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Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship

CHRISTIAN WORKER

MORE OMINOUS TRENDS

**LANDSLIDES
END TO CAPITAL TAXES**

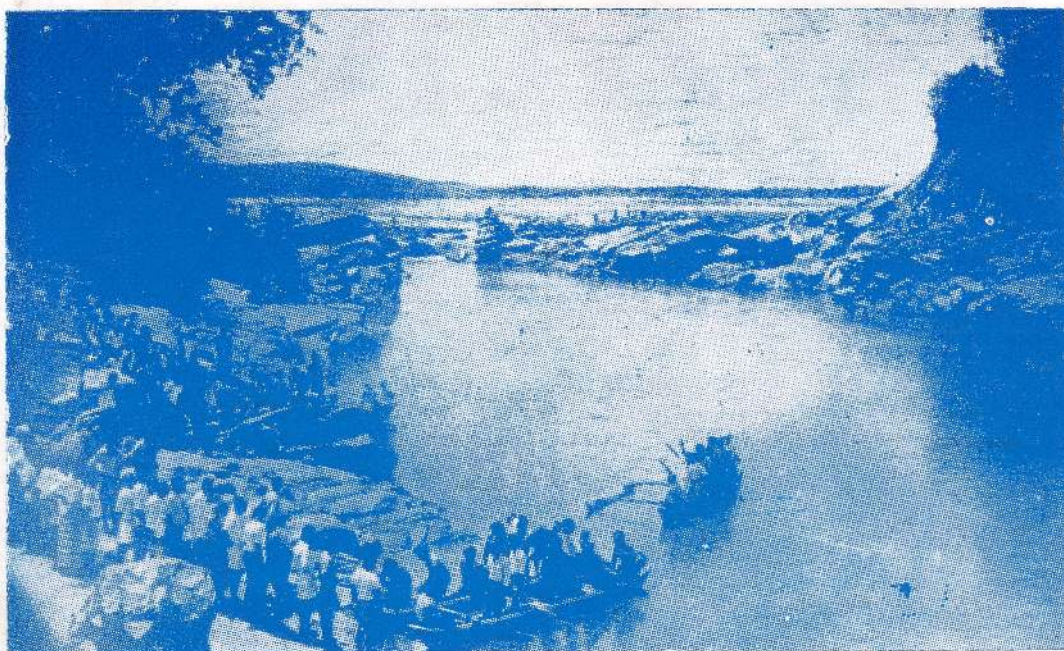
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● Philippines

● Pakistan

● Nicaragua

● South Africa



The Kantale Dam Disaster

As if the death and destruction wrought already during the first few months of this year—the senseless carnage and devastation of property resulting from the war between the Government and the Tamil militants, and the landslides which took over forty lives and rendered many homeless—were not enough, we now have the havoc caused by the breaching of Kantale reservoir dam on April 20th, which wiped out an entire village, claiming many lives.

Although sabotage has been ruled out by the authorities, reports reaching us indicate that there appear to have been warnings issued about the weakening of the dam, which, if heeded and acted upon in time, might have prevented this

disaster. Curiously enough, a hitherto unknown Tamil separatist group is said to have “claimed responsibility” for the breaching of the dam (most unconvincingly, since we are not told how) in order to “weaken the Sri Lankan economy”. This is now to be investigated by the Police on a Presidential directive.

*We intend to comment more fully on this disaster in the next issue of **Christian Worker**, but must in the meantime extend our sincere sympathy to those who are bereaved and otherwise cruelly afflicted, and who include both Tamils and Sinhalese.*

— Editorial Board

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From our readers

7th April, 1986

Editorial Board,

Whenever I have the pleasure of reading "Christian Worker" (which is **only** four times in one year), the thought that intrudes itself is "why not at least six times, if not twelve times in one year?" Why do I think in this way?

Because all your articles are an antidote to the kind of daily distortions, half-truths and downright lies that we are subject to through the newspapers, Radio, T.V. and other avenues of public information (or is it **mis**-information?) When your 'antidote' appears only four times in one year, its effectiveness is very minimal. What chance is there for the 'antidote' to work effectively?

So, brothers if you really aim to do your "Christian" Duty, step up

the number of your publications, and, for goodness sake, please do not change your style.

M. W. Perera

Nugegoda.

7th April, 1986

Editorial Board.

There are people (normally intelligent, very God-centered and, by normal standards, "good" people) who say that the "Christian Worker" magazine must be avoided at all costs! Reason? The effectiveness of our propaganda machine which dubs everything not in agreement with the thinking of the Establishment as "Leftist Rubbish".

How can one reasonably call Gamini Iriyagolla's article 'Kotmale Design for Disaster' a "leftist" article when it is so loaded up with factual information? Can you not request

the Hon Mahaweli Minister to reply to what his name-sake Gamini has said?

Siri Gunawardhana

Negombo.

The Editor,

Dear Brother in Christ,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Christ Jesus.

The strike launched by the members of the Public Service United Nurses Union is now on its third week. The Government has proscribed the Union and subsequently evicted the nurses from their living quarters. The legal questions and other matters arising from the said eviction are being argued now in Court. As these matters are sub judice, we shall refrain from commenting upon them.

