

The Ceasefire and Anura's new move
— Mervyn de Silva

LANKA

GUARDIAN

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ALL ABOARD

Having taken some strange by-ways and wild, circuitous roads, the UNP's foreign policy seems finally on the right flight path to Rajiv's Delhi.

First, there was the high-level Sri Lankan lawyers' delegation, led by Mr. Harry Jayewardene, the President's brother and top legal adviser. Consultations with Indian Attorney-General and other constitutional pundits, including Delhi's top negotiator on Jammu and Kashmir, followed. The subject was 'devolution', and the purpose was to draw, if possible, ideas and inspiration from the Indian constitutional and political experience.

Next, Secretaries of two key ministries, Trade and Plantations, led a senior officials' delegation to participate in tripartite talks with Indian and Chinese officials. The purpose a price stabilisation scheme for tea. India and Sri Lanka are the two biggest producers but for Sri Lanka tea is vital. (42% of export earnings in 1984). With defence spending soaring, and tea prices tumbling, Finance Minister de Mel was staring at a huge hole in his 1985 budgetary bucket.

Lastly, there is the Freedom party and Opposition duo, Mrs. B. and her son Anura, Mrs. B. was expected to break journey in Delhi

on her way back from Yugoslavia and Anura was to meet her in the Indian capital. Although they represent the Opposition, their journey stresses a crucial point which UNP foreign policy missed—the centrality of India in any sensible Sri Lankan concept of its fundamental interests.

And it is in this light that Prime Minister Premadasa's admission of a mistake is extremely significant. Top politicians, more than most other humans, are not given to the open admission of error. But Mr. Premadasa has had the moral and intellectual courage to do so in public. He had been wrong, he said, in saying that Mr. Gandhi was not helpful in the matter of finding a solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis.

MILITARISATION

Though the idea of a National Auxiliary Force has not gathered any momentum, and may in fact have been laid aside, the Manpower Mobilisation Office of Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe's Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs will inaugurate a new scheme by the end of this year to give 'military training' to ex-Cadets. The M.M.O. will recruit youth for the National Armed Reserve. Instructors have already been selected from former Army and Cadet Battalion officers.

TRENDS + LETTERS

History, Histrionics and that Mahavamsa Mentality

IN THE course of his practical-minded essay under the caption **Separation no Solution** (CDN 24 May 1985) Mr. Jehan Perera referred, among other things, to a "Mahavamsa mentality" that he believes too many Sinhala people belabour under and a mentality he sees as a major impediment to a just solution to the Tamil-Sinhala conflict. All too sadly, the only response Perera's thesis has hitherto elicited is a hysterical one—vide Guna-seela Vithanage's piece (CDN 10, 11 June).

Mr. Vithanage gives us copious statistics and incidents from History of Sri Lanka (as if we did not know these or need to be reminded of them) to prove that:

- (a) Sri Lanka had to face invasions from Tamil rulers of South India;
- (b) the Portuguese treated the Sinhala Buddhists harshly;
- (c) the treatment meted out by the Dutch to Buddhists and Catholics alike was horrendous; and
- (d) that the British divided and ruled Ceylon (Sri Lanka) during their period of occupation of the island.

While expounding the above Vithanage simultaneously extols the magnanimity of the Sinhala Buddhists who, according to him, remained paragons of virtue while all around them were doing the poor Sinhala Buddhists in.

The Sinhalese as a result of the influence of Buddhism have a proud record of treating peoples of other races and religions as equals, of respecting their rights and of peaceful co-existence with them.

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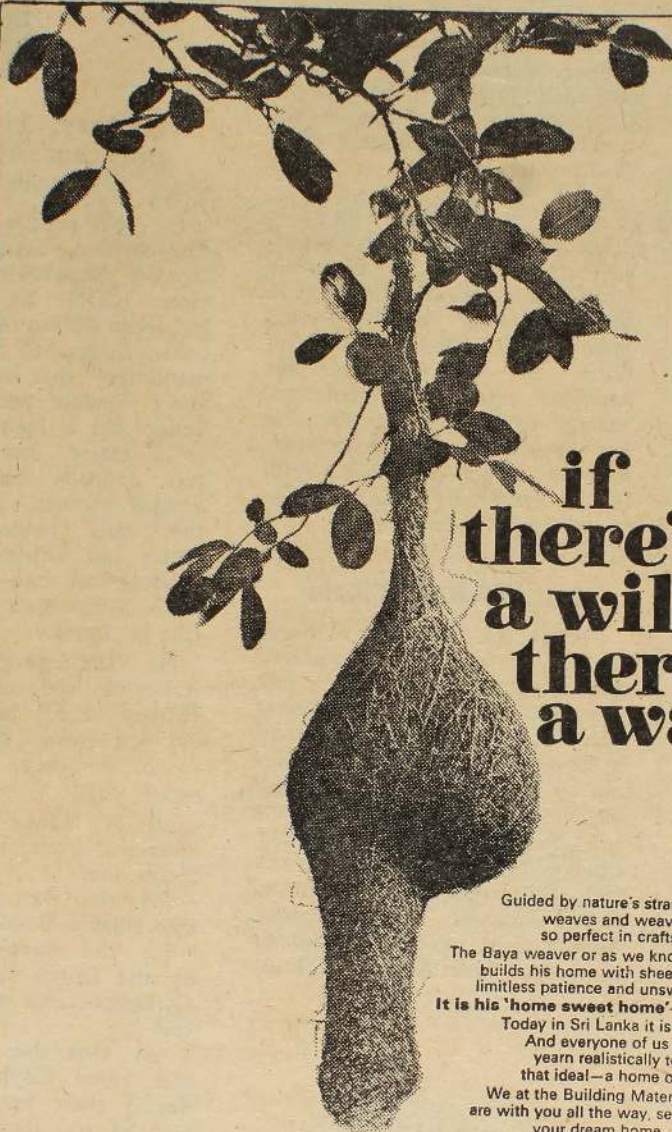
No. 246, Union Place,
COLOMBO-2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 5 4 7 5 8 4

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PHOENIX

Towards devolution — will SLFP be a road-block ?

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

"RASCALS" and "traitors" shouted the Opposition benches, in a rare burst of angry defiance and guts. "Traitors" yelled the serried ranks of the all-mighty U.N.P. which outnumbers the SLFP-MEP-CP combine by almost 12 to 1. The immediate provocation for the SLFP-MEP walk-out was the refusal to grant more time to the SLFP for the usual monthly debate on the Emergency. But behind the unusually high-spirited exchanges, the ill-tempered slanging and the dramatic walk-out is a political event of striking significance.

What happened in Parliament should be seen in the context of ceasefire announced on the 17th, Opposition Leader Anura Bandaranaike's talks with the Mahanayakes, his visit to Trinco and his unusually aggressive exchange of letters between Mr. Anura Bandaranaike and President J. R. It must also be studied against the background of the historic UNP-SLFP competition and conflict over the Tamil issue. In one sense, what happened last week — especially the Opposition leader's behaviour — is unusual; in another it conforms to a recognisable pattern of inter-party rivalry on the emotional and explosive national question, and in this latter sense, it could be the first sign that History has been seized by a sudden urge to do its thing — repeat itself.

Though he did make a passing reference to Tamil and Muslim refugees, in the course of the exchanges, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike wrote to the President making an impassioned plea on behalf of the displaced Sinhalese, numbering several thousands, who had been forced to flee their homes and villages during the bloody battles in the Trinco area. Those battles took place while an unofficial truce was obviously on the way in the north. The guns anyway went

suddenly silent in the north soon after President J. R. returned home from the summit.

In a way, Trinco is *sui generis* in this protracted sectarian violence and separatist insurgency. Not only because Trinco is a strategic Indian ocean port, the prize possession of Britain in the heyday of naval power and British dominance over the Indian ocean. The Indian elite which successfully led a nationalist struggle for freedom not only won back their country but inherited an imperial vision of which established British strategic doctrine was a necessary adjunct. The Indian ocean is the only ocean named after a nation. The defence of India must mean control over the sea-lanes, the exits and the entrances.

All external powers — and the less the better — are intruders. As the Indian elite sees their country fulfilling its true destiny in the 21st century, this thinking animates an unwritten Monroe Doctrine that sustains an undeclared Manifest Destiny. Mrs. Indira Gandhi in particular and the Soviet Union were deeply suspicious of US designs over Trinco. Some Indian analysts have told this writer that Trinco, in the Pentagon's forward planning, was America's "fall-back position in the event of a pull-out from Subic Bay" and that the asterisk on a 1981 Pentagon Defence Guidance Map showing Trinco as a US "facility" was no error but a slip of the tongue!

But Trinco, though neglected for decades, is potential economic asset of large proportions. There are forward planners, albeit developmental, among the more optimistic Eelamists too, and they visualise Trinco as a Singapore-style commercial port open to all and a flourishing free industrial zone for South Asia.

Even more importantly in the present context, Trinco is a border town between north and east, the territory claimed by Tamils as their "traditional homelands" and as strongly contested by the Sinhalese. It is the concept more than the claim that really causes intense Sinhalese dismay and disquiet. Though it ultimately left both the Tamil and the Moslem communities greatly disturbed, and distrustful, the successful military operation in the east against Tamil separatist rebels who had over-reached themselves, (physically and, in misunderstanding and arrogantly mishandling the conservative Muslim community, tactically) contained the eastern province south of Trinco through a policy of 'cauterization'.

With the government planning to introduce 200,000 Sinhalese settlers and, more immediately, devolution plans in the air, Trinco battles became a 'border war' in which the main issue was demographic change, (land-and-people) changing the past or trying to prevent future changes. The peculiar racial composition of the area — an evenly balanced three-way Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim split — made the violent battles uniquely complex, the situation confused and the outcome, untold suffering.

In his letter to the President, the Opposition leader took up the cause of the displaced Sinhalese settlers, and urged immediate redress. Noting with a certain asperity that the letter had been simultaneously released to the press, the President assured Mr. Bandaranaike that before any political settlement is reached on the ethnic issue, every displaced Sinhalese settler will be back in his home, with "enmity to none".

President JR's dismissive aside that he did not need anybody's advice on that issue raised eyebrows

in all parties. Except those cynics who believe that the President masterminds every serious political move in Sri Lanka, political observers were taken aback at this open JR-Anura confrontation. In the ranks of the S.L.M.P. where brother-in-law, Anura, has been branded "the President's pet", there must have been some consternation, said a pro-Freedom party academic.

"The Sinhalese race is being betrayed down the line", the Opposition leader who did not make a formal contribution to the debate, as a protest against the time given to his party, is reported to have shouted back at the government when hot words were being hurled back and forth. What is important is that Anura struck a more strident Sinhala-Buddhist note in his remarks than even the most consistent champion of Sinhala-Buddhist interests, Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena.

