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KETHESH LOGANATHAN <i>Jayadeva Uyangoda</i>	04
ASSASSINATIONS AND COUNTER ASSASSINATIONS <i>N. Shanmugaratnam</i>	05
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AID, CONFLICT, AND PEACE <i>Darini Rajasingham Senanayake</i>	07
JOURNEY TOWARDS BATTICALOA <i>Yolanda Foster</i>	14
REVITALIZING TRADE UNIONS <i>Janaka Biyanwila</i>	19
THE MYTH OF CENTRALISED POLITY OF SRI LANKA <i>Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne</i>	25
GLOBALIZATION, MILITARISM AND LABOUR <i>Rohini Hensman</i>	28
CRICKETING FEATS OF SRI LANKA <i>Neville Turner</i>	34
GLOBALIZATION, TERROR AND SHAMING <i>Sasanka Perera</i>	36
OSMUND JAYARATNE ON E.F.C. LUDOWYK	40
DOCUMENTS	42-44
IN MEMORIAM	46-51

ESCALATING WAR

The talks held on October 28-29 in Geneva between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE embody some of the major difficulties embedded in Sri Lanka's much maligned peace process. The delegations from the government and the LTTE went to Geneva amidst increasing international pressure to desist from war and resume political engagement. The Norwegian facilitators could not produce an agenda for the meeting because the two sides had different expectations from the Geneva talks. On the first day of negotiations, leaders of the two delegations made lengthy opening statements, indicating that they had come to Geneva committed to engage in positional bargaining. They were also expecting unilateral political gains. They were not in Geneva for problem-solving and conflict resolution talks. When the talks ended inconclusively, the international facilitators pleaded with the two sides not to act in haste, because of the real risk of imminent war escalation. In fact, the Geneva talks appeared to be a conduct of war by other means.

'War by other means' is a phrase that dramatically captures how Sri Lanka's peace process of 2002-2003 has gradually degenerated into conflict and violence. Sri Lanka's relapse to war should not surprise anyone, because the 2002-2003 negotiations failed to produce a *peace* agreement, even though there has been a *cease-fire* agreement in force. But neither the CFA nor the presence of international

truce monitors has deterred the two main parties and their hidden allies from waging an undeclared war.

The current phase of Sri Lanka's war has a few crucial and defining characteristics. First, neither the government nor the LTTE has formally withdrawn from the CFA. No side has formally declared war either. Second, the war is being conducted at low and middle-intensity levels with occasional outbursts of high intensity escalation. Third, the war so far has taken a high toll of civilian victims, yet both sides seem to accept the civilian casualty dimensions as a necessary component in this particular phase of the war. And finally, in the counter-state and counter-insurgency war, that runs parallel to the visible war, civilians are being deliberately targeted. Everyday, there are reports of Tamil civilians being kidnapped, extra-judicially executed or just assassinated. These reports emanate from Jaffna, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mannar, Vavuniya and of course, Colombo.

Looking back at events during the past several weeks in Sri Lanka's conflict, one can see a process of build up to a new phase of war escalation. The logic of this escalation has been the commitment of each side to gain unilateral military advantage, whether negotiations take place or not.

What is likely to happen to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, when its history has been one of protraction, reproduction and renewal? It may be the case that

this conflict has passed the stage of being ended through a negotiated settlement. The way in which the conflict has been reconstituted through the failure of 2002-2003 peace process and after, suggests that the dynamics of conflict sharpening have effectively replaced the possibilities for conflict mitigation and compromise. The conflict has reached the stage of a 'scissors crisis' in which the two main

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Editors

Jayadeva Uyangoda
Kumari Jayawardena

Executive Editor and Circulation Manager

Rasika Chandrasekera

Editorial Assistant

Chandrika Widanapathirana

POLITY

No. 12, Sulaiman Terrace
Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.

Telephone: 2501339, 2504623

Tel/Fax: 2586400

E-mail: ssa@eureka.lk

website: www.ssalanka.org

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protagonists – the Sinhalese political class in the South and the LTTE in the North – have crossed each other’s paths and are now travelling in two separate directions.

The task ahead, from the perspective of conflict resolution, is to ensure that the two paths intersect again. That will require a long process of political transformation of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Such a protracted process of conflict transformation will invariably be interspersed with outbreaks and escalation of war and violence. Only the external actors presently engaged in Sri Lanka’s peace process appear to have some capacity to manage this recurring crisis--by preventing the state and the LTTE from returning to a decisive phase of war.

Is there a possible way out from the dangerous stalemate in Sri Lanka? There two events that seem to coincide in the month of December. The first is the LTTE leader’s annual Hero’s Day address on November 27 in which he is likely to

outline the LTTE’s future course of action. The second is the submission of the constitution reform proposals prepared by the Panel of Experts, appointed by the government. The panel is likely to present two reports, one majority, the other minority. The minority report will argue for minimalist state reforms, from the perspective of Sinhalese nationalism. The majority report might have the potential to propose a framework of regional autonomy.

If the government of President Rajapakse can back a proposal for extensive regional autonomy, it can provide the impetus for the LTTE leaders to explore further political options, perhaps by reviving the idea of an interim self-governing authority, which the LTTE pursued, though without success, in 2003. Even to activate a new political dialogue between the government and the LTTE, the international community will have to offer strong disincentives to parties with regard to the war option. **P**

RAVIRAJ: ANOTHER ASSASSINATION

The killing of Nadaraja Raviraj, TNA parliamentarian, marks another step in Sri Lanka’s march towards barbarism amidst escalating war between the government and the LTTE. The TNA has blamed some unidentified groups for this killing. The killers have carried out their mission in a crowded neighborhood in Colombo.

The killings of political opponents, if it is actually the case, is a dangerous trend. Amidst local and international protests, President Rajapakse has appointed a Commission to investigate a series of unresolved killings, including those of Raviraj and Kethesh Loganathan

Throughout the ethnic war, Sri Lanka has seen political assassinations and the killing of civilians. After the LTTE’s split and the emergence of the Karuna Group in the Eastern province, a new internecine war has broken out between them, dramatically increasing the violence against Tamil civilians. Abductions and killings mostly of civilians loyal to either

group have been a widely practiced mode of war between them.

In 2006, there has been an alarming rise in these activities. They have been taking place in the North and East as well as in Colombo. In such a backdrop, a culture of impunity has begun to corrode the foundations of not only the rule of law, but also the every day conditions of law and order.

While the country is being dragged into another long period of civil war, the leading political parties as well as most of the media in Colombo do not seem to have learnt any lessons from the corroding impact of civil war on the institutions and processes of governance. Many of them want the war to intensify. ‘Military victory first; democracy, the rule of law and the protection of citizens later’ seems to be their formula for success. This is exactly the way the LTTE, – which is engaged in a counter-state war– too thinks. **■**

KETHESH LOGANATHAN

Jayadeva Uyangoda

Kethesh Loganathan

The on-going war has devoured many in Sri Lanka, including Kethesh Loganathan, a prominent intellectual activist. Deductive political logic suggests that the LTTE assassinated Kethesh, on political grounds. The LTTE saw him as a traitor, because, being a Tamil politico-intellectual activist he has been working for the Sri Lankan government for the past several months as a key functionary of its Peace Secretariat. Sinhalese nationalists linked to the government also saw him as a threat. The JVP newspaper described him a few times as an 'LTTE agent' who had infiltrated a key government entity. That is how extreme Sinhalese nationalists continue to see politically active Tamils, as 'LTTE agents.'

The assassination of Kethesh once again demonstrates some tragic dimensions of the politics in Sri Lanka's Tamil society. Its politics is dominated by extreme militarism. The LTTE practices militarism in its most extreme form. So do the anti-LTTE groups who are aligned with the Sri Lankan state. Sri Lankan state and the Tamil polity have been dealing with each other primarily by military means. If one were to be politically active in Sri Lankan Tamil society, one has to be in one of these mutually antagonistic camps. This is a tragic dilemma for mainstream as well as dissident Tamil activists.

Kethesh began his political life as a founder member of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) in the early 1980s. Led by Padmanabha, the EPRLF was the most Left-wing of all Tamil militant groups active in the armed struggle. The EPRLF tried to combine class struggle with the Tamil national struggle. Trained as an economist at the Georgetown University, Kethesh was one of the key theoretical figures in the EPRLF. He took part in Thimpu talks in 1984. I had the personal privilege of facilitating Kethesh's book *Sri Lanka, Lost Opportunities: Past Attempts at a Negotiated Settlement*, which carries a participant's account of the failed Thimpu talks.

Biographies

Kethesh's biography, like the life stories of many of my generation in Sri Lanka, has been closely intertwined with the complex trajectories of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. When the Indo-Lanka agreement was signed in July 1987, the EPRLF was in the forefront of accepting the Accord as the basis for a political settlement to the ethnic conflict. When the provincial councils were set up in Sri Lanka in 1988, the EPRLF led a coalition of ex-Tamil militant groups elected to run the new devolution administration. Kethesh did not take up any political office in the new provincial administration. But he continued as a key intellectual figure in the EPRLF, advising the new Chief Minister. Eventually, the EPRLF got into a great deal of trouble with the Sri Lankan state in 1990 when President Premadasa's regime established a tactical alliance with the LTTE in their common agenda to get rid of the Indian peace keeping forces. Backed by the Indians, but hated by the Premadasa administration, the EPRLF was pushed into a new war with the LTTE. Politically and militarily cornered and faced with the prospect of being decimated, the EPRLF leaders declared a UDI for Tamils only to seek asylum in India.

Degeneration

But Kethesh managed to stay back in Sri Lanka. He saw along with us how the Tamil national struggle got itself degenerated into war, war and war. Eventually, Kethesh left the EPRLF and active politics. He wanted to resume his professional life. He became a research consultant at Colombo University's Centre for Policy Research and Analysis. Kethesh wrote *The Lost Opportunities* while at CEPRA with immense passion and commitment. That book still remains the most valuable source of information and insights about Sri Lanka's past attempts at a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict.

For several years, Kethesh worked for Colombo's Centre for Policy Alternatives as its head of conflict and peace research division. In his CPA years, Kethesh remained very active in what we call Sri Lanka's civil society politics,

focussing on human rights, conflict resolution and peace building. He wrote newspaper columns under different pen names, his most favourite being ‘*Sathya*’ or the ‘Holder of the Truth.’

Dilemma

Actually, Kethesh began his *Sathya* column in 2002 in a significant political context. The newly elected United National Front government and the LTTE launched a joint peace initiative in early 2002. Brokered by the Norwegian government and supported by the global powers, the government and the LTTE signed a ceasefire agreement and began negotiations. There was an intense debate among Sri Lanka’s civil society groups on the question of how to deal with the new peace initiative. Kethesh initially welcomed it, but soon became very critical of what he called the ‘appeasement’ of ‘fascist LTTE’ by the Norwegians, the international community, the Sri Lankan government and the ‘peace lobby.’

Kethesh was not alone in this critical assessment of the 2002 peace process. In the sharply fragmented Sri Lankan Tamil polity, many intellectual and political groups shared his pessimism. The human rights group University Teachers of Human Rights (JFFNA) chronicled in consummate detail in their regular reports what they saw as the ‘Tiger appeasement’ and its consequences. It was also clear that sections of Sinhalese political class and the English press in Colombo made use of these sharp divisions in Tamil political society to advance the Sinhalese supremacist agenda.

Kethesh Loganathan is not the first or last person to have been slain by an assassin for political reasons arising from Sri Lanka’s ethnic war.

When the war intensified in recent weeks, the political space also opened up for assassins to hit those who in military parlance are described as ‘soft targets.’ And there are many soft targets around, Tamil as well as Sinhalese. That also signifies the kind of barbarism that an ethnic war can repeatedly bring about to a society torn asunder by an intractable conflict. ■

ASSASSINATIONS AND COUNTER ASSASSINATIONS: REFLECTIONS ON THE KILLING OF KETHESH LOGANATHAN

N. Shanmugaratnam

As I stood looking at the bespectacled face of the slain Kethesh lying in a coffin at Jayaratne funeral parlour, I could not help wondering why he accepted a high-ranking position at the government’s Peace Secretariat. What might have motivated this fiercely independent Tamil nationalist and an uncompromising advocate of human rights to join a highly politicised agency of the government? Did he think he could influence the government to move away from the majoritarian unitarist mindset and towards a genuine power sharing arrangement to solve the national question? Did he think he could engage President Rajapakse in a reasoned dialogue and convince him to abandon the JVP and JHU and their supremacist, militarist line? I was not sure if I was asking myself the right questions. But there was no question that the killing of Kethesh, an unarmed, unprotected dissident Tamil intellectual, must be condemned. After talking with several friends and acquaintances of Kethesh in Colombo, I

found that I was not alone in wondering what might have led to his decision to accept a political appointment. Nor am I alone in condemning his killing as a dastardly act.

However, one must go beyond condemning this particular murder and call for an end to political assassinations and massacres of innocent civilians in Lanka. Assassins had taken the lives of several Tamil politicians and activists. Many journalists have paid the ultimate price for reporting the truth, for knowing the identity of the perpetrators of extra judicial killings, or for taking the ‘wrong’ side. Nimalarajan, Sinna Bala, Nadesan, Rohana Kumara, Taraki (D.Sivaram), Relangi Selvarajah, Sampath Lakmal ... this is not the beginning or the end of the list of the fallen journalists. Humanitarian workers have been massacred, Christian priests who provided shelter to the displaced have disappeared and it is feared that they might have been killed. The state’s air force has been

bombing several areas in the North-East in the name of defending what the government calls sovereignty. But it has left scores of innocent citizens of the same state dead and many more displaced. Some statements from the Peace Secretariat in the days of the Mawil Aaru conflict and after made one wonder if they were emanating from a 'war secretariat'. How did Kethesh, the impassioned advocate of engagement and peaceful means, see his role in such an environment? I do not know the answer. Perhaps someone does.

The Tamil community has borne the brunt of politically motivated killings. It remains in the grip of a gun culture unleashed by rival parties. The gun was originally meant to serve the struggle for the liberation of the Tamils. But soon it took command of politics and has often been used to settle sectarian disputes by military means. I am not the first to say this, nor is this the first time I say it. Tamils need to reinvent the culture of intellectual pluralism and open political debate. And that culture needs to be regenerated by us from within our own society which I have no doubt is capable of absorbing transformative ideas and values from other societies. This must happen sooner than later to safeguard the justness of the cause of the Tamil people, to sustain the struggle politically, and to build a democratic society. It is widely recognised that the armed struggle has restored to the Lankan Tamils a great measure of dignity, while drawing the attention of the world to their legitimate grievances. However, internecine conflicts and the violent suppression of different ideas and perspectives on the national question and its resolution have done much harm to the Tamil cause and struggle. In the eyes of his killers Kethesh was a 'traitor' but

the world at large saw him as an intellectual with a different approach to the grievances of the Tamil people. Those who regarded him as a traitor should have taken the trouble to argue their case politically and show why his approach was wrong. What is the point in having so many Tamil and English websites, newspapers and magazines, TV channels and radio stations if we cannot use them for open exchange of views and for debates to develop an enlightened political culture in Tamil society?

My condemnation of the killing of Kethesh and my opposition to the gun culture that plagues the Tamil community cannot obviously be construed as an endorsement of government policy or the ways in which the government's Peace Secretariat conducts its affairs. The government talks of negotiations and peace without clearly stating its political stand on the national question. What emerges clearly from its practice is that it is pursuing a majoritarian supremacist agenda in the name of the sovereignty and sanctity of the unitary state. The problem with the state is that it is not just a unitary state but a communalised, desecularised, majoritarian unitary state. We cannot build a truly democratic Lankan society without restructuring the state to make it ethnically neutral (i.e. truly multiethnic) through an elaborate arrangement for autonomy and power sharing in a united Lanka. This should be the agenda of a government that is sincere and serious about achieving lasting peace in the country and to all its peoples. No government so far has had the political will to do this. The conflict cannot be transformed as long as this failure continues. Individual Tamil intellectuals like Kethesh could do very little to change this situation. ■

Professor N. Shanmugaratnam is attached to the Norwegian Agricultural University, Norway.

WIZARD of ID



Courtesy International Herald Tribune,

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AID, CONFLICT, AND PEACE BUILDING IN SRI LANKA

Darini Rajasingham Senanayake

Pace in Sri Lanka is increasingly an international legal fiction – an assumption contrary to ground realities. The ebb of peace in the palm-fringed, tourist-friendly island is indexed in the return of ‘dirty war’, a rising body count, trickle of refugees to South India, as well as suicide bombings and barricades in the capital, Colombo. For the first time, there have been coordinated attacks on international aid agencies. As the head of the Scandinavian peace Monitoring Mission noted recently, there is an ongoing low-scale, low-intensity war.

Even though neither the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), nor the Government has formally withdrawn from the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA), the new war continues the spiral of the (para) militarisation of civil society, with a “war economy” sustained by terror, taxation and international post-conflict and post-tsunami reconstruction assistance. These trends point to the possibility that the current conflict may also achieve a self-sustaining momentum beyond ethnic minority grievances as it has done in the past.

In this context, it is important to analyse the role of the international community, which though a set of apparently external observers, has become intrinsically embedded and intertwined in Sri Lanka’s conflict and peace process over the past decade. Given the extent of the international aid industry and bureaucracy in the country, the return of war despite the Norwegians’ best efforts raises fundamental questions about its relevance and impact on conflict transformation. The Strategic Conflict Assessment for Sri Lanka (SCA) commissioned by the World Bank, DIFID, the Asia Foundation and other donors that focuses primarily on the internal political dynamics of conflict in the island, falls far short of an adequate, reflexive and transparent analysis of the role of international aid actors and their impacts on society, conflict and peace in the island.

A recent study of peace processes by John Darby published by the US Institute for Peace has noted that of 38 internationally mediated peace efforts in the decade between 1989-1999, 31 had returned to conflict in the first few years. International assistance in low-intensity armed conflicts and

peace processes may either ameliorate or become part of a renewed conflict cycle as a number of scholars working on low intensity armed conflicts in Africa have noted. There have been few systematic reviews of donor assistance and its impact in Sri Lanka. As such, the attempt here is to develop a *structural analysis* of the three principal actors in Sri Lanka – the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), LTTE and the international community (none of them being homogenous) – and their relationship, based on an analysis of political economy of the international aid industry and bureaucracy.

The International War, Peace and Reconstruction Industry

Not too far back, in 2003, Sri Lanka was projected in international reconstruction and development conference circles and media as a test case of ‘liberal peace building and reconstruction’. After the Norwegian-brokered Ceasefire Agreement in 2002, three different international pledging conferences for Sri Lanka were held in Oslo, Washington and Tokyo. The conferences gleaned the promise of US\$4.5 billion for post-conflict reconstruction. Four co-chairs were appointed to Sri Lanka’s peace process—Norway, Japan, EU and US. The World Bank, that had positioned itself to lead the expanding international reconstruction industry and bureaucracy in the island, was appointed custodian of the North East Reconstruction Fund (NERF).

Given donor emphasis on the privatisation of development assistance, international consultants, private companies, UN Agencies and INGOs competed for lucrative reconstruction contracts in Sri Lanka in the peace interregnum – from demining, to road building, to peace education and advertising. More recently, the December 2004 Asia Tsunami disaster also drew a large number of volunteers and technical experts, unfamiliar with local languages, institutional structure and culture. Despite this, reconstruction has been painfully slow, primarily due to the fact that the international aid industry has snatched away local and regional ownership of the recovery operation. This is in stark contrast to India and Thailand, which refused most forms of international

assistance after the Tsunami, but are far ahead in the task of reconstruction.

Over the past half-century of war and natural disaster, Sri Lanka's politicians and policymakers have developed a culture of 'aid dependency' largely due to the de-development of the country's policy making and planning institution during a decade of structural adjustments (when the Ministry of Plan Implementation was effectively shut down), even though ground level facts point to the necessity of a different approach – the country is no longer a least developed country, has almost 90 percent literacy rate, and a number of under and unemployed graduates, and exports technical skills overseas. There are several questions this raises – why is national expertise marginalised in reconstruction; do aid pledges materialise; and how much of the assistance actually reaches the country or the communities affected by war, natural disaster and poverty?

Arguably much of the aid pledged and disbursed for peace and reconstruction in the country is “phantom aid”, defined by Action Aid as “aid that never materialises to poor countries, but is instead diverted for other purposes within the aid system.”

“Phantom Aid”

The international peace and development industry is entrenched in most parts of the global South, and is believed to be the fifth largest industry in the world. Conflict situations present significant “opportunities” for growth to international aid experts and bureaucracy, exported from the Euro-American world to these regions. However, the utility of this ever-growing donor assistance to conflict-affected countries and communities is an open question. At odds with local development priorities, the international aid bureaucracy is seen to have its own self-sustaining logic that is increasingly irrelevant to either the poverty or conflict on the ground.

