of a government or of one of its decisions be demonstrated? Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam took that course of action although the United Front kept him waiting several years before he could prove his point. UNP and Opposition leader, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene was luckier. He made his point in the Colombo South by-election after resigning his seat in 1975, the year that the U. F. should have faced another poll on its 1970 mandate.

'We have the new device of a referendum' replies government spokesmen. But the right to hold a referendum is vested in the government, and governments are not always eager to test their own popularity or lack of it.

By-elections, it is also submitted, are a distraction (from the development effort?) and often bring out only parochial questions, not genuinely national issues. The government's strongest argument however is arithmetic. It speaks with the authority of 141 seats. On past form, there would be about 8 to 10 by-elections in the 1977-83 period. It could not make any impression on the party line-up in parliament.

The government has in any case made certain that this party complexion cannot be altered until 1983. No by-elections and the omnipotence now vested in the party boss who can nominate another party man whenever a MP dies or is sacked from his party or leaves it, ensures that this parliamentary balance (or imbalance) will remain unchanged.

P. R.

The present imbalance is a direct outcome of the distortions inherent in the British winner-takes-all system. P. R. has its own imperfections but it is certainly more democratic. The Sri Lankan system (delimitation and the British practice) gives each person a vote but each vote is NOT equal. The disparity in value between the urban and rural vote is self-evident, and has often worked to the disadvantage of town-based parties. Theoretically at least, the Left was deliberately disadvantaged.

The 1970 and 1977 results in particular (the gap between votes and seats of the UNP and SLFP) expose the gross defects of the old system. A glance at what-might-have-been (in July 1977) dramatises the fact even more vividly. If the new JR system had been in operation the result would have something like this:

UNP	— 93
SLFP	— 52
TULF	— 18
ULF	— 5

The LSSP would certainly have had its triumvirate (N. M., Colvin and Leslie) in the NSA.

RMP and JVP

The Revolutionary Marxist Party—the political arm of Bala Tampoe's Ceylon Mercantile Union—seems to be edging away from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. When Rohana Wijeweera was released from prison it was to the CMU headquarters that he went, since it was Bala Tampoe who had defended him in court and outside it as well.

The RMP has in an open letter to the the JVP expressed concern over the political attitude of the JVP. They accuse the JVP of failing to attack the UNP Government. Instead they say that the JVP still directs its guns against the SLFP-LSSP and CP. Further, the JVP is reluctant to support the opposition parties in their campaign against the Government.

In reply the JVP states that they have in fact been critical of the UNP. But they do not want to drive people out of the UNP into the SLFP, LSSP and CP. "We cannot compromise with opportunism" they say.

They say that their anti-UNP agitation must not be premature but governed by the radicalism of the people. "We must only be one step ahead of the masses."

TUs study violence

The Action Committee of the major Trade Union Federations (in effect, all the non-UNP trade unions and the CWC) has decided to study and publish a report on the incidence of violence in the trade union field.

Members of the Ceylon Bank Employees Union who struck work recently were assaulted and intimidated in several parts of the island. In Colombo twelve strikers were injured, two of them were hospitalised. The CBEU says that the assailants were mainly port workers, in addition they claim to have identified 20 CTB workers from Moratuwa. Assault on CBEU strikers also took place in Kuru-

negala, Galle, Piliyandala, Peradeniya and Chilaw.

The Unions point to this attack on CBEU strikers as another incident in a long list of attacks.

In January, Ceylon Mercantile Union reports, their newly formed Union at Kelaniya went on strike. On January 17th strikers who were picketing were assaulted by local thugs. The CMU claims that the same thugs were used against the students of the Vidyalandara Campus a short while later, when they elected opposition supporters to their Students' Union.

In Puttalam the Cement Corporation strike was broken up. At Laksala workers who struck in April were dismissed. At the Tyre Corporation, State Hardware Corporation, Paranthan Chemicals Corporation and Port Cargo Corporation, workers have been interdicted or otherwise harassed for picketing against the White Paper on Employment.

Members of the Joint Trade Union Action Committee who launched protest pickets were assaulted at the Registrar Generals' Office, the Department of Immigration, Ceylon Petroleum Corporation and National Paper Corporation.

When picketing Petroleum Corporation employees were assaulted in Moratuwa a member of the Moratuwa UNP Branch, Mrs. Evelyn Peiris, wrote protesting to the UNP's top leaders:

"C.M.U. members who work at the Corporation do silent picketing. Not only they, but Messrs. Steuarts, Grovornors and some other firms also do it for half-an-hour during their lunch interval. One day one of the members of the C.M.U. was assaulted by UNP'ers and he was injured. Next day, three or four were injured and they had to go to the Accident Service and up to now they have not reported to work as they are on medical leave. The other day a gentleman was being very badly assaulted with a pistol butt till he bled and was taken home by his wife who happens to work in

(Continued on page 23)

And now to Havana

The non-aligned do not vote at their conferences. Consensus is the respected convention. But reservations are allowed and, if insisted upon, recorded. There were none when the Belgrade meeting ended. So the 6th summit will be held in Havana in 1979; no postponement, no change of venue. Unity despite diversity. There non-alignment stands, for the time being.

It was Egypt which formally called for a postponement or another host. Although Cuban Foreign Minister Mamierca himself alleged that the US had won over 15 non-aligned states to 'sabotage' the Havana meeting, it was only a small group (Somalia, Morocco, Kuwait etc) that took this line publicly. Thus, when Cuba took the offensive on the final day, its spokesman kicked Egypt in the groin. "Those who went to Jerusalem, now do not wish to come to Havana".

It is not known whether Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel who accompanied President Sadat to Jerusalem and kissed Prime Minister Menahem Begin (the butcher of Deir Yassin) hid his head in shame but the Cuban counter-blast does throw helpful light on the fluctuating situation within the movement. Like Indonesia under Soekarno or Ghana under Nkrumah, Egypt was one of the most influential members of the conference. With Suharto, Indonesia took a conscious decision to concentrate on the regional grouping (ASEAN) and play a token role in the non-aligned group. And a fortnight ago, Singapore Foreign Minister Rajaratnam made the frank admission that ASEAN was a firm supporter of the US. Ghana, somewhat like Burma, gave foreign policy a back seat in the 1970's.

As the major power in the Arab world, Egypt however has carried much weight within the move-

ment, along with India, Yugoslavia, Algeria, Tanzania, Nigeria, Cuba etc.

Ever since Sadat made his "peace move" and became, objectively speaking, an instrument of US policy in the Middle-East, Egypt's political influence in the Arab world has declined, while its moral prestige in the non-aligned community has sunk rapidly. The move itself has angered the radicals while the evident failure of the initiative has disappointed some moderates.

Nevertheless a majority of the Arab League are pro-western "moderates" or "rightwingers;" as the expulsion of the Marxist regime of Yemen from the League indicated. Next to the black African group, the Arab League is the most numerous unit within the 86-member conference. Will Egypt, in spite of the Belgrade decision, carry on the campaign for "boycotting" Havana?

In the larger OAU where black Africans are in a majority, French influence is strong and the multinational force which went to the aid of Mobutu was an idea conceived in Washington, born in Paris and blessed in Peking. But if they have the numbers, they are also discredited through their collusion with South Africa in the invasion of Angola in 1975. The more forward-looking countries are more articulate and hold the moral initiative. Recently, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, perhaps the most respected of African radicals, not only defended the Cuban assistance but asked the Africans to remember that those who once colonised Africa, plundered her wealth and still had enormous economic interests and investments, were the continent's real enemies. Nyerere gave an elementary lesson on the nature of neo-colonialism particularly to neo-Marxist interpreters of 'hegemon-

Nigerian influence within the OAU is also expanding steadily. The speeches of Gen. Obasanjo and more so of Gen. Josep Garba make it clear that Nigeria will support the line taken by Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Zambia etc.

Belgrade found a compromise on the key issue of "foreign intervention". Neither the Cuban resolution nor the counter-resolution supported by Yugoslavia and India was adopted in the original form. The search for a machinery to settle bilateral disputes will also go on.

But two basic issues remain. As the group increased in numbers, these issues surfaced sharply and inevitably:

(1) Where does the movement stand in relation to constellation of world forces? Is it neutral or equidistant between the blocs? The answer of course depends largely on the nature of each regime and how it perceives its own interests, nationally and internationally. There are a fair number of non-aligned states which are basically pro-western. Yugoslavia, in the middle, puts the anti-bloc struggle as the primary interest of the non-aligned. Cuba sees the socialist states as the "natural ally" of the Third World. While regretting the division within the socialist camp (the Sino-Soviet schism) and attacking the present Chinese leadership for its objective support of the US, NATO and pro-western states, Cuba does not make China the main enemy but "US imperialism". It is careful to differentiate between the Chinese revolution and the socialist construction of China, and the foreign policy of the 'new mandarins'.