Was Anura's response to the post-summit cessation of violence and the prospect of Rajiv Gandhi-supported political settlement, a knee-jerk reaction or is it a serious policy re-orientation? Perhaps the answer will be clear

only when the party leader, Mrs. B. returns.

Has Anura smelt UNP blood in the water? Or is he a young man in a hurry? While the government talks of a popular democratic mandate on any final deal, and Mrs. B. calls for a general election, Anura has insisted that the assent of the Maha Sangha should also be sought. And in an ISLAND report, he has spoken of approval by 'the forces'. What forces? Popular forces or armed forces?

Mr. Premadasa, Prime Minister and Anura's arch opponent, had his own interpretation. According to him, the Opposition Leader was trying to 'obstruct a solution'. Other UNP MP's accused the SLFP of trying to whip up Sinhala feelings and "exploit the situation".

The Gandhi-Jayewardene summit was "a very successful one" said Mr. Premadasa, India's most inveterate critic in the recent past. Roles become ironically reversed when the Opposition leader who is Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's friend, takes a line against a formal or informal agreement that is clearly a by-product of the Delhi summit.

It is Mr. Gandhi who insists that "an abatement of violence" should lead to a "political settlement" that meets the Tamil demand for devolution. Obviously, it is on this condition, Mr. Gandhi is willing to help and, evidently, has in fact helped. Like the SLFP leader, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike has persistently argued that the problem cannot be solved without India's cooperation. Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi both offered to help, if invited, but the cooperation is founded on a *quid pro quo*; it is conditional, and India will lay down the terms.

Perhaps when the Opposition leader meets Mr. Gandhi he will be able to clear up this point and resolve any blatant contradiction.

Unfortunately President JR, if we believe the usually well-informed Mr. G. K. Reddy, will have the power of veto over any close encounters between the Bandaranaike and the Indian Premier. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, according to the Delhi correspondent of the HINDU will see them only with President JR's concurrence.

Anuradhapura, aid and the ceasefire

THE 1984 budget deficit, says the Central Bank report, was Rs. 15,862 million. Though this represents a drop from 18 percent of G.D.P. to 11 percent, foreign financing of the overall deficit rose from 51 percent in 1983 to 71 percent last year. Thus, the importance of being Ronnie de Mel who undertook two major aid-mobilising missions abroad between April and June just before the Sri Lanka Consortium met in Paris on June 20.

Last July, Mr. de Mel based Sri Lanka's case for aid at previous levels on two main arguments, one economic, the other political. Thanks to the boom in tea prices, Sri Lanka would end the year with a modest payments surplus, estimated at about 200 million SDR. (In fact, the balance of payments surplus was closer to 300 million SDR). Secondly, the All-party conference would produce a

political settlement of the ethnic issue and thus restore political stability and "business confidence".

In late December, the political prop, the APC, collapsed while tea prices started to decline by the beginning of 1985. What is more, the violence spread deep into the Eastern province, and then right into the Sinhalese heartland, Madawachchiya, Nikaweratiya and finally to the holy city of Anuradhapura, a bloody massacre and a tragic climax.

While the cold-blooded and brutal attack on Anuradhapura was both a deadly blow to the UNP's already badly bruised public image and to the average Sinhala mind, the battles near Trinco and along the eastern coast delivered a paralysing blow to a tottering tourist trade.

"Forty five percent of the people" moaned Dr. Anandatissa de Alwis, Cabinet spokesman and tourism

minister "are opposed to the government, right or wrong".

The weeks between President JR's departure to Pakistan and the UNP's barrage on Indian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and the threatened boycott of the SARC conference in Bhutan, saw anti-Indian propaganda reach a new peak. With the Anuradhapura tragedy, the UNP's propagandist guns coughed and sputtered and went silent.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had returned from Moscow where he discussed Sri Lanka with Mr. Gorbachev and was already preparing his first visit to the other superpower capital, when Sri Lanka's diplomatic courtship also peaked. Sri Lanka was bound to be on the Gandhi-Reagan agenda, and the US is not only Sri Lanka's biggest donor but its powerful patron.

(Continued on page 5)

"End of plague by year's end"

"Come what come may, support or opposition, before the end of this year, I hope to see an end to the plague, (terrorism and 'Eelam') that had harmed this country and its people for several years.

President J. R. Jayewardene said so addressing a large gathering present, at the opening of the new Sanghavasala of the Sri Wijeyesunderarama Vihara at Kesbewa, on June 22.

The President said:

"What is called terrorism has been prevalent in this country for 10 years. The first murder was the shooting of Mr. Alfred Duraiappah, the SLFP Mayor of Jaffna and Member of Parliament. Since then hundreds of innocent people of all races and religions have been killed and injured and property damaged. Unfortunately terrorism today is world-wide and the bigger nations are now feeling that there should be an international organisation to help nations that suffer from terrorism."

"I have suggested to the leaders of the major nations when I met them in U.S.A., U.K., India and China, that it should be organised under the auspices of the United Nations and be called the United Nations Anti-terrorists Organisation. The movement in this direction is, however very slow.

"I had been urging the Government of India that they should not permit terrorists operating in Sri Lanka to find a haven on Indian soil. This is opposed to the great ideals preached by India's greatest son Gauthama Buddha and another great leader of India, Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi based his movement for freedom on Ahimsa—non-violence. He even called it off in the 1920s against the wishes of Pandit Nehru and other leaders because they were on the verge of success. He did this as his followers had burned a Police Station in Bombay District and killed

several policemen. He would not agree to achieve Independence through violence because, he felt the means to be adopted as important as the end to be achieved.

"The present Government of Rajiv Gandhi has decided to accept and follow this noble heritage that is India's. With his help we can begin more vigorously to control terrorism in our country. The longer it lasts, the longer is the suffering of our people, and in the years to come when we feel the economic and financial consequences of terrorism, our people will suffer more.

We must, therefore, seek not only to curb terrorism and fight it but to convince the terrorists that they should give up arms. "Eelam" and the division of Sri Lanka is a goal that will never be achieved and no Government in the world supports it.

If there is any decentralisation of central government authority applicable to the whole Island enabling the representatives of the people living in those areas to develop themselves economically, socially and more effectively, we must support that provided those who are seeking to achieve separation by violence give up both separation and violence.

"The next few months will be important in our history and my Government and I will not shirk the responsibilities we have been entrusted with, of securing the prosperity of our people in peace and harmony.

"It is easy for those leading comfortable lives, who have no necessity to work to earn a living to provide for their food, clothing and housing to oppose a political settlement for various reasons.

"It is those who have suffered through deaths and injury to their family members, and the masses

who toil for a living whose lives will be harder if the economy deteriorates and the cost of living and unemployment increases, who will welcome and benefit by a settlement.

"We don't propose to agree to anything that diminishes the rights of the Sinhalese or any minority. We will not agree to any proposal applying to the North and the East without the giving up of "Eelam" or separation; and "terrorism". My Government and I will if such a settlement is reached, bring legislation before the Supreme Legislative Body, elected by the people, to make its decision.

"Come what come may, support or opposition, before the end of this year, I hope to see an end to the plague that had harmed this country and its people for several years."

— Sunday Observer, 23 June

Anuradhapura . . .

(Continued from page 4)

The aid group meeting was on June 20, and time was running out.

The most hurriedly arranged summit in recent times (a State Dept. spokesman denied that the US had 'arranged' a summit which the US warmly welcomed) produced the joint communique of June 3. On June 20, Sri Lanka was pledged 480 million US dollars, which is four per cent increase on last year's aid. (The figure does not include aid for the Mahaveli project).

"All delegations expressed their deep concern over the impact of the ethnic problem on Sri Lanka's economic development" says an official release. "They expressed a fervent hope that the present cessation of hostilities would lead to an early political solution"

Tamil guerilla groups give different signals about ceasefire

NEW DELHI, June 20

Major Tamil guerilla groups have conflicting public and private signals today about whether they were observing a ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

"On the question of cessation of hostilities on both sides we have stipulated several conditions to be fulfilled by the government of Sri Lanka. Our final decision to observe the ceasefire will depend on the timely implementation of the proposed set of conditions," the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in a statement on behalf of five major groups.

Asked if the groups were observing a ceasefire or planned to continue attacks, an LTTE spokesman told Reuters: "No comment."

However, senior Tamil sources among the groups said guerillas have been ordered to end attacks unless provoked by Sri Lankan security forces.

The sources said the ceasefire would be called off if Colombo

dragged its feet on agreeing to a number of guerilla demands including withdrawal of troops from Tamil areas.

Apapillai Amirthalingam, leader of Sri Lanka's main Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), told the Press Trust of India news agency the guerillas were observing ceasefire.

"The militants had agreed to a ceasefire in deference to the Indian Prime Minister's wishes," he said in Madras.

Mr. Athulathmudali said on Tuesday that five major guerilla groups had agreed to lay down their weapons. He said troops would adhere to the arrangement if the guerillas did not cause trouble.

In Colombo, official sources said the ceasefire was still holding in Sri Lanka today. No major incidents were reported in the Eastern and Northern provinces since the ceasefire was announced, the sources said.

National Security Ministry spokesman said: "The fact that there

were no incidents during the past two days indicates that all five major groups are abiding by the understanding to stop hostile acts."

— (Reuters)

No agreement to lay down arms — L.T.T.E.

NEW DELHI, June 20 (DPA)

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, one of the main guerilla groups fighting for a separate Tamil state, said on Wednesday they had not agreed to lay down arms in the terms for the ceasefire announced between the Sri Lankan government and the militants.

In a statement in Madras, the group clarified that cessation of hostilities also did not entail giving up its armed revolutionary struggle.

It said it had accepted the ceasefire because of India's good offices in a bid to persuade Colombo to give up its military path.

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RAJIV GANDHI

The Message to Moscow

FOREIGN
NEWS

Dilip Bobb

FOR VISITORS to the Soviet Union, the most-sought-after souvenir after Stolichnaya vodka is a stout wooden doll that opens in the middle to reveal another and yet another till the last one, tinier than a thumbnail. In many ways, the multiple doll symbolises more than anything else, the problems of probing the collective mind of the Soviet leadership in bilateral exchanges: strip one layer, and another appears in its place. In that context, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi didn't quite get down to uncovering the last minuscule doll during last fortnight's whirlwind visit to the Soviet Union, but he came as close to it as was politically and humanly possible.

That, in itself, was the single most creditable achievement of his high-profile five-day tour that succeeded in elevating Indo-Soviet relations to a new and more mutually beneficial plateau after a period of relative uncertainty and edginess on both sides. In fact, when Air-India's Boeing 707, Annapurna, carrying the prime minister and his 31-member official entourage touched down at Moscow's Sheremetievskoye Airport in driving rain and a bone-chilling wind, senior aides on board were still unclear as to whether or not the reception would match the weather. "We really had no indication of how they were going to treat the visit. We had been preparing for it for weeks but in all our discussions they gave us absolutely no clue as to what their thinking was," said top official.