A recent report on aid effectiveness by Action Aid International, titled “Real Aid: Making Aid More Effective” estimated that 61 percent of all international donor assistance is “Phantom Aid”. Phantom aid, as opposed to Real Aid, includes funds that are: a) tied to goods and services from the donor country, b) overpriced and ineffective technical assistance (this is by far the largest category of phantom aid, accounting for US\$13.8 billion), c) spent on excess administration, d) poorly coordinated and high transaction

costs, e) aid double counted as debt relief, f) aid not targeted for poverty reduction, g) funds spent on immigration related costs in donor countries, etc.

The Report further notes that, “eighty cents of every dollar of American Aid is phantom aid, largely because it is so heavily tied to the purchase of US goods and services, and because it is so badly targeted at poor countries...Just 11 percent of French aid is real aid. France spends \$2 billion of its aid budget each year on Technical Assistance.... In real terms, the Norwegians are nearly 40 times more generous per person than the American, and 4 times more generous than the average Briton”.

Phantom aid accounts for a good deal of poor country debt, because southern governments service loans and aid that did not materialise because it was consumed in the aid system. The Report estimates that: “ In 2003 developing countries transferred a net \$210 billion to the rich world...Interest payments alone continued to take \$95 billion of developing countries resources, almost three times the value of what they receive in grant payments”.

In May 2006, the Donor Co Chairs of the Sri Lanka peace process estimated that of the 4.5 billion pledged to Sri Lanka, “US\$3,400 million had been provided based on Tokyo pledges and Tsunami funds, and more than 20 percent of that allocated to the north and east, including LTTE-controlled areas”. No disclosure is made of how much of this aid was in the form of loans. Phantom aid in disaster situations, where the usual development project safeguards are waived due to an emergency situation, may be as high as 80-85 percent of donor assistance. In the context, the fact that Sri Lanka's aid absorption rate remains at around 17 – 20 percent while donors continue to pledge ever larger sums for development assistance is not mysterious.

The international peace and development bureaucracy in the past decade in Sri Lanka has clearly gained its own self-sustaining momentum. This has happened at a time when aid may become increasingly irrelevant in a world where “trade not aid” is seen as the way forward, particularly for countries that are no longer in the least developed category. The development bureaucracy requires and absorbs most of the aid targeted for development, conflict resolution, and poverty reduction.

Moreover, international humanitarian aid has become, as an academic termed it, “a means without end”. It tends to lack an exit strategy until the money runs out, is often mistargeted,

distorts the local economy, and aggravates inequality, poverty and the underlying structures of a conflict. In the long run, it develops aid dependency and aggravates conflict. The conflicting parties often blame each other for aid that never materialised. International aid may increasingly morph into the war dynamic over time in the conflict zones of the global South even as it expands through processes of bureaucratisation.

At the same time, it is important to note that the Norwegian mediators, who have often been held responsible for peace and reconstruction policy failures that originate in the World Bank and UN centric international development bureaucracy, are but a miniscule part of the international peace and reconstruction aid industry. Moreover, the Norwegian Government that came to power in 2005 decided not to partner with the Bank in cases where structural adjustment was required as part of a peace and reconstruction package.

A Legal Bureaucratic Peace

Sri Lanka's peace process has been termed "a no war, no peace" process. Arguably, the formalistic and "legal-bureaucratic" approach of international peace building and reconstruction largely accounts for this phenomenon. Consider for instance, the resources, energy and experts spent on legal drafts and re-drafts of an Interim Governing Authority for the North and East (ISGA), the World Bank's North East Reconstruction Fund, (NERF), Post Tsunami Operational Mechanism (P-TOMS), three international donor pledging conferences, Multilateral Needs Assessments, the hundreds of MoUs for large infrastructure reconstruction projects in the past four years for Sri Lanka. The internationalisation and bureaucratisation of the peace process resulted in too much time spent on international development agendas, conferences, and donor time frames, that were often at odds with the needs and priorities of those affected by the conflict.

This approach effectively eschews seeing track-one peace building as a social process. It has stemmed from, among other things, the large numbers of international players and peace and reconstruction bureaucracy in the island, and the attendant coordination burden. Of course, all three actors in the conflict and peace dynamics in Sri Lanka – the LTTE, (seduced by the legal fiction of 'equality or parity of the parties'), GoSL, and the international community bent on implementing a "neoliberal" peace have contributed to the legal bureaucratic approach to peace building.

Arguably, the time spent on legalese would have been better spent in the creative implementation of actually existing possibilities for power and resource sharing, enshrined in the constitution under the 13th Amendment, and proper targeting of aid to improving the livelihoods of communities from whom fighters are recruited. There has also been a tendency to overburden an already over-determined peace process, by linking everything, including, natural disasters like the Tsunami (aid) to power sharing. There appears to be a need to de-link these issues and have a more balanced approach to peace and development.

The peace building approach of dialogue in various international capitals rather than analysis of substantive issues and implementation at ground level seems to derive from Euro-American analytic frameworks that privilege state-centric theories of conflict resolution, developed out of Cold War inter-State conflict mediation. The main conflicting states or parties are brought to a table to dialogue. However, intrastate conflicts where resource and ethno-religious identity conflicts tend to be intertwined and are often the outcome of post/colonial State building, require different approaches from peace builders. They require engagement with social realities within the country, and attention to internal complexities at the local and sub-national levels. Where the challenge of reconciliation is within countries and communities, and between asymmetric parties (e.g. State actors and non-state actors), peace building necessitates a less legal-bureaucratic approach.

The emphasis on legal mechanisms and processes has also obscured another picture closer to the ground – the reality of the emergence and existence of a dirty war in northeast Sri Lanka. The morphing of the peace process into war is evident when we move away from formalistic frames and focus on non-verbal speech acts, in other words, when we "read between the said, the meant and the done".

In this context, adding another layer of international bureaucracy in the form of Bill Clinton or some other UN Envoy to Sri Lanka will only deflect from focus on substantive issues. Rather, a new peace process led by the Norwegians would need to thin the international aid bureaucracy and agencies, and focus on substantive issues, including improving poverty reduction among conflict and Tsunami affected communities. In short, an exit strategy rather than extended time frames for aid is necessary for much of the international aid industry in Sri Lanka. This would enable a more locally owned and hence sustainable peace process.

The Economics of Peace

Though fisheries is arguably Sri Lanka's greatest natural resource, given the unpolluted ocean and rich breeding grounds that surround the country, international development assistance over decades has not focused on need to target and up-scale the fisheries sector for poverty alleviation and conflict de-escalation in the north or south. Throughout the peace process, the north and east coastal fisheries communities continued a subsistence economy. Sri Lanka's two main donors, Japan and Norway have highly industrialised fisheries sectors.

The most influential number of combatants in the LTTE hail from impoverished coastal fisheries and rural agricultural communities in the northeast. In fact, the LTTE sank a Chinese fishing trawler perceived to be poaching on local fishing grounds in 2003. It is crucial to develop the fisheries sector and industry to enable viable livelihoods for poor communities from which fighters are recruited to transform the conflict. The impoverished north and east fisheries communities and socially marginalised caste groups on the coast have been most radicalised in the years of conflict, and provide the foot soldiers. Tamil elites and Vellala or high castes have tended to eschew the LTTE's brand of nationalism, and the LTTE in turn has fought to overthrow the caste hierarchy in Tamil society.

However, the post-conflict and post-tsunami aid industry experts have systematically overlooked the importance of enabling sustainable livelihoods for such impoverished communities. The Multilateral Needs Assessment for Tokyo and the Tsunami Needs Assessment study, conducted by the World Bank in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and Japan's official aid agency, pegged the loss borne by the tourism industry at \$ 300 million, versus only \$90 million for the fishing industry, even though fisheries communities were far more affected.

Vasuki Nesiya, a commentator, points to the ideological assumptions embedded in an assessment methodology that rates a hotel bed bringing in \$200 a night as a greater loss than a fisherman bringing in \$50 a month have far-reaching consequences. With reconstruction measures predicated on this kind of accounting, we are on a trajectory that empowers the tourism industry to be an even more dominant player than it was in the past, and, concomitantly, one that disempowers and further marginalises the coastal poor. Many have noted the bias towards big business and tourism in the

needs assessments of the multilateral agencies and the GoSL where the up-scaling of fisheries infrastructure is ignored.

The donor–people disconnect

For the first time since the conflict erupted 25 years ago, coordinated grenade attacks were carried out on three international aid agencies in Sri Lanka recently. These attacks were in the wake of widespread rumours of sexual exploitation and harassment of local women by foreign staff of INGOs in the Tsunami and conflict affected areas. Local women were instructed not to work with international agencies, which, it was claimed, were violating Tamil and Muslim "culture". There is a sense among common people that the aid industry has not delivered, but rather consumed and lives off the funds.

At the root of the critique of the aid industry is the fact and perception of gross inequality between those who came to help and the receivers of assistance, as well as the erosion of basic humanitarian ethics and values evident in operational style of INGOs. What people see are extravagant lifestyles, lack of transparency, increased aid dependency with a concomitant failure of donors to deliver on projects. The fact remains that the majority of large international aid agencies have not performed and even blocked local philanthropists and the business community, which did much of the work in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami and have a far better delivery rate. Exit strategies and deadlines for the large agencies also seem to have become anachronistic.

The attacks on aid agencies must be contextualised in the broader setting. Militants who lack access to information, technical critique and evaluations respond to real and perceived corruption in the aid industry with violence. Such attacks are a matter of great concern to those who believe that competent international assistance is necessary for conflict de-escalation and reconstruction. Critics however fail to acknowledge and address the general disenchantment with international aid and INGOs that has become widespread in the country since the Tsunami, which in turn gives legitimacy to such attacks.

The International Red Cross in Sri Lanka represents a case study of the manner in which these agencies generate high expectations but fail to deliver due to a host of reasons. Having raised almost US\$ 2 billion for post-Tsunami reconstruction, 183 expatriate "volunteers", each worth over US\$120,000, but with little technical expertise, knowledge

of society, politics or culture, local languages or institutional structures came to Sri Lanka alone. Having pledged to reconstruct 15,000 houses, it had built a mere 64 one year after the tsunami. The International Federation of the Red Cross and SLRCS is the largest pledged housing donor and has set the bar very low. The blame for this is placed on the GoSL's buffer zone policy or the condition of the land.

The latest government estimates are that 21 percent of the required housing after the Tsunami is complete. That means that several hundred thousand Sri Lankans are still without permanent homes, by government estimates. Some 33,000 families, or at least 150,000 people, remain in transitional shelters. Others are living temporarily with relatives or friends.

The Red Cross was given 67 plots of land out of which about a third had problems. But several questions arise—why did it not build homes on the remaining land? Should a relief agency like Red Cross have taken up long-term housing construction given the absence of expertise and experience simply because it raised the funds? The Reconstruction and Development Agency in Sri Lanka, unlike the Government of Tamil Nadu in India, has failed to evaluate the INGOs and ask under-performing INGOs to leave the country, so that others may help.

It is increasingly apparent that privatisation of post-disaster reconstruction, given information asymmetries and endemic market imperfections in the sector, is a mistake. As long as such a large, incompetent, and costly international bureaucracy remains in the island, substantive and sustainable peace building and development will be elusive. There is by now an extensive literature on how international peace building, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance may contribute to sustain low-intensity wars in Africa and Asia and other parts of the global south, because such aid constitutes a large and complex industry and bureaucracy *in itself and for itself*. Clearly there is a need for reform of the international aid architecture and practices in the context of what writer Naomi Klein has termed as disaster capitalism, to enable accountability to beneficiaries and affected communities.

Reconstruction Policy

The Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) in Sri Lanka has in turn failed to take a policy lead on reconstruction, or to monitor and evaluate the various

international agencies doing reconstruction and development in Lanka. This is because RADA has not accessed the necessary in-country development expertise. The marginalization of local communities as well as national experts in the Tsunami recovery operation is due to the over centralized structure of the institution, politicization, and the manner in which TAFREN (RADA's predecessor) was initially constituted and set up to ensure accountability to international donors (rather than beneficiaries and disaster affected communities) with a large role for international experts and consultants.

TAFREN'S structure was designed, by the US consultancy company – McKinsey and Co. that constituted TAFREN's organizational design in the aftermath of the Tsunami. That a US consultancy company should draw up the institutional design of the national reconstruction and development agency would have been unthinkable in India. The bias towards donor-accountability has resulted in the marginalization of in-country development expertise in RADA, as well as, lack of decentralization and accountability to local communities. This effectively means that the agency tasked with the country's development has its post Tsunami and conflict reconstruction policy as well as crucially its monitoring and evaluation functions, run by international "experts", who lack basic knowledge of the island's society, politics and institutional culture, largely from the International Labour Organization (ILO), that is "assisting" RADA in the livelihood sector.

In the context, it is noteworthy that the Evaluation Report produced by TAFREN/ RADA and various UN disaster experts "with all stakeholders" one year after the Tsunami reads like pure fiction and spin given ground realities, as was noted by several eminent academics from Ampara and other affected regions recently at a conference on Tsunami Recovery. The fact is that failure to ensure accountability to affected communities, actually deflects real accountability to private individuals and companies overseas who gave generously to donor agencies who advertised their humanitarian brands with a range of Bollywood and football stars, from Amitab Bachan to David Beckham during the Tsunami disaster.

Local humanitarian Consortiums and NGOS have also adopted the practice of organization/ brand advertising with news letters and that advertise their humanitarianism. Gone are the days of quiet humanitarianism, anonymous giving and selfless care for others. It is noteworthy that in Tsunami affected south India where an effective local government

structure is firmly and clearly setting policy with in-country expertise, and monitoring the recovery operation, the international aid agencies are much more circumspect about advertising themselves, their brand names and claiming the credit. One does not see such advertising. There is a need for an independent monitoring and evaluation body of the Tsunami and conflict recovery operation.

Neo-liberal aid regime

Even as the Government and the LTTE are the principal actors in the conflict, it would be naïve to downplay the role of the international community in the process in Sri Lanka. The extent of international investment in Sri Lanka's "peace and reconstruction" has made official acknowledgement of the return to war difficult. But the peace process, in the best of times, enabled merely a repressive tolerance. This was by no means only due to the inability of the two main armed actors to engage on difficult issues – principally the need to democratise the LTTE and GoSL, and professionalise and humanise the military and enable the devolution of power. The international peace builders colluded with the main actors in deferring the core social, political economic issues that structure the dynamics of the conflict in order to promote a neo-liberal economic reconstruction agenda that is integral to the (phantom) aid industry.

In hindsight, this approach undermined the Norwegian-brokered CFA. The promise of US\$ 4.5 billion for reconstruction came with a policy requirement of structural adjustments (SAPs), and liberalisation favoured by the World Bank. Very little of this reached the communities affected by the disasters, and from which the majority of combatants are recruited. A recent Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission Report notes on the subject of child recruitment: "some underage children freely volunteer to leave their families due to economic reasons to join the LTTE". Mis-targeted aid translated into an economic bubble, a dramatic rise in the cost of living, increased inequality and poverty in the communities from which soldiers are recruited, and further erosion of the welfare state. In a very short time, the government that signed the peace agreement with the LTTE was voted out of power—and the rest is history. The tide in the affairs of men that may have led to fortune, even to peace in Sri Lanka, had turned.

Since Sri Lanka is not considered a least developed country, the country's donor dependence is directly related to the armed

conflict and the need for external mediation. International development agencies have recently recognised the profitability of working with rather than around social conflict in the post 9/11 world, increasingly focusing on projects "for democratization, governance and conflict resolution" as the Strategic Conflict Assessment notes. Sri Lanka's strategic location and the over capitalisation of its post-tsunami reconstruction means that the country remains credit worthy and an attractive place for the international lending institutions and the aid industry despite stories of donor fatigue.

Given the aid bureaucracy's embeddedness in the political economy of peace and conflict in Sri Lanka, it cannot be seen as a neutral actor or set of actors. This fact has particular relevance for much of the technical assistance and development "knowledge" produced and sub-contracted by development agencies. There is ample evidence that the macro-policies of the Washington Consensus exacerbates intra-group and inter-group inequality and poverty that fuels (identity) conflicts in fragile states in the global south.

There is a fundamental problem with a peace and reconstruction policy approach that claims to link "conflict-sensitivity to development" without assessing the dominant neo-liberal development paradigm and policy that tends to generate inequality and conflict within and between countries. The SCA does precisely this, though it hints at the need for such a critique. Ironically, the international aid industry and bureaucracy and technical experts may be a key impediment to the production of knowledge frames that may lead to more sustainable peace building in Sri Lanka and other conflict affected parts of the global south.

Looking Ahead

For the sake of peace and development in Sri Lanka, it is important that policy-makers and others draw lessons from the past experience of international involvement. What is needed immediately is an evaluation of the performance of the various aid agencies in the country. This could then form the basis for retaining only the efficient ones, which have contributed to the task of post conflict and tsunami reconstruction at the ground level. This would, in turn, reduce the coordination burden, and help streamline and effectively target development assistance. The Indian Government's approach to international aid and experts, especially in the wake of the tsunami, is a good example in this regard.

It is also important to reduce phantom aid and debt burden, and demand greater transparency, disclosure, and accountability from the International Financial Institutions, UN agencies, and various donor countries regarding aid programs (loans or grants), extent of tied aid, and technical assistance. INGOs should be required to disclose budgets, qualifications of staff, and in-country spending on projects, operation and transaction cost.

The connection between resource and identity conflicts is often not adequately acknowledged in peace processes. A new peace process will need to grasp the connection between resource and identity conflicts, as well as the intra-group dynamics of the inter-ethnic conflict. This requires deepened social analysis that is not to be confused with the notion of “social capital” that post/conflict advisors at the World Bank promote. Peace mediators and international development actors will need to be attentive to the discourse on inequality, poverty and link track one discussions to deeper social conflicts and intra-group inequalities.

The need for deeper analysis, however, should not to be confused with or used as a legitimacy clause for extending project delivery time-frames. Extended time-frames makes for aid dependency among beneficiaries in aid receiving countries, and even less accountability among aid agencies who tend to delay on project delivery and extend costly contracts. This was clearly evident with the tsunami recovery operation. It is important to devise exit strategies for aid agencies and to stick to the schedule.

Finally, it is to be hoped that the lessons from the peace process in Sri Lanka may serve as a turning point for a “structural adjustment” of the international peace and development industry, and ensure accountability to communities and countries affected by conflicts not just in Sri Lanka. This requires getting beyond the toolkit approach to post-conflict reconstruction with its predictably damaging macro-economic policies of structural adjustments that undo the work of peace mediators. These steps, coupled with local ownership of the peace process, may provide the way out of Sri Lanka’s present quagmire. ■

Dr. Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake is an Anthropologist and researcher at the SSA.

HRW on Civilian Protection

In a recent letter to the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, the New York-based Human Rights Watch appealed to the two sides to institute concrete measures to protect civilians. The HRW appeal suggested that the government and the LTTE should:

- Designate demilitarized zones as sanctuaries in conflict areas and pre-position humanitarian relief in known places of refuge;
- Improve humanitarian access to populations at risk, including by ending unnecessary restrictions on humanitarian agencies;
- Whenever possible, provide effective advance warning of military operations, both broadly – through loudspeakers, radio announcements or leaflets – and directly through messages to community leaders;
- Appoint local civilian liaison officers who are known and accessible to local communities and have sufficient rank to ensure that community concerns are heeded; and,
- Agree to the establishment of a United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Sri Lanka, as the extent of abuses and ongoing impunity require an international presence to monitor abuses by all sides.

JOURNEY TOWARDS BATTICALOA

Yolanda Foster

August was a violent month for Sri Lanka which experienced the worst fighting since the 2002 ceasefire between the government and Tamil Tiger rebels. Heavy fighting in Muthur District has created a humanitarian crisis. Over the last month thousands of civilians were displaced as they escape the latest round of fighting. People have been displaced a from Echilampattu, Muthur from the District of Trincomalee to Batticaloa District. Families are on the move daily often leaving everything behind to undertake dangerous journeys to places of safety. It is hard to get a sense of what is happening in the East sitting in 'strangely normal' Colombo so I decided to visit Batticaloa District in the last week of August.

The journey from Colombo to Batticaloa was in itself interesting. The trip was relatively normal up to Polannaruwa but as we stopped for lunch reminders of the conflict interrupted the languorous afternoon. In a restaurant at Kaduruwela a huge poster of Joe Abeywickrama dominates the wall. The actor was the main star in *Death on a Full Moon Day*, a film by Prasanna Vithanage. The film tells the story of a young Sri Lankan soldier who is killed in conflict with Tamil Tiger separatists. The plot revolves around a blind father, Wannihami (played by Joe Abeywickrama) who awaits news of his soldier son. One full moon *poya* day, the state returns the casket of the dead son. The first romantic images in the film soon harden into a powerful lament. The serenity of the *stupa*, the *wewa* (tank) and a flowing river are displaced by the harsh reality of wasted youth. Asking the restaurant owner why the poster is on the wall he says he liked the way Wannihami in the film refused to accept the everyday realities of people in the North East of violence and loss.

