

CHRISTIAN

Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship

WORKER

Vijaya Kumaratunga in the film 'Christhu Charithaya'



THE PRICE OF BLOOD

- **Is the Situation Easing?** Colvin R de Silva
- **The Mahaveli Scandal**
- **Eye-Witness Report on Batticaloa** Fr. V. Yogeswaren S.J.
- **The Ten Budgets of Ronnie de Mel** H.N.S. Karunatilake
- **Ecological Threat in Trinco**
- **The Radical Tradition of the Buddha and Karl Marx** Nalin Swaris



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Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship
**CHRISTIAN
WORKER**

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FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

From our readers

On Economics & the Accord

I was amazed by the article "The Economic Implications of the Accord" by Dr. H. N. S. Karunatileke appearing in your January 1988 edition as it was ridden with some terribly short sighted chauvinistic views.

To begin with, Dr. Karunatileke declares that the introduction of English and Tamil as official languages will result in "far reaching implications for the people who have been educated in Sinhala for the past thirty years and millions of school children who are now being educated in Sinhala and whose knowledge of English is very poor will be adversely affected." Now, while this may be true, he conveniently forgets the plight of the majority of Tamils educated in Tamil. Would they too not be in the same boat?

He then states that after 1956 "equal opportunities were available to all irrespective of social background and wealth."

This may be true of the years upto the mid sixties. The negative impact of the Sinhala Only cry of 1956 is seen in all its fury today in the form of youth unrest. Many are the highly qualified Swabasha graduates who are either under or unemployed. Why? The answer is simple. One has only to scan the newspapers to see that private sector apart, many a government institution insists on applicants having a knowledge of English. Thus these poor youth end up frustrated as they can neither find employment here nor abroad. This is the nett result of the Sinhala Only policy introduced by a selfish bunch of politicians backed by some short sighted intellectuals; who while making the poor man's child a veritable frog in the well, sent their children abroad to garner the benefits of an English education, and thus be gainfully employed either here or overseas. It is this coterie of people along with a powerful but dilettantist group that is against the introduction of English.

The writer then goes on to say that "the introduction of English will result in denying the right of the majority of the people to have their education in

their mother tongue". He will do well to note that English has NOT replaced either Sinhala or Tamil. On the contrary it provides another alternative to the poor man's child; an alternative denied to them since 1956.

The learned doctor questions the fate of those with a Sinhala education saying that "this decision in the Accord will now require this 12 million to learn English at this late stage in life..." Who are the people responsible for this? Could not this position have been totally avoided if, like in India, the English stream was continued at Central school level. Now that this blunder has been committed should not at least the future generations have access to an English education? As for how soon a well ordered introduction of English will take to produce results, it is well worth harkening to the words of Dr. I. A. Richards, one of the greatest English critics who says "Experiments show that a year of ordered English can give the beginner an entrance to the, language hitherto rarely achieved in five and with that a medium is available for truly world wide communication in planetary affairs." If this is the result English

would have in the international sphere, the effect it would have on plural societies such as ours, striving to heal communal wounds, is beyond any doubt.

But the writer, completely unaware of realities, seems to think otherwise. He argues that 75% of the people speak Sinhala and therefore if the Tamils had their education in that language the present crisis would not have emerged. Is not this statement ridiculous in the least? After all, why should the Tamils learn Sinhala when they themselves are the inheritors of a language much older and richer too? Again, why should they learn Sinhala when their own has been accorded second class treatment since 1956?

In a vain attempt to champion the cause of 1956 Act, the learned doctor tries to draw a non-existent parallel between India and Sri Lanka vis-a-vis official languages by saying "Although Hindi is spoken by only 30% of the total Indian population. India has never considered to put any other language on par with it." May I ask why there is no opposition to this? The answer is simple. India is a federal state with all the internal business of each constituent state being conducted in its own language. For instance the affairs of business and government in Tamil Nadu are conducted in Tamil, not in Hindi. With regard to inter-state and state-central government business, it is conducted in English which serves as the lingua franca. Thus the existence of Hindi as the state language poses no problems to the states. However these states have always zealously prevented Hindi making any inroads into their affairs, as shown by the recent language riots in Tamil Nadu. On the contrary Sri Lanka is a unitary state where Sinhala holds almost total sway, with the minorities at the receiving end of all that flows from it. This has in no small measure contributed to all the mistrust, animosity, and ill-feeling between the majority and minority communities today.

Hector Abhayawardhana in the same issue of the *Christian Worker* poignantly declares "What is serious about this whole thing is that it is taking place in the context of a crisis in our society which is so deep and has gone so far in the direction of disintegration that hopelessness and fear which seem to be the principal feature in people's attitude in our society today, will tend to reinforce movements like the JVP and the LTTE. This will bring about further destruction and disinteg-

ration." It's little wonder that such a situation is imminent with even so-called intellectuals adding fuel to the fire through utterly short sighted pieces of writing. They would be doing a great service by the country by gyrating well in the fields they profess to specialise in rather than straying into domains unknown, thereby fanning communal passions. In a nutshell, it will only serve to destroy the already wobbling fabric of Sri Lanka society and in the process destroy the very communal interest that some seek to protect.

D. C. H. Jayaweera
Peradeniya.
25.01.1988

Vijaya's Crowning Act

The coward killer's bullets sped
Thro' that brave bleeding heart,
Then riddled that fair face with lead
Beyond the surgeon's art.

The headless corpse lay steeped
in blood
In crimson pools of gore,
Felled unsuspecting as he stood
Outside his open door.

The monstrous crime for which
he paid
The price, his precious life,
His starry future lowly laid,
His children, home and wife.

For unity, for peace — end strife
Sans race, religion, class
He strove for justice, better life
For the exploited mass.

The Socialist United Force
He brought to birth in life
Was signed in death o'er his corpse
Led by his fearless wife.

The surging crowds that thronged
the pyre
Pledged solemnly the Pact,
The martyr tho' consumed in fire
Lives in his crowning act.

Mervyn Casie Chetty

Gamini - An Actor Agitated

An actor agitated
Anger unmitigated
A sorry sight
At a friend's funeral.
Gamini preached compassion
For Vijaya's assassin,
But for those who pulled
His legs, no forgiveness.
His remarks on Ronnie
Were no politics
Only others 'made it
A political funeral'
But he is an honourable man
Sure, weeping for his friend.
More worried about funeral rites
Than the way Vijaya has died.
Having acted as Mr. Kabalana
He seemed to have become one,
Capable of teaching mourners
How exactly to weep.

Loku Rala.

Call for Sympathy

Sir,

I am writing on behalf of the Tamil government employees. I shall be obliged if you will please, give publicity to our genuine grievances and help us to have relief.

As you will know the Tamil Government Employees Trade Unions are almost dismantled. We have no leaders to take up our case. So I am relying on your magazine very much. We are also workers and because we are few in number at the moment, we deserve your sympathy very much.

The government is at the moment concentrating on the recent victims and that too on victims of violence. The past victims and that too victims falling under unconventional categories are neglected. I am sending a separate hand-out sort of thing to help the editing process.

Thank you,
Yours sincerely,

Sgd. S. N. Nadarajah
230, T2, Park Road, Colombo 5.
19th January, 1988.

The Price of Blood

A heavy price has already been paid in blood for the senseless acts of violence that have followed attempts at destabilisation directed by forces operating from the Northern and Southern extremities of our land. These acts have included savage attacks on defenceless villagers and the brutal mowing down of individuals by gun-toting gangs. The highlight of this orgy of violence in the South was the tragic murder of the charismatic leader of the newly formed United Socialist Alliance, Vijaya Kumaratunga on February 16th at the entrance to his own home.

While the violence unleashed in the North and East has been in the context of a continuing guerilla war engaged in by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), that in the South has mainly taken the form of sporadic raids and gunning down of individuals organized by the Janata Vimukti Peramuna operating under such names as the Desapremi Janata Viyaparaya through groups of armed youth.

The LTTE in the North and East

Today a problem has obviously been created for the LTTE with the "saturation" of the Northern and Eastern Provinces by an increased Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) said to now number over 70,000 troops (some put the number at even 100,000). The Tigers must now decide whether to continue with their present policy of combative resistance and conflict with the fourth largest army in the world or to cease hostilities in the face of the hard realities of the situation however bitter and painful these may be and instead to enter the mainstream of political life by participating in the democratic process now offered in the form of Provincial Council elections.

This decision is by no means an easy one when it is recognised that the LTTE has been essentially

a military formation, more disciplined perhaps than other militant groups, but painfully lacking in political acumen and a coherent ideology. LTTE cadres could feel quite handicapped when it came to making political speeches on public platforms and participating in the electoral processes in contrast to the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) politicians and other groups that are more politically articulate. On the other hand, the LTTE's military acumen and knowledge of the terrain could enable it at least to prolong its guerilla campaign against the Indian troops. In fact the antagonism of the Jaffna population to the behaviour of the IPKF in the early stages of "Operation Pawan" even created a good climate for continued militancy on the part of the Tigers. It would however become increasingly difficult for the LTTE to engage in a fight on many fronts since it would now have to simultaneously take on the IPKF, the Sri Lankan Forces, rival militant groups and even the Sinhala and Muslim population in Tamil areas that it has antagonised by its recent butchery of defenceless villagers in the East and North-East.

Tiger Moves

It was perhaps a recognition of the difficulties it faced in the long run of continuing its armed combat, that induced the Tigers to seek to get back the position they had lost when they rejected the agreement of September 28th, 1987 which guaranteed them the pride of place in an Interim Administration (see last issue of *Christian Worker*). This they sought to do by appeals to the Indian Government for a restoration of the *status quo ante* and further discussions. The repeated appeals of Tiger Leader V. Prabhakaran were dismissed by the Indian Government as a mere "propaganda ploy." The Indian Government insisted that the LTTE accepts the Peace Accord, unconditionally surrender its arms and enter the democratic political process.

On at least two occasions, the LTTE is then reported to have sought an agreement with the Sri Lankan Government through some of its Ministers, notably Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, once in early January and then again in February. This proposed agreement was on the basis of the LTTE vacating all claims to the East in return for being allowed to set up an interim administration in the North for a period of 3 to 5 years without holding elections. The Eastern Province was to be divided into Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim areas under these proposals. These attempts however were not successful and only angered the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, Mr. J. N. Dixit, to whom also apparently overtures had been made.

In this context, it should become clear to the Tigers if they decide to end their confrontational course that there can be no return to September 28th 1987 where they were given the dominant place in an interim administration. Similarly it would be futile for the Tigers to insist on the Indian forces returning to pre-October 10th 1987 positions. There is also simply no possibility for yet another token surrender of arms by the LTTE as was done in the past. There will have obviously to be a clearly defined, perhaps at the most a phased out laying-down of arms within a specific period. Again there will have to be an unambiguous acceptance of the Indo-Lankan Accord by the LTTE Leader Prabhakaran. It is these hard realities that have today placed the LTTE in a quandary.

When their pleas are not being heard the Tigers also react in characteristic fashion — in barbarity, which is clearly evident in their latest series of grisly attacks in January and March on Sinhalese villages in the Trincomalee area and in Vavuniya. (Fortunately there was no backlash in the Sinhala areas though the slaughter of a vanload of mostly Tamils on March 11 is believed to be the retaliatory work of Sinhala extremists). By these means the LTTE has also demonstrated time and again that the resettlement of Sinhalese chased away from the East cannot take place before the Tigers are brought into a political settlement. This would also be borne out by a radio intercept said to be made of a conversation between Prabhakaran and the LTTE area leader Pandyan of Mannar on March 7th where the former is reported to have said: "All we have done so far has produced zero results. If we fail to get to the negotiating table, we have to think of the programme we had during the Vadamaratchi campaign by the Sri Lankan army. Every man must be instructed that he should kill at least 50 people before he goes down."

The fast undertaken by Mrs. Annamah David of the Batticaloa Mothers Front on February 20th was

also directed towards securing a cease fire and talks between the LTTE and the Indians, but this was stopped by the IPKF on March 16th in response it was said to an appeal and complaint made by her daughters that she was being kept under duress and forced to starve herself to death against her will.

It was obviously again a move to seek a form of settlement that is seen in the visit of LTTE's "Raheem" (Balasubramaniam Canagaratnam) and his colleague "Lt. Col. Johnny" who on March 5th were flown in on an Indian Air Force aircraft to meet their leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. (It was "Raheem" who together with "Kittu" figured prominently during Vijaya Kumartunga's visit to Jaffna to secure the release of two army men held by the Tigers). Both "Raheem" and "Johnny" went out of the IPKF base in Vavuniya into the jungles and had a series of meetings with Prabhakaran and other Tiger leaders. They are said to have spent nearly 14 days in Sri Lanka. Johnny's bullet ridden body was found in the shrub jungles off Vavuniya after IPKF operations. (*The Hindu* of March 15th reported that the IPKF had smashed the LTTE's operational headquarters in the Oddusuddan area and put Prabhakaran and other leaders on the run). The LTTE accuse the IPKF of having tailed Johnny who was returning after a meeting with Prabhakaran and shooting him dead in the jungle and allege some documents which Johnny had been carrying with him to hand over to his leader "Kittu" in Madras were stolen. The LTTE have stated this reflected "breach of faith" on the part of the Indian Government. "Raheem" who was with "Mahattaya" the LTTE's commander in Jaffna at the time, returned to the IPKF base in Vavuniya to lodge an angry protest and was later flown to Madras. Indian moves to arrest the Madras based LTTE members in this context were given up in view of strong protests by Tamilnadu politicians. In any case, the suspicions over Johnny's death have delayed any fresh dialogue between the LTTE and India.

Tamilnadu Elections

However the prospect of forth-coming Elections in Tamilnadu would make the Sri Lankan situation a sensitive issue which can be capitalised on by Opposition forces in Tamilnadu. Already the Congress has been severely criticised in Tamilnadu over developments in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Its intended alliance with the Jayalalitha faction of MGR's ADMK does not appear to be working because of differences in the allocation of seats. Political observers feel that the only possible chance for the Congress to counter the growing popularity of Karunanidhi and his DMK (which now has sought to espouse the LTTE cause) is for the Congress to effect a settlement with the LTTE.

Such a settlement will certainly take the wind out of the Opposition Party campaign. It will be recalled that that Rajiv Gandhi and MG Ramachandran made an appearance together after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord on the Madras Marina before an enthusiastic audience. It is therefore left to be seen whether such a reconciliation could in fact be effected. The acceptance by the LTTE of the Accord and its entry into the mainstream of political life after laying down arms can of course assist the electoral process that is to be set in motion with the Provincial Councils and help to bring the much desired peace to the people of the North and East.

The Role of the IPKF & Trinco

In an article in *The Island* of March 20th, D. B. S. Jeyaraj comments that "in recent times many people are puzzled over the seeming helplessness of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in the wake of a series of civilian massacres allegedly by the LTTE. Some even allege that there is a tacit understanding between the Indians and the Tigers". We ourselves have had occasion to comment on the sorry role of the IPKF especially in the Eastern Province where its inaction has resulted in the uprooting of thousands especially Sinhalese and Muslims from their homes.

Jeyaraj in the same article quotes M. J. Akbar (the editor of the Calcutta newspaper *Telegraph* and a journalist considered close to Rajiv Gandhi and even tipped to be appointed to the Rajya Sabha) who in the "Sunday" magazine has adduced a number of reasons on "Why we are in Sri Lanka". The most important reason according to Akbar is Trincomalee which has had strategic importance for India from British times.

The Hindu of January 21st reported details of a draft agreement between the Sri Lankan Government and the U.S. drawn up in mid-1986 with regard to Trincomalee. This draft was said to be worked out by Sri Lankan Government officials and the representatives of two private companies, one of them based in Singapore who are believed to be a front for the C.I.A. A copy of this agreement was obtained by the Indian High Commission and transmitted to New Delhi. It is thought that this was a major ingredient that prompted the Indian Government in the direction of committing itself to resolve the ethnic tangle in Sri Lanka through the Indo-Lankan Agreement signed on July 29th, 1987. The same account stated that "There are reasons to believe that the U.S. which was already overextended and did not consider Sri Lanka a 'vital' area of its security concerns, turned down the proposal and also made it known to India that the Sri Lankans were

getting desperate. The Indian side therefore saw this as a clear indication that the U.S. accepted India's role in Sri Lanka as long as it was within the parameters of accepting the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka and provided for the Trincomalee harbour remaining outside 'third party' hands. U.S. Ambassador in Sri Lanka James W. Spain however has described this Trincomalee project story as "a wicked fantasy".

Impact of the IPKF

We have in our last issue noted how the IPKF on its arrival was careful not to do anything to offend Tamil sentiment to preserve its image as the "saviour and friend" of the Tamil people. It was only the decision of the Tigers to defy the Indian initiative in setting up an interim administration that gave no option to the IPKF than to proceed militarily to disarm the LTTE and crush its resistance. The experience of 'Operation Pawan' and the conduct of some of the Indian ranks roused Tamil feelings, and resentment against the IPKF was widespread. Measures to exercise more restraint and enforce more discipline have apparently been taken since, as was evident during the search operations recently carried out in Batticaloa town.

Notwithstanding the heavy concentration of Indian troops in the North and East, Kachcheris are not functioning in the towns in predominantly Tamil areas including Jaffna, according to reports. The Tigers do not move around armed as in the past, but their presence is nonetheless felt. They are able to successfully organize protest actions, occasionally kill a "collaborator" or government official (Mannar Government Agent M. M. Makbool was the latest victim), hunt and destroy militants of rival groups, or bomb a printing press unfavourable to them as they did when they destroyed the Eelanadu press in Jaffna in February despite the heavy IPKF presence. To this must be added the cowardly killing of Jaffna Communist Party Leader S. Vijayanathan as a "traitor to the Tamils". And when an issue arises on which the Tigers need publicity, posters go up through the night though IPKF sentries and jeeps patrols all the main roads. Journalists say they are able to make easy contact with the Tigers in Vavuniya just a few kilometers from town. On January 19th Batticaloa jail was attacked and prisoners freed during a Tiger Hartal though there were no political prisoners.

The lack of confidence in and even distrust of the IPKF by the Sinhalese and Muslim communities in the East who have demanded protection by Sri Lankan troops has posed serious problems as regards the resettlement of refugees to which both India and Sri Lanka are committed in terms of the Accord. More

and more residents of Trincomalee including Muslims are beginning to blame the IPKF for their problems. About 40,000 people have been displaced from their homes in this area following LTTE attacks which began in September last year. Serious questions are being therefore asked about the IPKF's role in the East especially in the context of the heavy exodus of Sinhalese and Muslim from these areas. Tamil militant-Muslim clashes in Kattankudy (Batticaloa district) and Kalmunai and violence in Sainthamarathu and Samanthurai have added to the problems. Here too the total incompetence of the IPKF has given rise to suspicions that it was designed.

The need is for us now to be able to put our own house in order without delay so that the Indian presence will not be with us longer than is really necessary.

Added to this is the misunderstanding and estrangement that apparently exists between the IPKF and many of the Sri Lankan troops in the area technically confined to barracks under the Accord. Kendall Hopman writing from Trincomalee in an article appearing in the *Sunday Times* of March 27 asserts that there have been at least four occasions when due to misunderstanding or blunder a shoot-out between Lankan and Indian soldiers has been averted in the nick of time.

No doubt the Jawans are themselves having a difficult time and resentful too, of being deployed in a foreign land. The educational and cultural level of the IPKF rank and file when contrasted with the Sri Lankan army could also give rise to a lack of rapport and even resentment on the part of the local population accustomed as they are to different ways of behaviour and understanding. But those in command must take responsibility for acts like the continuous firing and clamping down of curfews in Batticaloa recently. The IPKF ban on fishing along the east coast also caused grave hardship to the people. India however is paying a high price to implement the Accord with the death toll of its troops nearing the 400 mark. New Delhi admitted on March 7th that it had lost 386 men since October 10th last year. At least 1250

have been wounded. Unofficial estimates put the death toll twice as high with at least 3200 wounded. "It is the highest death toll for the world's fourth largest army in a peace-keeping mission abroad" stated an A.F.P. report of March 25th though High Commissioner J. N. Dixit is reported to have told the Agence-France-Press that "the deaths are in keeping with the traditions of the Indian Army." The Indian offensive has claimed the lives of more than 1300 suspected LTTE men and women and led to the arrests of hundreds.

