

**EYEWITNESS**

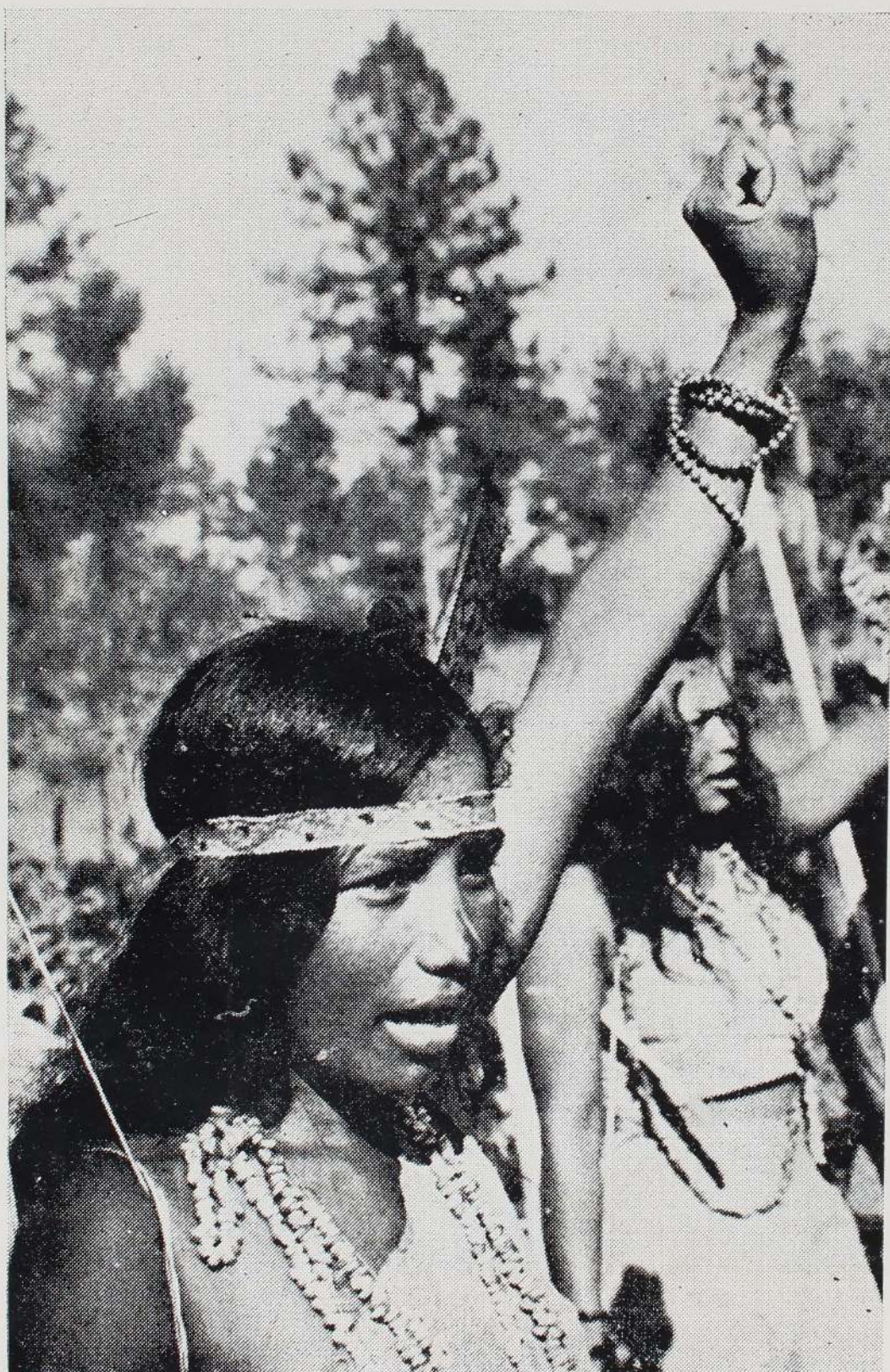
**The American Attack on Grenada — Dionne Brand**

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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## **FEMINISM AND THIRD WORLD**

— Asoka Bandarage

### **SRI LANKA : A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE**

— Barry Wain

### **RAMANUJAN'S POETRY**

— Chidananda Das Gupta

- \* Basil Fernando on Tissa Balasuriya's Christian repentance
- \* Prof. Sivathamby on the Tamil expatriate groups
- \* Goodbye Singapore Girl !



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## JUMBOS AMOK

The elephant that ran amok on Navam poya had at least a developed sense of the symbolic. The July rampage apart, stalwarts of the party whose proud symbol is the noble pachyderm have begun to go berserk in the front pages of the daily press in the past few weeks. The unseemly spectacle of cabinet ministers scolding each other or their officials, engaging themselves in charge and counter-charge has left the public to wonder how "united" the United National Party really is.

The reason for these elephantine exhibitions is of course the worsening economic situation and the immediate threat of the IMF/IBRD on the question of 50 millions SDR's (the second tranche) and 210 million SDRs for a Structural Adjustment loan to finance a medium-term development program. The threat is simple and blunt — Do what we say or else.....

In the recent past Sri Lanka has turned to the commercial banks. The IMF has effectively closed that option too. No more foreign bank loans until the IMF gives us its annual clean bill of health.

Lately, this column has focussed more and more attention on the gathering storm on the economic front, although our coverage of political events has been centred largely on the Ethnic issue and the Roundtable conference.

The truth is that these were never separate problems. The analytical articles published in L.G. in recent issues have spotlighted the economic aspects of the ethnic conflict and the economic background of the July eruption.

Today, the convergence of ethnic conflict and popular grievance over the acute material hardships of the wage-earner and the middle-class salariat poses a challenge of monumental dimensions. As a greatly weakened administration, increasingly conscious of its alienation, struggles to grapple with this hefty, fright-

ening challenge, internal friction is inevitable.

## POLITICAL STORM

It is heartening to see the mainstream media — including the state-run press — turning its attention to the mounting economic crisis without spending too much time and space on making original if embarrassingly amateurish contributions to the art of war, theories of counter-insurgency, geo-strategy, global diplomacy and other arcane matters.

Both the ISLAND and the SUN have recently excelled in their coverage of economic news, and the ongoing debate about the limited policy options open to the government, and the controversies within an increasingly enfeebled and besieged administration.

In the not-so guarded Idiom of the columnist, both the WEEK-END and the Sunday ISLAND, referred to a stormy meeting of ministers where President Jayewardene evidently chose to give a brief lecture on "collective responsibility".

'Vituperative politics' is a phrase from the last days of a United Front already on the verge of collapse. That was in 1975. We are now in 1984 and 'vituperative politics' seems to have become a UNP disease.

## ARMS AND AID

A news item in the SUN (17/2) and an exchange between General Attygalle, Defence Secretary, and the Editor of the ISLAND indicate interesting trends in foreign and defence policies, in the wider perspective of our current ethnic and political problems. The SUN reported that UK instructors were training a new commando unit. General Attygalle for his part confirms the purchase of four US made helicopters, two of which are gunships. They were delivered in January.

In the December issue of the LANKA REVIEW, published in

(Continued on page 2)

## TRENDS + LETTERS

### C. R. D. Reply

The CRD deeply regrets the mental distress of Ari Kumardasa et al. However we have no desire to satisfy Mr. Kumardasa's curiosity. In these troubled times, phychotics especially multiple schizophrenics soon turn to pyrrhomania.

The CRD's only purpose is to stimulate rational discussion on the ethnic issue. We are not particularly concerned with bazaar gossip. In the supermarkets they are saying that the C. R. D.'s pseudonymous critics are (or critic is) a former buruc-rat, a deserter from the Green revolution and a U.N.P. export, not to be confused with a U.N. expert.

Our response to Mr. Kumardasa and his pen-friends is that of T. H. Huxley: "When you can-

(Continued on page 2)

LANKA

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## Letters . . .

(Continued from page 1)

not prove that people are wrong but only that they are absurd, the best course is to let them alone". **C. R. D.**

### Repentance — True or Fake?

Fr. Tissa Balasuriya's article on Repentance raises a question in ones mind as to whether Christian repentance means adaptability and a little bit of weeping, so that one is soon able to forget the past.

The fundamental point of Christian theology as regards repentance is that for some there is no forgiveness at all. That is the case of the fallen angels. They were once God's closest assistants. Hell is a permanent feature in the Christian perspective.

As regards the human person, the one that does not repent in time, loses that chance forever. Last chance is the moment of death, and there is no chance after that. Important point in that is one is not allowed to repent, actually experiencing the hell and been shocked by that. There is no conversion after death. There may be purification for those in purgatory. But not for those in hell.

The important point in that is that Christianity believes in people having to take consequences for what they have done and does not encourage opportunism. Regrets due to consequences one has to suffer is not repentance. It could even be self-pity, a form of egotism.

Christian repentance is always directed towards the other. Sin is Sin fundamentally because it is a violation of the other. True repentance then is directed towards the restoration of the other. This implies that apologies does suffice, beating the breast, shouting 'mea culpa' does not amount to repentance.

If Church too has contributed to the "events of July 1983" then, the Repentance would have

to be of such a fundamental nature that it would be visible that there is a genuine attempt to restore the other, and be once more acceptable to the Creator. For repentance to be so genuine, it must be voluntary and unconditional rejection of the sinful past. There is no playing with repentance, as the Judge in this instance cannot be fooled.

These are important aspects for consideration at a time, when there is a murmur in the church, that it too has sinned. It is a murmur yet, because there is no open frank, and irrevocable admission by the church in SRI LANKA, of its sin. For if there is such an acceptance, it would be of such cultural importance, its' manifestations would have become very obvious to the nation at large.

It is the Colonial sin, that still persists, as far as the Church is concerned. After 1956, there had been reluctant attempts to adjust itself. But by and large, it defends its past, and many in high positions even dream of a return. It is due to its colonial roots that it has contributed among other things to the events of July 1983. It is yet to be seen whether it repents, and the extent of its repentance. Whether that repentance, would go as far as Christian theology demands, is also yet to be seen,

Wattala.

**Basil Fernando**

### Good work

I was able to obtain a copy of the L. G. of Feb. 1st only two days back — on the 12th. This is to congratulate your columnist on a brilliant piece of political writing "The Vijaya Phenomenon". Keep on the good work, of course, with the bias.

**Premadasa Udagama**  
Colombo 8.

### Trends . . . *Contd. from p. 1*

Toronto, it was reported that "US helicopters were available for immediate delivery because they had been part of an order for Marcos". The REVIEW also refers to a maritime patrol plane, costing 12.5 million dollars.

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# Sri Lanka : Capital flight, crisis of confidence

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Barry Wain

**P**osters promoting Sri Lanka promise "a taste of paradise." Racial riots last July brought instead a glimpse of hell.

Clashes between Sinhalese and Tamils left hundreds dead, homes, shops and factories destroyed, and the communities further apart than ever. They also scared tourists, frightened investors and sapped faith in the government.

The result today is nothing less than a crisis of confidence in the country.

President Junius Jayewardene's United National Party faces what one Western diplomat calls 'horrendous' problems. And, at times, it seems overwhelmed by them.

"The imperative of the hour for all of us," says Mr. Jayewardene, "is national reconciliation." While nobody questions the need to restore communal harmony, many are concerned that urgent economic issues are being neglected as the search goes on for a political solution.

## Slow Progress

Progress is painfully slow. It took five months and India's intervention to get Sri Lankan political parties and community and religious groups to sit down at the conference table.

Among other things, their current negotiations are supposed to reconcile minority Tamil demands for a separate state with militant opposition to separation from the Sinhalese majority. After a couple of weeks of talks, a consensus seems as elusive as ever.

Even if one emerges, critics say, it will be difficult to sell to both communities, especially to Tamil terrorists who are continuing a violent campaign for separation.