(Continued on page 7)

More Ominous Trends

Political settlement or Military solution?

Will the traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year (April 14) herald the beginning of peace in the North and East (and an end to the creeping repression so evident elsewhere in the name of "national security") or will the senseless slaughter on both sides continue and the situation deteriorate still further? On the answer to that question hangs the immediate prospects of Sri Lanka's working people and even our continuance as a country with at least some democratic pretensions.

In an Independence Day (February 4th) message to the nation, President J. R. Jayewardene vowed: "On this day I promise all freedom loving peaceful people of Sri Lanka that we shall, this year, overcome, destroy and eradicate terrorism in Sri Lanka in all its forms."

Earlier, in an interview with Indian journalist Kuldeep Nayer (reported in *The Island* of January 26), President Jayewardene declared: "I shall have a military solution to what I believe is a military problem. After doing so, I shall tackle the political side". In the same interview, the President admitted "indiscriminate killings of civilians" but saw no way out till the Tamil militants whom he described as "killers and murderers" gave up fighting. He said he would send soldiers to the barracks the day violence stopped. The President beamingly said "I am winning the war". He added: "My Army is better equipped and better trained. Now I have more weapons and countries like Pakistan are training my men. My Air Force is also being trained by people abroad. In fact, the morale of Armed Forces is high and they are increasingly effective". President Jayewardene also listed two other reasons for his confidence. One, the level of India's involvement had gone down and the Centre was not helping the militants though Tamil Nadu continued to do so. The other reason was the change in world opinion. But he added: "In any case I have come to realise that only success matters. I do not care what New Delhi, London or any other country says. How quickly and effectively I can exterminate the militants is the crux of the problem and I am on the point of achieving this". Strong words and clear.

Of course, President Jayewardene also claimed that he simply had no other alternative. In an interview with *The Hindu* (India) reported in *Daily News* of January 22, the President said: "We want a political solution. But you can't have a political solution with terrorists. This is a military problem. They seek a mili-

tary solution. With whom am I to talk? If you don't agree, they shoot you. With Thondaman, I talk. He can have a prayer, if I don't agree, he'll have a strike. He doesn't take a gun. So I come to a political solution with him and with others." In the same interview, President Jayewardene "freely admitted 'excesses' by the Sri Lanka security forces in the Tamil areas, and at one point noted that he had told General Vernon Walters during his visit to the island several months ago: 'What did your troops do in Vietnam?'".

Small wonder then that there was a sharp Indian reaction. On February 26, Indian External Affairs Minister B. R. Bhagat in a statement in the Lok Sabha said the killing of Tamil civilians by Sri Lankan troops had "elements of genocide". He also alleged that Colombo was pushing a military solution to its Tamil separatist problem, despite its stated desire for a political solution. This too was the position of the Tamil militants right along: that President Jayewardene was not really interested in a negotiated settlement but in buying time by making such professions until he was in a position of strength, that is to say military dominance at least in the East and sufficiently capable of launching an offensive in the North. Premier Rajiv Gandhi too has expressed his disappointment and called for fresh and early initiatives by the Sri Lankan Government to end the deadlock. He has also hinted that the reported military co-operation between Pakistani and Israeli forces and our own forces in Sri Lanka damages the country's security environment. **Weekend** of April 20 reported Indian patrolling of the Palk Strait off the Jaffna coast. The continued postponement of the reported visit of Mr. Bhandari too can be regarded as a sign of Indian displeasure as well as inability to help in the face of Sri Lanka's legalistic approach to any negotiation. While the Indian government is committed to Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity, it can hardly afford to antagonise its own people especially in Tamil Nadu where much emotion has been generated on the Tamil question.

So apart from a little noise about "negotiated political settlement" from time to time, the situation has remained unchanged. That is why in the last issue of **Christian Worker** we asked whether the intransigence on both sides is calculated or a product of circumstances? In a sense both the Government and the insurgents would appear to derive certain advantages from intransigence and a stalemate. The insurgents would not wish to lose the position they now hold in the North and be accused by their hardcore elements of Eelam. (They may prefer to let the TULF to do this instead.) Furthermore, in a situation where there is complete lawlessness in the North, the militants are more than able to hold sway. It was only very recently that some militants at Point Pedro challenged and interrogated the Christian Workers Fellowship organizer in Jaffna about his activities. During this interrogation,

the latter stoutly maintained the CWF position that Eelam was not a practicable proposition and that the need today was for unity between the Sinhalese and Tamil masses. It was fortunate that his **bona fides** were accepted and the matter ended there. We may add that the 'Boys' were very courteous, understanding and even friendly during the interrogation.

The Government too has some advantage in a stalemate as it serves well to divert attention from the burning questions of the people. It is only the role of India that is a constraining factor, since India can hardly permit a Tamilian South India of some 50 million persons to be disturbed for long by Sri Lanka's strife. She can hardly permit separatist politics in a island bordering Tamilnadu or ignore anti-Tamil or anti-Indian moves by the Sri Lanka Government. That the Sri Lankan Government also recognises this is to be seen in the statements made by it from time to time that it welcomes Indian mediation in reaching a political settlement.