Powerful pull

In the end, the worries and uncertainty cleared as abruptly as the drizzle and the long-lasting love affair between the Soviets and the Nehru family passed on to the newest member of the clan. Despite his relative inexperience and lack of exposure, Rajiv's boyish good looks, his natural charm and seeming sincerity exerts

RAJIV GANDHI set some kind of a record on last fortnight's visit to the Soviet Union. At every city on his schedule, he deplaned in unseasonal rain. When he left, it was in brilliant sunshine. But there was a symbolism in the meteorological phenomena. On his first official visit since becoming prime minister, Rajiv managed to firmly consolidate the durable love affair between the Soviet Union and the Nehru family. But though the visit was a clear indication of the future direction of Indian foreign policy, it also offered a rare and intimate glimpse of the prime minister's operating style, his interaction with his close aides and advisers and their place in the current Indian power structure. Associate Editor of "India Today", DILIP BOBB was on board the Boeing that carried Rajiv and his entourage to Moscow and back. This is his report:

a powerful pull. The day before his arrival, a young Russian woman interviewed on Soviet television was asked why she sounded so enthusiastic about seeing Rajiv. Her answer: "Because he is the most handsome leader in the world". Though superficial and trite, it was nonetheless a response that manifested itself in remarkable ways and over the widest possible spectrum of straight-laced Soviet society.

In an interview, shortly before the visit, the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachov, had remarked that "Indian leaders are received with a special feeling here" and it was clearly no hollow platitude. All along the broad and lengthy expanse of Gorky Street, Moscow's main boulevard, hundreds of people of all ages and both sexes braved the daunting weather to grab a glimpse of the young Indian leader and greet him with shouts of 'Miree, Druzbah' (peace, friendship) as he flashed past in his bullet-proof Zil limousine flanked by an impressive wedge of motorcycle outriders.

For the next two days, as Rajiv and his close aides closetted themselves in the historic and stunningly

beautiful innards of the Kremlin with Soviet leaders, Miree, Druzbah continued to remain the dominant theme. Outside, the winter thaw had given way to the first flush of a Moscow spring when the apple blossoms, lilacs and tulips that offer welcome and colourful contrast to the drab and depressing architecture of the buildings and condominiums, are in full and glorious bloom. Inside, the first flush of the Indo-Soviet spring was experiencing an equally luxuriant flowering. Not since the intimate affinity between Jawaharlal Nehru and Nikita Khrushchev have leaders of the two countries forged such an instant and visible rapport as did Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachov, a rapport that was already tentatively established during their first meeting at the funeral of Gorbachov's predecessor, Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko, earlier this year.

Billion roubles

The official schedule, in fact, was a mere formality. Details of the two economic agreements signed in Moscow under the glittering chandeliers of the Kremlin's historic Vladimir Hall had already been worked out between the two sides well in advance of the visit. One gives India, Soviet credit to the tune of one billion roubles (Rs. 1,400 crore) to finance a wide range of projects, mainly in power, coal, oil, machine-building and ferrous technology with the low interest credit to be used for Soviet purchase of Indian goods. The other, more wide-ranging agreement, is set in a longer-term perspective and chalks out the directions of economic, scientific and technical cooperation till the year 2000. But eventually it was the shadows rather than the substance that proved to be of infinitely more import and significance.

Kremlin-watchers were quick to note the many ways in which Gorbachov deliberately broke protocol, much to the annoyance of his

stolid and straight-jacketed security guards, during the two days that he and Rajiv were together. On the morning that the private talks between the two leaders were to start, Gorbachov arrived unannounced and certainly unscheduled at the Kremlin apartment where Rajiv and his family were staying ten minutes before they were officially supposed to meet. In what Soviet officials admit is a rare and unusual gesture, Gorbachov informed his bemused Indian counterpart that it was too beautiful a day to waste and rather than drive to the block where the talks were scheduled in curtained limousines, they would do better to walk. While security procedures were thrown out of synch, Gorbachov, stout and muscular with a livid scar across his broad forehead and Rajiv, slim and elegant in his Nehru jacket and tasselled Gucci shoes, linked arms and strolled through the Kremlin gardens. At one point, during the walk Gorbachov stopped, broke off a branch of lilac and presented it to Rajiv with an impish flourish.

Much in common

Later, the two leaders kept the entire Politburo waiting half an hour for the official signing of the agreements because, as Gorbachov later said with a laugh, "we forgot to look at our watches". Clearly, the talks between the two leaders were emboldened by the rapport that they had already struck. In retrospect, it was, in a way, inevitable. Gorbachov and Rajiv have much that is in common. Both are young — at 55 Gorbachov is the youngest leader the Soviets have had and certainly the most unconventional. Both have embarked on a massive reorientation programme in their respective countries, a programme that has its base in a new approach to issues, the workings of the Government and the induction of new technology from the West. More important, in conversations with Soviets, it is apparent that Gorbachov like Rajiv in India, symbolises a new hope and optimism for his people and their future.

But despite the genuine warmth and affinity displayed by both leaders, there were shortfalls in expectations.



Rajiv Gandhi

But clearly the disappointments were more than offset by the gains. Soviet worries that Rajiv's pro-western image and outlook would take India even further on the divergent path that started with the country's arms diversification programme in the late '70s were soon dispelled by Rajiv's strident and in fact, excessive criticism of the US during his visit. In diplomatic terms, it seemed an imprudent and negative approach considering the recent upturn in Indo-US relations, his programme to induct state-of-the-art technology available only in the US and its ally, Japan, and the fact that he is scheduled to visit that country next month. His statements are certain to upset the occupants of the White House and Capitol Hill.

Yet, the fact that he deliberately embarked on such a course is clear indication that the edifice of India's future foreign policy will rest heavily on the firm foundations of India's relationship with the Soviet Union. At his crowded press conference in Moscow, Rajiv, when asked why he had chosen Moscow for his first official tour as prime minister, jokingly replied that "I had to start somewhere and it so happens that the Soviets asked me first". But senior foreign office officials accompanying the prime minister confirmed that whatever

wooing was done as far as the West was concerned, the two top priorities in India's foreign policy will be the Soviet Union and India's neighbours. In fact, while in the middle of his talks in Moscow, Rajiv summoned Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari and instructed him to take off for Sri Lanka on their return to ensure that Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene makes a visit to New Delhi before the first week of June.

In Moscow, there were other indications of India's policy to maintain close links with the Soviets. The joint communique issued at the end of the visit was only remarkable for the issues that were left unsaid, namely Afghanistan and Kampuchea, two areas where India has been consistently criticised for its rather lonely pro-Soviet stand, specially since it is the Soviet presence in Afghanistan that offers the US a tailor-made excuse to pour arms into Pakistan. But obviously the success of Rajiv's visit depended on bending with the breeze without actually breaking.

Clumsy policy

BUT whatever the perceptions, Rajiv's visit was not an absolutely unqualified success from the Indian point of view and that seemed more a matter of bad planning than any diplomatic gaffes on his part. For one, it was clearly clumsy policy to arrange his visits to the Soviet Union and the US so close together. Knowing that in Moscow he would be compelled to adopt an anti-US stand which would hamstring his subsequent dealings with the US Government during his visit to the United States.

Secondly, it seemed surprising that he should have spent three days out of five visiting monuments in Minsk or watching a slushy equestrian display in Issyk-kul in Khirgizia on the Chinese border when he would have been better served getting acquainted with the Soviet leadership in Moscow, specially if the Soviet

Union is to play a pivotal role in Indian foreign policy. Informal chats with Soviet leaders like the wily and experienced Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko would have been far more constructive than exchanging pleasantries with the first secretary of the communist party of Khirgizia in faraway Frunze.

The cooing and billing apart Rajiv's Russian rendezvous contained a significance that extended well beyond the confines of Indo-Soviet ties. As his first official visit since becoming prime minister, it offered, for one, a rare opportunity to observe at close and intimate quarters how Rajiv tackled his first foreign policy test, his relationship with his close aides and advisers and where they stood in the new hierarchy, and his operating style. It proved a revealing exercise.

Subtle charisma

Despite his deceptively youthful demeanour — at times it is difficult to accept the fact that he is prime minister of the world's largest democracy — Rajiv radiates a subtle charisma. In Moscow, on his first couple of engagements, he appeared a bit nervous and unsure of himself. But as the visit progressed his confidence grew visibly and by the end he was performing like he had been doing it all his life. He displayed a casual and relaxed style that was strangely appealing, specially in the stiflingly bureaucratic atmosphere of Moscow. Despite the efforts of Soviet security personnel to hustle him along whenever there were crowds present, Rajiv made a point to exchange words with bystanders or wave and smile in appreciation of the fact that they had come out in inclement weather to see him, even on the most solemn of occasions.

The fact that his meeting with Gorbachov extended well beyond the deadline indicated that even without his aides, he can hold his own with the second most powerful man on earth and also a man who worships a different ideological deity. At no time, even ranged alongside the stern and aged members of the Soviet Politburo, did he look uncomfortable and out of place. The job is obviously growing on his and vice versa.

Alongside his attractive wife Sonia, they project the same romantic appeal that has endeared Britain's Prince Charles and Lady Diana to millions. Sonia, however, has a lot to learn from her husband. A person who has long shunned the limelight and is obviously uncomfortable in it, she seemed unable to overcome her diffidence throughout the trip. It clearly had little to do with security. In no other country could India's First Family have been safer. Yet on more than one occasion on her separate schedule, she brushed past on-lookers who had waited for hours to see her, and at one point an accompanying journalist gently suggested that a wave or *namaste* would do her image no harm.

But the situation was saved by the most unlikely of ambassadors — her two children Rahul and Priyanka. Unspoilt and attractive, they have a vulnerability that is intensely appealing. Their casual attire and their friendly nature only adds to the appeal. On the special flight to Moscow, restive in the confines of the plush cabin up front reserved for the prime minister's family, they wandered around the plane joking with their security personnel or in polite conversation with their father's aides. The Soviets have a great fondness for children, as is apparent from the many advantages and privileges for the young, and Rahul and Priyanka, despite the presence of more seasoned performers, went a long way in winning friends and influencing the Soviet people.

A revelation

The curious composition of the delegation was, in fact, even more of a revelation. Whether by deliberate design or by accident, the prime minister's party was made up of the current movers and shakers, the men or most of the men, who now hold India's destiny in their untried hands. The laid back informality between most members of the party — a strikingly new element in Indian bureaucracy — was of the kind that exists only in people who wear power well and without fear or favour. That, more than anything else, is a reflection on

Rajiv's style more than theirs for they represent the people he trusts more than anybody else and are those who he can relate to.

