

LANKA

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GUARDIAN

Eelam's long arm

JVP and Trotskyism

— Chintaka

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike

— Tissa Balasuriya

Tribute to Kovoov

— Carlo Fonseka

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LANKA GUARDIAN

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Letters

1971 & all that

To a serious political scientist like Dr Carlo Fonseka the question of whether or not Dr Colvin de Silva has the moral right to maintain his thesis that the April '71 rising was a foredoomed ultra-leftist adventure is, no doubt, a matter of trivial importance. To ordinary citizens like me, however, it is a matter of the utmost importance since Dr de Silva is a public figure who has for many years publicly laid down what he considers proper standards of conduct for other politicians to follow.

We remember that this same Dr de Silva and his LSSP while all the while knowing (as we all did) that the JVP was a party of ultra-leftists, tried to deceive the country into believing that it was ultra-rightist, 'the criminal and fascist arm of the UNP', for entirely self-serving reasons. We ordinary folk like our leaders to be credible; we demand decent standards of public conduct; we do not relish being treated as gullible fools.

Colombo 3. Costain de Vos

'Bambaru Avith'

I was a late viewer of 'Bambaru Avith' and had by this time heard and read a great deal about it. It is quite definitely an interesting film well made in its stark realism and to this end well served by excellent photography in black and white. It will also be well remembered for a trio of excellent cinematic portrayals of which to me at any rate Joe Abeywikrema prevails over Malini Fonseka and Vijaya Kumaratunga. While Kumaratunga, I am sure takes everybody by surprise. Abeywikrema and Fonseka are only doing what cinemagoers have come to expect of them. But even by their own high standards this was first class and I continue to marvel at the complete understanding and ease with which Abeywikrema creates each new role he undertakes. But then he is an unusual actor and that is his greatness.

Trends

Best-seller

The Indian emergency produced a rich harvest of popular books each offering the reader the 'inside' story. Now a senior official of the previous regime, a top political appointee, is reported to be working on a book that he confidently expects to be a best-seller. Journalistic circles say that the book is largely a vitriolic onslaught on the ruling family 1970-77, with several sizzling episodes that have such cosmopolitan backgrounds like London, Paris, Moscow and Teheran.

Pen portraits of the clan's top members range from the caustic to plain good humour. One member is described as a gentleman of such a visibly vacant mind that he is said to wear a "TO LET" board on his broad forehead!

Foreigners Only

'To let' notices appear in the newspapers these days with a predictable proviso—'foreigners only'. With less frequency, we see 'wanted' advertisements where foreigners announce proudly "Rent immaterial".

As rents and property values soar, Sri Lankans are being gradually evicted from the better residential areas.

Can the government step in to 'control' land values and rents or is it going to be laissez faire for land owners and landlords, with lawyers collecting a percentage?

Agricultural Credit

Easy credit to farmers is now a well established incentive but as a special correspondent to this journal wrote in our last issue there are many reasons why 75% of the farmers default on their loans.

The Ministry of Plan Implementation has now found that another reason why credit schemes fail is bureaucratic incompetence with more than a trace of corruption. A team of experts invited to investigate the Credit Scheme for sugar cane planting has observed in a report put out by the Ministry that 'elementary precautions' to prevent abuse were not taken.

Abuse took another, more familiar and deadlier form. Loans were given to wives, relatives and friends.

'The Leftist'

The dull conformism of the state-run media on the one hand and the proliferation of 'new' Left groups account for the plethora of papers (weeklies, monthlies and now-and-then newsheets) to be found at the newsstands. The latest in English is 'The Leftist', an organ of the LSSP (New Leadership).

These papers are read as avidly as the UNP papers in the last days of the SLFP regime.

But what concerns me more is the euphoria that has been generated by what is called the social and political content of 'Bumbaru Avith'. Some critics saw great relevance in the conflict between Anthony, the local exploiter, and Victor the intruder businessman as though this was some profound politico-economic question that had to be seen to be understood. Unless one is prepared to extend this parallel to include today's struggle between the local business entrepreneur and the multinational, what is the social relevance of this conflict. We surely do not have to be told that we are the meat in the sandwich. At best anyway, it pre-

sents a pre-56 situation where the local big business supplanted the foreigner and unless Pathiraja is saying that today the pendulum has swung right back there is nothing very wonderful about that aspect of the film.

Whatever else Pathiraja may not have sought to achieve he certainly succeeded in ridiculing the radical thinker and even when this forlorn figure tried to say something significant he was too far gone to be taken seriously. Some critics even related this to the present day political scene but apart from recognising this tragic-comic figure as the proto-type of the romantic university revolutionary of the late

40's and the early 50's, I saw nothing else. Indeed Pathiraja is fortunate in not having succumbed to the temptation of dishing up a 'note' which many play producers have fallen victim to. It is always prudent if not wise to let the audience speculate as to the intention, but even speculation or theorizing must be reasonable and within limits without allowing prejudices to impede one's judgement. 'Bumbaru Avith' is a film that deals with human relationships and it is very well done by a Director with a sure hand. As for political content, undertones or intonations I saw none.

Sidat Sri Nandalochana
Colombo 4

Cryptic Crossword No. 3

by Stripex

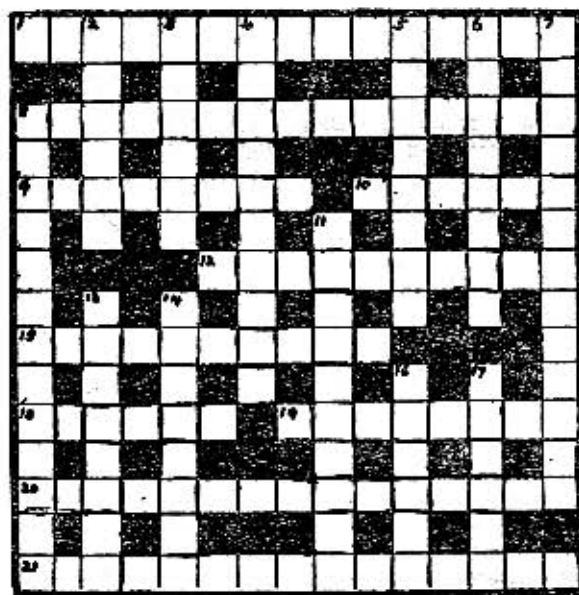
Across

CLUES

1. Overstate for maximum advantage (4,3,4,2,2)
8. BOAC's parachutes designed to ensure freedom of movement (6,6,3)
9. Friend leaves king's residence, gets the top card in the pack (5,3)
10. .. at the base of Pompey's → (Julius Caesar) (6)
12. Select a man : he could be off his rocker (6,4)
15. Rembrandt's famous picture is reversed for service (5,5)
18. Headgear worn in most urban areas (6)
19. Ancient room: you could get cold at it (3,5)
20. In this respect or otherwise now is used for then (8,7)
21. Ought to take broken earring to the women's libber: that's part of the drill (11,4)

Down

2. Garment for that Singapore girl (6)
3. Drags when they in France follow rising Art. (6)
4. Some reach creditable standard for every right-hand entry in the book (4,6)
5. Authentic count and that's no fib (4,4)
6. Shrove Tuesday, perhaps (5,3)
7. Teaches tot to eat but could be what the obnoxious brat has been forbidden (2,5,3,3)
8. Two with richer dish for the weird sisters (6,7)
11. Where Caesar's spirit had a rendez-vous with Brutus (2,8)
13. Commences (6,2)
14. What everybody's in search of these days (5,3)
16. Obviously not the curate's (3,3)
17. It's here the cockney tells you the part of the Empress of Blandings which is not convertible to a glossy coin bag (3,3)



Solution to Cryptic Crossword No. 2

- ACROSS— 8. Managers 9. A pearl 10. Ogg 11. Helpmeet
12. Impact 13. Private practice 15. Spirits
18. Spudded 21. Company promoter 24. Laputa
25. Cheese it 26. Roi 27. Depend 28. Extremes
DOWN— 1. Career 2. Karpov 3. Decent standards
4. Isotope 5. Magical property 6. Respite
7. Tricycle 14. Ici 16. Profaned 17. Raptures
19. Dot 20. Species 22. Oyster 23. Exiles.

'Internationalising' the Tamil issue

It was a stunt but what a stunt! Grabbing a platform is an old weapon in the propagandist's armoury. To seize the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly just before the distinguished Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka and thus address the world even for a minute is an agit-prop dream come true. Mr. Vaikunthavasan did it. The wire services did the rest. His caper in the world's most august assembly (or glass menagerie, as cynics would have it) is surely a tribute to Sri Lankan (Eelam?) ingenuity and daring?

It is of course the most spectacular exercise in a concerted campaign by Tamil expatriates to 'internationalise' the Tamil issue. Mr. Hameed was right in not losing his cool but the government would be foolish not to miss the significance of this sensational incident.

Two news reports in the 'SUN' indicate that the government has awakened to the importance of doing something on a problem that the previous regime was only dimly aware of or, in spite of many dramatic reminders, took rather lightly.

London is the centre. But the long arm of 'Eelam' is now reaching out to the US, Canada, Africa, Australia, India and some parts of South East

Asia; in fact, to wherever there is a sizeable Tamil community. Post-1958 exodus of Tamil academics, civil servants and professionals created the conditions for this movement. It is 20 years since then. And it is the new generation that has organised this campaign, collecting funds (often like 'kappan') using moral blackmail where honest and friendly persuasion fails, publishing booklets and leaflets, holding meetings, organising press conferences, and making contacts with opinion-makers (mostly journalists and politicians) in various countries.

The well-organised 'stunt' is the other technique. Publicity is the chief objective. The best of these was the two-wave 'attack' at the Sri Lanka-Australia 55-over 'Test' in Britain three years ago. When British bobbies carried away the first batch of youths who sat on the turf and held up play, the new group rushed in from another corner of the field three overs later. The TV cameras promptly 'took' the scene, and Fleet Street put the picture on the front page. Placards at the airport or a 'demo' before the Embassy are standard devices used by expatriate protest groups.

Here in Colombo, pamphlets were thrust into the hotel rooms of foreign delegates to an international parliamentary conference.

With its penchant for the sensational and, among the more 'liberal' sections, its sympathy for 'minority causes', the western press is a receptive audience.

It will be interesting to see how the Foreign Ministry and the new Information boss plan a counter-campaign. Will the time come when Eelam's long arm reaches out to an airplane on an international flight?

LSSP on Tamil rights

The LSSP (New Leadership) recognises the right of the Tamil people to self-determination and undertakes to fight for the recognition of that right among the Sinhala people, says Dr. Kumar David, a member of the party's polituro. Adverting to a report in the 'Lanka Guardian' (October 1st), Dr. David explains the (New) LSSP's position:

"Firstly we call upon the Tamil people to join in as a component part of the country's oppressed classes and communities in a united struggle against the capitalist state. In so doing we invite them to advance the slogans pertaining to their own specific oppression, to advance within the framework of their own organisations, if they so wish, and to coordinate their tactics in some form of united front action with the working class.