The Jayewardene administration was riding high before the eruption. A referendum in late 1982 ensured that it would retain its five-sixth

majority in Parliament for a second six-year term — until August 1989.

It needed the mandate and a period of political stability to consolidate ambitious economic reforms it has pursued since coming to power in 1977. The program aims to loosen the structure of government controls, allow market forces freer play and stimulate rapid growth.

**Many Sri Lankans are concerned that urgent economic issues are being neglected as the search goes on for a political solution.**

While the government could claim many achievements, the economy was overheated and in need of attention. Not only have the riots stymied remedial action, they've aggravated the situation, though the short-term effects appear surprisingly limited.

Official assessments put physical losses at \$120 million to \$160 million, with \$70 million as the cost of replacing damaged industrial plant and equipment.

Textile and garment factories were particularly hard hit. However, some of them hadn't been working at capacity. The disruption to exports has been cushioned further by resuffling quotas and working additional shifts in unaffected factories.

Agriculture, the mainstay of the economy with its tea, rubber and plantations, escaped practically unscathed.

"The setback wasn't as great as was first feared," says Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel. "We were able to return to normalcy very quickly in many sectors."

A notable exception is tourism, the nation's fourth-largest foreign exchange earner with receipts of \$147 million in 1982. Arrivals last year eventually totaled 336,500,

down 17% from 1982. Officials had projected a 5% increase before the violence.

The industry mightn't recover fully for a year or two. Although officials say it's picking up well and they're forecasting around 430,000 arrivals this year, that's no more than was originally expected last year.

The repercussions are being felt in other areas as well.

Bankers report capital flight, even if it hasn't shown up in official statistics. Moreover, the international marketplace isn't interested in lending to government agencies to the time being, they say, while corporate investors, already a bit disillusioned with Sri Lanka, have become decidedly skittish.

## Wait and See

Although companies in the free trade zone north of Colombo weren't touched and only a few joint ventures elsewhere were attacked, foreign investors are delaying decisions. Like everyone else, they appear to be waiting to see what happens next.

"The psychological impact was very heavy," concedes W. Rasaputram, governor of the Central Bank of Ceylon.

For instance, he notes that the curb market providing short-term funds for trade financing collapsed with the violence. When commercial banks moved in to fill the gap, credit ballooned until restrictions were imposed, he says.

Now, as the credit squeeze bites, others are predicting bankruptcies. Half a dozen concerns — large by



local standards and prominent in importing — could go under, they say.

According to one set of preliminary official statistics Sri Lanka's real, or inflation-adjusted, gross domestic product grew a creditable 4.2% last year, down from 5.1% in 1982 and short of the 4.6% expected before the riots.

Tea, the top export, saved the day to a certain extent. A phenomenal increase in the prices — they doubled during the year — actually improved the balance-of-payments position, the economic concern at present.

### Little Comfort

But that's little comfort. Such a windfall won't help the country come to grips with a yawning trade deficit that widened remorselessly in recent years. Nor does it hide declining tea production; last year's output was the lowest in 27 years, reflecting problems in the plantation sector generally as well as serious drought.

The riots also interfered with an attempt to control a chronic and expanding budget deficit, another major headache.

Indications are that the deficit reached \$1 billion in 1983 for the second straight year. And revenue didn't meet recurring expenditure, much less finance development.

Inflation also quickened, despite an outstanding effort by the authorities that ensured the smooth distribution of basic foodstuffs and prevented a price explosion after the disorder. Most estimates put inflation around 20% last year, up sharply from 11% in 1982.

The rupee remains strongly overvalued, bankers and businessmen say. It's no secret that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been pressing the government to devalue substantially for more than a year.

Almost everyone agrees that any improvement in the economy is unlikely while the country's leaders are distracted by politics. "We're borrowing time from economic matters," says one cabinet minister.

Prospects for a settlement aren't bright. Six months after murderous Sinhalese mobs attacked Tamils and

their property, a chasm of distrust separates the two communities.

The so-called Jaffna Tamils, who have been agitating for a separate state in the north and east of the island, are no longer represented in Parliament. Their voice, the Tamil United Liberation Front, lost its 16 members after the riots when the government banned political parties advocating separatism.

The TULF has been allowed to attend an amity conference in Colombo without pre-conditions. But officials say the government won't tolerate secession under any circumstance.

It's obvious from proposals circulated in advance by President Jayewardene that the entire relationship between ethnic and religious communities in Sri Lanka is under review. The proposals cover 14 points and include everything from language policy to land settlement, though few of them have found their way into the agenda for the committee stage of talks.

The thrust of much recent thinking towards Malaysian-style racial quotas permeates the proposals.

### Ethnic Considerations

For instance, the proposals suggest that the civil service and armed forces reflect the country's ethnic composition. They also say the police force should be responsible for internal security and should reflect the ethnic composition of the region where it's deployed.

## Praised by some, feared by most Tamil tigers fight on

Barry Wain

**T**o their supporters at home and abroad they are heroes courageously fighting for independence. To the government they are cowardly thugs to be compared with Hitler's stormtroopers.

Freedom fighters or terrorists, the armed groups spearheading the campaign for a separate Tamil nation to be called *Eelam* are widely known and feared as "tigers."

They get their name from the original movement, the Liberation

The crucial aspect of the talks, however, is the search for an alternative to separation.

Sources say the TULF, elected on a separatist platform, is willing to compromise. But they say it needs to find a way to reduce its demand to one that would allow Tamils genuine regional autonomy and provide their own security in Tamil majority areas.

The conference is taking place under the threat of violence. Hardly had it started than Tamil militants killed two policemen and wounded a third near Jaffna, continuing the campaign of terror they've waged in recent years.

As the talks proceed, any number of pessimists believe a settlement is all but impossible and that it wouldn't hold anyway.

Trade and Shipping Minister Lalith Athulathmudali isn't as gloomy, though he doubts the terrorism will stop. "I have a feeling that extremists on both sides won't agree," he says. "But if the mainstream of Tamils and Sinhalese can agree, then we can go on."

The alternative is likely to be grim. No one believes the nation can afford another bloodletting in the near future. Many echo the comments of former Premier Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who has predicted "catastrophe" if the negotiations fail.

— Special to the *Asian Wall Street Journal*.

Tigers of Tamil Eelam, formed in 1972. A group that split from it over ideology and personal rivalry is the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam. A third outfit calls itself the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization.

### Appeal to Youth

They appeal to the idealism of youth. Recruits are usually high school or university dropouts.

(Continued on page 11)



# IMF AND THE UNP DILEMMA

(Goodbye to the Singapore Girl or Learning to Live with the Big Bad Wolves of Washington DC)

**E**conomics in command. In spite of the Third Round of the ROUNDTABLE conference, the ethnic issue takes a back seat as we move into March. From now on, and at least up to the Aid group meeting in June-July, the UNP government will be preoccupied with the major dilemma it has now been compelled to face. Refuse to yield to IMF demands and retreat to the "hated" era of controls, shortages, ration cards and queues or bow to the IMF-IBRD pressures and pass heavier burdens onto the backs of the vast majority of Sri Lankans. What is at stake in short is the "Open Economy", the UNP's sole claim to growth, development and economic emancipation through free enterprise and a much greater reliance on foreign aid, investment, and export-led dependent industrialisation.

The challenge is not only to the UNP's economic policy but its political philosophy and its promise to the people of a better life. In plainer, propagandist terms, it is either farewell to the Singapore Girl and the South Korean 'model' or learning to live with the Big Bad Wolves of Washington D.C.

As an equation, the situation can be spelt out like this: 50 million SDR standby agreement with the IMF, would mean another 'plus' of 210 million dollar loan from the World Bank and a further 'plus' of about 400 million dollars from the World Bank sponsored Aid Consortium. This would allow us to go through with our major development projects (at a slower pace phased out by the IBRD), finance new medium-term projects, pay our huge import bill and service our mounting foreign debt.

What do we need to do?

(i) Further devaluation — ideally up to Rs. 30 to the dollar, but at least Rs. 27 by the time the Aid Group meets.

(ii) Severe cuts in proposed public expenditure — ideally, 5 billion (about 10% of the budget) but

3.5 billion rupees would be regarded as satisfactory.

(iii) Much stricter control of credit to reduce inflation which is now estimated at 20%.

(iv) Reduction in the current account deficit. In 1982 it was about 13% of GDP. 10% should be the target this year.

(v) The spending spree of certain corporations and enterprises must be stopped at once to dramatise the government's "good faith" and its resolve to maintain good house-keeping standards. AIR LANKA is the top target.

At the annual conference of the UNP in December Industries Minister Mr. Cyril Mathew moved the

main resolution. It was seconded by the UNP's senior Tamil leader, Home Affairs Minister, Mr. K. W. Devanayagam. One of the main supporting speeches was given by the Transport Minister, Mr. M. H. Mohammed, a Moslem stalwart.

It sought to demonstrate the "unity" and "national" character of the UNP as conceived by its founding fathers.

While the ethnic issue tested both these principles, the economic pressure, exerted chiefly through the agencies of the IMF and World Bank, has put the UNP's "unity" under serious stress as the public squabbling of the Ministers and the ministries reveal.

## Roundtable Talks — badly bogged down

**W**ith the SLFP decision not to attend the RTC but also not to "buckle it" (Mrs. B), the BMICH conference can no longer claim to be All-party talks. As the L. G. reported in the last issue, the SLFP has other, more pressing worries and its reaction to the Conference Secretary's special effort to persuade the SLFP to return to the conference appears to have been determined by these other anxieties. Firstly, the impressive challenge issued by the S.L.M.P. which had a surprisingly successful meeting in Nugegoda where many thousands gathered despite a heavy down-pour. Secondly, the mounting economic discontent and steadily rising anti-UNP sentiment find the SLFP ineffectual and even voiceless. Mrs. B. has now reacted to this by calling for general elections and declaring that she wouldn't join the UNP even if she has to beg on the streets — a rather extravagant reply to the charge made by its critics that the SLFP was responsive to the idea of a 'national government'.

The UNP's tactical answer to the SLFP withdrawal and the consequent threat of undermining a 'Sinhala consensus' was given by conference spokesman, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali. The Roundtable conclusions would be submitted to all parties, including those who are not participating. He called this an "open-ended treaty."

Meanwhile, the Conference has now received proposals from several organisations — the UNP, the Maha Sangha, the C.W.C., the Christians etc. And a new term, drained of all controversial content, has been put out to cover all aspects of "devolution". The term is "sub-institution" — the structural form that decentralisation will take. It can cover anything from village councils to Regional Councils. The 'papers' have not been released for 2 reasons: (a) it may "fix" parties to the positions stated and (b) published versions of the proposals, especially garbled versions, will only promote more heated controversies and public confusion.



# PUBLIC SECTOR GUILTY OF WASTE AND CORRUPTION — Auditor General

Jennifer Henricus

**A**uditor General Gamini Epa revealed glaring evidence of waste, corruption and inefficiency in the public sector, spelling out the shortcomings in the 119 departments and 184 corporations and boards that were accountable to him, the Parliament and the people.

Describing himself as the Watchdog of the Exchequer Mr. Epa told a news conference that there were three degrees of wastage in the public sector, minimal, considerable and colossal. All the departments and corporations were guilty of some degree of waste and corruption he claimed.

Mr. Epa said the increasing incidence of corruption and waste however was connected with several constraints his department has to face.

"The watchdog of the exchequer is not as effective as it should be. It is not possible for me to carry out an efficient audit because of financial constraints and major staff shortages". I find that in some places I don't have enough staff even to take over vouchers", Mr. Epa said.

Among the shortcomings that were visible in the public sector Mr. Epa said were —

- \* Basic accounting documents like source documents are not maintained or are incomplete.

The main excuse of all departments and Corporations is a shortage of staff.