Perhaps with a view to creating a more favourable climate for aid in the context of our Finance Minister's meeting in April, with the I.M.F. and the Sri Lanka Aid Consortium, we have had talk more recently about a set of new proposals to end the deadlock being studied by the Government. In March, an International Emergency Committee on Sri Lanka, headed by Dame Judith Hart M. P.P.C., declared it would be advocating the cessation of aid to Sri Lanka, pending a political settlement of the ethnic conflict). Thus the **Sunday Observer** of April 13 announced that the Government's new proposals (provincial councils with wide autonomous powers) are to be conveyed to the Indian Government by Foreign Minister Shahul Hameed when he arrives in Delhi for the Nonaligned Nations Co-ordinating Bureau meeting in April. Earlier this year too there were reports of some proposals made. At first we had the TULF proposals based on a federal solution but found unacceptable by our Government. Then there was talk of some new proposals based on the lines of the Union territories in India but nothing more was known about that either until now. We can but hope therefore that the new proposals forwarded through Foreign Minister Hameed are more imaginative and provide a basis for some genuine negotiation. **Weekend** of the same date (April 13) however reported under a banner headline that the Joint Operations Command Chief Lt. Gen. Cyril Ranatunga was awaiting orders to engage in an all-out battle in the North! Already the escalating violence in the North has developed to a stage of the aerial bombing of so-called "terrorist hideouts". Assuming that the targets aimed at are hideouts or camps, it is clear as has already happened that civilians will be the chief sufferers. Lt. Gen. Ranatunga himself admits that in case of a large scale offensive, the civilian casualties "in the cross-fire" will be heavy. But after all, war is war, even if it costs many innocent lives and brings Sri Lanka into disrepute in international fora, especially in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

What some of our Government leaders together with chauvinist and racist elements in the SLFP and elsewhere seem to forget is that while it may well

be possible to conquer an area temporarily by means of superior weaponry, you simply cannot crush the spirit and will of a people for ever. Such an action can only lead to deep-rooted bitterness and resentment on the part of the conquered. And the pity of it is that a **negotiated political settlement is possible if both sides have the will to it.** (Of course what may be a satisfactory settlement at one point of time may prove inadequate when offered only much later.)

We are not so naive however as to imagine that this or any other capitalist Government can satisfactorily solve out National Problem but a **common promise settlement or modus vivendi** can and must be found in the meantime to enable our people to come together regardless of racial and religious distinctions to solve their **common** problems that really stem from neo-colonialist and capitalist exploitation. That President Jayewardene can carry through such a settlement is to be seen in the manner in which he was able to effectively dispose of the thorny question of stateless persons by a two-thirds majority, only in January this year despite all opposition.

The End to Statelessness

Although the blatantly racist agitation against this move led by Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike and her Sri Lanka Freedom Party did not result in any open manifestation of hostility in the predominantly Sinhalese areas, it seems necessary to recount briefly the plight of this section of our population so as to be better able to appreciate the more recent events.

These mainly plantation based Tamil workers were disenfranchised soon after the grant of 'Independence' by the United National Party (UNP) Government led by Mr. D. S. Senanayake, through the enactment of the Citizenship Act No. 18 of 1948, after these workers did not vote UNP but returned instead their own Ceylon Indian Congress (CIC) candidates and in some places those of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) to Parliament in the General Election of 1947. (These C.I.C. MPs at that time joined the Opposition in Parliament led by the LSSP). The Citizenship Act was strongly opposed by the Left Parties and other sections of the Opposition including Mr. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolle. Under this legislation, plantation workers were asked to produce the local birth certificates of either their fathers or grandfathers in order to prove their Ceylonese citizenship (a condition that many Sinhalese would have found difficult to fulfil). This Act was followed by the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act No. 3 of 1949 which made possible under certain conditions the grant of citizenship by registration within a two-year period. (Most of those affected made applications under this Act thus showing that they considered Sri Lanka as their only possible home). At the same time the UNP Government also granted "distinguished citizenship" to certain leading Indian capitalists resident in Sri Lanka as if to demonstrate more clearly the class nature of this legislation. By the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act No. 48 of 1949 only citizens were thereafter given the right to vote. Thus was created a stateless section of

people without voting rights in Sri Lanka who were predominantly working class and who through their toil and sweat produced the social surplus on which all Sri Lankans depended. These workers had been brought down from South India by the British and kept segregated in line rooms on the plantations, surrounded by rural areas and thus precluded from integrating themselves fully with the indigenous population. A resolution to prevent such an influx of cheap labour to the island introduced by the two LSSP members of the State Council (Dr. N. M. Perera and Philip Gunawardene) in 1937 was defeated with 'National Leaders' like Sir D. B. Jayatilleke, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Major (later Sir) J. L. Kotalawela, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and Mr. Dudley Senanayake significantly voting **against** the resolution. (The last four were Prime Minister of this country after 'Independence'. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene was not in the Legislature at that time.)

Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike tried to achieve a partial solution to this problem through her Agreement with Prime Minister Shastri of India in 1964 whereby Sri Lanka and India each agreed to grant citizenship to 300,000 and 525,000 persons respectively (a 4 to 7 ratio). There was a remaining 150,000 persons on whom there was a subsequent Agreement signed by Mrs. Bandaranaike and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1974 by which Sri Lanka and India accepted granting citizenship to 75,000 persons each (1 to 1 ratio), "with the natural increase in that number" according to both Agreements i. e. those born after 1964.

Although not the 'perfect' or 'ideal' solution to the problem created by the UNP Government in 1948, (which cleverly made use of the fact also that these workers voted for the Ceylon Indian Congress and sought to brand them therefore as a foreign Indian element inimical to national interests in our political life) the Agreements were seen by the progressive sections of the country to be **some improvement on the stateless position of these people**. It was in this sense a compromise on the part of both the Sri Lankan and Indian Governments calculated to end the stigma of statelessness. However perhaps due the tardiness with which these Agreements were implemented (by January 1986 there were only 421, 207 out of 600,000 who had been granted Indian Citizenship and only 197,535 out of 375,000 accountable persons who had been granted Sri Lankan citizenship), there was still an "excess" who had to be settled.

The most recent Agreement therefore between Sri Lanka and India **provides that India will grant citizenship to 84,793 who applied for it before October 30, 1981, bringing its total to 506,000 while Sri Lanka will absorb the shortfall of 94,000 from the Indian accountable number of 600,00**. Indeed at the All Party Conference (APC) in 1984, it was unanimously resolved with the consent of the Buddhist Sangha (who in fact sponsored the move) that these stateless persons be given Sri Lankan citizenship. The delay in implementing this measure, resulted in the threat of prayer meetings being held from Thaipongal Day (January 14) on the plantations in the mornings with a demand for full days wages

for work done in the afternoons only. Faced with this move headed by one of its own Ministers, Mr. Thondaman, who is also leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress (which replaced the C. I. C. as a political party) and backed also by certain other Unions, the present Government had to accept the inevitable by coming to terms with the Indian Government to reach the most recent Agreement. It was therefore a matter of satisfaction to the working class parties and progressive sections of the country that the Legislation passed on January 31st this year ended this issue of statelessness.

This conferment of citizenship would bring into mainstream politics again the vital plantation proletariat hitherto isolated and disregarded, thus creating conditions for a real unity and consolidation of the Sri Lankan working class in the coming period. That these workers are not prepared tamely to submit themselves any more to oppression is seen in the militancy they displayed during the violence that followed the announcement of the recent citizenship legislation. It is indeed fortunate that the spate of violence in the hill country no doubt provoked and fanned by sinister racist elements both within the ranks of the Government and outside it, was brought under control with the support also of the trade unions, thus preventing this area too from becoming a battle ground similar to the North and East.

Militarization and Repression

Meanwhile the efforts of all peace loving people to cry a halt to the militarization of Sri Lanka have had little effect on the authorities. Commandos and Home Guards continue their deadly operations and defenceless civilians in the North are killed in what is described as "crossfire" between the army and militants, while as part of shootings elsewhere we have even had the shooting of the Government MP for Mahara. But all this violence and lawlessness today hardly causes shock or outrage since militarisation has today brutalised and deadened human feelings. The wave of arrests set in motion in the South more recently in which several persons mainly belonging to the more obscure Left groupings were taken into custody allegedly on grounds of aiding and abetting the "terrorists" under the Emergency Regulations is also indicative of the unhealthy trends in our country today. Many of these arrests have no doubt been made to lend support to the Government propaganda about a "Marxist terrorist" plot to seize power in the country, but the detention and treatment allegedly meted out to such persons kept for long periods without any attempt to deal with them under the due processes of the law, constitutes a grave violation of human rights as well as a danger to the functioning of any effective political opposition in the country. And this could hardly be a conducive climate in which people could be expected to expose corruption in high places before the recently appointed Presidential Commission even though corruption has today reached levels unheard of earlier.

The ominous trends now manifest were also shown up more recently in Parliament by Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, himself a former Deputy Minister of Defence,

when he stated that there was a special Intelligence Service based at Longden Place apart from the one at Cambridge Place which comes under the Police. This Intelligence Service he stated "goes about in the night in unmarked vehicles". People, he said are sometimes removed from their homes or workplaces and their whereabouts are unknown. Very recently we had the abduction of some bhikkhus, who were staging a fast in public in Colombo as a protest against the treatment meted out by Government to the nurses on strike. Such tactics can only spread fear and demoralisation among the mass of the people, further undermine the democratic processes, which have already been seriously endangered by the policies pursued by the Government (the recent Akmeemana bye-election result notwithstanding) help close and the door to peaceful and democratic methods of change and generate recourse to more drastic methods.