"Secondly. As a party we recognise the right of the Tamil people to self-determination including their right to secede or not to secede at their discretion. We undertake to fight for the recognition of this right among the Sinhala people, which after all, is where the fight on this issue is being bogged by other leftists both 'new' and 'old'.

(Continued on page 24)

Rubber keeps bouncing

In the first six months of 1978, Sri Lanka has topped her 1977 earnings from rubber. In 1977 rubber brought in 973 million rupees in foreign exchange. In the same six months Sri Lanka's exports total 78,000 tons — 8,000 tons more than in the whole of 1977.

Quoting these figures, Mr. R. B. Weerakoon, Secretary of the Ministry of Plantation Industries who recently presided over a conference of Rubber Producing Nations here in Colombo, predicts a fairly rosy picture.

Evidently the attack on natural rubber in the world market by synthetics has been blunted. Synthetics accounted for nearly 65% of the world market. The rise in oil prices have affected the oil-based synthetics. Recently, the Saudi Oil minister urged another 5% increase by next year.

All this, according to official sources, is good news for Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Unions in agonizing re-appraisal

The Joint Action Committee of the 17 trade unions which called off the September 28th strike will meet for the second time tomorrow October 16th. This meeting which has been summoned by the convenor, Mr. L. W. Pandita, will continue the talks that were held early last week. The idea is to issue a general statement on how and why the strike was called off, to protest against proposed legislation (Contract of Employment Bill) and to mobilise working class opinion for the next move.

Meanwhile, these unions will jointly write to the ILO and to trade union organisations throughout the world on what they describe as the suppression of trade union rights.

The Ceylon Federation of Labour has already submitted a lengthy complaint to the ILO. The letter accompanying the complaint on "violation of the freedom of association and Right to Organise, Convention 87" states:

"The Government of Sri Lanka which came to power in 1977 in a general election set about its task of attempting to demolish the trade union movement of this country through: (a) legislation designed to establish a Free Trade Zone in this country (b) legislation as would change the employment relation of workmen.

"The trade union movement fought these measures along with the assistance of international labour organisations.

"The Sri Lanka Government is at present attempting to suppress trade union rights through administrative action. The complaint to the I. L. O. relates to these actions.

"You will note in our complaint the reference to a proposed one day strike scheduled for the 28th of September 1978. We have included in the complaint the administrative action taken by the Government in the state sector. We have to add that in the days that followed the Government

insisted that the private sector employer too should treat all strikers as persons who have vacated employment.

"The complaint, we believe, will give you sufficient information on the immediate situation in Sri

Shan hails Hoxha

Albania, a small socialist country in the Balkans, is a strange phenomenon in contemporary history. Since it denounced Khrushchev, it remained China's steadfast ally in the Sino-Soviet ideological struggle, condemning both US imperialism and Soviet revisionism with equal vehemence. Today it brands the Chinese leadership as 'traitors' and the 'running dogs of US imperialism', and ridicules the 'Three Worlds theory' as un-Marxist. As a result, it has a small, but growing, band of Marxist admirers in odd corners of the world.

October 16th is the 70th birthday of Enver Hoxha, the man who has led Albania in its modern history. Mr. N. Sanmugathasan, General Secretary of the Ceylon Communist Party, has sent these greetings to the First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania on the occasion of his birthday.

"Under your leadership, the Party of Labour of Albania was the first to raise its voice against Khrushchevite modern revisionism at the Bucharest conference in 1960. Likewise, it was the Party of Labour of Albania, with you at its head, that was the first to expose at your 7th. Party Congress and in the now famous article of 7.7.1977 in *Zeri Popullit* entitled "The Theory and Practice of Revolution" the opportunism of the Theory of the Three Worlds spawned by the present leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

"We have learnt with sorrow and indignation the action of the Chinese government in stopping all

Lanka. We shall be grateful for the publicity you can give to this situation because the Sri Lanka Government, in its anxiety to attract foreign investment to the proposed Free Trade Zone, is likely to continue with its policies of working class repression."

economic and military aid to Albania and thereby attempting to disrupt the economy and security of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania. Its leaders are doing this at a time when they are rushing economic and military aid to one of the most notoriously reactionary rulers of Africa, Mobutu; and are hobnobbing with great ceremony with the arch regicide from communism, Yugoslavia's Tito and one of the world's most virulent anti-communists, the Shah of Iran — not to speak of Japan's monopoly ruling class and the semi-fascist dictators of South-East Asia.

"Our Party has vehemently condemned the unilateral action of the Chinese government in stopping all economic and military aid to Peoples' Albania and has declared our complete solidarity with tiny but brave Albania. We have no doubt that, relying on its own strength and led by a bold and truly Marxist-Leninist Party which has been steeled in similar struggles earlier against the Khrushchevite modern revisionists, Socialist Albania will overcome all difficulties and continue its triumphant march towards the construction of socialism in Albania.

"It is not accidental that one of the first acts of Khrushchev, when he betrayed Marxism-Leninism and embarked on the treacherous path of modern revisionism, was to cut off all economic and military aid to Albania. China, then, correctly condemned this. But, today its leaders are following in the footsteps of Khrushchev."

Pakistan

New war on an old front

Pakistan's strong-man General Zia who came to restore democracy but stayed long enough to grab the presidential gadi may soon face a new war on an old front—Baluchistan.

This least populated and most backward of Pakistan's provinces has suffered long years of wilful neglect by the centre. Political power, whether civilian or army, is firmly sourced in the more thickly populated and relatively developed areas of the Punjab and Sind. With access to the sea and rich in natural gas, Baluchistan is framed by a strategically important triangle linking Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

With the North West Frontier, Baluchistan was a British 'buffer' protecting India. Pakistan, the new nation, has grievously failed to achieve the integration of these two provinces by responding to the aspirations of the Pathans and the Baluchis and their sense of national identity. Feelings of domination and discrimination along with irredentist impulses have nourished separatist demands and open rebellion. Though the Baluchis number only 2 million in Baluchistan itself, they count another ten million or more in neighbouring Iran and Afghanistan.

The Bhutto regime made a mockery of its own declared policy of 'regional autonomy' when these two provinces voted overwhelmingly for Opposition parties. Assemblies were dissolved, prominent opponents locked up, and PPP stooges became Islamabad's satraps.

In 1973, Mr. Bhutto sent in several divisions of the Pakistani army to crush what he called a youth insurgency instigated by the sardars and encouraged by

un-named foreign powers. The tribal chiefs he claimed were resisting social reform and modernisation.

According to Baluchi sources, the armed forces killed over 5,000 tribesmen and youths. They claim to have accounted for a few thousand soldiers. But when the fire-power proved too strong the tribesmen and the youth activists took the predictable path turning into guerilla bands they took to the mountains. And there they still remain.

Releasing leading Baluchi politicians like Mr. Bizenjo the former governor and Sardar Buksh Marri of the large Marri tribe, General Zia did make an early attempt to de-fuse the Baluchi revolt. The trouble is still simmering and recently Sher Mohammed Marri a guerilla leader told Richard Wigg of the 'Times', London,

that armed struggle for self-determination will break out soon. The widespread disturbances in Iran and uneasy relations between Pakistan and the new Kabul regime now make Islamabad extremely nervous.

Mr. Sher Mohammed Marri says: "The contradictions between the Baluchi national interests and those of the Pakistani state are more acute today than in 1972. There has been no change. We continue to be treated as twentieth century slaves. Each province must be recognised as comprising a nationality and Pakistan must be a federation if it is not to disintegrate".

The Sardar also adopts an increasingly defiant line. "When we talked of provincial autonomy we were denounced as agents of India, Russia or Afghanistan.. Now that kind of autonomy is behind schedule...no rights, only a permanent emergency or martial law".



Nicaraguan civil war draws others into cauldron

by James Nelson Goodsell

(The Christian Science Monitor)

The Nicaraguan civil war appears to be escalating — and could well become a broader conflict.

Already there is evidence that other hemisphere countries are helping either the embattled forces of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle or his opponents.

Although some details remained unclear at this writing, there were these developments.

- Venezuelan Air Force units appeared to be providing cover for rebel columns that cross back and forth over the Nicaraguan-Costa Rican border.

- Costa Rica was accusing Nicaraguan troops of crossing the border in pursuit of guerrillas—but the Costa Ricans also were providing a haven for the guerrillas.

Somoza named 'war criminal'

The main Opposition group, the FAO, which consists of 12 parties and three major trade unions, have publicly accused General Anastasio Somoza of genocide against the civilian population of 6 Nicaraguan towns and branded him a 'war criminal'.

Leading clergymen, including the Archbishop of Managua, have added their respected voices to the rising chorus of worldwide protest. Spokesmen of the Catholic Church have furnished evidence of atrocities committed by the National Guard under the direct command of General Somoza's son. The victims include teenagers. Another influential protester is one of Nicaragua's top businessmen, Senor Manuel Torres, President of the National Development Institute.

Meanwhile, the deputy head of Nicaragua's UN mission, Ambassador Enrique Pagan, told the U. N. Correspondents' Club "I denounce the kidnapping, murder and torture of hundreds of Nicaraguan farmers and countless other victims of the Somoza dictatorship". Ambassador Pagan, who is alternate permanent representative resigned his post after his press conference.

- Costa Rica and Venezuela signed a mutual defense agreement because "the present situation is giving rise to hostile acts jeopardizing Costa Rica's sovereignty..."

- Honduras has offered assistance to General Somoza, and Guatemala, according to some reports, has supplied arms to the pro-Somoza Nicaraguan National Guard.

These reports are fraught with troublesome implications both for the U. S. and for peace and stability in the hemisphere.

If the Guatemalan arms came originally from the United States, as some observers of the situation suggest this might violate terms of agreements, between the two countries, and the Carter administration has asked the Guatemalans for information on the matter.

Otherwise, U. S. strategists are watching developments in Nicaragua as closely as they can at a time when the Carter administration is preoccupied with the Middle East.

Hundreds were killed in the clash, although the exact total is

Church is State in Latin America

This month, the Latin American Episcopal Conference meets at Puebla, Mexico. The conference will be presented with a strongly worded document on Governmental oppression, drafted by the 320 - strong National Congress of Brazilian Bishops. Since Brazil is the world's most popular Roman Catholic nation after Italy and the USA, and since it has the world's third largest church this document is considered to of paramount importance within the Catholic Church especially in the Third World.

Speaking to Western newsmen, Brazilian church sources disclosed that the document states among other things that "oppression is severe in the developing countries. The idea that industrialization and material progress

not known. Charges of extreme brutality have been leveled against the guard — a factor that is bound to add new weight to the opposition to the Somoza dictatorship.

