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Letters

National Press

The Agriculture Minister accuses the press when it paints the grim side of the picture, while the Finance Minister finds fault with sunshine stories. It is not difficult to understand the former. It is the latter that raises issues.

With the formation of this government the national press saw to it that their key posts were manned by pro-government journalists and they reported the sayings and doings of ministers out of proportion. A sensitive minister appears to have begun to feel the ill-effects of such grand style reporting. It would be healthy for all concerned if the national press thinks less in terms of sensational head-lines and more in terms of nation building.

Panadura. V. K. Wijeratna

Flour substitutes

The recent increase in price of Wheat flour has once again dramatised the importance of producing our own substitutes for this commodity.

When there was a world scarcity of Wheat flour in 1973-74, the government of Prime Minister Mrs. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike embarked on a crash program of growing flour substitutes such as Sorghum, Corn, Manioc and Batata. A concerted effort was made to change the eating habits of our people by demonstrating various recipes turned out of Sorghum and Corn flour. Our farmers took to the cultivation of Manioc, Batata, Sorghum, Corn, Kurakkan etc. in a big way. Sorghum 'pittu' 'string hoppers' and 'roti' soon began to grace the tables of even the affluent. We were soon well on the way to making a real breakthrough in the effort to wean our people from their addiction to bread. Then the government suddenly yielded to the temptation of flooding the market with PL 480 Wheat flour! This thought-

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Trends

The business of race

The economic factor is often ignored by the most thoughtful observers of racial politics. A large advertisement (SUN 22/9) therefore invites more than passing attention. It announces the establishment of a business organisation styled "Development Consultancy Limited". Its stated aim is the development of the entire Tri Sinhala (i.e. the ancient Sinhala kingdom) as an economically viable and "harmoniously integrated entity".

It pledges support to other organisations such as the Sinhala Vaniya Mandalaya and the Sinha Putra Development and Finance Ltd. which seeks "the total development of an undivided Sri Lanka".

Besides the interesting idiom used in the notice, the signatories also deserve attention. Lawyers, businessmen, an ex-Army officer, property dealers and a former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence (SLFP) are in the list. The group seems bi-partisan (UNP and SLFP) and has many traceable links with the upper echelons of the security apparatus, past and present.

Incidentally the SLFP's "Nation" made a front page box of the news and indicated that it was a response to the Loganathan Plan for the Development of North and East.

Rohana's style

Rohana Wijeweera who does his own superstar thing on the public stage has developed an oratorical style which combines the fiery eloquence of a Fidel with the clever clowning of a Bala Tampoe. He has a superb eye, picks his targets and machine-guns them in a three-hour peroration.

But at his last rally in Colombo, Wijeweera who concentrates his fire on Mrs. Bandaranaike and the Leaders of the U. L. F., showed that he could also leap across the generation gap to grapple with potential challengers.

The SLFP 're-organisation' he said was an artful dodge to place Mr. Anura Bandaranaike on the throne. But the JVP would make certain that all family 'thrones' were thrown into the bin of history.

And then to the surprise of many in his audience he let loose a barrage on the CP's Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama on the grounds that the CP press was now engaged in a special publicity build-up for the former MP, who was currently enjoying a meteoric rise in the party.

less act ruined the entire campaign to achieve self-sufficiency in flour substitutes.

Cheaper flour offered by the present government in 1977 even turned many people away from eating rice. By early 1978 we were dangerously dependent on imported wheat flour. The sudden increase in the world market price of wheat flour and government's decision to cut back on subsidies has awakened us to the need of growing our own food.

It is hoped that our politicians would at least now have the foresight to embark on a vigorous campaign of growing our own substitutes for flour. Let us also hope that they would have the courage and the perseverance necessary to carry out such a program to its successful conclusion.

Mahiyangana Ranjit Mulleriyawa

Coomaraswamy and caste

Mr. C. Rajasingham seems to me to have joined Ananda Coomaraswamy in what I called 'the cloudy realms of metaphysics', where I have no inclination to pursue him. I only wish to bring him down to earth in relation to the realities of the caste system. In *Medieval Sinhalese Art* Coomaraswamy wrote: 'Honour, pride, noblesse oblige, are of the caste idea.' Mr. Rajasingham goes even further and says: 'We see today the symptoms of disorder in the irresponsibility of the Sudra who has vanquished the Brahmin—the cause being that Brahmanical discipline is self-imposed whereas the Sudra has freedom to act irresponsibly.'

Against these metaphysical fantasies I wish to set some of the stark brutalities and inhumanities of the caste system, as recorded in a recent Reuter report from New Delhi (*Ceylon Daily News*, 1. 9. 78):

'More than 350 untouchables were killed throughout India in the year to the end of March in crimes directed against their low caste status, Parliament was told there.'

'Minister of State for Home Affairs, Dhanik Lal Mandal, giving the figures in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha yesterday said that Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of crimes against untouchables...174 Harijans died in that State and 5,755 other crimes were registered against their caste.'

Self-imposed Brahmanical discipline and noblesse oblige, indeed!

Colombo 5. Reggie Siriwardena
"1971 and all that"

Mr. Reggie Siriwardena writes better than he thinks. His review of Dr. Colvin R. De Silva's pamphlet on "April 1971" and his responses to correspondent Dr. Costain de Vos display more literary dexterity than clarity of thought. Through the Lanka Guardian of July 15 Mr. Siriwardena informed us that until April 1971 he was one of those who "shared the illusions engendered by the 1970 General Election". That's a significant admission.

The illusions of the 1970 General Election were engendered mainly by the massive electoral mandate that the people of this country gave the United Front of the SLFP-LSSP-CP. That victory was engineered precisely by what Mr. Siriwardena has characterized as "the opportunism of the LSSP (and CP) in and after 1964". So, by implication, the opportunism of the LSSP and CP must have had Mr. Siriwardena's approval at some stage before April 1971 because by his own submission he "shared the illusions engendered by the 1970 General Election".

Therefore at least in retrospect, Mr. Siriwardena must have condoned the strategy of those who—in his own felicitous phrase—"sought to substitute for the working class—Mrs. Bandaranaike". When such a gentleman now talks of "the opportunism of the LSSP and CP" with a sense of unsullied revolutionary purity, he sounds more convinced than convincing.

In a recent publication ('April Insurrection and JVP') some young men who played important

roles in the April 1971 insurrection have, with the benefit of hindsight, adduced no less than ten reasons why their 1971 political adventure was foredoomed. Mr. Wijeweera himself told the CJC that: 'In April 1971 the revolutionary precondition for the seizure of power by the proletariat and for an armed revolutionary struggle were absent'.

That this is precisely the thesis which Dr. de Silva maintains and is implicit in the very title of his pamphlet: 'April 1971, A Foredoomed Ultra Leftist Adventure'. Because the insurrection in fact failed disastrously, his thesis must be right—and that's that. Whether or not Dr. de Silva himself has the moral right to maintain such a thesis should be a matter of trivial importance to a serious political scientist.

Colombo

Carlo Fonseka

Lenin and Trotsky

Reader A. Vaidyasekera has missed the point of the exchanges I have had with Mr. Shanmugathasan. It is not so simplified as he seems to think, whether Lenin was wrong or Trotsky was right, all of which should be tossed into the limbo of history.

Let me reiterate, it was as Ralph Miliband says in the issue of L. G. September 15th, the question of Reform Versus Revolution. In the very same issue, Andre Gunder Frank, says of the Unidad Popular, "In a word, U. P. represented reformism and is it reformism that failed?" Mr. Vaidyasekera, should not forget that the Chilean C. P. not only supported the U. P. but held office in reformist Allende Government and was therefore partly responsible for the bloody coup by the Rightist Army Generals in the Government. That is why

(Continued on page 23)

The article entitled "Chile's Chicago School Economics" which appeared in our last issue was written by Charles Abeysekera, former Chairman of the National Institute of Management, and the article entitled "The Junta's Economic Model" was written by Dr. Michel Chossudovsky, of the University of Ottawa.

JR wins 'psy war'

The Americans have a word for it: eyeballing. They also call it 'playing chicken'. The two contestants stare each other in the eye and the one who blinks first is the loser, the 'chicken'. The Joint Council of Trade Unions Action Committee (JCTUAC) blinked. In its first eyeball to eyeball confrontation with President Jayewardene, the organized working class movement lost, and JRJ emerged the clear winner in this exercise in brinkmanship. The victory, however, seems more in the realm of 'psy war' (psychological warfare) than politics, since the Trade Unions have retreated with their forces intact and live on to fight another day.

If the strike had taken place, on the other hand, the government reprisals would have decimated the militant core of T. U activists at workplace level, and the loss of morale within the working class would have been very much more than it is now, after this hasty retreat. Thus, while a major psychological victory has indeed been scored by the UNP regime, the decisive defeat it would have hoped to inflict on the Trade Unions in the course of this single head-on confrontation, has been averted. Veteran observers also wonder whether even in the psychological battle the government did not in fact engage in the error of a propaganda 'overkill'.

While the government's drastic escalation of the conflict and the effect of 'upping the ante' and forcing the T. U's to back down unceremoniously, the question arises whether the government in fact overreacted to what was after all only a day long token work stoppage, and in doing so, unwittingly displayed a 'seige mentality,' and undermined its own image of stability', both at home and abroad.



Meanwhile serious rethinking and recrimination is also inevitable within the working class movement. While the government's media monolith had an obvious inbuilt advantage on the propaganda front, the T. U's agitprop counter offensive was pathetic. For instance, there were several times as many J. V. P. posters advertising their 'recital of revolutionary songs' as those put by the JCTUAC concerning the proposed strike! Except for the individual efforts of the CMU, mass leafletting campaigns were also sadly lacking.

At their many public meetings held last week, the ULF speakers made very sparse reference to the strike, their argument being that they didn't want to provide grist for the govt's propaganda mills concerning the political motivations of the work stoppage. The SLFP remained largely silent as far as public meetings were concerned, while the JVP's attitude was ambiguous to say the least. In short there was virtually no dynamic mass mobilization at workplace level and no vigorous

agitprop campaign that could counter the govt's media blitzkrieg. Instead the T. U bureaucracy tried to conduct the strike 'from above', by remote control as it were. However, the leaders' credibility among the rank and file is so low, and the T. U. apparatuses are so rusty after decades of coalition politics, that the 'machine' simply failed to move into top-gear and could hardly match the well-oiled state apparatus so effectively deployed by the govt.

Now that the T. U. movement has gauged the true strength of the regime, and glimpsed its battleplan, the realization must surely have dawned that any future confrontation needs a kind of organization, mobilization and broad unity which automatically implies a rupture with the old bureaucratic 'campaign styles'.