(2) In the interests of "unity" is the conference to remain a mini-UN "completely colourless and inoffensive"? as Garcia Frias, the Cuban delegate asked at the 11th Congress of the Yugoslav C.P.s. "Quality, not quantity" said Carlo Rafael Rodriguez at the Colombo summit and that remains Cuba's line.

US - USSR

Three months after his aggressive Annapolis address, on the eve of the NATO summit in Washington, Mr. Carter has begun to lower his voice. In trouble over domestic issues, as the popularity ratings showed, Mr. Carter's sudden thrust on the foreign policy front appears to have proved so disappointingly fruitless that the phrase "Carter's credibility" still keeps cropping up in editorials and commentaries in the influential 'quality' press in America.

Broadly speaking the Carter initiative had three elements:

(a) The open accusation against Cuba for her 'involvement' in the invasion of Zaire.

(b) A tough posture on US-USSR relations supported by charges over Soviet interference in Africa and an attempted link-up between Salt 2, the so-called human rights issue, Soviet global policy, US-USSR trade etc.

(c) The China card, Dr. Brzezinski's visit to Peking, and China's obliging flanking attack on the USSR and Cuba within the non-aligned Third World.

What prompted Mr. Carter to make this uncharacteristically pugnacious (and perilous) move? The unfavourable opinion polls, the forthcoming mid-term elections, the need to assert himself at least in foreign affairs and erase the growing impression of an untried and weak President, pressures from western allies with large interests in Africa, the frenzied appeals for support from beleaguered allies like Zaire, and the vested interests of the US industrial-military complex in far-reaching arms agreements are the main reasons widely adduced.

Today there is general agreement that the Carter initiative has gained very little and lost much, with his own credibility as the most obvious casualty.

'Well, I'm back from Geneva and I have a message from the Russians'



"Carter's foreign policy attacked under his own roof" ran a front-page headline in *Christian Science Monitor*. The report drew attention not to attacks from 'hawks' in the Democratic fold like Senators 'Scoop' Jackson and Daniel P. Moynihan but from 'doves' in the rival Republican camp, including House Leader John Rhodes.

For the non-aligned the significance of this otherwise purely American or superpower debate was it ran parallel to (and in many ways was reflected within) the controversy that raged inside the non-aligned community in the critical run-up to Belgrade.

Cuba was the focal point of this debate too. A basically pro-western group made Cuba the target of direct attack, and the USSR the superpower enemy outside, with the US and China providing these non-aligned states propagandist cover.

On all fronts, Carter gained nothing.

(a) Castro picked up the gauntlet with righteous rage and relish. "In engaging in a shouting match with Castro and being bested in the match, Mr. Carter's credibility has been tarnished" wrote James Goodsell, a top Latin American affairs specialist. "It

was Carter who got blemished, not Castro"

(b) On the propaganda front, Ambassador Young's bombshell exploded on the White House doorstep. (See "Political Prisoners").

(c) Moscow simply asked Mr. Carter to mind his own business, and went ahead with its own, despite such clumsy pressure moves like halting the sale of a computer to TASS!

(d) On the China card, no final judgment has been reached. It is agreed that it is the only strong card in the American hand at a time when the US is locked in fierce disputes, especially over competitive economic interests, with her own allies, notably Japan, and some western European countries. The majority view among

US analysts is that Mr. Carter over-played this card, played it too crudely or too early.

As a result, criticism of Dr. Brzezinski is even sharper, and sometimes personal. He is being called a second-rate academic, the author of some unreadable books and a Polish emigre with psychological hang-ups and a neo-McCarthyite neurosis. A proponent of widening the US intervention in Vietnam as late as 1968, his intimate connections with Rockefeller, US big business and the Trilateral Commission are being laid bare. The most serious stricture passed on him by US analysts however is that, unlike Dr. Kissinger, he has no conceptual grasp of world politics and is therefore unable to define a realistic role for the US in the pursuit of her interests.

China

Keng Piao's long march

Mr. Keng Piao, the Chinese Vice Premier who visited Pakistan and Sri Lanka in June had a busy schedule in July as the curtain rose on the non-aligned foreign ministers meeting in Belgrade.

In an undisguised attempt to carry its current diplomatic offensive into the camp of 'the enemy' the Chinese leader visited Trinidad, Guyana and Jamaica. Giving extensive coverage to this Caribbean tour by the highest ranking Chinese dignitary to visit the area, the US press reported warmly that it was "aimed at countering growing Soviet and Cuban influence in the region" and at "Cuba's role in the non-aligned movement".

While the Belgrade meeting was coming to a close, Mr. Keng

Piao visited another non-aligned country which is of immense strategic importance to the whole Mediterranean area, Malta. Ivor Tilney of the 'Sunday Times' (London) wrote:

"The island of Malta which will cease to be a British military base next March, has become the target for determined overtures from China. Peking which has given Malta a large "soft-interest" loan is playing it safe by wooing both the government and the opposition parties in an effort to prevent the Maltese forming diplomatic links with the Soviet Union".

While Mr. Keng Piao was in Malta, the leader of the opposition Nationalist Party, was on a two-week visit to China.

Bolivia treading 'Peruvian path'

LA PAZ, Bolivia,

Bolivia may soon learn the lesson that her neighbour to the north, Peru, recently learned — what the banks giveth, the bank can just as easily taketh away.

Like Peru, Bolivia has borrowed billions of dollars over the past seven years from various international banks and lending institutions to finance a host of development projects, such as roads, irrigation systems and the purchase of modern communications equipment.

And like Peru, which recently went through a period of severe political and social unrest when its creditors demanded that it end subsidies on basic foodstuffs and gasoline because it could no longer pay its debts, Bolivia may one day soon find itself at the mercy of the banks and lending institutions to which it now owes \$2.5 billion, \$1.84 billion more than it owed them in 1970.

The foreign debt now stands at about \$500 for each of Bolivia's 5 million people — more than the yearly per capita income of about \$400, which places Bolivia second only to Haiti as the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

U.S. diplomats here are officially optimistic about Bolivia's economic future, although they recently had to readjust their forecasts when it became apparent that Bolivia's trade and balance of

payments position were worsening at an unforeseen and almost alarming rate. "It can be done, Bolivia can continue growing," said one diplomat the other day. "It's just going to be tougher."

And as Peru learned to its dismay earlier this year, a run of bad luck with raw-material export prices or production coupled with an ever increasing debt repayment schedule can quickly bring down the house of cards. The banks are quick to lend money when country's balance-of-trade position is in the black or looks like it will be in the black. They are also just as quick to demand severe and politically dangerous measures when the balance sheet turns red and it begins to look as if a country will not be able to repay its debts.

While Bolivia has not yet reached the point of being unable to repay its loans, most observers believe the government will have to take some unpleasant measures over the next few years — such as dismissing thousands of tin miners, raising the price of gasoline and ending food subsidies — in order to avoid problems with its international creditors.

And there, of course, is the rub. After seven years of authoritarian military rule that produced political stability and economic growth at the expense of union freedom and the give and take of democracy, Bolivia held its first national elections in 12 years and is supposed to return to democratic rule next month.

— (Washington Post)

India under the Janata

by Shelton Kodikara

(Professor of Political Science
at the Sri Lanka University)

The change of government in India following upon the spectacular electoral victory of the Janata Party in March 1977 was expected to involve a shift of emphasis in Indian foreign policy, although the Janata Party Government had made it clear from the outset that no far-reaching changes were contemplated.

Domestic political factors connected with the ideological and organic links between the Communist Party of India and the Soviet Union and the former's unqualified support of the Indira Gandhi regime, including its endorsement of the decision to proclaim emergency rule in mid-1975 had made sections of the Janata Party leadership suspicious of the Soviet connection and of the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 itself. It was therefore believed that Indira's so-called "tilt" towards Moscow would be corrected by the new Moraji Desai regime and that India would henceforth follow a "genuine" non-aligned foreign policy.

Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Minister of External Affairs, addressing the 32nd session of the UN General Assembly on October 4, 1977 declared that the new government took the earliest opportunity on assuming office to declare its resolve not only to continue non-alignment but in fact to restore to the policy its original positive thrust. "It is a matter of some satisfaction that our stress on genuine non-alignment and our decision to pursue the policy with vigour and dynamism has been understood and appreciated in its proper perspective."

However, a more pragmatic approach both to the Soviet connection and to foreign relations generally has come to characterize Indian foreign policy since April 1977 when the visit of Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko,

to New Delhi brought about a new reappraisal of the Indo-Soviet relationship.