The Nurses' Strike

The cruel action of the Government in utilising Emergency Regulations to proscribe the Public Services United Nurses Union (PSUNU) and evict nurses from their living quarters consequent on the strike action launched by them recently has been condemned by all organizations concerned with human rights and democratic freedoms. The Justice and Peace Commissions of both the Roman Catholic Church and the National Christian Council too have voiced their protest and called upon the Government to reach a settlement with the Union through discussions. The action of the Government in this instance becomes all the more reprehensible when one considers the intervention made by the President himself when the doctors went on strike last January at the call of the Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA) and the Dental Surgeons too followed with a similar action. These sections had interim increases granted to them on their wage demands as a result of their strikes. It may be noted that the doctors have also been given a right to private practice by this Government unlike the nurses who are poorly paid and overworked. Indeed the public sympathy with the striking nurses despite the serious inconvenience suffered, appears to have had an effect on National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali himself to judge

by the report of his speech at the Colombo District Development Council meeting in Sun of April 12th: "Nobody said the nurses' strike was unfair. The Government's position was that with the present financial situation, their demand for a salary increase could not be accommodated just now" he said.

The Minister also said "the issues are further complicated because a trade union issue has been mixed up with a religious issue". (See item **Nurses' struggle and the Buddhist Sangha** inside). No comment is necessary except to point out that it is well known that there is today a serious lack of trained nurses and that the present total complement of some 7000 odd needs to be doubled if hospitals and patients are to be served adequately; all the more reason for the Government being able to afford the increase demanded. The nurses however belong to the lower orders and can be treated like the government workers who struck in 1980 and unlike professionals such as the doctors. The bigger fish apparently get what they want and nothing is left when it comes to the smaller fry! Not at all surprising too when we consider the consistent class position adopted by the Government on such matters. It is our duty however to raise our voices against injustice and oppression and sound a note of warning to the Government too. For the day of reckoning must surely come-sooner perhaps than expected if the Government persist in being insensitive to the feelings of the working people. And this is especially so today when Mammon sits enthroned and there is a yawning and ever-widening gap between the rich and poor in our country, even if some people including politicians choose to ignore it.

Post Script:

Since this comment was given for printing, it has been announced that the month old strike of nurses has been called off after discussions had between the Union and the Minister of National Security. The PSUNU has however stated that it will once again have recourse to strike action if the Government does not honour the undertaking to lift the proscription on the Union and consider the grant of the wage increase demanded. □

The demise of capital taxes

Fiscal farce

The recent abolition of the estate duty and gifts tax has surprised everybody except a few whose personal wealths and fortunes under the present government are increasing as rapidly as the economic helplessness of the poor. In one respect these changes are not surprising because, it is in the nature of UNP governments to abolish taxes merely to please its supporters. The government is progressively dismantling the integrated tax code which was introduced in 1960 on the recommendations of Nicholas Kaldor.

The reasons given are that government gets little as revenue from these taxes and that too at high administrative cost. These reasons can hardly hold water in the face of fiscal principles that have come to be accepted in modern capitalist fiscal systems.

Kaldor tax reforms

Income tax was introduced to this country in 1938. Kaldor's tax proposals which were implemented in

1960, marked a watershed in the development of the country's direct tax structure. His proposals comprised a system of discounted capital allowances for business plant and equipment, an income tax on capital gains and a three-pronged imposition of taxes on personal consumption expenditure, personal wealth and personal gifts, through the medium of an integrated tax return. The objectives behind this system were, to permit adequate business capital formation, to secure equality of treatment between income and capital gains, to discourage unduly high personal consumption and to check the undue accumulation of personal wealth.

Meade Committee report

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (U. K.) which is largely funded by voluntary contributions from the private sector, set up, in 1975, a committee of private sector experts under the chairmanship of Professor J. E. Meade to make a comprehensive review of that country's direct tax system and make recommendations for reform.

The Committee first summarised their understanding of the principles that should underline a good fiscal system of direct taxes:

1. A good tax system should be horizontally equitable i. e. should treat like with like.
2. A modern tax system should be so constructed as to be capable of use for *vertical redistribution between rich and poor*.
3. There will almost inevitably be some clash between the criteria of economic efficiency and of vertical redistribution; but a good tax system is one which minimises this clash and promotes a given redistribution with a minimum loss of efficiency.
4. The final choice of redistributive aims for a tax system involves basic value judgements about the nature of a good society, which are matters for political decision.

The Committee's recommendations comprised a personal expenditure tax, a tax on companies based on the flow of funds rather than profits and an annual wealth tax which would discriminate against property acquired by gifts and inheritances but exempt a taxpayer's accumulation of wealth out of his own earnings and efforts.

It is ironic that capital taxes are being progressively abolished in Sri Lanka at a time when their necessity is being recognised in advanced countries. The fact that India abolishes a tax does not mean that Sri Lanka should follow suit because here, unlike in India, it is government policy to develop the economy through enrichment of the private capitalist class. In such a regime, the redistributive aims of social policy should require to retain the taxes on the capital accumulations of the living and the dead.

Tax evasion and capitalist avarice

It is clear that the Minister of Finance is too clever to be ignorant of the proper fiscal principles that should underlie a private sector-based economy. What is obvious is that a powerful and growing coterie of persons who have aggrandized their in-

comes and wealth not always by honest means, are mounting pressures on the government to release them from taxation altogether.