SCM on national question

At the Annual Conference of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) a special session on the National Question was held, states a press release.

The SCM of Sri Lanka since the early sixties has been concerned about the problems of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Attempts have been made to understand and study this issue in its historical perspective as well as through dialogue with students and various sectors in the Sinhala and Tamil communities.

At the discussion on the National Question an important fact that emerged was that the steps taken by successive governments had failed to resolve this problem which requires a political solution. It was asserted that (as stated in our resolution) any political solution has to be based on the clear recognition of the right of the Tamil people for national self-determination. A consensus was also reached that a final solution to the problem can be arrived at only in a genuine socialist society.

Mass media mess

With the appointment of a new Information Minister, Mr. Anandatissa de Alwis, the government's hopes of getting to grips with the problems of credibility and competence in the state-controlled communications media have risen high. While the mild-mannered Mr. D. B. Wijetunge left the media to their own devices, his successor is an ex-journalist and a high-pressure Ad-man cast in the Madison Avenue mould.

A man with ideas of his own, the new Minister will probably try to bring all the media under his wing at least in the matter of broad policy. As it is, the lines of authority, communication and indirect control have got so snarled up that things have reached a sorry pass. Recently, the fledgling national news agency, 'Lankapuwath' came out with a real ten-ton 'bull' when it released the story that the President will spend his birthday in Kandy. The SLBC which is extremely wary about 'Lankapuwath' did not touch the item but the authoritative 'Daily News' did—to its enormous embarrassment the next day. The President obviously was not pleased with a national news agency and the country's leading newspaper that got his personal itinerary all wrong. In future, these matters will come under the purview of the President's press secretary, Mr. David Karunaratne. That of course is how things should have been in the first place but the local Jody Powell has been doing very little 'briefing'.

'Lankapuwath' has fourteen provincial correspondents, mainly ex-Lake House staffers, with a two-hour daily transmission. Its teething troubles have not been received with much tolerance by its principal paymasters. A move to cut the Editor's 2000/- salary by half (the Editor who was Director of Publicity in the Bandaranaike government's Planning Ministry is an old Esmond Wickremasinghe aide) met with a blocking move and a

compromise is likely to be reached at 1500/- But was it a move to flush him out?

But 'Lankapuwath' is a fledgling organisation. The more serious trouble lies with the established media. What impact TV will make on the mass audience (if such an audience can be reached) is still in doubt. Meanwhile the printed word carries the greatest potential for influencing opinion. This means the two state-controlled newspaper groups, 'Lake House' and 'Times'.

Such is the journalistic performance of these two groups that the *SUN* is hell-bent on an aggressive circulation drive, its expectations doubtless buoyed up by steady rise in circulation where its 'rivals' are caught in a rut.

Given the advantage of its linguistic medium, Tamil, the 'Virakesari' (policy-makers who belong to the ruling elite still react to English while the politician is sensitive to Sinhala news and comment) has successfully built up a fine reputation for its extensive coverage of news and political opinion. For all its general liveliness and professional initiative, the '*SUN*' seems to feel the constraints of its own basic ideological viewpoint on both local and international issues. Nonetheless, the '*SUN*' is catching new readers by its "exposure" stories and its more spirited, if often oblique, attacks on the bureaucracy and the consequences of certain economic policies.

It is clear however that the '*SUN*' is on the offensive, professionally and commercially. The future will decide whether the Gunasenas can do to 'Lake House' what Wijewardena did to the British-owned and ever-sinking '*Times*'.

Part of the forward-policy of the '*SUN*' is its talent-spotting technique and recruitment of bright young newspapermen from reporter and feature writers to cameramen.

If it is to win the fight it must of course try to improve its literary standards which are sometimes embarrassingly uneven. The new generation readership (tomorrow's market) is also very outward-looking and passionately curious about world events and issues. This is a major area of weakness in the '*SUN*' group's otherwise more enterprising journalism.

What ails the *Lake House* and the *Times*? The inevitable problem of policy strait-jackets and hypersensitivity to official reactions has been aggravated by day-to-day organisational shortcomings and low professional morale.

At the weekly briefing session held by Mr. Esmond Wickremasinghe the government's top media expert, editors and editorial executives were enjoined to resist all "divisive tendencies". Evidently journalists now feel themselves "grouped" according to creed, race, and even caste. There are subterranean power-struggles and conflicts even between pure-bred *Lake House* staffers and ex-'*Times*' 'gangs'. Patronage is no longer determined by the Old School Tie, university fraternities and Old Boy Networks but by religious and tribal loyalties.

The contest for power over the media between top insiders and influential outsiders assume such quaint forms that a former Sinhala editor observed that not only the ghosts of the past hang over '*Lake House*' but even the spirits of the YMBA, the Vatican and the High Church.

All this accounts for the demoralisation of the journalists and the malaise which grips the media. Already more than a dozen trained journalists have applied for sub-editors posts in Malaysia. There are reports also of a return to the field by the Wijewardenas—although it is not known whether it is the ancient regime or the new Wijewardena 'stable'. Sunday papers in Sinhala and English, with brand new rotary presses to print them, are in the planning stage. Already however many old loyalists, especially in the Sinhala medium, are preparing their fare-

well speeches in verse as they say goodbye to the increasingly muddied waters of the Beira.

Wijesoma, the *Lake House's* best sharp-shooter today, surprised everybody by taking a pot-shot at the Finance Minister's "schizophrenia". It is significant that this cartoon which obviously got a greenlight (a very greenlight) was a reply to Mr. de Mel's blast on 'newspaper lies'. (*Trends* 15/9). But for Wijesoma it was just a flash in the pan.

More to the point were the frank comments of Dr. Wickrema Weerasooriya who addressed the '*Lake House*' editors recently—a briefing which caused a flutter in certain circles, and an angry snarl from top insiders. "Superficial" and "scanty" were two of the comments made on editorial writing. As for reporting standards, Dr. Weerasooriya related how a *Lake House* staffer asked him "What's the latest?", without any idea of what story he was after. Dr. Weerasooriya had replied: "The latest is that I am getting into the lift to get to my car to go home for lunch"! The story did not make the stop press. Not even the '*Lankapuwath*'.

As for the mass circulating Sinhala press, the editors of the '*Aththa*' and the '*Janadina*', and the journalists who 'are making such a good show of the young '*Dinakara*' are no doubt delighted that the state-controlled Sinhala papers furnish the most telling daily evidence to substantiate Mr. de Mel's recent assertion that nobody believes them anymore. ●

Paddy production: fact or fantasy?

An official press release (C.D. N./ 19/7/78) gives the island's average per acre yield during the 'Maha' 1977-78 as 55.8 bushels. Yet the same communique says that the total yield for the season was 61 million bushels and the area cultivated was 1,390,000 acres. When 61 million is divided by

1,390,000 you arrive at the figure of 43.9 bushels per acre. So the official figure for per acre yield is wide off the mark. By what mathematical sleight of hand was the figure of 55.8 produced?

The '*Daily News*' (23.8.78) also reports the Hon. Minister of Agriculture himself making a happy prediction of a record harvest of 100 million bushels during the next Maha season. How realistic is this figure? It was no less a person that Mr. Dudley Senanayake, Prime Minister of the last UNP administration and no mean authority on agricultural matters, who moaned that bureaucrats had fooled him with inflated statistics on the 'green revolution'.

The present policy is not to issue cultivation loans to farmers who have defaulted. It is widely known that nearly 75% of the farmers who were issued loans last year have defaulted. Considering the fact that the price of fertiliser has almost doubled is it realistic to expect an increase in the yield per acre during the next Maha?

An overall increase in paddy production can therefore be achieved only by an increase in the area cultivated. Assuming yield per acre to remain static at last Maha's 44 bushels, the extent of land that needs to be cultivated to achieve the predicted 100 million bushels is a staggering 2.3 million acres — an increase of 0.9 million acres over the extent cultivated last 'Maha'. The extent of new land estimated to be brought under the plough even after completion of the mighty Mahaweli project is also 0.9 million acres. It would therefore be ridiculous to expect the acreage under rice next Maha to increase by 0.9 million acres.

Striking parallels

Does the 'Old Left/New Left' or 'reformist/radical' dichotomy, so very pronounced in the South, lose all meaning north of The Elephant Pass? The rude reception accorded to Mr. Wijeweera in Jaffna indicated strongly that the reply is 'Yes.' Several months ago the LSSP/CP leaders were pelted with slippers and stones, and their rally disrupted. Basically the same treatment was accorded to Messrs Wijeweera, Gamanayake et. al, if the news report on page one of the '*SUN*' (25.9.78) is correct.

As far as the militant Tamil youth are concerned, almost all the 'Sinhala' left groups sound alike—at least on the issue of Tamil Eelam. The LSSP attempts to reduce the problem to a mere language issue, while the CP, albeit accepting the right of self-determination, stops at the slogan of Regional Autonomy. All the Maoist groups regard the cry for Eelam as part of a conspiracy engendered by 'Soviet Social Imperialism.' The JVP says it recognises the right of self-determination but is firmly against the slogan of an independent Tamil State. Instead it recommends equal rights especially in the realm of language. Most other 'New Left' groups adopt a fairly similar stance.

As far as the Tamil youth are concerned all prominent sections of the Sinhala Left speak with a forked tongue, and that includes young Rohana.

The JVP and the Tamils

by J. Uyangoda

(A former JVP Politburo member, the writer served six years in jail after the 1971 insurgency)

Mr. Rohana Wijeweera having returned from his month's long Odyssey to Europe, is reported to have stated, at a press conference, that the JVP "would never give into The Call for Eelam because division of our country would only help to aggravate our problems". (CDN 02. 09. 78).

In the same vein, Lionel Bopage, a prominent leader of the JVP, in his long but confused essay entitled, "A Marxist Analysis on the National Question" states as follows:

"Under a Socialist Republic the division of the country into two parts as well as the arbitrary centralization will equally be opposed. But equality and national integrity, based on autonomy, will be preserved and maintained....."

At this recent press conference, R. W. is reported to have further stated that the policies of the JVP were not copied from any country but based on 'Marxism-Leninism' — so far so good!

Now, one can raise the pertinent question; when R. W. stands for the non-division of "his" country, does he not reject basic Marxist - Leninist principles on the national question?

Marxist - Leninists accept in principle that every oppressed nation has an inalienable right to self-determination. According to Lenin, this "right of nations to self - determination" means nothing other than political separation of the oppressed nation and the formation of an independent national - state— let us quote Lenin:

"Victorious socialism must necessarily establish a full democracy and consequently, not only intro-

duce full equality of national but also realise the right of the oppressed nations to self - determination. i.e. the right to free political separation."

(Lenin - Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to self-determination - Theses).