Although the guerrillas lost the battle the evidence suggests they were not crushed — and that large groups of them simply faded into the countryside to regroup and come back for another contest.

Analysts of the fighting in Managua, the capital, and in Washington think General Somoza may be able to stave off the immediate collapse of his rule but that the guerrillas are gaining strength almost daily as they attract new adherents to their cause.

General Somoza had the firepower to defeat the guerrillas in the field, but more and more the struggle takes on the appearance of a war between the overwhelming majority of Nicaraguans and the dictatorship they oppose.

In the long run, such a contest, in the opinion of observers, is bound to go in favour of the opposition. But in the process it may well tear apart the small Central American country.

alone will solve social problems is nonsense. This very process in Latin America has brought wealth to the few and misery to the masses... The state should not be synonymous with the nation. The excessive preoccupation with state security in Brazil has seriously undermined the security of the individual and threatened all basic human rights."

Meanwhile last month Brazilian bishop Don Helder Camara said in an interview with a leading Brazilian magazine that the Puebla conference should give advice "on the problems that have emerged or been aggravated in the past ten years such as the everstronger doctrine of national security and the growing strength and oppression of the multinationals".

Will Sadat go it alone?

A Kuwaiti newspaper reported last week that President Sadat had been tipped off by a foreign intelligence service of an armed forces plot to oust him in the wake of mounting anti-Sadat feeling throughout the Arab world. After the rude removal of War Minister Gamassi and his Chief of Staff (later re-appointed as military advisers to the President) rumours about seething discontent in the army and dissension in the upper echelons have been rife. An early warning came when General Shazli, the 1973 war hero, quit in disgust and went into self-enforced exile to accuse Sadat of betraying the Arab cause. What western correspondents openly described as a rigged referendum (99% vote) some months ago and cheering crowds after his return from Camp David have not dispelled doubts about the stability of the Sadat regime.

Now the pressure comes from outside. Despite some differences between them, the PLO has taken a firm stand along with the four Arab states which belong to the Rejection Front. It was Sadat's failure to "deliver" the PLO or a sizeable section of it to Washington and Israel which created the gap between the two "framework agreements" signed at Camp David. This made it patently clear that Egypt was willing to sign a peace treaty



with Israel without firm guarantees on the West Bank and Gaza and a future Palestinian state.

The pressure on Egypt (and its sense of isolation) widened when the Arab militants of the Rejection Front were helped in their propaganda drive by a larger group of moderates.

The initiative to summon an Arab summit in order to dissuade Egypt from signing a peace treaty came surprisingly enough from Iraq, a hardline Arab state. Iraq has never accepted any of the key UN resolutions on the Middle East, including resolution 242.

But it has a long-standing dispute with Syria which is ruled by a rival faction of the Baathist movement. Yet, President Assad, did welcome the Iraqi move which the Iraqi News Agency claims has the support of 13 other Arab countries.

In this list are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the oil-rich Gulf states, the pay-boys of the Arab world. After the 1973 war, they sponsored an aid-Egypt consortium and are well placed to appreciate Egypt's grave economic troubles, one of the major causes of the about-face in Egyptian foreign policy. The Iraqis have proposed a multi-billion dollar aid program to Egypt, the carrot which the moderates dangle while the rejectionists use the propaganda big stick.

Greatly embarrassed by Arab accusations of selling the Palestinians down the canal, Egypt now says that it will insist on the linkage between the two agreements. But Mr. Begin, who was jeered in the Knesset, will have none of it. Can Carter do what Begin won't and Sadat must, if he is to stop the growing isolation of Egypt?

COMECON outstrips OECD

The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which groups together twenty-four of the world's most economically developed capitalist countries (led by the USA, Western Europe and Japan) maintained an average economic growth rate of 3½% this year too. According to the latest issue of 'Economic Outlook', the OECD forecasts that its annual growth for the next 12 months will be 3¼%. This is far below the 4½% growth rate needed to hold unemployment steady. Meanwhile David Satter writing in *The Financial Times* (London) says the average annual growth rate of the COMECON countries over the last year has been 6.4%. This is almost double the OECD growth rate.

Booklet debunks myth about race and IQ

Thirty thousand copies of a 15-page booklet aimed at "debunking the myths about race and intelligence" are being distributed by the National Union of Teachers to its members throughout Britain.

The guide has been written for the union by Professor Steven Rose, professor of biology at the Open University and director of the university's brain research group, and Mr. Kenneth Richardson, lecturer in psychology at the university, who is also a member of the research group. The booklet was compiled after consultation with teachers and other authorities in the field.

The authors say that the word "race" has very little, if anything, to do with biology; that more than 94 per cent of all genetic differences between individuals are found within a given race rather than between races; that intelligence tests may help to predict a child's performance in school but say nothing about his fixed biological potential; and that it is not scientifically meaningful to divide a child's performance into genetic or environmental components.

The booklet's basic message for teachers is, in other words, that there is no direct relationship between the colour of a child's skin and his mental ability. Teachers should therefore be careful not to try to explain the low achievement of many black children on the basis of their low IQ.

Numerous studies have shown, on the other hand, that the teacher's expectations have a significant effect on a child's performance.

Mr. Fred Jarvis, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said that the booklet did a valuable job in debunking myths and clarifying issues on a very complex and sensitive issue.

The union was opposed not only to racial discrimination, but also to racist ideas, which could be even more pernicious in their effect. They could feed back into education, poisoning relations within schools and affecting the teachers' assessment of human potential and ability.

"There is a need for the teaching profession to speak out on this subject", he said.

News briefs

McNamara's prophecy

By the year 2000, 600 million people will live in 'absolute poverty'. The grim prediction comes from the World Bank boss Mr. Robert McNamara, last week's distinguished visitor to the country.

Unless the affluent industrialised nations change their trade policies and expand concessionary aid the poor countries cannot hope to achieve even modest growth rates. Even if such rates are reached, millions will go hungry. Mr. McNamara was specially severe on the U. S., West Germany and Japan.

Political prisoners

Bangkok.

WHEN Amnesty International alleged that there were 3000 prisoners held without trial in Thailand, the Thai government issued a strong denial. Later a Foreign Ministry source placed the figure at 20, with 19 awaiting trial.

Now, an official of the Corrections Department has disclosed that there are 500 political prisoners held on the orders of the National Reform Council, the

(Continued on page 24)

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S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike

Among those who have most influenced the modern history of our country is S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. Some would regard his contribution as most valuable, while others would tend to see in him the cause of quite a few of our problems. We are perhaps still too close to his times to be able to evaluate his life with that objectivity which distance might permit.

Everybody knows of his heritage by birth as the only son of the Maha Mudaliyar, Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike. Thus we have S.W.R.D. — Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike — symbolising the combination of British power and local loyalty.

If the son accepted this heritage he could have lived in comfort and ease and might have been eventually knighted by the British Crown and duly respected as the squire of Horagolla. But from an early age he had to choose between the development of his own personality and a comfortable ivory tower segregation from the rest of the youth. "At the cost of my happiness, I preserved my personality" he wrote in his "Confessions of a schoolboy."

S.W.R.D. realized that the system of Colonial power and administration which his father symbolized was no longer in accord with the aspirations and expectations of the people of this country. He had therefore no hesitation in identifying himself with their nationalist aspirations. While belonging to the fairly wide based Ceylon National Congress he founded the Sinhala Maha Sabha to foster the special interests of the Sinhala people. At this stage he remarked that the Sinhala people were deeply divided, specially Low Country and Kandyan and by caste and religion. His view was that the unity of the Sinhala people was to be a means to the larger unity of

communities within the country. This activity gave him an insight into the problems of race, religion, language and culture that were to shape future policies sponsored by him.

By 1951 he had come to the end of the road in his collaboration with the then ruling United National Party under D. S. Senanayake. He faced another important turning point in his personal life and public career. He had again to choose between what he called "the easy path of place and position and the harder road of what I conceived to be my duty to the people of my country". He chose to resign from the Cabinet and the ruling party and go into opposition as the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. He explained his reasons for doing so in one of his more famous speeches in parliament.

"It may be true that from the tourist point of view Ceylon is a pleasanter land than most other countries of South-East Asia; but from the point of view of the people of the country, there is a growing sense of frustration and disappointment. There does not appear to me to be any important change in the fundamental line of thinking and acting that we pursued for the last 25 years under colonial rule. In a free country, particularly in the context of world affairs today, this, in my view, is most unsatisfactory and even tragic".

From July 1951 to April 1956 he was in the Opposition. Some thought he resigned in pique due to ambitions of succession being thwarted; others perceived in him an alternative approach to the ruling policies. In any case he was closer to the people during this period, though many believed he had foolishly burnt his boats and gone into the political wilderness.

From a radio talk on the SLBC on September 26, 1978, the 19th anniversary of the death of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike.

These prophets were proved wrong in 1956. Once again S. W. R. D. had shown himself to be in tune with the feelings of the vast mass of people in Sri Lanka. Political Independence had been gained, but there had been no other significant change of direction. Social structure was still one of privilege and oppression and economically, there was an attempt to break out of the colonial system. It was the feeling of frustration engendered by this situation that S. W. R. D. felt and moved with.

He allowed the pent up feelings and aspirations of a suppressed people to come up to the polished surface. Making Sinhala instead of English, the official language of the country gave greater opportunity to the common man, specially in dealing with the public officials. It furthered and hastened the revival of the Sinhala language and culture.

His recognition of the place to be given to Buddhism as the religion of the majority of the people in the country was much less a cause of troubles. He accepted in general the recommendations of the Buddhist Commission of 1955 but tempered their implementation with a concern for other faiths.

His option in favour of the common people expressed itself also in terms of a more socialistic economic policy. He made an important innovation by nationalizing the bus services which were before that a means by which unscrupulous bus magnates exploited the travellers. The Paddy Lands Act and the establishment of the Employees Provident Fund and of Labour Tribunals were schemes in favour of the peasants and workers.

He was an enthusiastic promoter of village and town local government, of equality of opportunity in education, of economic planning of an expanding public sector, of progressive taxation, of workers and trade union rights, of settling the Indian residents and migrants problem on a long term basis and of constitutional reforms including the guaranteeing of fundamental rights of the people. He fostered education in the mother tongue; the priverna universities, the Ayurvedic system of medicine and an oriental simplicity in values and life style. He banned racing. He helped arrest the growing urbanization and Westernization of the country by an accent on the resilience of the cultural, religious and special values of the mass of the people, specially in the villages.

His political strategy of alliance or electoral no-contest pact with the more radical left groups opened the way for the Marxist parties to make a direct contribution to governmental policies. In this too he was an innovator, even though at the same time some conservative people disapproved of this step.