Following the spree of Tiger violence on March 17 and 22 when they pounced on defenceless Sinhalese villagers in the East, massacring even the children, discussions were had with India, after which Sri Lankan Security Forces were deployed to take defensive positions in Sinhala and Muslim settlements to provide security to the civilians. There will however be no joint patrolling by the Sri Lankan Security Forces and the IPKF. Sri Lankan Police personnel who were positioned in some of these villages will now join Indian troops in joint patrols in the Trincomalee town and other areas.

It is easy of course to be critical about the presence of Indian troops on our soil, but it must not be forgotten that such a step became almost inevitable when in the context of the conflictive and racist politics indulged in by our petty capitalist politicians, serious problems were created which invited intervention on the part of our big neighbour. The need is for us now to be able to put our own house in order without delay so that the Indian presence will not be with us longer than is really necessary.

Southern Violence: Provincial Councils

We have in the past issue of *Christian Worker* sought to discuss the nature of the insurgent movement in the South identified with the outlawed Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) and functioning generally now under the name of "Desapremi Janata Viyaparaya," against which has been unleashed state counter-terror in the form of the STF, "Green Tigers" and the like.

We have noted how the politics pursued by this group reflect in their own way the politics of frustration and despair characteristic of the youthful social layers that they represent. And these politics are as we have seen indicative too of the deep-going nature of the crisis that afflicts Sri Lankan society today. It is a crisis that has shown itself in the breakdown of our political system, and in the near collapse of our economy coupled with the falling apart of our cherished cultural and moral values. The brutalisation of our society following repeated waves of violence and the totalitarian

trends that have been evident especially since 1977 have played no small part in this process. The increase in acts of youthful violence illustrated perhaps dramatically by the young soldier who recently ran amok and killed 7 of his sleeping mates and injured 8 more at Oruwela is a sad commentary on our social condition. Furthermore the absence of a proper political alternative and a class force strong enough to show a way out of the present morass has tended to further complicate the situation. Hence the ready response too of petit-bourgeois youthful sections to Sinhala chauvinist cries in a fashion similar to the Tamil Eelamist cries of corresponding youthful sections in the North. The displacement of Sinhala people from the East following the Peace Accord many of whom have their roots in the Southern part of the island has tended to strengthen such tendencies.

It is in the context of the Provincial Council elections and other elections to follow and the formation of the United Socialist Alliance that the real meaning and significance of Vijaya Kumaratinga's murder can be understood.

The JVP has in this situation sought to take advantage of the position by concentrating its fire on the Peace Accord and thus link up with the agitation conducted by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led by Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike who has openly opposed the pact aided by certain sections of the Government too though such opposition is not expressed in the open.

Ironically the Peace Accord whatever its short-comings, remains today the only realistic way out in the context of out 'ethnic' strife. No other political solution has been put forward by Mrs. Bandaranaike or any other opponent of the pact. Indeed Mrs. Bandaranaike has herself admitted that she would not abrogate the pact in the event of her coming into power but attempt to "re-negotiate" it. Subsequent developments however have tended to weaken the effectiveness of this Accord and for this both the Governments of India and Sri Lanka must take the blame. India's tardiness in securing the disarmament of the militants and the inaction of the IPKF in the East where it was bound to ensure the safety of all communities in terms of the Accord, were costly mistakes, while our own Government's failure to clothe the Provincial Councils with adequate powers despite the promises made, was another serious lapse. Such lapses can only strengthen the hand of disruptive

forces in their effort at destabilisation. It is to be hoped therefore that the Provincial Councils elections (for which the Provincial Councils Election Act was passed on January 22nd before our President left to be Chief Guest at the Republic celebrations in India) will be properly conducted and the people given the opportunity thereby to intervene in our political life. It has to be borne in mind too that the concept of Provincial Councils was not a creation of the Government: it was accepted only as a result of the pressures by the Left parties at the Political Parties Conference. It could be seen and used as a means therefore not merely to solve the Tamil question alone but also to counter the unhealthy authoritarian trends that have become evident in our country in more recent times.

The Government has now sought to confine these Provincial Council elections in the first instance to four provinces no doubt because the Left in these areas is not so strongly organized, for the only proper opposition to the Government at these polls will be the newly formed United Socialist Alliance, since the SLFP has decided to boycott. But this electoral process if properly utilised can well change the present political climate. To refuse to fight these elections on the ground that security cannot be ensured is really to assert that a military solution takes precedence over a political one. Of course the situation is admittedly difficult for it was only on March 15 that M.R. Heenbanda a Socialist Alliance candidate in Polonnaruwa for the Provincial Council elections was gunned down while working in his garden at home.

Vijaya's Murder

It is in the context of the Provincial Council elections and other elections that are expected to follow it and the formation of the United Socialist Alliance that we could really understand the meaning and significance of the foul murder of Vijaya Kumaratinga on February 16th. This was a political murder perpetrated by those sinister forces who thought that by this fell deed they could prevent the emergence of the United Socialist Front of which Vijaya was the charismatic leader. But they did not bargain for the reaction of the people, for Vijaya's funeral became a mass demonstration of popular protest and condemnation too of the racist politics and terrorist tactics now identified with the JVP.

The formal announcement of the formation of the Alliance was fixed for February 21st which turned out to be the day of Vijaya's funeral after his murder. It nonetheless became the occasion too for the inauguration of the Socialist Alliance for which Vijaya had worked so assiduously. The signing of the Alliance

documents in front of Vijaya's coffin too at Independence Square was significant and moving as was also the spontaneous clasp of hands in salute by his courageous wife immediately thereafter in tribute to her husband and as a pledge to carry on his struggle. And this too in front of unprecedented numbers of people who had streamed in from various parts of the island to pay their tribute to Vijaya the courageous political leader, not simply to Vijaya the gifted and popular film star.

There was of course some criticism in the right-wing press about the 'politics' of Vijaya's funeral, but how could this have been avoided when the brutal murder itself was admittedly political? The speakers at the funeral would surely have utterly failed in their duty had they not indicated why Vijaya was murdered and the nature of the politics behind his murder. That the public fully appreciated the position was to be seen in the whole-hearted response of the vast crowd and the manner in which they dismissed an actor (himself an active worker for the UNP in past elections and a confidant of Premier Premadasa) who sought to play down this political aspect.

As for the SLFP, its response seemed divided. Its belated statement expressed sorrow but no condemnation of the murder and the forces responsible for it. Although Mrs. Bandaranaike called at Vijaya's home to pay respects to her son-in-law despite political differences and several other SLFP leaders followed suit, there was one notable exception who did not do so, namely the SLFP Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, even though Vijaya was his own sister's husband. Mr. Bandaranaike was also one known for praising the JVP and soliciting its support so it was no wonder that he too became an object of public condemnation in connection with Vijaya's death.

Vijaya stood for a non-racial Left alternative to the two main capitalist parties of the UNP and SLFP. And these precisely were the "crimes" with which he was accused — of splitting the SLFP and of seeking rapport with the Tamil militants and accordingly given the death penalty according to leaflets issued both before and soon after his death by organisations describing themselves as "Joint Headquarters of the Patriotic Armed Forces" and "National Campaign for Punishing Traitors" presumably added euphemisms for the underground JVP. The latter probably felt threatened too by Vijaya Kumaratunga more than by any other politician because he appealed to the same sections of young, frustrated and radical youth that by far constituted its own political base.

While it was known that the JVP had earlier carried out selective killings of informers and allegedly anti-social elements, its executions more recently have included NIB Police Chief Terrence Perera (who was investigating the JVP), UNP Chairman Harsha Abeywardena (after President Jayewardene's threat against the JVP in the South) and a few Left activists in the provinces. Left leaders too have been put on its 'hit list'. This only goes to show the sinister nature of this movement, for a decimation of the Left and the killing of a leader of Vijaya's calibre can only help to bolster capitalist reaction.

A speaker at the funeral commented that Vijaya had played the role of Christ in a film and now the cross belonged rightly to him through his murder. Significantly, it was also a massive picture of Vijaya carrying the cross in his portrayal of Jesus that was carried at the head of the funeral procession (see cover). But the Bible story of the cross was not the end of the matter for truth cannot be silenced by death and the grave. This is also the meaning of the Resurrection that follows the crucifixion of Christ.

The death of Jesus was also a political murder or execution but the liberation of humanity was paid for by his blood and the vicarious suffering endured by all those who follow in his footsteps "toiling up new Calvaries".

We could do no better than end with the English equivalent of a verse from a Sinhala lyric sung at the Christian Workers Fellowship's Service of farewell to Vijaya before his bier:

Though the cause of evil prosper
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong
Though her portion be the scaffold
And upon the throne be wrong —
Yet that scaffold sways the future....."

The United Socialist Alliance is surely the earnest of that conviction.

30th March 1988.

Postscript

Vijaya Kumaratunga's 'murder has since resulted in an internal crisis within the J. V. P. A call for a new leadership to replace that of Rohana Wijeweera has been made by J. V. P. General Secretary Upatissa Gamanayake in a leaflet issued to party cadres. The J. V. P. has also suffered serious setbacks with the arrests made of the alleged Parliament bomb thrower Ajit Kumara, the killers of Harsha Abeywardena and Terrence Perera and the identification of and hunt for Vijaya's Killers.

15 April, 1988

Our Tribute to Vijaya

Politicians prepared to forego immediate advantages and benefits by daring to act according to their convictions are unfortunately rare in our country today. Vijaya Kumaratunga was an outstanding example of such a person. His brutal murder therefore on February 16th at the hands of a gunman — symbolic of the dark forces of intolerance and ignorance — shocked all who knew him and brought about feelings of sorrow, revulsion and anger that were widespread.

At a time when our society has begun to show all the signs of breakdown and decay, the death of such a person becomes an irreplaceable loss. Many will remember how in the face of virulent anti-Tamil and anti-Indian hysteria that was fostered not so long ago, Vijaya dared to risk his political career by visiting India and Jaffna with the determination of effecting a break-through towards dialogue and negotiation with the Tamil militants. This in order to bring to an end the fratricidal conflict and senseless slaughter that was going on. That such a peaceful resolution of our vexed "ethnic" conflict was not possible despite the favourable climate created in that situation by Vijaya, must be laid squarely at the doors of the chauvinist political forces on both sides. Indeed if the lead given by him towards a negotiated political settlement had been followed, it may not have been necessary to have the Indian Peace Keeping Force invited to our country in terms of the Indo-Lankan Peace Accord of July 29th last year. We of the Christian Workers Fellowship are proud to have been supportive of Vijaya's efforts in this direction and to have joined him too in his second goodwill mission to Jaffna to help free two army men captured by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Vijaya Kumaratunga was born and brought up a Christian. He did not feel the need to disavow his faith out of political calculation and opportunism as many a Lankan politician may have done. But he was able to go beyond the externals of religion and comprehend the very essence of the religious spirit — which is to give one's life for happiness of many, for the welfare of many, out of compassion for mankind. He felt free therefore to join with the adherents of all religions in their activities. In fact his non-sectarian approach to religion was very much in keeping with

the spirit of our Christian Workers Fellowship with whom also he maintained contact. He was appreciative of our Fellowship's work and of its journal *Christian Worker*. Many of us remember seeing him present too at our CWF May Day Mass last year from where he left to participate in the meeting of the Three Party Alliance which was attacked by the Police. It was fitting therefore that our Fellowship was able to say farewell to him on February 19th evening at a Service held by us round his bier in the presence of his wife and mother at the Art Gallery where the body lay before its final journey to Independence Square.

The fact that Vijaya's murder was carried out at the time of launching the United Socialist Alliance is significant, for such a force could not have failed to pose a challenge to the bankrupt, racist and capitalist politics of the major parties and the other sinister forces said to be acting in concert with elements within them. Those responsible for Vijaya's murder have however obviously miscalculated when they thought they could prevent the emergence of a mass movement with the decapitation of its leader. The answer to that has been given clearly by the response of the masses themselves to the killing of Vijaya. His vision of a Socialist Sri Lanka will undoubtedly triumph however hard the forces of reaction try to prevent it. May the pain and sorrow we feel at Vijaya's death and the very revulsion we feel at this brutal murder spur us on to hasten the day when man's inhumanity to man will be ended.

Christian Workers Fellowship.

20th February 1988





After signing the United Socialist Alliance declaration before Vijaya's coffin (right to left) Chandrika Kumaratunga (hands clasped in salute), K. P. Silva and Bernard Soysa.

United Socialist Alliance

The United Socialist Alliance, in a "Declaration of Aims and Perspectives", states that the UNP and the SLFP have struggled in vain for long years to develop Sri Lanka on capitalist lines. They have had tactical differences about how to achieve this aim from time to time. But today such differences are confined to secondary questions. They are especially agreed on working out the "Open Economy" package of the IMF, which has benefited a thin stratum of agents and partners of foreign multinational companies, but has had ruinous effects on the economy as a whole. According to the Declaration of the USA, "Open Economy" policies have also had a strangulating impact on national cultures, have exalted "crass consumerism and vulgar cosmopolitanism" and disrupted moral and social values.

Alternative Strategy

The Alliance rejects the policies that the IMF and its imperialist patrons have imposed on Sri Lanka and to which both the UNP and the SLFP conform. In its place, the Alliance seeks to mobilise and unite the people behind an alternative economic and political strategy that corresponds to contemporary needs of

the country and the aspirations of the people at the present stage of their development. The essence of such an alternative strategy is to strengthen the political independence of Sri Lanka by wiping out all manifestations of neo-colonialism, inequality and backward economic and social relationships and removing all other obstacles to the economy's continuous growth.

History has proved that Socialism is the only social system that abolishes all forms of inequality, discrimination and exploitation. It rids mankind of such scourges as unemployment and racial strife. It provides the unfettered development of the economy and social institutions and promotes their national cultures. But the parties of the Alliance realise that the advance towards such a goal will be a complicated one, which has to pass through several stages.

Initial Steps

In the first stage, the parties of the Alliance will, step by step, seek to eliminate all colonial and neo-colonial features from the economy and social life, starting from the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy and the elimination of all

survivals of archaic property forms. The present penetration of the economy by transnational corporations, foreign banks and other foreign capitalist monopolies will be phased out speedily.

Economic activities in the Free Trade Zones will be re-examined so as to eliminate undesirable features such as tax evasion, smuggling and ruthless exploitation of Sri Lankan labour. "Where possible, anything of value will be absorbed into the planned national economy without any loss of employment to workers or capital loss to local investors in these zone."

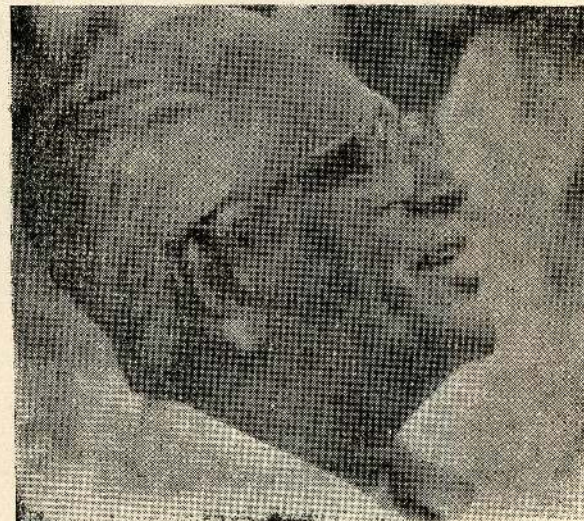
Foreign investment will be permitted, where national interests so demand, preferably in collaboration with state or local private capital. But the extent of foreign share-holding and profits will be strictly defined. The state will supervise and control economic activities in these joint ventures, as well as the wages and working conditions of Sri Lankan labour employed in them.

In this initial period, priority will be given to the maximum mobilisation and use of domestic resources. Foreign assistance will be sought and accepted only on terms that do not compromise Sri Lanka's national interests. But greater weight will be given to the development of mutually beneficial economic relations with the countries of the region, of the Non-Aligned movement and of the Socialist community.

Future Development

The privatisation measures started by the present UNP Government will be stopped. Priority in future economic development will be given to the state and cooperative sectors of the economy. While key sectors of the economy will remain under public ownership, a national private sector will be given opportunities to contribute towards national economic development in areas which the public sector finds it inexpedient to undertake at any time. This national private sector will have to conform to national requirements and standards, but will be allowed to make reasonable profits.

In the field of trade, the state and/or cooperative agencies will undertake the import and wholesale trade. The export trade will be conducted by nationalised agencies and where expedient, by agencies in which both state and local private capital are combined. Retail trade will be done through state cooperatives and private traders. A guaranteed supply of a selected number of basic commodities in daily use will be made available to consumers at affordable prices.



Is the situation Easing?

— *Colvin R. de Silva*

Various factors have come together to give a turn to the national political situation which will enable the people of our country to participate more directly than they have been able for many a year in the tasks of solving the almost innumerable problems of our country. Such a turn is of course a turn for the better.

CHANCE FOR MASS PARTICIPATION

One of these factors is that the government has at long last given a start to the Provincial Councils elections. No doubt only four provinces are involved at this stage; but even that will make an increasingly great and favourable difference to the political situation.

Elections in our country have customarily drawn the masses of the people into the political process in a manner that is not confined as in many countries to the mere act of casting one's vote. Elections in our country have always had the characteristics of a mass process.

In any governmental system, it is the participation of the masses that gives the system a truly democratic character. The Provincial Councils when they are functioning will constitute a widespread revival of the democratic process in the countryside: a process which was destroyed by the UNP government's abolition of

the Village Committees and the Town Councils, some 700 of which covered the entirety of the countryside. The Provincial Council elections will be the first stage in that resuscitatory process.

POLITICS BEHIND THE GUN

A second factor of major change in the political situation is the impact of the tragic murder of Vijaya Kumaratunga by a terrorist gun. It is not the sheer inhumanity of the act which has had this impact. Every terrorist murder we have seen has had this quality of inhumanity. It is the politics of the act — and it was a political act — which has had the consequence of wide sections of our people looking anew at the politics behind the gun. The shooting could not be put down to opposition to a hated government. Vijaya Kumaratunga was in the very process of building up an opposition with a revolutionary perspective against this government. The shooting had therefore to be accounted elsewhere. But there was nothing elsewhere to even remotely justify the killing. People therefore began to feel that there was something deeply wrong and not merely disagreeable in the politics behind the gun-toting terrorism which we are experiencing. Such a change in the people's thinking is of course a turn for the better in the political situation. When that mood spreads amongst the masses it induces a re-thinking which must necessarily turn attention to the politics of those others who are conducting a struggle with revolutionary perspectives against the government, not only without resorting to individual terrorism, but also denouncing such terrorism.

United Socialist Alliance

Another factor in the situation comes into play at this point. Vijaya Kumaratunga, at the time he was murdered for his politics, was engaged in the active and energetic advancement of the task of building up what is now known as the United Socialist Alliance. Representing as it did the coming together of the forces of what is called nowadays, not very appropriately, the traditional left; and, associated as that left is in the minds of the people with unrelenting opposition to the UNP Government and the UNP itself, the look leftward involves also a look at all the issues other than the ethnic issue by the people. The natural conclusion of that process had to be a realisation that the non-racial, class-struggle-minded United Socialist Alliance also constitutes a process of the building up of an organised political alternative to the UNP Government such as is not provided by the traditional alternative, namely the SLFP.

The United Socialist Alliance it should be observed, is also a political alternative to the JVP and its parallel in the North and East, namely the LTTE. In the case of both these parties the basic error is the endeavour to substitute the organisation with its armed strength for the masses in the struggle to overthrow both the reactionary UNP government and reaction itself. The error also diverts thinking from the truth that it is the masses travelling through the class struggle who make the revolution

A Fourth Factor

There is a fourth major factor of favourable change in the national political situation, the impact of which is over-all although it has to be described in regional terms. The Indian Army has substantially wrested the Jaffna Peninsula especially and the Northern Province generally from the LTTE and appears well set on the same course, if sometimes haltingly, in the Eastern Province. In the wake of the IPKF's military progress, the civil administration in the Northern Province seems to have got going despite interruptions here and there and civil life seems to be getting slowly restored. It does not appear that the same can be said of the Eastern Province; but even there a start seems to have been made, in the face of an LTTE which is more active than in the Northern Province. In short some degree of everyday civil life seems to have returned to the areas which were for quite a time experiencing a parallel LTTE administration.