The socialist support for the demand for separatism by an oppressed nation is based on the fundamental principle that only the separatism would assure full democracy to the oppressed nations. Lenin believed that it is only under socialism that national question can be solved effectively, thus giving the oppressed nations full democratic rights to determine their relationship with the ruling nation. If the oppressed nations, exercising its democratic right of self-determination for separation socialists cannot hesitate for a moment to support that decision.

The right of Tamil people in Sri Lanka, as an oppressed nation, for political separation must not be denied merely because the TULF fights for a separate Tamil State of Eelam. It is true that the TULF is not a socialist party. The leadership of the TULF consists mainly of the representatives of the Tamil bourgeoisie. Merely because the TULF leadership fights for a Tamil State, Marxists must not fail to understand the bourgeois democratic character of that demand for separation. To understand any socio - economic problem in Sri Lanka concretely, we must take into account the fact that many tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution have not been completed yet. The bourgeoisie is no longer able to go ahead with the fulfilment of these tasks of the bourgeois revolution. In this country the national question is one among those remaining unsettled. It is not surprising that the slogan for separation first comes from the bourgeois party of the Tamil people. Irrespective of the TULF

demand, Marxists must unconditionally defend the right of Tamil people to self-determination—including their right to form a separate state.

R. W. has stated that divisions of the country only helps to aggravate the problems. This settlement gives rise to two fundamental questions.

First, is it as accordance with Marxism - Leninism does he speak about a "division" of the country? For a Marxist solution to the national questions does not involve any question about "divisions". What is most important is to defend the right of an oppressed nation to decide its own political future. "Division" or "non-division" of a country is entirely out of consideration.

Secondly, it is entirely unprincipled and even chauvinistic to deny the Tamil people a separate state on the grounds that it would "only help to aggravate our problems." Does R. W. think that separation would result in the disintegration of the country? In opposing political self-determination of the Tamil people and in playing up the danger of "aggravating our problems" (whose problems?) Mr. Wijeweera is only defending the Sinhala - nationalist prejudices against the democratic rights of an oppressed nation.

Last, but not least, I would like to quote Lenin once again.

"Just as in bourgeois society the defenders of privilege and corruption, on which bourgeois marriage rests, oppose freedom of divorce, so, in the capitalist state, repudiation of the right to self-determination i.e., the right of nation to secede means nothing more than defence of the privileges of the dominant nation and police methods of administration, to the defilement of democratic methods."

Carter's coup, Sadat's sell - out

by Mervyn de Silva

It was a proud President Carter who addressed a joint session of the Congress soon after the Camp David agreements were announced. Overwhelmed by domestic discontents and political controversies, his popularity rating so distressingly low, Carter's diplomatic coup in what was widely accepted as a high-risk operation was a much-needed victory indeed.

Carter's campaign managers must hope that the public relations benefits would be high. It is reported that the announcement was delayed in order to avoid a clash for TV prime time with the Ali-Spinks fisticuffs! The Opinion polls and mid-term election results will probably show how much Camp David has helped bolster Mr. Carter's sagging image.

For all the evangelical overtones of his speech, Mr. Carter is a politician first and a missionary only later. So the happy tidings of "peace at last" in a perennially troubled Middle East was shrewdly spelt out 'to Congress and to the American public as a necessary and seriously considered exercise in America's national interest.

Mr. Carter identified those interests in a single paragraph: the strategic location of the countries concerned, its great resources, the fear that the area may be dominated by a hostile power, with the danger of a superpower confrontation.

US strategy

Ever since the October 1973 war and the "oil crisis", American perceptions of the Arab-Israeli issue have changed considerably. US policy-planners recognised that America had a vital stake in the Arab world, an area of 100 million people, who

along with neighbouring Iran, controlled the life-lines which sustained the economies of America's major allies, Western Europe and Japan.

In the hands largely of conservative, pro-western regimes the oil money has been re-invested in the west at a time when the monetary system and the dollar in particular are under heavy pressure. Saudi Arabia alone has invested 60 billion dollars in the US, mainly in US treasury bonds.

The Israeli issue however remained a stubborn cause of friction between the US and even staunchly anti-communist Arab states like Saudi Arabia. Certainly religious zeal made King Faisal a formidable foe of Israel. With the pro-US Prince Fahd in effective charge of Saudi Arabian affairs, Riyadh's policy is today more accommodating to Washington's plans.

Finally, there was the larger, ideological and strategic consideration. If the Arab-Israeli conflict was not de-fused, the logic of such unresolved disputes pointed to the inevitable radicalisation of the Arab people and Arab politics, a development which would threaten the stability of essentially pro-western regimes. Such a process could also represent an open invitation for the expansion of Soviet influence in this vital area.

If electoral pressures on the Presidency (the Jewish lobby and voting block) and America's strategic interest in running a strong military bastion in the Middle-East meant the Washington's commitment to Israel's "security" must remain firm as ever, the countervailing factor of American interests in the Arab world demanded that US support for Israel could not be, as in the past, unequivocal or automatic.

The two interests had to be reconciled.

With the abrogation of Soviet-Egyptian treaty and Sadat's decision to launch an 'open door policy', heavily dependent on foreign investment, as the way out of Egypt's mounting economic difficulties, America was able to return strongly into the Arab world.

By 1976-77 a Brookings Institution 'think tank' was already working on a blueprint for a new US Middle-East strategy, and Mr. Carter who endorsed the plan placed the area as his No. 1. foreign policy priority.

The foundation of that policy was a new network of relationships linking Egypt, the main political-military Arab power and Saudi Arabia, the financial power, and then Egypt and Israel. Once this was achieved it could create another cluster of relationships which brought into the emerging pattern of improving regional relations, Jordan, Lebanon, even Syria and hopefully sections of the Palestinian movement that would give legitimacy to a "home" for the Palestinian movement was not only fragmented but seriously divided on ideological and tactical grounds, influential Arab countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia may even be able to woo and win over the "rightwing" of the PLO.

Israeli policy

To achieve at least initial objectives it was necessary to persuade Israel to make certain concessions, basically territorial, to Egypt. But did the US have sufficient leverage over Israel? Would the Egyptians agree to a separate agreement with Israel?

The election victory of Mr. Begin introduced a new obstacle.

A one-time terrorist (the organiser of the Deir Yassin massacre) and a religious fanatic Mr. Begin's vision of 'eretz Israel' is derived from the Old Testament. But the US was finally capable of coping with Mr. Begin's intransigence.

As George Ball noted recently, the US is not only the military patron of Israel's "garrison state" but spends 1000/- dollars a year on every Israeli man, woman and child.

Besides, Israel has recently got into serious economic difficulties herself. (see Israel: Another victim of 'Friedmania')

Further Mr. Begin faces a strong opposition and leads a somewhat loose and shaky coalition. The US succeeded in putting at least a temporary halt to Jewish (military-pioneer) settlements and Mr. Begin's determined drive to colonise the occupied areas.

Sadat's sell-out

Only last month Mr. Sadat was insisting that the Palestinian problem was the "crux" of the Arab-Israeli issue. But the Israelis are only prepared to create a "self-governing" political unit on the West Bank and call it a home for the Arab Israelis (Palestinians). Imitating the South African policy of 'bantustanisation', Israel would pick some 'manageable' Palestinians to run this area. In any case, it embraces only the 1.2 million Palestinians on the West Bank and not the 2 millions outside.

The fratricidal strife within the Palestinian resistance during recent months showed how hard Mr. Sadat and others tried to force Arafat and the PLO's rightwing to give even a tacit approval to the grand plan. The Palestine Left, helped by states like Iraq and Libya, were equally determined to prevent and disrupt the emerging arrangement.

The US and Mr. Sadat lost. The Palestinian radicals and the hardline states have won, in as much as PLO, retaining its unity, has condemned the Camp David

Accords. That is why we have two separate accords. The US and Sadat failed to sustain the essential linkage between an Egyptian-Israeli agreement and a pledge on the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Mr. Sadat has paid a heavy price—Egypt's political leadership of the Arab world, Arab unity, and his own prestige. Already the PLO has lined up with the "Front of Steadfastness" comprising Algeria, Libya, Syria, and South Yemen. Mr. Sadat has been tried as a traitor in Iraq and General Shazli, the hero of the 1973 war, was one of the accusers. Sadat's foreign minister has resigned. Sadat's isolation in the Arab world has begun. The hard-line states have severed

diplomatic relations with Egypt. His position at home cannot be too strong.

The US has kept the USSR out of this diplomatic exercise. It was at Camp David, not Geneva, the accords were signed. A 'pax Americana' for the Middle-East has been established.

How real or secure will this peace prove? The PLO and the hardliners are already looking eagerly in the direction of Moscow. Far from bringing peace and stability, the Camp David Accords may paradoxically push the protracted struggle of the Arab people against Israel to a new, higher stage, and the Palestinian resistance, the vanguard of the Arab social revolution, will be stiffened, not weakened.

Foreign investment and 'aid': who benefits?

Who benefits most from the 'aid' given by the rich nations to the Third World? Does the donor benefit more than the recipient? The answer is strongly in the affirmative, according to C. W. Pickup, writing recently in the *'Sunday Times'* (London).

Quoting OECD figures, he points out that in 1975, official aid from OECD members to underdeveloped countries was US \$ 13,585 million, of which US \$ 12,000 million was in fact returned in order to service debts. In 35 developing countries, debt repayment is more than half of all aid received annually. Approximately 2/3rds of U. K. aid granted to the Third World is re-spent in the U. K. itself, on goods and services. Likewise 90% of U. S. aid ends up right back in the U. S. What then of total capital flows? Estimates of U. S. Dept of Commerce for 1950 - 1965 indicate that the flow of capital on investment account from the USA to countries outside Europe and Canada was 9,000 million dollars, while the reverse flow of capital profit amounted to 25,600 million dollars. Thus there was a net flow of \$ 16,600 million, from the poor to the rich!

The correspondent goes on to state that it is therefore hardly surprising that "after 30 years of intensive doses of aid, the general condition of most Third World peoples has not changed." Firmly linking the present high standards of living in the West to the low living standards of the Third World, the correspondent concludes: "One need look no further than these figures to realise that aid and investment in the Third World from the developed countries are primarily meant to benefit the donors and investors themselves, and are in fact the major cause of poverty in underdeveloped countries."

Line - up on the British Left

Sri Lanka leftists who are perhaps as Anglophile as this country's Establishment, will doubtless be interested by the relative strengths of various factions within the British Left. Latest reports in the British press indicate that the Communist Party (CPGB) is being outflanked — on its left, by more radical groupings. Mr. George Mathews, head of the press and publicity section of the CPGB, and also a Politburo member, admitted that membership of the Communist Party has dropped to its lowest level for more than 25 years. He said that the number of membership cards issued so far this year was about 22,000 which contrasted with the 28,519 in 1975 and 25,293 in 1977. This suggested a 5-10% drop per year.