- \* Non reconciliation of records. Bank reconciliation should be made daily but in one Kachcheri, the reconciliation had not been made for two years.

- \* Misuse of official vehicles — this had decreased slightly — but continued at a fairly high level.

- \* Absence of a system of monitoring the progress of work on projects of Departments, Corporations and Boards. Even in the case of major development works this is a problem.

- \* Lack of control over inventories and personnel. A large number of corporations and department bosses are guilty of not making the maximum utilisation of personnel. Illustrating the colossal waste in this respect, Mr. Epa said — "If ten people earning Rs. 500 are idling in a corporation the net loss is 5,000 rupees a month or Rs. 60,000 a year. The problem of overstaffing coupled with the lack of proper skilled staff is a big contributor to waste of public funds".

He drew attention to the newly created public companies under the Companies Law which were heavily financed by public funds, but were not accountable to Parliament nor to him or the people. These companies, included Air Lanka, Ceylon Milk Foods and Lanka Canneries.

"I have recommended that they should also be made accountable because of the large sums of public money vested in them" Mr. Epa said.

Pointing out reasons for waste at district level Mr. Epa said that several projects were multifinanced with funds from the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the District Budget and the Local Authorities. This meant slack control which was responsible for waste.

He added that other than surcharging local authorities for waste he did not have the power to take individual corporation heads and officials to task. It was the business of the Ministry under whose

purview the department of corporation was under to take necessary action.

It was also the responsibility of the Treasury to lay down working guidelines for the negligent corporations known as the Treasury Minutes. The last Treasury minute was compiled in 1975 for the year 1968-69.

Another major problem created by corporations not maintaining accounts is that vital statistics are not made available making the exercise of drawing up the National Budget a difficult task as well. In addition institutions also indulge in an interesting game of musical chairs with supply institution, where they withhold payments to the institutions, carrying over their liabilities.

There is also a lack of control over assets, lack of planning and an absence of procedures in several institutions, he charged.

Explaining how public expenditure had increased over the past decade thus heightening that incidence of waste and corruption. Mr. Epa said that expenditure had increased ten-fold. In 1973 it was five billion — in 1983 it was 50.5 billion.

This was expenditure only for the government Ministries and departments. The expenditure by corporations and boards was 51 billion. Public expenditure was thus a colossal 100 billion this year. Foreign Debt as of August 83 was Rs. 42.4 billion while domestic debt was 48.8 billion.

— SUN



# US not seeking 'Treaty' arrangements or bases – Schaffer

**P**resident Jayewardene's forthcoming visit to the US appears to have heightened speculation about US intentions in the region, specifically Sri Lanka, said Mr. Howard Schaffer, Deputy Asst. Secretary of the State Dept who is in charge of the area. Most of the speculative and 'mischievous' reports had their source in India, he said, noting a remark of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi about US interest in base facilities in Sri Lanka. When I referred him to an item in FOREIGN REPORT, the confidential news letter issued by the ECONOMIST, London, which spoke of a possible 'treaty of cooperation' between the US and Sri Lanka, Mr. Schaffer said:

"I haven't seen it but I can say that US does not sign Treaties of Cooperation and Friendship, though it has security arrangements of various kinds with Asian countries.

In this region, we have a pact with Pakistan signed in 1959, that's all in this part of Asia... further east, we have arrangements with Thailand, Philippines, South Korea and so on..."

Mr. Schaffer added: "We have not sought nor have we been offered bases in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or Pakistan".

Asked about Trinco, he said, Sri Lanka affords us the same facilities that it does many other countries.

When I drew his attention to a crucial remark in the report he recently presented to the US Congress on Sri Lanka (the report said "communal harmony is the key to political stability") he said the US government placed the greatest emphasis on the restoration of good relations between the two ethnic communities. It was essential to economic development and political stability.

(Q) Do you look for positive results from the Roundtable Conference?

(A) Certainly. We hope there'll be a reconciliation.

Turning to what he called 'the Indian initiative', he said that the US appreciated the move although it may not agree with every idea in what is reportedly recommendations of Mr. Parthasarathi, Mrs. Gandhi's special envoy.

He also pointed out that several leaders from the South Asian region had already visited Washington since President Reagan took office.

The emphasis in US relations with South Asian countries was economic, and in the field of assistance too, economic aid took precedence. Military aid to Sri Lanka was minimal, and some of it was still unused. Under training programs, Sri Lanka officers could be trained in the US. There was no arrangement for US military instructors to be here in Sri Lanka.

— M de S

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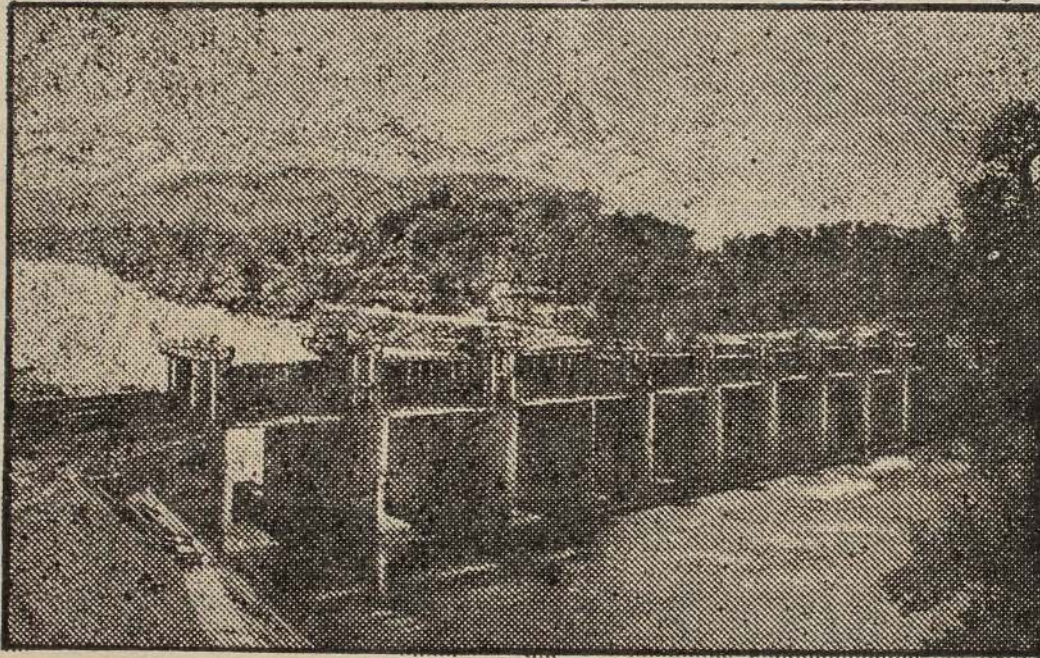
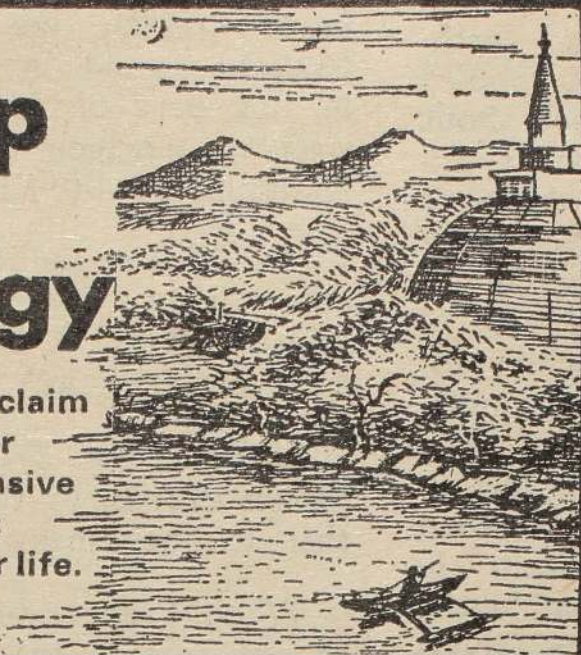
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# TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL FEMINISM

Asoka Bandarage

**S**purred by the women's movement in the West, women's liberation has rightfully emerged as a global issue. The internationalization of feminism is one of the most controversial, intellectual and political developments of our time. Women around the world have begun to address the age-old deep-seated phenomenon of female subordination and the strategies to overcome it.

In 1975 the United Nations inaugurated the International Women's Decade at the Mexico City conference. Many governments established women's bureaus in preparation for the mid-decade conference in Copenhagen in 1980. Extensive arrangements are now under way for the end of the decade conference scheduled for 1985 in Nairobi. Meanwhile, a new field known as "Women in Development" has emerged giving legitimacy to academic inquiries and policy planning pertaining to women in the Third World. Women social scientists and international aid agencies including the World Bank and the U. S. Agency for International Development are identified with this field. Their ideas and strategies are exported to the Third World to integrate women into the processes of economic modernization. Many non-governmental organizations and networks have also begun at the international, national and regional levels to deal with issues specific to women such as reproductive control and sexual violence. Even the multinational corporations now give the liberation of women as a reason for their expansion overseas.

But the solidarity among women is tenuous. At every international women's gathering the divisions of race, class, nationality and ethnicity

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erupt, tearing at the unity that brings women together. The official U. S. delegation is already discussing strategies to avoid the infiltration of such divisive issues at the Nairobi conference. Indeed, we can pretend that differences do not exist, or we can explore them and in the process, reformulate feminism itself. The latter is more difficult and painful, but indispensable, if sisterhood is to become more than a slogan.

In spite of all the conferences, declarations, academic treatises and women's projects, many women around the world have yet to hear of feminism or the women's movement. It is unlikely that they will until opportunities for literacy and a general improvement in living standards are available to them. But it is also the case that some women who know of the women's

movement show great antipathy and resistance to feminism. Such negative reactions are more apparent in the United States, the center of modern feminism and the women's movement. But why should any woman oppose feminism's attempts to eradicate those social constraints placed by sex which inhibit women (and men) from realizing their human potential? Indeed why do so many women who stand to gain so much from feminism see it as either irrelevant to their lives or are threatened by it?

To a large extent the anti-feminism of such women is attributable to dominant interests, especially male ideologies which succeed in manipulating these women's fears about the risks and dangers of feminism. The new right in the U. S. which depicts the women's movement as a threat to the alleged security of women's lives and reactionary nationalist movements as the one in Iran, which denigrate feminism as a Western fad or an imperialist plot are examples. The distortion of feminism by the media as constituting mostly the pranks of bra-burning white middle-class women has also played its part in alienating some potentially sympathetic women from the fundamental concerns of feminism.

Does this mean then that women who are alienated from feminism are ridden with "false consciousness?" If the feminist vanguard were to enlighten these irrational women of the objective conditions of their oppression, namely male dominance could a mass-based international feminist struggle be launched?

Obviously the answer is not that simple. We need to move beyond the familiar factors of male manipulation media distortion and the implied false consciousness of the masses of women. Being careful not to blame feminism for the deteriorating conditions of many



women around the world we must ask nevertheless if the feminist theories and strategies currently available are adequate for comprehending and changing the oppression of most women and the alienation of many from feminism. Have the class and cultural biases of contemporary feminism and the women's movement for example contributed in any way to the successes of anti-feminist forces among certain groups of women? If reactionary backlashes against some of the hard-won victories of the women's movement such as women's reproductive rights are to be countered a reassessment of the objectives and strategies of feminism is clearly necessary.

We need also to ask if in fact most women are opposed to the broad ideals of feminism — increased social and psychological freedoms for women — or if their resistance is to that particular brand of feminism arising out of the white, middle-class experience in the West, but popularly projected as "the Women's Movement" by the media and most Western, middle-class feminists themselves? Those studies which have inquired into the consciousness of poor and Third World women without resorting to Western feminist concepts are quite instructive. They have revealed a great enthusiasm for and acceptance of the broad principles and objectives of feminism among such disparate groups as "untouchable" women in India and poor black women in the United States.