The favourable impact on the general situation of this turn is shown by the manner in which the question of re-settling refugees has come to the forefront. These are the problems of peace, not war; of reconciliation and rehabilitation, and not of confrontation and conflict.

A Watershed

We do not say that all this has suddenly emerged and become clear in the convergence of the factors we have mentioned and of other factors which have not yet been that important. What we have are the beginnings of a turn politically away from the ideas and the politics of individual terrorism. There may be a long way to go, and much to do and pause and ponder over; but if we are correct that our people are on political terrain in the nature of what is familiarly referred to as a water-shed, then hope for the future after a long period of apparent hopelessness can burgeon anew. How that future will be reached and shaped is not a matter for this article.

7 March, 1988



The ten Budgets of Ronnie de Mel

H. N. S. Karunatilake

On January 18, Mr. Ronnie de Mel announced that he had resigned as Minister of Finance and Planning, a portfolio he had held since the UNP's election victory in 1977. The resignation was attributed to a disagreement of views and a reported breach of Cabinet responsibility.

Dr. Neville Karunatilake, a former Senior Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, discusses here the effects of the economic policies followed by the Government as reflected in the Budgets presented by Mr. Ronnie de Mel.

The previous Finance Minister Ronnie De Mel has claimed that his term of office for 10 years was record breaking, because he had outlived other finance ministers in Commonwealth countries and also managed the budget and the economy with exceptional competence. He also openly stated in Parliament that he would make his predecessors see stars by his magical budgetary performances. From the point of view of the international agencies and donor countries who have given aid to Sri Lanka; however, acceptable and effective his fiscal and monetary management may have been, the common people of Sri Lanka have been impoverished and the youth brought to a state of frustration and destitution and their aspirations shattered with his economic policies and budget management in the last ten years. The IMF and the World Bank have always judged economic performance mainly in terms of high growth rates and an increase in investment. Ronnie De Mel during his stewardship as Finance Minister was able to conform to these criteria and conditions and win economies from his foreign advisors and the Aid Consortium. However, he did not take the trouble to analyse how and where the high growth rates occurred and in what sectors these large investments took place. The Government was not concerned whether they favourably affected the people. The U.N.P. Government believed that

under the open economy the hidden hand of Adam Smith would always contribute to improve the welfare of the people.

Effects on the People

What benefits have the 10 budgets and economic policies, so strongly supported and advocated by the Minister and the President, brought to the country and the people? The Minister throughout his tenure of office forgot that the budget in Sri Lanka, is the most important instrument which affects the economic well being of the common people. Even though the budget only deals with government expenditure, which covers a part of the total annual expenditure in the economy, yet, it affects the welfare of the people in many ways. It provides the direction to economic policies and specifically lays down duties on imports, exports, and a variety of levies on domestic goods and other taxes. All these determine the prices of consumer goods and services. Depending on the size of the deficit the budget also determines the volume of new money created which has a significant influence on internal prices. This is reflected in the increase in the Treasury bill issue from Rs. 2.7 billion in 1977 to Rs. 28.6 billion in 1987. The budget covers all categories of government expenditure, which in turn, regulates a considerable amount of business activity in the private sector because the government sub contracts a considerable amount of work to private firms and buys a lot of goods from them directly.

The 10 budgets by the Finance Minister have had several common characteristics which have adversely affected the people. On the other hand the budgets have had a favourable affect only on a miniscule minority consisting of the foreign contractors and consultants, the big companies, businessmen, the mudalalis, political henchmen and local contractors. The problems of the people have never been highlighted in any of the ten budgets. On the contrary, the Minister never failed to eulogise his own policies and achievements. The people's problems include the rising cost of living, unemployment the sharp cuts in welfare, the destruction of small industries and the increasing debt repayments. Despite the progressive increase in the Colombo Consumers Cost of Living Index over the 10 years, from 200 in 1977 to 714 at the end of January 1988, no budget has dealt with this problem nor proposed measures to reduce the cost of living. On the contrary, the Minister has followed the advice of international organisations like IMF, the World Bank and donor countries and has sharply cut down welfare and consumption and increasingly depended on the market mechanisms for the economy to operate. The government at a very late stage in 1987 became aware of the adverse impact of the open economic policy on the people when various militant groups started taking up arms against the government.

Alleged breach of Cabinet Responsibility

"This, I feel, may be my last budget. I think eleven is enough. I hope we will have Provincial Council elections and also Parliamentary elections next year I think we should hold them before the people of this country get up and say 'In God's name go' I think it is no secret that if I had a free vote I would not have voted for the Referendum Most of our troubles stemmed from the fact that we did not hold Parliamentary elections at the correct time I think this Parliament is stale. It is obsolete and obsolescent."

Mr. Ronnie de Mel
in Parliament

Unemployment

The second important problem which was only given lip service in the last budget was unemployment. Upto 1987 the government took refuge in the findings of the Consumer Finance and Socio-Economic Survey 1981-1982, which gave an unemployment rate of 11.6 per cent. Many senior ministers of the government, including the Finance Minister went round the country claiming that the UNP government had brought down unemployment to a level of little over 11 per cent from about 22 per cent in 1986. Even as late as in 1986 and 1987 they were quoting the 1982 unemployment figures.

The government had forgotten that, since 1981, that is for the last 6 years, no socio-economic survey had been conducted. This figure of unemployment was relevant only upto 1987. From then onwards unemployment has increased progressively reaching a figure of 1.3 million in 1987. Furthermore, the 1981-82 unemployment figure, was clearly inaccurate because the survey defined an employed person as "any one who worked three hours on any one day in the week preceding the survey." This definition has contributed to heavily understate the number unemployed. Although the UNP created new employment opportunities up to 1982, most of these jobs were abroad and mainly in the Middle East, while new jobs in productive sectors were relatively few. The government entrusted the task of new employment generation to the private sector. It had no properly conceived employment plan. Its policy of privatisation tended to reduce employment than generate new jobs.

The budgetary policies which supported the open economy resulted in a decline in production in almost all sectors. With the Minister's talk of export promotion and efficient import substitution, a large number of domestic industries which had established themselves between 1960-76 progressively disappeared because they could not withstand competition from imports. While the industrial sector was considerably weakened the service sectors, particularly trade and transport, expanded rapidly showing a high rate of growth. On account of these, the most viable job opportunities of a permanent nature available to the youth progressively contracted because of the lack of adequate industrial growth.

Dependence on Foreign Finance

The 10 successive budgets lacked originality in both policies and action; they were all anti-national in character and spirit. They made the country increasingly dependent on external resources and on policies

advocated by external agencies. Local advice was frowned upon and the Minister did not hesitate to quickly get rid of competent men who were willing to give sound advice. To achieve the latter he went to the extent of amending regulations and procedures in a most discriminatory and vindictive manner. From 1978, he retained the services of S. G. Warburg and Company as financial consultants on a stupendous fee which rose from around Rs. 25 million in 1979 to Rs. 65 million in 1987. The government throughout failed to realise that sound economic advice could not be given, particularly in the interests of the common people, by external agencies who knew almost nothing about the problems of people and about the country itself. As Finance Minister it should have been his duty to cut down waste, to control rising costs of projects and to reduce the participation of foreign contractors in construction work which resulted in escalating costs. Apart from pruning expenditure he could have obtained more resources internally to finance the increasing capital expenditure in the budget. The government was always averse to higher taxation and it progressively reduced personal income taxes and company taxation, while raising the taxes particularly the turnover tax on all types of goods and services. These taxes in turn contributed to raise the price of essential goods sharply. Because of the incidence of the tax on the same commodity at several different points, there was a cascading effect.

A feature of fiscal operations before 1977 was that foreign finance and foreign aid was much less significant in financing budget deficits than today. This provided greater flexibility in budget making and in economic policy formulation. The low level of dependence on foreign finance meant that the country has had a greater measure of control over key variables, such as the exchange rate, the cost of living and welfare expenditure and that it could formulate policies independently. With the continuing dependence on foreign finance after 1977, Sri Lanka has been compelled, to some extent, to adjust its policies to the various criteria that have been laid down by donors and international funding agencies. The adjustments in policy that have to be made to conform to criteria laid down by international agencies has had a major impact on welfare expenditure, on the cost of living and other socially important variables. This may be characterised as an unfavourable secondary spin off of the present budgetary policies.

A large portion of the budget deficit has been financed from foreign sources. This feature was not there in the fifties and even sixties. In the 1965/66 budget, the overall deficit was financed to the tune of

Rs. 384 million through domestic resources and Rs. 174 million through foreign resources. In 1971/72, which was not a good year, domestic resources provided Rs. 736 million and foreign resources Rs. 559 million to finance the deficit. In contrast the relevant magnitudes in recent years are very much larger. In 1980 the total budget deficit was Rs. 16.2 billion, of which domestic rupee funds amounting to Rs. 9.6 billion and foreign funds of Rs. 6.4 billion were used to finance the deficit. After 1981 the quantum of foreign financing budget deficits have been very much larger. In 1983 the total amount of foreign resources used to finance the budget deficit was Rs. 10.9 billion and local Rs. 12.2 billion. In 1985 foreign financing to the tune of Rs. 14 billion and local finance of Rs. 9.1 billion was used to finance the deficit.

De Mel's policy resulted in foreign debt rising from Rs. 4.96 billion in 1976 to Rs. 100 billion in 1987 while local debt has risen from Rs. 12.9 billion in 1977 to Rs. 71 billion in 1987.

The donor countries and IMF and the World Bank were ready to provide increasing foreign aid because the government was slavishly prepared to follow its stipulations. Conditionality was the essence of foreign aid policy as far as Lanka was concerned and the UNP government did not hesitate to accept these conditions. Teams which entered into negotiations with international agencies were possibly the weakest that could have been mustered. Ronnie De Mel was keen to ensure that there would be no one else in such a team that would perform better than him. Increasing borrowings to finance the so-called high level of investment and increasing budget deficits resulted in a progressively increasing debt service problem. The UNP particularly J. R. Jayewardene, had great confidence in Ronnie De Mel because he believed that De Mel was the only man who could get foreign aid. It is for this reason that De Mel was the only UNP member after the Referendum of 1982 who although defeated at Devinuwara, was appointed by means of a "chit" to another seat Bulathsinhala, which was far away from Devinuwara. De Mel, apart from breaking a record by being Finance Minister for ten years broke yet another higher record by representing two parliamentary seats and having been reappointed as a MP after he had been rejected by the people at Devinuwara.

His performance as Finance Minister has been judged purely on his capacity for getting more aid. In this process the government had forgotten and totally overlooked the future problems that would be created in repaying aid. Which is indeed the most onerous problem facing the government today.

Debt Trap

De Mel's policy has resulted in the foreign debt rising from Rs. 4.96 billion in 1976 to Rs. 100 billion in 1987, while the local debt has risen from Rs. 12.9 billion in 1977 to Rs. 71 billion in 1987. The foreign debt service payments today are nearly 35 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. The government can repay the foreign debt now, only by borrowing more. The country has now been caught up in a vicious debt trap. In the Budget for 1988 Rs. 19 billion has to be set apart for servicing the local and the foreign debt and within the framework of the present economic policies, this could be done only by further borrowings. Ronnie De Mel's budgets have not created a viable and resilient economy which has resulted in higher production, less imports and more exports. He has made the economy more, dependent and servile, pushing the economic clock virtually back to colonial times, when the economy was heavily dependent on the rest of the world.

His budgets increased the cost of living by over 250%. Unemployment became 22% of the labour force. The rupee value depreciated by 400%. Every budget reduced taxation on the rich. Malnutrition increased.

De Mel has been praised as a great aid-getter and he has always made it a point to say that the grant component of aid has been considerable and loans have been on highly concessional terms. If this was true the question has to be asked why has the foreign debt in ten years risen by twenty times or 2000 per cent? Total grants in aid received have only been about 12 per cent of total aid. The present size of the foreign debt and the magnitude of the debt service payments is nothing but a reflection of the unfavourable terms on which foreign aid has been obtained. The UNP policy has been to get loans at any cost for any purpose, as long as it is aid. There has been no process of selection or discrimination. For the utilisation of foreign credits a pre-requisite should have been a carefully

prepared development plan to rapidly increase production and employment and designed to overcome the economic problems of the country and the people.

Ronnie De Mel as Minister of Planning was responsible for the overall development programme but did not present a proper plan. All he produced was a rolling plan for the purpose of presenting it at the annual Aid Consortium meeting. This document contained a repetition of the same conglomeration of projects and showed little change over the 10 years, with a few occasional adjustments here and there. Furthermore, De Mel spent at least four months abroad each year on aid seeking missions and attending various conferences abroad, which were of no relevance to the country. He was therefore never present in the Island, long enough to understand, and get to grips with the problems of the people. To produce effective results as Minister of Planning he should have travelled within Sri Lanka more often than spend most of his time abroad.

The heavy aid orientation in Ronnie De Mel's budgets was both in the short and long term not beneficial to Sri Lanka; in fact it was disastrous. The real beneficiaries were ultimately the large foreign contracting firms, their local agents and their political affiliates.

Summing It Up

The impact of the last ten budgets presented by Ronnie De Mel could be summarised in the following way. (1) These budgets caused the highest increase in the cost of living in the country by more than 250 per cent and they resulted in reducing real incomes by more than 65 per cent. (2) Unemployment reached the highest level ever of 1.3 million or about 22 per cent of the labour force. (3) The rupee was devalued from US. \$ 1 — Rs. 7.28 in 1977 to US. \$ 1 — Rs. 30.50 in 1977 which is a depreciation of 400 per cent. (4) The foreign debt rose by more than 20 times resulting in the country having to now set aside 34 per cent of current foreign exchange earnings to repay the debt. (5) The rich have got richer because every budget has reduced taxation on the rich. The income tax has been reduced while the gifts tax and Estate Duty have been done away with. (6) Malnutrition has increased because the price of nutritious essential foodstuffs are beyond the reach of the common man. Thus although Ronnie De Mel has given up his portfolio in good time, he is almost totally responsible for the present social, economic and political crisis in the country and for creating prolonged political instability, bloodshed and violence. It must be remembered that the root causes of the latter are almost entirely economic.



The Mahaveli Scandal

Christian Worker has previously carried a series of articles on the "Accelerated" Mahaveli Programme specially written by Gamini Iriyagolle. Our readers will therefore all the more appreciate the facts revealed recently in Parliament by Medawachchiya M.P., Maithripala Senanayake whose speech taken from Hansard of December 22, 1987 is reproduced below.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake — Medawachchiya :

Not only do I move for a cut, but I call upon this Government to appoint a Commission of Inquiry as of urgent national importance to go into the complete working and the finances of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme — the symbol of the government's "economic miracle poised for the biggest breakthrough in food production and the largest generation of employment for our people."

The Chairman :

Order, please! The Hon. District Minister for Colombo will now take the Chair.

Whereupon *Mr. Speaker* left the Chair, and *The Member for Kolonnawa Mr. Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi* took the Chair.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

It has not been achieved and the government's boast of a national asset has failed dismally and turned into the government's national disaster — at what blood curdling costs we are yet to see. We are still importing rice, and the other main objective of the Accelerated Mahaweli of generating employment has been nullified. Machinery has done most of the job

and the techniques of construction, used by all foreign firms, were such that they did not provide any significant employment opportunities. The employment of foreign contractors on these projects has resulted not only in the use of a lot of capital expensive equipment and machinery, but foreign contractors brought in large number of workers and technicians along with their families.

The salaries and allowances paid out to the foreign personnel are so shocking, it is unbelievable.

As a result of this artificially inflated cost this Accelerated Mahaweli project the budget has got completely out of gear and government was forced to create new money and borrow at tremendous rates of interest. Government even had to seek more borrowings for the Mahaweli to rectify the costly mistakes that have been made in the course of construction! True, you received certain grants but these grants have also proved costly.

The investigations will reveal facts and figures which will shock this country. It is not with political motives I say this. It is with sorrow and heart-break I say this. — how the great hope for the nation for the development of irrigation and agriculture, and of power turned out to be not a reality but an empty myth.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake — Minister of Lands & Land Development and Minister of Mahaweli Development.

Think of the Referendum.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Never mind, never mind, my company for the Referendum will not make any difference to what is going on. You can answer me when I finished. Do not be in a hurry.

A story of incorrect decisions, hasty and shoddy planning, squandermania, mismanagement, cuts and kick-backs, corrupt practices, cover-ups for negligence and carelessness, sheer incompetence and a massive inflation of continually escalating costs and bills, unnecessary bonuses to contractors for incomplete jobs, discriminatory favours—everybody was on the gravy train and a good many never had it so good!

Sir, the Mahaweli had diverted into many directions and into many places never envisaged when it was first mooted!! And made many rich men. Between fact and fiction is a very thin line!

The original estimate in 1977, when this Government thought of embarking on a full accelerated Mahaweli, was Rs. 11 billion — as the years went on it became Rs. 40 billion and it now stands at Rs. 50 billion!! Can you imagine this? And it irrigates less than half of the original 120,000 hectares of land — the 15 projects has been reduced to 5 under the full Mahaweli Scheme, and the anticipated power supply has also been reduced considerably. More money has been spent carrying out virtually less than half of the full project — A 500 percent increase in costs to carry out less than 50 per cent of the Scheme with only 30 per cent of the benefits. And here is what the World Bank itself says of the Mahaweli Development Scheme in its Report on Sri Lanka's economy submitted to the Aid Group in June this year. I will read it out to you

This is an extract of the World Bank Report on Sri Lanka's economy submitted to the Aid Group on 25th June 1987 :

“27. While the government was highly successful in curbing current expenditures until the outbreak of the ethnic conflict, the public investment program expanded substantially without a compensating increase in government savings. Domestic borrowing has been at 7% of GDP, on the average, during 1978-86. More importantly, the government did not ensure that public capital expenditures were being used efficiently. It is extremely difficult to make an assessment of the economic rate of return of the overall public investment since 1978, but available information suggests that the returns to the economy have been low. A number of factors account for this outcome. Between 1978 and 1984 the Mahaweli

Program absorbed about half of all public capital expenditures. Both because it was carried out on a crash basis and because cost escalations tend to be high in large projects, by 1985, the 1977 estimate of Rs. 11-12 billion for a full Mahaweli Program had become Rs. 40 billion, for a reduced program irrigating less than half of the 120,000 h.a. of land that were originally planned. Rapid inflation explains a third of this increase in costs, while the other two-thirds refer to real cost increases above the initial estimates that took place in spite of the reduction in the scope of the program. The acceleration of the Mahaweli program was only made possible by heavy use of foreign personnel, machinery, and other inputs, some of which could have been supplied domestically, at a lower cost, had the program been phased over a longer period. A longer implementation period would also have put less pressure on domestic markets. An indication of the pressure that was created by the accelerated pace of the Mahaweli Program is given by the increase of the construction cost index (as measured by the sectoral deflator): it increased by 500% between 1978 and 1984 while the Colombo Consumer Price Index increased by 170% in the same period. On the benefits side, as mentioned earlier, the area irrigated under the project was less than foreseen. In addition, the world price of rice had declined by 25% in real terms since 1975/77. With these developments the rate of return for Mahaweli, as a whole that was estimated at 11% before it started, ended up probably being substantially lower than anticipated initially.

28. From the outset the government knew that the Accelerated Mahaweli Program was a risky proposition, and so did the donors. From the government's point of view, there were, however, several reasons to proceed. First, several governments had tried, in the past, to remove the food subsidy and failed and or fell in the midst of clear popular discontent and turmoil. The new government considered that it would be too risky politically to eliminate the food subsidy without compensating such a measure with increasing employment, and, except for Mahaweli, there were no large employment generating projects ready for implementation. Second, after two decades of inward looking economic policies and low growth, the government felt it needed a project that could mobilize the country's energy and stand as the landmark of the change in the economy that its new policies aimed at achieving. Finally, Mahaweli built on old and popular themes; self-sufficiency in rice, and the revival of irrigation schemes that had been built two thousand years ago. On the donors side, there was a great eagerness to support the government's new economic policies, and since there were limited alternatives to channel the volume of aid that the donors were willing to commit, Mahaweli seemed a natural choice. While all these reasons are very powerful, a large volume of resources has been allocated to a scheme that may now have limited economic returns.”