The other two main leftwing parties in Britain are the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) with a membership of between 4,500 -5,000 and the International Marxist Group (IMG) with a membership of about 1,400 plus 1000 sympathisers. At the expense of the Communist Party, SWP has gathered a high degree of publicity due to their predominant role within the 'Anti Nazi League' — a broad front which organized a 70,000 strong march against racism in London recently. The IMG is a Trotskyist group led by Tariq Ali and affiliated to Ernest Mandel's Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International. Its strength is due to the high journalistic standards of its publications in particular the newspaper 'Socialist Challenge' which is edited by the well known young radical journalist Paul Foot, former Secretary of Britain's National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and former editor of 'Private Eye' magazine. 'Socialist challenge' however also publishes articles from all ends of the left spectrum ranging from the CPGB to the Labour Left. The exact strength of Mr. Ted Grant's 'Militant' group which represents the radical left of the

Labour Party's youth and student organization.

Meanwhile, 500 hardline members of the CPGB broke away last year from the main Communist Party in protest against the 'reformist' and Euro-communist nature of its programme 'The British Road to Socialism'. These members have formed the 'New Communist Party' under

the leadership of Sid French, and is strongly pro-Soviet in orientation.

Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara's LSSP (New leadership) is linked to the 'Militant' group in Britain, while Mr. Tampoe's RMP and Mr. Wijeweera's JVP are said to maintain contacts with Tariq Ali's IMG.

Israel: another victim of 'Friedmania'

The Israeli economy has become yet another casualty of Milton Friedman's monetarist economics, alleges Professor John Kenneth Galbraith. His accusation is corroborated by *London Times* correspondent Ruth Cale, reporting from Jerusalem. She writes: "The 'economic revolution' of last October has flopped. Applying the text books of Milton Friedman, the American Noble Prize Winner and laissez faire prophet, Israeli Finance Minister Simcha Erlich and his team generously liberalized foreign currency controls, and floated the local pound. This brought an immediate devaluation of 50% and another 20% since then as the Israeli pound's value has been dropping steadily The result of that policy so far has been that the steadily dropping purchasing power of the Israeli currency has reduced the real income of all wage and salary earners who are taxed at source, while at the same time benefited the fat cats in the free professions and commerce."

According to the same correspondent, the inflation rate has climbed to 54% and is not likely to drop below 40% before the end of the current fiscal year. The Finance Minister however had budgeted only for a 25% maximum rate of inflation. Now there is unrest in the powerful trade unions grouped around the opposition Labour Party, and the entire teaching profession from

high school principals downwards struck work on September 11th. They are demanding a 40% wage rise, but the government has sternly warned them that 15% is the limit. If they win their demands, the money presses will have to produce banknotes faster and the inflationary spiral will be fuelled.

Economic observers predict that the next step in the Israeli govt's economic strategy will be to increase electricity, water and fuel prices while raising VAT (Value added tax) — which is levied on every item except fresh fruit and vegetables — from 12% to 15%. "Then however, the unions will demand full cost of living index adjustments and the merry-go-round will go on as before" says a leading economist, who predicts that the Israeli economy will move from its present "hopeless mess" into a state of 'total collapse'. This economist, told Ruth Cale that the only solution was long term planning, controls, taxing of stock market profits and other measures "which hurt the fat cats."

Meanwhile, just as the Labour Opposition and the Trade Unions were demanding Finance Minister Simcha Erlich's resignation, the Minister was on a tour of Latin America, the USA and Western Europe, telling prospective investors about "the total success" of his economic policy, adds Ruth Cale.

Race in British politics today

by Jayantha Somasunderam

In an interview with A. Sivanandan

A Sivanandan, Secretary of the Institute of Race Relations in U. K. and Editor of the prestigious journal RACE & CLASS, sees the race issue as being crucial at the next British General Elections. The Conservative Party is increasingly moving towards a racist position. "What the National Front says today, the Tories say tomorrow," he said.

The National Front is an anti-immigrant group that has grown up amidst Britain's severe recession. They are convincing white workers in Britain that they don't have jobs and they don't have housing because the Blacks have them. So get the blacks out and you solve the economic problems of the Whites.

"But the truth of the matter," says Sivanandan, "is that if you take the blacks out, the British economy will collapse."

The growth of the National Front has pushed all British politics to the Right. They appeal to the frustration and false nationalism of the Whites, to the still lingering concepts of a Greater Britain.

"After the war," continued Sivanandan, "it was we who had the manpower. And we provided labour for Britain's labour-intensive industry. Thus the Blacks are concentrated in the old industrial cities where they became a sub-proletariat." Continuing he said, "The crude economics of the strategy would indicate that Britain no longer needs that workforce it was once desperate for and would like to lay them off—preferably in their countries of origin. All the Immigration Acts from 1962 onwards had pointed to this end—culminating in the Act of 1971 which finally established a system of importing workers when they were needed and sending them back when they were not. And all the Immig-

ration Acts because they were aimed at 'coloured immigrants' and therefore tied to race—were preceded by and sought justification in the philosophy that fewer blacks meant better race relations. But the 1971 Act applied to future immigration; there was always the question of what to do with those who had settled here before then. So that even when primary immigration was virtually ended, the philosophy continued—to be applied this time to the dependents of those who had settled here. But alongside that, another philosophy, springing from the economics of recession—still based on the premise that fewer blacks make for better race relations—begins to emerge: one that would eventually provide the justification for repatriation."

"For a long time the Black workers were regarded as docile and a political. Because they came from backward societies and did not react to the racism of the Whites. But now as the Conservative Party itself moves Right, as Mrs. Margaret Thatcher talks about Britain being swamped by an alien culture, the Blacks are responding. They are responding not merely to political pronouncements but to naked physical violence as well. They are forming Committees against Racism and Fascism, Vigilance committees that have sprung up in Black neighbourhoods.

In response to the Tory policy on race, the Labour Party has sought to portray itself as the friend of the Blacks. "Viewed in terms of electoral politics, the Tory tactics would appear to be no more than a vote catching exercise, cynically exploiting the racism of the white working class," explained Sivanandan. "But the philosophy from which the tactics emanate is ingrained in the philosophy of archaic, free-enterprise capitalism, which Mar-

geret Thatcher and her cohorts espouse.

For enlightened capital, the appeal to narrow nationalism and racism is not only unnecessary but, in terms of social cost, counter-productive. Hence the Race Relations Act of 1976 was aimed at dismantling institutional racism while still allowing racism to divide the working class. Since then, however, the Labour government in its role as agent of the ruling class, has persuaded the unions, the alleged representatives of the working class, to adopt its interests as their own in a contract social. And to leave the black working class out of such a contract would be to invite a militancy which could infect the rest of the class.

At the same time the rise of the National Front has shown that the continuing division of the working class on racist lines not only weakens Labour's electoral base but gives also a fillip to fascism—which is not in the interests of corporate capital: you don't need to defeat the working class when you can co-opt it. Hence Labour has disassociated itself from the recommendations of the Select Committee, inveighed against Tory immigration proposals as unnecessary, 'inhuman' and pointing to a 'pass law society', and been visibly active in on-going anti-racist, anti-fascist campaigns".

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The President's bombast

It is on record that all UNP governments have characterised strike action as politically motivated. Accordingly, it is not surprising to see that the Jayewardene-Thondaman government's efforts to condemn the token strike scheduled for the 28th as being politically motivated. However, up to now UNP governments have secretly supported the employers during trade union disputes. That was done not in fear but in conformity to the 'ethics' of the capitalist class. The first time a government has openly called upon the private sector to follow its example of sacking striking employees is the government of the Jayewardene-Thondaman coalition. It is clear from this that this government is neither democratic nor even 'dharmista' (just).



Why this fear?

Why these lies?

Why fear so much? This is the question that both the people of this country and the foreign masters of Mr. Jayewar-

dene are asking. Is this a struggle to overthrow the government? With the threat to sack striking workers and ordering the forces and the police to stand by, against whom is the government preparing to wage war? Let us for a moment assume that Mr. Jayewardene has succeeded in breaking the strike by wielding the big stick. Will he look upon it as a victory? Yet a single dream does not complete the night. Even if you assume that the token strike can be broken, can it put an end to the struggle of the people? Hunger knows no laws. Hence the break up of a single strike does not mean final victory. It merely ignites more struggles.

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Threats are not a new thing

Although the token strike on the 28th is the first struggle launched against the government since it was appointed, it is only the beginning of a struggle. What the working class hopes to achieve from this struggle is to waken the reactionary government from the sleep of inaction towards working class demands. Certainly, the workers anticipated that there would be threats and that their demands would be looked at through green tinted spectacles. Hence the huffing and puffing of the government is nothing new to the working class.

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The 'mixed economy'

In the development strategies followed in the countries with "mixed economies" such as Sri Lanka and India, one of the main areas of controversy, or at least one major preoccupation, has been the choice between the centrally planned, socialistic, state-monopolised strategies and the competitive, private-sector, market-based capitalistic strategies. Although the economic policies in Sri Lanka have generally accepted the need for a "mixed economy", the ideology and the economic philosophy behind the "mixed economy" has been extremely ambiguous. The "mixed economy" has been generally regarded as "transitional" by almost all leading political groups in Sri Lanka.

For the socialist part of the political spectrum, particularly the Marxist parties, the mixed economy was a transitional phase which should rapidly lead to an expansion of the socialist sectors of the economy and eventually create a centrally planned socially owned system of production and distribution. Within the Marxist framework, the "mixed economy" was placed within the logic of the unfolding class struggle, and what the Marxists perceived as the inevitable and essential transfer of power from the propertied and capital-owning class to the working class. But within the ideological framework what was not clear was the Marxist strategy of "transition" within the specific configuration of power and balance of class forces in Sri Lanka.

On the one hand, the Trotskyist allegiance to the concept of permanent revolution saw this transition as a continuous and rapid process. The shifts had to be managed through a coalition of progressive forces in which the Marxist vanguard would soon take the lead. On the other hand, the Marxist coalition with the S. L. F. P. and the balance of power it repre-

sented dictated a strategy where the "transition" had necessarily to be a longer intermediate phase in which the incentive systems and the framework of economic prospects had to create conditions for both the public and private sectors to function effectively over a considerable period. Here a sensitive adaptation of Kalecki's concept of the 'intermediate regime' to the class configuration in Sri Lanka, particularly its rural structures, might have provided a better theoretical premise for a more realistic Marxist strategy of transition.