These realities become clearer as we turn East from Habarana and the scenery changes from lush green to drier scrub. We say goodbye to the tourists enjoying an elephant safari and enter a world dominated by Army camps and remote military outposts. The comforts of Colombo become more and more distant as different smells and colours suffuse our vehicle. Posters advertising the bounty of Sri Lanka's natural beauty seem ironic as military convoys roar past. At an Army checkpoint in Manampitiya we are asked to show our

identification and the NGO workers in the van are asked for their registration certificates. We are relatively lucky. Our status as internationals spares us the intense checking that Tamil civilians face. At Welikanda I see bus travellers looking weary as they get down for yet another checking of their identity cards. There are between 5 to 10 ten checkpoints on the road to Batticaloa depending on the security situation where civilians are checked. Ordinary travellers must get out of vehicles and proceed to be frisked and checked often queuing in the sun as aluminium shelters are not yet erected. At Valaichenai burnt out houses stand as reminders of past abuses. The houses were torched in the early 90s, empty trophies of Army reprisals against civilians. It is civilians who are suffering again today, caught between warring factions who don't seem to care about the human cost of the current conflict.

As a result of the escalation of hostilities, over 200,000 people have been displaced from the North East since April 2006. In Batticaloa District alone OCHA estimates 37,738 people are now internally displaced (Figures estimates from OCHA, 22/08/06). As we drive past the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission at Valaichenai we see evidence of families fleeing shelling and airstrikes in Muthur. Makeshift tents outside the Church are now the new home for families displaced from Vakara. In the East 'we are all victims' notes one resident. Years of conflict have resulted in continuous displacement, loss of property and fear of the warring factions. People in the East have felt the iron fist of intimidation by the LTTE in the form of tax extortion and the demand for young cadres. They have also felt the shadow of suspicion from the Sri Lankan Army which led to mass round ups in the early nineties. The war changed its character in the early 90s as both sides resorted to increasing brutality.

There was a time when Tamils may have had some sympathy for the LTTE as it stood up for their historic rights. Tamils wanted a share in politics in the South but discrimination through language acts, education quotas and harassment meant rebellion took a militant form. The trend of the LTTE towards turning civilians in the East into instruments for their cause means that their methods now vitiate the justice of

their cause. Today Batticaloa town is under the custody of the Armed Forces which means a predominantly Tamil population is controlled by a Sinhalese Army. This isn't a simple story of goodies and baddies or occupiers and resisters though. The East has been the backdrop for a number of struggles over the years. This makes the political situation in the East very complex and the climate of uncertainties makes attributing blame for the current unease problematic.

Complex Politics

Batticaloa district forms part of the former Eastern Province. It has a population of 545,477 split into Tamils (73%), Muslims (36%) and Burghers and Sinhalese 2%. The area is volatile as three factions; the LTTE; the Sri Lankan Army and the Karuna faction vie for power. Domination and intimidation are a fact of civilian life. Batticaloa town has been controlled by the Sri Lankan Army for several years. Due to the heavy fighting in Muthur the armed forces have been replaced by the STF, a paramilitary adjunct of the Police, who now patrol the town.

Ordinary residents talk of a rise in uncertainty. There are sporadic clashes between the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE. Road blocks to make way for security convoys interrupt daily life. In addition people live under a shadow of fear. This is linked to a wave of abductions and killings in the last month. This human insecurity is nothing new. The city has witnessed countless murders, rapes, as well as mass disappearances of civilians in the early 90s. Despite documentation of complaints by the Batticaloa Peace Committee, there has been little investigation and no justice for affected families. A Government Commission of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal and Disappearances of Civilians in the Eastern Province acknowledges that during the late 1980s and early 1990s a total of 1,100 Tamil civilians were disappeared and assumed killed by the Sri Lankan Army and Special Task Force personnel, with most atrocities taking place in 1990. No one has yet been indicted. Local residents note that the current climate of fear reminds them of earlier more horrifying periods when the smell of bodies being burnt to get rid of evidence hung thick in the air. Today residents live in a self-imposed curfew returning home by 6pm so that streets lie deserted at night except for military patrols and more eerie travellers which locals refer to as the 'men in white vans'.

Batticaloa is an important centre for Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, better known as Karuna Amman, the former

LTTE commander who challenged the Jaffna hegemony of the LTTE and broke away in 2004. He currently operates his own political & military group, the Tamileel Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, or People's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (TMVP). A prominent TMVP sign welcoming people to Batticaloa stands opposite an Army checking point on the lagoon. It is important to note that the TMVP is not yet a political party and has a military wing operating with the support of the Sri Lankan Army to challenge the LTTE.

A local shopkeeper explains that people are used to the large military presence and checking in town on the bridges across the lagoon. Ordinary civilians have been subject to various regimes over the years: the struggle for LTTE hegemony in the 80s; the clampdown of the Indian Peacekeeping Forces (IPKF) in the late 80s which locals refer to as the 'Indian people killing force' and then gradual occupation by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. Civilians in Batticaloa District are extremely vulnerable because of this backdrop of continuing power struggles and relative isolation from the rest of the island.

In the late 90s, civilian arrests and round ups were common. Today people talk of uncertainty as the old struggle between the LTTE and the Army has become more complex with the rise of the Karuna faction and the politicisation of Muslims. When Karuna broke away from the LTTE in April 2004 there was initially a feeling of relief in the East. 4-6,000 youths were released and the regime of tax extortion imposed by the LTTE (5-8% of government salaries) was lifted. Some of the ex-militants have positive stories but it seems many of them have been clawed back either by the LTTE in uncleared areas or into the Karuna military wing which operates under the protection of the Army. Human rights groups in the District blame both the LTTE and the Karuna group for child abductions. Young men are a particular target and families try to keep children indoors.

Rise in IDPs

Today an additional challenge is the large movement of people displaced from Muthur district because of heavy fighting. "contents" Sri Lankan air force planes resuming aerial bombardment of Muttur region in Trincomalee district on April 26th. The attacks followed the suicide bomber attack on Army Commander Lt. Gen Sarath Fonseka in Colombo on April 25th. Retired army brigadier Vipul Boteju, told AFP that President Mahinda Rajapakse had little choice but to order limited air strikes after the suicide

bombing at army headquarters in Colombo. "The government had to retaliate, they had to do something. They selected Trincomalee. They are showing we are not willing to simply accept what the Tigers have done to us," (D.B.S.Jeyaraj, 26 April 2006). As a result families fled their homes and sought refuge in religious places to try to escape shelling.

Stories of Displacement

In the wake of a humanitarian crisis with thousands of refugees on the move the government as well as International NGOs are keen for the recently displaced to stay with host families. In some ways reliance on local webs of support and networking is good but host families will also need support to cope with new financial burdens. Not all the displaced are lucky enough to have a host family. Some are still stranded on the road whilst others are in temporary 'sites'. I visited two sites for displaced families in Batticaloa town. The *Sinhala Maha Vidyalaya* School is home now for 177 families. These sites are supported by various International NGOs as the Government finds it hard to cope with the humanitarian crisis. Over 37,000 families have moved into the district due to recent fighting and this puts pressure on local services to cope with the demands of shelter, food and sanitation.

Talking to two women in the centre is heart rending. One 33 year old woman describes her journey of displacement. She said that the problems in Muttur started after the April 25th bomb blast. Everyday shelling and air strikes by the Army made people very frightened. Some families in the town began taking shelter at St. Anthony's Church. For 3 months her family went there everyday at 5pm hoping the Church would offer sanctuary from shelling. One day a small boy, a child of one of the women gathered round, was killed by a shell as he stood near the Church door. Escalating clashes between the LTTE and the Army was simply making it unsafe for civilians to stay. With the support of the ICRC a convoy of families began to move southwards. Despite the white flag of the ICRC convoy there were shell attacks and people dispersed, some moving into LTTE held 'uncleared' areas. Their journeys are ones of hardship. Most families travelled with just the clothes on their backs and perhaps a handbag. They have no idea if their homes are safe or destroyed. The long journey from Muthur to Vakaraai on foot took three days. They had little food and had to help the elderly on the way, sheltering in bunkers when air strikes began.

Many displaced families moved first to Verugal. As this area is under LTTE control and the Government was not letting

INGOs into uncleared areas families tried to move southwards to Government controlled areas. The two women I spoke with said it was Christian Priests whom they met in Verugal during Sunday mass who took pity on their plight and tried to organize transport for them to Batticaloa. The LTTE was not happy to let civilians move southwards as they act to some extent as a human shield but finally families managed to pay a bus driver to take them to Valaichenai. Life is tough in the centre. This is the first experience of displacement for the two women I talked to, one of whom ironically, is a health co-ordinator for an NGO. Their strength is taking solace in survival. The women said that during their journey a town they had just past through, Echilampattu, was destroyed. War is not something abstract. "If we lose our belongings we can earn them again", they say. "If we lose our lives what is everything for?"



Figure 1 Families have small partitioned areas in the school

International NGOs are stepping in to try to help families meet basic needs but the crisis precipitated quickly so support is slow. At the moment EHED, a local Catholic NGO, is playing a co-ordinating role at the SMV School and is supporting families to get food rations from the government and co-ordinating the various needs. A pressing issue was school for the children, bored at living in cramped conditions in a basic school with few trees for shade. Local schools, already overcrowded, have now offered to take pupils. The toilet facilities in the Centre are basic and families can not cook yet for themselves so there is little to take their minds off their new label, 'the displaced'.



Figure 2 Young children in the camp looking forward to restarting school, Batticaloa 30/08/2006

Families did not seem keen to move back to Muttur. To them peace and the memories of the window of calm the ceasefire offered seem far away. In addition, tensions have developed in the last few months between Muslims and Tamils living in Muttur. Families living in Muttur town said that the LTTE issued a letter warning Muslims to leave the area as there have been killings of LTTE cadres by militant Muslims. Some militant Muslims had subsequently taken revenge on Tamils who may not have been affiliated to the LTTE so families are scared of reprisals. What is interesting to note is that Muttur was predominantly Tamil in the 1950s but is a more mixed population now of Muslims and Tamils due to government resettlement. Now there is a lull in fighting and the UN has expressed some 'concern' about the return of Muslims from Kantale back to Muttur fearing pressure 'from political leaders'.

Other Memories of the East

The East was not always a powder keg. It has some of the most beautiful beaches in Sri Lanka. One woman living in Colombo notes that her family used to visit the East regularly, "to Batticaloa, to Kalkudah and Pasikudah. Batticaloa had a normal beach, very popular in the 70s. 1983 changed things. I actually went to Trinco in early 1983, I didn't go back until 1998. Since 1983 things have become more Colombo-centred and South-centred".

Non-combatants in the East deserve a life free from terror and lawlessness. At the moment the security situation is so bad that attributing blame for various killings is difficult and because of lack of justice for disappearances in the 1990s families are not confident that their cases will be investigated. During my one week stay there were several incidents including the execution of 5 Tamil youths. The shadow of the brutal killing of 17 Action Contre l'Aide workers in Muttur on August 5th has meant low morale amongst local aid workers, an incident which the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM) recently attributed to Government forces. The principal theme of Philip Alston's recent report (UN Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial killings, summary and arbitrary executions) is that extrajudicial killings, if left unchecked, have the potential to fatally undermine the peace process and to plunge Sri Lanka back into the dark days of all out war.

Lack of access to communities in crisis

In addition lack of access to uncleared areas makes understanding the ground reality for those trapped in these areas difficult. Reports from people in these areas say that the LTTE has started compulsory 'self-defence training' for all living there whilst the prohibition imposed by the Government on NGOs travelling to uncleared areas in August means food shortages. The human cost of current hostilities is simply too hard to bear.

I first visited Sri Lanka shortly after the Peoples' Alliance (PA) coalition government was elected to office on a peace and reform platform in August 1994. Then President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge began a process of dialogue with the LTTE. At that moment in history it seemed possible to imagine an end to protracted conflict. Despite six rounds of peace talks under different governments the political crisis in Sri Lanka has deepened. Today discourses of diversity and peace seem increasingly under attack. International NGOs seem to be a collective scapegoat which makes their work in crisis and access to civilians caught in uncleared areas difficult.

The Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM) which played a monitoring role during the ceasefire has had a bad press. True, its mandate limited its role to observation and recording rather than action. At least when the SLMM was present incidents were recorded and follow up visits set in place. In a time of uncertainty with killings on the increase their shrunken presence due to the removal of the Swedish monitors means that a climate of impunity prevails. Sri Lanka

desperately needs the support of an international human rights monitoring mission.

Sri Lanka appears to be going through what I term a politics of aphasia. Aphasia is a disorder of the nervous system, characterised by partial or total loss of the ability to communicate. A culture of violence has consolidated itself through propaganda and the demonising by each side of the other. This culture of violence is not confined to the two warring parties. Bipartisan politics has been infected by political thuggery. Media censorship is also key to a politics of aphasia, since without reliable information, rumours and silence open up the space for mythology and symbolism.

The people who suffer most during this period of aphasia are those who are forgotten like the ordinary families I met in Batticaloa town. It is hard to imagine the psychological impact of living in a town under self-imposed curfew for over a decade. Non-combatants in the district are citizens and have the right to live free from fear. These families have names and hobbies and aspirations for their children. They are not simply 'beneficiaries' or 'the displaced'. They have identities beyond the politicisation of their lives into ethnic categories or stigmatized generic labels. People in Batticaloa want to listen to local poets like *Thimilai Thumilan* or enjoy village performances like *Villupattu* without worrying about their children and staying out after dark. They struggle to manage as the price of basic foods goes up due to lack of transport and they need to have access to their paddy fields many of which are in uncleared areas.

The war event

In Sri Lanka we live in the middle of a 'war-event' which has become over time a kind of twisted normality. The 'war-event' has become a normality to many Sri Lankans. When I use the term normality, I am not attaching any normative presuppositions to this noun. Normality in this text refers to what is regular, common. The stench of violence - the disgust and anger it ought to produce, has faded in Colombo, faded to a whiff of unease in the humid afternoons. The political space in Sri Lanka is a place where people expect violence to happen. Perhaps people in the capital are fatigued by petty political bickering but they must remember their lives are so much better than those in the East. It's time to reject aphasia and reach out to those for whom war is not abstract. War has too high a human cost and it will not bring about a long term solution. A political solution which invites all communities to share in the long conversations that need to be had about a possible peace with justice is not only necessary but urgent.

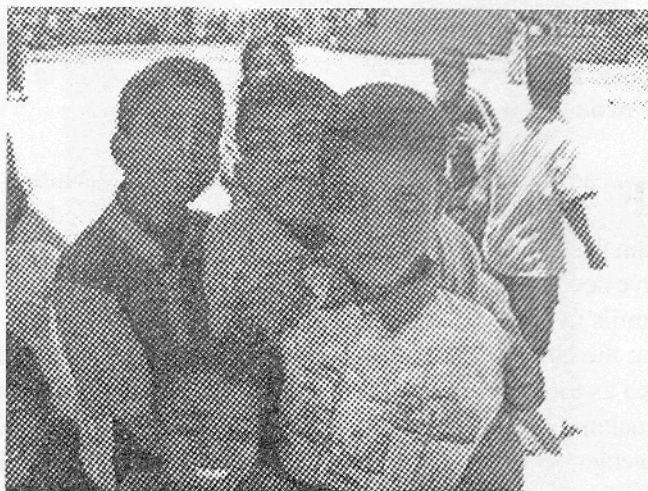


Figure 3 Children making their own games at the SMV School, Batticaloa, 30/08/2006.

REVITALIZING TRADE UNIONS : GLOBAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

Janaka Biyanwila

Introduction

The union movement in Sri Lanka is going through a period of crisis as well as experimentation. The dominant perception of unions is that they are captured by political parties, powerless to organize new workers, and mostly operating as “industrial wings” of political parties. While this party subordination is a significant feature, there are new tendencies emerging within labour movements across the new global economy. This tendency is described as community unionism or social movement unionism. The main orientation of this new tendency is to regain union identities as a social movement engaged in struggles for social justice. Particularly in a context of neo-liberal globalization, revitalizing unions is intricately linked with issues of transnational worker solidarity or labour internationalism. In extending social movement unionism to the global realm, some local unions are increasingly becoming aware of a global social movement unionism, depicted by the Southern Initiative on Globalization and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) network.

Union strategies

In terms of union responses to neo-liberal globalization, the two main tendencies can be described as business unionism and movement unionism (figure. 1). Business unionism is what is promoted by business and the World Bank, think tanks and a range of NGOs. In this view, unions are seen purely in economic terms as labour market actors whose interests are to improve wages and conditions for their members. Accordingly, the unions should co-operate with the management to improve “productivity”, “efficiency”, and “international competitiveness”. The two main manifestations of business unionism are described as authoritarian and strategic unionism (Lambert, 2002).

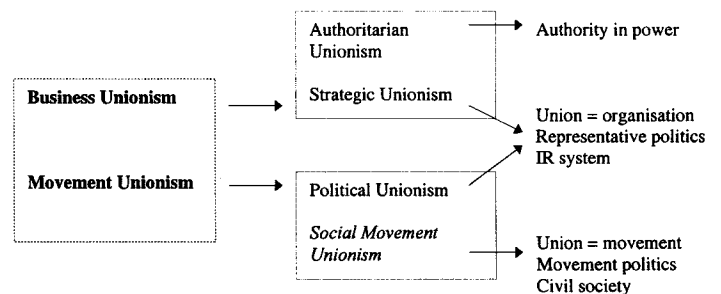
Authoritarian unionism is where unions are controlled by the authority in power (theocracy, military dictatorship, fascist party, etc.), with limited access to a system of industrial relations. In contrast, strategic unionism focuses on the realm of representative politics and systems of industrial relations. This economic approach to unions, focuses on providing

“services” for members, while avoiding alliances, agitation and mobilization. Generally, these unions are the preferred choice of employers as well as the state, where unions act as ‘managers of discontent’, socialising workers to become hard working, self-responsible and docile.

In contrast, movement unionism locates unions as key actors within the labour movement as class and civil society actors. In acknowledging the specificity of capitalist class relations shaping wage work, union interests extend beyond the workplace and labour markets into addressing issues of community and citizenship. Within movement unionism there are also two tendencies. Political unionism, like strategic unionism is based on representative politics. In Sri Lanka, the CP, LSSP and JVP unions practice varying degrees of political unionism. Meanwhile, the UNP union *Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya* (JSS), the SLFP union *Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya*, and the CWC (Ceylon Workers Congress – the dominant plantation union) practice a version of political unionism that is mainly promoting business unionism.

The changes in party-union relationship are central for understanding new possibilities for unions. The party-union relationship entered a new set of relations with the decline of classic Socialist or Communist labour parties, and the disconnection of socialist alternatives from the labour movement and social revolution (Hobsbawm, 1989). In addition, the rise of new social movements (women, peace, ecology, sexual identities, etc.) revealed the inability of centralised parties to address a range of issues. Even working-class parties such as the CP, LSSP and JVP are hollowed out, lacking alternatives to market-driven politics.

Figure 1. Union responses



An emerging new tendency within movement unionism focuses on union strategies independent of political parties, and geared towards long term alliances with other civil society movements and on collective action. This tendency is described as community unionism (Wills, 2001, Fine 2005) or social movement unionism (Waterman, 1993; Moody, 1997; Seidman, 1994; Lambert, 2002). In this strategic orientation, even party allied unions are manoeuvring to gain some autonomy, which is often contested and negotiated.

Social movement unionism (SMU) is about gaining union independence to activate autonomous, creative initiative and collective agency of workers while building alliances with external actors. These external relations include other unions, and community groups, and NGOs. These actors are located in different territorial scales (local, national, regional, and global), strategic terrains (lobbying, awareness raising, activism, etc) and issues (worker rights, womens' rights, ecology, peace, etc.). In resisting political party attempts to negotiate, institutionalize, and change demands won by trade unions, the SMU approach suggests party "strategies that serve rather than lead and dominate" trade unions and the labour movement (Waterman, 1993).

Unions and the labour force

The capacity for unions to mobilize relates to their specific context in the labour force. The level of unionisation in Sri Lanka in 2000 was around 18% of the employed labour force, or nearly one million workers, of the 5.6 million employed labour force (Labour Department, 2001). Between 1977 and 2000, the numbers of unionized workers have fluctuated between 1.4 to 1 million workers. In 2000, there were 1,636 unions encompassing around 1.4 million members (Labour Department, 2001).

The plantation workers are the largest segment of unionized manual workers, with close to 450,000 unionized workers in privatized tea plantations. The urban labour movement is dominated by services sector workers, mostly in the public sector. While representing a relatively small nucleus of organised workers, the public sector workers are a core segment of the labour movement, with a militant history. Most militant unions are dispersed in the ports, bus, railways, government administrative services, postal, telecommunication, banks, schools, and hospitals.