The UNP government continues to dump money into the Mahaweli project without any limit or controls and this is —

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

May I find out from the hon. Member whether he is still reading from the Report?

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

No. I have finished. I am sorry. I did not mention when I finished the quotation.

Mr. W. P. B. Dissanayake :

That document can be tabled.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

No. I will not table it. I will read it. If the Hon. Minister wants it I can give him a copy today, so that he can reply me tomorrow.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

I would like to have a copy.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Yes, I will certainly give you a copy after I finish.

The UNP Government continues to dump money into the Mahaweli Project without any limit controls and this is because most of the work is undertaken by foreign contractors who are allowed to inflate bills. Recently Zachery Dillingham, a foreign contractor doing downstream work on Mahaweli had lodged an additional claim of over Rs. 3 billion from the Mahaweli Ministry, while local contractors are not paid on time and they are subject to the most rigorous tender and financial controls.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

There is a Supreme Court writ against —

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

I am not aware.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

It appeared in the front page of the newspapers.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

I do not know. I am not aware of what they claimed.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

You are ignoring what has happened and coming out with something else.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

You can reply to that when you speak.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

Whoever who has written that has not taken those facts into account.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Let me see when you reply tomorrow.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

Well, it appeared in the newspapers.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

In 1988 the government proposes to spend a further Rs. 5.05 billion on the Mahaweli projects after having spent Rs. 40 billion. The estimates reveal that a further sum of Rs. 234 million is being spent on Victoria, Rs. 361 million on Kotmale, Rs. 1.5 billion on System C, Rs. 1.04 billion on System B, Rs. 562 million on Randenigala, Rs. 176 million on Maduru-Oya. Why is government continuing to spend such large sums on Mahaweli, especially on the headworks at Victoria, Kotmale and Randenigala? In addition to this maintenance costs have been listed separately and these are Victoria Rs. 19 million, Kotmale Rs. 13 million and Maduru-Oya Rs. 14 million.

Kotmale with a disastrous history and after a grandiose opening ceremony was forced to close down 2 days later. It still stays closed.

Victoria, also with a disastrous 4 year history, had to be shutdown within a week after its lavish ceremonial opening by Her Majesty the Queen. Repairs had to be effected and Victoria today is limping along, still full of problems.

Maduru-Oya is another sorry story —

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

Victoria was not opened by Her Majesty the Queen!

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Then by whom?

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

By Mrs. Margaret Thatcher who is not the Queen of England!

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Thank you!

Mr. M. I. M. Aboosally :

Get your facts correct.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

It began its life with irregular tender procedures, and a project was launched at great cost on what the government's Dutch consultants NEDECO reported was on sub-standard soil. It was a costly exercise and the commissions and omissions that took place here are truly unbelievable.

Now the government is working on Randenigala Oya and Rantembe.

As I said, the construction of Victoria has had a disastrous 4 year history and in the attempt to rush through this project, Engineers were faced with the problems of foundation rock, huge volumes of soft rock under the most critical section of the dam, vast lime stone cavities, several landslips, plant servicing problems, serious rockfalls et cetera. The government was forced to offer a heavy cash incentive bonus well over a hundred (100) million rupees in its desperate attempt to get the work through, anyhow and anyway. I am reliably informed that Victoria alone has cost over ten thousand million rupees. The government in addition has still to find two thousand two hundred and forty million rupees (Rs. 2,240,000,000), half of which must be in foreign exchange.

Victoria was plagued by mishaps, tunnel cave-in and a number of deaths of construction workers. Disregarding all costs the government persuaded its British contractors, Balfour Beatty and Nuttall to rush and complete the scheme at "top speed". In the attempt to complete Victoria Dam in 4 years Messrs. Balfour Beatty and Nuttall followed what engineering experts say were "dangerous practice of simultaneously excavating the foundation and constructing the dam upwards, adopting the dangerous practice of blasting and removing rock over the heads of men working below." These and other dangerous practices resulted in 40 deaths and 990 accidents!

Victoria destroyed 3,000 acres of land already cultivated with paddy, tobacco, vegetables, other food crops, 2,000 acres of mixed fruit, cocoa, coffee, coconut, spices, village garden homes, 2,000 acres of big and small estates, cocoa, coffee, pepper, rubber, coconut, sugar cane. An already developed area with infrastructure such as roads, industries was wantonly erased.

The height of the Victoria Dam, envisaged by the Mahaweli Authority in my time, had in mind the maximum capacity of water that could have been impounded in the Kotmale reservoir. This would also have eliminated the need for the complete submersion of Teldeniya, a greater portion of which could have been saved to bring in annually an income of over Rs. 20 million worth of paddy, vegetable and spices, and saved also the traditional homelands of the Kandyan peasantry, and several historical temples.

And what about the hundreds of million by way of compensation? All this mighty effort, expenditure and sacrifice — for what? What is the position today? Victoria still has problems.

I will now read out a letter written no less a person than His Excellency the President to the Mahaweli Minister recently calling upon him to explain certain instabilities and unremedied defects at Victoria.

This letter is from His Excellency the President as Minister of Power and Energy. It is dated 24th August 1987. It states :

PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

Hon. Gamini Dissanayake, 24th August 1987
Minister of Mahaweli Development,
500, T. B. Jaya Mawatha,
Colombo 10.

My dear Minister,

Victoria Hydro Power Station

I am informed by the CEB of the following unremedied defects at the Victoria Power Station :—

- (a) Draft tube instability and consequent vibrations and power swings over an unusually broad load range (15MW to 60MW) in the turbines provided under contract C11.
- (b) Explosions connected with switching of 220 KV generator circuit-breaks provided under Contract C14.

The restriction that the turbines at the Victoria Power Station cannot be operated in a stable manner between a wide range is of concern to the CEB. This large instability range makes it necessary to operate other plants of the system at non-optional loadings.

I understand that the above defects were listed as reservations at the time of take over from the Contractors. I shall thank you to finalise early remedial measures.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. J. R. Jayewardene
Minister of Power & Energy"

This is what the President wrote to you on 24th August 1987.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

This is the Committee Stage debate. I would like to ask the hon. Member whether there were no faulty turbine generators when he was Minister of Power, and if there were those problems, whether they were not put right. He has got the letter that His Excellency the President wrote to me but he is not reading my reply.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

I say that they have not been put right. I will tell you further. Electricity failed several times, and according to the engineers those failures were due to defects in the Victoria Power Plant as well as machine tripping. There are still inherent deficiencies, says the Ministry of Power, in a thunderous note to the Mahaweli Ministry. The Ministry of Power further says that of the three machines in the Victoria Power Station only one machine is still commissioned and able to give a continuous supply. You are behind the extended target by about six months, which causes grave concern. This also refers to the "unreliable situation" in the Victoria Power Station.

Finally, I wonder whether the Hon. Minister is aware that there is evidence of earth movements in the vicinity of the Victoria Reservoir? Is the Hon. Minister aware that the recommendation of the TAMS Report on the environmental impact of the Accelerated Mahaweli Project was never carried out by the Mahaweli Authority? The mahaweli monument has now become a national disaster!

I now come to the other national disaster — Kotmale the Rs. 8 billion project that never got off the ground, except for two days! The Kotmale Reservoir, if completed according to its original capacity, would have impounded above the Polgolla Division Dam the large storage reservoir of water not only to generate more hydro-power but also to provide through the North-Central canal water for some of the best lands that could be brought under paddy cultivation in the country. The reduction in the height of the Kotmale Dam has finished for all time the high hopes of the North-Central Province farmers to irrigate very large acreages of the North Central Province through the North-Central canal by the diversion of this water through Moragahakanda. The indifference and callousness, or perhaps the total ignorance of those handling the project, which should have taken into account the quality of the soil for cultivation of paddy,

will always remain an unforgiveable and heartbreaking tragedy that this Government will never be able to erase.

If the Mahaweli Ministry had handled the Kotmale hydro-power project efficiently and correctly we would have had adequate power for our needs. Instead, from the very beginning Kotmale has been a story of delays, mess-ups, cover-ups, problems after problems, breakdowns, last-minute and unnecessary modifications, relocating dam positions even after the foundation has been laid the scaling down of the headworks after a considerable amount of construction had commenced. Kotmale was grandly commissioned in 1985, but within a few days it ceased to function and remains inoperative to date.

Kotmale, on the estimate in June 1979, cost about Rs. 5.6 billion, and expenditure began climbing and climbing to Rs. 8.8 billion and still keeps spiralling. It was commissioned, only to be taken out of service almost immediately. I remember when we mentioned this the Hon. Minister laughed away the cracks that had occurred in the tunnel. It is now estimated that the total cost of repairs will be about Rs. 750 million. A sum Rs. 197 has already been spent up to the end of 1986. Already about Rs. 8,700 million has been spent on the Kotmale project, and no less a person than the Hon. Minister of Mahaweli Development told his Colleagues — I have a copy of his Cabinet Paper — that until further repairs to the tunnel are completed it will not be possible to derive any direct return from the power component of this huge investment.

Because of the shortage of funds, the Hon. Minister now wants the CEB to share the cost of repairs. He is calling upon the CEB to dole out Rs. 373 million immediately and Rs. 80 million in the next year so that the Kotmale tunnel repairs can be completed without further delay. A write-off, I say! All the billions already spent utterly wasted!

The Hon. Minister admits that the MASL owes the contractor Rs. 78 million for work done and that the latter has given notice under the terms of the contract to terminate the construction unless payment is made. This is what you say in your Cabinet Paper. I have a copy of it here. In paragraph 4 you say —

"It is now estimated that the total cost of the repairs of the tunnel would amount to Rs. 750 million. A sum of Rs. 197 million has been spent up to the end of 1986. The nature of the adverse geological formation and the extent to the repairs necessary have exceeded all expectations. Hence the modest amounts asked for in the Budget Estimates which have been Rs. 60 million for 1987 and Rs. 40 million for 1988 are too low to meet the actual

needs. Already about Rs. 8,700 million has been spent on the Kotmale Project. Unfortunately, until the repairs to the tunnel are completed it will not be possible to derive any direct return from the power component of this huge investment."

Again, in paragraph 6 you say this :

"6. Shortage of funds has now become the major factor in attending to the repairs. The MASL has no funds to pay the contractor. Already the MASL owes the contractor Rs. 70 million for work done and the latter has given notice under the terms of the contract to terminate construction unless payments are made regularly and in time."

In paragraph 8 you say :

"8. The approval of the Cabinet is therefore sought for the Ceylon Electricity Board to contribute to the MASL the shortfall in funds amounting to Rs. 373 million in F/Y 1987 and Rs. 80 million in F/Y 1988 so that the Kotmale tunnel repairs can be completed without delay."

Now I will read you a note sent to the Mahaweli Ministry by the Minister of Power, I quote :

"(1) The Kotmale Power Station, right from the very beginning, while it was in the hands of the contractors and being tested, showed tunnel leakages which appeared as water coming into the cavern of the Power House

(2) At the time the Power House was being ceremoniously opened by His Excellency the President and the Hon. Minister from Sweden, there was water leakage into the Power House and several pumps of high capacity had to be continuously used to prevent the power House from being flooded.

(3) Within the first week after the ceremonial opening (3 to 4 days after the event) the Power House had to be shut down and the tunnel drained. Cracks along the high pressure shaft were observed and the engineering belief expressed by Dr. Kulasinghe verbally was that this was due to what is termed as hoopstress and the tunnel design was inadequate for such hoop-stress.

(4) After temporary repairs, one machine at Kotmale was commissioned for a few months in order to make sure of the water during the drought period of 1986 with the understanding that at the end of the drought period the Kotmale Power Station would be shut down for permanent repairs.

(5) Thus the defects were there right from the beginning and the C.E.B. has no responsibility at all as agreed to by everyone at that time, for the design and or construction of the tunnel or other factors which caused these problems.

(6) After several discussions, the high pressure part of the tunnel was given for full steel lining.

(7) The C.E.B. kept reminding that dewatering analysed by the CEB pointed towards large scale leakages from the surge shaft and or in the neighbourhood (perhaps in the low pressure tunnel above the surge shaft).

(8) As it was not satisfactory that the work of the high pressure shaft alone was being attended to, the Ceylon Electricity Board invited the attention of the Mahaweli

Authority several times stating that the bulk of the leakage appeared to be either from the surge chamber or close to the surge chamber. Also they inquired whether adequate attention was being paid to the repair of these sections. After several verbal representations, the only reply received by them was that a more detailed report would be sent in due course!

(9) As we were more and more concerned about the work on the surge shaft and on the low pressure tunnel upstream of the surge shaft, the CEB sent letter No. PE/W/L/84 dated 15th April 1987 addressed to you, requesting whether the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka could define the full scope of the work involved and the time-frame of each of the activities.

(10) As you are aware, the CEB was not claiming to be responsible for design or otherwise that was going into the tunnel repairs, but propositions were made with good intentions that due weightage should be given to matters of the annex referred to above. Since the methodology indicated therein has not been adopted the CEB was compelled to completely dissociate itself with technical suitability and least cost methodologies for the repairs on the tunnel and surge shaft.

(12) Mr. K. L. Ariyananda, who represented the CEB at the Technical Evaluation Committee in relation to repairs on the low pressure tunnel and surge shaft, had pointed out several technical matters of a fundamental nature by his letters dated 4th August 1987 and 17th August 1987 addressed to the Chairman, Technical Evaluation Committee. The limitations of the Technical evaluation Committee and the Tender board itself were pointed out at a meeting in terms of paragraph 2 of the minutes of the meeting held on 25th August 1987."

Mr. Chairman, this is how Rs. 8 billion is being spent.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

Sir, before the Hon. Member goes further, I wish to make a correction.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

No, Sir, I do not think he should interrupt me at this stage.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

This is a debate.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

You can answer me when you are replying.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

You can practise your elocution. This is a debate. He said that three turbines of the Victoria Project are not working.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Sir, I am not giving way.

The Presiding Member :

Hon. Member are you giving way?

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

No, Sir, I am not giving way. The Hon. Minister can reply.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

All three turbines in the Victoria Project are working.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

No, they are not working. I say that they are not working, though you say they are working.

At another tender board meeting recently on Kotmale tunnel repairs by the Mahaweli Authority, the minutes of which I have in my possession, when the Ministry of Power raised certain serious problems, the chairman of the tender board stated that it was not for the tender board to look into the technicalities of the designs and that the variation order was issued to the contractor based on the decision made by the Minister of Mahaweli Development and the tender board had only to negotiate with the contractor on the rates quoted by him. Why did you need to intervene? This was a matter best left with your engineers and experts.

Even recently, what did the Manager of the Mahaweli Complex, CEB, report to you?

"In the past unfavourable decisions have been taken quoting CEB requirements of end of the year target. Because of our need to keep to the programme we will now have to acquiesce in irreconcilable decisions the CEB will have to make. Consequently, the CEB's interest will best be served by disassociating ourselves completely with tunnel repairs. CEB will maintain the tunnel in the future and regrettably will have to bear costs and loss of generation due to the mistakes of other organizations."

That was the letter sent by the CEB to the Mahaweli Authority.

The tender board also expressed very grave concern about the ill-effects on the grouted main tunnel by blasting operations of the drainage gallery. It was also expressed here that (1) the designer of the drainage and grouting tunnel, by omitting to specify vibration levels, has lacked concern for damage that could be caused to the main tunnel, and (2) that engineers at

Kotmale have complained that during blasting operations, vibrations could be felt at the intake which is a considerable distance from the blast. Tell us, Mr. Minister, what the total damage is because I think Kotmale is going to be a write-off.

Serious concern has also been expressed by the engineers about the repairs to the surge shaft and in the tunnel above the surge shaft. How long more are you going to fool us? What was the point in paying the foreign contractor over Rs. 9 billion if it takes 8 years to become operational after years of incompetency and mismanagement, and giving them a massive bonus as well? The Government continues through the Central Bank to issue cheques worth millions from time to time in favour of the foreign contractor who was originally responsible for the faulty construction. Our local engineers and firms would have completed the project easily in 5 years at about one-third the cost. The public must be told and mismanagement exposed.

Now we come to the Rantembe Project. Here again, barely has the project taken off the ground than the finances are already escalating. I will now read out your Ministry note on the subject :

"(1) The foreign component of the project cost is estimated at DM 174.5 million, leaving DM 55.5 million for physical and financial contingencies. As such the proposed transfer of DM 17.5 million could be accommodated without affecting the implementation of Rantembe Project.

As this transfer of DM 17.5 million is a recent development not envisaged at the time of preparation of Project Cost Estimate incorporated to the Loan Agreement with KfW, this sum is now reflected on page 1 of the Quarterly Report for 2nd Quarter of 1987.

(2) The sum of DM 17.5 million equivalent to Rs. 287 million at current rate of exchange, cannot be accommodated in full within the provision of Rs. 750 million for the financial year of 1987.

The Cabinet Paper seeks the approval for the transfer of certain expenditures up to CM 17.5 million from Randenigala to Rantembe Loan and to effect the corresponding adjustment in the Rantembe Loan in the financial year 1987.

As long as the available loan amount (DM 230 million less DM 17.5 million) is sufficient to meet the foreign component of Rantembe Project this transfer will not entail any additional financial commitment by CEB.

In the case of Foreign Component the total of DM 174.5 million will remain unchanged. However we anticipate some shifting of expenditure within the period of 1986-1988, partly due to disbursement of certain payments (mobilisation advances) approved in December 1986, only in January 1987. A revised estimate of DM component will be furnished to you shortly. However to meet your immediate requirement, we wish to inform you that the revised DM component for 1988 is DM 57 million (against DM 51 million given in the previous estimate).

We also confirm that the total local Component of Rs. 1049 million includes the settlement of customs duties and all taxes payable by expatriate contractors and consultants."

Mr. Minister, search your conscience; you know I speak the truth. I have come today armed with letters and documents from your own Ministry. Nothing is hearsay. I do not envy you at all when the final accounting of the Accelerated Mahaweli Diversion Scheme takes place. I do not have to visit the Mahaweli Complex. I know what is going on there. Your own Ministry file tells me all.

Now a word on Kantalai. The bund of an ancient tank was breached through sheer neglect and ill-conceived decisions, drowning nearly 200 poor peasants in their sleep, and several more who are missing, figures of whom are still unknown.

Mr. A. M. S. Adikari — Deputy Minister of Lands & Land Development :

That comes under the Ministry of Lands and Land Development. The Debate on that Vote is over. This Vote is on the Mahaweli Ministry.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Well, all right. The damage to persons, property, tank, has been estimated at Rs. 575 million. Somebody made a political decision. Someone wanted to favour somebody and there was this disastrous result.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

Hon. Member, I cannot allow you to speak on a matter in relation to which a Commission was appointed and the Commission Report was tabled in Parliament. You must accept that.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Sir, I would not proceed on that point any more. All that the report said was; (Interruption). I said I would not proceed on that any more. So why are you getting excited about it?

Before I conclude I would like to reply to the Minister of Finance on Samanalawewa. He gave us a history of Samanalawewa in reply to me when I stated that it is the SLFP that got the necessary funds from the USSR and started the initial work at Balangoda. I tabled the financial agreement. I thank him for his personal affection and regard for me. I like him too. But I am surprised that he said I had made a faux pas about Samanalawewa.

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake :

Sir, I rise to a point of Order. I think it is very clear under Standing Orders that the hon. Member must speak in relation to the question that is being debated. He cannot speak under the Ministry of Mahaweli Development about matters pertaining to the Ministry of Power. The Samanalawewa Project is a matter which comes under the Ministry of Power and I strongly object to the hon. Member for Medawachchiya seeking permission of this House to reply to the Hon. Minister of Finance in relation to observations made during the discussion on the Ministry of Power.

The Presiding Member :

I think the hon. Member for Medawachchiya must refrain from speaking on matters that come under the Votes of the Ministry of Power and Energy.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

Sir, all I want to say is that the Hon. Minister of Finance referred to this in his reply the other day — (Interruption)

Mr. M. I. M. Aboosally :

The hon. Member can take it up on the 24th when the Votes of the Ministry of Finance are taken up.

The Presiding Member :

Yes, you can take it up when the Votes of the Ministry of Finance are taken up.

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake :

I will do that. Anyway, you cannot hide the fact that it was the SLFP when Mr. C. P. de Silva was the Minister in 1960 that initiated some work on Samanalawewa and it was in 1970 that I was able to get the funds for it. — (Interruption) That is all I have to inform the Hon. Minister and I hope he will submit to this House and the country the true facts about the Mahaweli.