In foreign policy, Mr. Bandaranaike laid down the broad orientations which the country has hitherto followed. Though Ceylon became Independent in 1948, the foreign policy of the country was definitely pro-Western and anti-socialist till 1956. Mr. Bandaranaike articulated the policy of effective neutrality and non-alignment in the East - West cold war. He got the British forces to withdraw from Trincomalee thus dissociating Ceylon from a military alliance with Britain. He recognized the socialist governments of Eastern Europe and People's China thereby opening a new era of friendship with all countries. He was prepared to begin state enterprises with the support of socialist countries. Along with Jawaharlal Nehru he was a forerunner of a policy which later blossomed into the movement of nonaligned countries.

The personality of Mr. Bandaranaike was one which tried to understand the conflicting issues and reconcile them in a harmony

that was in favour of the less disadvantaged and oppressed. He had an innate concern for the weak, almost to a point of weakness.

He was an intellectual in politics, one who constantly kept abreast of world trends and had a philosophical approach to both local and international problems.

Sri Lanka is fortunate in having had a personality like S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who could provide a democratic alternative with a greater accent on social justice. Without such an alternative we might have fallen a prey to one or other of the totalitarian extremes that prevail today in the world. Because of him the common person is more conscious of his rights as a human being.

He is now part of our national heritage. All major political parties have, explicitly or implicitly, accepted many of his policies, and inherited also some of the problems consequent on the mass upsurge and cultural renaissance that he helped engender. All the country's religions have had to respond to the challenges that his life options furthered: such as the revival of Buddhism, the respect for all religions, dialogue with Marxism and the practical search for social justice with political freedom and economic development.

Nearly two decades after his death we can see that on most issues he was on the side of the future, of history and of humanity, specially the oppressed; even though in the practical execution of his policies he had to face severe trials and limitations. In this sense we can understand his dictum "rivers don't flow backwards". Fundamentally, it might be said, that he maintained through a troubled and much controverted life a basis of fidelity to his inner inspiration and primacy option which he has thus described.

"From a very early age I felt strongly within me the urge to serve the people of my country to the best of my ability, an urge which almost amounted to a feeling of dedication."

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The JVP's conversion to Trotskyism

Nikita Krushchev's speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, it is said, was Leon Trotsky's great revenge. Indeed the past 2½ decades, which (as Samir Amin rightly concluded in the 25th anniversary issue of the *Monthly Review*, have proved the continuing sterility of Trotskyism, has simultaneously and paradoxically witnessed a revival of the world Trotskyite movement. An understanding of this irony of history, and more pertinently, the J.V.P.'s conversion to Trotskyism, after 1971 hinges on an understanding of the post-1956 crisis in the world communist movement.

Over a decade after the Great Debate of the 1960's it is hard to escape the conclusion that it was something of a non-event. Certainly, the Chinese and Albanian parties' critique of the CPSU's revisionism did defend certain basic tenets of Leninism against the Krushchevite distortions. Yet, time has shown that this alone could not and did not fulfil the crying need of the world revolutionary movement at that conjuncture. Neither of the protagonists made a correct analysis of the central phenomenon of neo-colonialism. The Moscow Declarations of 1957 and 1960, taken together with the "Open Polemics", show that neo-colonialism was wrongly perceived as a mere disguise, a mere shift in tactics of old colonialism entailed (i.e. capitalist development in the periphery, enabling it to become the dominant mode of production) the national bourgeoisie becoming the ruling class, being subject to the process of compradore fication and entering into symbiotic dependence with imperialism; rapid class differentiation in the peripheral societies; etc. Both the directly Leninist lineage of Stalin as well as the very dimensions of the role he had to assume in contending with imperialism on a world scale provided him and the Cominform with the kind of global

perspective that was necessary for an understanding of imperialism's new alliance with the national bourgeoisies and the changing character of this class, in the post World War II period. His death in 1953 however cut short the on-going process of this analysis.

The Chinese and Albanian parties, lacking this truly global responsibility and perspective, merely generalized and tried to apply on a world scale the specific experience of their respective Revolutions. Thus, the thesis of 'carrying through the National Democratic Revolution to completion' was accepted by both the leading parties and, in varying degrees by the entire world communist movement. The dominant ideology emanating from both centres of the world communist movement in the post 1956 period to date remains right revisionist in essential character. The Cuban Revolution, taking place as it did in a peripheral, but non-colonial context and rapidly assuming a socialist character, posed the first threat to this dominant ideology—as did the series of revolutionary struggles it fuelled in Latin America. These struggles, as well as the Tricontinental and more importantly the CLAS Conference in 1967 adopted a stance which was not only anti-imperialist, but of necessity, anti-capitalist too. However, the de-emphasis of the role of vanguard party and the consequent inadequacy of vitally necessary 'social accumulation among the proletariat,' coupled with an over emphasis on military technique, spelled disaster for these successive waves of armed struggle. As a whole generation of Latin American revolutionaries was buried, their implicit cry of challenge to the dominant revisionist ideology of the world communist movement was also muted. The post 1968 shift in Cuba's foreign policy away from social revolution and towards

national liberation struggles was a consequence of these defeats.

However the battle cry of socialist revolution reached receptive ears in this other tropical island half-way across the globe. The endogenous contradictions of the capitalist mode of production are compounded by the feature of dependence as far as the peripheral economies are concerned, and the mid 1960's saw economic crisis gripping Sri Lanka. The heightening of the phenomenon of unequal exchange in trade was revealed in the Balance of Payment problem assuming major proportions, while successive government exercise of its class-determined option of increased external borrowing, ensnared the national economy inextricably in the debt-trap. On the advice of the World Bank, IMF and other neo-colonialist agencies, the mendicant bourgeoisie of Sri Lanka began stripping away layers of the social welfarism that had cushioned the masses to an extent and provided the scaffolding for the country's highly 'successful' bourgeois-parliamentary system.

The social class to be hardest hit, in terms of 'relative deprivation' was the petty bourgeoisie, which saw a rapid fall in its living standards, while spiralling unemployment blocked the fairly free upward social mobility it had enjoyed in the wake of the 1956 Bandaranaike populist reforms (which in turn, were made possible by the economic boom conditions). Sections of the petty bourgeoisie was most acute in the latter areas where the problem was accentuated by the marginalisation caused by the 'Green Revolution' which reached Sri Lanka's rural areas in the mid 1960's under the auspices of neo-colonialist agencies, (thus paralleling developments in many other '3rd world' countries such as Mexico, Philippines, Thailand and India). Greatly reduced infant mortality due to the expansion of social welfare

accorded youth an overwhelmingly pre-dominant place in the country's population structure thus leading an added (generational) dimension to the social strains and stresses.

The petit bourgeois youth, especially in the rural areas, caught up in the vortex of the crisis of capitalism on a national and international level, could undoubtedly have been a vitally important ally of the Sri Lankan proletariat, had not the parties of the working class been so hopelessly enmeshed in reformism and engaged in tailing abjectly behind the bourgeois SLFP. The revolutionary alternative to the Old Left was provided at the time by the Maoist Ceylon Communist Party of Mr. N. Shanmugathasan whose mechanistic, Sino-centric standpoint was in fact no real alternative (Ideology apart, in organisational aspects and style of work, it was a virtual mirror image of the bureaucratised pro-Moscow CP). So, as in Latin America, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the formula of "New Democracy/People's War" was not the real answer to Krushchev-Brezhnev revisionism.

Thus, the organisationally strong Sri Lankan proletariat was ideologically and politically weak, due, among other things, to the fact that its vanguard parties functioned within the false problematic imposed on them by the leading centers of the world communist movement — a problematic which did not confront the fundamental reality of the qualitatively changed role of the national bourgeoisies. Owing to this basic political weakness, the proletariat was incapable of assuming a hegemonic role vis-a-vis the crisis ridden, volatile petit bourgeois rural youth. So, this social stratum threw up its own political movement and its leader — the JVP and Rohana Wijeweera — which led it in the bloodily suppressed spartacist rebellion of April 1971, a rebellion whose sole, if tenuous affinity with the proletariat was that it occurred in the centenary year of the Paris Commune!

A proletarian party — one based on the working classes and

steeped in its ideology — has the capacity of assimilate and digest the experience to the most terrible defeats. (The Chinese CP after 1927 is but a single example). But the disaster of spring 1971 had a different impact on the collective petit bourgeois psyche of the JVP. The sordid squabbles, denials, denunciations and betrayals at the CJC trials, the violent fratricidal strife within the jails, where criticism and self-criticism was sometimes effected by violent means. All this revealed the depth and extent of the trauma and the petit bourgeois psyche's utter inability to cope.

The government's savage butchery of between 5-10,000 members, supporters and sympathisers of the JVP was one kind of traumatic experience, but more painful altogether was the experience of betrayal. The JVP had very few illusions as to the ideological political degeneracy of the LSSP and CP (Moscow wing), but was unprepared for the extent to which the leaders of these parties could go in gleefully applauding the barbaric bloodbath. However the unkindest cut of all was inflicted not so much by the local left, but rather the world communist movement, the various segments of which either actively supported the repression (China) or remained studiously silent.

Despite the theoretical inadequacies of 'Maoism', its emphatic rejection of the pro-Moscow CP's parliamentary cretinism and its generally militant stance, enabled Chairman Mao and the CPC to retain the well deserved admiration and loyalty of most revolutionaries in the so-called 3rd world. But the pronounced right opportunist deviation in Chinese foreign policy in the early 1970's onwards changed all this. Bangladesh, Sudan and Sri Lanka were the first real examples of the deviation, and Chou En-lai's infamous letter. (Surely a large blot on the exemplary life of that great revolutionary) was something the JVP was totally unprepared for.

Hindsight confirms that while Krushchevite revisionism resurrected the political corpse known as Trotskyism, the neo-revisionist foreign policy of the Chinese Communist Party put Trotskyism firmly back on its feet. Orphaned by the local Left (including the Maoists who in a mirror image of the old Left's utterly grotesque denunciation of the JVP as agents, branded them... KGB agents!) and the communist movement, the JVP began to be adopted by that omnipresent and indefatigable foster parent of lost or abandoned causes, that wholly ridiculous contraption, the so-called 4th International. Together with messages of support from the Unified Secretariat in Paris (the Ernest Mendel wing) and the legal counsel of its local representative (the mercurial Mr. Bala Tampoe), came a steady stream of literature and ideology which was a major influence in the formation of a theoretical framework cum perspective for Wijeweera in comprehending the shattering experience of 1971. The specificity of the social structure of this country is such that the petit bourgeoisie is a sprawling class and its ideological influence is extensive. This accounts in the main for the historical eccentricity that the dominant trend within the Lanka Left movement is Trotskyism. This curious feature of the country's political topography was an added factor in speeding up the process of Wijeweera's conversion to Trotskyism which was made easier by the fact that the original JVP had not clearly defined ideological position to start with except for a vulgarly eclectic mixture of Maoism, Castro-Guevarism and Trotskyism.