However, the fragmented character of the union movement is a main constraint on union mobilization. According to

Labour Ministry categories, the concentration of registered trade unions in 2000 included: 140 in Education, 123 in the health sector, 90 in railways, 61 in the plantations, 36 in Mahaweli-related (agriculture) activity, 26 in Bank-related areas, and 19 in the ports (Labour Department, 2000). While there are numerous unions, in each sector and within each occupation, often only a handful of unions are active.

Authoritarian labour markets

In Sri Lanka, as in most South Asian countries, the liberalization policies (or market-driven politics) are re-configuring dominant political unionism strategies towards business unionism. This is based on reinforcing authoritarian labour markets or coercive labour regimes aimed at making a productive and docile labour force. Authoritarian labour markets are essentially those that restrict collective bargaining rights and freedom of association, while legitimizing coercive managerial authority.

A key moment in this shift towards authoritarian labour markets is the repression of the union movement during the 1980 July strike. The mobilisation of the UNP union, the JSS, then known as *Thugs Inc*, characterised how unions were manipulated for narrow party interests. The authoritarian labour markets were also reinforced by the state engaged in an ethnic conflict since 1983 and counter-state violence of the 1989-90 'terror period'. Moreover, the regular enforcement of Essential Services Act, and the extension of "free trade zone" status to the whole country, continues to undermine unions while empowering employers.

Unions are restricted not only by the decisions and non-decisions of the state, but also by the conditions of unemployment, declining real wages and sustained levels of poverty. While the official unemployment rate has declined from around 14% in 1990 to around 8.3% of the labour force (7.7 million) in 2003, issues of underemployment and unemployment in rural areas, of educated youth and women are serious enduring issues.

The growing casualised (migrant workers, home workers, etc) and feminised labour force also reveals the inadequacies of dominant union strategies. For unions spatially fixed on formal workplaces, the casualised informal sector workers who are difficult to organise is a key challenge. Meanwhile women wage-workers continue to be neglected by enduring male-biased unions. Even in unions where women are a majority of members, such as tea plantation workers, nurses,

and teachers, the union leaders and officials are mostly men. This masculine culture of trade unions also evades substantive alliances with the women's movement. However, the male bias in unions is maintained by similar tendencies in other interconnected institutions such as the private sector, state (labour department, courts, labour tribunals, police, hospital, schools, etc), and community (religious worker welfare institutions, NGOs, etc.). Given these internal and external constraints, how can unions develop SMU strategies?

Social Movement Unionism in action

The SMU theorising relates to the rise of militant labour movements with similar strategies, yet in different contexts of the global capitalist economy. This labour militancy emerged in "semi-peripheral" or "late industrialising" economies of South Africa and Brazil in the 1970s, and Philippines and South Korea in the 1980s (Webster, 1988; Moody, 1997: 200; Seidman, 1994). However, the development of SMU strategies is not confined to semi-industrialised authoritarian countries. In the North, the Canadian Auto Workers Union, in the late 1980s (Moody, 1997:200), Justice for Janitors (Johnston, 1999) and Solidarity and Workplace Project (Fine, 2005) in the U.S. have adopted similar strategies (Waterman, 1993). The 'social movement' character of these unions relates to their "inclusiveness" that connected the workplace with demands around collective consumption (public goods and services).

The union strategies in South Africa and Brazil in the 1980s characterized an SMU orientation for their "unusually inclusive character" that strengthened "the discourse of class within popular organisations" (Seidman, 1994: 40). Despite differences in histories and ethnic politics, the two labour movements depicted similar patterns, scales, forms, and discourses of mobilization. These similarities involved three main strategic and organizational elements. First, there is an eruption of strike activity mobilized by workers with a strong shop-floor organization. Second, a rapid escalation of demands from workplace to broader community and national issues that linked shop-floor organizations with national federations. This escalation of demands also positioned the labour movement, directly challenging the state. Finally, strong structured alliances between labour movements and the community groups, mutually reinforced each other. In emphasizing the movement dimension of unions, the labour-community alliances elaborated new relations between the "working class, the state and dominant classes" (ibid.).

The emergence of union-community relations, in both South Africa and Brazil, were conditioned by a specific context of "peripheralisation" of worker communities (Seidman, 1994). The steady outward push of the poor and working class residents, to the geographic and social edges of the city, meant a daily commute to work with minimal state social provision. This provoked struggles around public services (collective consumption) such as public transport, housing, and municipal governance issues, which reinforced union-community alliances in both South Africa and Brazil (Ibid. :227-252). These struggles around public goods and services, or anti-privatization struggles, are emerging as a new terrain of struggle capable of building alliances across a range of actors.

These union-community relations have also emerged within Sri Lankan labour movement. For example, the nurses' (Public Services United Nurses Union) struggles in 1985 drew on a range of actors, including women's NGOs. The FTZ workers have mostly linked with NGOs in their struggles. The unions most likely to forge these alliances are generally party-independent trade unions, with relatively progressive leaders such as the CMU (private sector clerical workers), the CBEU (banks), the UPTO (post and telecom) and FTZWU (free trade zone workers). However, these union-community alliances are mostly instrumental, contingent and transient. Deepening these alliances into structured, long term alliances is a key aim of SMU. In addition, extending these alliances into the trans-national realm, of labour internationalism, described as Global Social Movement Unionism.

Labour Internationalism

Labour internationalism entered a new phase in the early 1990s under a new global economy. The new global economy is characterized by: the increased scale and power of global financial markets; the extended role of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) in the production and marketing of goods and services; and new transnational regulatory structures (e.g. WTO and numerous bi/multi lateral trade agreements) (Leys, 2001: 13-14). In other words, the unions are now dealing with globally mobile capital and an internationalised state. This draws attention to the limitations of a purely nation-state oriented union strategies, that have also nurtured existing forms international union alliances of labour internationalism.

Labour internationalism was founded in the second half of the twentieth century and coincided with the invention of

nation-state traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). In the context of a growing North-South divide and competitive regional alignments, an effective union revitalisation relates to the possibility of, and necessity for, a Global Social Movement Unionism (GSMU) strategy (Moody, 1997:275). Accordingly, a GSMU orientation is grounded in recognising the interdependence of labour internationalism with other internationalisms, such as feminist, environmental, and human rights. This emphasis on many internationalisms, leads to recognising the limits of 'old' labour internationalism.

The 'old' labour internationalism is maintained by the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), the WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions) and the GUFs (Global Union Federations which are industry based international unions such as the ITF – International Transport Federation). Among these the ICFTU and GUFs are the main international unions and they primarily focused on systems of industrial relations, engaged in promoting union rights. However, their (eurocentric) discourse of 'social partnerships' and 'social contract' end up reinforcing authoritarian state strategies in the South.

In contrast, the emerging "new" labour internationalism coincides with new social movements and Third Worldism. These perspectives are critical of eurocentric, bureaucratic, and male-biased tendencies of 'old' internationalism (Munck, 1988). Unlike the 'old' internationalism that was based on 'unity in diversity' the 'new' internationalism emphasises 'diversity in unity'. This allows for recognizing 'many' internationalisms that are interdependent with labour.

In turn, the new labour internationalism expresses a complex solidarity. This complexity relates to negotiating a range of hierarchical relations of power that extend across multiple sites, relationships, orientations, strategies, and alliances (Waterman, 1998:72-73). As a result, the new labour internationalism is initiated by workers in the global South, involving African, Asian and Latino workers (Lambert and Webster, 2003). In turn, these new initiatives reveal the inadequacies of 'old' labour internationalism in the South socialised by independence struggles, and based on party subordinated, nation-state strategies. So are there concrete initiatives that characterize GSMU strategies?

The SIGTUR

The SIGTUR (Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights) is an international union network resembling a new labour internationalism (GSMU). The

"South" is articulated as a counter-hegemonic value orientation. It emphasise the subordinated (marginalized) status of the South in the global economic power hierarchy; the history and experience of colonialism; coercive labour regimes; disillusionment with post-colonial development states; and differences in national histories and organizational cultures (Lambert and Webster, 2003).

The SIGTUR emerged from the struggles of the South African union COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions). COSATU's struggles in the 1980's against the authoritarian apartheid state encouraged new strategies of building worker solidarity. With the aim of developing a new trade union internationalism, COSATU committed itself to an initiative bringing together independent unions from Asia, Australia and Southern Africa. SIGTUR's orientation is based on encouraging open, democratic internal structures, engaging in contentious action outside of the establish system and building alliances with other struggles, movements and NGOs. Focused on mobilization and campaign orientation, these strategies express new ways of organizing.

New modes of organizing and mobilization

The SIGTUR is aimed at transforming bureaucratic, hierarchical, centralized, modes of organization that restrict debate, dialogue and participation. Led by a generation of committed activists, SIGTUR promotes democratic and network organizations that encourage decentralized open debate. The aim is to promote new forms of worker solidarity within unions and among unions and other social movements, networks and organizations. There is also a focus on "structured linkages" between strong and weak unions. These linkages relate to coordinating organisational strategies through collective decision making and community-building events.

The SIGTUR's focus on independent democratic unions is formally articulated in the 1999 "Principles for Participation" statement. This is built around the ILO conventions 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention) and 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention). In broadening the scope of unionism, these core principles are for developing clear organising strategies to move into the new areas.

Since its origin in 1992, SIGTUR has held six international conferences between 1992 and 2005. These conferences include a range of unions, labour non-governmental organizations (NGOs), global union federations (GUFs),

labour academics and activists. The SIGTUR conferences are often linked with events of local activism. At the 2005 SIGTUR conference in Thailand, the activism included two protests: one in front of the Australian embassy against new labour reforms and the other at a chicken processing factory where locked-out women workers were agitating.

At the third conference in Calcutta in 1997, hosted by the CITU, there were 260 delegates. More than 20,000 workers participated in the Calcutta opening events. At the fifth SIGTUR conference (2001), in Seoul, South Korea, there were 150 delegates from 15 countries including South Africa, South Korea, Brazil, Australia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Hong Kong. At this conference, SIGTUR delegates participated in an anti-war rally condemning the war on Afghanistan and the Joen Tae II labour activists commemoration rally (somewhat similar to a May Day rally). The conference also initiated solidarity action to release jailed union leaders and activists in Korea and Malaysia.

The 2005 SIGTUR conference was attended by three unionists from Sri Lanka. They were Anton Marcus (FTZWU - Free Trade Zone Workers Union); O.A. Ramiah (tea plantations workers) and Saman Rathnapriya (nurses' union). As an activist within the SIGTUR from its inception, Anton Marcus has leveraged the SIGTUR network to engage in a range of campaigns. For example, at the 2001 SIGTUR conference in Korea, Anton actively campaigned around the coercive labour practices of Korean companies in the Sri Lankan FTZs. In effect, the Free Trade Zone Workers Union remains the only union experimenting with SMU strategies. Emerging from worker struggles in the FTZs in the early 1980's, this new union began as a partnership between a women's NGO (the Women's Centre) and a union. By participating in the SIGTUR network, the FTZWU has gained resources, opportunities and incentives to internationalise the struggles of FTZ workers.

As an emerging new labour internationalism, the SIGTUR has opened the space for revitalizing unions. The emphasis on the South is of particular importance in contesting Eurocentric tendencies of dominant labour internationalism strategies that neglect the movement dimension of unions. However, this also highlights transforming a range of power relations (such as class, caste, gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability) within unions in the South. The revitalization of unions, along SMU involves a deep democratic orientation that can promote non-hierarchical internal relations, as well as encourage worker-community alliances. In building

GSMU orientation, the aim is to go beyond the nation-state diplomatic positioning to organizing campaigns to mobilize workers and their unions. By emphasizing the movement dimension of unions, SMU and its' global version GSMU, suggest new possibilities for unions to revitalise their struggles for social justice.

Conclusion

The revitalisation of unions is central to contesting the neo-liberal globalization that is undermining unions. The dominant business unionism response is often state-centred, male-biased, top-down view of unions that maintains hierarchical internal relations and limited union alliances. In contrast, emerging tendencies of social movement unionism emphasise the movement dimension or contentious collective action as the new platform for building solidarity, within and among unions, and between organised and unorganised workers.

The social movement unionism (SMU) strategy is geared towards the (self)transformation of unions, particularly related to their internal and external relations. In terms of internal relations, SMU suggests non-hierarchical, democratic, open relations that can encourage active participation and creative initiative of union members. As for external relations, the aim is to extend workplace struggles into the local and global community. In scaling-up workplace struggles into the international realm, SMU strategies articulate a global social movement unionism (GSMU), or a new labour internationalism grounded in initiating global solidarity action. As a concrete example of a GSMU, the SIGTUR union network illustrates new possibilities for revitalising unions and building working solidarity.

While most unions in Sri Lanka are party subordinated unions, there are unions within the labour movement experimenting with SMU strategies. While these union strategies might not be articulated in terms of an SMU orientation, the revitalisation of unions demand an open dialogue around issues of non-hierarchical internal relations, community and transnational alliances, and contentious movement politics.

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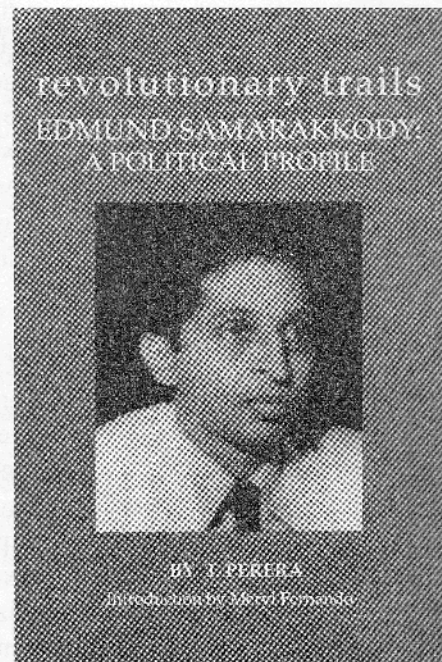
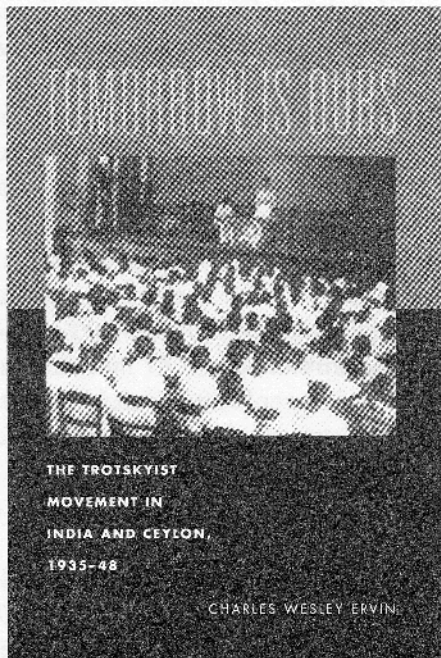
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Janaka Biyanswila teaches at Department of Organisational and Labour Studies University of Western Australia.

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THE MYTH OF CENTRALISED POLITY OF SRI LANKA

Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne

At a recent seminar at the BIMCH, H. L. de Silva, Sri Lanka's leading constitutional lawyer, opined that a "federal solution to end the ethnic conflict is like a snake a drowning man clutches onto in desperation to stay afloat." For polemical measure he added "federalism is the beguiling serpent which by its fatal sting will bring an end to this precious Republic." However the Sri Lankan Republic is in existential tatters, riven asunder by one of the most belligerent forms of ethno-religious nationalism that South Asia has witnessed. I'm not referring to the LTTE, but to the dominant form of nationalism in Sri Lanka's last 100 years, Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, the dominant narrative that has set the terms of debate about the nature of the postcolonial Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) state.

In spite of the existence of a highly efficient (although authoritarian) *de facto* Tamil state in parts of the Northeast, the jury remains out on whether Eelam will ever be an adequate replacement for the current moribund Sri Lankan cum Sinhala state. My argument is that Sri Lanka's past offers resources which should be used to challenge the arguments frequently invoked by the likes of H.L de Silva and others who misrecognise federalism as a term of abuse. The Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran recently impressed on the Rajapakse regime, the necessity for a federal blue print which the Government should put before the LTTE and the wider Tamil social formation. This is a timely moment in which to defend a federal solution to Sri Lanka's national question.

Only at brief moments in her pre-European past has Sri Lanka ever exhibited centralizing dynamics. The degree of centralisation was intimately connected to the administration of a classical hydraulic civilisation. In the Anuradhapura period the maintenance of the irrigation system was delegated to various farming communities who had a financial interest in their maintenance. Even during the South Indian incursions both farming communities and monasteries usually maintained the irrigation system. Ironically the centralisation of administration under both Vijayabahu and Parakramabahu I may have led to a loss of local autonomy. As C.R de Silva has noted the chaos in the *rajarata* in the early 13th century may have sparked a migration of those skilled in irrigation management. This, combined with the decline of a more centralized administrative system, would have had an adverse

effect on the ability to maintain the lifeblood of the agricultural economy. In effect the brief experiment with centralisation led to the denuding of local expertise.

Between the late 13th and 14th centuries Sinhala society began to reorganize itself in the East West and the South of the island. The resurgence of Sinhala power was centered on first Kotte and then Sitavaka. In the late 15th century the rulers of Kotte succeeded in limiting the power of the Jaffna Kingdom to the peninsula in the North, but the authority of Kotte was limited to the West and Southwest of the island. In this it was also limited by the power of regional chiefs. The consequence of this was a decentralized form of rule which itself was emblematic of the decline of central power registered by the slow collapse of Polonnaruwa. Centralisation was thus not the norm in Ceylon's pre-colonial past.

Modern Ceylon owes its modernity to the institutional and governmental reforms introduced by the British from 1833. The reforms recommended by the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission of 1829 resulted on the one hand in the generation of a centralized Ceylonese State, which served the interests of European and local mercantile capital. It cannot be legitimated by recourse to the Pali Chronicles. British rule was also marked by the introduction of new modalities of power, which were to have a significant impact on the way in which the precolonial was imagined in the lexicon of Sinhala nationalism. A new taxonomy of identity emerged and it was one which racialised the discourse of identity in Ceylon. Its destructive legacy is still with us.

The Sinhala political class that emerged from the gradual break-up of the *Ceylon National Congress* was one that saw in the centralised state a means of controlling the demands of the Sinhala and Tamil periphery. Increasingly nationalist elements in the Sinhala political class began to construe campaigns for devolution cum federalism by first G.G Ponnambalam and then S.J.V Chelvanayagam as tantamount to a demand for separation. We now have a *de facto* separate state in parts of the Northeast, which by many outside accounts is more efficient than the *de jure* state. This ground reality is a telling indictment of the systematic

mismanagement of administrative and constitutional relations between the Sinhala and Tamil (and Burgher) social formations by successive Sri Lanka Governments since 1956. A *de facto* state of the mind will still pertain even if Colombo is successful in recapturing Elephant Pass over the next three-four weeks. Indeed the collective disillusionment of the Tamil social formation within Sri Lanka and the wider diaspora will be intensified if the Government adopts a scorched earth policy in its likely campaign against Elephant Pass. We need hardly speculate on what the LTTE response will be in these circumstances were the armed forces to inflict a form of collective punishment against Tamil civilians if it moves against the LTTE in the North.

Let me suggest that while the precolonial gives rise to what we can characterise as a form of Buddhist cosmic sovereignty, in practice, administration on the whole was highly decentralised. The model of kingship that had taken root in Anuradhapura was Ashokan. It was one that stressed the symbiotic nature of Buddhist kingship, for the king, in encompassing the dhamma (the cosmic law), projects outwards onto the social his beneficent nature. Righteous Buddhist kingship leads to the acquisition of *karma*. The accumulation merit had the effect of showering blessings on the laity for the righteous king is one that determines the moral status of his subjects. Buddhist kingship in the Anuradhapura period becomes increasingly embedded within a Buddhist cosmological frame. By the 5th century kings were venerated as a *bodhisattvas* or Buddhas to be and by the 10th century, at the end of the Anuradhapura period, kings imagined themselves as *kinsmen of the Buddha*. The consequence was that kingship refracted the aura of the Buddha himself. It gives symbolic weight to the concept of *dhammadipa* that the island belonged to the Buddha, although 'dhammadipa' is only cited once in the *Mahavamsa*. By extension the Sinhalese polity was the possession of the *sasana* (Buddhist teaching) and the Sinhalese were the heirs to the island.

In spite of these literary tropes the precolonial Buddhist-Hindu polities were fairly devolved enterprises, exhibiting only brief moments of centralized control, as already indicated. The Sinhalese Buddhist-Hindu polities that dominated the pre-British period refracted at a number of levels the non-bounded nature of the Buddhist cosmos. Stanley Tambiah, in his account of the vicissitudes of Thai Buddhist kingship, has argued that early Buddhism forged a model of the polity that conjoined religion in the form of the Sangha with a political order, which elevated kingship as its

central principle. The result was a form of cosmic sovereignty in which Buddhist kingship took the form of an overlord who delegated authority to tributary rulers and governors. While such relationships reflected the hierarchical aspect of the cosmos, with tributary polities paying tribute to the center, in substance, cosmic sovereignty generated highly decentralized forms of administrative ordering.