It is necessary then to make a clear distinction between feminism as a universal ideology potentially acceptable to most women and the middle-class, predominantly Western feminism which has become synonymous with the contemporary women's movement. This distinction is at the root of many of the conflicts that break out among different groups of women at international women's conferences.

What is problematic of course is not that there are differences among women but that there are inequalities and conflictive interests among us, as among men, based on the

hierarchies of social class, race, nation, ethnicity, etc. For example, it is obvious that imperialism (Western economic, political and cultural hegemony) has given white women a higher social status in the world over Third World women (women of color in Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as the racial minorities in the West). Similarly, women from the privileged social classes in the West and the Third World, though themselves subordinated to their men, are placed in relations of dominance vis-a-vis poor women and men. The radical feminist assertion that all women are oppressed by all men developed around issues of sexual control and violence, needs qualification in the context of such realities as the racist use of the rape charge against black men in the United States. In the last forty years or so four hundred and fifty-five men have been executed for rape. Four hundred and five of them were black. No white man has ever been executed for raping a black woman in this country.

Note too that the contrasting racist and sexist images of white and black women here depict the former as passive, dependent and delicate creatures to be protected and the latter as strong matriarchs or bad black women to be cast aside. These stereotypical images alone should raise questions about the prevalence of uniform models of womanhood and manhood for all groups.

### **Western Feminism and Middle Class Values**

Not surprisingly perhaps, feminist analyses and the women's movement arose within the ranks of the relatively deprived white, middle-class women in the West rather than the absolutely deprived majority of poor Third World women. What is important to note is that the analytical categories and social change strategies produced by Western middle-class feminists, while couched in universal terms, are derived from the unique historical experience of their own social class and culture.

Both the nineteenth-century women's suffrage movement and the

contemporary women's movement in the U. S. have emerged largely, as responses by white, middle-class women to the contradictions created in their lives by the processes of capitalist industrial development. The nineteenth-century movement in particular can be seen as the challenge of educated middle-class women already engaged in "public" activities, notably the abolition movement, to the ideology of femininity that confined them to the "domestic" sphere. Their aim was to legitimize their integration into public life through the vote and eventually to become the legal and social equals of the men of their class.

Similarly the contemporary women's movement emerged among middle-class women (some confined to the home and others already in paid employment) seeking greater integration into public life through satisfying careers and eventual equality with their men. This movement must also be seen in the context of increasing commercialization of domestic services and rapid absorption of women into the wage labor force.

The liberal integrationist strategies and their emphasis on legislative change unite the two women's movements in the U. S. What distinguishes them is the emergence of a newer more radical branch of feminism in recent decades which has politicized personal relations between men and women within the family. Extending its critique to other social institutions, radical feminism argues that women's liberation cannot be achieved without the overthrow of male dominance or patriarchy, which is the very foundation of social life everywhere.

Many of the popular categories of feminist analysis today, such as the private-public dichotomy and the patriarchal nuclear family, have been formulated by white, middle-class feminists in the process of reassessing their unique historical experience under industrial capitalism. Like much of Western male scholarship then feminist analyses and practice too are ridden with middle-class and Western biases. Feminist thinking which takes the middle-class experience as the norm



may not only be irrelevant and alienating to most women, but the social change strategies emanating from such thinking may have negative consequences for poor and Third World women and men.

In this regard we should remember how the nineteenth-century women's movement in the U. S., which emerged from within the abolition movement later capitulated to the racial and class politics of the time. When white supremacist politicians pitted the vote for women against the vote for black men the suffragists in their exclusive concern for the vote for women — that is white, middle-class women — went along with the racist forces. During the early decades of the twentieth century, some feminists searching for allies in their campaign for birth control took positions supporting the reduction of "undesirable" elements in the population, such as blacks foreigners (immigrants) and the lower classes. Such positions fed into the eugenics movement and the racial hysteria of the time. Unless the scope of feminism is broadened, the contemporary women's movement (in spite of its roots in the civil rights struggle) can again be aligned with white male politicians seeking to keep women, minorities and the working classes divided and conquered.

Perhaps the most important strategy of liberation advocated by contemporary liberal feminism is the incorporation of women into the paid labor force as the equals of men. Indeed for middle-class women formerly confined to domestic chores, a professional career can offer greater self-fulfillment despite the new stresses that come with those careers. Women from the privileged social classes in the Third World have also benefited from higher education and integration into paid employment.

But for the majority of other women, integration into the wage labor force entails at best working as a factory or field laborer and at worst as a maid or a prostitute. Can absorption into the prevailing structures of employment bring liberation to most women? In the absence of changes in those hierarchical structures at the international and national levels, integration

results merely in prestigious careers for a few women and men but continued underpaid and undervalued work for the majority. Data now available indicates that unequal integration further deepens the class, racial and national cleavages among women rather than helps build sisterhood.

Demands made in the name of women's liberation by liberal feminist organizations in certain Third World countries only exacerbate this trend. Take for example the cry for imported luxury kitchen equipment that would supposedly lighten the household chores of busy professional women. It is no secret that the conspicuous consumption of the privileged classes diverts scarce foreign exchange from the survival needs of the masses of poor women and men in those countries.

Turning briefly to radical feminism now, it can well be argued that some of its basic postulates such as the "personal is political" are broadly applicable everywhere. But a closer analysis of some of the specific institutions, such as the male-headed, nuclear family against which radical feminism directs its critique, helps recognize the limits of this analysis. Research into social classes and cultures outside the Western middle class reveals a diversity of family structures. At least one third of the households in the world today are headed by women. Research also shows that the family is not the primary focus of women's oppression everywhere. In some communities, especially those subjugated by racism as under slavery in America or apartheid in South Africa, black women have experienced family life as essentially supportive rather than oppressive. Women in such situations may consider labor for their families as their only labor of love.

**(To be continued)**

**Western Feminism: A Critical Look by Jenny Bourne, will appear in our next issue.**

**Praised by...**

*(Continued from page 4)*

The government holds them responsible for about 90 killings, "cowardly

attacks on policemen and soldiers merely because they were the symbols of state authority." It says they've also robbed banks, attacked police stations, destroyed an aircraft, set fire to vehicles and sent parcel bombs to politicians.

A prime target is any Tamil who cooperates with the government.

Authorities have trouble stamping out the tigers because they enjoy sanctuary in India's Tamil Nadu state, home of about 50 million Tamils, which at its nearest point is only 20 kilometers away across the Palk Strait.

An official Sri Lankan publication says "their tactics and material suggest that they have been professionally trained, and that they have foreign links."

Independent assessments support that view. Tamils living abroad provide funds, Western diplomats say, while small numbers of terrorists appear to have been trained in Tamil Nadu, Libya and Syria. Sri Lankan Tamils were among Palestine Liberation Organization prisoners captured by Israeli forces in Lebanon in 1982, they say.

### **Influx of Recruits**

Rifle-carrying members of the three groups were thought to number no more than a few hundred before last year's racial riots. By most accounts, their ranks have been boosted by an influx of recruits since then, and at least one new group, the Cobras, has surfaced.

The government has long sought to connect the Tamil United Liberation Front with the terrorists. The TULF was the largest opposition party in Parliament before being proscribed for advocating separation after the riots. It denies any link.

The government also has tried to discredit the terrorists by branding them communists.

Undoubtedly the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam is Marxist-led. But independent sources have difficulty pinning a label on its rival, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

In any event, they don't like each other. Leaders shot it out on the streets of the Indian city of Madras in 1982.

— Special to the Asian Wall Street Journal



# Role of Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates

Prof. K. Sivathamby

**T**he one factor which changed the whole character and course of the Sri Lankan Tamil Question is the emergence of youth militancy expressing itself through violent attacks on the armed force and the police and on those whom it thinks are traitors to the Tamil "Cause". **There's is a guerilla strategy. Described as "terrorists", their actions have been directed against the state as an institution.**

The emergence of this movement has radically altered the character of politics and modes of political communication among the Tamils. There is a ban on these types of organizations — "The presenting of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other similar organizations law" (1978).

The underground character of the movement, their guerilla type organization and the ban imposed on their activities make it virtually impossible for anyone to discuss in critical, academic terms the nature and the features of their activities. However, due to reasons of political expediency, these have been interesting articles and reports giving some insight into the organization and motivations of the movement. The articles in *Weekend, Sun, Sunday Island*, and now in the book "*The Agony of Sri Lanka*" by T. D. S. A. Dissanayake provide useful pictures of their organization and activities.

The publications of the various groups of the movement, pamphlets, leaflets are distributed in places where the public gathers — markets, bus stands etc. with such smoothness that before one realizes what is happening, one has a leaflet in the hand. The changed modes of communication is also seen in the wall posters. With a ban on their movement and with censorship of

news about them, they use the wall posters as the media for their "messages".

Going by such material as is available, there at least five major organizations Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam led by Prabhakaran, People's Liberation Organization for Tamil Eelam, led by Uma Mahesvaran, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization associated with the late Kuttimani, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Army, with information relating to leadership not known.

It is quite evident that, inspite of a common aim — the establishment of Tamil Eelam — these organizations are not united.

**All the groups speak in terms of Marxist concepts of political and economic liberation. All of them advocate armed struggle for the establishment of Tamil Eelam.**

**It is significant that in the posters and handbills there is no reference to past ethnic glories or to a golden age of Tamil culture — a characteristic feature of the rhetoric and the Dravidian Movements of Tamilnadu. Here the emphasis is on a Marxist formulation of the Tamil Question. It is equally clear that these organizations clearly oppose the TULF for its parliamentarism.**

From the reports and analysis it is evident that the field of recruitment for these groups comes mainly from those who have passed the A. L. Examination.

Had it not been for the role played by the Tamil expatriates living in various parts of the Western World, concentrated more

in England and the U.S., the Tamil Question would not have received the international attention it has. It is not too difficult to identify the motivating factor — most of them had been victims of discrimination, either at the level of the admission to the University or at the level of employment.

To have a full understanding of the mind of the Tamil expatriate, it is essential to understand the highly centrepetalist character of the family unit in the Sri Lankan, specially the Jaffna Tamil Social Organization. One studies more to earn more and one earns more to better the family prospects. Really speaking, the family or the household is yet the basic social unit in Jaffna life. Centrifugalism occurs only to enrich and strengthen the centre (the family). And when it is found that the locus of that centre is threatened, then, it is natural that there is a rallying of forces. With the threat to property and life, the dreams of seeing a family of well established brothers and sisters and of a well earned retired life in the place of your birth, with the soil under your feet belonging to you, are shattered. For people who are confronted with various disabilities in the earning, discrimination and uncertainty of status in their own place of birth disturbs them. This deprivation has led the more articulate of the expatriates to pool their resources to publicise their cause.

## Ethnicity and Political Consciousness

It would be quite correct to hold that the politicisation of the large mass of the Tamil population started only with the threat they had to face to live within his own social unit of existence. When faced with the reality of discrimination and



its ethnic basis, ethnicity decides the form and content of political consciousness.

Attention should be paid at this stage to the difference on the class character of the ethnic cry raised at the level of the Sinhala masses. Recent analyses by Kumari Jayawardena have shown the class content of the ideology of Buddhist revivalism. It is important to note that this ideology of Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism had been anti-minority. In terms of historical conditioning there was a latent anti-Tamil content. As the country passed from colonization to neo-colonialism with the consequent changes in production relations there was a logical outflow of the anti-Tamil content.