Is it surprising that Sri Lanka is in the unique position of providing a permanent amnesty to tax evaders through the banking system? Anyone who has black money can now dump it in a bank and obtain a nameless certificate of deposit which entitles him to get his money back later with interest with no questions being asked by anybody. At the same time the government has just introduced a withholding tax on interest paid by banks and financial institutions on deposits held by *named* depositors. The Inland Revenue has taken great pains to explain that under the law tax can be withheld only from interest payable to named depositors, but, curious people are asking why the law did not provide for tax to be withheld on all deposits, named or unnamed. Surely the privilege of being able to hold interest bearing tax free black money should at least attract the penalty of a non-refundable withholding tax!

It is not the policy of this journal to advocate economic development through private sector economics alone but it has to serve fair warning to the rulers that they are engaged in a deadly embrace with its unprincipled tax evading supporters who, instead of paying taxes honestly to sustain the capitalist system, are fast destroying it. Even the ranks of Tuscany can scarce forbear to cheer!

All these fiscal capers are going on at a time when the disparities of income and wealth between rich and poor are widening rapidly, when the nutrition levels of the poor and middle classes are fast deteriorating and the poor are even made to pay turnover taxes through the prices they pay for their essentials. Eisenstein in his "Ideologies of Taxation" stated: "Equity in taxation consists largely of two principles. The first principle is that equity is a special dispensation for those who are differently situated. . . . The second principle is that equity is the privilege of paying as little tax as somebody else. . . . Since equity is the fair distributions of dispensations, Congress is busily emulating the Dodo. Like Congress, the Dodo tried hard to be fair and impartial. After watching a curious race, he dispassionately declared: everybody has won and all must have prizes."

Nicholas Kaldor in his INDIAN TAX REPORT wrote a fitting epitaph for potentially corrupt fiscal regimes: "There is no point in having a system of progressive personal taxation at all unless it is to secure a more equitable distribution of wealth in the country than would obtain without it. If the system fails to secure equity—whether on account of the legal loopholes tolerated or the failure to enforce the strict statutory provisions of the tax laws—it is better to abandon it altogether or reduce it to the level at which it can be efficiently administered, than to allow it to continue in a form in which its redistributive effects on wealth are only formidable on paper but ineffective in reality; and as a result of which some unfortunate minorities in the community (who are unable to make use of the facilities for evasion and avoidance are both unjustly and from a social point of view most harmfully penalised". □

GLOBAL TERRORISM

The Libyan Fiasco

In spite of the devastation in Tripoli, caused by the despicable Anglo-U. S. aggression against a tiny country of 3.4 million people, knowledgeable observers wonder whether it is Reagan's juvenile bluster, or the heroic spirit of a small people who will not be cowed by brute force, that will triumph in the end. The U. S. action, undertaken supposedly to avenge the death of one American in a disco in West Berlin, is being almost universally condemned, even by allies.

A Reuter report from London, dated April 16, asserts that major British newspapers criticised the U. S. bombing raids and Thatcher's decision to allow British-based planes to take part. Only the London *Times* and most of the mass-circulation tabloids supported the attack. Significantly, the Conservative *Daily Telegraph* called it a "bad decision", and the *Financial Times* called it "futile, deplorable and almost certainly counter-productive", while *The Guardian* said that the Americans "were wrong to do it and Britain was foolish to help them." France and Spain forbade overflights for the bombers from the U. K., and the Italian Prime Minister, Craxi, angrily condemned the attack in Parliament. All that we got from Foreign Minister Hameed was a little squeak, "deeply distressing", which Rupavahini altered to "deep regret."

What is even more intriguing, is that the London *Times* in an authoritative article under the headline "Gadaffi U. S. scapegoat rather than a mad dog", said that branding Gadaffi has helped to obscure what "many U. S. diplomats and Intelligence officers have known for months, namely that recent bomb attacks and hijackings were planned in Syria and Lebanon rather than in Libya., "America concentrates on Libya," the article adds - "in Libya, a few hundred Americans and up to five thousand Britons still live in comparative safety under the Gadaffi regime," while in West Beirut, forty-nine foreigners have been kidnapped these past twenty-six months by different groups not linked to Libya. Furthermore, two hundred and fifty U. S. marines died when their Beirut base was blown up by a one-woman explosives truck in October 1983. The Americans withdrew from Lebanon in February 1984 without avenging these deaths.

Why this straining at the Libyan gnat while swallowing the Lebanese camel? To mix metaphors, the death of two hundred and fifty marines was a whale of an humiliation to Americans but they slunk away. Why

then pick on Libya? Only one plausible explanation exists. Imperialism is living its last days. The once all-powerful British lion is toothless, and the American hold on the world is weakening, with the American eagle clawless and clueless. They fear another Vietnam, so they attack tiny objects - Grenada, Libya and the Malvinas (Falkland Islands), just to show the flag.

In this shameful episode, the U. S. A. stands morally bankrupt and politically isolated. The two partners in this gruesome crime are all alone in the Security Council.

In our mid-1985 issue we reproduced a report and cartoon which appeared in the *Daily News* in July 1985. We now reprint that cartoon. If any comment is needed, the news, also given by the *Daily News* of 18th March 1986, that Mr John McMahon, for forty-three years director of the C. I. A., has resigned from that organisation in protest against expansion of the C. I. A.'s covert - action budget of five hundred million dollars to destabilise countries which are not stooges of the United States. **Who are the State terrorists of the world?** The bombing of Tripoli by the United States is merely a trick to cover up its own blood-stained tracks.