There is enough archaeological and textual evidence to indicate that both Sri Lanka's and mainland South East Asia's precolonial states were essentially as Stanley Tambiah asserts, decentralised *galactic polities*. Through the overarching principles of Buddhist kingship these *galactic polities* established a link between the domain of the gods and the domain of material existence. In their spatial and administrative functioning, these polities, which established a binary relationship between Buddhist kingship and the cosmic order, were non-centralised entities. As Tambiah reminds us (and it's a sentiment repeated in H.L. Seneviratne's seminal analysis of the Kandyen Kingdom) they were pulsating entities that exhibited the tensions of contesting levels of patrons and clients. These polities were anything but bureaucratic hierarchies. There is indirect evidence from the Pali Vinaya, which suggests that the vast Ashokan Empire far from been a centralized monarchy was more likely to have been a galactic entity with lesser political replicas circulating the central domain.

Their organizational form possibly has Buddhist scriptural justification. In the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* (*The Lions Roar of the Wheel Conquering King*) the Buddha extols that a *cakkavatti* king on conquering new territory should tell his vassals to "continue to govern as you did before" (cited by Collins. 1996: 429). In both Burmese and Indian thought there was no idea of how to extinguish a conquered territory. The Buddha in the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* was voicing what appears to be a conceptual problem in Hindu-Buddhist political thought at the time. The decentralised administrative cum bureaucratic order of the galactic polity possibly has Canonical import by virtue of the devolutionary imperative that the Buddha attributes to Buddhist kingship in the shadow of conquest. In the shadow of conquest the Buddha recaptures the ethical import of *karma* by virtue of his blue print for devolved government, if not by design, then by accident. Stanley Tambiah notes in his 1976 study of the Thai Buddhist polity that the logic of the *cakkavatti* king gave way to "the decentralized locational disposition of the traditional polity and its replication of like entities on a decreasing scale – which constitute a galactic constellation rather than a

bureaucratic hierarchy..." (114). In his 1978 study of the Kandyan Kingdom, H.L. Seneviratne observed that the evidence indicated that the authority of the king "waned as the provinces stretched farther away from the capital." (174).

As Michael Roberts has recently shown, the Chronicle tradition, along with a wider corpus of Pali and Sinhala literature, indicates the consolidation of a Sinhalese consciousness in the medieval period (10th - 15th century) and the middle period (16th - 19th century) of Sri Lanka's recorded history. This was a consciousness that indeed reveals distinctive processes of 'othering' authorized by Sinhala and Pali textual practices. In practice however – and following the logic of encompassment rather than exclusion – the Sinhalese Buddhist-Hindu politics revealed a capacity to incorporate the outsider/other who came from South India, albeit in a prescribed hierarchical relation. Notwithstanding this hierarchical process of transformation, in practice, these precolonial politics gave rise to highly decentred administrative practices that implicitly drew on the non-bounded nature of the cosmic order.

These Buddhist arguments in favour of a decentralised confederal Sri Lankan polity depend on a radical transformation

in Sinhalese (Buddhist) public space. A reinvigorated public space needs to both deconstruct and then reconstruct the tropes of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism. It is the profoundly un-Buddhist nature of Sinhalese nationalism that the discursive community in Sri Lanka has to unpack before the task of critical reconstruction of the Sri Lankan past can begin. But the intellectual resources for defending a highly devolved state structure through indigenous Buddhist-Hindu resources are there. There can be no guarantee that a devolved confederal state structure will keep Sri Lanka united as the break-up of Yugoslavia reveals. However the disintegration of Yugoslavia was premised on the capture of the state by a Serbian hegemonic project. In Sri Lanka the unitary state has lost all public credibility with the minorities because the Sinhalese political class chose to systematically entrench its numerical majority in the institutions of state. The Sinhala political leadership should look to Sri Lanka's precolonial past for evidence that the order of things was far from hegemonic.

Citations to Collins are to Steven Collins, "The Lions's Roar on the Wheel-Turning King: A response to Andrew Huxley's 'The Buddha and the Social Contract'" in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (1996) Vol. 24 (4), 421-436. ■

Dr Rosalind S. Gray, Ph.D., is an Adjunct Lecturer at Griffith Law School, Queensland, Australia.

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GLOBALIZATION, MILITARISM AND LABOUR

Rohini Hensman

Defining globalization

Globalization has become a buzzword, yet there are widely differing conceptions of what it means. For those who support it in the form in which it has been taking place, there is an assumption that, globalization “leads to development, development leads to democracy and democracy leads to better human rights” (Pierre Pettrigrew), in some automatic manner. On the other hand, those who oppose it comprise a broad political spectrum from the extreme Right, who oppose it from the standpoint of cultural and economic nationalism, to the extreme Left. Even amongst Left groups claiming some affiliation to Marxism, there are widely differing theoretical approaches to globalization, resulting in diametrically opposed responses to it.

Part of the problem is that those who use the word seldom bother to define it. *Prima facie*, it would appear that a ‘globalized world’ is one in which there are no barriers (other than purely natural and technological ones) to the movement of people, products, money and ideas around the world. But globalization in this very general sense pre-dates capitalism and the formation of nation-states. Clearly, this is not the subject of current debates about globalization, although it is not irrelevant to such discussions. It is presumably in order to clarify this point that various adjectives are used to qualify ‘globalization,’ such as ‘capitalist,’ ‘imperialist’ and ‘neo-liberal.’ However this creates new problems, because these adjectives have their own meanings. When they are combined with ‘globalization,’ where do these meanings end and the meaning of globalization begin?

Globalization as Capitalism

That capitalism is inherently global is taken for granted by Marxism. In the graphic words of the *Communist Manifesto*: “The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.” Moreover, the very survival of capitalism depends on its extraction from wage workers of more value (surplus value) than they are paid in the form of wages; thus exploitation of workers is part of the

definition of capital. The expropriation of petty producers, ruin of small capitalists, and job losses – all seen as characteristics of globalization by its critics – are inherent in capitalism itself. The overlap between globalization and capitalism seems to be complete.

However, the danger of defining globalization as capitalism is that it implies that the real enemy is *international* capitalism, which domestic capitalism and small producers should be protected against. This has been the standpoint of fascist movements, going back to Hitler’s denunciations of international capital in *Mein Kampf*. In India, this is the position taken by the Hindu nationalist RSS. At best, such a conception propagates the illusion that capitalism can solve problems of poverty and unemployment so long as it remains national. At worst, it condones and supports brutal oppression and exploitation by indigenous capitalists. Globalization may be a phase of capitalism, but anti-globalization can never be anti-capitalist, because genuine opposition to capitalist oppression and exploitation does not distinguish between ‘national’ and ‘international’ capital, nor support the former against the latter.

Globalization as Imperialism

There are several theories of imperialism in the Marxist tradition, of which Lenin’s is the most popular. Lenin’s theory emphasizes the export of capital in order to exploit higher rates of profit in the colonies, the dominance of finance capital, and division of the world between imperial powers. It has been criticized on the grounds that the income from British overseas investment exceeded the outflow of capital throughout the nineteenth century and up to 1914. Moreover, Britain, the dominant empire of the time, was characterized by the dominance of old established family firms rather than finance capital. Luxemburg and Trotsky emphasized capital’s need for expanding markets, Luxemburg arguing that in the absence of external markets, the accumulation of capital would come to a halt. Bauer pointed out that accumulation was not impossible in a closed capitalist system, but would be placed within limits; he himself emphasized the role that imperialism plays in expanding the wage-labour force.

Although Marx called it the ‘colonial system’ rather than ‘imperialism,’ his writings contain a critique that includes all these elements as well as a subsidiary theme in the writings of these Marxists, namely capital’s drive to secure sources of raw materials. In this conception, imperialism starts in the earliest stage of capitalism, which he calls ‘primitive accumulation’ (i.e. the transformation of pre-capitalist relations of production into capitalist ones): in Volume 1 of *Capital* he says, ‘The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of ‘blackskins,’ are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.’ As large-scale industry develops, capital’s thirst for markets as well as raw materials alters the global division of labour, ruining manufacturing in the colonies and converting them into raw material suppliers and markets for the imperialist powers.

In this phase, backing from the state is crucial for the expansion of capitalism. Abroad, military and political intervention is necessary in order to establish and retain an empire; this might be overt colonization or covert intervention to put ‘friendly’ governments in power, the latter being the preferred strategy of US imperialism. At home, the imperialist state engages in protectionism, and contains class struggle by extending welfare benefits to the working class or whipping up war fever and hatred of an external enemy. Globalization, on the contrary, is characterized by a rollback of the state, with some degree of state sovereignty being handed over to global regulatory institutions. It is therefore not only different from imperialism, but in some ways opposed to it. This is why the US has always been opposed to any encroachment of global institutions on its national sovereignty. Thus, paradoxically, anti-globalization helps to perpetuate imperialism.

Globalization as neo-liberalism

The term ‘neo-liberalism’ has been used to describe the economic stabilization and structural adjustment policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, set up in 1944, on Second and Third World countries in return for loans. These policies included free trade policies, but went much further, especially in pressing for privatization of public services and cuts in government expenses on social security and welfare.

There is certainly an overlap between the policies of the World Bank and IMF (which have come to be called the ‘Washington Consensus’ because these institutions are headquartered in Washington) and the globalization agenda of the World Trade Organization or WTO (set up in 1995 and headquartered in Geneva), which seeks to remove barriers to international trade and capital flows. Yet there are also crucial differences. The IMF and World Bank have an inbuilt dominance by First World countries, whereas the WTO is a one-country-one-vote institution, creating the potential for Third World countries to influence its policies if they act collectively. Moreover, its emphasis is not on deregulation – which will always benefit the stronger party, namely capital, at the expense of the weaker, namely labour – but on shifting regulation from the national to the international level. This, again, creates the potential for the labour movement to contest the imposition of pro-capitalist policies, provided it can act internationally. Thus neo-liberal policies, while compatible with globalization, are not inevitable. It is possible to fight for an alternative agenda.

A new phase of capitalism

We could usefully define globalization as a new phase of capitalism, marked by: (a) a capitalist world economy covering more or less the whole globe; (b) large-scale decolonization, and the emergence of some Third World countries as powerful players in the world economy; (c) a changing relation between capital and the state, where the most advanced capitals do not need protection and support from the nation-state, but instead need porous national borders and global regulation; (d) the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), both as a new and increasingly dominant branch of industry in itself, and as a factor affecting manufacturing and finance; and (e) the emergence and increasing importance of new institutional investors, including pension funds, whose assets amounted to 57.1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the US and over 87 per cent of GDP in The Netherlands in 1995.

The WTO is not the only institution of global regulation and governance. Various UN institutions, including the ILO, are examples of weaker institutions of the same sort. The Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002, set up to prosecute people in power who are guilty of core crimes – war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression – is potentially a more powerful institution of global governance than the UN, because it is less subject to manipulation by the big powers.

Globalization and Militarism

Militarism played a positive role for capital during its imperialist phase, enabling it to expand geographically and accumulate rapidly. The destruction caused by war, like that caused by crises, could re-establish conditions for accumulation, although at the cost of the certainty that some capitals would perish. Luxemburg and other Marxists also suggested that the market for military production assured by the state could temporarily serve to boost employment, thus smoothing over business cycles. Initially, there were also 'spin-offs' from Research & Development (R&D) in military production to civilian production, leading to major innovations which increased overall productivity, such as the use of computers. Luxemburg also pointed out that the heavy taxation required to fund military spending led to the bankruptcy and expropriation of the peasantry within the imperialist countries, adding to the potential for capitalist expansion. Yet there are inherent problems in militarism that came to the fore as imperialism matured.

Under capitalism, according to Marx, labour is either productive – in the sense that it is exchanged with capital and produces surplus value or profit – or unproductive, in the sense that it is exchanged with capitalists' revenue or workers' wages, and does not produce any profit. However, this definition of productive labour is relevant only from the standpoint of individual capital: labour is or is not productive according to whether it does or does not produce profit for the individual capitalist. A problem arises, however, when we look at production from the standpoint of total social capital, as Marx himself realized when he considered the capitalist production of articles of luxury consumption. Unlike raw materials, machinery, and means of subsistence for workers, which come back into the production cycle, these products are not recycled either as means of production or as labour power; they are a dead loss so far as total social capital is concerned. The same is true of military spending, which is vastly greater than luxury production. It is funded out of taxes on capital and labour, and its products do not re-enter production; they are, in Marx's words, 'unreproductive articles,' and one could characterize the labour that produces them as 'unreproductive,' or socially useless. To illustrate: capitalist production of raw materials, machinery and food for workers is both productive and reproductive; housework and childcare is unproductive but reproductive; and military production is productive, in the sense of being highly profitable for individual capitalists, but unreproductive.

Consequences of Military Overspending under Globalization

The channelling of taxes into military spending occurs at the expense of state expenditure on infrastructure, which is necessary for the smooth functioning of capital, and on the social sector – education, health, and social welfare – which is necessary for the smooth reproduction of labour power. As military production becomes more high-tech and specialized, the spin-offs decline, and R&D in the military sector starves civilian R&D. Moreover, the 'cost-plus' pricing formula of industries producing for the military means that there is no incentive to improve productivity, which therefore falls behind productivity in countries with less military spending. The US exemplifies all these trends. Hurricane Katrina showed the rest of the world the disastrous state of infrastructure in the US, as well as the widespread poverty resulting from cut-backs in social spending. And Seymour Melman has argued that the massively larger military spending by the US, in comparison with Germany and Japan, resulted in its lagging far behind these two countries in terms of productivity.

In a globalized world, where the most advanced sectors of capital need global regulation and porous borders rather than backing from the nation-state in terms of geographical expansion and protection, militarism becomes a drag on the economy. The result, in the US, has been enormous fiscal deficits that would have wrecked any other country's economy. The only reason why they did not, was that US financial dominance of the world economy, underpinned by the role of the US dollar as the only world currency, ensured an equally huge inflow of capital to offset the deficits. However, this system has come under threat ever since the creation of the euro offered a potential alternative to the dollar as a world currency. Many countries, including China and Japan which have the most massive dollar reserves, have started diversifying their foreign exchange assets. In a significant move, George Soros pulled his assets out of dollars, and many US investors followed suit. This does not mean that the dollar is liable to crash in the near future, since countries that have large dollar reserves and rely heavily on the US market will no doubt continue to prop it up. Yet in the long run, it means that the US economy is doomed unless the government changes its policy of military over-spending and tax cuts for the rich. In a globalized world, military power no longer ensures economic dominance.

Implications for Labour

One consequence of globalization has been the worldwide expansion of the proletariat, which has occurred much faster in the Third World, with more women than men joining the labour force. At the same time, there has been a convergence in conditions of employment, which came out very clearly in the project I was working on with Women Working Worldwide, an organization working with women workers in several countries. For example, we produced an educational booklet on Codes of Conduct, which was translated into various local languages. One of the examples was of a factory in El Salvador which was supplying garments to The Gap - a major US retailer - where the workers, mainly women, responded to oppressive conditions by forming a union. The employer retaliated by dismissing those involved; this was followed by an international campaign in support of the workers, as a result of which a Code of Conduct guaranteeing basic workers' rights was introduced.

Women workers from the Free Trade Zones in Sri Lanka, some of them also working for companies supplying The Gap, read this story out loud in a workshop, and when I asked what they had learned about codes, one woman said, in awe and wonder, 'They too had problems getting permission to go to the toilet!' Another added, 'And they too were forced to do compulsory overtime.' A third commented, 'They were thrown out for forming a union, just as we were!' There was an immediate sense of identification with these women workers on the opposite side of the globe, which I found very moving. The potential for this kind of identification has been created by the convergence resulting from globalization. Along with the expansion of the proletariat, whom Marx saw as 'grave-diggers' of capitalism, this convergence of conditions, with its potential for leading to solidarity and common strategies, would have been seen as a positive development by classical Marxism. If capital is inherently global, its grave-diggers too have to be global. And ICT can be an immensely useful tool in creating a global labour movement.

A third area which is potentially positive is the fact that if capitalism no longer needs militarism to boost its expansion, the possibilities of successful opposition to war and militarism would be greatly enhanced. Unfortunately, the labour movement today is not nearly as consistently opposed to war and militarism as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin were, so this possibility has scarcely been explored.

Nor has the possibility of shifting public expenditure from armaments to the social sector, although many women's organizations have called for it. This is partly due to support for nationalism, with its inevitable link to militarism, in the labour movement.

The 'Race to the bottom'

Globalization has also had a negative impact on workers, often summed up by saying that it has resulted in a 'race to the bottom' so far as workers' rights are concerned. By removing barriers to the movement of commodities and capital, it has facilitated the migration of capital to, and sourcing of imports from, countries and sectors where labour rights are weak. This puts pressure on countries where labour rights are stronger to lower their standards. However, it is worth looking at this phenomenon more closely.

It is only because there are some countries and sectors which *already* had poor labour standards prior to globalization that sourcing of imports and capital investment could shift to them once barriers were removed. But what is responsible for these low standards? One obvious reason is colonialism, which destroyed indigenous manufacturing capacity and plundered indigenous wealth, leading to widespread poverty. Theories of underdevelopment and neocolonialism also pointed to mechanisms by which wealth continued to be drained out even after colonial rule itself had ended. But imperialism was not the only culprit. In India, for example, traditional labour control systems based on gender and caste hierarchies were very rigid and at times cruel and barbaric. British rule created a veneer of modern labour relations, but left the vast majority of workers untouched. Successive governments in independent India too found it convenient to preserve this huge informal labour force unprotected by labour legislation. The distinctive characteristic of informal labour is the fact that these workers have no legal recognition of their status as workers, and no proof of employment. Many labour laws are explicitly formulated to exclude them, but even those which are not, cannot be implemented. For example, all workers may legally have the right to organize, but if informal workers ever do so, they are almost invariably sacked, and getting their jobs back is virtually impossible in the absence of proof that they were ever employed. Even getting the legal minimum wage usually turns out to be impossible, forget about any benefits. The lack of rights means that employers often deliberately use informal labour - for example contract workers, who are hired through a labour contractor - for hazardous work, as a result of which the rate of serious and

fatal accidents is extremely high in their case. Informal women workers are often subjected to sexual harassment, and their only remedy is to quit the job. Homeworkers, who are mostly women, are sometimes required to work flat out to complete an order, while at other times they get no work at all – and no pay – for weeks on end. Sometimes illegal deductions are made from their abysmally low piece-rates, and if they protest, they are told that they need not take the work if the pay doesn't suit them.

In India, informal workers already accounted for about 90 per cent of the labour force before economic liberalization, which is unusually high. One consequence of globalization has been the spread of this system of labour-without-rights to parts of the world that did not have it before. For example, Sri Lanka and Bulgaria did not suffer much from this particular problem earlier, but informal labour was spreading to them by the early 21st century. It is an irony of history that an ancient system of labour relations in India, which gave workers (*shudras* and *dalits*, the latter regarded as untouchable) no rights, was perfectly compatible with a neo-liberal dispensation that was equally hostile to workers' rights.

The other reason for the so-called race to the bottom is the fact that despite the internationalism of early socialists, labour law and labour movements have developed within national frameworks. When global capital which is highly mobile confronts nationally restricted legislation and unions, it has a huge advantage. Many unions have concluded that the way to resist is by trying to curb the mobility of capital. But this is both unrealistic and unhelpful from the standpoint of billions of workers in the world whose employment conditions are already highly exploitative. It makes more sense to utilize one of the advantages of globalization – the fact that it is creating the conditions for global coordination and solidarity – to overcome these problems.

Towards a Global Labour Movement

Unfortunately, only a small minority within the labour movement globally are working according to such a perspective. In India, for example, the party-linked national unions waste their time tilting at the windmill of globalization, while the real enemies under their noses – such as informal labour, or caste and gender oppression – are not confronted. Even where enemies like imperialism and neo-liberalism are correctly identified, the fact that they are incorrectly assumed to be inseparable from globalization prevents a viable strategy for fighting them from emerging. The answer is seen to be

economic nationalism, yet just as cultural nationalism divides workers within a country (Sinhala versus Tamil, Hindu versus Muslim), economic nationalism divides workers in different countries. Any kind of nationalism is part of the problem, not part of the solution, because it constitutes an obstacle to solidarity.