(This article is reproduced from the Economic and Political Weekly of India)

Next: JVP after "self-criticism"

The eight myths of hunger

Learning often begins with un-learning. In seeking to understand causes of hunger, one first has to cut through many pervasive myths. These myths paralyze many people with guilt and fear. They also prevent many from seeing that food self-reliance is possible for every country in the world.

- People are hungry because of scarcity—both of food and of land.

Can scarcity seriously be considered the cause of hunger when even in the "food crisis" of the early 1970s there was plenty to go around—enough in grain alone to provide everyone in the world with ample protein and 3 000 calories a day, not counting any of the beans, tubers, fruits, nuts, vegetables and nongrainfed meat? Three thousand calories are about what the average American consumes.

Such global estimates mean little we are told; what matters is the food per person in the "hungry countries." But focusing strictly on the Third World, one finds that food production has kept pace with and often exceeded the growth in population during the last 20 years in countries accounting for 86 percent of the total population of the developing countries.

What most undermines the assessment of developing countries as

Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins are co-directors of the Institute for Food and Development Policy. Mr. Lappe is the author of *Diet for a Small Planet*. Dr. Collins wrote with Jacques Chonchol, David Baytman and Susan George *World Hunger: Causes and Remedies* (Transnational Institute) at the time of the World Food Conference. In June 1977 Houghton Mifflin published *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*, by Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins.

foodscarce, however, are not production statistics but trade statistics. The very countries that most people perceive as food-deficient and import-dependent are themselves, it turns out, agricultural exporters. Forty percent of all agricultural imports into the United States, itself one of the world's top three agricultural importers, comes from developing countries. In 1973, 36 of the 40 MSA countries exported agricultural commodities to the United States.

Agricultural exports from the Sahelian countries dramatically increased during the early 1970s, in the face of worsening drought and widespread hunger. In Mali to take but one country, cotton exports went up 400 percent between 1966 and 1972, while groundnut production for export to feed Europe's cattle increased 70 percent, rice production, also largely for export, reached a record high. FAO surveys showed that every Sahelian country, with the possible exception of mineral-rich Mauritania, actually produced enough grain to feed its total population, even during the worst drought year. So, while many went hungry it was not because of scarcity of agricultural production or even of food.

And what of land scarcity?

Only approximately 44 percent of the world's cultivable land is now being cropped. This can partially be explained by the fact that many land-owners who hold land as an investment, not a source of food, leave vast amounts unplanted. A 1960 study of Colombia, for instance, found that the largest landholders, in control of 70 percent of the land, planted only 6 percent.

But only by assessing what the cultivated land is growing can one understand that scarcity of land is hardly the cause of hunger.

the problem is to see how the people can democratize control over agricultural resources

In Central America and in the Caribbean countries, where as much as 70 percent of the children are undernourished, at least half of the agricultural land, invariably the best land, is made to produce crops for export, no food for the local people. In most developing countries, this pattern is intensifying.

- There are just too many people in the world. An exploding world population means there is less food for everyone

If "too many people" cause hunger, one would expect to find more hungry people in countries with more people per hectare. We could find no such correlation. China, for example, has only half the cultivated acreage for each person than does India. Yet, in only 25 years China has succeeded in eliminating visible undernutrition. Yet there are countries with comparatively large amounts of agricultural land per person that suffer from the most severe and chronic hunger in the world. While severe hunger is a daily reality for most Bolivians, they live in a country with well over 0.2 ha of cultivated land per person, significantly more than France (and a potential of over 4 cultivable ha per person). Brazil has more cultivated hectareage per person than the United States, yet in recent years the percentage of undernourished people has increased from 45 to 72 percent. Mexico,

where most of the rural population suffers from undernourishment, has more cultivated land per person than Cuba, where now virtually no one is underfed.

Investigating the supposed "basketcases," from Bangladesh to the nations of the Sahel, one finds that there is no country in the world lacking adequate physical resources to feed its population. Indeed, what one learns is that as long as food is bought and sold in societies with great income differences, the degree of hunger says nothing about the amount of food per person produced in a country. Similarly, the relationship of hunger to land turns out to be not so much a question of quantity; hunger has far less to do with the amount of land than with who controls it. Who controls the land determines whether or how it will be put to use and who will benefit from its fruits.

Neither the size of country's population nor its growth is today the cause of hunger. Both hunger and rapid population growth are actually symptoms of the same disease. Fixating on symptoms is fruitless; it is a tragic diversion we cannot afford. If we are really serious about eventually balancing this planet's population and resources, we must now address the root cause of both hunger and high birthrates: the insecurity and poverty of the majority resulting from the monopolizing of national productive resources by a few.

- **Hunger will be overcome by concentrating on producing more food.**

Diagnosing the cause of hunger as scarcity inevitably leads to the conclusion that greater production in itself will solve the problem. Thus, techniques to boost production have been the central thrust of the "War on Hunger" for at least 30 years. Governments, international agencies, and multinational corporations have promoted "modernization" — largescale irrigation, chemical fertilizer, pesticides machinery and the seeds dependent on such inputs — all to make the land produce more.

But when a new agricultural technology enters a system shot

through with power inequalities, it profits only those who already possess some combination of land, money, creditworthiness and political influence. This selectivity alone has excluded most of the world's rural population and all the world's hungry.

Moreover, once agriculture becomes a speculative investment in which sheer control over the basic physical resources promises financial success, a catastrophic chain of events is set into motion. Competition for land sends land values soaring.

Focussing on production totals has transformed rural development into a technical problem — one of getting the "right," usually foreign-made, inputs to the "progressive," invariably better-off farmers. This production focus is narrow precisely because it ignores the social reality of hunger — that the hungry are those with little or no control over food-producing resources. The real task is initiating the social transformation of the agrarian structure that will make the hungry the primary decision-makers and beneficiaries. The solution to hunger lies in releasing the great potential of people who can develop their own skills and local resources. By contrast, reducing the problem of agriculture to one of technology of production divorces agricultural progress from basic rural development. Agricultural modernization is but a mirage of rural development — a mirage that undermines the interests of the majority of the rural population to serve those of a few.

In country after country where agricultural resources are allowed to be sources of individual wealth the narrow drive to increase production has made the majority of rural people increasingly marginal to the production process. And to be cut out of production is to be cut out of consumption. The observation of a 36-cent-a-day agricultural labourer in Bihar, India, confirms this truth: "If you don't own any land, you never get enough to eat, even if the land is producing well."

Indeed, in many countries more food per person is being produced;

yet more people are more hungry. This is not a speculative point. Empirical studies recently prepared for ILO document that in the very Asian countries where the focus has merely been on increasing production and where, indeed, food production as well as the gross national product per caput have risen, the rural poor are absolutely worse off than before.

- **To achieve food security the hungry world must rely on large landholders.**

Governments, international lending agencies, and foreign assistance programmes have passed over small-holders because they have believed that concentrating on the large holders was the quickest road to production gains.

In fact, however, it is the small farmer who is generally more productive, often many times more productive, than the larger farmer. A study of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala found small farmers to be 3 to 14 times more productive per acre than the large farmers. In Thailand, plots of 0.8 to 1.6 ha yield almost 60 percent more rice per ha than farms of 56 ha or more. Likewise in the United States. In only two of the 14 years from 1960 through 1973, was the realized net farm income per acre greater on the biggest farms than on family farms.

We need not romanticize small producers. They get more out of the land precisely because they are desperate to survive on the meagre resources allowed them. The smaller farmers plant more closely than would a machine, mix and rotate complementary crops, choose a combination of cultivation and livestock that is labour-intensive and, above all, work their perceptibly limited resources (especially themselves) to the fullest. The large holders, for whom land is not the basis of daily sustenance, invariably underutilize their land.

Consider the Chinese experience. Through an evolution to collective ownership of land, China has significantly reduced rural ine-

quality. The gap between the richest and poorest segments of the rural population in China is probably only one fourth to one half as great as in other Asian countries. Production is directly controlled by and benefits those who work the fields. Food production in China has climbed consistently and there has been no famine since at least the early 1960s.

- A needed increase in food production can come only at the expense of the ecological integrity of our food base: farming must be pushed on to marginal lands at the risk of irreparable erosion; and the use of pesticides will have to be increased.

Is the need for food for a growing population the real pressure forcing people to farm lands that are easily destroyed?

A Caribbean country offers a shocking picture of environmental destruction. The majority of the utterly impoverished peasants ravage the once-green mountain slopes in a desperate effort to grow food. Has food production used up every safely cultivated acre so that only the mountain slopes are left? No. The rich valley lands belong to a handful of people who seek dollars in order to live an imported lifestyle. These lands are thus made to produce largely low-nutrition and feed crops (sugar, coffee, cocoa, alfalfa for cattle) exclusively for export. Grazing land is export-oriented, too. Recently, Texas-ranchers began to fly in cattle for grazing and re-export to the American institutional and fast-food market.

How pesticide-dependent is the world's current food production? In the United States, about 543600 tons, a whopping 2.7 kg for every American and 30 percent of the world's total, are dumped into the environment every year. Surely, such a staggering figure means that practically every hectare of U. S. farmland is dosed with deadly poisons. U. S. food abundance, therefore, appears as the plus that comes from such a big minus.

The facts, however, proved us wrong. Nearly half the pesticides in the United States are used not on farmland but on golf courses, parks and lawns; only about 5 percent of the nation's crop and pastureland is treated with insecticides, 15 percent with weedkillers, and 0.5 percent with fungicides; non-food crops account for over half of all insecticides applied in United States agriculture. Cotton alone receives almost half (47 percent) of all insecticides used. It should be noted that, even then, half of the total cotton acreage receives no insecticide treatment at all.

- A development country's best hope for development is to export crops in which it has a natural advantage and to use the earnings to import food and industrial goods.

There is nothing "natural" about the developing countries' concentration on a few, largely low-nutrition crops. The same land that grows cocoa, coffee, rubber, tea and sugar could grow an incredible diversity of nutritious crops.

Nor is there any advantage. Reliance on a limited number of crops generates economic as well as political vulnerability. Extreme price fluctuations associated with tropical crops combine with slow-maturing plants (a coffee tree, for example, takes 5 years to mature) to make development planning impossible.

Often quoted illustrations of how much more coffee or bananas it takes to buy a tractor today compared to 20 years ago have indeed made clear that the value of agricultural exports has simply not kept pace with the inflating price of imported manufactured goods. But even if one considers only agricultural trade, the developing countries still come out the clear losers. Their share of world agricultural trade dropped from 40 percent in 1961-63 to 30 percent in 1971-72. And two thirds of the benefits of the most recent increases in prices of agricultural exports accrued to the industrial countries.

- Hunger is a contest between the rich world and the poor world.

Terms like "hungry world" and "poor world" make one think of uniformly hungry masses. They hide the reality of vertically stratified societies in which hunger afflicts the lower rungs in both so-called developed and developing countries. Terms like these make hunger into a place—and usually a place over there. Rather than being a result of a social process, hunger becomes a static fact.