Top man

THOUGH number five in terms of protocol, the top dog is obviously Rajiv's close friend and Parliamentary Secretary Arun Singh. Despite the presence of more senior officials like Finance Minister V. P. Singh, G. Parthasarathi, chairman of the policy planning committee, and Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari, Arun Singh is obviously The Man when it comes to taking decisions, and he takes them instantly, secure in the knowledge that he is doing just what Rajiv would want him to do. His authority, despite his inexperience, is unquestioned. Unlike the abrasive Arun Nehru who likes hogging the limelight, Arun Singh prefers to stay in the background, hands in his pockets, quietly observing the scene and issuing rapid-fire instructions when required, especially on matters concerning the security of the First Family. And, for a man in his position and influence, he is surprisingly accessible and open with none of the arrogant impiousness of people who have their first taste of power.

Another man who maintains a low profile and yet has Rajiv's ear and trust is Finance Minister V. P. Singh. His conversations with Rajiv seem more those of a friend and valued advisee than a politician who holds a crucial portfolio. The fact that he has a clean image is what perhaps endears him to Rajiv and lends an easy familiarity to their relationship. As finance minister, his was a crucial role in Moscow considering that the agreements signed were mainly economic but not for one moment did he behave like he had more right to be there than any of the others, a trait that seems to be in short supply among the rest of his more stodgy ministerial colleagues.

Rajiv also seems to have a good equation with Romesh Bhandari, perhaps because of the very characteristics that same of Bhandari's

colleagues in the Indian Foreign Service are highly critical of — him casual and informal approach and his dovish, make-love-not-war image. But Bhandari's relaxed and informal style is certainly a welcome change from the rigid and overly conservative attitude of some of his more illustrious predecessors. Certainly, none of them would have replied the way he did to the question of what it was like working for Rajiv. "I'll give you the answer in one word", he said, "exhilarating".

Of Rajiv's other aides, Oscar Fernandes clearly has the edge over the others present in Moscow like Gopi Arora and C. R. Gharekhan, in terms of access to the prime minister and delegation of authority. At the official banquets and get-togethers with their Soviet counterparts, old-timers like G. Parthasarathi seemed to be anachronisms, there for protocol reasons rather than their place in the new scheme of things. What was in evidence was a tightly-knit team, inexperienced and perhaps unacquainted with the devious ways of the world they now inhabit, but still a team.

Top billing

In that sense, Rajiv's visit to the Soviet Union was more indicative of the new Indian powerhouse than the one that sits in the gilded halls of the Kremlin. The Soviets have traditionally had a soft corner for the Indian people and the Indian leadership, one of whom actually breathed his last in one of their cities. Three days after Rajiv left Moscow with his entourage, his official business well behind him, the Soviet press and television channels were still giving him top billing and the crowds at his non-official stops, even more enthusiastic. How long the affair lasts will depend on events beyond his control. But whether it was the overpowering atmosphere of Moscow, the genteel elegance of Minsk or the coarseness of Khirgizia he left behind a lasting impression of warmth and sincerity and above all, a dedication to ideals that strangely enough, suddenly seemed much more attainable.

— June 15, 1985 "India Today"

USSR

A Separate Reality

Dilip Bobb

A JEANS-CLAD couple is locked in amorous embrace in a park framed by the russet splendour of a late setting sun. A few hundred yards away, more elegantly dressed couples gyrate to the husky, breathless voice of Tina Turner in a strobe-patterned basement discotheque. Higher up, on the slopes of the city, a young man glides along on a skateboard, oblivious to the track-suited joggers around him. Paris? London? Washington? The answer, surprising as it may seem to some, is Moscow.

Thanks to the hyperactive imagination of spy fiction writers and the lack of objectivity in much of the western media, the popular image of the Soviet Union is of a dark and depressing dungeon peopled by Homburg-hatted apparatchiks and grimy, ill-clad workers bowed down with the weight of an overbearing and stifling system. The truth, apparent even on the briefest of visits to that country, is some-what different. The Soviet Union may not be the workers' paradise that party propagandists extol so tortuously, but it is still a distant whisper from the dark and gloomy portrait that is so often painted.

The only visibly depressing feature is the heavy, Gothic facade of the older buildings. But the less populated parts of Moscow, like the Lenin Hills, with its orderly rows of apple blossom trees and well-manicured lawns, is as beautiful and inspiring as any comparable feature in the west. The people, especially the young, are gaily and fashionably dressed, though jeans predominate and are still very much a status symbol.

The GUM (pronounced Ghoom) and other department stores are laid out like their western counterparts with escalators leading to different departments and are well stocked with East European products which, though not as varied and imaginatively packed and displayed as their western equivalents, are

LIFE behind the Iron Curtain is a far cry from the apocryphal image that is painted so vigorously in the west, as Associate Editor DILIP BOBB discovered on his recent visit to that country, during which he met a wide cross section of Soviet society. This is his report.

adequate for a society unbombarded with television advertising and unworshipful of conspicuous consumption.

Dollar shops

But even for those who are and can afford the premium prices, there are the so-called "dollar shops" which sell Japanese electronic goods, French perfume, German television sets and Italian footwear. Though officially meant for tourists, the fact that the dollar on the flourishing black market fetches around four roubles as against the official price of virtual parity (one rouble = Rs 14) is enough indication that, even in the Soviet Union, where there is a will, there will be a way.

Contrary to popular myth, Soviet citizens can — and do — own their own apartments through a cooperative housing system, though all land is stateowned. For the last few years, housing and city planning has been given top priority and the massive condominiums that dominate the skylines of most Soviet cities are the most enduring image of the country. To ensure that population does not outpace availability, there are laws that prevent citizens of one city from migrating to another though there are no restrictions on them visiting other cities. Rents are controlled and cheap. A three-room apartment in Moscow with a kitchen, bathroom, central heating, gas and other basic amenities costs around 20 roubles a month while a two-room apartment goes for around nine roubles. The average wage for a skilled worker is well over 200 roubles a month. Incentives and bonuses are additional. The only tax Soviets pay is a direct income tax which is 8 per cent for those, earning 150 roubles and less and 13 per cent for those earning more than that amount.

The Soviet system is based on social pricing which ensures that the costs of necessities like bread and foodstuffs are kept to a minimum and have been for the last decade. Beef, the most popular dish in a Soviet house — the Soviet appetite and capacity for meat is as prodigious as their consumption of vodka — costs just over two roubles a kilo while chicken and mutton cost slightly more. There are, again contrary to popular myth, no serpentine queues in front of food stores and only a very few items are in seasonal short supply. The Soviets produce champagne and cognac that is as good as anything produced in the French regions they are named after and their ice cream and confectionery, especially cakes and chocolates, are comparable to the best.

Travel by public transport must be the cheapest in the world and the streets are well-maintained and clean. On the famed and awe-inspiring Moscow Metro stations which are more like museums with chandeliers and ancient statues and frescoes, an all-day ticket is 50 kopeks (half a rouble) and has been for the last three decades. The ticket also entitles the holder to travel on any other form of public transport like buses, trams or electric trolley cars, all very efficiently run. The Moscow Metro celebrated its 50th anniversary last fortnight and it is a tribute to its engineering that the only accident on the system in all that time was when a newly-installed escalator collapsed. The state airline, Aeroflot, must be constantly in the red considering the ridiculously low air fares. A ticket from Moscow to Tashkent, a distance of almost 3,500 kilometres, is around 60 roubles. Airports around the country are, not surprisingly, fairly crowded with travellers. An additional incentive is the fact that hotel accommodation, for locals, is dirt cheap. A hotel room that would set a foreign tourist back by 40 roubles a night costs a Soviet citizen a mere four or five roubles.

Few Soviet citizens feel the need for their own transport though there are an increasing number of private cars on city streets. The choice, however, is limited and relatively expensive. The cheapest car, a Fiat built in collaboration

with the Italians costs 9,000 roubles while the only other car available on the open market is the sturdy Volga which carries a price tag of 14,000 roubles. The other two cars produced in the country, the Zil and the Chaika, the former made in a tank factory from bullet-proof material are only available to top officials. The cost of petrol has only recently been raised to around 40 kopeks a litre from its original rate of a mere 25 kopeks.

Vacation

Every Soviet citizen, from the head of state down to the lowest worker, is decreed by law to take a month's vacation after every 11 months of work. The country is dotted with holiday camps and sanatoriums which cost virtually nothing and are free for children. All education and medical treatment is free for everybody, with the result that most Soviet salaries are spent in buying food or clothes and the rate of savings is one of the highest in the world.

The new Soviet leadership under Gorbachov is obviously bent on relaxing the stranglehold of the state over the citizenry. All over the country, churches and cathedrals are being lovingly restored, an indication that religion is no longer the cardinal crime it was earlier. Even the newer buildings and apartment houses are of a different architecture with more emphasis on colour and design.

But there is bad news around the corner, especially for Soviet males. Gorbachov has embarked on a serious crackdown on drinking and the anti-alcohol campaign was to start officially from June 1. But its effects are already being felt. For the first time in the history of the Kremlin, no vodka was served at the official banquet given for Rajiv Gandhi and his delegation and the low spirits of Soviet officials indicates that the crackdown has already begun as far as official receptions are concerned.

Gorbachov, however, is obviously justified in his campaign. Though Soviet statistics are unavailable or deceptive, alcoholism is undoubtedly a major problem — the country's per capita consumption of spirits is one of the highest in the world. It has led to a serious drop in industrial productivity and is the

single biggest cause of divorce and traffic accidents. The new alcohol-related laws introduce stiffer penalties for drink-related accidents or criminal activities.

The Soviets also have a curious fascination and curiosity about India. Indians living in the Soviet Union — there are 600 in Moscow alone — are treated with special affection and respect. Every Indian one meets has a story to relate of how strangers came up to them in the streets after the assassination of Indira Gandhi and embraced them with tears in their eyes and words of genuine sorrow and regret. It is an obsession that manifests itself in strange and heart-warming ways. In Minsk, a pretty 18-year-old Soviet girl gave a highly creditable performance of Bharatanatyam at a reception for journalists accompanying the prime minister. Later, it transpired that she had never been to India, never had a single lesson in her life and only learnt from watching documentaries and Indian films. Her real name is Marina she insists that people call her Mira. In the apartment she shares with her mother, a plump, cheerful and hospitable woman, every available space is plastered with pictures she has painted herself and posters relating to India or figurines of Indian gods and goddesses. She has a stack of Indian records and every book on India ever printed in the Soviet Union. Her mother, like mothers anywhere in the world, expresses justifiable concern. "She is such a talented girl but she doesn't want to go to college. All she wants to do is dance. She dances two hours every day and she has only Indian friends. What am I to do with her?" But the exasperation is tinged with a certain pride in her daughter as well.