Once this is accepted, the agenda is clear. One important part of it is a campaign to ensure that basic workers' rights are enforced globally. The conditions for this have already been created by the ILO, whose Conventions constitute the basis for a body of international labour law; the campaign could start by pressing for the incorporation of the Core Conventions – dealing with freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively, freedom from forced and bonded labour, the abolition of child labour, equal remuneration, and equality of treatment and opportunity – in the labour law of all countries. There can be no doubt that if these conventions are incorporated in legislation, and implemented, they would make a huge difference to workers in India and elsewhere. For example, the ILO estimated that there were 90 million child workers in India, some working in hazardous occupations that threaten their lives and health, others in conditions of bondage resembling slavery, many of them vulnerable to abuse. These children are denied their right to adequate rest, play, education and childhood itself. Moreover, it has been shown that child labour in a labour-surplus country like India causes adult unemployment and thus perpetuates poverty. Where organizations have succeeded in taking children out of employment and putting them into school, it has been found that men get more days of work per month, and women's wages rise. Even in Sri Lanka, where child labour was earlier not a major problem, some of the worst forms of child labour, like the use of children as soldiers and prostitutes, have emerged as serious abuses. For all these children, enforcement of the ILO Minimum Age Convention would be a huge advantage.

However, some additions need to be made to these Core Conventions. For example, the right to a formal employment contract and proof of employment needs to be incorporated, so as to eliminate informal labour. Conventions on the rights of migrant workers are also very important, given that one element of globalization is the increased mobility of labour. Even where migrant workers have crossed borders legally, they are usually denied labour rights in the country where they work, and their home country does not ensure their protection. Where these workers are regarded as 'illegal,' they are even more vulnerable to super-exploitation and abuse. It is therefore important for the labour movement to

demand not only that migrant workers be given the same labour rights as citizens, but also that workers seeking employment in other countries should not be treated as criminals or 'illegal aliens.' It is appropriate that as globalization progresses, the right to rights should not be restricted to citizens, but should be extended to all residents of a territory.

The main drawback of the ILO is that it has no power to enforce the implementation even of its Core Conventions. Consumer campaigners have sought to remedy this by threatening companies which sell products produced in violation of the Core Conventions with adverse publicity, and in some cases this has resulted in workers' rights being recognized. Solidarity campaigns by workers and unions in other countries have achieved the same end. Another proposal is that these basic workers' rights should be incorporated into the multilateral trade agreements of the WTO itself. Sadly, unions have not been able to agree on the need for such a

clause, but it would seem to be the most appropriate way to counteract the aggressive drive by capitalists to incorporate protection for property rights – for example, intellectual property rights – into WTO agreements.

Finally, it is time to rebuild the close connection between the labour movement, internationalist Left politics, and opposition to war and militarism, which has been so badly damaged by almost a century of nationalism in trade unions and Left parties. This would allow for a much more focussed campaign to redirect public spending to the social sector. If this is combined with efforts to combat the gender division of labour in the home, it would reduce the burden of over-work on women, and prevent the devastation of families which usually occurs when women migrate abroad for employment.

It is not anti-globalization, but these measures, will reverse the 'race to the bottom.' ■

Dr. Rohini Handman is a Free-Market writer living in Bombay.

Available at the Suriya Bookshop



CRICKETING FEATS OF SRI LANKA

Neville Turner

SL overall test record

Played 165

Won 46

Lost 62

Drawn 57

Since Jan 1st 1996

Played 100

Won 39

Lost 32

Drawn 29

The recent, astonishing win by Sri Lanka against England at Trent Bridge, and the prodigious record stand put together by Sangakkara and Jayawardene against South Africa at the SCC grounds in Colombo in late July 2006, have coincided a tragic, de facto termination of the ceasefire in the conflict between the Tamil Tigers in the north-east and the state. The coincidence of these events encourages a reflection on the unique cricketing achievements of this beautiful country.

How can it happen that a nation that is one-fifth the size of India has produced the greatest bowler in the history of the game – for Muralitharan has taken five wickets in a Test innings on 54 occasions, which leaves the knight, Sir Richard Hadlee, next in line at 36 times, far behind? How has it happened that Sri Lanka has also achieved the two highest partnerships in the 130 years of Test cricket?

Lack of appreciation

It also bears consideration that in the mere 25 years since Sri Lanka gained Test status it has won 46 matches out of a total of 165 played with 62 lost. Indeed, since 1996 the record reads 39 won and 32 lost of the 100 Tests played. More critically, the Sri Lankans secured their first victory as early as 1985 four years being initiated to the highest level. By comparison India took 20 years, South Africa 18 years, and New Zealand 26 years before they made the initial breakthrough. Sri Lanka's achievements have not,

unfortunately, been fully appreciated by the ICC, which has never allotted a five-Test (or for that matter even a four-Test) series to the island country!

The cricket literature of Sri Lanka is rather sparse. Only two attempts at a comprehensive history have been published, the first by SP Foenander in 1924; the second by SS Perera in 1996. Neither is free from flaws and neither is up-to-date.

Michael Roberts has not merely rectified this lacuna. He has gone further than either previous writer in analyzing the socio-political and cultural factors that have shaped modern Sri Lankan cricket. Accordingly, his booklet can confidently qualify as the most profound analysis of Sri Lankan history written thus far.

Roberts is well qualified to write dispassionately and unequivocally about both historical and current trends. A historian by training with long exposure to teaching and research within a Department of Anthropology, his long tenure at Adelaide University enables him to perceive both the triumphs and ruptures that have eventuated in his native country. Roberts minces no words in his criticisms of the administration of the game. "[The voting system] has favoured the election of wheeler-dealers and populist politicians rather than patricians notables ready to dig into their pockets." The retrenchment of successful coaches has not been uncommon. Sri Lanka has had five different coaches over the last nine years. Dav Whatmore was one of the victims on two different occasions despite his patriotically-motivated success rate. Indeed, Roberts remarks that it is a wonder that Sri Lankan cricket has continued to be successful in spite of the ructions in the system of governance.

Even for those who profess knowledge and appreciation of Sri Lanka's cricket scene derived from having visited the island during several Test series, there is in this book so much original and, in some cases, unforeseen information, that it can be said that he who has not read it has only a fraction of

the knowledge essential for a comprehension of the nuances of the cricketing world of Sri Lanka. It is perhaps not widely known that Murali is one of the very few Tamils to have played first class cricket during the last 2-3 decades. But (and again this may not be well-known) his Tamil origin is quite different from that of the Tamils of the north and east of the island, many of whom - Roberts tells - will barrack for India against Sri Lanka. Muralitharan is Malayaha Tamil, a descendant of migrants from southern India to the island from the middle decades of the nineteenth century to the 1920s who were induced to move in order to toil as plantation labourers for the most part. His father was from the ranks of kanganies (jobber, foremen) who moved into small scale manufacture. He was able to educate his son at St. Anthony's, an elite school in Kandy (the former capital of Sri Lanka). In contrast, the Tamils of the north and east of the country, are of different pedigree insofar as their ancestors have been present for over seven centuries. Despite these roots they felt marginalized when Sinhala was made the official language of administration after a populist electoral overturn in 1956 fuelled by linguistic nationalism of a sectional kind - eight years after independence was secured. Thus began the tale of their confrontation with the majority Sinhalese people.

Not merely are there ethnic divisions. Cricket has, till recently, been an elitist pursuit, dominated in considerable part by the products of two English-speaking Colombo schools, Royal College and St Thomas' College, the former government sponsored and the latter Anglican. It is these two schools in particular who took up the baton of cricket in the 19th century after it was introduced by the British ruling class. What is perhaps less well-known is that initially the game was taken up mostly by lads and men from the Burgher community, descendants of the various European peoples who had controlled territories in the island, that is, the Portuguese and Dutch with a more recent British admixture. Though pilloried at times as "half-caste," their prowess at cricket enabled them to mount challenges to notions of White European superiority. These "Test matches" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were apparently treated with the same intensity as the formal Test matches that we observe nowadays. Paradoxically, however, the advent of self-rule and the triumph of a Sinhala-Only programme in the 1950s, induced many of these mestizo people to emigrate to UK, Canada and Australia from the 1950s onwards.

The manner in which racial, religious and educational differences have plagued Sri Lanka cricket over the last fifty years is a surprise that Roberts has elicited. It surfaced

powerfully in the 1960s when the Royal-Thomian network was challenged in an unfortunate manner through a conspiratorial effort that displaced the captain Michael Tissera (a Thomian), albeit in ways that were ultra vires and more to the point, in ways that set Sri Lankan cricket's international advance back by a decade. However, the very fact that such an effort was mounted indicated the intrusions of political and class overtones, especially the divide between fluent English-speakers and bilingual Sinhala-speakers. Moreover, such challenge marked the presence of good players from outside the magic circle of leading Christian denominational schools plus Royal College. These new men of skill came from what are known as "Buddhist schools," that is, schools that were initiated way back in the 1890s as one facet of the movement of Buddhist revitalization in opposition to the dominance of Christianity in the colonial firmament.

Democratization

Two of these schools, Ananda and Nalanda, were at the leading edge of this movement both in the political sense and in the manner in which they had, by the 1960sm nourished good cricketers and developed a "big-match" against each other that rivaled that between Royal and St. Thomas'. By the 1980s the captains of Sri Lanka were being drawn from these two schools rather than royal or St. Thomas'. The Wettimuny brothers and the Ranatunga brothers all emerged from Ananda, while Bandula Warnapura, Sir Lanka's first captain when they secured ICC test status in 1981, was from Nalanda.

While highlighting these tensions, Roberts also outlines the processes which encouraged the democratization of opportunity in the field of cricket and the emergence of brilliant players from beyond Colombo - from what are known as "outstation" schools. This analysis deciphers the expansion in popularity of the colonial game to the point where it is now the national pastime, one that enjoys popularity and interest. But Roberts' masterly treatise ends on a pessimistic note; "Instability, alas, has been a feature permeating the cricketing scene as well as the political scene for many a year." And "the silver lining arising from the ceasefire of the past [two] years has dark clouds threatening it (p.38)" Judging from the performances against England and South Africa in 2006, however, I venture to think that cricket will win out over political turmoil. ■

Neville Turner is the past President of the Australian Cricket Society

GLOBALIZATION, TERROR AND THE SHAMING OF THE NATION

Sasanka Perera

Globalization, Terror and the Shaming of the Nation: Constructing Local Masculinities in a Sri Lankan Village by Jani de Silva. ISBN 141207889-X, 264 pp. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing.

Context

Jani de Silva's book is one of the few serious books that attempt to place the period of extreme political violence in Southern Sri Lanka of the 1980s in context. As quite evident from the title, the text is concerned with three interrelated themes: globalization, terror and masculinities. These thematic concerns are interrogated and explored through the careful reading of a specific violent event that unfolded in the Ratnapura district between November 1989 and January 1990 in which 22 students were abducted from their homes by masked gunmen, taken to a nearby army camp, tortured and murdered at the height of the period of terror in southern Sri Lanka that was commonly referred to as *beeshanaya*. This event itself captured much public and media attention at the time and afterwards and it is one of the few cases that ever made it to the courts. A reading of why this event occurred the way in which it did is what the author attempts to achieve through a narrative analytical pathway that takes the reader through issues such as globalization, terror and the construction of masculinities in the local context.

Relevance of Masculinities

Given the fact that the construction of local masculinities is a major preoccupation of the book, let me take a moment to briefly locate this book in the context of ethnographies of South Asia that deals with issues of sexuality and gender. At the level of global academic discourse, the issue of masculinities is no longer a marginal concern. However, as the editors of the 2004 publication, *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* observe quite correctly, many of the key concepts and theoretical works associated with masculinities have been developed via empirical material specifically located in developed

Anglophone countries. On the other hand, what emerged as gender studies in the South Asia region were often more specifically women's studies that were concerned with issues of female sexuality and related concerns. In this scenario, there was an almost total absence of theorizing the male and masculine on the one hand and serious fieldwork that explored local constructions of masculinities and their global interrelations on the other. So even though South Asia has produced a serious corpus of empirical works on gender and sexuality specifically located in the region, the focus on masculinities as a specific issue within studies of gender is still at a very preliminary stage. At the same time, works on the Indian Hijras such as Serena Nanda's *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (1990) could have opened up more avenues for discussions on masculinities had not some of these texts evaded the issue of masculinity by insisting on presenting an argument for a 'third gender' as pointed out by Caroline and Fillipo Osella and Radhika Chopra in *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* which they edited. In this regional context, Jani de Silva's book is a pioneering work that explores the processes and dynamics of constructing local masculinities as a central issue while it is the most serious text that I am aware of that deals with this issue in the Sri Lankan context.

Contents of the Book

Let me now proceed to make some preliminary comments on the book itself. In effect, Chapter One sets the tone and marks the points of departure for the overall narrative and reading that would emerge over the remainder of the text. In so doing, she draws the readers' attention to the political context of the event that she would later discuss in detail, the dynamics of the parents' group that was formed consequent to the abduction and killing of the school boys, the failures of rule of law, militarization and rites of shame, the role played by students' politics in constructing masculinities at high school and a number of other important areas which are crucial to a fuller understanding of what happened.

In latter chapters she explores these ideas by both expanding our ethnographic understanding of the event and its socio-political landscape and a robust theoretical discussion in an attempt to unravel some of these issues that are not readily self-evident. In the second chapter de Silva spends considerable time exploring how the global is assimilated by local actors in specific localities and contexts as in the site she has opted to investigate. She attempts to do this by using Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia and hybridization. Chapter Three is a more conventional ethnography of the settlement where the events and the incidents she describes took place. She attempts to describe how this specific site or locality came into being in historically recent times through an exploration of its social and political history. As she points out, while a specific local identity was formulated through a number of processes, it was achieved by enforcing certain codes of group solidarity. These historical dynamics too had much to do with what transpired at the height of political violence in the late 1980s. Chapters four to seven are also quite important in ethnographic terms. In chapter four she focuses on the abduction of schoolboys from their high school by providing an extensive background on radical student politics in the context of which the relationship between teachers and students collapsed to a significant extent. That collapse and the process of invalidating student protests by state authorities as 'inappropriate behavior' had much to do with their collective fate as de Silva convincingly argues. Chapter five more specifically explores the manner in which notions and ideals of masculinity are produced in the contexts of both the school and student protest movement that was visibly energetic at the time, mostly through the backing of the JVP.

Chapter Six is a presentation of events from the perspectives of captors and captives. The captors' narratives are drawn from the representations to the Judge of the High Court in Ratanapura made by three captors in their latter incarnation as the 'accused' when the event that de Silva describes actually became a closely monitored moment in recent Sri Lankan judicial history. The narratives of captives are presented on the basis of stories narrated by some captives who survived as well as the stories of parents, siblings and friends of the students who were killed. These narratives are presented by de Silva as 'truth in fable' (186) as "events seen through the eyes of witnesses whose lives were affected and sometimes changed by them" (186). Chapter Seven is also important as it attempts to explore, through the extensive narratives of three young women, why young women did not engage in student activism to the same extent as did young men. De Silva attempts to show how the community decides

what the 'appropriate behavior' for young women would be, and how the community actually controls the sexuality of women by 'sexualizing' what is deemed unacceptable forms of behavior for young women. This process of social control played a crucial role in deviating women from participation in violent politics.

General Comments

One thing I was particularly struck by when reading this text, particularly the more ethnographically inclined chapters, is the 'thickness' of ethnography or the substantial attention given to details of the events, people, places and processes that are described. This clearly emerges from the extensive narratives of the characters that de Silva has met and talked to in the field. Particularly, the narratives of the captives and the three young women in Chapter Seven read like fictional narratives of violence, terror, memory and fear of shame. As such, if the life as a social anthropologist and civil society icon is not lucrative enough, de Silva already has enough material to become a successful novelist. On the other hand, this text is not merely about ethnography. It is one of the most theoretically sophisticated readings of an event that I have read in a long time. I make these two observations on ethnography and theory with reference to two manifestations that I am familiar and concerned with:

- 1) Many allegedly 'anthropological' texts produced in Sri Lanka today, particularly in the Sinhala language are almost completely devoid of theory and theorization while their ethnography is also often shaped and colored by the concerns of the writer rather than privileging the narratives themselves.
- 2) Other 'anthropological' texts on Sri Lanka mostly stand out due to their 'thinness' of ethnography where theory often seem to merely linger on to make a convoluted case for the writer's 'scholarship' in the clear absence of fieldwork or ethnography. In such cases, theory seems to have replaced ethnography out of context.

I would suggest that de Silva's text avoids both these manifestations. Not only is her text replete with detailed ethnographic descriptions, but she seems to have taken great care to present the narratives of the people she has talked to in the tones they have spoken to the extent possible, which brings to mind a similar effort undertaken by James Brow in the 1990s when he wrote his book *Demons and Development: The Struggle for Community in a Sri Lankan Village*. On the other hand, theory in this book is not for the purpose of superficially enhancing the writer's scholarship or

'beautification' of the text, but for unraveling, unlocking and contextualizing some of the events and issues that are discussed.

Concluding Comments

I am quite happy that a local scholar has been able to produce a substantial piece of scholarship as in the case of de Silva's text. This is particularly important when the global academic landscape is littered with what I consider sloppy or inconsequential scholarship on Sri Lanka such as Alex Argenti Pillen's *Masking Terror: How Women Contain Violence in Southern Sri Lanka* that tend to be taken unduly seriously by virtue of their relatively easy access to global

centers of knowledge production and dissemination where decisions to publish or not seem to be taken by individuals with a dubious understanding of Sri Lankan society, culture and politics. Being mindful of this context, I hope de Silva's book will be well received in the country and beyond on the strength of its scholarship. In conclusion, I would articulate one concern that would be considered 'completely politically incorrect' by most accounts. That is, the kind of mind and discipline required to produce this kind of work could have been put to much better use had the author opted to leave the diminished but overrated intellectual environments of Colombo's civil society and located herself in the diminished intellectual environments of the local university system where at least in theory better, more enhanced and worthwhile opportunities are available to engage with young individuals.

Dr. Sasanka Perera teaches Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Colombo.

PILL FOR AN ISLAND

I did not visit the Black Pussycat,
the Fat Flounder, or even Macy's
on 34th Street. I left the Black Fence
for another return. I must devote
myself to compressing the city
into a compact, multi-purpose
pill to pop on those occasions
far away on Ceylon's East Coast

Where the blue-green jeweled
sea—turned not brown, in the wake
of the tsunami-witnesses again
patrol boats and small arms fire,
lobbed grenades and thatch explosions,
rapes of social workers and hundreds
upon hundreds upon thousands
in flight from their villages.

War has returned to the hamlets,
coves and palm-fronded taverns,
and in New York those towers
of Ilium vanished, my two islands
united in the global accounting
of war and war's alarms,
everybody bruised, jaded and afraid
waiting for the Messiah or the flames.

Indran Amirthanayagam, August 18, 2006



BIRTH CENTENARY OF E.F.C. LUDOWYK

Born in 1906 on the 16th of October, E.F.C. (Lyn) Ludowyk of Galle did a degree in English in Cambridge. He became a Professor of English at the Ceylon University College and later the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, retiring in 1956. Ashley Halpe has described Ludowyk's contribution to English studies in Sri Lanka – rejecting the old syllabus (with its emphases on Anglo-Saxon and English texts and literary history), and introducing students to 20th century literature and avant-garde literary critics such as F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards. Halpe also refers to the “Ludowyk charisma in the classroom” where he was an inspiring teacher, making an impact with the new ‘practical criticism’ (*The Island*, 14 October 2006). Ludowyk's contribution to revolutionize the English syllabus has been acknowledged by his students – some of whom became distinguished teachers of English – notably R.C.L. (Dicky) Attygalle and Regi Siriwardene—who influencing another generation, based on Ludowyk's teaching.

Other less known facts about E.F.C. Ludowyk are his influence on Ediriweera Sarachchandra who introduced modern trends to the Sinhala theatre, and Ludowyk's links with the Left movement of Sri Lanka. He was close to the L.S.S.P and its leaders, and supported the Left causes of the period. In his politics he worked together with his wife Edith Gyomroi—the distinguished Hungarian psychologist (a refugee from Nazism) who was also a part of the European Left of the 1930s. In Sri Lanka she was not only involved in Marxist politics but also in the autonomous socialist women's group, the Eksath Kantha Peramuna. EFC and Edith Ludowyk are also remembered for their work for the University Dramatic Society. We reproduce Professor Osmund Jayaratne's recollections of this period when English drama flourished in Sri Lanka.

OSMUND JAYARATNE ON E.F.C. LUDOWYK & THE UNIVERSITY THEATRE MOVEMENT

In my very first year, I came under the influence of Professor E.F.C. Ludowyk, who had directed a play while I was at Royal College. The very first English play that I participated in at University was Eugene O'Neill's *Marco Millions*. This refers to the travels of Marco Polo to China and back again. Oh! It was a marvellous play with wonderful references to that period, and a piece of very good drama. I was cast in the role of the 'Chronicler.' Right through the play, before every scene, I had to sit cross-legged at a side of the stage, wearing an 'exotic' turban, dressed in colourful garb, and I had to introduce every theme in the play, in poetic language.