Worse still, the all-inclusiveness of these labels leads one to believe that everyone living in a "hungry country" has a common interest in eliminating hunger. Thus, we look at a developing country and assume its government officials represent the hungry majority. Well-meaning sympathizers in the industrial countries then believe that concessions to these governments, e. g., lower tariffs on their exports or increased foreign investment, represent progress for the hungry. In fact, the "progress" may be only for the elites and their partners, multinational corporations.

Moreover, the "rich world" versus "poor world" scenario makes the hungry appear as a threat to the material well-being of the majority in the metropolitan countries. To average Americans and Europeans, the hungry become the enemy. In truth, however, hunger will never be redressed until average citizens in the metropolitan countries can see that the hungry abroad are their allies, not their enemies.

Only 5.5 percent of all farms in the United States now operate over one half of all land in farms. The resulting landlessness and joblessness in rural America are at the root of much of the persistent hunger in the midst of agricultural bounty.

Almost 90 percent of vegetable production in the United States is controlled either through contracts or directly by major processing corporations. Many farmers

(Continued on page 24)

Hugh Mac Diarmid

by N. M. M. I. Hussain
(of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service)

The work of the great Scottish poet Hugh Mac Diarmid, who died last month at the age of 86 after a literary career of over half a century, seems to be hardly known in Sri Lanka, apart from a few anthologised poems such as the weirdly compelling "O wha's been here afore me, lass" and the magnificent celebration of vitality, "Cattle Show".

This seems curious considering that he was accorded the imprimatur of Scrutiny approval by Leavis' favourable review of *The Second Hymn to Lenin* in 1935 and by John Speirs' *The Scots Literary Tradition*. More recently he has had the advocacy of David Craig, the Marxist literary critic who was formerly a lecturer at Peradeniya University. Mac Diarmid himself visited Sri Lanka sometime in the Sixties without provoking much interest. He had remained unremarked, as far as I am aware, in literary articles written in Sri Lanka over the decades.

In Britain itself his work has had nothing like the currency it deserves, partly perhaps because his Scots poems were published with inadequate glossaries. More important his virulent Anglophobia, his incorrigible and unfashionable Communism, his refusal to frequent the London literary coteries, apparently made him a rebarbative figure whose work had to be ignored after due acknowledgement of its extraordinary quality. But it is precisely the characteristics that make him so un-English, so remote from the ethos which allows a Kingsley Amis to indulge his silly Little Englander contempt for everything that is "abroad", which should make Mac Diarmid appealing to those of us in Sri Lanka who find the literature of England not sufficiently relevant to our preoccupations.

His Scottish nationalism, for instance, which to a Western European may seem retrograde will strike a sympathetic echo in the Third World where nationalism can sometimes be seen as a phase in a progressive movement towards socialism. It is however, striking in its unlikeness to the widely prevalent nationalism which consists in praising societies which ought to be criticised. While Scotland remains a major preoccupation throughout his poetry, he excoriates the Scotland of his time in the best flying tradition of earlier Scots poets. His is an alienated nationalism looking towards the transformation of his society, the kind of self-critical nationalism most needed in the Third World today.

There is nothing parochial about Mac Diarmid's nationalism. In his beautiful poem *Dieradh III* he writes of Oriental provenance of the Scottish Gael, the Eastern affiliations of Gaelic poetry and music, and describes Stalin's native country Georgia as the first home of the Scots, all of which is probably unscholarly mythology but which serves to show that his nationalism is outward-looking. It allows for an easy transition to the inter-nationalism of his last poem *In Memoriam James Joyce*, in which he says that he is "more concerned with East than the West".

Mac Diarmid is unique in being the only poet from the British Isles who can be taken seriously as a Communist poet, even though his Marxism is thoroughly unorthodox. In the *First Hymn to Lenin* he sees the Communist leader as marking the great turning point in history since Christ, an unorthodox view, and in the *Skeleton of the Future* he writes with religious overtones of an apotheosized

Lenin. In the *Seamless Garment* he brings into odd association Lenin and the German poet Rilke for the integrity shown in their work. The *Second Hymn to Lenin* concludes with the declaration that politics is child's play compared to the tasks confronting the poet. But unorthodox though these and other poems are, they are authentic political poetry of remarkable quality as recognised in David Craig's fine assessment of Mac Diarmid as a Marxist poet in *The Real Foundations*. Together with some of the poems of Yeats and of the lesser poet Adrienne Mitchell, Mac Diarmid's are the only political poems produced in Britain in this century which are worth reading. There is no doubting his political commitment, so unlike that of the Auden generation of the Thirties, which led him to rejoin the Communist Party after the 1956 events in Hungary.

Some brief indications about the quality of his poetry will have to suffice in this article. The early Scots lyrics, poems such as *The Bonnie Broukit Bairn* and *The Watergaw*, establish him indubitably as one of the supreme lyric poets of all time. *The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* is among the best long poems of this century and the subsequent work up to the *Second Hymn to Lenin* of 1935 constitute together with the earlier poetry a body of work strong enough to put him among the major poets. The controversy about his work is over his later poetry, the long poems *The Kind of Poetry I Want* and *In Memoriam James Joyce*, sometimes dismissed as rhythmically flaccid chopped-up prose. In fact these and other poems in the later manner are of unusual though very uneven quality, occasionally original in their transformation of technical and scientific terminology into poetry, and at their best a poetry of argument which does much more than can be accomplished in prose.

(Continued on page 18)

Veera Puran Appu

by H. A. Seneviratne

(Translated by the author from his own article originally written in Sinhala)

A criticism of an attempt to produce something worthwhile for the filmgoer at a time when there is a mad rush of third rate films, must not be misunderstood. It is absolutely futile to discuss films that do not deserve any criticism.

So, let's talk about 'Veera Puran Appu'. Is it a feature film or a documentary film? It is stated at the commencement of the film that whilst the documents regarding the 1848 rebellion at the archives are made use of, oral tradition is resorted to only in order to "fill the gaps". As this announcement is made certain documents are in fact shown on the screen. Thus we feel that we are about to see some historical facts about a past event. But in a moment something else happens. Contemporary actors and actresses begin to enact the roles of people like Puran Appu, Gongalegoda Banda, Ven. Kudapola, Governor Torrington, his wife, the Government Agent at Kandy etc etc. Therefore, we have to conclude that from now on what we see is a 'historical feature film'.

If it is feature film that we see, is it necessary that we should be presented with the various documents mentioned earlier? If they are presented at all, should it not be with a view to giving some additional meaning to the film? After all these are documents written by the British rulers who ruthlessly suppressed the 1848 rebellion. And these documents contain their views. The makers of the film *Veera Puran Appu* fail to give any special interpretation to the 1848 rebellion, at least with fact in mind.

Certain dates and names of places are shown on the screen from time to time as the story unfolds. But these dates and names of places add no special

significance or meaning to the story. This again undermines the 'feature film' aspect of the movie.

In fact *Veera Puran Appu* is a feature film that has taken the form of a documentary. Its characters are like puppets that depict some old incident. They are physically active indeed. They ride horses, they run, jump about and fight. But we do not see that their physical actions are only reactions of what is going on in their hearts and minds. In short their emotions and thought processes are not really revealed by their actions. That's why they become mere puppets despite their energetic fighting.

Let's take the character of Puran Appu himself as portrayed in the film. What richness there must have been in the character of this simple man who was born in Moratuwa only to go to Matale and there lead a rebellion against the might of the British imperialists! What richness there must have been in this man who at the end faced the bullets of the British imperialists without any hesitation or repentance whatsoever! What force elevates men to such grand heights? The film *Veera Puran Appu* provides no answer to this vital question!

Let's now see what the attitude of the film is towards the common people of this country who rose against their British rulers in 1848. Although in words and songs it is said that unreasonable taxes were levied on those people, the film fails to capture the sufferings of the people who were burdened with those repressive measures. Although it is said that those who fail to pay the taxes will be whipped, not a single such instance is shown. In other words the film does not portray in the language of the cinema the force of the torment and injustice that led a people still steeped in feudalism, to push aside caste, creed and other considerations and recognise Gongalegoda Banda,

and later, Puran Appu as their crowned king.

Because of these drawbacks there is little or no audience participation in the film even where there are fighting scenes.

And what is the human content the film *Veera Puran Appu* seeks to give? We are told at the end of the film that the 1848 rebellion, though a failure, was the beginning of a protest that succeeded in 1948. But there is nothing in the film that helps the audience to come to such a conclusion. How could there be? Is it not a fact that the psychology of protest in human minds do not end with "failures" or "successes" as such? At the height of such outbursts of protest human beings become instruments of history. The greater ones become representative figures who symbolize and articulate essence of the epoch itself.

The makers of the film *Veera Puran Appu* have failed to grasp any of these aspects. Therefore the film has become an aimless exercise. The hundreds of people involved in the film, the fighting, the storming of the fortress, the massacre of human beings—all these appear to have been just wasted.

Similarly, the truly excellent acting by Tissa Abeysekera as Ven. Kudapola, the commendable acting by Ravidra Randeniya as Puran Appu, the maturing photography of Donald Karunaratne — all these appear to have been wasted too.

The barrenness of content in the contemporary Sinhala cinema, which is clearly seen in this film, is not something peculiar to either its director Lester James Pieris or to its script writer Tissa Abeysekera, but it is a common malaise that has overtaken cinema itself. Independent and genuine criticism is one thing that is most essential for the solution of this problem.

Killers

Selwyn Lloyd's memoirs posthumously published recently in the *'Sunday Times'* (London) contain an account of the Suez 'adventure' which attempts to whitewash Eden's role (and Lloyd's own) in that sorry episode. Though agreeing with John Foster Dulles that 'force unless backed by world opinion would have disastrous results' they went ahead with a piece of international thuggery assuming that the US would, at the least, stay out of the argument. The nationalisation of the canal, which was the *casus belli* was Nasser's retort to the withdrawal, at Britain's instance, of US aid for the Aswan Dam.

Selwyn Lloyd as Foreign Secretary arranged the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression on Egypt and lied to the House of Commons about it. The same day (October 31, 1956) the RAF bombed 4 Egyptian airfields. Anthony Eden, too, lied to the Commons saying

Hugh Mac...

(Continued from page 16)

"A poetry like the barrel of a gun,

Weaving like a snake's head"

He seems to me one of the great poets of this century together with Yeats and Eliot, far more impressive than the better known Pound or Auden. The Hugh Mac Diarmid Anthology available in the British Council Library, provides an excellent introduction to his work though it includes some poems of dubious quality in preference to finer poems which have been omitted.

Britain had no foreknowledge of the initial Israeli attack. America had to get tough with the aggressors and call upon them to back down, not merely because of the US's new-found faith in the UN as the proper arena to settle international disputes but also because it was election year.