At the levels of the Tamils, the anti-Tamil cry of the Sinhalese, at the start, affected only the English educated state sector employees. It soon affected the small shop owners too. With the broadbasing of education through free-education and use of the national languages as media of instruction, there came into being a new group of young men, from the lower income groups and from the peasantry and the under privileged groups, who too were discriminated against because they were Tamils. Thus ethnic consciousness has become an important factor in political consciousness. **This is also the reason why the caste problem, which was once the major contradiction among the Tamils is not surfacing today in the manner it used to do.** It is not that caste has ceased to be an operative factor in Tamilian socio-political life, particularly in intra-Tamil matters. The major contradiction now is the ethnic area for it decides the crucial question of employment. Being the major contradiction it also determines the nature of the politicisation.

A correct understanding of the class character of the Tamil Question as it stands today is important. **A clear distinction should be made between the class basis of the ethnic cry among the Sinhalese and the Tamils.**

**At the level of the Sinhalese, the ethnic cry, (first priority in terms of language now in terms of religion) is whipped**

**to complete a process of establishing class hegemony started prior to independence but in greater earnest after 1956. At the Tamil end, the ethnic cry has become the rallying point against common oppression. It is true that at the start the Tamil cry was raised by a class to preserve its own interests but with the Sinhala bourgeoisie using this cry along with state power to consolidate its position there is a change. Today the Tamil cry is raised as a rallying point for all those who are faced with the same type of oppression. The change from F. P. (1948) to TUF (1971) to TULF (1976) is also a qualitative change and the continuity of the slogan is coterminous with the continuity of the leadership too. But it is now clear the slogans are tending to be different. The basic contradiction the leadership of the TULF has with its own rank and file is an expression of the changed class nature of that rank and file.**

**It is because of this historical change that those non-marxists concerned with the Tamil questions are now taking a marxists position and the marxists who are drawn into it are able to see the justification of the ethnic consciousness.**

It is in this context that the impasse referred to at the outset becomes significant in relation to the turn the character of the problem is going to take.

### **The Tamilnadu (and Indian) Interest**

The Indian interest and the anxiety in Tamilnadu over the Sri Lankan Tamil Question arise from two facts. Firstly it is also a problem of the Indian citizens those who have got to ultimately be sent back to India. They have been described as people of Indian origin and there is a diplomatic agreement (Sirima-Sastri Pact) in operation relating to them. So when something is done to them, whether as labourers or as Tamils, it is the duty of the Indian government to express concern.

"In Sri Lanka there are Tamils of Indian origin and Sri Lankan Tamils of Indian origin. I have a sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamils. The affairs of the former is Foreign Affairs; that of the latter is Internal Affairs".

— M. Kalyanasundaram  
— Virakesari 10.9.1981.

By extending the language problem to full ethnic proportions and starting to attack them as Tamils, the path, was irretrievably paved for Indian concern over the Upcountry Tamils. And given the economic significance of the plantation labour, the sheet-anchor of the economy yet, the leadership of the Tamils of Indian origin can speak with a sense of confidence the Sri Lankan Tamil leadership cannot possibly have.

Tamilnadu's concern for the Tamils of Indian origin living overseas has been a point of irritation between the centre of the state in India. Sri Lanka was not the only place from which Indian Tamils were ejected. They were sent back from Burma and Malaysia too. Rehabilitation for them was ill planned and poorly executed. So when the human traffic from Sri Lanka also started moving, there was concern. The level of consciousness of this problem is well indicated in modern Tamil literature.

The sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamil cause lies in the logic of the history of nationality formation in India during and after independence. Nationality formation within India was on an ethnolinguistic basis. Tamils and Bengalis constitute two of the highly conscious ethnolinguistic groups in India. The Pure Tamil movement, The Dravidian Movement were all part of the Tamil consciousness. Post-Independant India accepted the linguistic basis of the states (1956). This social psychology of Tamilian consciousness, perse and within an all-India framework is well reflected in Tamil literature, especially in poetry from Bharathi to Bharathidasan.

With the attack on the Sri Lankan Tamils on the basis that they are Tamils, the anxiety about the linguistic brethren arose as a natural expression of extra territorial ethnic solidarity. This is not something new in Indian politics. There had been expression of solidarity with Bengalis living in Pakistan and even

(Continued on page 16)



# THE INVASION

Dionne Brand

**Tuesday 25th October 1983**

AT 5 A. M. in the morning the American planes begin circling above St. George's. Everyone is awakened by the noise of the planes above. It is a very unusual sound for the town. Planes do not usually pass overhead, only once in a blue moon and in the daylight one hears a crop duster. We knew that it was the beginning of the invasion because Radio Free Grenada had been warning of it for the past two days and the regional newsbroadcasts had reported the presence of the U. S. task force in Grenadian waters. In fact on Monday evening as we returned from the airport at Pearls, people were standing in shops watching toward the sea, silently. At first we thought that they were sheltering from the rain, but there seemed to be something else in their faces, fear, uncertainty. Apparently they had seen one of the American warships skirting the coast of the island. One Grenadian friend on the road described it as being as "big as a building". Those are the terms which a rural people have to speak of the enormity and alienation and bewilderment of the American presence. We heard many more and saw the collective trauma which the invasion, its size and its persuasive power brought to bear on the Grenadian people.

We watched toward point Salines that morning counting 500 paratroopers dropped from planes flying underneath the surveillance planes. We decided that the best place to last out the imminent bombardment was in the narrow corridor of the house, away from flying glass and having on each side what we thought to be concrete walls. The bombing began at about 6 a. m. We huddled in the hallway counting the hours and flinching with the sound of every bomb, every shell, every rip of gunfire and anti-aircraft. For twelve hours that day except for running trips to

the kitchen, crawling to the phone in the bedroom and stupid or courageous moments of looking outside to see what was going on, the five of us sat, terrified in the narrow corridor. Radio Free Grenada went off the air at 9 a. m. that morning calling on all Grenadians to arms. As they went off the air the last lyrics to a song could be heard "stand up and fight back, you got nothing to lose." The invasion was three hours old. The revolution dead. About midday a unit of the Peoples Revolutionary Army (PRA) passed beneath our window on Tyrrel Street. Fort Rupert across the Carenage (the harbour) was shelled from a battleship in the outer harbour. Earlier we had seen the PRA retreat from the fort and cemetery hill. We wondered about the fate of the general hospital quite close to the Fort. In the early afternoon Butler House, the office of the Prime Minister and the venue of Parish Council meetings was bombed and set on fire. That night we watched this symbol of the revolution burn into the early hours of the morning. Between 11 p. m. and morning, jet bombers bombarded Fort Frederick. We ran to the hallway feeling the vibration of the bombs falling on the Fort on the hill behind us. The house shook as we counted 7 impacts on the fort. At about 3 or 4 in the morning flares lit up the town as if it was daylight. One thing — early in the day one lone Grenadian soldier in the road below our house shot at the planes with his rifle. He shouted and fired emptying all the bullets in his gun into the sky.

On Wednesday, the second day of the war, the American bombers terrorised the town flying low over the houses and still bombing Fort Frederick. We could hear what we discovered later was the crack of the bombers' passage through the sound barrier. We thought

that at any moment our house would be bombed. It stood on a promontary nicknamed 'the rocks'. We had no reason to believe that the Americans would not bomb the town. They had done it in Vietnam. We watched the bombers terrorise another section of the town, Old Fort, flying low and bombing the hills behind. During a lull of about three hours a few Grenadians came and went behind a warehouse on the docks. Shouting to one of them from the house, we discovered that 2 dead bodies lay behind the warehouse a US helicopter gunship had been downed 200 metres from our house and the two had crawled to the warehouse. Before the discovery we had seen two Grenadian soldiers in a jeep and one on foot with a grenade launcher circle the carenage go to the warehouse heard the gunfire and saw them leave the town. Their jeep coming around the carenage seemed so tiny, so futile against the spectre of the American war machine, which filled the skies and the seas and finally the land of Grenada. The young man on foot, a red handkerchief tied around his forehead, his AK-47 and his grenade launcher were no match for the brutality of F-15 bombers and helicopter gunships which strafed the hills of St. George's. In the afternoon two jeeps of American marines with machine guns mounted and bristling in all directions came into the town to collect their dead. Hurriedly they slung the bodies over the top of one of the jeeps and left the town. Later we witnessed the attack on Grand Anse beach and the surrounding area and the bombing and burning of Radio Free Grenada, another symbol of the revolution. We lost count at seventeen helicopter gunships, two jet bombers and one surveillance plane in this display of American might. The Caujta cottages, government operated lodgings where non-national technical workers on short term contract lived, were strafed by



the bombers which spewed shells into the wooden structures at 6000 rounds per minute. People died there. By the American counting, the only important dead are their own. No mention was made of Grenadian casualties, symbolic of the contempt in which they held Grenadian lives. In Vietnam they took pride in counting Vietnamese dead. A pride which backfired in the revulsion of their people at home as it was equally dehumaising. Grenadians who fought the Americans are missing from the lists of the dead so that Americans lie to the world about who they were fighting in Grenada and who they killed in Grenada.

There are no suitable words to describe the obscenity of the display of American military might on the island. After the attack on Grand Anse their fighter bombers and surveillance planes did a dance in the sky above the strafed and gutted area.

On Thursday, the third day of the war the major shelling and bombing had died down. Fort Frederick, the last stronghold in St. Georges had fallen in the early hours of the morning. A scattering and then a crowd of looters gathered at the supermarket 'Food Fair' on the Carenage. People were hungry. We had never seen looting in the town or lawlessness in Grenada before the invasion. Not even in the tragic days which preceded the invasion. We heard that the prison at Richmond Hill had been busted open by the Marines and by afternoon some of the criminals let loose were in control of the looting, hoarding to sell the goods on the illegal-market. With a lull in the fighting we went out, with a white flag on the car, to check on the safety of friends. Until Wednesday morning we had been able to make and receive internal calls. When people we knew witnessed bombing in our area they called to see if we were alright and we did the same. We were told on the street that the Americans were paying people to finger other people who had in anyway supported the government of Maurice Bishop. In as small a population as Grenada this kind of tactic of setting people against people began to create an

atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and intimidation as the American occupation of the country continues to do. Thursday was the first day that the marines came into the town. The Americans had met with stronger resistance than they expected from the small and ill-equipped Grenadian army and militia. They had thought that by midday on Tuesday, the first day, they would be able to wipe out the resistance of the Grenadian people. They invented stories of Cubans, fighting in the hills. Little did the American and world public realize that the Cuban workers at Point Salines airport would have had to go through at least five American marine check points from Point Salines to Tanteen to get to those infamous hills. On Thursday the word from Fort Frederick was that some Grenadians had finally surrendered there, some killed, some buried their weapons and changed into civilian clothes and the rest had retreated into the Grand Etang, the 2000 ft peak in the middle of the island, to fight a guerilla war.

Coming back the house in the car, as we turned the corner of Woolwick Road and Archibald Avenue we were surprised by a platoon of American soldiers occupying the roads with mortars, grenade launchers and guns pointing in all directions including our car. We stopped abruptly and waited for instructions, told them that we were going home and were given permission to drive through. Most of them were black, young and southern. The operation underway now seemed to be the sweeping of the town by platoons of marines. The mood in the town was one of fear, anger, shock and silence. People stayed inside their houses or on their verandas or in the yards watching the movement of marines through the town. Anyone who objected to the invasion had a clear picture that no matter what they had to be silent or prepare to be killed. And so Grenadians watched quietly and angrily. The only sound we heard in the town that day was the marine lieutenant's orders to the platoons to move and one woman's voice. She stood near the fire station watching some young men

silently shadowing the marines and shouted at them. "You're following them? You should be spitting on them!" That was the only sound we heard in St. Georges' on the first day that the marines entered the capital.

That evening the Police Station was set on fire and we could still hear shelling and bombing in the direction of Springs and Calivigny, an army camp over the hills. We heard that the Americans were planning to bomb another army hold out at Jean-Anglais.

On Friday, the fourth day of the war, most of the heavy shelling had died out. We could still hear bombing at Calivigny and at Golf Course.