The S. L. F. P. could have perhaps been the party best suited to the politics of the mixed economy as initially its class support was drawn from all strata. The economics "of the middle path" seemed best suited to its ideology. But even so it was not able to give clear definition to the policy framework which was necessary to support an efficiently functioning mixed economy. It waged a losing struggle to bring about major changes in the socio-economic structure while at the same time maintaining an efficiently functioning economy. Although it appeared to support a system in which the state and the private sector were in some state of balance, this seemed to reside more in the conceptual frame of the planners than in a clearly defined social ideology or political commitment. In fact, there was a manifest failure to demarcate the areas of operation for the public and private sectors with the result that large parts of the public sector became increasingly inefficient and the private sector, with the exception of a few pockets such as the tourist and gem trades, lost its incentive for growth and investment.

The U. N. P. which was traditionally regarded as the party of the propertied classes also seemed to accept the framework of a mixed economy from the time it

formed the first government after Independence. It did in fact establish a significant component of state-owned industrial enterprise and laid the foundations of the welfare state. But the underlying bias was in favour of a dynamic private sector in production and commerce, supported by a strong state sector mainly confined to activities concerning the economic infrastructure and social welfare. The encroachment of the state into production and commerce did not seem to find ready acceptance within the U. N. P. policy framework. Nevertheless, where left oriented governments had transferred important branches of economic activity to the state, the U. N. P. governments did not seek to reverse the process in any significant way. In this sense the U. N. P. ideology seemed more willing to adapt itself to the mixed economy as a permanent feature of the socio-economic system than the other political ideologies which approached the "mixed economy" as essentially a transitional phenomenon.

Given the different stances in the approach to the "mixed economy" by different political groups, the mixed economy remained a troublesome concept to both politician and planners. At best, they were apt to regard it as a necessary imperfection, dictated by political conditions. At worst, it was considered a state of confusion in which the economy received the worst of two worlds—the socialist and the capitalist. In public debate and discussion one frequently encountered the exhortation that Sri Lanka must make a definite choice between the socialist path or the free enterprise capitalistic path. It was argued that in either one, there was a consistent system of incentives which would yield positive results if systematically adopted. According to the conventional view, the attempt to mix these systems generated serious inconsistencies which worked against the efficiency of both.

In this critique of the "mixed economy" there was the assumption

(Continued on page 23)

Why farmers don't repay bank loans

During 'Maha' 1977-78 the People's Bank and the Bank of Ceylon are reported to have doled out as much as Rs 475 million by way of cultivation loans to our farmers, but only a small fraction of this sum (less than 25 per cent) is said to have been recovered. This matter is causing such grave concern to the government that it has decided to seek the assistance of an advertising agency in a bid to motivate farmers to repay their cultivation loans.

It is regrettable that the government should have embarked on taking corrective measures before making a complete study of the problem. Thorough investigation and proper diagnosis are essential pre-requisites for the effective treatment of any disease. Likewise the problem of why farmers don't repay bank loans deserves in depth study before any meaningful corrective action can be taken.

Investigations conducted by this writer during 'Maha' 1977-78 indicate that there are at least four factors responsible for the high percentage of loan default among our farmers. They are: 1. Low crop yields 2. Reduced income resulting from a fall in the market price of subsidiary food crops following the government's decision to import chillies, onions, Masoor dhal etc. 3. Lack of government concern in ensuring loan recovery in the past 4. Liberal issue of cultivation loans.

Low Yields: 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 paddyland in a dry zone colonization scheme would therefore obtain a total yield of 165 bushels of paddy. (55x3) This farmer would retain about 40 bushels for home consumption over the next six months (until his next harvest). He therefore sells only 125 bushels of paddy (165 - 40)

At the prevailing guaranteed price of Rs 40/- per bushel, the farmer's gross income for the season would be Rs 5,000/- (125 x 40). What are the farmer's liabilities? He needs Rs 2,350/- to repay his bank loan. He has to make an additional contribution of Rs 2,250/- towards meeting the cultivation costs of the next crop (this would apply even if he were to obtain a fresh bank loan for the next crop — bank loan meets only half the cost of production per acre, which is about Rs 1,500). This leaves the farmer with only Rs 400/- (5,000 - 4,600) to support himself and his family of six over the next six months! Since it is impossible for the farmer to exist on Rs 400/-, he is compelled not to repay his cultivation loan.

Reduced Income: The present government's decision to import previously banned commodities such as dried chillies has considerably lowered the price paid to locally grown chillies. Thus chillies which never fetched a price lower than Rs 8/- per pound during the past seven years, hardly fetch Rs 5/- per pound (price paid to farmer) today. Farmers who obtained bank loans for chilli cultivation last year hoping to receive at least Rs 8-10 per pound for their produce, are now unable to realize more than 50 per cent of their targeted income. It is not at all surprising that such farmers should find it difficult to repay their bank loans.

Government Policy: Succeeding governments formed in this country during the past decade have shown little concern in ensuring recovery of cultivation loans. The S.L.F.P. government of 1970 choose to ignore previous loan defaulters and issued fresh bank loans to virtually all and sundry. The UNP government of 1977 did precisely the same thing! Many farmers have now got accustomed to the belief that the government is not really serious in recovering outstanding loans.

Inadequate Safeguards: Granting of cultivation loans during 'Maha' 1977-78 was unusually liberal. Banks were besieged by numerous applications for cultivation loans. Understaffed and hopelessly pressed for time, bankers could not ensure their normal safeguards. As a result, even many non-farmers availed themselves of sizeable chunks of agricultural credit. In some instances, two or more individuals are said to have obtained loans for the same land!

The irony is that even the bankers knew that they were doing the wrong thing. Yet, they dared not question government policy — the expeditious granting of loans. The only way to grant loans expeditiously, with the limited staff and time at their disposal, was to grant loans to virtually all who applied.

An unbiased analysis of the facts presented above leads one to the inescapable conclusion that the major responsibility for non-repayment of agricultural loans granted during 'Maha' 1977-78 rests with the government and not the Sri Lankan farmer. The government's new import policy is directly responsible for the low income earned by chilli, onion and cow pea farmers. The government is to be blamed for failing to take the normal safeguards preparatory to the approval of bank loans. Even the low yields obtained by many farmers are a direct result of the failure of many government institutions to adequately service the farmer.

The internal factor

The determinant factor in any given process being in the last instance the internal one, it is necessary to focus on the internal dynamics of the Third World. These dynamics are located fundamentally in the economic plane though they operate at each and every level of the society and polity. The peripheral nature of the 3rd world within the global capitalist system, the relationship of dependence between these peripheral economies and the developed (metropolitan) ones ensure that the acute economic crisis now gripping the entire non-socialist world, falls heaviest on those least capable of bearing the burden—the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Only option

In the context of such a crisis, there is only one option open to the ruling elites of the periphery, whom it must be emphasized, are in a relationship of symbiotic dependence with their counterparts in the metropolises. This sole option for the maintenance of maximum profit for themselves and their metropolitan masters is to increase the rate of expropriation of surplus value.

Stated baldly this means the increasing exploitation of the working class and peasantry in these countries. The masses resist of course—in various ways and varying degrees, and this means that the ruling elite must resort to increasing repression. This cannot be achieved within the framework of the bourgeois-democratic welfare state. The old superstructure no longer corresponds to the objective situation at the economic base and therefore, cannot be tolerated any further. The dynamics of the development of capitalism in the 3rd world (or more correctly the development of capitalist underdevelopment, as Gunder

Frank puts it) within an overall situation of international and internal crisis, requires a new political 'shell' which corresponds to this situation. Thus, the economic concessions granted to or won by the masses in 'boom' periods have to be withdrawn and the political rights won by the working class removed. In short, the bourgeois democratic framework has to be severely altered or altogether dismantled.

New model

This is the very process that has taken place in Uruguay, Chile, Indonesia and the overwhelming majority of 3rd world countries. Democratic freedoms have been totally squashed, tens of thousands slaughtered, imprisoned and tortured and harsh dictatorships installed, prior to inviting multinational corporations to dominate the country's economy, in conjunction with local big business. A new model of state, pioneered in Brazil is being fashioned in most 3rd world countries. Known euphemistically as the 'State of National Security', it involves the complete centralization and militarization of the state apparatus. The main organs of the new structure are the Armed Forces, Police, the intelligence units and the National Security Council. (G. I. Mirsky in his study says that the apparatus is dominated by "an anti-national-military-bureaucratic ruling caste," whose tacit slogan is "politics without political life.") In their thinking, the genuine development of the people takes second place to 'stability' and 'security'. The dominant psychology is that any form of opposition is treason; and treason emanates from civilians. The emphasis is not on representation or popular participation, but rather on 'modern'—techniques and 'scientific' forms of management and administration. The state's social base becomes

steadily narrower and soon a strategy of 'total war' is embarked on, aimed at the complete elimination of all oppositional social and political forces—left wing political parties, trade unions, student groups peasant organizations, national minorities and even religious associations. Before long, political elimination becomes in effect physical elimination.

Thus, all existing and potential counter-structures are dissolved and the state's monolithic, corporatist structure is imposed. As the ideological apparatuses of its control (i. e. the mass media) becomes increasingly bankrupt in the eyes and ears of the masses, the ruling class relies almost exclusively on its repressive apparatus to maintain its hegemony. Some 3rd world radicals term this neo-colonial phenomenon-neo-Fascism', due to the specific features it possesses vis-a-vis classical European fascism. These specificities they say, are the political reflections of the economic specificities of 3rd world capitalism vis-a-vis that of the metropolis. Capitalism in the periphery is characterized by the features of dependence, underdevelopment and co-existence with pre-capitalist residues.

The massive expansion of the armaments industry and the huge public works programme reduced inflation and soaked up most of the unemployed in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, while not even Nobel prize winner Milton Friedman and his Chicago Mafia can control Chile's triple-digit inflation. Indeed, average unemployment in the entire non-socialist 3rd world runs at over 30%! So, even in a narrow economic sense, fascism in neo-colonial context just doesn't work—not even in the short run. It is however, highly profitable for the multinationals and their domestic (junior) partners.

Neo-fascist

Some 3rd world Marxists even go so far as to assert that this neo-fascist model of state, the

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The making and unmaking of Constitutions

The Leaders of the Opposition contended in the Assembly that the making of a constitution is not 'an isolated event, but a step in the process by which a people assert their identity, articulate their basic values and aspirations and define the instruments of government through which the sovereignty of the people can be exercised.' There are two approaches to this process which need to be distinguished and classified.