Eyewitness Report on Bitticaloa

- Fr. V. Yogeswaran, S. J.

My visit to Batticaloa took place during the Christmas season. Since I had heard from various sources on different occasions about the difficult situation prevailing in that part of the Island, this visit gave me an opportunity to verify what I had heard and see and experience the difficulty of the common man. The duration of my stay was for a period of two weeks, viz. from 20th December 1987 to 5th January 1988.

These two weeks were fairly sufficient for me to visit a number of places where some major incidents of destruction took place and meet the people who were affected by them. I also had the opportunity of meeting the Government Agent, the members of the Citizen Committee of Batticaloa, the Trade Union Federation of Batticaloa and the members of the clergy who work in the Batticaloa district. Mr. Dixit, the High Commissioner of India, visited Batticaloa during this period and I too was given the opportunity of attending the meeting along with the Government Agent, the Citizen Committee, and the representatives of the Trade Union Federation.

Impact on People

The general situation of the Batticaloa district may be viewed from three broad categories and their impact on the society at large, viz. transportation, economic and social.

The passenger transportation as well as the goods transportation function at the lowest level. Due to the non-functioning of the railway and fear of the lorry owners to use their vehicles on the roads, essential items like flour, sugar, milkfood, fertilizer, fuel etc. were not reaching Batticaloa district. The local products too are not marketed from one place to another. The few long distance buses that were operating from Batticaloa to Colombo, Vavuniya, Bibile were taking a tremendous risk on each journey.

The failure of regular transportation has affected the economy very much. Petrol and diesel are issued on permits. But diesel is not issued to tractor owners. Fertilizer has not reached Batticaloa from Colombo. Therefore the paddy fields are abandoned. Various cordon and search operations have kept the farmers away from their fields.

The ordinary labour force of the community — carpenters, masons, fishermen, farmers etc. — are unemployed mainly because cement has not reached Batticaloa for long time for any building work; lack of fuel and fertilizer prevents the farmer; continued night curfew prevents the fishermen from going out; traders cannot transport their goods.

Added to all these, the goats and food stuffs brought into the country by the IPKF spread disease. The cattle were dying and already there is a ban in Batticaloa on slaughtering. To prevent this disease from spreading, the cattle are being killed and buried due to lack of medicine for treatment.

The social situation of the district can be summed up as general sense of fear, anxiety and distrust. The harassment caused by the IPKF has made the common people to fear them and distrust them rather than to co-operate with them in their task. The arbitrary arrest, detention, retaliation, rape, looting and killing have made the common man to call the IPKF "Innocent People Killing Force."

Effects of Violence and Counter Violence

For the period of three months, viz. October - December 1987, that is soon after the breaking down of the Peace Accord, a number of major incidents of retaliation took place by the IPKF as well as by Sri Lanka Security Forces. They were in Kumburumulai, Kaluvanchikudy, Oddamawadi, Vandaramoolai, Batticaloa etc. The IPKF proved that they are no better than the Sri Lankan Forces and they are not peace-keepers.

In these retaliatory actions, a number of villages were burnt and people were rendered homeless. According to the Government Agent of Batticaloa there are over 36,000 refugees of all communities and the number is on the increase with fresh violence, viz. in Kattankudy,

When I inquired from the Government Agent about the relief and rehabilitation programmes for the refugees he was lamenting about his immediate problem. He said that immediate relief is very essential and without the trains running, food will not reach the people.

The long term plan of rehabilitation, of rebuilding the homes and villages and settling the refugees can only be achieved once normalcy prevails and more if sanity prevails among the parties that perpetrate violence.

The cry of the hour is the immediate need for relief in terms of food, clothing, medicine etc.

During my stay in Batticaloa, two major incidents of violence and destruction took place. They are the burning down of the Batticaloa Market Complex and Kattankudy bazaar and part of the village. The source of destruction of the former is the Sri Lanka Police and the latter is by the militant groups of Tamils and Muslims.

The role of the IPKF in these two instances was that of silent spectators to the destruction of civilian property and the gruesome killing of the civilians.

According to the eye-witnesses, a group of policemen went to buy provisions from the station to the adjoining market. One of them was shot dead by someone in the crowd. In panic and fear the Police opened fire into the crowd, killing a few. The people began to flee. In the meantime, Police from the station came in and shot indiscriminately and began burning the shops and looting. The IPKF was present all the while but did nothing to prevent the damage and destruction. At the end, over 100 shops were burnt and destroyed, 23 bodies of men were sent to the hospital mortuary, the many injured sought help at the hospital. Eyewitnesses recount the death of women and children too. But no bodies were recovered or identified. They have mysteriously disappeared. I had the opportunity of visiting the scene of destruction to verify the damage caused.

The Kattankudy incident occurred when a Muslim youth belonging to the LTTE was shot dead by a member of former Home Guards, another Muslim. The group affiliation soon changed into violent ethnic trouble

between Tamils and Muslims. Though violence broke out in the early hours of the morning, the IPKF moved in only in the afternoon to restore peace. But in the meantime the damage was done. Though I could not visit the scene, from people who managed to flee, I gather that about 45 civilians died and a good number of business establishments were burnt and looted.

Dixit's Visit and Allegations of Harrasment

Another important event that took place during my short stay was the visit of Hon. J. N. Dixit, the High Commissioner of India. He met the Government Agent, members of the Citizen Committee, representatives of the Trade Union Federation of Batticaloa. Unfortunately Muslims could not be present because the troubles in Kattankudy made their journey to Batticaloa impossible. The important matters that were raised by the groups that met Mr. Dixit, included the restoration of the railway which will enable the transportation of essential items; how to prevent types of retaliation by the Forces; inquiry and release of political prisoners; how best to cooperate to implement the Peace Accord which will eventually result in the general elections; facilitating the University and the Paper Mills to function by making necessary adjustments to shift the security camps that exist within the premises.

“The day to day experience of the common man is the fear of life and property fear . . . of joint action to expose these problems. The victims are afraid to seek remedy for fear of being further victimised.”

The issues that were not raised and avoided (for reasons known only to the persons who participated) are — requests for an impartial inquiry into various retaliations that took place; finding the guilty party and compensating the victims; inquiry into arbitrary arrest and detentions; alleged torture and rape by the IPKF; visiting the scene of the damaged areas by Mr. Dixit; long term relief and rehabilitation programme to restore normalcy.

Time will tell the success or the failure of this meeting.

Another important area of my inquiry centered around what I have heard in various circles of the alleged arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and rape. I met a number of persons who were arrested, detained and later released as well tortured and released. Almost

all the released persons are given a small note to the effect that the particular person was detained under PTA by the IPKF for the specified time period which varies from a week to a few months. This piece of document is signed by an officer of the IPKF. So far, any acts of the IPKF have not been challenged in any Courts of Law in Sri Lanka. Most of them allege that while they were questioned for their alleged involvement with the LTTE, they were tortured — various methods in varying degree were used. In this process some have disappeared. I have seen the documentation of the Citizen Committee which include complaints of arrests, affidavits of rape victims etc. But no action is being taken except to plead with the IPKF to release the detainees as early as possible. No action is being taken on behalf of the rape victims, torture victims, for property lost and persons who have died in custody.

Another feature I observed is that some militant groups collaborate with the IPKF in identifying the members of the LTTE at various check points, and this hinders the peace process. For, a number of LTTE who have given up violence after the Peace Accord are identified by the other groups as LTTE or its sympathisers. These persons are now being arrested. Therefore there is fear among the LTTE to change their ways and come into the open to lead a normal life.

The other common complaint that I heard is the pilfering by the IPKF while doing the routine house to house search. Due to bad experience of rape and molesting, people go out of their house while the search goes on.

I have also seen the IPKF in their shopping spree. From TVs to digital wrist watches and fancy goods, all of foreign make are being bought and some small traders complain that they are paid Indian money and the bigger traders use the Indian rupee for their other transactions.

Widespread Fear

The day to day experience of the common man is the fear of life and property. Everyone expresses this fear at the mere suggestion of a joint action to expose these problems. The victims are afraid to seek legal remedy for fear of being further victimised. The Citizen Committee, the Trade Unions too express the same fear in the event of a common action. When courts, laws and our own Government cannot protect us and ensure our safety, to who shall we complain? is the common sentiment expressed by the prominent citizens of the district. The only form of protest comes in the way of 'Hartal' where everyone keeps away from work and stays indoors, some to enjoy a video and others to go hungry. In reality, it has no effect on the IPKF or the Government or the militant groups.

The next day dawns with the same old fears, worries and sufferings.

Colombo 4.
10.01.1988

More Violence in The East

Role of the IPKF Questioned

The Eastern Province has continued to suffer violence with the Muslims bearing the brunt of the attacks in late March especially.

The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) has again come under bitter criticism for their inaction when Muslims villages like Kalmunai, Sainthamarathu, Samanthurai and the environs were attacked and their homes set on fire.

The *Weekend* newspaper of April 10 reported Indian High Commissioner J. N. Dixit as having alleged that "a senior Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister was using the 'Three Stars' group to stir up the violence." However the gross "inefficiency" shown by the IPKF in these situations has never been properly explained. Allegations have been made that it was all a part of an Indian RAW design to rid the Eastern Province of Sinhalese and Muslims to make the North-East merger a reality. According to the 1981 Census, in the Eastern Province Tamils are 41%, Muslims 33% and Sinhalese 26% of the population.

The following is an extract from a report appearing in *The Island* of April 3rd :

"Analysts see a well planned campaign to chase out Sinhalese and Muslim villagers from the East and North Central Provinces with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vincent Perera himself telling Parliament on March 24 that the attacks indicated a plan to 'drive out the villagers'".

"A prominent Muslim leader from the east had this scathing comment to make on the attitudes of the IPKF '...which the government seems to ignore despite the truth being so very plain to anyone'".

"The comment was '...The IPK is remarkably inactive when attacks are launched on us and on the Sinhalese. But when a single grenade was thrown at an IPKF convoy at Batticaloa doing no damage whatsoever, the Bishop and twenty five priests were made to stand out in the sun for over half an hour while the Bishop's House and the whole town was thoroughly searched. Need we go further into this insane business?' said this leader bringing his hand down hard in frustration on the table as he finished."

April 11, 1988

— Editorial Note

U. S. Stock Market Crash

No economic event in 1987, exceeds in significance as Black Monday, October 19, when prices of shares of stocks at the New York Stock Exchange and major stock markets of the world plummeted in an unprecedented scale wiping out in a single day some \$ 500 billion of wealth in stocks.

1929 Revisited

October 19, 1987. The day of America's nerve-wrecking rendezvous with reality had come. The New York Stock Exchange went wild with panic selling on a scale considered the worst in the US' financial history. Share prices plunged swiftly, wiping out an entire year's gain in equity value in just a day. The Dow Jones industrial average — an indicator of the overall trend in movement of stock prices in the US — dropped by 508 point or a stunning 22.6%, almost double the record 12.9% fall of October 29, 1929. (Time, 2 Nov. 87)

That was Bloody Monday. Because of advanced communication technology and global computer networks, the fear in Wall Street spread to high-flying stock markets around the world. Stock prices fell the next day by 12.2% in London, 15% in Tokyo, 16% in Paris, and 6.7 in Tronto. The panic went on for a week, the prices went down and up, down and up, changing directions in hours. The gyrations even led to the closure of the Hong Kong stockmarket for four days. (Time, 2 Nov. 87; Business Week, 2 Nov. 87)

Anxiety and confusion swept the US, with many questions awaiting immediate answers: Will the stock crisis lead to a recession? Or even a global depression that resembles the aftermath of the 1929 Crash? Will retrenchment in companies follow? What will happen to pension funds in whom thousands of Americans depend for the rest of their lives? What will Ronald Reagan do to prevent a total economic wreck? The American sense of financial security was in shambles.

Newsmen described that time, as "a week of shattered illusions and vanished fortunes." The wealthy owners of stocks lost millions and billions of dollars. Wall Street's young brokers and investment traders, even those earning more than a hundred thousand dollars in commissions a year, were threatened by lay-offs. To the 80% of US population who owned no stock, job losses and erosion of their standard of living are imminent dangers. Said Time Magazine: "What crashed was more than just a market. It was the Reagan illusion: the idea that there could be a defense build up and tax cuts without a price, that the country could live beyond its means indefinitely". (Time, 2 Nov. 87; 1)

The crash brought to the fore the crisis of economic confidence gripping the US today. One factor that triggered the selling binge was a report two weeks earlier showing that the US trade deficit in August shrank only slightly to \$ 15.7 million. Investors who had been hoping for a big decline took that as a cue that US finances were out

of control and that the Reagan administration was unable to fix them. (Time, 2 Nov. 87; Newsweek, 2 Nov. 87)

It was a situation where the White House and Congress were "held hostage" by financial markets to compromise on the long standing problem of huge budget and trade deficits.

From Five-Year Bull

Before the free fall last October 19th, it was bullish for five consecutive years in the world's stock markets. The global bull market began in late 1982 when the world coming from the worst recession ever since the 1930s, showed signs of recovery. Driven by economic confidence and cash-rich institutional investors, the stockmarkets climbed and hit new highs in the second half of 1987. By that time, the equity capitalization of world stockmarkets had risen from \$2,000 billion in 1982 to \$ 8,000 billion in 1987.

The bullishness was indeed global. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones index rose by 250% from August 1982, to peak in August 1987. Hong Kong's Hang Sang was up more than 200%; in an all-time high on October 14th, the Tokyo's Nikkei index was 287% higher; Frankfurt was up 241%. Sydney almost 400%. In London, where some say the bull market had run since the winter of 1974-75, the index reached its peak in July, up 253% higher than its 1974-75 low. (The Economist 24 Oct. 87)

The boom was helped by the globalization of stock trading, improvements on communication technology, as well as by deregulation

lation of stockmarket memberships and exchange controls. Globalization transformed domestic securities firms into multinational investment banks. In 1980, no foreign securities firms were allowed a seat on either the London or the Tokyo stockmarkets. Foreigners were permitted to be members of the New York Exchange but these foreigners were not allowed to be primary dealers in American Treasury Bonds, the world's largest capital market.

Prompted by opportunities for bigger profits, London opened its

stockmarket to all-comers, who have rushed in either by buying member firms or by building their own equity and gilts department. In December 1986 the Federal Reserve bank of New York gave primary dealership licences to two Japanese firms. Add to these the foreign banks that have bought American primary dealers in Treasuries.

The Economist, reflecting on the Black Monday disaster said that the 1987 Crash has demonstrated "one dramatic effect of the internationalization of investment

banking. As a firm's equity book is passed round the globe every 24 hours, from market to market, trader to trader, a new dimension is added to an old adage: "When New York sneezes, London catches a cold. Now it catches pneumonia. So do Tokyo, Sydney, Frankfurt and all stockmarkets..." And for the rest of the world especially the world's poor, the effect may be far-reaching and even more hurting.

— Marcy Cosare-Ballesteros

(Courtesy: IBON, Philippines, 31 January 1988)

Nicaragua Makes Major Concessions

The Central American Peace process was saved at January's San Jose presidential summit because Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega announced a series of concessions that rescued the negotiations from an impasse. According to many observers here, the concessions reflect the Sandinista's growing concern that Nicaraguans cannot withstand much more of U.S.-sponsored low-intensity warfare. Although some measures are clearly unpopular among party militants, government leaders say they have no choice.

The Economy & US Aggression

Nicaragua has never had an economy that served the needs of its poor majority.

By the 1979 Sandinista takeover, real per capita income had dropped to 1960 levels. Popular discontent had fueled revolutionary fervour.

But the Sandinistas inherited the same economy in 1979, and have been plagued by a growing foreign debt, capital flight and export prices that have lost more than 30 percent

of their value since the triumph. In the beginning they had some economic success, employing a mixed economy strategy that envisioned agrarian reform, food self-sufficiency, import substitution, the nationalization of natural resources, growing foreign trade and banking and an aggressive investment strategy.

But the model was unable to survive the U.S.-sponsored war. Part of the Reagan administration's strategy, in addition to inflicting heavy material damage on the country, has been to strangle Nicaragua economically.

Nicaragua shares with its neighbours a variety of factors that have inhibited economic growth. But the war is the biggest cause of the ruined economy; some economists project that the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would be \$ 3.6 billion larger if there were no war.

Further Problem

A region-wide drought made matters worse. President Ortega declared a "national food emer-

gency" Dec. 18, announcing that the drought had destroyed 75 percent of the bean crop, 45 percent of sorghum and 25 percent of corn. Export earnings would fall between \$ 50 million and \$ 100 million.

The new year has featured major energy shortages. Contras blew up electrical pylons near the borders, and several generating facilities sat idle awaiting spare parts. By late January, many businesses and factories in Managua were without electricity more than half the day. Added to gasoline shortages that produced monumental lines at service stations, the energy cuts further crippled production and exacerbated popular discontent.

Sandinista leaders remain confident that the majority of Nicaraguans still support the revolution but take seriously the present right-wing Opposition campaign to destabilize the government by channeling discontent into action and provoking repression. "The Sandinistas' political task is to teach people to understand the real causes of the economic deterioration and offer alternatives to confront it" explained an area government representative.

— *Latinamerica Press*



Naked Repression in Singapore

International Church Body Expelled

On December 30, the secret police entered the offices of the Christian Conference of Asia, an ecumenical body with more than 100 member churches and councils from all over Asia (including the Anglican and Methodist churches of Singapore), and informed the staff that CCA was officially dissolved under Singapore law, that the entire office and its contents were now under seal, its accounts were frozen and all executive staff had 2 weeks to leave the country.

With such a massive amount of archives, files and other records at its disposal the Singapore Govt. will be able to fabricate any story it wishes and find a supporting letter or memo. It is likely that material from this office will be used throughout the security services of ASEAN countries to crush human rights groups and other forms of democratic dissent especially by Christians.

Although CCA had its headquarters and 7 departments in Singapore, it also has 2 departments based in Hongkong and so is using Hongkong as its temporary headquarters.

Protests at the expulsion have been made by churches from all over the world. However, CCA itself has taken a low-key approach and is now re-organising in order to continue its work.

The most remarkable reaction to the expulsion came from the national member council from Indonesia which stated that it supported the Singapore gov't's action and agreed that CCA had moved away from its religious aims into politics. There has been a continuing debate within the Asian churches (and thus CCA) over human rights questions in Indonesia and also its 1975 invasion of East Timor. However, this debate has always been carried out within the fellowship and never in public. This breaking of ranks by the Indonesian Christian Council to endorse a repressive act against its own collegial body is a major fracture in Asian inter-church relations.

Malaysia - Singapore Cooperation

Cooperation between the two govts in crushing democratic dissent using the Internal Security Act has been obvious from the beginning. The expulsion of the CCA was followed by the serving of 2-year detention orders on many of the Malaysian detainees including those who were assisting in the campaign to free the Singapore detainees. In several orders (e.g. those of Ms. Chee Heng Leng and Dr. Nasiri) CCA is outlandishly termed "a body infiltrated by the International Communist United Front."

It is also said that the relations between Malaysian PM, Dr. Mahathir, and PM Lee Kuan Yew were very warm and friendly at the ASEAN summit in Manila 14-15 December compared to the Vancouver Commonwealth meeting a few months previously. Malaysia's copycat repressive actions were clearly seen as a blow for ASEAN solidarity.

Govt. brings in Vatican shock Troops

Father Peres, an Opus Dei priest, has been visiting Singapore detainee Vincent Cheng regularly in his police prison. Opus Dei ("God's Work") is an organisation within the Roman Catholic Church founded by Fr. José-Maria Escrivá de Balaguer on October 2, 1928 in Spain. It flourished under fascism, giving Franco's rule messianic overtones. It has been a controversial organisation owing to its secrecy, its very conservative theology and its deep involvement on the right wing of politics in many countries. Previously regarded as a kind of Catholic Freemasonry, it has received official recognition from the present Pope. It is now aggressively penetrating many established Catholic structures, educational institutions, powerful business interests and political lobbies. It recently took over the Catholic Students' Society at the National University of Singapore.