Cartoon reproduced from *Daily News* of 4 July 1985

(Continued from page 1)

The Government clearly indicating its disinclination to talk with the particular individual who happens to lead the Union, has refused to negotiate with it. The reason for refusal to negotiate is unique indeed. However just, fair and reasonable the demands of the Union may be, there can be no talks for a settlement of the dispute, appears to be the Government's position.

We believe that concerning state-run hospitals, the Government is obliged to run them efficiently

not only providing an adequate medical service for the sick, but also seeing to the welfare of sections of its employees. Quite recently the Government negotiated with and settled certain disputes that arose between itself and the two Unions of the Government Medical Officers and of the Dental Surgeons.

We are convinced that likewise a solution to the present dispute with the P. S. U. N. U. could be found through negotiation. We therefore appeal to the Christian

Workers Fellowship to take all possible steps to foster a spirit of reconciliation, which would help the two parties to the dispute, to meet at the negotiating table and end the deadlock.

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5 : 9.)

Sincerely Yours in Christ,
Brother Malcom Perera

Pastor Bethany Prayer Centre,
35, D. S. Fonseka Road, Colombo 5.
10th April 1986

Nurses' Struggle and The Buddhist Sangha

To what extent could Buddhist monks interest themselves in the activities of women? A Seminar of Buddhist monks under the distinguished leadership of two Maha Nayakes was held on March 27 to discuss this question consequent on a statement reported to have been made by President J. R. Jayewardene that it was against the Buddhist scriptures (Tripitaka) for a Buddhist monk to lead a trade union of Nurses (an organization of women). In fact the present Government has consistently refused to negotiate with the Public Services United Nurses Union (PSUNC) on the ground that its President was a Buddhist Monk.

It was to discuss whether or not it was proper for members for the Maha Sangha to take part in such activities therefore that some 250 monks gathered at the Abhayarama Temple in Narahenpita the accustomed meeting place too of the Nurses Union (PSUNA). They were led by the Ven. Batapola Anomadassi Maha Nayaka of the Amarapura Order and the Ven. Hedigalla Pannatissa Sangha Nayake of India. When the monks who had gathered sought to proceed from there to another Temple in the vicinity which was the venue for the meeting in the manner prescribed by the Rules of the Sangha—single file according to the seniority of the monks—the police obstructed them and refused to allow the procession. The monks remonstrated with

the police and while the Maha Nayakes sought to explain what they were attempting to do, the police are said to have forcibly pushed back the monks, resulting in the aged Maha Nayake Ven. Batapola Anomadassi himself being struck by a rifle butt. When the monks insisted on being allowed to proceed to the seminar, they were permitted to leave, five at a time, in order.

The seminar which followed resolved that there was really no violation of Buddhist principles or scriptures when monks engaged themselves in the activities complained of by the President and other members of the Government. It was queried as to where in the Tripitake was there a prohibition of such activities. There was even an offer made to debate this matter in public with those concerned!

This incident had a sequel later on when at a religious ceremony presided over by the Ven. Batapola Anomadassi at which a Government Minister was the chief guest, the Mahanayake in reported to have said that while the President, Prime Minister, Ministers and MPs had their salaries raised, they had objected to the poor nurses asking for a wage increase and that in this context, today even an 80 year old monk like himself could not walk on the public highway without being at the receiving end of the police officers of the Government. The Minister is thereupon said to have lost control of himself and had to be led off the stage by his supporters.

The 'case' of the abducted monks

The Constitution of this country states that, amongst other points, Buddhism will have pride of place among the country's religions and also that the people of this country having democratic rights are free to engage in religious and other activities as and how their desires impel them. It in effect implies that the membership of a Trade Union is possible, that Trade Union action is permitted, that the people of this country are free to voice their disapproval of what Government does and also that the Law is there to safeguard their rights.

Enshrined sentiments..... very pleasing to the ear. But reality can be something quite different as was the experience of seven monks who

engaged themselves in a fast, having got the blessings of the Sangha, at Thunmulla Junction Colombo some days ago.

Their fast was in protest of the high-handed action of the Government when it decided to proscribe the Nurses Union and also to pontificate about the involvement of monks in social issues. It has always been said that the Temple was concerned with people and our history bears this out. However, when it suits people to re-write the truth and have it loudly proclaimed by the media, then the Temple must be in seclusion. The monks were suddenly found missing. What happened to them? The guardians of Law and Order who were in the area to make sure that no harm came to these monks claim that they have been "abducted". Now, these monks were visited at fairly

regular intervals by lay people and also other monks who were concerned about the issue and their well being, the last visit being around 2.45 a.m. Shortly thereafter they were non est. Under the eyes of the vigilant police! Is this possible? Should the Law have made any effort to safeguard the fasting monks there would have been banner headlines in the media. That they did not do so but simply succumbed to the force of the 'thugs' and have been most silent about the whole affair surely smacks of connivance or manipulation. What price freedom: what cost to the Tax Payer for his safety?