Eden's folly brought to an end his prime ministership and his political career. Sir Antony Nutting, a junior minister at the Foreign Office, resigned in protest and was driven out of politics for his pains. He wrote his own account of the events long before Lloyd's whitewash job. Nutting told of how he submitted a memorandum to Eden urging caution in trying to replace Nasser with an unknown. Eden telephoned Nutting and shouted at him: 'I don't give a damn if there's chaos and anarchy in Egypt. I want him destroyed, can't you understand?'

Recently, after Lloyd's memoirs were published, Nutting told Christopher Hitchens an even more damaging tale: 'He (Eden) told Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick that he wanted the Egyptian leader murdered.' Kirkpatrick as the senior mandarin with cloak and dagger connections replied: 'Prime Minister, I understand that some countries maintain special departments for that sort of thing but I'm afraid Great Britain is not one of them.' So it was not only Eisenhower and John Kennedy who believed that to get foreign heads of State bumped off in the Chicago style was OK. These predatory heroes of the West make Idi Amin, who at least confines his activities to the boundaries of his own bailiwick, look like a Sunday school teacher.

Malachy's prophecies

In June this year I wrote a piece about the prophecies of Malachy O' Morgain (1094-1141) who was Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland. He composed a series of Latin devices all of which

were supposed to refer to the future occupants of the throne of St. Peter, not necessarily to their characters but to the most striking features of their pontificates or even to their coat-of-arms.

At the time I wrote Paul VI was still reigning. To the successor to Paul VI, I wrote, Malachy gave the device 'De medietate lunae' (of the half-moon). John Paul, we were subsequently to learn, was born Albino Luciani in the diocese of Belluno (which means beautiful moon). John Paul died (on September 28) before the completion of one moon after his consecration which was on September 3. (It is to be noted that a Pope's pontificate counts from the date of his consecration and not from the date of his election.) It must be admitted that 'De medietate lunae' as a motto for Paul VI's successor was a bull's eye for the 12th century priest-prophet.

According to Malachy there will be only three more Popes: De labore solis (of the toil of the sun) who will reign as Gregory XVIII, De gloria olivae (of the glory of the olive) who will be Leo XIV and finally Petrus Romanus (Peter of Rome) who will be the last Pope.

He wrote: 'In persecutione extrema sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae sedebit Petrus Romanus qui pascet oves in multis tribulationibus; quibus transactis, civitas septicolis diruetur, et Iudex tremendus iudicabit populum.' In extreme persecution of the Roman Church shall sit (in the Chair of St. Peter) Peter the Roman who will feed his flock amid many tribulations; which things being over, the City of Seven Hills will be removed and the Great Judge will judge the people.

ජනදින

Strengthening class ranks

Yesterday we published the news that one of the foremost state institutions—the CWE, has abandoned-Sinhala and now conducts its work in English. Such a move can be construed as a step taken by some of the top officials in the CWE to strengthen the foundations of this capitalist state.

To discriminate against the Sinhala educated workers in this institution just because it has come under the influence of a Jayewardene government which bows and scrapes before English is patently an injustice.



A strange Socialism

That the government is proposing to ban strikes—specifically strikes in the government sector—can be seen from the speech made by the President himself at the meeting of UNP teachers. What we wish to review here is not this proposal, but his contention that strikes should be banned because strikes are banned in socialist countries. The wealth that is earned in socialist countries belongs to the working people. The major portion of the wealth that is earned in this country is taken away by the capitalists. The state, too, is a capitalist state. Though a nationalised sector exists within the government fold it is state capitalism that rules there. That is why both state and private

sector workers have been forced to ask a just share of the returns in order to keep abreast of the cost of living. In such circumstances to propose to ban strikes, at least in the public sector, is a fascist action not seen even in capitalist countries. Just as socialism cannot be established merely by christening the state 'democratic socialist' so cannot strikes be banned by legislation and prevent workers from asking their right to live and struggle against capitalist exploitation in a capitalist state.



A nest of white elephants

What prevails today is not a government but a cabal of ministers. When the 'walking skeletons' see a Father Christmas bestowing office, as if it were a bag of sweets to be distributed among kids, they wonder where all this is going to end. The President, too, is a Minister under the new constitution. The list of ministers under this government, which daily pays pooja to such an office, now reaches 80. Minister, Deputy Minister, District Minister, along with Project Ministers outside Cabinet rank, the variety of this tribe which has received Presidential honours is multifarious. This is not to speak of those who have been similarly honoured with other titles. What can be seen from all this is that those who came to power after making false promises have converted the mandate they got into a sizeable spoon with which to serve themselves titles.

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Science marches on

Exciting news! 'The Sunday Observer' scooped the world press and 'Lankapuwath' with the story that Mrs. B. J. Fernando, wife of our UN Ambassador Mr. B. J. (Hail President Park, Thy Kingdom Come to Sri Lanka) Fernando had served string hoppers to some natives of New York in their Park Avenue flat.

Not since our Foreign Minister enjoyed Anne Almeida's haal meso badun in that fair city, and T. M. Deen cooked parippu for his Shaul Brother Hameed has an event of this shattering significance made culinary, if not diplomatic, history. (T. M. Deen, by the way, is now an adviser to our UN delegation, presumably counselling the Minister on the eating habits of the Udongo tribe in Namibia).

As any media expert on in-depth news, investigative reporting, development journalism and other mass communication crap would point out however, what's really important in the *Sunday Observer* scoop was the story-behind-the-story. Evidently, the University of Kansas has launched an "on-going research project" to invent an "instant string hopper". The University is collaborating with the State Flour Milling Corporation and a New York manufacturer of vermicelli. Kansas researchers, it is reported, have already visited the resplendent isle to "get a feel of the project". The Corporation chairman proudly announced that the project has reached "the take off stage".

By an odd coincidence, we spotted Dr. Arthika Prasnatilleke at the Blue Cabin. Dr. Prasnatilleke has just returned from his sabbatical at the University of Buffalo where he worked for six months on a research grant of the Hamburger Foundation. His paper "Population, Pollution and Feed: How the Multinationals are helping

the Third World", won him the prestigious Cheeseburger Prize for original research. "A masterly thesis, delightfully devoid of all truth" was the candid comment of Myron J. Cheeseburger, Chairman of Cheeseburger Inc, who added, off the record, "give him an extra dollar".

"Hi Art!" I hailed him. (Since the days of his first Fulbright fellowship Arthika prefers to be called 'Art'). In return, all I received was a glacial stare. Arrogant academic that he was, perhaps he was annoyed by my air of familiarity.

"Hullo, doc..." I said a little more humbly. Still no response.

"Katey pittuda bung...?" shouted I, resorting to the vulgate.

He promptly swallowed his mouthful in one savage gulp and then to my great astonishment took a little lunumiris with his finger and ran tongue over the local poison in a gentle gesture of delicacy that a wine-taster of the Rothschild chateau would have envied. His eyeballs, thereupon, glowed with a fiery red. A glass of iced water appeared miraculously in his hand. A loud gargling noise followed before he turned to me:

"Enough of this frivolity Outsider... have you no respect for scientific research, you parvenu...?"

"What the devil are you talking about, doc...?"

"Can't you see dammit that I am trying to get the feel of the thing...?"

"Of what blessed thing...?"

"The on-going project, man, the on-going research project... true, true, I admit, it's still on the launching pad, as the boys at NASA would say..... not yet at

the take-off stage but we are making splendid progress..."

"Doc, doc, slowly, slowly..... please, please, what's the secret?"

"Secret, it certainly is..... Mitsubishi is after it, and the Lockheed boys will probably bribe an army of researchers if they only got a whiff of it..... and you, you bloody nose reporter want me to tell you all about...?"

"Doc, you know me... I don't go in for sensational stories... just the in-depth stuff on the on-going projects for the out-going news agencies..."

"Okay, okay... the University of Buffalo, the Rand Corporation, MIT and the Sri Lanka Institute for Bowel Diseases are collaborating on a project to manufacture an instant pittu machine..."

"But, doc, you are an economist...?"

"This is an integrated project which approaches the problem from the widest perspective of eco-development and basic needs strategy... environment, nutrition, ecology, labour-saving, appropriate technology, import liberalisation and overall demand management... all aspects are covered... and I am a member of the Task Force..."

"A little more detail, doc, kindly..."

"Look, its quite simple... The question is whether Sri Lanka is going to enter the technological age or not? You can take that down, if you want to... Think of all the servants and the housewives and other slaves in

every Sinhala home getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and pounding the rice or sweating furiously over a miris gala. Think of the husband yelling he's late for office, and the kids fighting over the pol kiri... consider the noise, the energy consumption, the neurosis and alienation, the time-consuming delivery problems and finally, the cost-benefit ratio and the inflationary spiral... well, Outsider, we've got the answer. The Instant Pittu machine. Each person drops a ten cents coin, American of course... one for the pittu, one for the lunu miris, and one for the pol kiri which comes in a paper cup... each person has what he wants, at the time he wants it, in the quantity he needs... there it is... no pittu bambus, no miris galas, no victorian slave-driving... remember that when you next write stupid editorials about our academics wasting time on pure research and not on applied research..."

"But what is the ultimate socio-political objective?"

"Individual enterprise and self-reliance, the ideological bed-rock of democratic socialism..."

"May I suggest another positive angle..?"

"Certainly... even an ignoramus has a right to an opinion... what did you have mind?"

"With each member of the family relying on a machine wouldn't there be less conflict of interest and more respect for each individual's rights and in that sense a great victory for Mr. Carter's Human Rights Campaign?"

"Bambu...!" snorted the doc, making his escape in the general direction of the American Centre.

● ELMER DE HAAN, troubadour, Rabbelaian wit and scourge of all local musicians, is dying of cancer. From his death bed, he has sent us this essay which is vintage Elmer.

Trends in modern music Ultra - realism

Living as I do in this backwater, Ceylon, I am practically shut off from the various cultural developments taking place elsewhere. I say 'practically' because news does seep through to me occasionally from sojourners abroad, tales of such wonder and fantasy that completely put in the shade the narratives of those master story-tellers, Sinbad, Mandeville, and Munchausen. Nevertheless, I am still grateful for the few crumbs that fall from the tables of our ubiquitous cognoscenti.

I was extremely interested to read of the innovations of Kagal who uses the homely knitting needle and the paper clip to produce in his String Quartet a "sonority not unlike that of certain primitive African instruments" a sonority that would have undoubtedly delighted the ear of Neanderthal Man as it certainly does that of his 20th-Century cousin.