As Vincent Cheng is a strong Christian with a mild, self-effacing and tolerant attitude, he is unlikely to be swayed by the heavy political arguments and appeals to self-interest characteristic of the secret police. Perhaps now the Singapore Govt is hoping to undermine his theological views by setting an Opus Dei priest on to him. He has been under psychological pres-

sure since May 21, 1987 and is held under laboratory conditions so there may be some grounds for the Govt's hopes. However, Vincent also assisted with a Church and Society publication in 1986 which included a series of exposes on Opus Dei entitled "Opus Dei-Revelations of an Elite Battalion" so he is aware of their mind-bending tactics.

The Embarrassing Truth

Fr. Edgar D'Souza resigned his priesthood after a dirty, personal campaign against him by the Singapore Govt. As part of his reply to the Govt, he released records of the meeting between a Church delegation (including the Catholic Archbishop of Singapore, Gregory Yong) and Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. The records are Fr. D'Souza's notes taken as the Archbishop and other delegation members gave a subsequent account of the meeting to priests, plus notes of related events and statements of Yong.

The records make it clear that the Church delegation were browbeaten by the Prime Minister and the Archbishop felt "cornered" when a press conference with the PM was sprung on him without warning.

Far Eastern Economic Review Chopped

These allegations by D'Souza were reported in the Hongkong-based Far Eastern Economic Review of 17 December, 1987 in the same way that it has reported govt allegations against the detainees and the priests. On 26 December the Singapore Govt declared the Review to be "a foreign newspaper engaging in the domestic politics of Singapore" and cut its circulation to 500 copies to be marked and circulated as directed by the govt. The Review responded by withdrawing its entire circulation saying

that it had, in practice, been banned and would not allow the Govt. to have control over its circulation.

PM Lee Kuan Yew has fulminated against the Review and brought charges for defamation. The Review has refused to apologise and has denied his charges. The matter is now before the Singapore courts. The Review was given a two week extension in which to file its defence. Since the Govt. exercises such heavy control of the judiciary it is unlikely that the Review, with the best case in the world can clear itself of the charges. In the meantime it has withdrawn its printing operation from Singapore.

The discomfort and anger of the govt is partly due to the truth receiving such wide currency. The govt has also claimed to allow press freedom provided official rebuttals

are published in full. To its embarrassment, its bluff has been called-off by the Review and this policy has been shown to be hollow. *Time* magazine, *Asiaweek* and the Asian *Wall Street Journal* were banned because they refused to give acres of space to official replies to their articles on Singapore. But the Review has faithfully given space to every Singapore Govt letter it received and published them unedited, partly, as Review editor Derek Davies said, "because we believe the government has a right to reply; we printed them partly also because their content and tone revealed more about the mentality of Singapore officialdom than could the most gifted journalist." Even having the unrestricted right of reply, the Singapore Govt has been unable to take the heat of the truth coming out.

(*Singapore Human Rights Alert*, New Zealand)

Notice to Issue on SI, U.C. Chairman

Basic rights plea for terminating C.W.F. Seminar

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed notice to issue on Sub-Inspector A. D. S. Peiris of Wattala Police, Reginald Perera, Chairman of the Wattala-Mabole Urban Council and the Attorney-General after an application of three petitioners seeking leave to proceed with a fundamental rights case was supported.

In the application which was supported before Justices Raja Wanasundara and Parinda Ranasinghe, the petitioner — Messrs Jayanath Wanigasuriya (a teacher), Basil Fernando (a lawyer) and the Rev. Brother Edwin Ambrose of the Wattala Branch of the Christian Workers Fellowship allege they were restrained by the Sub Inspector and the U.C. Chairman from holding a seminar in violation of their fundamental rights.

The petitioners claim that the Christian Workers Fellowship of which they are members, is an organisation which is

inter-denominational and aims to promote social thinking among the adherents of all religions and to foster inter religious dialogue and racial amity, to promote the study of the Christian gospel in relation to contemporary society, to assist in raising the conscience of the working people and all oppressed sections of society through dialogue, study action and cultural activities.

The Wattala Branch of the organisation had organised a seminar to be held at the Wattala-Mabole U.C. Hall on November 25, last year. The purpose of the seminar was to explain the provisions of the Constitution on Human Rights in the light of the Supreme Court decision.

Permission was granted by the Urban Council for the use of its Hall for the seminar.

The seminar commenced and when Mr. Basil Fernando began his speech, the Sub-Inspector who arrived there with the UC Chairman and some policemen ordered the meeting terminated. He said he was ordering so on the basis of a difference in the letters of invitation and the application made to the UC. The Sub-Inspector however, gave an opportunity for Mr. Fernando and Mr. Wanigasuriya to explain. He also ordered the gathering to disperse. The Sub-Inspector next tried to snatch a camera belonging to a photographer, but Mr. Fernando prevented this.

The petitioners allege that by that act they were prevented from expressing views on human rights to the public and that it tantamounts to an infringement of their fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association as guaranteed under Article 14 (1)(a) and (c) of the Constitution.

Mr. Wanigasuriya has claimed damages and compensation in Rs. 25,000 and Mr. Basil Fernando and the Rev. Bro. Ambrose in Rs. 15,000 each.

Mr. Govin Dayasiri instructed by Mr. D. A. Jayamaha supported the application.

The Island of 3rd February 1988 (excerpt)

Counsel moves to lead Oral evidence of Two Attorneys

The fundamental rights application filed by S. W. R. D. Wijewardane was taken by for hearing on 18th of May 1988. The Bench comprised Chief Justice Parinda Ranasinghe and Justices H. D. Tambiah and Tissa Bandaranayake. In this application the petitioner complained that, he had been illegally arrested, illegally detained and cruelly and inhumanly treated by the officer in charge of Pamunugama Police Station, Mr. T. R. Zain. The petitioner also cited Deputy Inspector General of Police Mr. P. B. Ekanayake and the Attorney General as Respondents.

When the case was taken up for hearing the State Counsel took up a preliminary objection on the ground that the application was out of time.

He stated that according to the petitioner the arrest was on the 20th of August 1987 and the respondent's position was that the arrest was effected on 22nd August 1987. He said that the petition also shows that from or about the 21st of August 1987, the petitioner's brother-in-law and the Attorney-at-Law had been aware for this arrest and had taken steps before the Magistrate's Court of Wattala to challenge the arrest and the detention of the petitioner, and that on 24th August 1987, a detention order had been produced before the Magistrate on behalf of the respondent. He also submitted that although the arrest was made specifically in respect of an offence of robbery under the Penal Code, the police also received information shortly thereafter which justified the police keeping the petitioner under detention under the Provisions of the Emergency Regulations.

The State Counsel tendered to Court a document which he stated was of importance to the respondent, and was the basis on which the validity of both the detention order and the detention thereunder was sought to be established.

The State Counsel stated that he had not produced this document earlier and no notice had been given to the petitioner. He therefore moved that the document be accepted and if necessary, the petitioner be given an opportunity for filing a further affidavit. This document was then marked of consent.

Mr. E. D. Wikramanayake moved that an opportunity be given to study the document and file an affidavit if necessary. He also moved that he be permitted to lead oral evidence of two Attorneys-at-Law in support of the petitioner's position, that he was arrested on the 20th August 1987 and not on the 22nd. Mr. D. A. Jayamaha, Attorney-at-Law had stated that he had visited the Pamunugama Police Station on the 21st noon and seen and talked to the petitioner. The sequence of time was important in this case particularly in view of the position taken up by the Respondents, in the new document that was marked.

The Court making order, indicated that as and when it became necessary to hear the oral evidence it would make an order at that stage. The petitioner was to file counter-affidavit if necessary by April 4th with notice to the respondents and the matter was to be fixed for hearing early next term before the same Bench.

Mr. E. D. Wikramanayake with Basil Fernando appeared for the petitioner. Mr. A. R. C. Perera, Senior State Counsel appeared for the respondents.



Philippines a battlefield says Rights Commission

The Asian Human Rights Commissions has described the Philippines as a battlefield with "low intensity warfare" and "high intensity warfare" creating division and fear.

After a 12 day study mission the commission said it gained an impression of total militarisation of the country where civilian was pitted against civilian "in a war which should be fought between two armies."

The commission said from what it had seen and heard it had to convey its overwhelming concern that the Filipino people were being denied the right to lead a normal life and enjoy peace of mind.

"They are being forced to choose between supporting vigilante groups carrying arms and intimidating and victimising their own people or bearing the consequences of being branded communist sympathisers."

It said the victims of many abuses found no redress through the military or legal processes.

"Instead there appears to be a commitment to a total war against insurgency in preference to a total war against the causes of insurgency — poverty and land. The result of this is, we believe, the continuing violation of the rights of the Filipino people as guaranteed in the internationally recognised human rights law and in the Philippine Constitution itself."

They were deeply disturbed by a statement of the President branding allegations of human rights violations as "total lies". "We find this untenable given the serious and unjustifiable violations of human rights we have observed," the commission members said.

The radical tradition of the Buddha & Karl Marx

- Nalin Swaris

Drs. Nalin Swaris is a Sri Lankan who is presently a Senior Lecturer in Social Philosophy at the College of Social Work in Driebergen in the Netherlands and a research fellow of the University of Nijmegen.

In its last issue, (January 1988), the *Christian Worker* published the full text of a conversation between a Christian clergyman and a Thai Buddhist Scholar, on the subject of Buddhism and Social Change.

The underlying assumption in the discussion, particularly suggested by the way the topic was introduced by the Moderator, was that there is an undeniable radical tradition in Christianity, whereas Buddhism inculcates an attitude of non-involvement in the world and the pursuit of a purely individualistic form of liberation..Nirvana — the state of perfection striven after by Buddhists was defined in ontological terms as a state of *non-being*, whereas it was suggested that Christianity was an affirmation of life and an aspiration to the fullness of life.

This discussion recalls to mind a debate carried on some years ago in the *Lanka Guardian*. There again the burning issue was the presence or lack, of a radical tradition in Buddhism. Those who stressed the quietist elements in Buddhism, are unanimous in tracing this con-

servative character of Buddhism to the nature of the doctrine taught by the Founder, Gautama the Buddha himself. Progressive thinkers and specifically Marxists in general consider Buddhism to be a form of subjective idealism. With regard to the social significance of the Buddha's teaching, they are curiously enough in agreement with Max Weber's assessment that "Buddhism is a specifically unpolitical, and anti-political status religion", particularly appealing to social elites of the time — intellectuals, merchants and princes.

Some Sri Lankan Marxists have of late begun to express themselves in positive terms with regard to Christianity. This is in large measure due to the development of a branch of Christian theology, since the sixties generally called "liberation theology" today. This theology draws its inspiration as much from the Bible as it does from the revolutionary world view of Karl Marx. It is in the light of these developments, that one has to understand the oft recurring debate about the radicalism of Christianity

and Buddhism. Comparisons are always odious; such debates serve hardly any practical purpose and reminds one of the Jewish-Christian debates among the so-called progressives of Marx's time. In his "On the Jewish Question", Marx stated that the old theological question, "as to whether the Jew or the Christian has the better prospect of salvation is repeated in the enlightened form: which of them is *more capable of emancipation*? The question now is: Which makes man freer, the negation of Judaism or the negation of Christianity?"

If one were to transfer Marx' critique to our own times: the current discussions seem to suggest that if Christianity is more radical than Buddhism, then Sri Lankan man would become freer, more by the negation of Buddhism than by the negation of Christianity!

It is by no means the purpose of this article to join issue on the relative radical merits of Christianity and Buddhism. Its aim is: 1) to draw attention to the presence of

a radical core in the teachings and practice of the Buddha; 2) to indicate the remarkable correspondence between the Middle Path of the Buddha, which is an organic unity of thought and practice and Marx's Philosophy of Praxis. Unfortunately, the relationship between Buddhist and Marxist intellectuals in Sri Lanka has in general developed into one of mutual suspicion if not hostility. This has prevented the growth of what might have been a mutually advantageous tradition of dialogue and collaboration.

What is Radicalism?

Friend and foe alike will readily admit that the most radical theory of Man and Society in modern times is the Philosophy of Praxis developed by Karl Marx. It is therefore not unreasonable that we turn to Marx himself for a definition of Radicalism. In his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law", he wrote, "To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself. The evident proof of the radicalism of theory and hence of its practical energy, is that it proceeds from a resolute, positive abolition of religion. The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being."

The Buddha's life-mission for a full forty five years, was to restore to human beings a sense of themselves. Again and again he stressed that he was a human being. His teaching he insisted was not the result of divine inspiration or obtained through the mediation of some supernatural power. He had broken through, to understanding and enlightenment by immense human effort. Every human

being had within himself or herself the potentiality to take the path he had taken. Buddha believed firmly in the educability and perfectibility of the human being. Man is his own master — there are no fates or destinies, no "iron laws of history" as it were, 'outside man'. Mankind can define its own goal (*attha*), and by conscious effort work towards its attainment. In other words, there is no teleology — no hidden goal — outside of human activity.

To be radical is to place man at the centre.

To understand the World as the product of human consciousness and activity.

In the Brahmajala and Samanaphala Suttas of the Digha Nikaya we see as it were, an 'encyclopaedic compendium' of religious thought and practice in Buddha's time. One by one these theories and practices are, examined and rejected by the Buddha because they were pernicious hindrances to the one thing necessary, the liberation of human beings from suffering — here and now, "in this world". The enumeration of superstitious practices in the Brahmajala Sutta; the use of charms, recourse to astrologers and soothsayers to know or determine the outcome of natural and social events, the making of vows to deities, etc, read like a general description of religious practices

in contemporary Sri Lanka. It is also a sad commentary on how far actual practice even of religious leaders, has deviated from the teachings of the Founder. Buddha rejected such practices as "*tirichanna*", animal like behaviour because they were indicative of a state of consciousness in human beings who have not yet discovered their true humanity, or who, having done so have again lost themselves. Karl Marx describes this state of affairs in remarkably parallel terms in his "German Ideology", as follows: "Consciousness of nature first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are *purely animal* and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature."

To be radical then, is to place man at the centre. To understand the world as the product of human consciousness and activity. To understand human oppression and suffering as the product of human agency itself (*kamma*, in the Buddha's specific re-definition of a then current term), and to work as human beings towards human self-liberation.

Once the problematic has been correctly formulated in its real, this-worldly, dimensions, then by further analysis, one could go on to the solution of specific problems. But for this the mystical veil of religious and secular ideologies, which obstruct true vision and distort consciousness has to be rent. In the words of the Suttas, which anticipate a similar Marxian formulation by more than two thousand years, "what has been turned upside down has been set upright, what has been hidden has been revealed, a light has been brought into the darkness, so that those with eyes might see things as they are".

The Middle Path :

The Result of Ideological and Practical Struggle

The subjective driving force in the Buddha's quest for human liberation as Rhys-Davids put it, "was the anguished questionings of his mind, brooding over the misery of the world, and the infinite living and dying in it" (Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, p.43)

The Buddha examined and tested the various ideologies and practices of his time, & rejected them in so far as they were not conducive towards true human liberation, but retained some of their positive elements in the formulation of his own teaching.

Against the Brahmanic ideology, which maintained that Brahman alone was the only true, eternal and unchangeable reality, the Buddha firmly asserted the nature of reality as constant change, (*anicca*). If reality is constant change, then, what had once arisen through human activity can also be changed through human intervention. This was a revolutionary concept for the time.

The Materialists of his time were the most fierce critics of the Brahmanic system, and its metaphysical idealism. They reacted against the hypocritical pretension to morality of the Brahmins by denying all morality. They taught that all reality was composed of matter, that thought was a mere reflex of material processes, "just as the fermentation of certain elements in combination, produce alcoholic spirits."

Buddha asserted the moral nature of the world. (The "world" *loka* has to be understood, in Buddha's thought, just as in Marx's thought, not in a cosmological sense — that is the world, as it were, independent of human knowledge and action. Such a world

as Marx put it is an absurdity. The world is the world *we know* and *which we construct through thought and action*. It is *the world of man*. Theoretically we can say that the world exists independent of and anterior to man, but it is always a 'human' judgement).

Like the materialists, Buddha, admitted the sensory, thus material basis of human knowledge, but denied that consciousness was a passive reflection of external conditions.

Through ideological struggle, the Buddha achieved a remarkable breakthrough in the history of philosophy.

He pointed out step by step that, when an object enters the field of one of the sensory organs, the eye for example, there is contact, which leads to sensation and perception. However, he made clear that visual *consciousness* was the result of the dialectic interaction of external stimuli and the internal subjective appropriation of sense data. This internal dynamic principle the Buddha identified by the term, "sankhara". This elucidates the active and subjective aspect of the human personality. The karmic formations in which one finds oneself, the country, period, one's position in society, one's sex, one's upbringing, and past experiences good or bad, are all actively present in the moment of cognition of a thing. Thus there is no such thing as a neutral cognition, there is always an emotional reaction of

attraction, aversion, or indifference to external realities, unless of course one has attained critical awareness or enlightened consciousness, to see things as they have come to be and are becoming.

Buddha rejected all theories of extreme *Determinism*, be it Idealist or Materialist. He also rejected the extreme *Voluntarism* of his time who believed that by a sheer exertion of the will they could surmount the limitations of physical existence and achieve the liberation of their spirits.

The Sceptics of the Buddha's time, represented a major step forward in Indian Philosophy. Two of the Buddha's most illustrious disciples Sariputta and Moggallana are reputed to be disciples of the Master of the School of Sceptics. Against Brahmanic dogmatism, and the speculative method, characteristic of the theologians of the period — they advocated an attitude of suspended judgement towards all propositions. They raised scepticism to the level of a scientific method, and paved the way for a critical method of inquiry. However they could not indicate a way out of the impasse. Suspension of one's judgement, amidst a "wilderness of views" they taught, was conducive to mental tranquility. Buddha accepted their critical method, but went further. The truth of a proposition he taught, could only be tested in practice. This was equally true even for his own teachings — he said, as in his celebrated discourse to the Kalamas.

Thus through ideological struggle the Buddha achieved a remarkable breakthrough in the history of philosophy. The central problem as he saw it was this. Change and decay are real. What then is the role of human agency or practice. Should one become pessimist like the fatalists, or amoral like

the materialists? Or remain caught up in the samsaric net of the Brahmans? Could human beings work out their liberation? When he finally found a way out of the impasse we are told that he spent a full four weeks meditating on the astounding discovery he had made.

The Buddha defined his discovery as *Paticcasamupada* : *Conditioned Co-Arising*.

“When this is present, that is present
From the arising of this that arises
When this is absent, that is absent
On the cessation of this, that ceases.
.....”

When the Buddha understood this, he realised that the path to liberation was wide open.

Human beings are not product of some external agent. They are not determined by blind forces, be they natural, supernatural or social. They are the result of specific conditions, but are not fully determined by them. Understanding one's conditions, indicates the way to freedom from these conditions.

Thus the Buddha saw a fundamental Law underlying all reality, understanding this law, which he said was “necessary, objective, invariable and present under verifiable conditions” could lead to freedom from necessity. Or as Marx put it “True freedom is insight into necessity”. Human beings in Buddha's radically new formulation of the theory of Karma are at the same time producers as well as products of conditions.

Thus it would be a gross distortion of the Buddha's teaching to present it as a form of subjective idealism. Buddha correctly pointed out the nature of human knowledge as sensual as well as active. His method to use Bruno Bauer's phrase, was a “systematic puncturing of illusions”. Particularly the notion of an abstract, separate and isolated individual, existing

eternally or immortally as a spiritual essence, independent of specific conditions. Buddha correctly pointed out that the notion of self “arises”, under specific conditions and would cease with the cessation of those self-same conditions.

Marx's Epistemological Break-through : Result of Ideological Struggle

The youthful Marx began his academic studies when economic and political changes were transforming the face of Europe at a rate and on a scale that was without precedent in history. The universities were charged with a sense of great expectations. The young intellectuals of the time felt that they were to be the witnesses, if not architects of a brave new world, in which social privilege or disability, would no longer be determined by birth or by divine ordination. The American and French Constitutions were thoroughly secular. The finest ideals of Enlightenment thinkers, had found their concrete expression in positive legislation. “All men were born equal and had the inalienable right to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

**The Buddha saw
a fundamental
Law underlying
all reality which
if understood could
lead to freedom
from necessity.**

Whilst great political advances were being made in France and economic advances in England, it is in the then relatively backward Germany, that the most significant developments in philosophy were taking place.