The visit was instrumental in restoring to this relationship its earlier cordiality, convergence and cooperation which was based both on the security and economic links which had been built up between the two countries since 1971 and earlier. Soviet contributions to India's recent development of its defence net-work, particularly in the building up of India's Navy has been crucial. Soviet assistance to Indian naval expansion began in the late 1960's, but after 1974 became significant. During the period 1974-1977, for example, India acquired four additional submarines, ten fast-going frigates in addition to several patrol boats with a long-range capability. The Soviet Union's economic assistance to India, which predated the 1971 treaty itself acquired an added importance after 1971. Soviet trade with India registered a four fold increase during the last decade and is expected to increase by 20% this year.

As Moraji Desai pointed out during his visit to Moscow, there are more than fifty important Soviet-assisted projects including the prestigious steel mills at Bokaro, in India. Prime Minister, Moraji Desai's visit to Moscow in October 1977 was itself indicative of the Janata Government's changed attitude to the Soviet Union, considering that his only other foreign visits were to London to attend the Commonwealth Conference in June 1977 and a stop-over in Paris on the way back. On the occasion of this visit, Mr. Desai said "preservation and continuance in today's circumstances of this (Indo-Soviet) relationship is a tribute to the maturity of two proud nations who recognised the imperative of peaceful co-existence".

A further example of the new Indian pragmatism in foreign policy was occasioned by a Chinese goodwill visit to India by a delegation headed by Mr. Wang Pinnam in March this year. The visit was non-official in character; but certainly cleared the ground for resolution of outstanding issues in dispute between the two countries and for formulating concrete proposals with a view to improving bilateral relations between India and China. During the course of his visit, Mr. Wang recalled the observation of Mao Tse-tung in Peking on May 1, 1970 about India being a great country and the inevitability of China and India becoming friends. He expressed confidence that on the basis of the five principles of co-existence and "with patience, mutual accommodations and common understanding all problems can be resolved".

Mr. Desai himself pointed out that India's consistent stand had been that the border question should be solved through bilateral discussion and through peaceful means. Mr. Vajpayee on this occasion accepted in principle an invitation of the Chinese Foreign Minister to visit China.

The fence-mending posture of the Janata government was carried a stage further by the Farakka Accord between India and Bangladesh signed in November 1977, which concluded a long-standing dispute over sharing the waters of the Ganges between the two countries. The dispute over this question between India and Pakistan, which had a 25 year old history, had acquired a new dimension with the birth of Bangladesh as a new international entity. Although the working out of the agreement is likely to involve difficulties between the two coun-

tries, it remains symbolic of a new chapter of bilateral relations and co-operation between the two most populous states in South Asia. The attempt to demarcate an Indo-Bangla maritime boundary, however, has not so far materialised. Demarcation of such a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal has assumed considerable importance in the context of the search for off-shore oil in the region, and renewed attempts are being made by both countries to reach agreement or, at least to narrow down their differences on this issue.

Maritime boundary agreements between India and Sri Lanka demarcating their historic waters in Palk Strait, the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal had already been entered into by the two countries even before the advent of the Janata government, in 1974 and 1976. This government inherited the problem of implementing the Indo-Lanka agreements of 1964 and 1974 as the one outstanding problem between India and Sri Lanka. Here, too, there is evident a tendency on the part of the Indian government to co-operate with its Sri Lanka counterpart headed by Mr. J. R. Jayewardena in a spirit of mutual accommodation. Both Janata and the UNP had, in 1977, shared a common experience in forging impressive electoral victories against governments which had had a relatively long tenure of power, and this perhaps provided a common bond between Morarji Desai and J. R. Jayewardena, which has been buttressed by a declared common endeavour *dharmishta* societies in their respective countries.

In February 1978, India signed five agreements with Vietnam providing for co-operation between the two countries in diverse fields including trade, agriculture, science and technology and cultural exchanges.

In its nuclear policy, Prime Minister Morarji Desai has reiterated the stand of previous Indian governments in desisting from signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, without guarantees regarding the manufacture of new nuclear weapons and a phased reduction and eventual elimination of the existing stockpiles of the two super powers. Desai, however, has gone a step further by giving a categorical guarantee that India would refrain from further nuclear tests even for peaceful purposes.

Of all India's neighbours, Pakistan perhaps remains the one country where mutually hostile feelings have not abated to any significant extent. Even so, contemporary Indian foreign policy displays elements of continuity more than of change from the policy of the Indira era, and can be held up as upholding a virile tradition of non-alignment. As Vajpayee put it at the UN:

'Many political changes have taken place in the last one year in South Asia. Even so, it is a tribute to the people that the area is today freer of tension than it has been for decades.'

Non-alignment is 'anti-bloc' – Tito

By its nature, the policy of non-alignment is directed against imperialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all other forms of foreign domination and exploitation. It is directed against the policy of force, against political and economic hegemony, and against all forms of foreign interference and dependence.

This all makes the movement of non-alignment anti-bloc in its commitment. Our movement does not see the world's future in a balance of forces between the blocs or in one bloc prevailing over the other to stand supreme. Attainment of the goals to which we aspire means our constant endeavour to transcend a bloc-divided world, to build up the elements in world relations conducive to peace, security and general social progress. This has given the non-aligned movement its independence and unity and made it an independent factor in world affairs, and it must remain so.

The non-aligned movement has worked and works for active peaceful coexistence, which means a constant struggle for peace and equality in the world and against the imposition by others of their social-political systems or ideologies.

As a result, the non-aligned countries have from the very start been a great moral force, and today are a real political force in changing the old and establishing new, democratic relations in the world.

We can assert here, with the deepest conviction, that all the summit conferences to date of the non-aligned countries have mar-

ked significant steps to these ends. And I want especially to emphasize that non-alignment, in this last period, that is, since the conference in Colombo up to today, has experienced further, important affirmation and achieved new important results. Permit me to cite a few examples in illustration.

Our policy has constantly been a positive factor in overcoming the cold war, it was decisive in getting detente underway and is persevering in working for its universality. It has contributed, thereby to creating the general conditions for strengthening peace and security, for relations of equality and for general progress.

By our activity, we have built awareness in the international community of the need to open ways towards new, more just, international relations. Our final goal is, of course, establishment of the new international economic order. Whatever the difficulties along the way, we must not be deterred from this. The existing inequitable relations are a constant source of deep contradictions and dangerous conflicts in the modern world.

The non-aligned countries can allow nobody to bring into question the solidarity of the movement or blunt the edge of its fundamental commitments and action unity. They can allow nobody to dilute the policy of non-alignment or reduce the intensity of our solidarity with peoples fighting for their independence, freedom and free choice of the roads of their own development. All sectarianism is alien to non-alignment, divisions based on ideological, religious or

other criteria and motives are impermissible, regardless of the slogans behind which they hide.

Various pressures are being stepped up against the unity of the non-aligned. We are witnesses to attempts to establish in vitally important regions of the non-aligned world, above all in Africa, new forms for a colonial presence and new forms of bloc dependence, foreign interference and domination. We must stand united in resisting such attempts. The very essence of non-alignment, of the interests of us all together and each country separately demands this of us.

All of this heightens the need to transcend within non-aligned ranks conduct and disagreements which are greatly to the detriment of these countries, as they are also to the movement as a whole. I am convinced that this is possible, and it is indispensable. Individual national interests and the problems handed down by colonialism cannot be allowed to lead to conflicts. There must be a democratic appreciation for differences in approach amongst us, however serious these may be and if problems and disputes cannot always be avoided, they can and must be settled peacefully by joint efforts.

Even more than for others, for a movement working as is the movement of non-alignment, for democratic relations worldwide, respect is indicated for democratic rules of conduct in relation with itself, we must be conscious of the danger of imposing narrow self-interests, which is conducive to undermining the solidarity and force of our movement.

(Text of speech to the Foreign Ministers of the Non-aligned Conference — Belgrade)

'Neutrality is impossible ...'

— Castro

Even though we don't like to be the ones to speak of the irrep- roachable way in which the Cuban Revolution has fulfilled its interna- tional duty, it should be recalled that our military cooperation with Angola and Ethiopia was not something new. Cuban soldiers went to the sister republic of Algeria in 1963 to support it against foreign aggression when, in the months following the victory of its heroic struggle for independence, attempts were made to grab a part of its territory. Cuban soldiers went to Syria in 1973 when that country requested our help right after the last war waged against the Zionist aggres- sors. Cuban fighters fought and died to help free Guinea - Bissau and Angola from Portuguese colonialism. It is no secret that worthy comrades from our guerrilla struggle in the Sierra Maestra died with Che in Bolivia.