Other than her daughter's future, the mother has little else to complain about and most Soviet citizens one meets seem fairly happy and content with their lot. Certainly, the Soviet socialist system has what would be considered serious drawbacks in Western and democratic societies in terms of freedom and choice, but it is a system that works and works fairly well — after a fashion.

— June 15, 1985 "India Today"

Indians see better U.S. ties after Rajiv's visit

NEW DELHI, (LAT-WP)

Indians look forward to a new era of improved relations with the United States following what was seen here as a highly successful US visit by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

But the recently retired Indian Foreign Secretary, Maharaj Krishna Rasgotra, cautioned against putting too much emphasis on possible arms sales that would attempt to wean India from its military supply relationship with the Soviet Union.

He said Gandhi is unlikely to enter into large-scale arms purchases that would jeopardize New Delhi's relationship with Moscow which is "important because the Soviet Union is an Asian Power" that shares long borders with neighbours of India such as China, Iran and Afghanistan.

Rasgotra and other commentators here said Washington's arms-supply relationship with Pakistan remains a major irritant between the United States and India. Gandhi during a visit that ended on Saturday, focused in his talks with the Reagan administration on what his country sees as the danger to it from a Pakistan armed with sophisticated US weapons.

Even with the Pakistani cloud hanging over improved US — Indian Relations, Rasgotra — who laid the groundwork for the meeting between Reagan and Gandhi — in office seven months following the Oct. 31, assassination of his mother, Indra Gandhi — concluded that "the visit has gone well."

Rasgotra said Gandhi was attempting to head off a new round of US arms sales to Pakistan, following completion of the current Reagan administration commitment of 1.6 billion in credits for American weapons, including 40 F-16 fighters partly paid for by Saudi Arabia.

"A bigger package is bound to come," he said. India and Pakistan have fought three wars since they gained independence in 1947.

India is especially concerned that Pakistan might be able to buy the E-2 Hawkeye airborne early warning radar surveillance plane which was used by Israel three years ago to control its jet fighters in their attack on Soviet-made Syrian Migs. The Israelis shot down 75 Migs in one day with help of the Hawkeye. Pentagon officials visiting here last month said.

— SUN, June 19

India's relations with neighbours

NEW DELHI, (Reuter)

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi arrived home on June 18 after an extensive foreign tour which has raised hopes of a breakthrough in India's troubled links with neighbouring states.

"I am fairly certain the United States will do everything it can to prevent Pakistan going nuclear. But that does not mean Pakistan won't have a bomb", Gandhi told reporters at Delhi airport at the end of his five-nation tour.

He said US arms supplies to Pakistan were not a threat to India's security and that his concern was mainly over the diversion of Indian funds from development to defence.

Gandhi's government has frequently expressed fears that Pakistan was developing a nuclear weapons capability and that US arms supplies to Pakistan would threaten India's security.

In Sri Lanka the government said major Tamil separatist guerrilla groups had agreed to stop hostilities from today.

Political sources said India had used its influence over the rebels to agree to halt attacks. New Delhi has denied charges by Colombo that separatists have received assistance in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

(Continued on page 16)

Letter

History...

(Continued from page 1)

And so, in his woeful attempt to refute Perera's thesis, Vithanage displays perfectly the very "Mahavamsa mentality" that the former has spoken of. The sooner we shed this and other similar fossilised ways of thinking reflected in the rigid attitudes of backward looking folks like Gunaseela Vithanage the nearer we shall be to a return to sanity. That there are counterparts of Vithanage among members of the Tamil community too only compounds the tragedy of anachronistic thinking that impedes the path to a practicable solution to our ethnic crisis. If one were to carry the tragedy of anachronistic thinking that impedes the path to a practicable solution to our ethnic crisis. If one were to carry Vithanage's attitude to its logical (illogical?) conclusion we may have to put him on an elephant and send him up North to do combat with Prabakaran, Maheswaran or Amirthalingam or whoever may be the protagonist from the Northern camp, making sure that we have sufficient funds to build a monument to whichever is the fallen warrior!

Surely the need of the hour is for a new nationalism that seeks to strengthen a truly Sri Lankan identity — one resting on common elements of history, values, beliefs and aspirations — such as was the foundation of our national independence. Only thus shall we be able to pave the way to the reconciliation of the "true interests of the Sinhalese and Tamils within a united Sri Lanka".

Tissa Jayatilaka

A TRUE SCHOLAR

Prof K. Indrapala

James Thevathasan Rutnam turns eighty today. The four score years of his life so far spans an important period in the history of modern Sri Lanka — an epoch beset by changes more radical, more rapid and, towards the end, more painful, than in any preceding age in recent centuries. He was born at a time when **Pax Britannica** was reigning supreme and British rule in this tropical island seemed unshakable. The background against which he grew up could hardly have been more stable. Then came the changes. And today, as he begins his ninth decade, the land he loved is in turmoil and slipping inexorably towards the abyss of civil strife. Having raised his voice against the British as a mere lad and latter associated himself with political organisations and leaders with a desire to lead the country out of bondage, he must indeed be a sad man today.

James failed to make a name in politics. From the beginning he was torn between politics and scholarship and gradually opted for a career in politics. When he finally gave it up, the loss to politics was scholarship's gain. Looking back, one wishes he devoted more time and energy for scholarship. He perhaps has no regrets.

Whatever one's chosen area of interest is, one eventually gravitates to history is a favourable maxim that James always publicises. His own enduring interests in history were not a late development but were first formed while he was at the Ceylon University College and the Law College. It was at the latter institution that his inclination for historical research first won recognition, when he was awarded the Walter Pereira Memorial Prize for Legal Research for his monograph on the introduction of trial by jury in Sri Lanka. It

was his first important piece of historical research and, I believe, it was from that time that he became interested in the life and work of Alexander Johnston, the papers relating to whom are among the most valuable collections that James had acquired over many years from different parts of the world.

In the early years James had a passion for genealogical studies and soon became a specialist in the field and was sought after by many to trace their family trees.

Genealogy naturally led him to biography. He regularly wrote biographical sketches of leading political personalities and colonial administrators to the local press and became an authority on the lives of national leaders. Among his best contributions in this field is undoubtedly the well-written biography of his political mentor, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, on the occasion of the latter's birth centenary celebrations in 1953. It was published in English, Sinhalese and Tamil by the Government. His researches into the life of Arunachalam led him to unravel the work of William Digby, Arunachalam's mentor, and to the acquisition of the valuable Digby Papers.

Modern history has been his forte. But he is not one who favours narrow specialisation and has shown as much zeal for the medieval and ancient history of Sri Lanka as for the modern. His writings on Fraser of Trinity College, the Polonnaruwa Colossus and the Tomb of Elara clearly reveal that he is equally at home in all the periods of the Island's history.

He worked in isolation and never knew his real worth. Recognition eluded him for a long time. When he reached the age of seventy, he had written himself as a 'successful failure'. Little did he realise that he was entering a new stage in his life — that of a guru figure.

Recognition followed. He was elected President of the Jaffna Archaeological Society, a Member of the Governing Council of the Royal Asiatic Society (S.L.B) a Faculty Member of the University campus in Jaffna, and later a Member of the Council of the University of Jaffna. And that new university honoured him with a D. Litt. degree at its first convocation.

But when all this came, James was not going to rest on his laurels. He busied himself with the establishment of the Evelyn Ratnam Institute for Intercultural Studies in Jaffna, a dream that was his ever since the sudden death of his beloved wife, and began his long-awaited work on the Alexander Johnston Papers. He felt that time was running out and ploughed through the paper with the eagerness of a student working for a Ph. D. In a place plagued by frequent power cuts, it was an amazing sight to see him flashing a torch with his trembling right hand on to a document held in the other and reading late into the night when men of his age were enjoying a good night's sleep after playing with their great-grand children. But alas for nearly a year now, his cherished work has been cruelly interrupted by the developments in Jaffna.

Thorough in his investigation, critical in his approach and dedicated to his research, James is a master of words which he puts together very elegantly. A scholar of true universality, his intellectual personality is perfectly imaged in his fluent style. On this day of remarkable achievement, James Rutnam deserves to be saluted in Shakespearean phrase: **Thou art a scholar.**

James T. Rutnam was 80 years old on June 13.



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English Literature teaching is meaningless

Qadri Ismail

"In any society the dominant groups are the ones with the most to hide...Very often, therefore, truthful analyses are bound to have a critical ring, to seem like exposures rather than objective statements..."

— Barrington Moore

After four years studying English Literature at the University of Peradeniya, supposedly having the premier English department in the country, I came out wishing I had studied History, or Sociology, or even Political Science. The study of Literature (yes, it has a capital in those parts) is meant, according to those dons there who still quite passionately believe in the more than fifty year old philosophy of F. R. Leavis to be central — perhaps even indispensable, one sometimes gets the impression — to the study, or knowledge, of life. After four years, I can only come to the conclusion that there is something wrong with Leavis, or with the teaching at the department, or both. Nothing I learnt was taught there — with the exception of parts of the meagre linguistics course — put me in touch or gave me any kind of understanding about.

What was going on around me/us in the country. And I don't just mean ethnic conflict, which we only came to take as central after the massacres of July '83. I mean that the whole process of studying literature there, along with the whole ideology attached to it and carefully shoved down our throats (the point is moot about brains) is utterly elitist in nature and has the ultimate effect of very successfully alienating the vast majority, mainly women, of those unfortunates who pass through the noble portals once graced by the greats — Ludowyk, Passe, de Souza and so on — from the mainstream of life in the country.

I clearly remember the very first lecture we had with Professor Ashley Halpe. There were twelve

of us eagerly awaiting the encounter — the largest "honours" batch in a long time. When we walked into the room, we found what we subsequently learned was a canto by Ezra Pound (to those who forget, he was an incurable elitist and had fascist inclinations) chalked on the blackboard. I think it was called "A station in the metro", and ran thus:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd,

Like petals on a wet black bough.

He took no notice of the canto and proceeded to tell us of the great glories of English literature. It then became (painfully) apparent to me why he chose Pound's canto. It was clearly meant to imply that the English speaking classes, in comparison to the poor masses who didn't have that privilege, were superior beings: i.e., like shining (pink, I somehow always felt) petals would look superior as parts of a lovely flower, in comparison to a (dirty and mucky I always felt) wet and black branch. The English speaking faces stood out in a crowd: they — thus the petal comparison — had individuality unlike a shapeless branch of a tree. Yes, the comparison was nauseous then and still is now. But that, in a nutshell, was the *raison d'être* behind English literature teaching at Peradeniya, presumably for the last thirty (almost) years.