Whilst society was visibly changing, the old view of mediaeval scholastics was still the dominant ideology. Christian and particularly Catholic theologians were fighting a last ditch battle against these changes. According to this worldview; reality was static, there was nothing new under the sun, the notion that human beings could emancipate themselves through critical inquiry and practical effort was a satanic pretension. The world consisted of distinct entities, hierarchically ordered. At the apex of this pyramid were the monarchs, who held absolute sway over their subjects by divine right. The empirically observable material things were the individual embodiments of “universal ideas”, eternally present in the mind of the Absolute Spirit. As for human beings they were nothing but spiritual substances, or immortal souls, entrapped in matter. Earthly existence had no further relevance than as a temporary testing period. The social order was divinely willed and individuals had no other purpose in life, than to ensure their eternal and spiritual salvation, “out there”.

The great achievement of the philosopher Hegel is that, for the first time in European philosophy, he developed a “dynamic grand theory” of human society and history. Hegel in his writings presented a panoramic view of human society, moving forward through progressive changes. The young Marx, like many of his contemporaries was at first an enthusiastic disciple of Hegel. For those dedicated to the practical transformation of society, here at last was a clear and coherent theory of social change.

Very soon however Marx began to realize the inadequacies of Hegel's system. Whilst pretending to present a secular theory, Hegel was in fact a theologian in disguise. Instead of a "Holy Spirit" *outside* reality, Hegel had posited a secular "Absolute Spirit" *inside* reality. Instead of an unchanging, eternal spirit, Hegel now posited an eternally changing spirit, impelled forward by an inner dynamic towards self-realisation. History was nothing but the external manifestation of the Absolute Spirit, moving towards self perfection! Human beings were willy nilly, instruments in this process. Their role was to understand "the iron laws of history", and collaborate with it.

Marx realised that such a theory did not correspond to real facts. There was also no real theory of human praxis, in Hegel's system. Above all the Hegelian notion of history, had its corollary in a new social morality. This could justify, every horrendous act of savagery carnage, the annihilation of civilisations and peoples perpetrated in the past, and even then being perpetrated by European colonialists, because they were furthering the historical purposes of the Absolute Spirit! (It should be noted that many Marxists who justify such a Machiavellian attitude to morality, are in fact disciples of Hegel not Marx. There is no such thing as "history" outside Man. No inevitable march of history in the name of which the rights of nations and individuals could be callously dismissed).

It is in fact another disciple of Hegel, Ludwig Fuerbach who helped Marx develop a critical attitude towards the great master. Fuerbach convincingly demonstrated that what we call "gods" or the "Spirit", are nothing but projections of the human mind and reflected the material and social conditions of human

beings themselves. The desire of human beings to live forever, makes them project the notion of an Eternal Being. (For a parallel critique of the notion of Brahman see the Brahmajala Sutta of the Digha Nikaya). It is in a critical dialogue with thinkers such as Fuerbach and Marx Stirner that Marx developed his own critical method of analysis.

Fuerbach, Marx realised was a rigid materialist. He imagined human consciousness as a passive reflection of material conditions.

Like the Buddha, Marx insisted that the truth of a proposition was practice. He rejected the notion of an abstract individual existing independent of conditions.

In this way he, like Hegel, was not able to formulate a theory of human praxis. Man was a passive recipient or contemplator of the external world. The human subject consciously appropriating and transforming his life circumstances, had completely vanished in Fuerbach's thought.

In "The German Ideology", Marx for the first time formulated his own Philosophy of Praxis.

The world that we know is the World of Man. Human beings do not passively contemplate or register external impulses, Marx taught. In his famous 'Theses on Fuerbach', he stated "The chief defect of hitherto existing materialism (that of Fuerbach included)

is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object of contemplation* but not as *sensuous human activity, practice* — not subjectively". (emphasis Marx)

Vulgar Marxists who propagate delusions about materialist determinism, of the need to change structures first, after which people will "automatically change". need to read their Marx anew. Thus Marx in his Third Thesis on Fuerbach: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself."

Marx did not posit any dichotomy between "man" and "society". Once the dichotomy has been posited (a false premise as starting point) then the debate begins between moral reformers who stress the priority of personal conversion and the structuralists who emphasize the priority of "changing the system."

Marx himself who saw the individual and society as an organic unity, stated in the same Third Thesis, that "the truly revolutionary practice is the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and self-change."

Speculation and Practice

Like the Buddha, Marx fully rejected the speculative method as a means of arriving at truth. Like the Buddha, he insisted that the true test of a proposition, was *practice*. "The dispute about the reality or non-reality of thought independent of practice", he said "is a purely scholastic question". "Where speculation ends", explained Marx in 'The German Ideology', "where real life starts, there consequently begins real, positive science and the practical process of the development of men."

The Individual Ego

Marx like the Buddha, fully rejected the notion of an abstract and isolated individual existing independent of conditions. For the Buddha the human personality was an ensemble or aggregate of several factors (khandas). On the dissolution of these aggregates the personality ceases.

The notion of the individual, Marx pointed out was already present seminally, with the emergence, "in rudimentary form, of the social division of labour."

"The human essence" he stated, "is no abstract essence, *inherent* in each individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations"

It is only in the eighteenth century, Marx pointed out, that the notion of "the individual" becomes a dominant and pervasive ideology, fully penetrating human consciousness. In his critique of Destutt de Tracy, Marx points out how, with the development of private property and possessive greed, ideologists like de Tracy could posit "an ego, which is the exclusive owner of the body, which it animates and sets in motion". (German Ideology)

In the Maha Malunkya sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, The Buddha criticises the false view of "one's own body", in almost parallel terms.

"The egoistic individuals", Marx wrote, in his 'Holy Family', "may in his puffed up, non-sensuous imagination and lifeless abstraction inflate himself into an atom, i.e. into an unrelated, self-sufficient, absolute and blessed being". But reality added Marx, contradicts such inflated notions of oneself.

The positivist approach to social analysing by many marxists could receive a corrective and spiritual vigour if combined with the Buddha's teachings.

To sum up, we have pointed out that there are several congruent elements in the theories of Gautama the Buddha and Karl Marx.

Both rejected the speculative method, as irrelevant to the task of human liberation.

They both stressed that what they had discovered was a method for analysis and action. (Vulgar Marxists have forgotten this and have turned his teaching into a dogma. This tendency was already present in Marx' lifetime and led him to declare "I am not a Marxist." Both insisted that the truth or falsehood of a teaching can only be tested in practice, and rejected dogmatism.

Both rejected rigid determinism as well as extreme voluntarism. Both stressed the empirical and practical nature of human knowledge and thus steered clear of the extremes of idealism and materialism. Both saw in the ideology of the abstract individual, "the great delusion of their epoch".

The most fundamental difference, however, between the two teachings is that, Marx accepted the instrumental use of violence by the victims of social oppression to liberate themselves. Buddha radically eschewed all forms of violence. Thus the Buddha fully repudiated the notion that a desired good end could justify less desirable means.

The Buddha stressed again and again, that any work undertaken "for the happiness of many, for the welfare of many and out of compassion for the world", will from the outset be vitiated, if it is done with an unenlightened mind and through improper motivations. Buddha stressed that moral as well as material preconditions are necessary for a just society, but his main emphasis was on the moral aspect of liberation.

There need be no contradiction here with the teachings of Marx. In fact the positivist approach to social analysis by many Marxists, their notion that revolution is merely a question of social engineering by a few elites endowed with "true consciousness" could receive a corrective and a dynamic spiritual vigour rooted in the culture of our people if combined with teachings of the Buddha.

I will conclude with a quotation from Marx, from a letter he wrote to the Deutsch Franzosische Jahrbucher, in 1844 :

"Our motto must be: reform of consciousness not through dogma but by analysing mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself, whether it manifests itself in a religious or political form. It will then become evident that the world has long dreamed of possessing something of which it has only to become conscious in order to possess it in reality. It will become evident that it is not a question of drawing a great mental dividing line between past and future but of realising the thoughts of the past. Lastly it will become evident that mankind is not beginning a new work, but is consciously carrying into effect its old work."

Colombo.

26 February, 1988



Being Christian and Marxist

“Besides AIDS, world’s most pervasive epidemic is rampant anti-communism” — **Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo.**

Since retiring four years ago after 30 years as bishop of Cuernavaca, Mexico, Sergio Mendez Arceo has become the “itinerant bishop”. He travels throughout Latin America, visiting and encouraging Christian base communities and pastoral workers living among the poor. In July 1987, Mendez Arceo was in Rio de Janeiro for the Seventh International Conference of Solidarity “Oscar Arnulfo Romero” where LP correspondent Jose Pedro Martins interviewed him on the progress of the Christian-Marxist dialogue and on the revolutionary processes taking place in Cuba and Nicaragua :

Q: You were one of the first church leaders to promote dialogue among Latin American Christians and Marxists. How do you evaluate its progress?

Mendez Arceo: I’d say dialogue between Christians and Marxists is pretty difficult today. We’re witnessing a generalized, rightward drift throughout the world, especially in Latin America. I’ve always said that besides AIDS, the epidemic that is most prevalent in the world is rampant anti-communism—a disease that affects not only Christians but politicians as well.

That makes dialogue extremely difficult. But what does exist today are increasingly good relations between Christians and Marxists. Here I would say that ‘Fidel and Religion’, the book written recently by (Brazilian theologian) Frei Betto of his interview with Castro has contributed to better relations between the Cuban government and the Catholic church.

For instance, this year, for the first time in its history, the Cuban

church held a meeting to discuss the relationship between Christians and the revolution. The meeting’s final document, which was published by the Vatican itself, will be distributed among Cuban parishes and grassroots Christian communities for further discussion and reflection. That’s real progress.

I would also mention the new openness of the Soviet Union and the fact that the Christian Peace Conference took place in Cuba this past May. At that meeting, I found the leaders of the Soviet-bloc countries to be much less disposed to take refuge in a closed materialism and more open to ethical, spiritual considerations than they have been in the past.

Marxism is a Sociological body of thought, an interpretation of human relationship based upon the material relationships that exist among people.

I think it’s also important to know that next year (1988) the Russian Orthodox Church will celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of its founding. This church has shown a new openness recently; for instance, it has just published a document condemning the arms race.

In my opinion, this new openness on the part of Cuba and the Soviet Union has advanced the Christian-Marxist dialogue. Not so much in the area of scientific, philosophical dialogue, but in the area of advancing a better working relationship between both sides.

Q: What made you opt for socialism?

A: I made a definite option at the end of the 1950s when the Cuban revolution confronted all of Latin America with the socialist option.

Up until then I had many prejudices against socialism as a viable alternative. But gradually, by talking with people who had visited Cuba, by asking why the majority of the countries of Latin America cut off diplomatic relations with Cuba, by questioning that horrible propaganda which proclaimed: “Christianity, yes; Communism, no!” — by analysing all these events I came to see that in fact, socialism was a very real alternative and the only way Latin America could be free of poverty.

I publicly endorsed socialism in 1968. I argued that it was necessary to be deeply familiar with both Christianity and socialism in order to understand why certain forms of socialism are acceptable to Christianity and how one can simultaneously be a Christian and a Marxist. As you know, that position caused quite a stir and a strong right-wing faction within Mexico tried to have me silenced.

Of course, it's always necessary to define what we mean by Christianity and what we mean by Marxism. A democratic, participative socialism is perfectly acceptable to Christians. And a Marxist doesn't necessarily have to be an atheist. Marxism is essentially a sociological body of thought, an interpretation of human relationships that are not considered in the abstract but are based upon the material relationships that exist among people.

Q: How do you evaluate present day socialism?

A: Socialism is going through a real transformation. I've always told socialist leaders that they can't play into the hands of the imperialists by railing against Christians. That's what happened to the Soviet Union when it declared itself an atheistic country and insisted that religion was the opium of the people. When Marx wrote that phrase, he did so because he saw that the churches favoured capitalism and alienated workers.

But Marx wasn't presenting a deep philosophical argument here; rather he was describing a historical sociological situation.

Socialists who today continue to insist that we must do away with Christianity are falling right into the hands of capitalist ideology which sees itself as the defender of Christian civilization.

Q: How do you evaluate the revolutionary experience in Nicaragua?

A: In all honesty, I believe the Nicaraguan experience is the dawning of a utopian time; it is giving birth to new men and women, to a new society. I very much agree with Julio Girardi, the author of *Sandinismo, Marxismo Christianismo*. Girardi shows how the Sandinistas have reflected deeply

on Nicaragua's history. These leaders want to reclaim the unique characteristics of the Nicaraguan people as part of the nation's heritage. What they find is that Nicaraguans can claim both Sandino's heritage as well as that of Christianity and Marxism.

Socialists who rail against Christians fall into the hands of capitalist ideology and the imperialists. Nicaraguans claim Sandino's heritage as well as that of Christianity and Marxism.

When the Sandinistas embraced Sandino's beliefs in nationalism, when they continued his efforts to bring campesinos and urban workers into the revolutionary process as the only way to make the revolution successful, they assumed essential Marxist principles. Yet Sandino himself wasn't familiar with Marxism. Nevertheless, Sandinista thought does not contradict Marxism, because Marxism gives us a sociological basis for revolution and no modern-day revolution can take place without recourse to Marxist sociology.

The Sandinistas have also taken Christian principles into account. Sandino almost totally rejected Christianity because at that time the Nicaraguan church was on the side of the oppressors. But today, with the rise of the "popular church" that has opted for the poor, that's not true.

I'm tremendously hopeful that the Nicaraguan revolution will succeed. As I have said on many other occasions, I am convinced that Nicaragua is a watershed for all Latin America. If the revolution fails there, I don't know how many more centuries we'll need again bring about change in Latin America where we can be independent, sovereign peoples in the face of capitalism.

Q: As bishop of Cuernavaca, you were well-known for implementing the directives of the Second Vatican Council. Now, 20 years later how has the Council changed the Latin American church?

A: I would say that the Council's directives were never really applied in Latin America. At the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Medellin in 1968 it was only because of (Peruvian liberation theologian) Gustavo Gutierrez' influence that the bishops affirmed a preferential option for the poor, for all those who had been historically marginalized: blacks, indigenous peoples, prostitutes. The bishops reaffirmed that commitment to the poor when they met at Puebla in 1979. It was the Medellin and Puebla Conferences, rather than the Vatican Council, that most influenced the Latin American church.

Here I think it's important to stress that this preferential option for the poor in no way excludes the rich, but calls for their conversion. It doesn't mean that those from the First World are excluded from God's love; rather the evil they do is to be denounced and they are called to a change of heart.

That's why Marxism is so important; it can bring to light and denounce material relationships that have been invisible.

— *Latin America Press*
September 17, 1987



S. African Churchmen defy Government

A serious confrontation between the church and the South African Government appears to be in the offing, as churchmen, defying a Government ban, held a special service in Cape Town on Sunday to protest against the toughening restrictions on black opposition.

Hundreds of Christians of different denominations filed into the Anglican Cathedral in the city on the southern most tip of Africa where church leaders described the special service as an act of faith for freedom and democracy.

Outside the Cathedral, South African police mounted a big security operation. So crowded was the congregation that several people sat in the aisles.

The service was called by the Anglican Archbishop and 1984 Nobel peace prize winner Desmond Tutu after the racist Pretoria regime banned a new front formed by churchmen, academic and sports administrators a week after 17 leading anti-apartheid organisations, including the multi-racial United Democratic Front and Cosatu, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the biggest black trade union confederation, were ordered by Pretoria to shed their political activities east month.

The new forum known as the Committee for Defence of Democracy, was to hold its first rally on Sunday.

Archbishop Tutu said of the Government: "You may be powerful militarily but you are mortals and God cannot be knocked.....your cause is unjust, indefensible. It is evil, immoral, unchristian and, therefore, you will come a cropper and you will bite the dust, and bite the dust comprehensively."

The rally was held inside the Cathedral where formidable anti-apartheid speeches, as never before, were made, informed sources said. The speeches were delivered by multi-racial church leaders."

The Roman Catholic Archbishop, Dr. Stephen Naidoo, told the congregation that people could not be denied the rights due to them as God's children.

As the Cape Town services were held, the Law and Order Minister, Mr. Adriaan Vlok, accused the clergy of "preaching revolution and fomenting the aims of the African National Congress" banned in South Africa since the last 25 years.

But a defiant Rev. Allan Boesak, anti-apartheid activist and founder member of the UDF, told the Minister at the special church service. "Mr. Minister you can put us in jail as many times as you like. Let not your security forces threaten our lives and paralyse our children. No Government can challenge the living God" — *PTI*



Squared Circles

To serve God
and money.

To seek the kingdom of God
and the security
of power and prestige.

To worship God
and be indifferent
to neighbour's misery.

To hear the word of God,
and turn deaf ear
to the cry of the oppressed.

To partake of the Lord's supper,
both those who eat well
and those who go hungry.

A caring economic system,
with 10 percent Epicureans
and 40 percent Lazaruses.

A Christian civilization
that trains itself to fend off
every kind of barbarism.

Harmonious living with justice,
under a constitution and laws
made for the few
to perpetuate their power.
and cover up their crimes.

The national reconciliation,
of an oppressed people
with a minority that continues
to exploit and exclude them.

The option for the poor
and cordial relations
with the dictatorship of the rich.

Communion and participation,
under hierarchical powers
who act like the owners
of the church.

Gospel ministry,
and ecclesiastical career.

The following of Jesus,
avoiding all conflict
and problems with the powerful.

When will our eyes be opened
to recognize the difference
between a circle and a square?

— **Ronaldo Munoz**

From : Pastoral Popular
Oct-Dec., 1987
Santiago, Chile.

Courtesy: *Latinamerica Press*

10.12.87

Ecological Threat in Trincomalee

Trincomalee whose fine natural harbour has been eyed as a strategic spot by imperialist interests, now faces another threat which can spell disaster to many parts of our island if the Ceylon Electricity Board is allowed to push ahead with its Rs. 9 billion Coal fired power project in that harbour.

Since it has been found that hydro-power could not be entirely depended upon especially in the context of droughts, coal has been selected by the Electricity Board because it is the cheapest for the purpose of providing more power. Power and Energy Minister P. Dayaratne has stated that it was only in Trincomalee that the 325 acres of land required for the project could be had in Snug Cove and that Trincomalee was also the only harbour large and deep enough to accommodate 180 ton colliers. The Minister has stated that last year the country was short of 350 million units of electricity, necessitating power cuts. He said that all the other alternatives to coal i.e. wind, solar, nuclear and thermal power, cost three to four times more.

Serious Objections

Serious objections have however come to this project from a wide cross-section of scientists and environmentalists. The objections range from concern over the future of Trincomalee's marine life, fisheries and scenic beauty to much

more serious consequences across the island such as "acid rain" on the Mahaweli Development area, the tea plantations and even Colombo in the long run.

Considered scientific opinion is of the view that while it would be disastrous to site this project in the Trincomalee harbour area, it would in any event be an outdated monstrosity in any part of the country. The only place where such a plant would do the least damage would perhaps be the deep South where the monsoon winds could carry the poisonous sulphur and nitrogen oxide bearing fumes directly into the ocean. But it has been rightly pointed out that in view of the serious dangers involved in the coal-fired power project, alternatives should be seriously considered. The development of mini, micro and small hydro-power stations is one such alternative since the entire tea country had been dotted with over 200 mini hydro-power plants early this century. They had changed to diesel engines after the First World War and to the Electricity Department's subsidised electricity around 30 to 40 years ago. But if encouraged they could revert to generating power from the streams running close to the factories. One of the problems that the plantations which constructed such mini hydro-power stations would face was excess generating-capacity but

this power could well be bought by the Electricity Board. Similarly wind and solar energy, bio gas and ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC) have also been suggested alternatives, in the context of the country's available resources. Power from the tree is also put forward since planned cultivation of fast growing trees in some 2 million acres of barren land could save the country a large portion of the Rs. 1.6 billion worth of oil Sri Lanka imports for thermal applications like the use in the thermal power plants. Efficient burning of fuel wood, the introduction of gasifiers to the tea industry which cuts the cost of power by half, the introduction of wood gas for transport are some of the other suggestions that have been made. Obviously in the context of our country and its resources, small scale generators of power and small scale industrial development would be both economical and preferable to the big schemes which have already proved to be so costly and wasteful in our experience.

A Lesson in "Development"

In this situation, it is also good to bear in mind the price that a leading industrialized Asian country like Japan has had to pay for its style of big industrial development.