The Yankee imperialists practice solidarity with the reaction, the bourgeoisie and fascism. Hundreds of thousands of US soldiers and military specialists are in Western Europe, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, South Korea, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and scores of other countries. Why is it that imperialists are allowed to cooperate among themselves but revolutionaries aren't?

Our military specialists in Africa and other parts of the world have been requested by sovereign governments. The United States, however, has tens of thousands of soldiers in Panama against the will of that people. The United States has thousands of sailors stationed in a part of Cuba's national territory against the will of our homeland. What right does the United States have to demand the withdrawal of our military personnel from Africa, when they are there at the express wish of completely independent

progressive and revolutionary governments?

Sooner or later, the hard- working, militant, self-sacrificing, heroic and revolutionary Chinese people will settle accounts with the traitors who have dropped their beautiful internationalist banners at the feet of imperialism.

There are two paths in the world: that of reaction and that of progress. A choice must be made; neutrality is impossible.

It is impossible to be neutral concerning the Arab peoples' struggle to recover their occupied territory and to have the rights of the Palestinian people recog- nized; it is impossible to be neutral in the struggles between the peoples of Africa and their neocolonizers, between Angola and its invaders, between the Saharan people in defense of their rights and the occupiers of their territory, between the Ethiopian revolution and the Somalian aggressors, between the Yemeni revolution and the Arab reaction, between the progressive Arab countries and the reactionary Arab countries, between Vietnam and those who threaten and harass it, between the South African racists and the African people of South Africa, between the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe and Ian Smith, between Mozambique and the Rhodesian and South African fascists, between Namibia and its colonizers, between the people of Cyprus and the foreign occupiers, between the progressive forces and the rightist forces of Lebanon and between Allende and Pinochet; it is impos- sible to be neutral on such questions as Panama's sovereignty over the Canal, the right of the peoples of Belize and Puerto Rico to independence and the blockade of Cuba and the Yankee naval



base at Guantanamo; it is impos- sible to be neutral concerning imperialism, colonialism, neocolo- nialism, racism, fascism and any of the situations that come up in the political, economic and social struggle between the reactionary forces and the progressive forces of the world.

According to news reports coming from the United States, the government of that country has approached 15 nonaligned countries, asking them to contest Cuba's role in that Movement. However, the Movement of Non- Aligned Countries is not the OAS, the Ministry of Colonies in which imperialism, as the ruler of this hemisphere, makes all the deci- sions. It would be good to know which 15 foreign ministries the United States contacted and what their replies have been.

Since when does the United States have the right to advise and orient the non-aligned? Which are the shameless govern- ments that lend themselves to this?

We have always thought that the Non-Aligned Movement—which Cuba, along with Nasser, Nehru, Nkrumah and other leaders, many of whom are, unfortunately, dead, helped to found—should be characterized by quality rather than quantity. We have always opposed and will continue to oppose having countries that belong to military pacts participate in this Movement. We have also opposed and will continue to oppose having fascist, reactionary governments, pawns of imperialism, introduced as Trojan horses in the heart of that force. We have always thought and will continue to think that the Non-Aligned Movement should not be an amorphous, opportunistic, weak-kneed current but should be an anti-imperialist, anticolonialist and progressive force that can influence world policy. It was created with this spirit, and it cannot be conceived of in any other way.

Cuba is a non-aligned country because it does not belong to any military pact, but it is decidedly against the reaction, imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, fascism, racism, Zionism, unequal trade relations and the exploitation of the underdeveloped countries. Cuba resolutely supports the liberation movements, the just causes and the progressive forces of the whole world, essential objectives for which the Non-Aligned Movement was created.

Why is the United States so interested now in the 6th Summit, to be held in Havana? Why is it trying to sabotage it? Who is going along with this manoeuvre? What objectives do they seek in our Movement? It is clear that the United States, the traitors, the opportunists, the neocolonizers, the fence-sitters and those whose principles are negotiable are worried by the militant, firm, staunch and honest role of Cuba.

There are governments that sell out, but the Government of Cuba can never be bribed. The United States knows this.

We will make no concessions; we will not betray our internationalist principles; we will never bend to the exigencies and blackmail of imperialism. We do not pursue chauvinistic interests. We do not negotiate our international policy. We are ready to resist the imperialist blockade selflessly and with dignity for as many years as it may be necessary. Others may give way, accept bribes and engage in betrayal, but Cuba will continue to set an example as a revolution that does not surrender, does not sell out and does not go on its knees.

In the epoch in which we live, mankind as a whole has no middle way between war and peace; peace and civilized, peaceful coexistence between different social regimes are the wisest and only real way out. Meanwhile, every people must determine its economic and social destiny for itself, without any interference, and this must necessarily be that of progress, that of a just world of solidarity—as Marx and Engels said—rather than a dog-eat-dog society.

The forces of socialism and of peace are strong enough now to keep imperialism from imposing its policy of hegemony, war and regression in the world. These forces, including our beloved sister, the glorious homeland of Lenin, constitute a very strong, invincible curb to the appetites, adventures and excesses of the reaction in the present stage. These forces keep Asia, Africa and Latin America and their natural resources from being once more carved up and colonized by the imperialists.

Mankind will not go back to the past; peace will be preserved; the peoples will advance along the paths of progress, and nothing and nobody can prevent this.

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*Patria o Muerte!
Venceremos!*

(Speech delivered at the 26th anniversary of Moncada)

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FTZ: Getting off the ground

Although free ports have been in existence for a long time, the free trade zone is a new concept, the first such zone being set up in Shannon, Ireland, in 1958. The first Asian FTZ was the Kaohsiung Zone in Taiwan, begun in 1965. Since then zones have begun in South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Asian countries have set up FTZs in order to acquire foreign exchange through exports, create new jobs and obtain technology. Developing countries like Sri Lanka set up industries in the early sixties to promote import substitution. But internal poverty restricted the market that such industrialization needed. Further, dependence on imported machinery and materials created new balance of payment problems, and revealed that import-substitution did not automatically result in an independent development of national industry.

In the early seventies countries like Sri Lanka shifted to export-oriented industrialisation in order to contain these problems. Lacking capital, technology and access to markets the tendency was to look for foreign investment. The White Paper of 1972 and the Foreign Investment Guarantee Law of 1975 have now culminated in the Greater Colombo Economic Commission set up earlier this year. Within the GCEC we have the first two Export processing zones at Katunayake and at Biyagama.

The Katunayake Zone is under development. Around twenty projects have been approved by the Government, half a dozen of which have been signed up. The Katunayake Zone covering 600 acres is large—so large that the security problem is obvious. Products from within the Zone could be smuggled into the rest of the country.

A curious feature of our Zone is that the GCEC plans to allow manufacturers upto 50 percent exports into the national market. This would be a severe blow to the avowed objective of earning of foreign exchange from the Zone. Such exports are not encouraged in other Zones.

There has been an obvious 'over sell' of the 'Zone' idea. The FTZ has been held up as the panacea for all our ills. Particularly towards solving the employment problem. Yet the most successful Asian zone, the Kaohsiung Export Processing Zone in Taiwan provides only 42,000 jobs—and this after ten years. In an effort to make their projects attractive, foreign investors coming before the GCEC are inflating the employment potential of their plants.

The investors for their part are expressing anxiety about the suggestion that they recruit from the job-banks. It also appears that the GCEC is short of funds to clear the land in the EPZ and set up the infrastructure. Upto now the most exciting thing happening in the EPZ is the manual felling of coconut trees.

There has been a lot of foot-dragging in the launching of the EPZ. Infrastructural equipment, like communication equipment, is only now being ordered. This brings us to the question of planning and operating the zone.

Sri Lanka's EPZ is headed by businessmen, doctors and lawyers. The wisdom of giving businessmen key posts in the GCEC is questioned by those who see possibilities of conflicts of interests. And there are several businessmen at the helm. Further, the efficacy of having non-payment administrators is doubtful.

Even Dr. Viswalingan, who has been brought in to co-ordinate

the infrastructure, is only a consultant. An engineer draws around Rs. 150 per hour. Dr. Seevali Ratwatte is a permanent official.

Given the poor organisation, the Zone Administration is failing to attract people of high calibre. One Central Bank expert reverted back to his old post after one frustrating month at the GCEC. The bulk of the work has therefore fallen on young, inexperienced officers.

As a result, no proper project evaluation is being done. No preference is being given to industries that use local raw materials. Our industries at the present only absorb 7,000 tons of rubber—200,000 tons being exported. Yet no effort is being made to set up rubber based industries.

What is forgotten is that unlike Singapore or Hong Kong, which can only be pure service facilities, Sri Lanka is rich in natural resources. Little attempt is being made to harness these resources.