The first approach is directed towards the elaboration of an institutional framework which more effectively corresponds to the political style of the regime in power. Such an approach is regarded as the 'instrumental' approach to constitution making, and does not envisage the constitution to be an eternal instrument embodying the highest values and aspirations of the people. There is a measure of impermanency in such instruments as their life span is often limited to the duration of the political regime in power. They provide the means by which those who had captured power can more effectively organize and exercise power.

The second approach to constitution making envisages the Constitution to be the fundamental law enshrining for all times the basic values, aspirations and ideal of the different components of the body politic. Such Constitutions are somewhat permanent instruments, and even the process of amendment gathers inspiration and direction from the underlying philosophy of the Constitution itself. The second is the 'consensual approach.'

The instrumental approach recognises a somewhat authoritarian process of constitution making which disregards the aspirations of groups in opposition to the regime in power. The consensual approach on the other hand views the Cons-

titution as a legal and political compact capturing the compromises that have been worked out between different communities and political groups; it defines the framework with which the different groups may compete for power and gain access to the resources of a society,

Is the constitutional exercise that has been recently completed of the instrumental or consensual type?

The resort to a Select Committee procedure meant that the political parties unrepresented in the Assembly could not enjoy direct participation in the drafting process. The non-participation of the Tamil United Liberation Front in the Select Committee further eroded the exercise of its 'consensual' elements. The conceptual basis for the TULF's noninvolvement in this process has been summarised by Mr. Amirthalingam:

"The Republican Constitution of 1972 sought to sever legal and constitutional link with the past. Once there is such a break in legal continuity, the sovereignty of the inhabitants of the Island until then under eclipse, (during a period of foreign domination or externally designed constitutional rule) resurfaced. Hence the sovereignty of the Tamil Nation which was ethnically, geographically and linguistically separately identifiable and distinct, revived. The United National Party had clear unequivocal mandate to assert the sovereignty of the Sinhala nation and enact a new constitution. The mandate the majority of the Tamil Nation pointed to a different duty."

The Select Committee constituted in November 3rd 1977 tabled its report on June 22nd, 78. Despite these major handicaps there was remarkable congruence between the views of the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party as they related to some of the substantive concerns of the Select Committee. The areas of agreement included fundamental rights, judicial review, lang-

(The author who has a doctorate in Law from Harvard is a research director at the Marga Institute)

uage, citizenship, principles of state policy and the creation of an Ombudsman. Although the SLFP has been consistent in its opposition to the Executive Presidency, and some aspects of proportional representation its principal concern appears more procedural than substantive. It protested against the total repeal of the Republican Constitution of 1972, and favoured the introduction of a Third Amendment containing substantive alterations to the existing instrument. This position appears to have been further hardened by the addition of controversial provisions in the general and transitional chapters after the Committee Report had been tabled. The SLFP dissent accordingly warned ominously.

"The sanctity and continuation of a Constitution depends on public acceptance of its provisions. If at the next elections the people grant us a mandate to do so, we shall introduce a Constitution consistent with the views expressed (in our dissent) and the Republican Constitution of 1972."

The problem still remains whether the constitutional exercise which appears instrumental, can nevertheless acquire the formal attributes of a consensual instrument. The system of proportional representation provides the clue to this problem, and we must now briefly examine its main elements and their implications for the process of constitution making.

The rationale of proportional representation is clearly articulated in the Report of the Select Committee which states that the present system is inadequate in that it is not fairly representative of the political opinion within the country. It points out that in 1970, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party was able to secure 60.3% of the total

number of seats in Parliament although it received only 36.9% of the total vote. On the other hand the United National Party with 37.9% of the total vote was only able to secure 11.3% of the total number of seats. In 1977 the United National Party with 50.9% of the total votes secured 83.3% of the seats, while the Sri Lanka Freedom Party with 29.7% of the total votes secured only 4.8% of the seats. It should be noted that 13% swing for the United National Party resulted in a 72% gain in representation while the negative swing of 7.2% for the Sri Lanka Freedom Party resulted in 55.5% loss in representation. The Report reiterates that this is not merely unfair but leads to political instability.

We must then digress to examine the main elements of proportional representation which are found in Articles 135 to 139 of the Constitution.

Firstly, the identification of the district as the basic electoral unit. A Delimitation Commission will divide the country into several electoral districts. These electoral districts shall be one or more administrative districts. They shall remain unchanged thereafter.

Secondly, the principle of allocation of seats. The total number of seats will be frozen at 196; each province would be allocated 4 seats to be distributed amongst the districts contained within the Province. The remaining 160 seats would be distributed amongst the several electoral districts according to the number of registered voters. As the population increases the number of registered electors will correspondingly increase.

Thirdly, the voting would be for political parties and not for individuals. Recognized political parties present a list of candidates and voting could be based on such lists. There will be no Independents unless they form a group and present a common list of candidates.

Fourthly, the concept of a cut off vote. This means in effect that if a political party or a group of individuals receive less than 1/8ths of the total number of

votes cast, these votes would be cancelled and the political party concerned would not be able to return a candidate to the National Assembly.

I have elsewhere examined the impact of each of these elements on the growth of the party system. It would be sufficient for this purpose to summarise some of the major criticisms of proportional representation.

Firstly, one of the consequences of the district being recognized as the electoral unit, would be to eliminate the parliamentary electorate and erode the relationship that has evolved between the Member of Parliament and the Constituency. The parliamentary electorate has evolved into a distinct political sociological and territorial entity. Within its framework there has evolved a system of social relations between the Members of Parliament and his constituents. This includes the system of reciprocity by which constituents assert the rights to make demands upon their representatives for jobs, for governmental benefits and the corresponding duty to be responsive to these demands. The Member of Parliament influenced the allocation of resources and even mediated inter personal conflict. It is difficult to see how this system of reciprocity and the network of social relations within which it was contained could replicate itself with a District. The choice of a district as the basic electoral unit would sever the lines of accountability between the representative and the electorate.

The second criticism relates to that of area of weightage. The issue of representation has been one of immense controversy in the political relationships between various communities. We are all aware that the formula for balanced representation presented by the All Ceylon Tamil Congress was not accepted by the Soulbury Commission. The Commission held that representation should be on two principles, viz, one member for every 75,000 inhabitants and an additional member for every 1,000 square mile radius. The object of area weightage was to give addi-

tional weightage to the minority communities; so that the Northern and Eastern Provinces were given eight additional seats and the remaining provinces were given 17 seats. Article 136 (4) has reversed this process of weightage by providing that each province will be entitled to 4 seats which in effect means that the ratio of 8:17 has now been escalated to one of 8:28. The additional bonus of 11 seats by increasing the representation of the majority community will undermine the very purpose for which area weightage was introduced.

The third problem relates to electoral lists. One of the implications of a list system is that the power of returning individual representatives effectively shifts from that of the electorate to that of the political party. The nomination of candidates and the ranking of candidates become issues of immense importance over which the political party would have control. Under the system of election for Local Government the party lists of the candidates would not even appear on the ballot paper. No doubt there are other means by which these lists can be disseminated among the electorate. The system of lists we have adopted places a greater distance between the individual voter and the individual candidate who would ultimately be returned to Parliament.

It is therefore submitted that system of proportional representation must be preceded by a democratisation process within the political party itself. The enormous power that the party leadership enjoys in the nomination of candidates, must be modulated to ensure greater accountability to and consultation with the rank and file of the party. Most political parties have an organizational structure in which decision making is delegated by the Party Convention to a hierarchy of Committees. But the formal organization often conceals that the real decision making is concentrated in the higher reaches of the leadership. Democratization should find expression both in form and spirit.

Finally we may now look at the issue of the threshold vote. Both

the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Ceylon Workers Congress in their dissents have complained that the fixing of the threshold vote at 12½% would discriminate against smaller political parties. The figure 1/8 of the total vote has been fixed because this is the point at which the candidates in a single-member constituency would forfeit his deposit. The C.W.C. memorandum however argues that there is no rational relationship between the formula for the loss of deposit in a single-member constituency and the threshold vote in a system of proportional representation. 'These are two distinct concepts and it will be arbitrary to determine the former by reference to the latter.'

Let me revert to the general theme of this article. Does proportional representation provide the answer to whether the new constitution would evolve into the 'instrumental' or 'consensual' type? Article 82 (5) provides that a Bill

for the amendment or repeal of a constitution would require.

- (a) a special majority of two thirds of the members of the National Assembly.
- (b) a majority of the members of the National Assembly plus the approval of the People at a Referendum.

Given the pattern of electoral voting that we have seen over the past three decades, it is unlikely that any of the recognized political parties would be able to capture the legislative majority necessary to enact a Constitution of the instrumental type. Proportional representation would entrench an instrumental constitution and clothe it with the permanency of the consensual type. The President further implied during the deliberations of the Select Committee that the new reality could compel the U.N.P. and the S.L.F.P. to abandon the politics of partisanship and evolve the political style of consensus. He stated.

"Are you not always thinking in terms of the old British System - that the two party system or the three party system will survive? Can we not go ahead of that? Can we not think of a national way?"

On this reasoning proportional representation could foreshadow a transformation in the style of electoral politics and the emergence of new configurations of power.

On the other hand, there are many who are sceptical of this theory. They contend that no formula for representation could per se lead to such transformations. Consensual politics can only emerge out of a climate of political accommodation. And unless a conscious effort is made to create such a climate, it would require little legal ingenuity to work around the entrenched procedures of constitutional change to create another 'legal revolution'. We would then be thrown back into the cycle of making and unmaking of instrumental constitutions - from which proportional representations can provide no escape.