Little wonder then that those coming out of it, especially in the last two decades or so, have made hardly a contribution to Sri Lankan intellectual affairs. While in most other countries of the tricontinental world the cultural baggage left

behind by colonialism has been re-examined, if not thrown away, we still have our annual celebrations of Shakespeare's birthday. No Sri Lankan literary scholar has produced a serious work on what meaning, if any, English literature could have for us — and I mean for all of us in Sri Lanka. And this major lacuna, which if erased would have led to the demystification of much we believe about English, may have also led to a more realistic appraisal of the role English must necessarily play in a country like ours. Which in turn could have led to more Lankans being given access to English. The whole business of *kaduwa*, I very firmly believe, could be blamed upon the English department apart from an iniquitous social system. Not that a radical English department could have ever hoped to change the system; but since departmental dons, or students, have invariably dominated commissions of inquiry into English teaching, a more realistic, intelligent and humane consciousness of what English does, and of what could be done with it within the department, would have inevitably percolated upwards and downwards — and especially influenced such important places like the Education department and the teacher training colleges. So, then, to look at a little detailedly at the content of English literature courses.

The first year of our honours course we had to do five papers:

1. the novel and poetry;
2. language and practical criticism
3. the European "background" to English literature;
4. an Introduction to Sinhala and Tamil literature; and
5. a subsidiary of our choice.

The linguistics course didn't make much sense there since it was essentially an introduction to next year's work and would have been easier on all students concerned if done then. "Practical criticism" (a practise long forgotten in the English department in the west and Australia) was defended on the grounds that our A' level standard was quite low and so students should be given a thorough grounding in the close reading of literature. If this is the case, and I certainly agree that all students should pay close attention to the text, then it should be done in the first year, where students are "taught" practical criticism too; that is, **before** the selection is made for honours. Such an emphasis on prac crit, there is another paper in the final year, only serves to create a belief in the student that this is the only way to read literature — thus establishing what someone called the hegemony of the text, and making students totally ignorant of the role of context and other extratextual influences. (The fact that the final year paper, meant to have a course on literary theory too, stopped at the 1930's for us, thus ignoring some of the fascinating recent developments in criticism and theory, did not help correct this deficiency.) The two background papers were quite meaningless: the European one does hardly anything to increase knowledge of the forces that go into the creation of literature, especially since it stops at the renaissance — and it, anyway, implies that societal forces are the "background" to literary production, rather than the very womb from which it springs; and the other was a departmental apology for 1956 and for the fact that all other students entering the university had to pass an examination in English. If properly done, that is in those languages rather than in English, and with a bias on recent writing rather than on a meaninglessly long historical overview, it would have helped combat the alienation I spoke of earlier; but this way only served to reinforce feelings of superiority. I have left the most absurd thing about the syllabus to the last — the fact

that only one paper is about English literature. Criticisms of this led to bizarre changes. The background papers, instead of being enlarged or discarded, were amalgamated, thus making their content so small to be useless; more novels were introduced — but in the "pre-novel" period, the 18th century, which is quite boring to read; the subsidiary was made compulsory — Greek and Roman drama, thus reinforcing elitist notions (I don't think it necessary to study classical drama to understand Shakespeare better certainly not for a whole year!) and also making it impossible for those who wanted to study a more useful subject than "Classics" — say Economics, Political Science or Sociology — to do so.

The special degree syllabus is worse: it has one subsidiary paper: one language: one criticism, dating of unseen passages (this is an archaic and inexpressibly crude method to test familiarity with literature) and literary theory; one ten thousand word dissertation and six papers on literature. Out of those, only one is on Sri Lankan and Commonwealth literature. Thus, given the structure of examinations (however vast the syllabus' students are told to expect questions on every subject or author, and need be familiar with four, or sometimes three, only!) he or she will in all probability only know two "Commonwealth" writers — the rest of the tricontinental masters being thought irrelevant. (The argument that this may be because they don't write in English doesn't hold water — there is also a paper on comparative literature.)

Thus the syllabus, combined with the elitist ideology, makes the alienated products. Literature, as Barthes said, is what gets taught. Terry Egleton elaborated on that: "what counts as Literature is determined neither by texts themselves nor by what people happen randomly to favour, but by the ideologies which constitute our very ability to recognise a text as a certain kind of writing in the first place. The history of a piece of writing is the history of its functions — of the varied, often conflicting ways in which it is

constructed, granted a home, valorised, put to use, within the different ideological systems it inhabits. "He ended that article, titled "Literature and Politics now" by posing "the most fundamental question: what is the political significance of Literature?" In Sri Lanka today it has been a tool of the ruling classes (who conduct their day to day affairs in English) which gives the **kaduwa** they wield so successfully a sharper cutting edge. Demystifying English literature inevitably would involve demystifying the English language as well. Apart from the societal dimension that makes this task impossible within the present societal structure, there is also the other one: this would entail that our English departments, as currently constituted, would cease to exist.* But surely you cannot expect our dons, whose recent behaviour towards their students has been one replete with utter selfishness, to actually work towards their inutility?

(Next: a look at the recent products of the departments.)

* If, that is, uniting of all forms (though obviously with a tricontinental bias) is critically studied, rather than English Literature alone paid *pooja* to. I mean, there is no rational basis for interpreting as "Literature" only, or nearly only, writing that came from Britain.

India's . . .

(Continued from Page 12)

Gandhi said his talks with leaders, in Egypt, Algeria, France, the United States and Switzerland were beneficial and would lead to closer bilateralities with each of them.

But Gandhi returned home to face simmering domestic crises.

Within hours of his arrival, he met Punjab State Governor Arjun Singh to discuss the situation in the northern state where militant and moderate Sikh leaders have been battling for control of the sect's main political party the Akali Dal.

The press Trust of India (PTI) said Gandhi and Arjun Singh discussed security measures needed to tackle any acts of violence in a militants' campaign to set up a sepa ration in Punjab state.

Marxist theory : The National Question, Imperialism and Uneven Development

Radhika Coomaraswamy

The Marxist tradition is singularly ambiguous on the phenomenon of nationalism, seeing it more as a strategic tool in the long-term interests of class struggle. Marx in the Communist Manifesto did argue that national differences are disappearing owing to the development of bourgeois commerce, the world market and uniformity in the mode of production. Nevertheless, he did support the nationalist struggle in Poland and the Irish struggle against England.¹⁰ At the same time there is enough evidence to show that he saw the British presence in India, the US presence in Mexico, and the French presence in Algeria as having certain positive features. His approach was augmented by Engels who saw historic and non-historic nations — perhaps reflecting the influence of Hegel. The Slavs, Bretons, Basques and Scots, for example, were regarded as non-historic if not fanatical.¹¹ Kolakowski in his article on the "Main Currents of Marxism" points out that only 2% of Marx was devoted to the issue of nationalism but 20% of Lenin and 50% of Stalin theorised on nationalist issues.¹² The Marxist approach to nationalism is a post-Marx phenomenon evolving over time as Marxists have attempted to come to terms with the political reality around them.

The first Marxist to give importance to nationalism were the Austro-Marxists. Otto Bauer in his study on The National Question¹³, accepts the right to self-determination and cultural autonomy and argues for it to be

given a place in Marxist doctrine as a central tenet. Rosa Luxemburg, a Pole by birth, however, rejected this right as being abstract, utopian and unscientific.¹⁴ Her failure to understand its dynamic political dimension led Lenin to launch a sharp polemic against her. But, unlike the Austro-Marxists, Lenin himself did not raise the **right to self-determination** to the level of doctrine. He reiterated the instrumental case-by-case approach expressed by Marx and Engels — Great Russian nationalism was negative, but the Polish struggle should be supported. Nationalism against capitalism countries was seen as historical but against socialist countries was regarded as reactionary. It was Stalin who formally expressed a Marxist approach to nationalism in his well-known 1913 article on "Marxism and the National Question". A Nation, he wrote should have the following factors:— it must be historically constituted, have a stable community of people, a common language, a common territory, a common economic life and a common culture. This Stalinist litmus test, was actually formulated not only to counter the Austro-Hungarian call for general acceptance of cultural autonomy but also to attack the proposition that the Jews were a nation. Stalin was, however, unable to predict the dynamic and powerful force of nationalism which would refuse confinement into this tightly knit legalistic categorisation.¹⁵

Despite Marxist ambiguity on the question of nationalism, Lenin, was to profoundly influence Third

World thinkers with his analysis of Imperialism with its anchor in the theory of uneven development.

In fact Lenin's theory of imperialism was to provide the conceptual focus for much of the discussion of nationalism in a Third World context.¹⁶ In its crudest form, the theory of uneven development states that nationalism is the response of the less favoured areas in their attempt to assert independence.¹⁷ As Tom Nairn writes in the Break-up of Britain, "it is the consequence of capitalist development in peripheral regions — forced mass mobilisation in a position of helplessness".¹⁸ The doctrine, which is essentially economic, asserts that western capitalism, in a state of crisis, requires imperial colonies to ensure access to raw materials and to extend markets. Nationalism is therefore a response by exploited countries to their colonial economic status. Though the theory of uneven development may be seen to explain the imperatives of international capital and the forces of imperialism, it does not fully explain the phenomenon of nationalism. In fact contrary to a widely shared belief which has led to much intellectual lethargy in Third World countries, nationalism is not the other side of the imperialist coin — it can be said to have a structure and autonomy of its own. Regis Debray, in an article in 1977, writes in a rare moment of candor, that Marxist approaches to nationalism neglect the crucial and sometimes determining role of political process and social formation, especially those which existed prior to

colonialism.¹⁹ In fact, it could be argued that the Marxist attempt to see imperialism and nationalism as part of one process, a belief which is supported by Keynesian liberals as well, has led to a massive infusion of nationalist doctrine into the scientific theory of Marxism — something which Rosa Luxemburg initially feared. In fact Marxist analysis of imperialism is today the orthodoxy in Third World societies, regardless of political persuasion, since the doctrine often provides the relevant discourse for the political legitimisation of nationalist elites regardless of class origin. This Third World "love-affair" between nationalism and Marxism, has also challenged many of the categories of early Marxism — class has turned into people, socialism into the Third World state and working class into a broad based movement involving the peasantry, and petit-bourgeois elements. For Marxists, the dilemma today is to reclaim an analytical rigour now clouded by nationalist sentiments. Theoretically, it is now necessary to distinguish the phenomenon of nationalism from that of imperialism and there is a need to develop contemporary doctrine — not only strategy — based on Third World post-colonial experience.