Projects that are up for consideration concentrate on recouping their investment in two or three years. Further investment would be dependent on the suitability of the facilities provided. If Sri Lanka does not provide efficient and adequate infrastructure services, investors will pull out at the earliest date, thus leaving employees and related industries in the lurch.

The London *Financial Times* has already voiced its reservations about the way the GCEC is getting about the setting up of zones. There is much that needs redress, if one accepts the premise that the pattern of growth generated by an EPZ is the kind of development that Sri Lanka needs.

— J. S.

Roadblocks to agriculture

by Ranjit Mulleriyawa

Increasing domestic food production and achieving selfsufficiency in food have been the avowed objectives of every government formed in Sri Lanka during the past thirty years. Nevertheless, despite considerable effort and enormous sums of money ploughed into various 'grow more food' campaigns, very little progress appears to have been made in this nation's effort to feed itself. Not even the technological innovations spawned by the 'green revolution' of the mid-1960s seem to have made any significant impact on our search for self sufficiency in food. This is clearly borne out by the fact that despite an 'exceptionally good' rice harvest during 'maha' 1977-78, Sri Lanka's average rice yield continued to be a meagre 55 bushels per acre.

In an effort to collect authentic information of factors limiting food production in this country, the writer and his wife spent ten years living and working among the peasant farmers of our dry zone colonization schemes. In a further bid to experience reality, they decided to become farmers themselves cultivating a five acre plot of land with a variety of crops—rice, corn, sorghum, soyabean, chilli, onion, cowpea, green gram and black gram. This article attempts to spotlight some of the major constraints to increasing domestic food production as seen from a grass roots level.

Inconsistent policies: Inconsistent agricultural policy has been a major factor stifling food production in our country. A case in point is the present government's decision to lift the ban on the importation of subsidiary food crops. In an effort to stimulate local production of chillies, onions and pulses, the previous govern-



Soyabeans grown successfully in a paddy field in the Anuradhapura district. Marketing is the problem.

ment imposed a ban on importing these products. Encouraged by attractive prices, local production of subsidiary food crops registered a significant increase. Subsequent political changes resulted in an about turn in agricultural policy with a resultant serious set back to the cultivation of these crops.

Another good example of unsound agricultural policy is the previous government's decision to flood the market with imported (PL 480) wheat flour just when local farmers who had responded to the government's call to grow manioc and bataala as substitutes for rice and flour were about to reap their harvests and profit by attractive market prices. The manioc and bataala market crashed almost overnight leaving many

local farmers distraught and penniless. Today hardly anyone grows manioc and bataala on a commercial scale!

Unrealistic planning: One of the greatest tragedies of this country is the tendency on the part of many of its agricultural planners and policy makers to be completely alienated from the mainstream of life in the country—the rural masses who constitute our farming population. As such, many of the high powered plans and programs for rural upliftment drawn up in the air conditioned offices of Colombo have very little relevance to the solution of real problems at grass root level.

Real understanding of rural problems can only be accomplished

by living among the rural masses and carefully observing their trials and tribulations throughout at least one cropping season.

Farmer training: Inadequate farmer training is a major obstacle to agricultural progress. Since this nation's effort to increase food production has been traditionally relegated to the relatively illiterate peasantry, a vigorous farmer education program is an urgent necessity.

A significant breakthrough in our agricultural production can only be accomplished by diligent application of the principles of scientific agriculture. The highest priority must therefore be given to expanding the present agricultural extension service as well as improving the quality and outlook of some of our extension workers.

Inputs: Non availability of essential inputs (seed, fertilizer, agro-chemicals etc.) in sufficient quantity when required often act as a major constraint in the battle to increase food production. This is also frequently the major factor limiting effective utilization of agricultural credit. Every effort must be made to provide farmers with the entire package of essential inputs when they are given their cultivation loans. Printed instructions detailing suitable cultural practices and proper use of agro-chemicals may also be included in this package of inputs.

Marketing: Poor facilities for the marketing of farm produce are the bane of the Sri Lankan

farmer. Paddy is the only agricultural commodity which can be sold fairly easily at a realistic price. The farmer is mercilessly exploited by the trader in the marketing of all other agricultural produce. (In mid July this year the Rajarata farmers were paid only four rupees for a pound of dried chilli and Rs. 1.50 per pound of cowpea while the trader sold the same produce to the consumer at twice the purchase price!)

Government institutions entrusted with the task of purchasing commodities other than paddy function in an ad hoc manner. A case in point is the Paddy Marketing Board's decision to suddenly stop purchasing soyabean and black gram in mid June this year. No one seemed to consider it necessary to make alternate arrangements for marketing these legumes! Neither did the P. M. B. extend the elementary courtesy of informing the public about when they expected to resume purchasing these commodities.

Mechanization: The only aspect of farm mechanization that has received any attention in recent years has been the provision of tractors. It is very essential that adequate attention be also given to other aspects of mechanization such as the provision of grain processing machinery and seeding equipment.

All over the dry zone farmers are finding it extremely difficult to obtain sufficient labour—particularly during the harvest. Mechanization seems to be the

only way out for most of these farmers.

The Mahaveli Development Board in particular would do well to give the highest priority to mechanizing the paddy harvest. Failure to give adequate attention to this facet of agricultural production would soon result in rice farmers being faced with the dilemma of having a maturing crop in the field and still be unable to process it due to insufficient labour.

Due to the antiquated methods of grain processing still in vogue in our country, many farmers lose 10-15 per cent of their rice harvest. (Shattering and threshing floor losses) When rains occur during harvest, grain losses may be as high as 30 - 50 cent! Small machines such as paddy reapers, threshers, and grain driers would go a long way in reducing this unnecessary waste besides helping to provide a cleaner and superior grade of rice to the consumer.

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Pathiraja, politics and cinema

by Reggie Siriwardena

It is just over four years since Dharmasena Pathiraja made his first impact on the Sinhala cinema with *Ahas Gawwa*. Since that time he has completed four other films, the newest to reach the screen being *Bambaru Avith*, now running in the cinemas. In *Ahas Gawwa* Pathiraja showed himself to be a film-maker of strikingly fresh and original talent, with a genuine feeling for the medium that was not obscured by the inevitable technical roughnesses of a first film. But what most attracted the attention of younger filmgoers and critics to the film was that it brought into the Sinhala cinema a theme: and an experience that had hitherto not been touched in it.

Ahas Gawwa explored the lives of lower middle-class urban youth; unemployed, alienated from their family life and seeking a direction and purpose. It was right to recognise in the film's experience the voice of a new generation. But in critical interpretation the ending perhaps got more emphasis than it should have. Pathiraja left his central character marching and cheering in a May Day procession. The way in which he came to be there did not suggest that the director was offering this as a deeply considered political commitment. But critics who had been talking of the need for 'committed cinema' were all too ready to fit Pathiraja to this image, and perhaps some of his own statements at that time may have lent themselves to it.

The films themselves do not in fact bear out this view. What they do show, with one exception, is his concern to explore and illuminate contemporary social relationships. The exception was *Eyaden Loku Lamayek*, which seems to me a conscious compromise with the box-office—when one has

praised Malini Fonseka's performance in it, one has virtually exhausted its virtues. But the Tamil language film, *Ponmani*, though not, I think, cinematically realised (except in a few striking scenes) was, in conception, a bold and searching examination of dowry and marriage in Jaffna society. *Para Digey* (which audiences won't see for quite some time) is about a young man trying to raise the money for his girl-friend to have an abortion. Only in *Bambaru Avith* is there an explicit reference to political ideas, but neither in this film nor elsewhere in his work is Pathiraja a film-maker concerned to offer political solutions to social problems.

In a radio interview last month, Pathiraja answered a question I asked him on this point by saying that it was not the task of the film-maker to offer solutions but to awaken the audience to an awareness of social realities they had ignored. When the audience has made this discovery, he suggested, they will decide for themselves how they should act. Pathiraja's explanation of his purpose as an artist (which one could have inferred from the films themselves) reminded me of the statement of a 19th-century writer who said, in connection with the novel, that 'the more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art,' and that 'the author is not obliged to serve the reader on a platter the future historical resolution of the social conflicts which he describes.' The writer was Friedrich Engels, whom no one will suppose to have been indifferent to the social functions of art. This view is in marked contrast with that of some 'Marxist' critics who value literature or the cinema only so far as it is a vehicle for an overt political message.