On Friday, the fourth day of the war, most of the heavy shelling had died out. We could still hear bombing at Calivigny and at Golf Course Road. The U. S. military had taken up positions in the town and set up check points along the 18 kilometre road from St. Georges to Point Salines. At 7 a. m. the attache from the Canadian High Commission came to the house. He had contacted us two days before and we had refused to leave the island on any American vessel. This time he told us that it may be our last chance to leave and that the U. S. military was not allowing any other nation to land air craft in the Island. We agreed then to be evacuated. We were first taken to the Ross Point Inn going through 2 U. S. Check-points where we were searched under guard. We remained there from 7.30 a. m. to 4 p. m. At about 4.30, two trucks with Canadian flags mounted came into the driveway of the hotel. Another attache had come to take us out on a Canadian plane. The unsuspecting attache found two of our company draped around his neck and the rest of us cheering at having been spared the humiliation of being evacuated on an American carrier, at being used further in this indefensible act on the part of the U. S. administration. Going through 4 more checkpoints we arrived at Point Salines Airport. An American flag had been planted on an incline — a sign of contempt for the struggle of the Grenadian people in the last 4½ years. Along



the way we had been stopped to let a convoy of marines pass. We counted some 30 vehicles loaded with marines and weaponry. Painted on several trucks, appropriated from the airport, were the words 'U. S. A. is taking CHARGE.' Along the way also we saw Grenadians being apprehended, searched and detained. They bore this infringement silently and watchfully as the day before. The orchestrated reports of Grenadians welcoming marines insulted and belied these scenes in St. George's, Springs, Grand Anse True Blue and Point Salines. At the airport site 300-400 Grenadians, were being herded along by marines. It was not until this time that we truly calculated the number of U. S. marines on the island. In the 18 kilometre road there were marines head to toe on both sides of the road, behind bunkers, in houses, in ditches and in platoons on either side of the airstrip at Point Salines. It was then that we knew that the stated number of 2,000 marines was a falsehood. There were thousands more. Later we learned the figures 5,600 marines on the island and 10,000 in 15 ships surrounding the island. That is 1 American soldier for every 7 Grenadians. The repertoire of American weapons also included 2 surveillance planes, 3 jet bombers, and countless helicopter gun ships.

## REGIONAL BETRAYAL

Nowhere was the cynicism of the tactics of political isolation and economic sanctions against Grenada so evident as in the country itself.

Living in Grenada, one saw a tiny nation-state struggling to put some distance between itself and its past of dependancy and poverty. Its neighbours had yet to even articulate the kind of independent aspirations which Grenada was experiencing at a practical level. In the Caribbean, there is an expression — "when your neighbour's bed catches fire, you must wet yours". After the downfall of Eric Gairy in 1979, many of the leadership in the Caribbean, swept in on a wave of nationalism after the colonial period, began eyeing the Grenada revolution in this cautious manner. Like Grenada in 1979 and still, their economies are

in a shambles, unemployment at the level of 50%. What if their own populations began demanding the same benefits which the Grenadian people had? Grenada was a thorn in their sides, as stated by Dominican P. M. Eugenia Charles, "Grenada was an aberration in the Caribbean". An aberration against the insistent poverty and inequality. The neo-colonials who gave the Americans leave to invade Grenada saw the invasion as a weapon to stave off the challenges to their rule already emerging in their own states. Miss Charles once boasted on a Toronto Television Program of being "the best beggar in the world". Those words rang significant of the moral and political bankruptcy of the leadership of the Caribbean states which accommodated the U. S. Invasion of Grenada. Unable and incapable through their own will to extricate their islands from the grasp of dependent development, they collaborated in the destruction of the most hopeful democratic society in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The U. S. reasons are no less vulgar. Grenada stood apart from the pro-U. S. islands, not only in terms of its healthy economy but also in terms of its outspokenness against U. S. attempts to recolonise the region. Failure to bestir the disintegrating Jamaican economy has not deterred the U. S. in its prescription for economic recovery in the Caribbean. Nor has it dissuaded the Caribbean countries involved from the notion that the road to prosperity lies in kowtowing to American policy. In fact neither parties may be under any illusions — the U. S. is prepared to give and the English-speaking Caribbean is prepared to take crumbs from the table. It is these crumbs that the collaborating islands were so eager to prove that they deserved, which led them to betray the people of Grenada.

The payoffs are already coming in. The much diminished Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) money has been promised momentarily and in the first two weeks of December each of the invading states received shiny new arms from the U. S. to beef up their security. One guess as to who their new military might will be used against — since

there is no more so-called Grenadian threat in the Eastern Caribbean — it must be against the majority of the people in the region who remain poor, marginalised and potentially dangerous.

In March of 1983 when the Somocistas invaded Nicaragua, the feeling in Grenada was one of solidarity. There was a massive demonstration in St. George's. The crowds chanting "If they touch Nicaragua, they touch Grenada."

## Role of . . .

(Continued from page 13)

with Panjabis living in the United Kingdom. There have been instance when the Central Govt. of India had expressed concern over the problems of such groups. Thus arose the demand in Tamilnadu about voicing Indian concern over the Sri Lankan Tamil issue.

To add to this, these are the strategies of the parties of Tamilnadu. DMK, under Karunanidhi, has claimed leadership of the Tamils all over the world. Any inactivity by M. G. Ramachandran and his ADMK government could lead to massive gains to DMK, the biggest of the opposition parties in Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu Congress (I) cannot isolate itself from Tamilian sentiments. Nor can the two Communist Parties keep silent over the "legitimate demands" of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Thus there has been an all party consensus on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue.

Though there had been concern over this problem since 1956, discernible political interest starts with the 1974 deaths in the Tamil Research Conference and in 1979. Interest in the Sri Lankan Tamil Question increased with militant youth seeking shelter in Tamilnadu.

Since 1977 there has been an additional fear in India, the fear of an American take over of Trincomalee.

And this changes the entire perspective of the problem.

What had started as a problem of language of the government gazettes of attacks on the suruttu kade and the thosai kades and of media of instruction and marks to enter the University, has now become a problem of geo-politics.

(Concluded)



# Capitalist underdevelopment and the end of dualism

Dayan Jayatilleka

**A** part from the erosion of national independence and sovereignty, one other result of the further integration of the periphery into world capitalist system in the present period, is the collapse of the pre-capitalist sectors of the peripheral economies. While colonialism and even neo-colonialism in its early phase preserved and utilized precapitalist relations, neo-colonialism in its contemporary phase, causes or accelerates, the dissolution of those relations and establishes instead, the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production over the precapitalist relations within the peripheral socio-economic information.

Consequently, feudal structures play a subaltern or indeed residual role in most peripheral economies. Indeed relations which appear feudal in form have actually been rendered capitalistic in content. Even the agrarian sectors of the peripheral economies have now been integrated into the capitalist world market and land is increasingly utilized to produce commodities for the world market. While on the one hand, commodity production (for the external and domestic market) predominates, on the other hand there has occurred and is occurring a process (not yet completed) of proletarianization whereby the village owner-cultivator is being transformed into a landless wage labourer. True, this process is a complex contradictory and far from unilinear one. Still the fact is that there has been a more or less rapid extension of capitalist relations of production in the agrarian sphere and these relations have now become the hegemonic relations of production in the rural areas of the periphery. Furthermore, the capitalist relations are of a **dependent** character in respect of both inputs and markets. A majority of the inputs required for the type of agricultural production introduced with the so-

called Green Revolution in the 1960's (chemical fertilizers, weedicides, pesticides, tractors, and even money capital) had to be imported from the metropolitan centres. On the other hand, the emphasis on the export of agricultural produce such as fruits and vegetables, not to mention handicrafts, has meant — as we stated earlier — the further integration of the rural sector into the world capitalist market, completely disrupting the old self sufficient subsistence rural economies where the primary social relations were based on reciprocal obligation rather than monetary payment.

All those developments amount to an invalidation of the famous 'dual economy' thesis which underlies much of Soviet and Chinese theorizing on the Tricontinental countries. At the political plane, these developments render obsolete the strategy of anti-feudal transformations carried out in alliance with the national bourgeoisie. Given that we have already rejected as obsolete the strategy of anti-imperialist transformation in collaboration with the selfsame national bourgeoisie, what we have is nothing less than a critique, at the level of political Economy, of the basis of the thesis of 'National Democratic State' which was an ideological product of the CPSU's de Stalinization, enshrined by the world communist movement in the 1957 and 1960 statements.

## The Development of Capitalist Under-development

The 'national' bourgeoisie's strategy for growth, pursued in alliance with transnational capital, is not only enhancing the dependency of the peripheral economies on the metropolitan centres, but in doing so it is strengthening, under different and new forms, the process of unequal exchange and exploitation, thereby doing nothing less than causing the worsening of the state of underdevelopment of their countries.

Ever since the publication of Paul Baran's 'Political Economy of Growth' in 1957 and certainly since Gunder Frank's burst of bold theorising in the 1960's, we have been aware that underdevelopment is not a set of economic characteristics, but a continuing process, and that this process is a result precisely of the integration of our economies as peripheral units into the capitalist world economy during the colonial period. Underdevelopment therefore, is a function of dependence upon the metropolitan centres. It is this dependent relationship that determines the underdevelopment of our countries.

A. G. Frank and Samir Amin have identified the linkage in the triple dialectic: centre/periphery, accumulation/disaccumulation, development/underdevelopment. Within world capitalism (capitalism is a world system) there are metropolitan centres and peripheral units or satellites. (Immanuel Wallerstein has since posited a third category, that of a semi-periphery). This division of the structure of the capitalist world system into two main sectors corresponds not only to the levels of capitalist development obtaining in those sectors, but even more importantly to their respective functions within this capitalist world system. Their functioning must be understood in the process of the accumulation of capital on a world scale. This process of accumulation occurs in a far from even or equal manner. "Accumulate! Accumulate! Accumulate!. That is the Law and the Prophets". wrote Marx, dramatizing the centrality of accumulation to the capitalist mode of production. He went on to point out that the accumulation of wealth at one pole of capitalist society is accompanied by the accumulation of poverty, misery and insecurity at the opposite pole. It is this process that unfolds on a world scale, with accumulation taking place at the centre and disaccumulation occurring at the periphery. The surplus generated by the working masses of the Tricontinental areas (who are truly 'the wretched of the earth') is not



retained within those countries but is sucked out across their national boundaries only to accumulate in the metropolitan centres, namely U. S. A., Western Europe and Japan.

".....The process of surplus appropriation runs through the entire world capitalist system in chain-like fashion, from its uppermost world centre through each of the various national, regional, local and enterprise centres".

(A. G. Frank, — 'Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America' — 1969)

This continuing process of which our countries have been victim since the dawn of imperialism has led Eduardo Galeano to emblazon his major work with the shocking evocative title '**The Open Veins of Latin America.**' It is precisely this outflow of surplus or more correctly of 'potential surplus' (Baran) that is to say, this **disaccumulation**, that is the source of the underdevelopment of peripheral countries, while conversely it is the accumulation at the centres of this surplus expropriated from the peripheral proletariat, that explains their development. Accumulation and disaccumulation stand in dialectical relationship to each other, as do development and underdevelopment.

"Economic development and underdevelopment are the opposite faces of the same coin..... one and the same historical process of the expansion and development of capitalism throughout the world has simultaneously generated and continues to generate both economic development and structural development".