The Communications Model of Nationalism

Modern liberal thinkers on the question of nationalism always begin by distinguishing the nation from the state. As Seton-Watson writes "the State is a legal-political organisation, while the nation is a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture and a national consciousness".²⁰ Implicit in this analysis is also the understanding that every nation need not have a State and that nation-creation is dependent on specific political and economic factors. Beyond this initial distinction, there is a large amount of disagreement as to the definition and historical role of nationalism and the nation-state. Karl Deutsch, probably the most influential theorist on nationalism in the 1950's and 60's, analyses the nation-state in terms of a "realistic" doctrine

which States use for the purpose of "integration".²¹ For Deutsch and all those familiar with the East European experience, nationalism was always regarded as a positive historical force which allowed for social mobilisation in an era of rapid urbanisation and also provided for cultural assimilation, in an era of social alienation. In the final event, Deutsch, recognised nationalism as a communication strategy during the phase of modernisation. Though Deutsch promoted in his writings the rapid evolution of the international system, he accepted the nation state as the only realistic concept/unit for managing and administering society.

Deutsch's emphasis on nationalism as communication was also based on a social-psychological assumption shared by theorists such as Kornhauser and Arendt who were trying to comprehend the rise of totalitarianism in Germany and Italy. Their theories accepted the premise that modernisation has led to uprooted, atomised, individuals coming as wage labour into the large cities. This process has led to psychological alienation and a release of "emotional energy" resulting from the loss of kinship ties and a loss of "intermediary associations". Nationalism therefore is seen to fill that emotional gap. Since the roots of this nationalism are irrational, the scope for ideological manipulation is enormous. The notion of mobilisation for intensive communication and the creation of a homogenised public awareness is seen by Deutsch as the political art of nation-building. Though Deutsch has been criticised for his optimistic approach toward nationalism, and for the socio-psychological content which sees nationalism in terms of "management" not "power", his focus on communications as a crucial variable has been developed by other social scientists of different political persuasions as being the nerve-centre of the nationalist enterprise.

Nationalism — a Political Religion

Another liberal approach to nationalism has been to treat it

in structuralist terms as the functional equivalent of religion in modern political movements. Eckstein and Apter have often put this forward as the explanation for the nationalist appeal.²² However, investing nationalism with a spiritual content may actually serve to mystify it further, divorcing it from the fact that nationalist movements are always about politics and politics are usually informed by a specific material purpose.

To be Continued

FOOTNOTES

10. See generally, K. Marx, *Political Writing Volume I: "The Revolutions of 1848"*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973.
11. A. Wright, "Socialism and Nationalism" in L. Tivey, *op cit*, p. 152.
12. L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Vol. II, 1978, p. 88.
13. See generally T. Bottomore, P. Goode, ed., *Austro-Marxism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, especially Bauer's study on the National Question and Social Democracy (1907).
14. H. B. Davies, ed., *op cit* — see introduction for polemic with Lenin and theses.
15. See generally, J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, numerous editions, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1936.
16. V. I. Lenin, "Theses on the National and Colonial Question", 1920, numerous editions from Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow. For a good analysis see A. G. Meyer, *Leninism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 147-161.
17. A. W. Orridge, "Varieties of Nationalism" in L. Tivey, ed., p. 54.
18. T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, London, New Left Books, 1977, p. 101-102.
19. See R. Debray, "Marxism and the National Question", 105 *New Left Review*, (1977).
20. H. Seton-Watson, p. 1.
21. See generally, K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, Cambridge, M. I. T. Press, 1966.
22. See generally, D. Apter, "Political Religion in the New Nations", in C. Geertz, *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Africa and Asia*, New York, Free Press, 1963.

IS CAPITALISM NECESSARY ?

Gail Omvedt

India in the pre-colonial period was not a nation, but nevertheless as a social formation had potentialities for developing as a nation as well as in terms of separate linguistic-nationalities.³ Basically it was a caste-based social-economic system that was the common feature of Indian society as a whole, and this contained divergent cultural traditions that included on one hand the dominant brahmanic one emphasizing varnashramadharma, the Vedas, the authority of the Brahmins, a sanskritizing process of absorbing low castes and tribes etc., — and on the other hand the more popular, submerged non-brahman cultures of revolt and opposition, ranging from the materialistic traditions of Carvaka and Buddhism onwards.

Now, India developed a national consciousness in the course of anti-imperialist struggle as it has rightly been emphasized. But what was the content of this consciousness? In fact throughout the whole 19th century and into the 20th a process of reinterpretation of tradition by the elite was going on which produced a revitalized and re-formed Hinduism which came to exercise hegemony among Hindus and thus within the national movement as a whole. This movement it has to be remembered was fairly thoroughly controlled by the bourgeoisie; working class, peasant, tribal, anti-caste forces were vigorous throughout the whole period but never came close to exercising any hegemony. India's emergence as a "nation" was not in a cultural vacuum, not simply abstractly and secularly anti-imperialist, and major nationalist leaders included the bourgeois intellectuals whose project was to re-define and modernize Hindu traditions and who essentially defined Indian "nationhood" in those terms.

The National Congress had its beginnings with the exclusion of the Social Conference from its mandap, and with Tilak's slogan of "political reform before social reform". Its Bengal leadership was heavily tied in with anti-Muslim symbolism and campaigns; its Punjab (Hindu) leaders were immersed in the Arya Samaj.*

* Kenneth Jones, historian of the Arya Samaj in the Panjab, notes the way in the 19th century a process of communal alienation began, with Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike beginning to align in antagonistic bodies — but argues that the Arya Samaj was by and large taking a lead with modernized but communal organizational forms.

Finally, however liberalized and reformed an interpretation Gandhi gave to Ram-Rajya, it was essentially a slogan that was not only Hindu, but in content anti-low-caste, and anti-woman. (Indeed all of Hindu revivalism, including the social reform of the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission etc., much more "popular" and influential than the more secular social reformers, was simply building an updated model of Sita to suit the remodeled Hindu patriarchal family).

Marx, Engels, Lenin etc. tended to neglect the question of the actual cultural-ideological content of any particular nationalism because they were concerned primarily with nationalism and national movements as a process of struggle against feudal or imperialist powers (indeed, it can be argued that it is in this period that the more progressive features of any national culture are emphasized, as bourgeois and middle class leaders seek to draw the masses into the struggle; even more, these periods of struggle are ones which generally bring forward the most internationalist and universalist interpretations of nationalism). What happens as capitalism deve-

lops and nationalities consolidate themselves is a feature they gave much less attention to. In contrast, Stalin used "common psychological makeup", equivalent to bourgeois theorists' focus on common culture, as one of the criteria defining a "nation" — but this was taken mechanically, as an already existing fixed fact. In fact this was a bit similar to bourgeois nationalist theorists' projection of the "notion" as an ideal, pre-existing historical abstract entity. Actually, the process of building a national movement, or nation-building, is also a process of constructing national culture — out of existing materials, to be sure, but nevertheless in a process of class struggle over what aspects of popular historical tradition shall define the group/nation. Where working class forces are weak, where women are suppressed and subjugated by existing traditional kinship/class patterns, where religious minorities and low-status groups (low castes, untouchables) have little voice, where indigenous peoples are given no identity at all except as "backward" "savages", it is quite natural that the process of national self-definition is likely to see the institutionalization of updated and bourgeois forms of patriarchy, communalism, casteism and religious revivalism. Those who would like to see Bhagat Singh or Nana Patil and the prati sarkar as representing the essence of revolutionary nationalism cannot afford to forget that the traditions they represented were submerged ones, historically repressed ones; it was the Aryans, the greatness of the Vedic period, "Indian spiritualism" Rama and Sita which came to represent "Indian" or "Hindu" national tradition... The "common psychological makeup" constructed during the colonial period, has helped to feed the Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh tensions and riots of today.

A fundamental objection to the prevalent logic of viewing national movements today has to do with another aspect of their connection with capitalism — that is, the Marxist reassessment of the capitalist stage of history.

Capital projected this as a necessary state: "the more developed country shows to the less developed one the image of its future." This assumption has been retained among almost all Marxists, so that even theories of "new democracy" or "peoples democracy" assume that societies have to go through some kind of bourgeois-democratic pre-socialist stage, even if under the leadership of the proletariat. These notions, or those of "completing the democratic revolution" provide the theoretical base for arguing that the nationalist process, which is so much linked to the capitalist stage in classic Marxist-Leninist understanding, still has a progressive role to play. (Even a Trotskyite position, which would argue that socialist revolution is on the agenda for countries like India because of the prevalence of capitalist relations of production, still is open to seeing nationalism as a part of "democratic tasks").

However, as we now know Marx himself rejected this logic in the last years of his life. When dealing with the Russian revolution, he expressed his agreement with the Russian populist tradition that not all societies had to go through the path of the breakdown of communal property, institutionalization, of private property, capital accumulation, centralization and revolution; communal forms could be a base for a socialist transition in a period of the development and decadence of capitalism as a world system.⁴

This perspective throws open the entire question of evaluating the national question in quite another way. But, if nationalism is inseparably connected with capitalism, and if building capitalism (or completing the bourgeois-democratic revolution) is no longer on the agenda as a historical task for societies in the world today, then — even if there are national

contradictions and oppressed nationalities — we have to look at these in a different way. The question for communist revolutionaries today is not how to assess movements in terms of building a democratic bourgeois state, but how to assess their role in socialist revolution and liberation. This may be a very different matter. We cannot simply assume that the old arguments hold.

With a view to raising some of these questions, let us look again at some arguments used in connection with supporting various types of nations/national movements.

(1) One of the major arguments Lenin used in regard to national movements was a strategic one, linked to their role in intensifying a general crisis of capitalism rather than to that of their outcome in the event no socialist revolution took place:

To imagine that socialist revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church and the monarchy, against national oppression etc. — to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says "We are for imperialism", and another, somewhere else, and says "We are for imperialism", and that will be a social revolution!...

...The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene.

The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilize the Irish rebellion the French — the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage were not taken of the enemy's slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where are with what

force some power magazine will explode. We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis.⁵

This was written in a period of world war, with Lenin assuming that chaos and not "stability" represented in general more favourable conditions for revolution, and conceptualizing "imperialism" not as equivalent to one of the great powers but as a worldwide political-economic system. Does such an outlook still hold today? Especially since, with the spread of unclear weapons, the stakes for warfare and destruction are so much higher?

(2) Support for big, strong centralized and more or less unitary states has been taken as a marxist position; within the context of building capitalism this has had some basis. But why should this position be held today? What is the most effective political form for a transition to socialism? Many put forward (with the background of the Paris commune, the soviet model etc.) various models of peoples' power ...why should these locally-rooted forms be linked to large, centralized nation-states? Why not small state? Doesn't large state itself constitute an anti-liberatory factor?