Bambaru Avith, which was directed by Pathiraja from his own story and script, is set in a fishing village, and was shot on location in Kalpitiya. The wasps who have come—in the words of the title—are a young man, Victor, and his friends from the city, who arrive in a jeep to muscle in on the fishing trade in the village. Although Victor has been brought up in the city, he is actually the son of a mudalali who dominated the village fishing business, until he grew old and ill and had to retire. In his absence a new boss has grown up—Anthony—who has risen from the ranks of the fisherman to become a mudalali. With Victor's arrival, there develops a conflict between him and Anthony—a conflict which represents a clash between an old-style patriarchal exploiter who is part of the village and the new, more impersonal money-power that Victor embodies. Into this conflict, which is both personal and social, the whole village is drawn until there is a violent denouement.

In *Bambaru Avith* Pathiraja shows a maturity as film-maker and a control over his medium beyond anything in his previous films. *Bambaru Avith* has a tense power, enhanced by its vigorous and salty dialogue, the strength of the playing (especially Joe Abeywickrema's dominating performance as Anthony). Premasiri Khemadasa's very imaginative score (the three background lyrics are a new departure in Sinhala film-music), and the brilliance with which Donald

Karunaratne's camera has captured the sun-baked landscapes and faces in the film. But it is the social content of the film that has provoked most discussion and argument since last month's preview, and it is likely to trigger open critical controversy by the time this article appears in print.

There are two questions that I have heard raised in private discussion about the film over the last few weeks. One: Does Pathiraja reject the ideas of socialism in the person of the character played by Wimal Kumar de Costa, the young pseudo-intellectual who talks left-wing phrases? Two: Is the ending without hope?

The first observation I want to make about these questions is that one doesn't really need Costa's speech in the market-place to realise the fact of exploitation in the village, either before or after Victor's arrival. The words only give imperfect theoretical expression to the living reality that one sees brought out in the actual social human relationships in the film. The speech throws more light on Costa himself than on the social realities of the village.

In Cos'a's role Pathiraja suggests both a contradiction between beliefs and living, as well as a failure to reach the people he wants to communicate with. That failure is the result both of the contradiction in his own personality and of the abstractness of his theorising. Hence his total isolation by the end of the film.

As for the view that the ending is defeatist, I think one is back here to the question whether art should portray reality as it is or as one would wish it to be. The gulf in communication between the alienated left-wing intellectual and the village fisherman is part of the reality that the film-maker sees. Within that situation and within the community that the

film portrays, it would be unreal to smuggle in a hopeful resolution. No more than the novelist is the film-maker 'obliged to serve on a platter the future historical resolution of the social conflicts which he describes'.

While I don't mistake or fault Pathiraja's intentions here, I think both he and the actor have been led into error in guying Costa's role over-much, and this part of the problem of the ending in its impact on the audience. There is,

it seems to me, a certain shift in Costa's attitudes at this point: his anger over the death of Francis, Victor's servant, is real, and he stands apart from his friends at the end. This makes him a more sympathetic and somewhat more serious figure (there is both dignity and pathos in his lonely departure), but if the audience has by then been induced to treat him as a 'funny man', they may find it difficult to see him in any other light.



"Mr. Nixon's book is at the other end of the store."

What ails Sinhala film ?

by H. A. Seneviratne

The Sinhala film is faced with a crisis. It is a crisis of quality and content that has not grown very much with the maturity of the film-goer. The local film-goer has by and large matured not so much by seeing great Sinhala films but by getting bored with the rush of low quality ones with hacked themes and distorted views of life. He has also matured due to secondary and higher education coupled with the day to day experiences of distress and suffering, both economic and social. Naturally, the money bags in the film industry are woefully lacking in intellectual acumen to grasp this phenomenon. What is more important is that we still lack outstanding film directors who understand life both in general and in a particular social matrix.

The result is most pathetic. We are presented with two types of films in general. The usual type is the one with a superficial touch of modernity but essentially retaining the ingredients of the age old easy and cheap formula of love, fights, songs, dances, hero, girl, villain etc. The other is the one which purports to give us a "slice of life" as it were, but in fact giving nothing more than a half-baked slice which sometimes leads to various internal irritations: This half-baked slice is of course nicely wrapped to please the eye. In short this second type of film which is often highly commended by half-baked critics, contain jump-cuts, flash-backs, cross-cuts zooms, close-ups fade-ins, fade-outs and a multitude of other technicalities of form but are barren in content.

This is broadly the position of the Sinhala cinema today as the State Film Corporation is planning apparently to increase charges from film-goers, according to a statement made by the Chairman of the Corporation (now resigned) Upasena Marasinghe. (see 'Desatiya', published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 30-5-78 —

This article is an attempt to discuss the main legal and institutional barriers that prevent even the present handful of film directors and script writers in particular, from reaching maturity. A Sinhala film maker has summarised the legal obstacle personified in the Censor Board, in the following terms:

"Our greatest obstacle is the Censor Board. The Censor Board has taken our intelligence and thoughts into custody. We like to create something new and different. We remain silent since we suspect that the Censor Board will either 'ban' or 'censor' it. (Translated from 'Desatiya' of 30-5-78.)

The gravity of this indictment can be ascertained by a cursory glance at the Public Performances Ordinance which provides for the setting up of "Certifying authorities", commonly referred to as censor boards. Section 6 of the Public Performances Ordinance gives the "certifying authority" the discretion to grant or refuse a certificate without which a film, or for that matter any public performance, cannot be "exhibited or presented... to the public in any premises, whether public or private". In the case of any refusal to grant a certificate the only redress the aggrieved party has is to appeal to the Minister, whose decision "shall be final and conclusive." Apart from the lack of any legal remedy in this case, the Public Performances (Amendment) Act No. 11 of 1969 has made it an offence liable to "a fine not exceeding one thousand rupees or to imprisonment of either description for any period not exceeding six months", if any person publishes in any way any reference to an order of the certifying authority! This completely shuts out proper discussion or the formation of proper public opinion through publication of criticism of a decision of a censor board. This is a drastic curtailment of the democratic right to criticise, in this case — the activities of the Censor Board. The film-

maker is rendered helpless against this formidable obstacle. The script writer's freedom of thought is thwarted even before he takes up his pen to write.

This brings us to the question of script writing which is the foundation for the creation of any good film.

The ex-Chairman of the State Film Corporation stating the policy of the Corporation had this to say on this matter:

"It is our objective to assist, through the film medium, the march towards the 'free and righteous society' that the President has promised. We will not allow the production of films that are contrary to this aim. We especially act very strongly against films that depict sex and violence. We have appointed a special board for the purpose of approving film scripts". ('Desatiya' 30-5-78)

One can just imagine what type of film scripts will come up under these arbitrary "guide lines" set out by the State Film Corporation, which has full control over all aspects of the film industry in this country. There is hardly any option for any ordinary script writer but to fall in line with the "guide lines" of the political party in power. The result of this can be disastrous for the Sinhala film industry itself in that percentage of Sinhala film-goers may not be so lucrative in the future if these "guide lines" are to be followed.

The State Film Corporation also has a separate institution called the "Film Script Bank", sometimes literally bank scripts in cold storage. I can speak with personal knowledge about a script (written by me) duly presented six months ago but still remaining to be decided upon by the so-called special board for the purpose of approving film scripts. We even

do not know who these gentlemen called upon to preside over the future of works of art in the film medium are.

The Corporation wants to assist in the march towards a free and righteous society! It looks as if it wants to do it—of course under the directions of the government—by methods which are the very opposite of freedom and righteousness. The Public Performances Ordinance which remains unaltered and the State Film Corporation which remains apparently undaunted betrays signs of fear of other people's freedom and righteousness.

The impossibility for scripts of a high aesthetic value to emerge if script writers stick to the narrow thinking of the State Film Corporation is quite obvious. A script of high aesthetic value will definitely have to go beyond and even be critical of the government's concept of freedom and righteousness since a real work of art will have to derive its raw material and inspiration from the existing social reality. After all, if the government is sure of its righteousness, why should it be afraid of the artistic truth? But under the present set up such a film script can be just rejected by the film script board, and that's the end of it. Even if such a film script gets the approval of the film script board by sheer dint of artistic merit, there is the Censor Board at the other end to do the needful. And the law assures that there is no public campaign against the decision of the Censor Board. So the people have been shut out from being the final judge.

It is time for intelligent and right thinking people interested in the film art and industry to seriously consider whether or not the censor board and the State Film Corporation have become obstacles to the development of a genuine cinema. It is high time to start a serious discussion on this matter as a first step towards taking positive steps to assist in the development of such a cinema.