(A. G. Frank, — 'Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America' — 1969)

What this makes clear is that the Tricontinental countries cannot be described as 'less developed' or 'developing' as both Western and most Soviet scholars do. This is because the countries of the world capitalist system cannot be arranged in a continuum in which the peripheral societies are some way behind the metropolitan ones ('less developed') but are essentially traversing the same path of development ('developing'). Marx was wrong when he held up Britain as the model of capitalist development which all countries would be forced to emulate and cautioned the workers of the world "De te fabula narratur" ('Of you the

tale is told'). In fairness to Marx, living as he did in the pre-monopoly period of capitalism, he could not form a conception of uneven development. Lenin too, though he was correct in his analysis of imperialism and in discerning the growth of capitalism in the periphery, was wrong when he thought that the First World War would jolt the colonies out of their backwardness and shift them on to 'general European lines' of capitalist development. In fact, it is the very historical process that fuelled the development of Europe and the other centres which structurally precludes the development of capitalism in the periphery 'along general European lines'; since integration into the world capitalist system effectively negated the possibility of an autocentric capitalist development in the periphery even in those areas which had exhibited a possibility for such development (e.g. India and Peru according to Baran and Anibal Quijano respectively.)

Even a modest acquaintance with history shows that underdevelopment is not original or traditional and that neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped countries resembles in any important respect the past of the now developed countries. The now developed countries were never under-developed though they may have been undeveloped."

(A. G. Frank, 'Underdevelopment or Revolution' — 1969)

The process of world history is not one in which all countries have to imitate one another and inevitably pass through the same stages of development, in the same sequence. The rigid mechanistic conception of historical development as a unilinear process has to be abandoned, together with the Europe-centric vision that such a conception presupposes, if we are to grasp the specificity of the peripheral capitalist mode of production which dominates the social-formations of the Southern hemisphere of the globe. This of course is Samir Amin's very project.

Since underdevelopment has proven historically to be the result of integration into the capitalist world system, it is clear that the present strategy of the local bourgeoisie which perpetuates dependency by new methods and forms has the consequence of actually **generating** further underdevelopment. The ever

tighter integration of the peripheral economies into the world capitalist system under the present policy of dependent industrialization, while causing certain changes and reforms in the international (capitalist) division of labour, in no way eliminates the unequal nature of this division of labour. In fact, this unequal and exploitative character is enhanced in the present period, and the dependent economic relationships ensure the continued flow of surplus from the neo-colonies to the metropolis, thus ensuring in turn the continued underdevelopment and disarticulation of peripheral economies.

What are the main modes and mechanisms of dependency which bind the neo-colony to the metropolitan centre? Though the peripheral units no longer function exclusively in their old role of primary producers, their economies still exhibit heavy dependence on external trade (the export-import character of the economy remaining unchanged), while their patterns of external trade reveal a high degree of enmeshing with the capitalist world market. Within that framework, though, there has been a partial diffusion of dependence. i. e., a shift away from the old imperialist metropolises to the neo-colonist centres and emerging sub-imperialist powers in Latin America (Brazil), Asia (India) and the Middle East. Consequently, unequal exchange (manifested in deteriorating terms of trade and continuing balance of payments problems) has remained a principle mechanism of the outflow of potential surplus and thus a cause of underdevelopment.

The ruling bourgeoisie, in an attempt to bridge the Balance of Payments deficit caused by adverse terms of trade has resorted increasingly to the option of foreign loans and aid. Most of these loans which are sought from and granted by the IMF, IBRD, USA JAPAN, West Germany and OPEC, operate at interest rates of 8 — 12% a year and are meant to be repaid over short periods such as 3 — 5 years. Skyrocketing external debts have become a permanent feature of peripheral economies in the recent past. While debt servicing alone devour a large percentage of annual export earnings, most of the loans are utilized not for industrial expansion but to import foodstuffs and to bridge



the everwidening gap. The dependent bourgeoisie has now, like Alice, to run twice as fast to stay in the same place.

Aid and loans, mostly from IMF and IBRD constitute the financial aspect of neo-colonial domination. Cheryl Payer's 'The Debt Trap' and Therasa Hayter's 'Aid as Imperialism' have exposed the workings of foreign aid as a mechanism of dependence and as a instrumentality of exporting finance capital. Most of the loans and aid are 'project-tied' with stipulations in respect of how they are to be utilized, or 'source-tied' with specifications on what goods should be purchased, from where, how they should be transported, in which markets the end-products of the aid should be sold etc. The dismantling of social welfarism and the devaluation of local currencies, (which in the first place are linked to imperialist currencies such as the pound sterling, the dollar and the franc), are two of the conditions constantly imposed upon the recipient countries by the aid 'donors' in the present period of global capitalist crisis.

The national bourgeoisie has thus been transformed not only into a dependent bourgeoisie, but also into a 'mendicant bourgeoisie', divesting itself of the last shreds of its national character and depressing the living standards of 'their its own' peoples, condemning them to penury for the sake of a few crumbs from the tables of their metropolitan masters in the form of loans and 'aid'.

In the contemporary neo-colonial phase, the transnational corporations are one of the major, if not the foremost, mechanism of dependency and exploitation. According to the policy planners of the ruling bourgeoisies, the combination of foreign aid and foreign investment will furnish the scarce capital necessary for economic development. The reality however, is that the capital brought in by the transnationals is far exceeded by that which flows out of the peripheral economy in the form of profits, dividends, royalties, patent, technical fees, licencing fees etc; Just as the payment of interests and amortization greatly exceed the quantum of aid received. The device of 'transfer pricing' in inter-company transactions (whereby artificially high prices are charged by the mother companies of the transnationals for the raw materials and

machine equipment that have to be imported while artificially low prices are fixed for the products that are exported), is yet another, albeit, oblique, method of the transfer of value from the periphery to the centre. One might also remember that the host governments, at the periphery actually subsidize the operations of the transnationals through the provision of infrastructure, tax concessions, credit facilities, relaxation of exchange controls etc.

This combination of repatriation of profits, transfer pricing and Governmental subsidies amounts to nothing less than a huge disaccumulation of surplus. This surplus which is sucked out and transferred across national boundaries, is surplus which could potentially have been utilized for national development. Because of this net outflow, and luxurious consumption (not to mention excessive military expenditure) by the ruling classes, there is hardly anything for domestic accumulation and expanded reproduction. There is no 'multiplier' or 'accelerator' effect in operation. Even an increase in export prices of products will not accrue to the peripheral economy, but rather to the owning company in the form of higher profits, dividends and royalties. (Prices themselves being controlled of course, by the monopolistic, capitalist world market.) The net outflow resulting from foreign investment has been widely documented by a variety of impeccably non-Marxist sources. According to Hilarian M. Henares, former chairman of the Phillippines National Economic Council, a study by the N. E. C. of 108 U. S. firms which accounted for over 70% of US investment in the Philippines revealed that of their total capital expenditure of US dollars 489.7 million in the 10 year period 1956 — 1965 only 12% or 58.6 million dollars came from abroad while the rest was borrowed from local sources. On the other hand these companies remitted 369 million US dollars abroad while retaining only 20.8 million US dollars as invested profit.

(To be continued)

Education for Peace by L. N. T. Mendis. The concluding part will appear in our next issue.

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# "Suddenly, a phrase begins to sing"

Chidananda Das Gupta

**P**oets are supposed to be anguished beings, people who feel even the joys of life too deeply for comfort; they are sensitive, vulnerable, naked against the wind, torn by contrary pulls. Etcetera. This preferred popular picture of the poet ignores the intellectual con men, or the tough old nuts who simply have the gift of feeling deeply and speaking powerfully and go on looking like bankers. The Byronic image dies hard.

So what happens to the one who has two mother tongues, writes in three languages, teaches in four faculties, lives in someone else's country and dreams much about his own? If poets were as weak as some cigar-chomping executives think, A. K. Ramanujan would not have survived those stresses. In point of fact, he is a man of natural strength, poise and humility, the most unpretentious you will ever meet. No chip on his shoulder; no false modesty. The poet in him is not obvious but has to be gradually discovered.

*And that woman*

*beside the wreckage van*

*on Hyde Park street: she will not  
let me rest*

*as I slowly cease to be the town's  
brown stranger and guest.*

That's from a Ramanujan poem called "Still Another for Mother." The old ragpicker in Chicago, where he has now lived 20 years, could have been in Mysore, where he studied, or Madras, from where his parents came. Ramanujan is a man of many places, and tongues. "By the time I was 17," he says, "I spoke Tamil downstairs, English upstairs and Kannada outside." He adds quickly: "But I am not unique in that." By the time he was 17, he had also been writing poetry for at least two years — in Kannada. And now, several buses in Chicago

**Well known to poetry lovers and academics for decades, a quiet Indian poet, teacher and translator living in Chicago attracted wide attention recently when he won a "genius award," a handsome grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation designed to enable highly talented people to pursue their inclinations free from the pressures of breadwinning.**

display a poem of his, chosen by the Illinois Arts Council:

*And search*

*for certain thin-*

*stemmed, bubble-eyed water bugs.*

*See them perch*

*on dry capillary legs*

*weightless*

*on the ripple skin*

*of a stream.*

*No, not only prophets*

*walk on water. This bug sits*

*on a landslide of lights*

*and drowns eye-*

*deep*

*into its tiny strip*

*of sky.*

What made him end up in the United States, a professor teaching in four departments, writing poetry in English and Kannada, translating Tamil and traveling often in India? What has living abroad and hugging India inside him meant? How do poets fare in a superindustrial society supposedly bitten by the bug of success? How has his poetry done in the United States? What is his view of poetry? Who reads it anyway? What good are academic poets — compared to those away from the cloister? What is it like

to live in Chicago as an Indian poet-professor? How does a translator and an original poet live within the same soul — in peace or in conflict? I fired a volley of questions, the inevitable ones any Indian would ask.

Ramanujan earned his B. A. and M. A. in English language and literature from Mysore University and, as did most such people at that time, went on to teach in a college. But with many a difference. First off, he was not content to live in one place. "I wanted to live in different parts of India — for one year in each, at least. I started in Kerala, then moved to Madras, to Madurai — then I went to Belgaum for a few years and to Poona and Baroda." He felt he had to explain why he stayed longer than usual in Belgaum. "My father died. For familial reasons, I had to stay put." But the stability was not without its benefit. His interest in Tamil and Kannada poetry took root here. Also he became interested in the problem of literacy. He wrote little books for the literacy program and articles for neo-literate magazines. What is more, he became, in these seven years, dissatisfied with the teaching of English and felt that the right way to study it was from the point of view of a linguist. That's when the foundations of his fame in linguistics were laid.

"I became disillusioned with my teaching of English, I felt I was not doing it right — we were not doing it right — even though many of us were very dedicated to English and to our students. I felt that even after five or six or a dozen years of learning English, many students did not know it well enough to use it. Of course there were some extraordinary students, but for most of them — in spite of their high esteem for English — the results, after giving so many



years of their lives to it, were disappointing. I was in Baroda, for instance, teaching English in the commerce section — but the students were my despair, even though they liked me very much, listened to the stories I told them and so on. If I asked them to write something, they wouldn't get one sentence right. So I wondered if there was any other way of doing this."

Linguistics, he decided, could point the way. Ramanujan went to Decan College in Poona to take a course in linguistics. After that he got a Fulbright scholarship to study linguistics at Indiana University and off he went. And then?

"For nearly 10 years, I taught straight linguistics at the University of Chicago, morphology, syntax and so on, which I enjoyed doing. But because I had always been interested in folklore, and in the anthropology of language — structuralism, semiotics, connexions between linguistics and forms of communication in general — over the years I have become more and more involved in South Asian languages." He is at present chairman of the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilization at the University of Chicago. "The department is very dear to me, because it has taught me more about India living here in Chicago than I could have learned anywhere else — even in India. In India I would have taken many things for granted and I would not have met so many kinds of translators. There are such people in India of course, but I would not have met many of them. In Chicago they are bunched together in one place,

The University of Chicago is full of famous scholars who can't be pigeonholed into one discipline. So it has found a way to deal with these "miscellaneous people" as Ramanujan calls them. Paul Wickely, for instance, is a geographer and at the same time an expert on China. Ramanujan himself has a joint appointment in four departments: in the Department of South Asian Languages; in the Committee on Social Thought consisting of writers, philosophers and related disciplines, in the Department of

## Death and the Good Citizen

I know, you told me,  
your nightsoil and all  
your city's, goes still  
warm every morning  
in a government  
lorry, drippy (you said)  
but punctual, by special  
arrangement to the municipal  
gardens to make the grass  
grow tall for the cows  
in the village, the rhino  
in the zoo: and the oranges  
plump and glow, till  
they are a preternatural  
orange.