Pollution was so severe in Japan in 1977 that people had to use gas masks to breathe. Deaths were recorded of those who suffered from pollution-related diseases. There are 95,000 certified victims of air pollution receiving compensation. Each year there are about 9000 new victims. Stringent laws did control sulphur dioxide but there is now a new pollutant mixture

called photochemical pollution of nitrous oxide from factories and hydrocarbons from cars. The effect would take up 10 to 20 years to show up in statistics but an increase in lung cancer is predicted in industrial areas like Kawasaki, Yokohama and Chiba prefecture near Tokyo.

There were 59 warnings issued for nitrous oxide pollution in 1981 and 171 warnings in 1985. Of the 696 monitoring stations in Japan, only 10 showed pollution that met with government standards.

Marine pollution is one area where there is strong evidence. By 1985, 792 people had died from Minamata disease caused by mercury poisoning of the sea. A mysterious illness hit Minamata Bay in the late 1950s and 60s. Crows started falling on the ground. Cats became mad and jumped into water and fire. They whirled round uncontrollably crashed into walls and died.

After 10 years the government agreed that the human deaths were caused by people eating fish contaminated from a nearby factory that polluted Minamata Bay located at the southern island of Kyushu.

There were no warning or symptoms of the illness. It started with numbness of the extremities, difficulty in grasping things like holding chopsticks or buttoning shirts, constriction of the vision, weakness, speech disturbances and impaired hearing. These increased gradually causing paralysis, deformity, difficulty in swallowing, convulsions and death.

Tremendous amounts of nitrogen discharged from the plants of Chisso Corporation has still not been removed. The amount is estimated to be 200 to 600 tons. The mercury which flowed into

the sea 30 years ago is still in the sea water and sea bed and pollution of high concentrations extend over a very broad area. Catching and selling contaminated fish and shells is not prohibited and victims of Minamata disease are still increasing in numbers.

A survey carried out several years ago showed that 25ppm of mercury was recovered from most areas of the Bay and concentrations of 400ppm detected in some spots.

The Japan Action Commission of Victims by Environment Pollution in its report issued in February, 1987 states that the delay in taking countermeasures against Minamata disease is a piece of gross negligence by the Japanese government.

"Today in Japan", stated the report, "problems of environmental pollution are in a very serious situation in the face of the great retreat of the environmental administration. There was a time when the environmental policy of Japan attracted attention from various countries. Now it is difficult to find another example of the abnormal retreat of its subsequent environmental administration in other countries."

"Air, water and the earth are the common property of human race. It is our common theme to keep them intact and hand them over to posterity".

(The data about Japan has been taken from *Appen Features* (Sahabat Alam Malaysia Penang))

Mass Opposition to Missile base in India

The unsuspecting and innocent people of Baliapal and Bhograi area of the Balasore district in Orissa (India) were shocked to learn in July 1985 that their 400 sq. k.m. area on the east coast abreast the Bay of Bengal was earmarked for a ballistic missile base, euphemistically called the National Testing Range by the Ministry of Defence of the Government of India, and that they had to vacate their traditional land in the "interest" of the nation. The people of Orissa were also astonished at the fact that for the first time one of the most prosperous regions is being destined to ruination due to the proposed "development."

According to official sources, the Bharat dynamics of the Department of Defence production is involved in a missile manufacturing project to be executed in collaboration with the Soviet Union in 1988. The missiles — short range, intermediate range, and integrated guided missiles including SS-20 rocket, SS-30 rocket and in due course intercontinental ballistic missiles, would be tested from the Balipal National test range. In fact on May 21, 1986, the scientific adviser to the defence ministry said that it would be the nation's premier missile test range, and would also be used for launching space vehicles and missiles, including firing of long range missiles.

The estimated cost of the project is a mind boggling Rs. 40 billion, excluding the cost of rehabilitation (Rs. 1.3 billion), the biggest ever defence project in the country. Orissa is already overcrowded with defence projects. There is Asia's biggest radar station at Nilgiri, Balasore rocket station, Interim test range and Space Research Organization programme at Chandipur, air force bases at Rasgobindpur and Charabatia, naval bases at Chilka lake and Gopalpur, an assembly Plant of the Soviet MIC aircraft at Sunabeda, and a gun powder factory at Sainthal, etc. All these forebode that the entire area will be converted into an integrated militarized zone.

Inferring from these pronouncements and facts it is indeed going to be a nuclear missile base. How can the Indian government call itself the "crusader against nuclear proliferation" and for "world peace" while at the same time taking steps to build up a nuclear missile base?

A Mass Struggle

The agitation against the proposed missile base began around October 1985 by launching signature campaigns, small meetings, submission of memorandums etc. Having learnt the firmness of the state and dangerousness of the project, the agitation has now turned to the most militant peace movement India has ever experienced. Since March 1986, the volunteer squads have successfully prevented the entry of the government officials and police forces. There is a round-the-clock vigil with properly codified signals at all checkgates in all the 126 villages. At the sight of any alien person, the volunteers blow their conch shells and immediately hundreds of men, women and children gather at the spot and drive away the intruders.

During the course of their struggle many mass-organizations have been locally forced, notably anti-missile people's front, students front, women front, children front, fisher-people front, teachers fronts, lawyers front etc. The recent addition to this list is the formation of death squads to resist the national test range, which demonstrates that it is literally a life and death issue. Various civil liberties organizations of the region are supporting the two year long struggle of the people. Several regional conventions in defence of the peoples movement are held, and demonstrations, wall posterings, processions, signature campaigns etc. are carried out all over the state. It is obvious that no amount of repression can deter the people from fighting against the setting up of the missile base at Baliapla-Bhograi area. The unique unity, organized strength and determination shown by the people in the course of their movement and the powerful solidarity that their cause has drawn from varied forces has made it difficult for the government to resort to still more ruthless means against the movement. Of course, the next step could be devastating. Their struggle is not limited to retain their lands and dwelling but struggles for peace, and struggle against war and preparations for war. Their recent slogans include, "No missile base on Indian soil", "Declare Indian Ocean as peace zone", "Establish no war pacts with neighbours", and "Scrap Indo-Soviet treaty".

In contrast to this militant spirit of the people, the opposition political parties, are mostly concerned with relocation of the site. The Janata Party has even suggested some tribal areas as alternative sites.

(Courtesy : *Appen Action Alert*).

Another Protest ! Burning Brides and Hanging Maidens

Oh India, Mother India
How can you take your place
In great Assemblies of the World
Yet permit this disgrace?

The laws alone are helpless
To root this evil out,
This relict of dark ignorance,
Of poverty and doubt.

By birth the weaker vessel
Condemned to serve the male,
A woman is a household drudge
Whose tears are no avail.

By cruel customs sanctioned by
Convention and belief,
The dowry hunters work their will
While brides burn for relief.

Economic independence,
Education has not brought
Relief in any measure from
The sacrifices sought.

Dowerless maids hang grim in death
And brides in anguish burn
While widows immolate themselves
To share their husband's urn.

Ye Godmen, Rishis and Babas
Have you no thought to spare
For the sufferings and wretched plight
Of women in despair?

Awake from your dull stupor
Use now your vaunted power
To save these helpless victims from
The flames that them devour.

Mervyn Casie Chetty.

Cost of Military Power

The energy equivalent of the explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor was less than 0.1 kiloton; the explosive energy in today's stockpile of nuclear weapons is 16,000,000 kilotons.

One person in five in developing countries is undernourished; one in five in major industrialised countries is over-weight or obese.

At the cost of less than half an hour's world military outlay, the UN's FAO destroyed a plague of locusts in Africa, saving enough grain to feed 1.2 million people for a year.

Military-controlled governments are more than twice as likely as other Third World governments to make frequent use of torture and other violent forms of repression against the populace.

The Hiroshima bomber delivered 15,000 tons of TNT equivalent explosive; today's bomber can deliver 8,000,000 tons.

Arms imports of developing countries between 1975 and 1985 amounted to 40 percent of the increase in their foreign debt in that period.

The two superpowers have less than 11 percent of the world's population, but 97 percent of all nuclear warheads and bombs.

Third World military expenditures in constant prices have increased six-fold since 1960, unemployment eight-fold.

In the US 170 times as much public research money goes for transport into space as for mass transit on earth.

In the USSR more than twice as much money goes to military defence as to education and health expenditures combined.

Three governments in five spend more to guard their citizens against military attack than against all the enemies of good health.

Wars have become more frequent and much more deadly. On average there have been ten times as many deaths per war in the 20th century as in the 19th.

Weapons of mass destruction, on hair-trigger alert, now hold all of humanity hostage. Enough nuclear weapons are scattered over the globe to kill everyone on earth at least 12 times.

From Ruth Leger Sivard: *World Military and Social Expenditures* 1986.

Anti - Genesis

The earth had been lovely
until man's spirit moved over the face of the earth
and destroyed all things.

And, man said: let there be darkness.
And the darkness seemed good to them,
and they named it Security;
and divided themselves into races
and religions and classes.
And there was no morning or evening
the seventh day before that final day.

And man said: let there be a strong government
to reign over us in our darkness;
let there be armies that kill one another,
let there be order and efficiency in our darkness,
let us hunt down
and destroy all those who tell us the truth,
here and until the ends of the earth,
because we prefer our darkness.
And there was no evening or morning
the sixth day before that final day.

And man said: let there be missiles and bombs
to kill quickly and easily.
And there were gas chambers and ovens
to finish the task more efficiently
the fifth day before that final day.

And man said: let there be drugs
and every kind of escape

because we must avoid the consistent nagging
of REALITY
which gets in the way of our comfort,
the fourth day before that final day.

And man said: let there be divisions among nations
so that we may know who our enemies are,
the third day before that final day.

And finally man said:
let us make god in our own image and likeness,
not some other god who will compete with us,
A god that thinks as we think
who hates what we hate
and who kills just as we kill,
the second day before that final day.

On that last day
there was a great explosion on the face of the earth;
fire purged that once beautiful world,
and there was silence.

And the Lord God saw
what man had done,
and in the silence
that enveloped earth's smoking ruin
God wept.

— Iglesias
October 1987
Mexico City

Latinameruca Press, 12 November 1987

Fellowship in Action

Study Programmes

With the growth of new CWF groups in the recent period, study programmes have played an important part in the Fellowship's activity in the first three months of the year.

From January 15th to 17th and February 13th to 15th two residential study camps were held for new CWF members and close sympathisers, coming from different parts of the island. The participants at each of these camps numbered 65 to 70. Week-end study groups were also organized by our branches at Galaha and Badulla, while Negombo, Devahuva Anuradhaputa, Kantale and Heradiwela too had study discussions. These studies were climaxed at the end of March and the first two days of April in our Holy Week programmes where three full days of study were combined with liturgies held in the evenings.

Holy Week Programme

This year too the CWF Holy Week programme of Bible Studies and liturgies drew many more participants than in previous years. They included a number who were new contacts of the Fellowship. The three-day study sessions beginning on Maundy Thursday morning and ending on Easter Eve had the celebration of the liturgies for the day at the end of each day's session. These liturgies were specially drawn up and arranged to be more meaningful in a local cultural and working class context. The Bible Studies covered the socio-economic and political backgrounds of both the Old and New Testaments with a discussion of their relevance and meaning for us in our present situation. Those who led the studies were Fr. Rienzie Perera, Fr. Lionel Peiris, Fr. Kenneth Fernando, Sr. Milburga, Nalin Swaris, Vijaya Vidyasagara, Kingsley Perera and Basil Fernando.

Worship in a Living Context

The Liturgies that were celebrated each evening with the participation of those attending the sessions, were both meaningful and moving. Thursday evening's service commenced with the Ministry of the Word being held in the

open air. After the reading of the Gospel (John 13:1-15) the clergy washed the feet of the participants as they entered the building for the Lord's Supper. (It is customary in our Buddhist cultural tradition for laymen to wash the feet of monks when they enter homes for an almsgiving) The Ministry of the Sacrament then commenced with the exchange of the Peace. The Great Thanksgiving was chanted with everyone seated round on mats and the oblations placed on a low table in front of the clergy, the dressed main altar serving as a background. After the communion and the removal of the sacrament to the Altar of Repose, the main altar was stripped bare during the recital of psalm 22 with the lights being gradually extinguished. Thereafter the traditional watch in the Garden (before the Blessed Sacrament) was kept by the participants. The stark but dramatic Liturgy of Good Friday followed the next evening with the Readings, Veneration of the Cross and the Reproaches (incorporating also burning social questions like racism, exploitation and oppression). The service terminated abruptly and in confusion to symbolise the mood of the disciples on the first Good Friday

The Saturday night's Liturgy comprised the Vigil with lessons read in the dark outside the building. This was followed by the lighting of the New Fire and Paschal Lamp which was carried into the unlit building, the candles of the people being lit from the Lamp after the singing of the Exultet with the words: "Christ the Eternal Light: Take Light, Spread Light!" The Gospel account of the Resurrection (Mark 6:1-8) was then sung in a blaze of light, ending with the cry "Christ is Risen"! This Festival of Light was followed by the Festival of Water which ended with the taking of the Thisaranaya (Triple Refuge) and the sprinkling of the crowd with the blessed water. The first Mass of Easter was celebrated immediately thereafter, beginning with the exchange of the Peace and ending with the singing of the Sri Lankan version of the Internationale and the cry "Christ is Risen!" reinforced by a prolonged drumming.

After the Mass there was traditional raban playing and the serving of local sweetmeats as during the Sinhala and Tamil New Year festivities. The Holy Week programme like the May Day Mass has now become a regular event in the life of the CWF, especially for its cadres.



Easter Eve Observances

Para-Legal Training Course

The most recent addition to the varied studies organized by CWF was a two and a half days residential seminar meant to provide a basic paralegal knowledge for social workers. This was held from February 26th to 28th at the Lassalian Centre in Mutwal, Colombo. Twenty persons attended these sessions which were organized by the CWF Legal Aid and Training Programme. The talks and discussions covered due problems of law, rule of law, human rights, the Emergency Regulations and other related matters. An attempt was also made to acquaint the participants with the Courts structure in Sri Lanka. Lively discussions followed the talks and the participants who were appreciative of the sessions expressed the wish to have similar programmes organized in their own areas. Attorneys-at-Law Basil Fernando and D. C. Ambagahawatte conducted the sessions

The first volume of the *Journal of Labour Law* published by the CWF Legal Aid and Training programme came out in January. Our Legal Aid team has assisted in Fundamental Rights issues and the CWF itself is now involved in a case alleging violation of rights on which the Supreme Court has issued notice (see separate item under *Human Rights* inside).

Relief Work

Relief work still continues to engage the attention of the CWF where our groups are active in the North and East.

In view of the conditions in many parts of the East, we have selected Kantale as a base for our relief work from where we will cover Trincomalee and Kallar too. Our CWF Kantale group has succeeded in keeping the unity of the people despite the difficulties and representatives from the CWF Working Committee had a meeting in January with delegates coming from the different villages in the area, Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim, to discuss their common problems.

The people of Kantale have in fact suffered doubly: first by the devastation caused by the breach of a dam of the ancient Kantale reservoir occasioned by pile driving to give the Prima (Cey) Ltd. (a Singapore based Company at China

Bay in Trincomalee) its required water supply and later through "ethnic" troubles. Since the Government has taken no steps as yet to grant compensation to the people affected by the devastation following the breach of the dam, our CWF group in Kantale has called on the people directly affected to bring in the required information to file legal action with a view to obtaining redress. Already over 450 applications have come in and the necessary papers are now being prepared for legal action, since claims for compensation could become prescribed in April.

Our Kantale group has also in consultation with the residents selected the fifty poorest families drawn from Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim villages in the area with a view to giving them basic materials for a means of livelihood as the start for a rehabilitation programme in the area.

A similar programme is intended to be implemented in Trincomalee and it is envisaged that other affected areas where our groups are working in Kallar and the North too will have small programmes in accordance with their needs.

We have already helped refugees in the Trincomalee camps with clothes collected by our groups elsewhere and also given some books for the children. These have been acknowledged by the Government Agent and Social Service Assistant Director of Trincomalee but we have been informed by them that the children needing books amount to about 2000.

Victimisation by Prima (Cey) Ltd.

While we are busy on these matters, the plight of the two CWF Trincomalee group members (reported in our last issue) who were refused work by Prima (Cey) Ltd., in Trincomalee because they objected to that Company taking advantage of their situation as refugees and imposing new conditions regarding their employment, remains unchanged. Making use of workers who had earlier taken refuge in the Company premises to work during the period of racist outbursts, Prima expected the other workers who had fled to return to work and live amid stacks of flour inside a Company warehouse instead of their quarters on account of unsettled conditions! Those who refused to do so were later asked to sign a document with new conditions of service on their return. When the matter of the two

victimised workers was taken up by the Labour Department, this Singapore based Prima Company took up the position that the Co-ordinating Officer for the Trincomalee District Brigadier Denzil Kobbekaduwa himself did not want to have these two workers — Sarath Jayapala and Janaka Wickramasekera — within the area. When the Brigadier was subsequently contacted by these workers, he said that the reports made to him by Prima were without foundation, that he had found after inquiry that there was simply nothing against them! The Prima Company has now taken up the position that the two have been interdicted and that an inquiry (no charges specified) will be held by the Company when conditions permit! And so the harassment of the workers in true Singapore style by Prima Ltd. continues. This too has now become an issue for CWF since it involves both workers' rights and rehabilitation.

Vijaya Kumaratunga's Funeral

The CWF lost a good friend in Vijaya Kumaratunga who was brutally gunned down outside his own home. The Fellowship arranged the funeral service at the Art Gallery where the body lay in state before it left for Independence Square for the cremation and marched in the funeral procession behind its own banner.

May Day

The CWF May Day Mass this year will be held on Saturday April 30th evening at St. Michael's Church, Polwatte, Colombo, preceded by a procession starting from the parish hall at 5 p.m. and going through the Polwatte area. As usual clergy from all the major churches — Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant who are supportive of the CWF will concelebrate the Fellowship's Workers Mass assisted by the workers. The first part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, will be conducted by the workers themselves. The Sermon will take the form of a playlet. This May Day Mass has been held without interruption from 1960. Last year it became the only celebration of May Day officially permitted in view of the Government's ban on May Day meetings that year. The service is open to everyone.

Readings at the CWF Service for Vijaya Kumaratunga

The First Reading — Taken from the Final Year School Examination Essay by Karl Marx, entitled 'The Choice of a Profession'.

The chief guide which must direct us in the choice of a profession is the welfare of mankind and our own perfection. It should not be thought that these two interests could be in conflict, that one would have to destroy the other: on the contrary, man's nature is so constituted that he can attain his own perfection only by working for the perfection, for the good, of his fellow men.

If he works only for himself he may become a famous man of learning, a great sage, an excellent poet, but he can never be a perfect, truly great man.

History calls those men greatest who have ennobled themselves by working for the common good: experience acclaims as happiest the man who has made the greatest number of people happy: religion itself teaches us that the ideal human being whom all strive to copy sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, and who would dare to set at nought such judgements?

If we have chosen the position in life in which we can most of all work for mankind, no burdens can bow us down, because they are sacrifices for the benefit of all; then we shall experience no petty, limited, selfish joy, but our happiness will belong to millions, our deeds will live on quietly but perpetually at work and over our ashes will be shed the hot tears of noble people.

August 10-16, 1835
(MECW Vol. 1 p.8)

The Second Reading — Taken from the Gospel according to John (Chapter 15: 9-14)

As the Father has loved me so have I loved you: abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

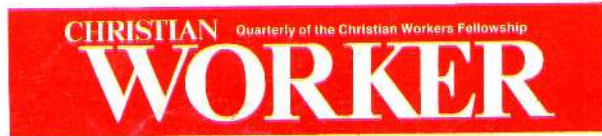
This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.



C W F Service for Vijaya Kumaranatunga on February 19 at the Art Gallery, Colombo



C W F Meeting at Kantale with villagers drawn from all three communities (Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims)



Invites its readers to participate

MAY DAY WORKERS' MASS

April 30th Saturday 5.30 p.m.

St. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, POLWATTE
Kollupitiya, Colombo 3.

5 p.m. Procession from the Parish Hall

Clergy from all the major churches will join in concelebrating
the Mass Sermon in drama form.

This service is open to all
Christian Workers Fellowship

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