Press opinion



A question about the Flour Mill

Several responsible Ministers have said at different times that the price of flour was raised to discourage the consumption of wheat flour and encourage the eating of rice flour foods. If this was the policy of the government what we wish to know is how the government came to sign an agreement to set up a flour mill. Did it forget this fact when it signed the agreement or did it adopt the policy only after the mill was set up? By next year the country will be self-sufficient in rice, say some of the government supporters; definitely so, thinks the government, by the end of its term. In that case why did the government enter into a twenty year agreement to set up the flour mill? And why did it ignore the criticisms levelled against this deal and rush to sign the agreement even after the defects in this proposal were pointed out before the agreement was signed? Was it because somebody was in a hurry to pocket the commission? Whatever the reason, hasn't the whole country now to suffer this loss?



Why not control the police?

Conditions have been created for law abiding citizens to live without fear, says the President and requests the public to let either the MP of the area or

the President himself know if the police harass any member of the public. When the President made this announcement two men taken into police custody had died. After the last July election the situation that prevailed in the country was so dreadful that people were wondering whether it was the police, hand in hand with same lawless group, that had come to power. Although the President wants the public to let him know of police harassments, the question has to be asked what he was doing when the Leader of the Opposition was being harassed by the police. In these circumstances to say that conditions have been created for law abiding citizens to live without fear is a joke.



No reply, only a wail

The President has not succeeded in replying to any of the significant points raised by Mrs. Bandaranaike in her speech made in the National Assembly. In our opinion there were two obligations he should have fulfilled when he addressed the UNP's Executive Council. One is that he should have attempted to meet the objections raised against those clauses in the Constitutional Bill that have incurred the displeasure and criticism of the public. The second is that he should have replied to the points made in parliament by Mrs. Bandaranaike. Instead of these he has merely raised a wail—the UNP's panacea from the day it came to power—against Mrs. Bandaranaike's rule. The government party MPs, too, instead of replying to Mrs. Bandaranaike have repeated the same old wail.

The Asian approach

Mr. Amunugama: Reading Martin Wickremasinghe, you find a sort of central theme in the reservoir or the water tank and the "dagoba"—the religious edifice. In some of his books like "Sinhala Lakuna" and "Kalu Nikaseveema" he describes this point of view.

Do you like to comment on your reading of Martin Wickremasinghe's philosophy?

Dr. Needham: Well, I am in a difficulty there because unfortunately I don't read Sanskrit or Pali or Sinhalese. So I have been only able to read what was published of him in English and I certainly do hope that for example his novels, his trilogy will be translated into English in the near future so that it can be available as World Literature to readers all over the world. As long as it stays in Sinhala, then it is obviously restricted in its readership. So I am in a difficult position about him and my relation with him is better described in terms of personal friendship and personal discussion because I found when I got to know him, and was honoured by his friendship, that he was really a kindred spirit. He was interested in comparative religion, comparative theology and philosophy, the history of science and technology and the history of literature because he had this remarkable faculty of interpreting the great Russians like Dostoevsky Tolstoy, Turgenev, Gogol and so on in terms of ideas originating in Asia.

In a way it is a great pity that there hasn't been more studies of Western writers from the Asian point of view. I can think of only a small number besides Martin Wickremasinghe. There was also Jasin Tan who still holds a lectureship in Cambridge. He made a remarkable study from the Chinese angle of Edmund Spenser's "Fairy Queen" in which

The second part of a radio interview with Dr. Joseph Needham. The interviewer was Mr. Sarath Amunugama, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. (The first part appeared in our issue No. 6 of July 15)

he discussed all sorts of important concepts like guilt and sin and such ideas from a Chinese angle. And recently I read another interesting book by a Chinese Jesuit in which he thoroughly dissects the ideas of John Henry Newman, again from the Chinese angle, because he is extremely Chinese although he is a priest. So it would be interesting if Martin Wickremasinghe's writings could all be published in an international language so that they would be available to people all over the world. I wish very much if more Asian scholars would approach Western writings in the way they ought to be approached, namely as one possible way of understanding the Universe or one possible contribution of a culture among other cultures instead of with all those pretensions towards universality and unique validity and so on which have spoilt European culture so much.

Mr. Amunugama: In Sri Lanka Chinese philosophy has been more or less identified with Confucius' thoughts and during the last few years we've had news that this has been subjected to severe criticism. Later on we had news that perhaps the criticism was not so severe.

Would you like to describe the role of Confucius in the Chinese intellectual tradition and the present vicissitudes of Confucius' thoughts in China?

Dr. Needham: Why, I can say something about that, of course. Confucius must always be taken as a historical figure in the setting of time in which he lived which, after all was round about 500

B. C. Nevertheless, it is the case I would certainly say that somebody else's thoughts are a great deal more important for China of the present day than Confucius' and I am sure everybody knows whom I am referring to. Well, in recent years especially when Mao Tse-tung was getting very old there were influences at work in China which were very unfortunate—I would also say dangerous particularly the so-called Gang of Four which I will refer to as the G4, because in the first place I don't like Communist jargon and in the second place you need an abbreviation. So during the dominance of the G4 there was very serious interference with historical research, with science and consequently with all technology and everything had to do with production and the technological aspects of production. In fact people in China recently, because I have been there during the past four and a half weeks, don't hesitate to say that if the actions of the G4 had not been curtailed, it would have brought the country to the verge of economic collapse. Now what could this possibly mean? I would say that their ideology, was a kind of heresy of Mao's ideology.

I talk like this because I am a Western Christian and I knew something about the history of the Christian Church and while in Buddhism the concept of heresy really has never played any great part, it has played a big part in the history of the Church in the West and there were many occasions when it was very dangerous and one that comes to my mind is the *Cultus Ignoranti*—the Cult

of Ignorance which you get in St. Bernard d' Clare Verve and other important Christian thinkers throughout the Ages. Now this Cult of Ignorance is a very dangerous thing because it amounts to saying that as long as your opinions are right about the exact relation of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity or something, so it doesn't matter what else you do, in a sense that you don't need to learn anything or study anything or be expert in anything—all that doesn't matter at all, it's better not to know too much about nature, or make experiments or anything like that, all this is a waste of time.

Believe it or not this attitude was precisely that of the G4 and they mounted an attack really on all intellectuals and scientists and technologists in particular. It wasn't, of course, the Three Persons in the Holy Trinity that they were interested in being orthodox. On the contrary it was the class struggle, but if you take the line that an orthodox attitude to the class struggle is the only thing that matters and that you don't need scientists and technologists and scholars, and if you take the line that it is necessary only to be red and not red and expert, then you are heading straight for disaster—catastrophe. And this is what they just averted. Now at the present time there is a very optimistic atmosphere in China.

People talk freely about a spring-time of Science; they even talk about a new long march. Science has been liberated as we see in the Science Policy Conference which took place last April when they were given guidelines for an enormous development of Science and Technology in Chinese culture. I think it is rather important to get this straight because unless one has a background of the G4 properly one can't understand the Science Policy Conference. Nevertheless it has given the keynotes for the future and I have no doubt that there will be enormous advances. After all when you come to think of it you've got 800 million people with an amazing reserve of talent. It is a question of getting it out, getting

it taught, putting ideas in its head and that talent will certainly come out, whether it is in space physics or in computing mathematics, or whatever you like to say. The Chinese people have an enormous reserve. So that I think it is very fortunate for the future as a whole that this heresy has been dealt with as far as it has been in recent times.

Of course, that was not the main thing we studied in China when we were there—we were interested in all kinds of archaeological things and in modern things too like for instance, factories making traditional Chinese drugs on the one hand or on the other hand the latest results of the biochemists and physiologists in Shanghai. And linking up with what Sarath Amunugama was saying a few minutes ago, we had a wonderful visit to the Lin Chi—translated it means the “magic canal”. It was the first contour canal in any civilization. It was built by an engineer called Shu Lu in 213 B. C. and what he did was to unite the waters of a northward flowing river by a canal about 25 miles long snaking through the hills with the waters of a southward flowing river which would give access to the South. The result was that barges could come up the Shan Jan from the North and go through the Lin Chi Canal and then ride down the Lee Jan to the South to Canton.

Well, for the 1st Century B. C. you must admit that it is an amazing work and I am extremely glad to say that it is still functioning today, not in the sense of barges coming through—they don't need that water traffic now—but it is used largely as an irrigation canal now and it is full of water and it is kept up in perfect repair. One can go and photograph, for example, the system of spillways which kept the water level constant and things of that kind.

Mr. Amunugama: *Now with these changes do you feel that the past of China — you've spent a lifetime*

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being interested in this field—has some impact, some relevance for its modern period with its four modernisms and so on? What do you think is the impact of this human heritage for the present quest of China?