To many of us however, such freakish aberrations may seem confusing, even bizarre. Of Paderewski "The Arts are being driven into the wilderness", or Rachmaninoff "I can never understand this modern music". Should the present trends continue, there is no reason why such experiments should be confined to the paraphernalia of the spinster's work-basket. Every avant-garde composer — and the name of Zogan Amoebiarsis, that brilliant Cretan comes readily to mind — will soon be spreading his net far and wide in search of still more exotic sonorities. It will be remembered that Amoebiarsis won international fame in the mid-sixties with his epoch-making discovery that the Dodecaphonic Tritone contains within itself the germ of the Pentatonic Chord of the Seventh which, in turn, led the Cracovian polychromaticist, Lazor Gorczycki

to establish that the Bach '48' was but Schoenberg in reverse.

Amoebiarsis and Gorczycki are at present jointly working on a Piano Concerto (world premiere, 1980) in which will be incorporated those utilitarian continuo instruments, the Commode and the Bidet. In an explanatory note, joint authors state: "The Soloist having bowed decorously to his audience will now unhurriedly remove his pants and with a gravity befitting the solemnity of the occasion, will endeavour to accomodate his posterior to the contours of the Commode, before beginning his onslaught on the Concerto. In order to provide that touch of realism without which no avant-garde work will be seriously considered by even the Soloist in order to generate the intestinal pressure necessary to a valid interpretation of the Concerto will have partaken of a repast of curried 'Kosata' just one hour before the concert. During the cadenza the Bidet will quietly enter as an obligato instrument and will continue so to the end of the work. Thus, the audience will not only hear their favourite soloist but will see and smell him as well.

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Dr. Abraham Thomas Kovoov

Dr. Abraham Kovoov died on September 18 at the age of eighty. Had he seen me writing the preceding sentence in an anticipatory obituary (he was rational enough to contemplate such a thing calmly) he would have insisted that I should add the phrase "leaving behind neither a mind nor a spirit to bother credulous people". Such was the man! To the last day of his life he was working like fury to liberate his fellowmen from what he called 'superstition'. But what is superstition? The truth is that one man's faith is another man's superstition. So far as Dr. Kovoov was concerned, empirical and deductive knowledge were the only kinds of knowledge he accepted. Everything else he contemptuously dismissed as 'superstition'. He refused to admit that there might be problems to which reason and science could not find answers. Particularly during the last few years of his life, he came to hold that view rather dogmatically.

Perhaps a bit of dogmatism is not unpardonable in an octogenarian whose main motive was a humane concern for his fellowmen who have been systematically swindled by godmen, saints, gurus, swamis, astrologers, palmists, charmers, yogis, rishis, spiritualists and their ilk. It was Dr. Kovoov's sincere belief that all religious dogmas were not only untrue but also harmful. He realised as well as anybody else that the complications of life in this world are too much for all of us. Not for a moment, however, did he concede that orthodox religion can cure our troubles. At best he regarded religion as "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world..." He never made a serious attempt to seek the social and economic roots of the continuance of belief in assorted gods and superstitions. He believed that happy human societies could be built by attacking superstition

vigorously and he dedicated the last years of his life to this task as completely as any saint was dedicated to the propagation of religion.

Abraham Thomas Kovoov was born in Kerala on April 10, 1893. His father was the Very Reverend Kovoov Eipe Thomma Kathanar, the Vicar General of the Mar Thamma Syrian Church of Malabar. One wonders what an ingenious neo-Freudian would make of that fact! As Dr. Kovoov once put it: "I was born in the beautiful land of Kerala in a Syrian Christian family as the son of a Christian priest as the result of a geographical and biological accident over which I had neither control nor choice. But when I came of mature age I adopted an equally beautiful country — Sri Lanka — as my country and rationalism as my philosophy as the result of my volitional act".

He was educated at the Syrian Christian Seminary, Tiruvalla, started by his father. Later he took his degree in botany and zoology from Bengabasi College, Calcutta. He migrated to Sri Lanka in 1928 at the invitation of Reverend P. T. Cash, the principal of Jaffna Central College. During his first year he was entrusted with the task of teaching not only botany but also scripture to final year students. Legend has it that never thereafter was he permitted to teach scripture because although all his students passed in scripture and many of them with distinction, all of them had lost faith in their religion!

After Reverend Cash retired in 1943, Dr. Kovoov left Jaffna Central College and taught in turn at Richmond College Galle; S. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia and finally at Thurstan College, Colombo, from which he retired in 1959. It was after retirement that he began to preach the rebellious rationalism which he

had assiduously practised ever since he became capable of independent thought. And within a decade he became far and away the best known freethinker in Sri Lanka, if not indeed in Asia.

Unquestionably he was the leading questioner in living memory in Sri Lanka. Undoubtedly he asked more questions than even he could satisfactorily answer. But his own answers, often picturesquely overstated, were offered with an amazing zeal and truculence. To the end his mind was razor sharp. It was also satirical and provocative. He took a puckish delight in irritating believers. What made him a formidable debunker were his wit, incorrigible irreverence and a vast fund of information. He was never daunted by hostility and his spirit was never dampened by ridicule. He himself had a keen sense of the ridiculous and cultivated habit of putting his views in the most outrageous way he could. He certainly succeeded in disturbing the complacent routine of the spiritual lives of many believers.

No wonder that many people in this country and elsewhere came to regard Dr. Kovoov as a positive force for evil. And yet he was such a gentle, kindly, humane and — in all except orthodox religion — thoroughly orthodox person!

It was not a rationalist but none other than the late classics professor J. L. C. Rodrigo who once wrote: 'Mr. Abraham Kovoov has constantly crusaded for straight thinking: he delights in debunking those who parade the half-truths to which they cling; he boldly stakes a fortune in support of common-sense and practical wisdom, but there are no takers. They lack the courage of their aberrations. I count myself among his admirers. If only he dispels the mists of credulity, the delusions

thickening all rounds us, he would be as useful as Socrates was to Athens. Mr. Kovoor should be canonised as a national hero. But he remains a prophet without honour".

For following reason wherever it led Socrates was poisoned; Bruno was burnt; Galileo was put under house arrest and Luther was excommunicated. Dr. Kovoor was ceaselessly and roundly abused. But he went serenely on speaking his mind with Olympian disregard of the censure he incurred because historically he belonged in a glorious intellectual tradition. And when the Minnesota Institute of Philosophy honoured him with a doctorate he beamed with pardonable pride.

Like Bertrand Russell Dr. Kovoor firmly believed that when he dies he will rot and nothing of his ego will survive. During

the last year of his life he knew he was seriously and incurably ill but he scorned "to shiver with terror" at the thought of death. For me to think of the terror of death is to remember a passage from James Joyce: 'Death, a cause of terror to the sinner, is a blessed moment for him who has walked in the right path. For the pious and believing catholic, for the just man, death is no cause of terror. He it is and he alone, the pious and believing Christian who can say in his heart.

'O grave where is thy victory
O death where is thy sting'

As it happened, in 1973 when Dr. Kovoor sustained his penultimate heart attack he summoned me to his bedside and I was privileged to see how a believing rationalist faced the possibility of imminent death. As for the pious

(Continued on page 24)

Final epistle to Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor

Among the day's dismal news one odd spot said
Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor is peacefully dead.
Not believing in a soul, he had consigned
His Corpus to the medics when he died
His pal, Dr. Carlo, the sole devout pall-bearer
At the last rites for the Great Rationalist Torch-bearer.
This made my sad pensive mind
Find reasons for this funeral unkind
And, after much search for a thesis,
Arrived rationally at this:
Considering he was 82, more or less
When ancient Abraham ran out of gas,
Beating into myth the Biblical life-span
Of three score years and ten, I reckon
All his dear emotional friends and relations
Of the first, second and third generations
Must have pre-deceased him at the bend
Leaving him many a steel-nerved intellectual friend
Who would scoff at all pious rituals and ceremonies
As unworthy of him and fit for intellectual enemies.

Therefore, this final exercise of reason,
He had surmised, gave offence to none,
And, all this besides,
Advanced the cause of science.
So without animus I have penned
This epitaph for our dear friend:

He was by self-proclamation a rationalist
And attacked at sight fire-walker and theist;
But for those who believed in god
This Dr. Kovoor was a queer bird.

Badulla.

Patrick Jayasuriya

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(Continued from page 15)

The eight . . .

already have no choice but to sign the processor's contract or to go out of business.

Less than 0.2 percent of all food manufacturers in the United States control about 50 percent of all the industry's assets.

● Hunger should be overcome by redistributing food.

Over and over again we hear that North America is the world's last remaining breadbasket. Food security is invariably measured in terms of reserves held by the metropolitan countries. We in North America are made to feel that the burden of feeding the world is squarely on us. Our overconsumption is tirelessly contrasted with deprivation elsewhere the implicit message being that we cause hunger. No wonder that North Americans and Europeans feel, burdened and thus resentful.

The problem lies in seeing food redistribution as the solution to hunger. We have come to a different understanding. Distribution of food is but a reflection of the control over the resources that produce food. Who controls the land determines who can grow food, what is grown and where it goes.

Thus, food redistribution programmes like food aid will never solve the problem of hunger. Instead we must face up to the real question: how can people everywhere begin to democratize the control over food resources? ●

(Condensed — CERES)

(Continued from page 8)

News briefs . . .

military junta. They were considered 'detrimental to society'. A leading lawyer who was himself a political prisoner for several years, Mr. Thonghai Thongpao says that the actual figure exceeds 500.

Cairo trial

London

THE Director of the International Press Institute, Mr. Peter Galtner has cabled President Anwar Sadat urging him to withdraw charges levelled against 5 well-known Egyptian journalists for

criticising the Sadat regime. Their trial started on the 13th. The IPI has requested President Sadat to stop the trial as "a gesture of goodwill towards the freedom of the press".

Dictator's diet

Managua

"I'M NOT leaving and they are not going to make me leave" General Anastasio Somoza, head of Nicaragua's besieged dictatorship told Joseph Mann last week. Correspondent Mann found the dictator had left his villa by the Pacific and was living in a 'bunker' next to the Infantry Training School. After a serious heart attack last year he has lost 5 stones and stopped smoking and drinking. He told Mann that his diet is now based on the popular American book "Live longer now cookbook".

(Continued from page 3)

LSSP and . . .

"Thirdly. In our political activity in the Tamil areas and among the Tamil people we will do our best to convince them that secession is a blind alley and no solution at all to their problems. We will explain the consequences of racial civil war and that division is more likely to create two "fascist" states than two (or one) "socialist" state.

"I will not ask for more space in your valuable journal but refer interested readers to a longer article in the Sept-Oct. issue of 'Leftist' - our English Journal."

(Continued from page 23)

Dr. Kovoov

and believing catholic, so for Dr. Kovoov, the apostle of pure reason, death was no cause of terror. At that time, the one who shared her life with him during a period of over 50 years of almost idyllic married life was also, as always, at his side. What Dr. Kovoov wanted from me was not medical advice. "Promise me", he pleaded "that when I died you will take my corpse straight to the Medical College without permitting any religious mumbo-jumbo". Five years later, on the 19th of September, his wish was fulfilled.

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