There were other plays, directed by Professor Ludowyk, in which I participated. Bernard Shaw's play, *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isle*. The Italian dramatist, Pirandello's *Right You Are! If You Think So*.

During my university years I acted in 12 plays directed by Professor Ludowyk, first as a student and then as a junior lecturer in Physics.

In the play by Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, again I played the lead role. The female role was played by a good friend of mine, Jeanne Pinto who is unfortunately now dead. Of course, we were unaware of Brecht's politics then. We treated it then just as a play. I must mention, in particular, my role in a play, known as *Tobias and the Angel*, by James Birdie. This was a little biblical story and I played the role of Tobias, and I think I played it very well.

We had a great occasion to look forward to at the end of each performance. Professor Ludowyk and his wife Edith would invite the entire cast to a party at King George's Hall or KG Hall which was a well-known venue of the University where all the plays were performed. Edith Ludowyk was a very accomplished artist who assisted Professor Ludowyk in his productions, and was also a great psychoanalyst who was a member of the executive committee of the International Psychoanalytical Association.

Professor Ludowyk was a very good pianist, and was very fond of German music. On those occasions he would sit at the piano and play piece after piece and song after song: he could sing as well and would sing to us songs also in German. Of course, there were many servings of short-eats, and soft drinks. Every play produced by Professor Ludowyk was an adaptation of a play by an English author, or many continental plays translated into English. His contribution was a massive one. Associated with Professor Ludowyk were two men, both whom I greatly respected. Professor Cuthbert Amarasinghe who helped Professor Ludowyk in all of his productions, and Arthur van Langenberg, a great proponent of English drama who also helped in Professor Ludowyk's plays.

Plays directed by Professor Ludowyk became a big social event in the city of Colombo attracting the English-speaking middle and lower-middle classes. People looked forward to these plays, the whole of King George's Hall was a mass of people. There was tremendous enthusiasm among the visitors, while the press too did us a very great favour. Every one of Ludowyk's plays received encomiums, which no production of that kind received ever before.

It was the custom to repeat each play on three separate occasions. This was the general practice. I have never known a play that went on more than three times. After the three performances of a play in the King George's Hall, some of them were taken to Kandy and staged in the beautiful hall of Trinity College. Once, I cannot quite remember when, a play was taken to the northern city of Jaffna. The English-speaking people of Jaffna appreciated it very much and organized a special dinner for Professor Ludowyk and all of us. Later, I remember taking one play to Batticaloa. As a result of these repetitions more people than ever got the opportunity of seeing Ludowyk's plays. They will never forget the beauty of the productions by Ludowyk.

Now 12 plays in a university career is an achievement. I was in the university for a period of four years, continuing there as a lecturer too. However, I am very sorry that I was unable to take part in the last play during university, where despite my inadequate knowledge of Sinhala, I might have been able

to do a fair performance if chosen. This was the famous Sinhala play *Kapuwa Kapothi* which was the Sinhala version of a Molière play, produced by Ediriweera Sarachchandra. It was directed in Sinhala with the help of Professor Ludowyk, and first staged in King George's Hall.

Sinhala Theatre and Sarachchandra

I must say, although Ludowyk's main preoccupation was English drama, he had a crucial role in Sinhala theatre as well, influencing the Sinhala Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra, who later developed his own idiom based on 'Nadagam' plays. Of course as drama enthusiasts we were proud of his famous plays *Maname* and *Sinhabahu*, and I still remember his little piece *Rattaran* and *Elova Gihin Melova Ava*: both of which I think were played on the same occasion. Sarachchandra, although living in Peradeniya, was deeply interested in Ludowyk's productions. He came very often to Colombo and would sit through some of his plays as well as the rehearsals. Sarachchandra greatly admired Ludowyk's pioneering role – even though it was in the English language – in developing drama in universities, and they were intellectually very close. I know that he and Ludowyk had many, many discussions, on various aspects of drama, on dramatic form, not only of Sri Lanka, but of Indian and international theatre as well. Professor Sarachchandra studied and was later influenced by Japanese 'Kabuki' plays too. He studied it for one year in Japan. Through his experiences in Japan, and through Japanese Kabuki theatre, he introduced Japanese elements to some of his later plays.

Professor Ludowyk and Professor Sarachchandra were great characters who contributed so much to Sri Lanka drama and culture the extent of which can be hardly imagined. This will never be forgotten by anyone who has some interest in the background of culture and drama in our country. I have had discussions with Professor Sarachchandra, who gratefully acknowledged the help he received and his admiration of the methods of Professor Ludowyk – I consider Professor Ludowyk also a pioneer in the development of Sinhala theatre. In 1947 Sarachchandra was known only for his literary activities. His plays, for which he became famous,

came only in the mid-fifties. The works of Sarachchandra were known to the whole country. Later everybody admired his contributions to the resurgence of Sinhala drama. Sarachchandra's contribution to Sinhala drama long pre-dates the Bandaranaike era, which began in 1956.

Men of the calibre of Professor Sarachchandra -- the father of modern Sinhalese drama -- if you consider these pioneers during this period, dramatists, even various artists, not one of these pioneers were involved in or had any connection with communalism. They were independent in their views. It might also be noted that there was no contribution by the then well-known bourgeois Sinhala nationalist organizations to the development of Sinhala drama or to the work of those like Sarachchandra in that period. This development was entirely carried out by a set of young intellectuals both within and outside the university who were influenced by progressive ideas.

All the plays that I participated in were in English and my entire education of course was in English. I will talk later of how I became very competent in Sinhala, but back then I could not take a Sinhala script of a play, look at it, read it and memorize it. I did not have that capacity. Therefore I did not participate in Sinhala plays.

Twenty-five years later, after the death of Professor Ludowyk, his friend the late Percy Colin-Thomé, former judge of the Supreme Court, collected a number of actors, including myself, in order to replay *Marco Millions* by Eugene O'Neill: as a tribute to Professor Ludowyk and the English Drama Society. It was easy for me because *Marco Millions* had been the very first play in which I took part in the university. I had the same role I played then: once again the Chronicler introducing every theme. I now believe the chronicler was really similar to what in our subsequent Sinhala plays came to be known as the *Pothe Gura*. I do not know precisely from where Eugene O'Neill obtained this idea. I never knew whether it was from the Eastern or Western classical tradition. But that was the role I played, the role of *Pothé Gura*. That replay was a great success, and nostalgic for all of us. ■

(Extracts from the *Memoirs of Osmund Jayaratne*, Chapter 2, pp.11-16)

Professor Emeritus Osmund Jayaratne who died on August 31st, 2006, was a frequent contributor to *Polity*.

FRATRICIDAL POLITICAL VIOLENCE AMONG THE TAMIL-SPEAKING PEOPLE

The background

Several of us, deeply disturbed by the continuing escalation of political violence, met recently and shared our concerns. While all political violence is unacceptable and merits unqualified condemnation, we focus on the sharp escalation in such violence among the Tamils and between the Tamils and Muslims. We consider this trend to be both suicidal to the Tamil speaking people and a critical impediment to resolving the national question, adversely affecting the entire population of this Island. The ethnic minorities have faced discrimination almost from the time of independence. The nature and intensity of such discrimination have fluctuated, frequently manifesting in calculated violence. Tamil groups also have engaged in much violence. An increasing share of the political violence is fratricidal, either Tamil-Tamil or Tamil-Muslim.

Resolving differences

Fratricidal violence has been misguidedly indulged in by activists in many struggles against oppression in the belief that it may be the only means to effectively settle differences. We do not subscribe to this view. Differences that may arise on policies, strategies, personalities or on any other matter will have to be resolved through discussion among the partners in the struggle, not by liquidation. Resorting to fratricidal violence can only deepen divisions, provoke counter-violence and undermine the struggle. Bitterness created by liquidation or expulsion of communities will linger, like in the case of the fratricidal clashes among Sri Lankan Tamil groups in the late 80s and early 90s and the recurrent instances of ethnic cleansing of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims since the 80s.

Value of diversity

A culture of permitting free expression of opinions and lively discussion of differences has been a feature of

successful struggles (e.g. the movement against Apartheid in South Africa and the US Civil Rights Movement of the third quarter of the last century, and the Gandhian liberation/independence movement of India). In contrast, a culture of violence and intolerance, even if it appears to be helpful to enforce unity, is a recipe for the emergence of dictatorship and further oppression (e.g. USSR under Stalin, the French Revolution in the later stages, and the post BJP proliferation of communal conflict in India). The end result may be that both in numbers and in quality the potential strength of the movement is undermined, increasing the adverse tilt of the balance of forces and facilitating further majoritarian oppression.

Need for independent voices

Among the Tamils, most of those remaining politically active appear to be either aligned to the LTTE or uncompromisingly opposed to it. The number of independent minded Tamils available to effectively lobby within Sri Lanka, with foreign governments and with international agencies, against majoritarian oppression is dwindling, and the consequences are increasingly reflected in political developments in Sri Lanka and overseas. Particularly hurting is the marginalization of the parliamentary leadership. At Thimpu in 1985, the Tamil parliamentary leaders worked with five militant groups to formulate the 'Thimpu Principles', which have gained enduring recognition as reflecting a Tamil consensus at that time. Even if such a consensus is secured now, it is easier for those opposed to it to question its legitimacy.

Loss of moral high ground

A major concern is that the culture of violence, especially violence against civilians of all ethnic groups, has led to losing the moral high ground occupied by Tamil leaders when the struggle was against violent suppression of Tamils by the state. Ready resort to violence against civilians, and

indifference to democratic and human rights norms devalue the legitimacy of the struggle against state violence and denial of minority rights. Recruitment and use of child combatants, fratricidal violence and assassinations, torture and brutality, and the intolerance and suppression of dissent, resorted to by various Tamil groups have contributed to the loss of much support, locally and globally. Attempts to undermine the autonomy and integrity of non-government organizations, political parties, newspapers, universities, schools and other institutions functioning in the North and East by various agencies have also been counter productive. Even if some of these activities appear to yield immediate gains, their long term impact on the community is overwhelmingly negative. In contrast, consistent upholding of values and principles played a critical role in the success of the struggles led by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela.

Upholding human rights

We are also concerned about the rights and sensitivities of regional minorities. They need to be valued, respected and legitimized. It is increasingly accepted among the Sinhalese (though not yet by the government) that federalism and inter-ethnic power sharing are necessary to regain national unity and integrity. In turn, Sri Lankan Tamils need to accept the need for power sharing in the regional capital (Trincomalee) as well as sub-regional autonomy, particularly for sub-regions in which regional minorities are dominant. Those who campaign against ethnic violence, ethnic cleansing, ethnic oppression and displacement, delegitimize their protests if they do not also protest against ethnic violence, ethnic cleansing, ethnic oppression and displacement of civilians of other communities, especially if they occur at the hands of their own ethnic group. Civilized political culture demands that we need to protest all violations of human rights and to uphold the rights and welfare of women, children and all vulnerable sections of the population. Those who claim to fight for human rights cannot afford to be selective.

Building Coalitions

It has to be emphasized that we are not indulging in an exercise to divert attention from the continued injustices committed against the minorities for over five decades, nor to subvert any ongoing struggle against such injustice, but to underline the need to mobilize all available

resources and to avoid any action or advocacy inconsistent with legitimate objectives. We note that the first major majoritarian attack on a minority was the disenfranchisement of the Malaiyaha Tamils soon after independence. Sadly, except for S.J.V. Chelvanayagam and one or two others, most Sri Lankan Tamil and Muslim Members of Parliament were complicit in this exercise. Those who opposed it were mostly the Sinhalese Marxist-Leninist and, of course, the Malaiyaha Tamil Members. The development of majoritarian policies was facilitated by the failure to evolve principled coalitions of minorities and progressive forces.

Defining our values and goals

In conclusion, to supplement the values referred to above, we reiterate our belief in the following extracts from the Oslo statement of 5th December 2002, which the parties in conflict, the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government, agreed to explore:

... a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka [and] acceptable to all communities ... Power sharing between the centre and the region as well as within the centre ... Human Rights protection Law and order ... the need to ensure that the priorities and needs of women are taken in to account ... that children belong with their families or other custodians and not in the work place, whether civilian or military ... consultation with all segments of opinion as part of the peace process ...

COLLECTIVE AGAINST FRATRICIDAL POLITICAL VIOLENCE

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Rohan Edrisinha
Lakshman Gunasekera
M.C.M. Iqbal
Bishop Rayappu Joseph
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S. Narapalasingham
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Gananath Obeyesekere
Jehan Perera
Shanthi Sachithanandan
Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
Muttukrishna Sarvananthan
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Sumathy Sivamohan
Stanley J. Tambiah
Selvy Thiruchandran
Jega B. Tissainayagam
Premini Tissainayagam
Jayadeva Uyangoda
Asanga Welikala ■

THE SINGARASA CASE: A BRIEF COMMENT

R.K.W. Goonesekere

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court seeking to invalidate Sri Lanka's accession to the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR has led to questions as to how this judgment came to be given. Yes, there was a case, and as Senior Counsel I would like to explain the circumstances in which it came before the Supreme Court.

An application was made to the Supreme Court in 2005 for the exercise of the Court's inherent power of revision of a conviction and sentence in 1995. This was after the views of the United Nations Human Rights Committee had been conveyed to the State, that Singarasa should be released or retried as his right to a fair trial had been breached. Singarasa had petitioned the UN Human Rights Committee by virtue of the right given to him by an international agreement or treaty entered into by the Sri Lankan State, namely the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The Supreme Court constituted a Divisional Bench of five judges to hear the application, and it became known as the 'Singarasa Case'.

The legality or constitutionality of Sri Lanka's accession to the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR did not arise in this case, was not raised by Court and was never argued. Indeed the time given to make oral submissions was limited and an application on behalf of the petitioner for a further date of hearing was ignored.

The Supreme Court could have in passing in the judgment raised the question of the treaty ratification process and left it to be decided in a suitable case, after hearing the Attorney-General on behalf of the executive Head of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who takes the initiative and is responsible for registering the instrument of ratification or accession in the UN.

Singarasa's application to Court was *not* an application to *enforce* or *implement* the views expressed by the Human Rights Committee (HRC) of the UN on an individual's communication in terms of the Protocol. It is a matter of

common knowledge that the views of the HRC are not decisions binding on national courts. All that Singarasa did was to ask for a revision or review of the decisions of the Supreme Court and other courts given earlier. This is possible in our law. The views expressed by the HRC were relied on solely to seek to persuade the Court to take a fresh look at the facts and the law in Singarasa's case. The Supreme Court was invited to reconsider the conviction and sentence of 50 years imprisonment (reduced in appeal to 35 years) in the light of the HRC's views as to the requirements of a fair trial, which is a right guaranteed in our Constitution. Unfortunately the Supreme Court has seen it only as an attempt to substitute for the decisions of our courts the views of the HRC and, without looking at the facts or the law on confessions to the police, pronounced on the constitutionality of the State's accession to the Optional Protocol in 1997. This also explains why the Court said the application was misconceived and without any legal base.

There could be no misunderstanding in the minds of Judges that the petitioner's substantive case was that there had been a grave miscarriage of justice in his conviction, and a number of reasons were given in the petition which were totally independent of the views of the HRC. There is no reference in the judgment to these other arguments and they have not been considered. As stated above time was not given for full argument even though judgment was delivered after many months.

In its views communicated to the State the HRC of the UN had recommended that the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) provision, which cast on the accused the burden of proving that a confession made to the police was not voluntary, should be amended. Singarasa had been convicted, after the confession was held admissible, for not leading any evidence to show that the alleged attacks on Army camps (which formed the basis of the charges) had not taken place or that he was not involved in them. It was a golden opportunity for the Supreme Court to have emerged as the true guarantor of the rights and freedoms of people by including in a judgement – even a judgement refusing the application – a recommendation to this effect.

Singarasa was a Tamil youth of 19 or 20 who had no schooling and spoke only Tamil. His conviction was solely on the basis of a confession which was denied by him at his trial. The evidence was that he made the confession in Tamil to a police officer who understood Tamil but could not write Tamil; his confession was translated into Sinhala and written down by the same police officer. At the end of Singarasa's statement the police officer read out to Singarasa in Tamil what he had written in Sinhala before taking his thumb impression on the record. This was all done in the presence of a senior police officer to whom a confession under the emergency regulations or the PTA had to be made. This officer understood only a little Tamil and the translation into Sinhala was also for his benefit. The Supreme Court could also have commented on the undesirability of a procedure that permitted a police officer to record a statement confessing to committing serious crimes, in Sinhala, when it was made in Tamil. Had the Supreme Court done only this we would have been disappointed but satisfied that the cry for justice by Singarasa, sentenced to prison for 35 years, had been heard. It is responses like this that have made the Supreme Court of India the highly respected body it is.

Nowhere in our Constitution is it said that the Supreme Court is Supreme; it is but another court exercising the judicial power of the People who are Sovereign. It is the People's right to say that the Supreme Court's pronouncement taking away a valuable right conferred on the People was *per incuriam* and in excess of the Court's jurisdiction. A treaty solemnly entered into by the State in the exercise of the executive power and in terms of international law as reflected in the Vienna Convention on Treaties is not, it is submitted with respect, subject to judicial review. There is a procedure in the Protocol for a State Party to denounce the Protocol, but until this is done, the Protocol is in force in the country. It must not be forgotten that Sri Lanka's accession to the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was one of the major accomplishments of the late Lakshman Kadirgamar during his distinguished career as Foreign Minister. Both Bench and Bar, at the unveiling of his portrait at the Law Library, paid tribute to Kadirgamar's eminence as a lawyer and to his outstanding contribution to the country as Foreign Minister. ■

R. K. W. Goonesekere is a leading lawyer

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A FOND ADIEU TO OSMUND JAYARATNE

Joyce Jayaratne

“Like the dew on the mountain
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain
Thou art gone and forever.”

-Sir W. Scott

The saddest day of my life dawned on the 31st of August 2006 when Osmund breathed his last and departed from this world. The funeral took place on the 3rd of September. All that occurred during this period is etched and will remain forever in my mind.

It is not my intention to repeat here all that has been said in the speeches made and articles published in the newspapers extolling the life and work of my late husband. I would merely state that his life was a dedication to the upliftment of humanity in the fields of politics, science and education. Glowing tributes have been expressed by people from all walks of life – from the President of Sri Lanka down to the poor farmer in the deep south in a village called Hathporuwa in Tissamaharama. They all reiterated the value of the service and contributions made by Osmund during his lifetime, and mourned the loss of a true patriot of this country. To me it was a loss of a dear husband, friend and companion. Many were the trials and losses which dotted out lives, but we faced our tomorrows with fortitude with the knowledge that we had each other.

Osmund and I shared an interest in literature and music which we both enjoyed. I have gathered much information from his conversations which enriched my knowledge of science and politics. Recorded CDs and cassettes sent to him by his former students now working in the USA kept him updated about the happenings in the scientific world. He was fascinated with the vastness of the universe containing millions of galaxies. Our own galaxy, the ‘Milky Way’ was of special interest to him and he would listen enthralled to any scientific discovery made by astronomers and astronauts probing outer space.

Turning his attention to our known world, he enjoyed the beauty of nature, but deplored man’s inhumanity to man. He always stood for justice and equality. Even in the early years he would observe certain injustices in the treatment of different categories of people. For example, the rich lived in comfortable houses and traveled in cars, while the poor laboured and toiled for a pittance, living in little huts and walking barefoot on the streets. Such a situation was unacceptable to Osmund. We were students then

and he would talk to me about these matters which greatly influenced my thinking. It surprised me to know that my views and ideas were the same as his. I admired his dedication to change the order of things in the society in which we lived. It was his firm belief that everyone had the right to claim in the words of Karl Marx, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” (It is significant that a similar reference is found in Acts 4 v.34 of the Bible) Such an era has yet to dawn, and perhaps it will in the not-too-distant future.

Osmund was happiest in the company of his colleagues, friends and students whom he loved. He would warmly welcome them whenever they visited us in our little home. Their response of love and regard expressed at the funeral was overwhelming. I am deeply grateful to all those who supported and assisted me in my time of grief.

In passing, I am sure that Osmund would have liked to leave behind a message to all of us and especially to the youth of this country, from a quotation by the poet H.W. Longfellow:

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.
Let us then be up and doing
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.”

It is not an unknown fact that Osmund was an excellent actor. Even as an undergrad and after, he took a lead part in many of the plays directed by Prof. Lyn Ludowyk. These plays enacted in English became popular social events among the English-speaking population in Colombo and also in Kandy and Galle. His best performance was the role he played in *The Father* by Strindberg. Osmund particularly reveled in the plays written by Shakespeare, and had played the part of Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*. He would often recite with passionate fervour, some passages which he had memorized. In conclusion I would like to express my own sentiments by repeating from *Hamlet*, just a line which Osmund loved to quote:

“*Goodnight sweet Prince, and may flights
Of angels sing thee to thy rest...*” ■

OSMUND JAYARATNE (1924-2006): SCIENTIFIC AND POLITICAL VISIONARY

The death of LSSP politician, physicist and writer Osmund Jayaratne in September 2006 was mourned by the many who knew him in his various capacities. He is missed by those with SSA who came to know him recently through working with him on his memoirs, as we extend our deep condolences to his wife Joyce and family.