Dr. Needham: Well, I think it is very relevant. Incidentally you talk about a lifetime but it is only half a lifetime because I was a scientist for half my life and I turned into a historian of science only after that work. It is true I do know a little about China, probably more than some people and I would say that the past is extremely relevant. Because one of the groups of people that was hard hit by the G4—the activities of the G4—was the historians of science and I was very

happy to spend a day with them in Peking discussing our common problems and hearing what they were doing and they have excellent historians of science, very, very good indeed, and they are publishing quite rapidly all sorts of books on development.

But there is another way which I think it would be worthwhile to mention here where the past in China is extremely important and the Chinese are being tremendously faithful to it and would have betrayed it had they taken to Western Capitalism, because Western Capitalism is a terrifically Western invention. It was not invented anywhere in Asia and I must say that as far as the Chinese were concerned, when they had it in its full bloom in Shanghai before the war, the more they saw the

less they liked it. Anyway traditional Chinese society was composed of theoretically non-acquisitive intellectual elite, namely the Mandarinate, the civil officials chosen by examination from the mass of the people and serving one single Emperor.

In the same way also now, under Socialism, the Chinese are really continuing their ancient traditions. You can't say unchanged because of course the Party Cadre of the present day is a very different type of being from the Civil Official of former days. But nevertheless the basic idea of the Society organised and run by a non-acquisitive, non-hereditary elite is something which has persisted right through and the Chinese have never been more faithful than they are now.

Cryptic Crossword No. 5

by Stripex

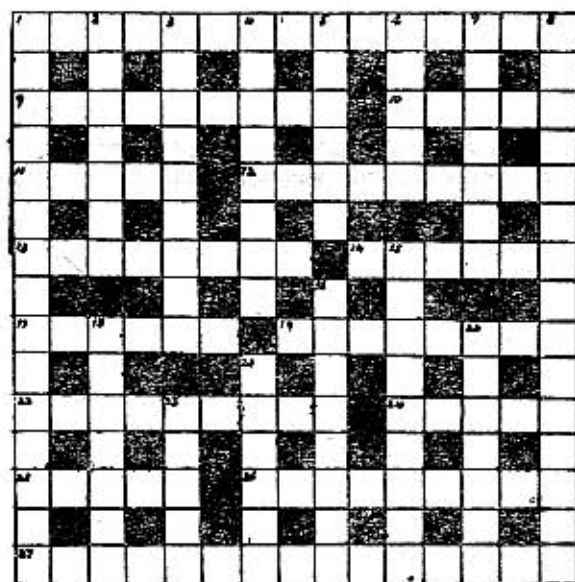
Across

CLUES

1. Possibly heroic pairs (7,8)
9. Ices put overleaf shortly can be made to give soothing results (9)
10. Oklahoma city (5)
11. Confused age the British queen follows, excited (5)
12. Also first could be some primitive carving dug up (3,6)
13. ...but Count that is a good man follows soonest (8)
14. Guinea pig's cousin is first rate, without illness (6)
17. Kingship, we hear, cast away (6)
19. Two objections (3,3,2)
22. Litter from tuber cigs (5,4)
24. Reverse vehicle with hesitation — he's a fast one (5)
25. Long lost Iaco River in Brazil has more than one mouth (5)
26. Zoltan Karpathy e.g. (9)
27. Test last pool car, it could begin to fall to pieces (5,2,8)

Down

1. Demonstrations over present E-rations (15)
2. Junior (7)
3. Bury prospect of conference (9)
4. Clogs, say, to turn stylish (2,6)
5. Attacks while filming? (6)
6. Pat I love to court (5)
7. Swiss town (7)
8. Much of a muchness (5,10)
15. To get there on time your letter had better (2,3-4)
16. It's not up to feeds (4,4)
18. Get a tar for the boat racing (7)
20. Price M. D. takes to remove wrinkles (7)
21. Tongue to urge (6)
23. Cook the joint (5)



Solution to Cryptic Crossword No. 4

ACROSS:— 1. Mock 3. Of shoes and 10. North 11. The walrus 12. Eve 13. Treat 14. Startled 16. Incomes 18. To speak 20. Graphic 22. Edition 23. Cesspool 26. Alibi 29. Eat 30. Historian 31. Eleme 32. Pretension 33. Berg.

DOWN:— 1. Many things 2. Carve 4. Fates 5. Hielant 6. Exact estimates 7. Agree 8. Dust 9. The time has come 15. Skindiving 17. CIA 19. Eli 21. Coolies 24. Elsie 25. Lento 27. Irene 28. Ship.

News background...

(Continued from page 4)

the same Corporation. He is one Mr. Cecil de Mel from Moratuwa. I saw him when they were leaving the Corporation premises. I really felt sorry for this gentleman. Some of them are genuine UNPers though they have joined the Ceylon Mercantile Union.

"These are the words a lady said to me who works in the Corporation: 'I really do not know why they are assaulting

people in this manner, I am disgusted with the Corporation and the Government. We are genuine UNPers not like those fellows who called themselves UNPers now. When the SLFP was ruling they were S.L.F.Pers and they are now green. I think there must be an end to this, otherwise people will only blame our Party and the other parties will be overjoyed when they hear of splits in our own camp.'"

Is it worth farming?

The Jaffna farmer is compelled to sell his chillies at five rupees a pound while his cost of production is Rs. 7.50. The Raja Rata peasant is lucky if the trader offers him even Rs. 4/- for his chillies! There is no demand for locally grown 'Lanka parippu' because of imported masoor dhal. There is no organisation to purchase soyabeans and black gram since the Paddy Marketing Board abandoned such purchases over six weeks ago.

Millions of rupees worth of imported seed potatoes are rotting in the stores. Our farmers no longer consider potato growing a profitable venture. Cultivations of batala (sweet potato) and manioc are as extinct as the Dodo!

Despite an exceptionally good rice harvest during 'maha' 1977-78, the average rice yield in Sri Lanka was only 55 bushels per acre. An average peasant farmer owning three acres of paddy land in a government colonization scheme obtains a rice yield of 165 bushels per season—a gross return of Rs. 600/- (assuming he sells all his paddy at the guaranteed price of Rs. 40/- per bushel).

What are the farmer's liabilities? He needs Rs. 2,350/- to pay his cultivation loan. Even if he were to obtain a fresh bank loan for the next season, the farmer still has to make an additional contribution of Rs. 2,250/- towards meeting the cultivation costs of the

next crop. (Cost of cultivation per acre is Rs. 1500/-) This leaves the farmer with only Rs. 2,000/- a monthly income of Rs. 333/- to support himself and his family of six over a period of six months.

Could one possibly maintain body and soul together on a meagre Rs. 55/- per month? Isn't the rice farmer in Sri Lanka living below the poverty line?

Letters...

(Continued from page 2)

1971 and all that

So Reggie Siriwardena cannot answer my question 'irrespective of what class interests are involved', can't he? I expected the archaicism but cannot see why he avoided answering in the light of the 'class interests involved'. This simplistic good-guys/bad-guys approach to social problems couched in the Marxist-Leninist jargon puts RS in the position of the mob of plebians inflamed by Mark Antony's oration which roamed the street in search of the conspirators. They came across one Cinna. When they discovered his name a pleb shouted: 'Tear him to pieces he's a conspirator'. Cinna cried: 'I am Cinna the poet'. Another pleb shouted: 'Tear him for his bad verses'. Cinna protested: 'I am not Cinna the conspirator' but the verdict

was: 'It is no matter, his name is Cinna'.

Colombo 3.

Costair de Vos

R.S.'s fantasies

Your journal is perhaps the only ray of hope in these present dark times—Abudassa Yugayak—which has become more pronounced over the last few months.

As much as I have enjoyed reading the past numbers, so have I derived a rather perverted satisfaction in seeing Mr. Reggie Siriwardena once again doing exactly what I had expected him to do.

I think R.S. present posturings invite my comments again.

"But I must add that although until April 1971 I shared the illusions engendered by the 1970 General Election the trauma of April helped to rid me of these illusions". (Lanka Guardian July. 15. '78) What political understanding, conviction and acumen R.S. displays! Till 1971 he endorsed the political opportunism of the LSSP and CP and shared the illusion till it was torn asunder by the cruelties of the '71 insurrection.

Well, comrade R.S. though you may try to convince yourself and would like us to believe that these flashes of revelation and disillusionment have come upon you in such dramatic and mystic ways, to those of us who have followed your career over the last few years there is a definite and discernible pattern in the evolution of your illusions and disillusionments in the varied fields ranging from Sinhala literary criticism to JVP politics.

I can see how your illusion is complete; how you have changed the world to suit your illusion. I can quite understand the cathartic pleasure you must be deriving in indulging in those anarchistic, nihilistic, infantile phantasies.

Gunadasa Amarasekera

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