Cryptic Crossword No. 7

by Stripex

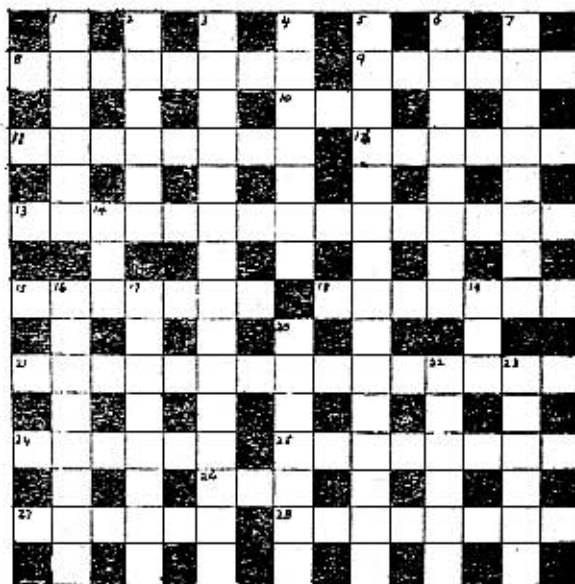
Across

CLUES

8. Trainers of nag and mares (8)
9. ... threw — away/Richer than all his tribe (Othello) (1,5)
10. British constitutionalist confuses Magog's ally (3)
11. Wife to contribute to the success of the assembly (8)
12. Arrange pit mac for effect (6)
13. Soldier gets training for what our doctors like (7,8)
15. The choice and master — of this age (Mark Antony) (7)
18. Dug for potatoes? (7)
21. A firm pusher you might say (7,8)
24. Absurd country visited by Gulliver (6)
25. Stop what you do with the curd (6,2)
26. King in France (3)
27. Hang from deep-end pointlessly (6)
28. The very limits of sex-meter (8)

Down

1. Run rapidly as a way of making a living (6)
2. Chess champion moves: King takes Rook Pawn (VOA broadcast) (6)
3. Proper flags as models for imitation (6,9)
4. Nuclear scientists' jargon is nothing to confused poet (7)
5. Occult quality of enchanting theatrical set? (7,8)
6. Reprieved Sid Peter (8)
7. 150 follow youth leader in a trice for machine (8)
14. Here where 26 is king (3)
16. Fan gets D-rope — is treated with contempt (8)
17. Transports pure star (8)
19. What a man has to face at the end of a sentence (3)
20. Groups coin to some to some point (7)
22. Dispossession is nothing to us three times (6)
23. Thou Paradise of —, Italy! (Shelley) (6)



Solution to Cryptic Crossword No. 6

ACROSS — 9. Nasty part 10. Loose 11. Lease to
12. Agnates 13. Astra 14. Noble Lady 16. Burning question
18. Ennobling 19. Satan 20. Deolali 21. Dubarry
22. Alibi 23. Later plan.

DOWN — 1. Unscramble 2. A smattering of it 3. Hyaena
4. Halo 5. Strasbourg 6. Blankets 7. Contradictorily
8. Cess 14. Negligible 15. Yin nan dyang 17. In Brazil
19. Suborn 20. Deal 21. Date.

'Veera Puran Appu' and the distortion of history

One does not usually insist that 'historical' films should be factually accurate down to the last detail, but when historical accuracy is emphatically claimed by a film producer, then it is only fair that distortions and errors of interpretation should be challenged.

In the recent film 'Veera Puran Appu', claims were made in the opening sequences that the film was based on research done at the National Archives and that it was guided by historians and that the film-makers resorted to invention only to fill in the "empty spaces" of Puran Appu's life. However such inventions should be in the spirit of historical truth. One knows for instance that there never was a massacre on the Odessa steps, but Eisenstein, basing himself on the fact that there were innumerable such massacres in various places, crystallised the truth of all of them in one magnificent, cinematically - conceived episode. This is the kind of truth against which this film continually offends.

Take, for example the episode with which the film begins. The supposed abduction of the British government agent's niece is a fabrication. What is this meant to achieve? Is it to titillate the crowds (bandit abducts white woman)? This very untypical incident is used for two purposes, both of which run counter to historical truth: first it gives Puran Appu an almost personal motivation for his subsequent actions against the British; second, it is used to show Puran Appu as the "gentleman hero" who saves the girl from being molested by Gongalegoda Banda, who in contrast, is depicted as a clown of sorts as well as a weak and low character.

Another distortion is the portrayal of Dr. Christopher Elliott

who is seen as a spy who betrayed the Kandyans. Although rather naive remarks are made in the film (in reference to Elliott) that all white men are 'bad guys', the film producer's lack of correct historical perspective does a disservice to the real contribution of Elliott. For it is well established that Elliott was a radical Irishman who led an important struggle for liberal, democratic rights in the 1840's against the authoritarian colonial regime in Sri Lanka, and was in the forefront of the urban agitation in Colombo against the repressive taxes of 1848. The film makes no reference to this important agitation of the incipient working class and other inhabitants of Colombo and its environs which took place simultaneously with the resistance of the Kandyen peasantry in July 1848.

The film also fails to show the influence of political upheavals in Europe in 1848 on a remote colony like Sri Lanka. In that year there was revolution in France, sparking off the fall of autocratic government all over Europe, along with a wave of working-class agitation in England (the Chartist Movement) and a revolt in Ireland, all of which had an impact on the events of 1848 in Sri Lanka. The news of revolts and revolutions in the white man's own regions were publicised by radicals like Elliott and discussed in Sri Lanka - the people of Sri Lanka even being urged to emulate the French and refuse to pay oppressive taxes.

However, the major failure of the film is its inability to communicate the background of unrest and exploitation which led to the rebellion of 1848. The economic depression in the capitalist world that occurred in 1846 affected Sri Lanka, which by the time was linked to the capitalist world market through coffee exports; this crisis was the immediate cause of the oppressive taxation that the British government in

Sri Lanka resorted to, namely the taxes on guns, dogs, shop and boats and the notorious poll tax on the people. To the Kandyans, who had seen the disruption of their traditional society, their pasture and ekena lands sold for coffee plantations, the decline of their religion and culture and the increase of social evils such as drunkenness and crime, the oppressive taxes were the final provocation. The incident in the film where Puran Appu, in true cowboy style, tosses the coffee planter's gun from his hand is used to show Puran Appu in a heroic light to his prospective bride and her father, rather than to illuminate a facet of the foreign aggression and exploitation the Kandyans were subjected to.

Puran Appu, whose real name was Francisco Fernando, and who came from Moratuwa, was connected by birth to the new capitalist class of renters and traders of the maritime provinces who had penetrated the Kandyen regions; most of this class were loyal to the British but some of them had contradictions with them. Again, the film portrays Alexander Fernando, the wealthy arrack renter of Moratuwa (said to be the cousin of Puran Appu), but no attempt is made to elucidate the relationships between the renters of the low country, the Kandyans and the British. It was the fact that they belonged to a different mode of production, together with the social disintegration of Kandyen feudalism following upon British rule, that permitted socially conscious adventurers like Puran Appu and Gongalegoda Banda to assume the leadership of the Kandyen peasantry when conditions for rebellion arose.

The failure of the film's makers to correctly understand and communicate this background has led to the portrayal of Puran Appu

as an individual hero whose personality (and horoscope) had an impact on historical developments. Their lack of a broad historic perspective has also led the film makers to highlight religious and caste factors in an unnecessary manner. The sight of 'our man' Puran Appu, going to war leading the Kandyan peasantry with his caste flag billowing behind him, may warm the hearts of the caste group to which he belonged, but it seems highly unlikely if not ludicrous to others.

The attempt to highlight the religious factor has served to thrust Kudapola Unanse into a central position; indeed, if the film is to be believed, Kudapola was the main organiser of the rebellion whose motive was really the protection of the Buddhist religion. Puran Appu, Gongalegoda Banda and the other were merely puppets in his hand. The fear of religious persecution did play a part in the rebellion but to make it the main motive force is to reduce the scope of the event.

In the face of these various omissions and distortions, the film cannot be called historically accurate, in the depiction of Puran Appu and the rebellion of 1848. Rather it does a disservice to the national heroes of 1848, by reducing them to individualistic fighters, brave but stupid, who were no match for a mere handful of British soldiers. All it does, really, is to justify the position taken by those who speak of the "so-called rebellion of 1848" and describe it as a mere skirmish of a few brigands, rapidly and effectively put-down by the British, whereas in fact, 1848 was a part of the continuing resistance to imperialism that began in 1818. Moreover the Kandyan armed peasantry are shown as fighting in open combat, indulging in positional warfare against the British forces, whereas the Kandyans have always resorted to guerilla warfare, ambushes and sudden attacks when pitted against forces with superior weaponry.

Neither is Veera Puran Appu a good film in the cinematic sense.

Reduced to individualistic heroes, it seems to share many of the clichés of crude Western film, down to the touching farewell by Puran Appu to his faithful (albeit stolen) horse. As a film it is rather pedestrian and dull, and except for Tissa Abeysekera's powerful portrayal of the militant bhikkhu, Kudapola Unanse, the film fails to evoke a passionate involvement in the desperate, but heroic popular struggle of 1848.

One wonders therefore whether the film has been deliberately used for sectarian political ends. Moratuwa has two distinct traditions. One is the tradition of pioneer capitalist and entrepreneurs who like the famous De Soysa family, amassed immense wealth through arrack renting, coffee cultivation and graphite mining, loyally supporting British rule and being duly rewarded by the imperialists. The other tradition has been of dissent and rebellion, the working people and the intelligentsia of this town having a long history of support for anti-imperialist and radical movements. Is this film merely a cynical attempt by the first tradition as represented by its producers, to use the dissident tradition as represented by Puran Appu, for its own narrow political and caste purposes?

Is there also at the end of the film an attempt to whitewash British rule in Sri Lanka? We are told that Torrington, Tennent, Watson and other were recalled by the British Government in London, thus showing the repressive taxes and the brutal suppression of the revolt as the aberration of a few individuals whom the British Raj duly punished.

It is also regrettable that the film indulges in Sinhala chauvinism and that songs of the "We Sinhala" type are sung. Surely the time has come when we have to portray our anti-imperialist fighters as real national heroes, who belong to the whole people and over whom no one caste, religion or ethnic group should have proprietary rights.

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Implications of educational changes

Somewhere it was said that all philosophies arose by man trying to explain the reality in which he is living through words. Since this is an impossible task, always controversies remain. Mr E. H. de Alwis and Mr. V. P. Vittachi's debate on present educational changes in the pages of 'Lanka Guardian' seem to be facing difficulties arising from this basic fact. Therefore the debate is coming to a point where each says to the other, "You did not understand what I said." Let us try to take this discussion out of this rut if possible.

Welfarism

Welfarism as I understand it comes into being when in a profit motivated economy investments are made without a covering of the costs or a generation of profits. Therefore it is really a 'dirty word' in a profit motivated or a free enterprise economy as stated by Mr. Vittachi in his first response to Mr. de Alwis. But I wonder from where he gathered that it has the same status in "communist states" (I am ignoring the assumption of Mr. Vittachi about the existence of "communist states"). If we substitute the term 'socialist states' instead I think we can carry on the dialogue without deviating. In some of the present day countries with socialist economies not only education but health, transport and even housing are provided for the people on a 'welfare basis', as it is interpreted in capitalist systems (subsidized food can be added to this list in the case of some countries.) But the 'dirty word' welfare we do not find in describing these investments within these countries. In contrast to the capitalist economies, the planned socialist economies do not expect to run its service components in any other way. They are services and are not expected to generate profits. Having efficient

service components so that people will get their basic requirements almost free, is the aim to which a socialist economy is driving towards, while the logic of capitalism makes welfarism a hinderance to economic growth. Pure economic growth being the aim of capitalism.