For the past several years, we visited Osmund and Joyce at their home in Kandana regarding the compilation and editing of his memoirs. This culminated in the launch of the book on his 80th birthday, in October 2004, and the rousing speech he made to the packed N.M. Perera hall. It was a working relationship that continued, with Osmund Jayaratne regularly contributing engaging and educative science articles for *Polity*. Osmund could not have written his memoirs or articles without the support of Joyce, who during his last years living with his visual disability, never left his side. Those with SSA who worked with Osmund and Joyce, and came to know this legendary figure, who was physicist, dramatist, leading LSSP activist, local council politician, university professor, reformer and vice-chancellor – appreciated the chance to contribute to the publishing of his memoirs and last writings.

No one could forget the genuine warmth of Osmund's welcoming smile and sincere words, and the inspiration that he provided over to so many people over so many years. As Kamini Meedeniya, who knew him from university days, emphasized: "Osmund was an excellent teacher; he made any subject he taught come alive, whether in physics or politics. He was passionate about whatever he did. That is why his students, whether here or working now at NASA or as professors in universities abroad, supported him in his most difficult days."

Osmund Jayaratne, even after losing his sight, still held strong to a powerful vision for people here and throughout the world, best captured in his own words, from the closing lines of his book, under the heading "A Renewed Vision." Much of the tragic trajectory he professed four years ago, in light of the

ensuing Iraq war and the tsunami, seemed prophetic – as more hopefully still would be his ultimate vision for humanity. As he wrote:

"Through BBC and CNN I am fairly aware at the moment of the tragic events in the world: nation fighting against nation; massacres occurring in many of the countries of the Third World. The Arab nations, particularly those of Palestine, are subject to the cruellest attacks by the well-armed State of Israel. Blood is flowing along the streets and human life has become cheap in the poorer countries of the world, and above all this stands the monstrosity of US imperialism seeking to impose its will upon all the countries of the world..."

In addition to these man-made disasters, natural tragedies have also begun to affect the world. Floods and drought, earthquakes and violence, eruptions and disasters in the transport sector are killing thousands upon thousands of the peoples of the world. The grossest corruption seems to have overtaken the capitalist corporations in the USA. The world is undergoing an unprecedented economic crisis, in fact a severe depression that is euphemistically referred to as a 'recession.' States are collapsing everywhere, markets are dwindling, and the world is undergoing a crisis that, in my opinion, is even worse than the Depression of 1924-25 and the 1930s of the last century.

"Yet, at the risk of being labelled an incurable optimist, I still believe that the world cannot proceed in this manner for very long. In the decades to come, long after my own generation has passed away, imperialism and capitalism will inevitably reach its destined end predicted by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels 150 years ago. A socialist society must inevitably arise, and the human race will for once come into its own.

(Osmund Jayaratne, *Politics, Science, Academe: Memoirs*: p160-61) ■

Book editor, May Yee; Osmund Jayaratne's memoirs were compiled and edited by the Social Scientists' Association. The book is available at the SSA's Suriya Bookshop.

THE MANY FACES OF OSMUND JAYARATNE

Ajith Samaranayake

The death of Professor Osmund Jayaratne closes a chequered life which has left its imprint on diverse areas of Sri Lankan society. An eminent scientist and academic he was also a leading member of the LSSP and a member of the Colombo Municipal Council while at the same time being a leading light of the Lionel Wendt Theatre at the time when the Centre could still hold. Academic, Politician and Thespian, Osmund Jayaratne was a Renaissance man of a type which has made an immeasurable contribution to enriching the intellectual and emotional life of the Sri Lanka of our times.

Osmund Jayaratne belong to that generation of idealistic young men and women who were radicalised by the ideas of socialism as spread by the LSSP during its early days. While excelling himself in his chosen discipline of physics he also soon emerged as a second-string leader of the LSSP and a formidable speaker in both Sinhala and English on both political platforms as well as study groups. He had a sound grasp of socialist theory and although not a theoretician in the same league as Hector Abhayawardhana or Doric de Souza was a speaker much in demand at seminars and study groups where socialism was seriously discussed.

In the 1950s when Dr. N. M. Perera was elected Mayor of Colombo much to the chagrin of the UNP establishment. Osmund and Bernard Soysa were N. M's main stalwarts. The filibustering speeches made by the two of them on the vote of 'No Confidence' against the Mayor while waiting for a judgment from the Supreme Court have already attained folkloric status in the annals of LSSP history.

During the hartal of 1953, fifty-three years ago Osmund Jayaratne was in charge of organising the Colombo South area. He manned an operational centre from a hideout in Wellawatte and was horrified when well-known LSSP leaders like Dr. Colvin R. de Silva arrived at what Osmund had made out to be an innocent middle-class household. Yet the hartal was a total success in Colombo and much of its organisation in the capital city was carried out by Osmund.

In the 1970s during the government of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Osmund Jayaratne was appointed Chairman of a committee charged with the reorganisation of the University system. In a radical measure which evoked howls of injured protests from the conservative academic Establishment the Jayaratne committee recommended a single University with Peradeniya, Colombo, Vidyalkara and Vidyodaya as its campuses.

Osmund Jayaratne will have his own space in the LSSP's history as the proponent of the Second Resolution at the LSSP Convention in the mid-1970s where the whole question of the role of the LSSP in the SLFP-LSSP-CP United Front Government was brought under challenge.

The Second Resolution was highly critical of the LSSP's role and Osmund recalled much later how he was virtually pushed into the toilet of the New Town Hall and forced into withdrawing it by some very formidable LSSP leaders!

I first saw Osmund Jayaratne when I was a schoolboy in 1968, when Principal of Trinity College E. Lionel Fernando invited him to give some tips to the College English debating team. Being an actor no doubt helped but Osmund was a speaker in a class of his own where diction, delivery and body movements were synthesised into a delightful whole. Very much later I had the pleasure of long hours of his company when along with the late Surath Ambalangoda, a former Editor of the *Aththa* and a formidable speaker in his own right and the late Lakshman Lokumanne, a well-known printer of the day, we formed a foursome who met fairly regularly at the Solis Restaurant at Koswatte Junction, Nawala, when Osmund was living at Welikadawatte, Rajagiriya.

Osmund Jayaratne's was a full life which was not without its afflictions and in a sense was a tragic commentary on the life of an intellectual in a Third World society. However, his was also a contented life, for Osmund Jayaratne belonged to that dwindling breed which refused to join the rat race, seek the baubles of office or surrender to the Establishment. ■

Courtesy *Sunday Observer*, 3 October 2006.

Ajith Samaranayake is a leading journalist and editor of *Friday*.

While this issue was under way, Ajith Samaranayake passed away at the age of 51. The *Polity* mourns the loss of a friend, contributor and social commentator par excellence.

A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

(A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE ADRIAN WIJEMANNE)

Neville Jayaweera

Unlike the more famous voice that cried in the wilderness some two thousand years ago, Adrian Wijemanne did not literally have his head served on a platter, but was regularly threatened with reprisals no less gruesome. Neither did he ever have to live on a diet of locusts and honey, but was constantly promised humble pie unless he stopped writing and lecturing on the ethnic conflict. His detractors not only ridiculed and abused him, but also directed at him, hate mail, death threats and promises of bodily harm if he ever set foot in his native Sri Lanka. Even though for the past 5 years he was ravaged by cancer and was often in excruciating pain, hardly anyone, that is, besides his immediate family his devoted wife Chitra, daughter Shevanthi, and son-in-law Dr Bruce Roser, and occasionally a few other close friends, and myself, cared to look him up or call him. The only reason for banishing Wijemanne to the wilderness was that he had the audacity and the moral courage, unequivocally, volubly and globally, to challenge the extreme rightist Sinhala orthodoxy on the Sinhala-Tamil conflict.

Wijemanne, a distinguished product of Royal College Colombo, passed into the then CCS in 1947 and went on to hold several important positions in the Lands and Irrigation Ministry. However, though a scion of a top drawer Sinhala family from Kalutara, unable to adapt himself to the emerging culture of political interference, indiscipline and ethnic discrimination, during Mrs Bandaranaike's first government in the early 1960s, (he took early retirement). After a short stint in the private sector in Colombo, he joined the World Council of Churches, as the head of its Development Bank in Geneva (moving later to Amsterdam) in which role he served till his retirement in the early 1990s. Upon retirement, he and his wife Chitra settled down in England, to be close to their daughter Shevanthi.

In 2001 Wijemanne was first diagnosed with a cancer of the spine but even though the illness took hold rapidly and he was often in great pain, he never spoke about his condition, unless asked. I saw him last as he lay dying in hospital, a few days before he passed away, but even then, though in unutterable pain, he was lamenting not his illness but the

folly of SL leaders in failing even belatedly to face up to the reality of the crisis facing the country. Two days after I saw him he went into a coma and within another two days, on the 22nd of July, passed away. He was 81.

Handling dissent

Wijemanne and I had not only been colleagues in SL (he was my senior in the Service by seven years) but after we both took early retirement, we went on to be colleagues in the international ecumenical service as well, he working from Geneva and I from London. However it was only after we both finally retired in the mid 1990s that we got to talking on the telephone almost daily, sharing our respective views, mostly on issues relating to the ethnic conflict, but often discussing international problems and spiritual and religious themes as well. Very often we disagreed, and disagreed vehemently too, but it was the measure of his stature as an intellectual that Wijemanne could not only listen to those who held contrary views but could also handle dissent with total composure, without becoming personal or vituperative, however animated the discussion or sharp the discord. I thought that this inner coherence and dignity, more than anything he wrote, set Wijemanne apart as an intellectual. Equally, Wijemanne was endowed with a rare sense of humour and a capacity for infectious laughter, with which he fended off with a total insouciance, the vituperation that detractors hurled at him regularly.

Motivation

During the period 1990 to 2001, Wijemanne not only wrote copiously but also lectured widely, in the USA, in Canada and in Europe. Although he copied all of his writings to the principal broadsheets in SL, hardly any local paper published them. However, several global websites carried them regularly and the Internet multiplied them hundreds of thousands of times over. I recall that in the nineties, along with the SL journal Pravada, Wijemanne writings were standard reading for diplomats manning South Asian desks in the Foreign Offices of European capitals. I also recall that at least on one occasion in the nineties, the

UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva gave him a hearing in his personal capacity, which was an unprecedented gesture for a UN body.

However, regardless of all this publicity and international exposure, Wijemanne remained transparently modest and devoid of ego, neither talking about himself nor ever deliberately seeking public profile or visibility. He was modest not only in demeanour but also lived modestly with his wife Chitra in a twin bedroom suburban apartment, never accepting payment either for lecturing or for writing and having only his pension and savings for an income.

Former friends and even relatives, often wondered what motivated Wijemanne to espouse the Tamil cause in the manner he did, exposing himself to such wanton condemnation. Far from deriving any material or visible benefits, he and his family paid a mighty price for his self sacrificial commitment, in terms of the stress they were constantly subjected to, and their eviction from the mainstream Sinhala community, both in SL and in the UK.

I believe that what motivated Wijemanne was a total dedication to justice and righteousness as he saw it, untainted by self or ambition, and stemming from his deep Christian roots. Espousing the cause of the Tamil people was not for him a foreign funded. He did it because he believed that it was the right thing to do, whatever the cost, and expediency and opportunism never stained his endeavours. He simply loathed injustice and oppression per se, by whomsoever perpetrated, not only in SL, but wherever it manifested in the world, and he spoke up as unequivocally on the side of the Bosnians, the Palestinians and the Chechnyan rebels as well.

A contradiction

However, heroic though he was, Wijemanne stance on the LTTE was fraught with a contradiction, which he and I have debated lengthily, though without resolution. The contradiction was simply this. How can one condemn Sinhala oppression of the Tamil people on one hand and yet not condemn the oppression of the Tamil people by the LTTE itself? How can one condemn state terror and turn a blind eye to LTTE terror?

Wijemanne sought to resolve this contradiction by claiming that the LTTE recourse to repression and terror was episodic

and tactically inevitable, as it had been with every liberation struggle throughout history, whether class based or nationalistic. He believed that when Eelam is finally achieved and Tamil society secured and stabilised, the need to resort to repression and terror will disappear and the culture of violence wither away. In support of his contention Wijemanne would cite the liberation struggles in Kenya, Algeria, Cyprus and Ireland.

Those who seek to justify the use of terror and repression as tactical tools often adduce this argument. However, as I used to point out to Wijemanne repeatedly, any society which claims to be civilised must order its affairs within a framework of certain absolute values, and the abrogation of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law, and the systematic recourse to terror, whether by state or non-state actors, even tactically, is never acceptable. On the other hand, it is true that the UN system has conceded to states the right to derogate human rights and the rule of law, for coping with specific emergencies, under certain defined conditions and subject to strict monitoring by international agencies, but not as an alternative to democratically resolving long simmering national conflicts.

Tamil nationhood

Wijemanne perspective on the ethnic conflict flowed from the premise that the claim of the SL Tamils to nationhood (not to be confused for statehood) is irrefutable. He held that by internationally accepted criteria, insofar as the Tamils of Sri Lanka had been in continuous occupation of a clearly defined territory for more than 1500 years, and are heirs to a distinctive language, and a distinctive religion and could claim to belong to the sub-continent's oldest culture, and most of all, are sustained by a vibrant sense of ethnic identity, they were already a nation, whether or not the Sinhala and the rest of the world recognised it. What was in dispute was whether that nation, so conceived, could be integrated within a single Sri Lankan state, or whether it should, or could, set itself up as a separate state.

He also believed that it was primarily in the interest of the Sinhala to release the Dhamila from the majoritarian stranglehold they exercised over them, so that both nations, the Sinhala and the Dhamila, may prosper in a symbiotic and synergistic relationship within a single united Sri Lankan state, rather than waste their respective resources in a self-destructive civil war.

Terror and terrorism

Wijemanne held very strong views on the subject of terror and terrorism. While condemning terror, he also refused to draw a distinction between state terror and non-state terror. Terror is terror by whomsoever inflicted and he held that state terror was in fact more reprehensible because it had unlimited access to sophisticated technology and could easily cloak evil in the vestments of legality and legitimacy. He often cited the USA, the UK, France and the Soviet Union throughout their histories, and Germany and Japan during WW2, as classic perpetrators of state terror and claimed that more often than not, it is the state that casts the first stone and that non-state terror is invariably a last resort response by an underclass, driven to extreme frustration by the intransigence of the state.

Wijemanne was convinced that whether it takes another five decades or more, unless the Sinhala polity remedies the conditions that first generated Tamil militancy and LTTE terror, the blood letting will continue until the Tamil people finally emerge as a separate state or at least take their place as equal partners within a confederation. Therefore he urged that it was equally in the interests of both the groups to accelerate that outcome fast, through dialogue and negotiation. However, he also believed that such an outcome is not likely without direct foreign intervention and without a Dayton Accord type formula being first put in place. In

the absence of such *travaux ex machina* he envisaged an endless haemorrhaging of both groups and their total debilitation.

Current trends

I believe that some of Wijemanne's views, as expressed in his writings of the early to mid nineties, especially concerning LTTE's policy on violence and terror, were flawed. But then, so has every conceivable view on the ethnic conflict, there being no fully consistent position ever possible, which can satisfy equally the aspirations of all parties, while simultaneously meeting the demands of liberal values.

Wijemanne's contribution to the debate is that he has, more than any Sinhala commentator or intellectual I know of, exposed with a relentless clarity and power, with total commitment, and on a global canvas, and furthermore, without material support from any quarter either, the folly of the main line Sinhala orthodoxy, and with equal cogency, argued the case for the Tamils. Judging by the current trends, the Wijemanne view that unless Tamil grievances are rapidly remedied through negotiations, helam, or at least a confederation, is inevitable, may not be so delusional as some may think. Adrian Wijemanne may not have had his head served on a platter, but he may yet prove to have been the prophet of his generation. ■

SENAKE BIBILE'S LIFE AND WORK

Carlo Fonseka

Senake William Bibile was born to an aristocratic family of Uva-Wellassa on the 13th of February 1920. He was the eldest of the six children of Sylvia Augusta Jayawardane (daughter of Mudaliyar Harry Jayawardane of Kataluwa, Galle) and Charles William Bibile, the much-loved *Rate Mahatmaya* of Bibile at that time. A brilliant, scholarship-winning student and award-winning sportsman, he could also act, sing and dance. He was indeed an extra-ordinarily talented all-rounder. He was educated at Trinity College Kandy (1928 - 1939); the Colombo Medical School (1940 - 1945); and the University of Edinburgh (1949 - 1952). At the Colombo Medical School, he graduated MBBS



in 1945, having passed all the professional examinations in the First Class and winning the most prestigious gold medals on offer: the Dhunjishaw Dadabhoj Gold Medal for Medicine and the Rockwood Gold Medal for Surgery. In due course, he distinguished himself as an academic pharmacologist, a world-class medical scientist, a charismatic university professor, a perceptive medical educationist, and a socialist visionary, deeply involved in humankind.

Of all the doctors Sri Lanka has ever produced, Professor Senake Bibile must be reckoned the one whose life's work directly benefits to the greatest degree patients who need

treatment with drugs. For his was the acute intelligence that devised a scheme for the rationalization of the supply and use of pharmaceuticals which makes available to the public, the most essential, effective and safest drugs at the cheapest possible prices. The alternative is to buy them in the free-market from the pharmaceutical industry whose sole reason for existence is the maximisation of profit by hook or by crook. Patients have no choice; they simply have to buy just what their doctors order for them. With the political support of Dr S.A. Wickremasinghe, Member of Parliament and leader of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, Senaka Bibile created the State Pharmaceutical Corporation in 1971. As its Founder Chairman, he demonstrated for all the world to see, that his scheme actually worked very well in practice. It has since become the pharmaceutical policy model for many developing and even developed countries which do not regard health care merely as a branch of cut-throat big business. Successful implementation of his scheme eroded the exorbitant profits of the multi-national drug companies. Predictably, they used every means available to them including intervention by officials of powerful foreign states, to try to sabotage the smooth operation of the State Pharmaceutical Corporation. The fact that it has survived up to date in the teeth of calculated opposition is proof of the enduring validity of Senake Bibile's inspired and inspiring vision. If the light of rationality in the supply and usage of drugs still burns in this country, it is because Senake Bibile set it alight with such intensity. A national drug policy in line with Senake Bibile's vision is now being implemented step by step nearly three decades after his death.

The importance of Senake Bibile's mission in the field of pharmaceuticals far outshaded the seminal roles he played as a medical scientist, educationist, health policy theorist, university don, humanist and political activist. He was the first Dean of Peradeniya University's Faculty of Medicine (1967 – 1970), and one of his signal initiatives was the setting up of its Medical Education Unit. In the field of general education, he served as Chairman of the School Biology Project sponsored by the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science. Its aim was to devise curriculum materials suitable for use in secondary schools at the GCE

O level. He was a scientific researcher of the first rank, and had to his credit some 45 publications in local and international journals. As a health policy theorist at the national level, he subscribed to the view that medicine was primarily a social science and rational politics, the implementation of sound medical practice on a national scale. Thus his enthusiastic involvement in active politics as a committed member of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party. In 1959, he compiled the Ceylon Hospitals Formulary (the little Red Book), which gave a succinct and lucid account of the drugs used in our hospitals. He also collaborated with Ayurvedic Physicians to investigate the efficacy of some of our indigenous remedies. As a medical researcher he proved that large daily doses of Vitamin C (500 mg) neither prevented nor cured the common cold. As a teacher, he had a very decisive influence especially on his more perceptive pupils, a few of whom became his lifelong disciples. They endeavour to continue the practice of humane medicine he inspired in them by precept and example. His indomitable courage in the face of adversity persisted to his last days on earth.

His efforts to formulate and implement a national drug policy were frustrated. He was clearly ahead of his time. His political party, the LSSP, ceased to be a part of the United Front government in 1975. In 1976, Senake Bibile resigned from the Chairmanship of the State Pharmaceutical Corporation. In 1977, UNCTAD – The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development – invited him to work as a Senior Advisor and Consultant on Pharmaceutical Policy. He was entrusted with the responsibility of working on the pharmaceutical policies of 13 developing countries. Thus he proved to be a prophet who was held in honour, except in his own country.

His last assignment was to visit and report on the pharmaceutical scene in the Caribbean Islands. He was in Georgetown, Guyana, when he became terminally ill with heart failure and died on the 29th of September 1977. His wife, Leela, was by his side through thick and thin. She brought his ashes to his motherland and they were interred in the Colombo Jawatta Cemetery on the 4th of October 1977. ■

Dr. Carlo Fonseka is a member of the University Grants Commission.