(3) Support for larger states — in reaction to the above arguments — is often argued for in terms of their necessary efficacy in opposing imperialism, in protecting newly emerging socialist relations. (A sub-argument here is that national contradictions should not be given scope because imperialist powers are playing around with them). But the evidence of the last two-three decades hardly shows that big states are more successful in opposing imperialism. On one hand, the growing unity of these states (and the leadership of some of the bigger ones) in UN and other international bodies has had some success in opposing some of the domination of certain imperialist countries and pushing for

independent capitalist development — but this is hardly an opposition to imperialism as such; it merely builds a better integration into the imperialist system. On the other side is the fact that the really revolutionary anti-imperialist battles have been carried on by small nations — Vietnam, not India in Asia; Nicaragua and El-Salvador (countries of 4 and 5 million), not Brazil or Mexico. Even Grenada, a country of 200,000 had to go through a process of murderous infighting among its revolutionary forces before the U.S. could bring off an invasion.

Lenin was quite impressed with the ability of small European oppressed nations to stand up to the big powers in his day. Since that time, the entire social weight of the nonwhite, mostly "small" nations of the world has increased immensely. It is true that the economic power of the big multinational corporations and the destructive powers of weapons systems has multiplied immeasurably — nevertheless all the evidence indicates that the economic and political power of big powers such as the United States is declining in relation to the rest of the world as a whole. Isn't it time we stopped worrying about how to build up a national/military force capable of confronting one such big power and worried instead about the process of tearing down the imperialist system as a whole?

(4) Support for post-colonial bourgeois states such as India cannot be justified by Communists on the grounds that it is building the nation or that it is the best institution for independent capitalist development. Communist support can only be justified on the grounds that such a state is capable of a socialist transformation, capable of playing a liberatory role beyond the development of capitalism itself. The Soviet concept of the "non-capitalist path of development" makes such an argument. But do we agree with such a position?

Finally, it seems to me that the period in which "nationalism"

and "national movements" were of central importance in the dynamics of revolutionary struggle has ended with the second world war. Isolated struggles continue aimed at establishing an independent nation-state (Nagaland, Tamil Eelam). For the most part, however, while national contradictions continue, and while movements directed at preserving/recovering land and/or continue, to have a central importance, they are no longer national movements in the classic sense and trying to deal with them within the framework only of "national movements (or reacting to them as if they were raising separatist demands) is in-sufficient. **Indigenous movements** are a case in point: Marxists have understood them for a long-time only under the category of "national movement", but now these movements are taking the stage on their own and proclaiming that **regardless of whether or not they constitute "nations" in the analytical sense** still pre-state tribal peoples have rights to preservation of land and culture. The crucial point here is that (while they contain different trends) for most part these movements link up with a new ecology-environmental searching for alternative models of development rather than to the classic nationalist project of nation-state building and industrialization.⁶ Similarly, the concern for identity (national, popular) has been said to be the main aspect of the "unresolved national question" for Latin Americans⁷ and it is certainly reflected in the new trend of naming revolutionary organizations after indigenous revolutionaries — the Sandanista Front, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, the Shining Path of Jose Marietegui. But again it would not be accurate to see these as "national movement" in the sense in which Marx, Engels and Lenin used the term. The themes of **autonomy, identity, participation and self-determination** which are uniting themes of so many movements today in India and elsewhere do not fit easily with and may even be contradictory to the nationalist thirst for state-building and industrial development.

FOOTNOTES

4. See T. Shanin, ed. *The Late Marx and the Russian Road* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984)
5. Lenin, from "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" (1916) in *ibid.*, pp 193-5.
6. See the documents and testimony collected in *Native Peoples in Struggle* (Testimony before the 4th Bertrand Russel Tribunal) and William Bollinger and Daniel Lund, "Minority Oppression: *Latin American Perspectives* 33 (Spring 1982)
7. See Tilman Evers, "Identity: The Hidden Side of New Social Movements in Latin America" (paper for Workshop on State and New Social Movements in Latin America, Amsterdam, October 1983), p. 13.

Paper presented to the Seminar on Nationality Question in India, Pune, 27th to 31st May, 1985.

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The Ethics of Corporatism

Alexander R. Magno

The technocratic ethos is at the same time totalitarian ethics. On the day martial law was proclaimed, the Filipino people have been daily bombarded with the slogan, *Sa Ikaunlad ng Bayan, Disiplina ang Kailangan* (For the Nation's Progress, Discipline is Necessary), a maxim easily compatible with liberal consciousness with deep ideological roots.

The cornerstone of the social ethics of authoritarianism is an absolute view of man. The one-dimensionality of 'reason' in Lockean thought and the constancy of a 'human nature' in the Hobbesian sense form the essential premises of technocratic consciousness and

the authoritarian preference for social control and social engineering, rather than the free play of individual creativity which technocrats tend to see as anarchic.

In an interview with **TIME** (June 7, 1976), Marcos spoke of man as 'a strange mixture of the good and the bad. But given the opportunity, the good will come out.' Thus, logically the state controls the 'bad' aspects of man, and determines from some imagined absolute reason the conditions whereby the 'good' aspects are made to surface. Marcos notes further that 'human nature could hardly be changed although the social structure can be drastically chang-

ed.²⁷ This point is a reiteration of the more explicit: 'To change man, we have to change the institution.²⁸

The unidimensional concept of change is understood in the framework of 'reason' that in no way is historically relative and therefore absolute and non-partisan. Men must therefore submit themselves to this singular 'reason' and consequently to the 'plans' detailed from above to achieve 'development' known only to the state but not autonomously available to individual consciousness. Men must therefore conform eventually not through coercion but by 'free' option on the basis of 'nationality.' Thus: 'To change others, we must first change ourselves.'²⁹

This kind of individual transformation makes of the 'democratic revolution' ultimately an 'internal revolution'³⁰ where men strive for submission to the singular 'reason' of the political order and eventually establish a conformism and mass identity: the technocratic Utopia.

This is the theoretical essence of the call for discipline. The ideal condition aimed at by 'political development' is an absolute rationality mandated by science — a scientism distorted to legitimize a repressive technocratic society. In the **Notes of the New Society II**, this objective is set out more clearly:

'Political development, going hand in hand with cultural formation, suggests too our willingness to use science and technology in the transformation of human life... Our instincts may be sound, but we need, as any people in the modern age, the reason of science in realizing our goals. Thus we pursue a humanist culture with the aid of science and technology. The objective is the Filipino in his wholeness as a human being.' (Underscoring supplied)

At the edge of the Tropical City

A sheet of metal rust embroidered
A drum opened out, but not quite flattened
Spread like cardboard, yet obstinately stiff
A leaking roof over a perplexed head.
Old box sides stand as temporary walls
A poor barricade against torrential rains
Carrying the menacing signs of multi-national names
Upside down or willy nilly sideways
The tenant's own directionless ways
A human kennel, a little outsize
For a cordoned, condemned, canine life.
It crouches secretly like scores of other shacks
On a garbage bank skirting a stagnant lake
Holding putrefying life, seething and sinking
Like an abandoned weather beaten ship.
Every morning he scans the waiting sleepers
Of a railway line fencing the shanty
The only escape, the only regular open hope
At the edge of the tropical rotting city.

Tilak. A. Gunawardhana.

The reason of science is not based solely on technocratic rhetoric. It is the very fibre of the New Right ideology that brushes aside all social issues and fundamental ideological differences. It poses the false promise of technology and technological reason as the resolution to various problems of human existence. It also posits the infallibility of a political apparatus which lays absolute claim to scientific reason. Most importantly, it becomes a very compelling justification for the persistence of dictatorship.

By posing as the liberating element, technocratic reason invalidates the question of social relations as the focus of any effort at social change. It sees the social structure not as a matter of historically tentative relations transformed by human will on the basis of historically delimited consciousness but as a phenomenon determined wholly by technology. Subjective human impulse is negated as the absolute reason of science is seen as a tool for man to totally comprehend reality. This technologism seeps into the core of conventional social science rendering it scientific rather than scientific.

It is along this logic that we should understand the regime's penchant for technological showcase where it assumes that industrial 'take-off' is the road to human progress and where it replaces the 'development of men' with the 'development of things.' In terms of this perverted understanding, the meaning of class struggle, underdevelopment and exploitation is consciously overlooked. The import of pollution, massive foreign investment, the wholesale destruction of tribal homelands standing in the way of 'development,' the nuclear plant and its potential dangers are all subsumed in the total logic of technological advance. They are peripheral questions, 'necessary evils' in the all-mandating 'reason' of a technocracy efficiently backed by the military.

This total and totalizing understanding of the 'reason of science' subsumes even the understanding of humanism: or rather mutates

the understanding of humanism by denying any form of relativity beyond the transplanted techniques of the natural sciences imposed on the understanding of human society. Note for instance:

'We should not think that there is technique or science on one extreme, and human considerations on another. Science and humanism go together. Development will be achieved by scientific means, this is understood; but it is human beings who will raise science for the ends of human community.'³¹

The polemical portion for raising 'science for the ends of human community' does not, however, mean the installation of science to its proper place as an instrument of human will. Rather it connotes, as it turns out in policy, the scientization of human will. Technocracy's simplistic reductionism of every social problem to a problem of 'management' emphasizes the primacy of control, operating on the one-dimensional logic of costs and benefits, over independent initiative. Nowhere is this more telling than in the educational policy of the regime:

'There will be... a continuing realignment of our educational system with manpower realities and goals. Our objective is to end the structural faults in our educational system which continues to train the young for jobs that do not and probably will not exist. This leads to an appalling waste of resources and is a major cause of the present structural unemployment.'³²

In more straightforward terms this means submitting the entire educational system to the 'development priorities' laid down by the technocracy. This would include education in the general process of corporatization and centralization under the direction of the state which has already involved the trade unions, peasant cooperatives and youth organizations through the *Kabataang Barangay* (Barangay Youth). Again, this is rationalized by the ideological view of the state as the expression of the

public interest not recognizable on an individual or group basis and not achievable either outside the direction of the state.

Authoritarianism and 'Take off'

The promise of 'national development' is at once the familiar export-led, foreign investment-fueled dependent industrialization mapped out by the planning institutions of the centre of capital and enforced through the dictatorships in the neocolonies. It is the *raison d'être* of the developmentalist authoritarian states. The line of development articulated for instance by the IMF-World Bank, emphasizes integration into the world imperialist system rather than self-propelled, self-sufficient development. It emphasizes 'interdependence' rather than independence. More attention will be paid to the significance of this development line as ideology over its significance as policy (an aspect extensively discussed in other studies).

Backwardness, according to the reactionary social science exported from the capitalist centers to the Third World, is merely a transitory condition caused by a rapid infusion of Western **social** influences and the 'lag' emerging from the slow 'adaptability' of the non-Western societies. The solution, then, is to establish strong political orders so as to 'stabilize' these societies and increase their adaptability to effect the transition from the 'backward' cultural systems which only serve to 'bottle-neck' development. Development is then understood as Westernization — or to those sensitive to its ethnocentric implications, the creation of an 'efficient' culture that would give full play to society's creative potential largely unrealized because of the 'old' values.

(To be continued)



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