Good animal yet perfect  
citizen, you, you are  
biodegradable, you do  
return to nature: you *will*  
your body to the nearest  
hospital, changing death into small  
change and spare parts;  
dismantling, not de-  
composing like the rest  
of us. Eyes in an eye-bank  
to blink some day for a stranger's  
brain, wait like mummy wheat  
in the singular company  
of single eyes, pickled,  
absolute.

Hearts,  
with your kind of temper,  
may even take, make connection  
with alien veins, and continue  
your struggle to be naturalized:  
beat, and learn to miss a beat,  
in a foreign body.

But  
you know my tribe, incarnate  
unbelievers in bodies,  
they'll speak proverbs, contest  
my will, against such degradation.  
Hide-bound, even worms cannot  
have me: they'll cremate  
me in Sanskrit and sandalwood,  
have me sterilized  
to a scatter or ash.

Or abroad,  
they'll lay me out in a funeral  
parlor, embalm me in pesticide,  
bury me in a steel trap, lock  
me so out of nature  
till I'm oxidized by left-  
over air, withered by my own  
vapors into grin and bone.  
My tissue will never graft,  
will never know newsprint,  
never grow in a culture,  
or be mold and compost  
for jasmine, eggplant  
and the unearthly perfection  
of municipal oranges.

Linguistics, plus he has an associate professorship in the Department of Anthropology. Chicago, he explains, has this penchant for interdisciplinary appointments and committee consisting of people of different specializations who come together on matters of common concern. "When I study classical Tamil, I am on the one hand interested in its poetics, on the other in the social arrangements or world view reflected in the literature . . . I feel that none of these can be studied without the others. One of the fortunate things of my life is that I have been able to keep the miscellaneous interests of my youth alive — because I landed up in a place where this was formally recognized. It's good to feel that these interests are not hobbies I pursue outside my own field."

The legitimacy of his many interests was brought home to him one day by his secretary. Ramanujan had drafted some poems and was typing them in his office. His secretary watched him do this and said: "Raman, why don't you give this to me?" When the poet protested that it was personal work, the secretary assured him that whatever work he did was official; there was no line drawn between the official and the personal. From that day she typed his poems, no matter how many times he revised them. And he found she liked typing poems. "It's a change from reports. Secretaries are refreshed by it. Sometimes I ask them — how does this sound? However well you may know English, there are always ambiguous elements which only a native speaker can spot. Some of the typists are politic with me, but others will say — no, no, that doesn't sound right.

"One of my oldest concerns is the form of poetry — not just the rhymes or count of syllables but the way it begins and ends and gathers a certain clarity. Content does not come independently of form. The meaning goes on changing with the form. In fact there is a point where you begin to feel that the form itself is the meaning of the poem."

Was he saying that, reduced to pure content, there is no personal



expression, that it will then be something said before, belonging to someone else? Isn't it in the way of saying that content acquires a personality and therefore a meaning?

"I would go further than that," says Ramanujan. "I would say that the meaning is in the form. The particular nuance is what you experience; you are not looking for some big thought. Even the biggest thought must come to you in a particular form; it must be embodied. The how is as much the what as the what."

Does that mean that words have a nonverbal content, as it were? "Yes. Because we use words all the time, we think poetry is made up of words. Of course poetry is made of words, but here words are like paint or gestures or other nonverbal things you use in the plastic arts or the performing arts. Words are like objects; they have a sound, a look. There was this writer who said: 'Language is the universal where we are constantly trying to convert into a virgin.' Everybody uses language, yet when I use it I must use it in such a

way that it says something new, innocent. Language is full of stock phrases, clichés — you fall back on them whenever you are not really thinking. It is exactly like perception. When I see that scene outside the window, it is what I have seen a hundred times, but one of these days I may suddenly see it as if I had never seen it before. It acquires a quality of experience, and, at that very moment, it also becomes aesthetic. The words, when they appear in a particular order, surprise you, as though you had never seen them before. That's when you know you can't change it any more. You are your first reader.

## STILL ANOTHER FOR MOTHER

And that women  
beside the wreckage van  
on Hyde Park street: she will not let me rest  
as I slowly cease to be the town's brown stranger and guest.

She had thick glasses on. Was large, buxom,  
like some friend's mother. Wearing chintz  
like all of them who live there, eating mints  
on the day's verandahs.

And the handsome  
short-limbed man with a five-finger patch of gray  
laid on his widows' peak, turned and left her  
as I walked at them out of the after-  
glow of a whiskey sour. She stood there  
as if nothing had happened yet (perhaps nothing did)  
flickered at by the neons on the door,  
the edges of her dress a fuzz, lit red.  
Fumbled at keys, wishbone shadows on the catwalk,  
as though they were not keys, but words after talk,  
or even beads.

He walked straight on, towards me,  
beyond me, didn't stop at the clicks of red  
on the signals.

And she just stood  
there, looking at his walking on, me  
looking at her looking on. She wanted then  
not to be absent perhaps on the scene  
if he once so much as even thought  
of looking back.

Perhaps they had fought.  
Worse still, perhaps they had not fought.  
I discovered that mere walking was polite  
and walked on, as if nothing had happened  
to her, or to me:

something opened  
in the past and I heard something shut  
in the future, quietly,

like the heavy door  
of my mother's black-pillared, nineteenth-century  
silent house, given on her marriage day  
to my father, for a dowry.

"The poet is a specialist in what everybody does every now and then. You are talking to me. You turn witty, you tell me a story, you make a new phrase. Suddenly a phrase begins to sing, and everybody notices it. And then you pass on to something more ordinary. Poets are more consistent about it. They have to make every phrase sing. Poetry intensifies words: From one point of view, it is minimal utterance; from another, maximal. You can feel the temperature of the thing — if the word is right. So poetry is language that has not been used before — intense, creative, imaginative. And yet it is ordinary language, not a thing apart. It is this paradox that interests me. I want my poems ultimately to sound as though I spoke them."

As with so many Indian writers living abroad, it is the Indian experience — a whole storehouse of it that they carry inside, review, relive from time to time and bring into contact with present experience — that nourishes Ramanujan's poetry. Perhaps that is where the value of such writers lies for the host country as much as the country they departed. Obviously, Ramanujan had explored and clarified the problem of duality a long time ago, for when questioned, he does not have to ponder over it much; he comes out with a fully formulated answer, although fresh in the telling. His thoughts on it illuminate the condition of any expatriate writer, not just his own.

"At first the dream was of being some kind of a citizen of the



world, to be at home wherever I was; it takes time before you realize that there are limits your culture has placed on you. Only they are not just limits. They are also resources. You respond to things differently from others. Even among small groups that share your interests, your sensitivities and so on, you have personal responses that are not the same as of Americans." Yet Ramanujan fits into the American scene sufficiently to be published there a good deal and to be listed in every *Who's Who*. With some 3,000 published poets around, making one's mark in the United States is not easy. It seems to have come to Ramanujan in a natural, gradual way. Speaking of the 3,000-odd poets, Ramanujan does not find the number unduly large for a country of the size of the United States. "Don't they say that if you threw a stone in Calcutta, chances were that it would hit a poet? Readership of poetry is bigger in India. My friend Karandikar had written a (Marathi) poem that angered some group or the other. He was asked to read poems at Sangli or some such place where one of the first people he met on arrival was a police inspector. Asked what he was doing there, the policeman said: 'Some Marathi poet is coming, so I am on duty here.' That sort of thing is unusual in the United States, although the Beat poets did make a big thing of it for a while."

Is it embarrassing, as some people suggest, to be a poet in a superindustrial society where success in scientific, industrial and managerial areas counts for a lot? "No," Ramanujan replies firmly, "It's not embarrassing in any company to say that you are a poet. Of course they wonder how you make a living, but that's natural anywhere." How do they make a living? "There are many little magazines and university magazines that publish poetry, then there is *Poetry*, which is a national publication. Some big magazines like *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic* and *Harper's* publish poetry and pay very well — you can almost live on it. And poets are often made professors of creative writing in universities these days — even if they don't have a degree. You give workshops, talk to young

students who are beginning to write poetry. You are a poet-in-residence. Of course, there is some criticism of this too, on the count that it makes poets write for academics. But a good poet is a good poet anywhere. Robert Lowell taught at Harvard, Berryman at Minnesota. Admittedly, the audience for the academic poet is slightly different, but then Ginsberg or Ferlinghetti are discussed at the universities as much as any other poet. Wallace Stevens was an insurance man. William Carlos Williams was a pediatrician who wrote poetry between birth and birth, as it were."

How does he get on with his translations? Is there a conflict between them and his original work? "It looks as if I live between things all the time — two (or more) languages, two countries, two disciplines. It's always been that way for me. My translations are a way to keep them all together. There are no compartments between languages for me. If a poem comes to me in Kannada, I can't write it in English, I can't even translate it later into English. If I do, it ends up by being a completely different poem. If I translate someone else's poetry, I can't take liberties with it. Not that I am literally faithful to them — that's a way of being unfaithful in fact, because languages have systems of their own. They don't have the same grammatical patterns, idioms, not even the same consonants. Besides, the experience in each language is different. That's why many of our scholarly translations in India are so difficult to understand. Some of them can, in fact, be understood only by those who know the original. So one has to find equivalents in the other language — faithfully. I believe that only poets can translate poetry. The fact that we can learn more than one language itself means that there are universals, transfers. Your first language does not debar you from another. Indeed linguistics show how we transfer elements that we learn in one language into another. But the common factors between languages are not at the level of the literal. Also, I never translate a poem singly. When you do a number of them, the reader begins to see certain regularities, structures, conventions. If the first

poem seems a little strange, the second will be less so. You read 10 or 15 and sort of start thinking in a new language as it were."

Ramanujan must have kept some faith with his originals, for *The Interior Landscape*, a book of poems translated from Tamil, was honored by the Tamil Writers' Association in 1968. The poems were able to touch the minds of those who did not know the originals. *Speaking of Shiva*, a volume of translations of Kannada lyrics, brought the National Book Award nomination as well as inspiring the British Broadcasting Corporation to produce an opera based on it. So he lives between translations and originals without conflict. When he was 35, Oxford University Press issued his first volume of original poems in English, *The Striders*. *Relations* followed five years later. *Selected Poems* was published in 1976. His work at Chicago entails a lot of scholarly activity. "There is a sort of competition between writing one's own poetry and scholarly work. Translations require both scholarly and poetic skills. It's a nice compromise."

In his 20 years in Chicago Ramanujan, born in 1929 and raised in Mysore by parents from Madras, has not ceased to be an Indian and yet has no sense of being an alien. He writes in English, Kannada and translates Tamil, has a host of close friends in Chicago and the rest of the United States as well as in India. His wife, an Indian novelist, gives courses on creative writing in colleges near Chicago. One of these is a black college and represents an experience the husband does not really share; even though he has black students, he has never taught in a completely black college. There was a Fulbright marriage, both having gone to the United States on Fulbright scholarships and met there. His daughter, 20, studies Sanskrit, besides being a Greek scholar. He himself continues with his combination of original and translations. *Poems of Love and War*, an anthology of translations from Tamil, will be published in 1984, and a work on *South Indian Folk Tales* will follow. The unexpected and large MacArthur Award has made little difference to the even tenor of his life. "I will continue to do what I am doing."

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