Mr. Vittachi does not seem to distinguish these basic differences and hence fails to understand that the type of development the I. M. F. is advocating to us, is based on certain basic concepts and aims of development upheld in Capitalism. therefore there is no response from him to the statement by Mr. de Alwis that "socialism which alone can continue to sustain it (welfarism), which is an effective summarising of what was said above.

Socialism can make 'welfarism' the aim of their economic development not by creating wealth first and then by distributing it afterwards, as Mr. Vittachi seems to think is the proper way, when he says, "wealth however must be created before you can distribute it," (therefore the need to cut down on subsidies or welfare measures so that you can have the capital to create wealth—a classical I. M. F. argument!) but by having certain distribution structures along with the steps for the creation of wealth. Free Education in a true sense, forms a part of this distribution structure. These distribution structures ensure that while wealth is created that it does not get accumulated in certain sections of the society.

We cannot expect the I. M. F. to support a programme of economic development aimed at more equitable distribution of wealth, since this on a global scale would mean a redistribution of wealth between the developed world and the underdeveloped world, which is against the interests of I. M. F.

(Sunil Bastian is a graduate of Leningrad State University and is currently engaged in research on Higher Education at the Centre for Society and Religion.)

On the contrary they want any structures that are bringing about even a slightest redistribution of wealth to be curtailed, so that 'growth' can take place, which is their idea of economic development. But 'growth' for the benefit of whom? The I. M. F. right from 1965, when their direct influence on our economy began, had been demanding cut back on welfare measures in education and health. But the basic question that we have to ask is whether such development will really go to benefit the masses?

Cost of education

Coming to the question of 'cost of education' Mr. Vittachi seems to be making a bigger blunder than in the case of 'welfarism'. He raises the question, on behalf of those in charge of education, "What does the country get in return for the vast expenditure in education?" But the next question that he should have asked is, on the basis of what criteria can we measure that this return is adequate or not? If the closing down of the residential campuses is a measure taken to cut down the costs, Mr. Vittachi seems to be implying that the lack of so called 'discipline' unruliness and student protest in campuses are indications that investment there is not worth while and does not bring enough returns to the country. I may be wrong in interpreting what Mr. Vittachi said on this point, but since such arguments are currently being put forward in our society it is well worth considering.

To my mind the only criterion that can justify any investment in education, is the degree to which such an expenditure is moving our educational system towards more democratization, i. e. moving it towards giving equal access to education to all and an education

of equal quality for all. The foreign exchange that the country is spending by introducing London A. L. exams, the statements by the Ministry about giving aid to the private schools, the rule that 50% of first grade entrants will be from the offspring of old boys and old girls, and foundation stones laid here and there in the Colombo South educational district, are measures which can be criticized because they go to increase the gap between the haves and have-nots in the educational sphere. If the closing down of the residential facilities is going to increase the economic burden of students coming from poor rural background, then again we have a step taking us away from our goal of democratisation in the educational sphere.

According to the country report that Sri Lanka presented in the Education Minister's Conference of Asia and Oceania which was held in Colombo in July this year, Sri Lanka in 1976 had spent 3.6% of our G. N. P. in education. (It was 4.6% in 1971, when Dudley Seer's report said that we have a high percentage compared with other developing countries) 91.4% of this money goes for General Education, and 8.6% of that is for the payment of teacher's salaries. Hence we can understand why the government is trying to cut down on teachers training programmes, teachers being the costliest component of the system. In 1972 we were spending roughly 18 times more for the running of the system compared to the amount spent as capital expenditure.

The vast amount of resources that we pump in today into education gets distributed in an unequal way. Statistics are not needed to prove this but a visit to the schools in the Colombo South Educational district, where elite schools coexist with slum schools will suffice. A sociological analysis of the pupils in these two types of schools will complete the picture and prove to us how our education is structured in such a way that 'haves' get still more. If we add to this that in our country

around 10-15% of school going age children do not go to school at all and around 45% had dropped out by the time they reach the sixth grade, only around seven percent of those entering the grade one reach the levels, and of this 1-2% enter the University, we see the results of this unjust structure of our education.

Mr. de Alwis when he criticizes the cutting down of expenditure on education seems to be calling for more money to be pumped into the system hoping that it will lead to more democratisation of education. But will this really happen with the unequal distribution structures of the existing education system? Won't this extra money get diverted to those who already command some resources? Can we aim at better distribution without looking at the basic concepts of the 'school' in particular and education in general that we have today? Aren't these concepts brought to us or imported to us with a certain economic system? In short will a simple quantitative expansion in education solve our problems without qualitative changes in education itself, in its concepts and in the ideas about school models?

What is said above is of course not an argument for cutting down the expenditure on education. Since such a step with the unjust distribution structures that are existing today will have less. Thus we have a crisis situation in education today where most measures that can be thought of within the present framework are going to lead to the widening of the gaps between haves and have-nots, which to my mind is a reflection of the crisis of our entire society at large.

Student unrest

This is a question that we cannot ignore today when speaking about education. Specially with a new Higher Educational bill round the corner and a bad image about the campuses being cultivated by the media, while ignoring antistudent thuggery and outside interference in the campuses. Many seem to be making

use of the so called 'unruliness' in the campuses to justify cutting down of expenses, which might come in a big way in the future.

If one is really keen on understanding the protests in the campuses we must look into their historical development. One could clearly trace the changing characteristics both qualitatively and quantitatively. As years went by when education began to spread, more and more students began to enter the campuses from a poor rural background. Most of them were concentrated in the Arts faculties, since the schools where they studied could give them an education only in that stream. As the social background of the campus population changed we observe the rise in the frequency of the protests. And they were concentrated in the Arts faculties due to objective and obvious reasons. Basically the problems in the society were brought into the campuses. Student unrest is not in any way indication of the failure or the waste of money spent on higher education, but it is an indication of the problems that our society itself had failed to solve.

Educational changes

If Mr. de Alwis now thinks that welfarism is a 'secondary issue' leading only to 'discussion of an academic nature' it is OK by me. If he implies that the student's knuckleduster was intended for use against a posse of 300 policemen I am willing to let readers judge for themselves. If Mr. de Alwis claims that the official report which revealed sexual (and other) violence at the campuses a piece of sensation-mongering I will leave this too for the readers to judge. But he really cannot accuse me of 'applauding from the sidelines the emasculation of the university and the disruption of its communal life thus reducing it to the level of a day-school' when in his own opinion university learning has already degenerated into 'taking down notes.' You cannot emasculate the emasculated.

Colombo.

V. P. Vittachi

Burning Spear

The death of Jomo Kenyatta comes soon after the publication of Charles Douglas-Home's mainly adulatory biography of Sir Evelyn Baring who was Governor of Kenya during the Mau-Mau rebellion. I remember about 15 years ago when Kenya was about to become independent a sincere and earnest young Englishman whom I met at some party or other who told me that he had served in Kenya for many years and that he thought it was a big mistake for Britain to give Kenya independence. It was this young man's considered view that the Kenyans were 'unfit to govern themselves'. There were Englishmen as recently as 15 years ago who actually spoke like that.

Being less restrained in my language than I have since learned to be I asked him: 'And what makes you baskets so damn sure that you are fit to govern yourselves let alone other peoples about whose cultures you know nothing and care less?' But he was not fazed. He smiled patiently and said: 'Kenyatta is a cold-blooded murderer.' Clearly he believed what he was saying.

Now Douglas-Home's book reveals that if there was a cold-blooded murderer in Kenya at the time it was none other than the British governor Evelyn Baring who paid 'rewards' to prosecution witnesses before the trial and bribed the High Court judge Thacker £20,000 to ensure a conviction of Kenyatta. Douglas-Home now foreign editor of the 'Times', London was ADC to Baring.

Yes, there wasn't

A commissioner: 'In fact there was no proper application made to Court?'

Witness: 'Yes'.

(Reported proceedings of a commission of inquiry.)

It is clear from the context that the witness did not mean 'Yes, there was' but 'No, there was not' and was so understood. When he said 'Yes' he meant he confirmed that what the commissioner said was correct. This usage is so widespread that we have, I suppose, to accept it as an established Ceylonism. But it can certainly mislead people who are not acquainted with the usage which brings to mind an old Tin Pan Alley song: 'Yes, we have no bananas.'

How's that again?

'Mt. Kilimanjaro, the breath-taking backdrop to Serena Lodge...

Swim in the lovely pool while you drink it all in.'

(Kenya tourist handout)

Safely filtered and chlorinated, we hope?

Mr So-and-so

(With apologies to GKC)

When mountains walked and turtles flew

And the sun went down at dawn

Some witching hour when the moon turned blue

Then So-and-so was born.

Twas long before thalidomide
So they had no reason to fear
A copy of Jekyll's Mr Hyde
Was scheduled to appear.

The doctor had a heart attack
He simply could not cope
The parents they sent for a quack
To cast a horoscope.

The horoscope had this to say:
This boy has a fate sinister;
It's destined that he'll be one day
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The mixed . . .

(Continued from page 12)

tion that there were certain politico-economic models which had proved their internal consistency for the development of Third World countries. These were the models which had first been evolved in the empirical context of economic growth in the West and which had been conceptualised in Western historical conditions. Those who derived the conceptual tools from these two schools of European politico-economic thought which had sought to direct the industrial economies—the Adam Smith-Mill-Ricardo school and its inheritors or the Marx-Engels-Lenin school—saw the mixed economy somewhat in the way in which Samuel Johnson saw the metaphysical conceit—mutually contradictory elements yoked together by violence”.

It is natural therefore that on one side, at least, until very recently, the IMF and World Bank were

impatient of what appeared to them a queer medley of policies, and on the other side Marxist critics predicted the inevitable polarisation and the inescapable choice between capitalist dictatorship and socialist transformation.

The internal . . .

(Continued from page 14)

so-called State of National Security is the latest form in the development of the bourgeois state since the French Revolution. One may or may not agree, but the central question is whether the faint outlines of such a monolithic monstrosity can already be discerned in our own country.

Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

the lessons of the October Revolution are of such importance to us in the Third World, i. e. whether the bourgeoisie or even national bourgeoisie are reliable partners in the anti-imperialist

struggle—Recall how Stalin supported Kerensky in an editorial in the Pravda and Trotsky alone opposing it, with Lenin concurring with him after his return from exile on hearing the truth of the revolutionary situation in Russia.

What we have to learn from the October Revolution is whether we should support our local Kerenskys. The working class parties have had a painful and soul searing experience in supporting Mrs. Bandaranaike. That is what people like Mr. Vaidyasekera would like the working class to forget.

This is not just a useless exercise in an esoteric discussion on Lenin and Trotsky—but whether the working class stands for Reform or Revolution as Ralph Miliband puts it—That is what is on the cards for the Working Class of the Third World.

Amaradasa Fernando

Note: This correspondence is now closed
— Editor



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