Thugs and thuggery seem to be vital props to buttress the policies of this righteous Government. The people have experienced these strong arm tactics for long. How long more is the cry.

The Peace Pilgrimage

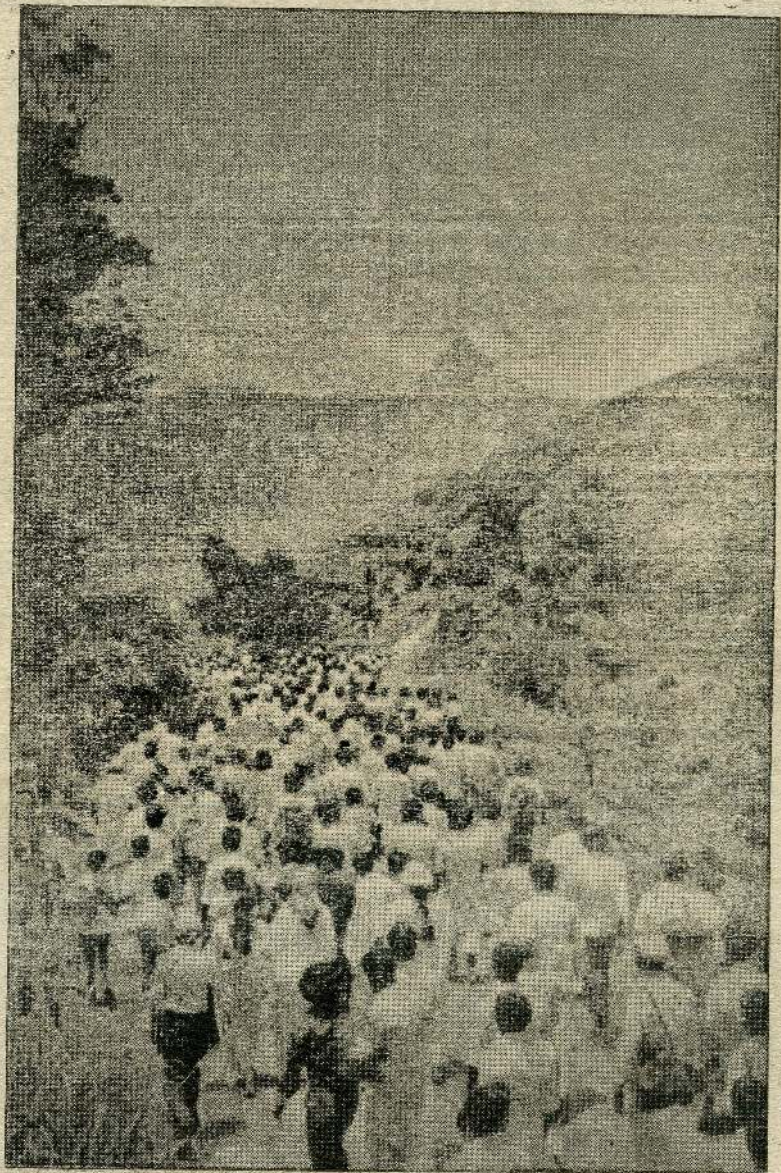
For several centuries the holy mountain Adam's Peak also called Sri Pada, Samanala Kanda or Sivanolipadam has attracted devotees of all religions - Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims - to its summit 7360 feet above sea level. Many are the beliefs and myths associated with this sacred Peak, so that an annual pilgrimage for cleansing and renewal has been a feature of the religious and social practice of generations of Sri Lankans. It is recorded in history that King Nissanka Malla (1187 - 1196) got a path cleared through the jungle, crossed the river at Ambagamuva, climbed the Peak with his followers and worshipped the foot print of the Buddha with great devotion.

In 1986 the beginning of the season saw only a trickle of pilgrims attempting the climb. In late January and early February violence had broken out in the hill country and as a result the trek to Adam's Peak virtually ceased in February and early March. On the 11th of March a representative gathering of over a hundred citizens in Hatton meeting under the auspices of the Sarvodaya Movement and the Deputy Inspector General of Police (Central Range) met to discuss ways and means of establishing and maintaining peace in the hill country areas. It was at this meeting that the idea of a peace walk and peace pilgrimage to Adam's Peak was first mooted by two participants and thereafter the Central Peace Committee of Hatton endorsed the idea wholeheartedly and planned for it immediately at

its first meeting on 17th March. In **eight days** of enthusiastic effort by an organizing Committee of the Central Peace Committee all the arrangements were finalised with strong support by the Police.

On the 25th of March, Medin Poya Day, the committed people of all faiths who assembled at the Police square in Hatton at 6.30 a.m. numbered about five hundred, but by 7.30 a.m., the crowd had swelled to about a thousand. The opening

ceremony was a simple and moving one - religious leaders of all faiths joined hands and lit the lamp accompanied by the prayer chants of Japanese Buddhist monks and two brief talks by Dr A. T. Ariyaratne, the Sarvodaya leader and DIG Gamini Gunawardene spelt out the objectives of the peace pilgrimage lucidly. A brief talk in Tamil by a Buddhist monk from Vavuniya set the tone of inter-racial friendship. The people then set off in threes, deliberately mixed up in all communities in places



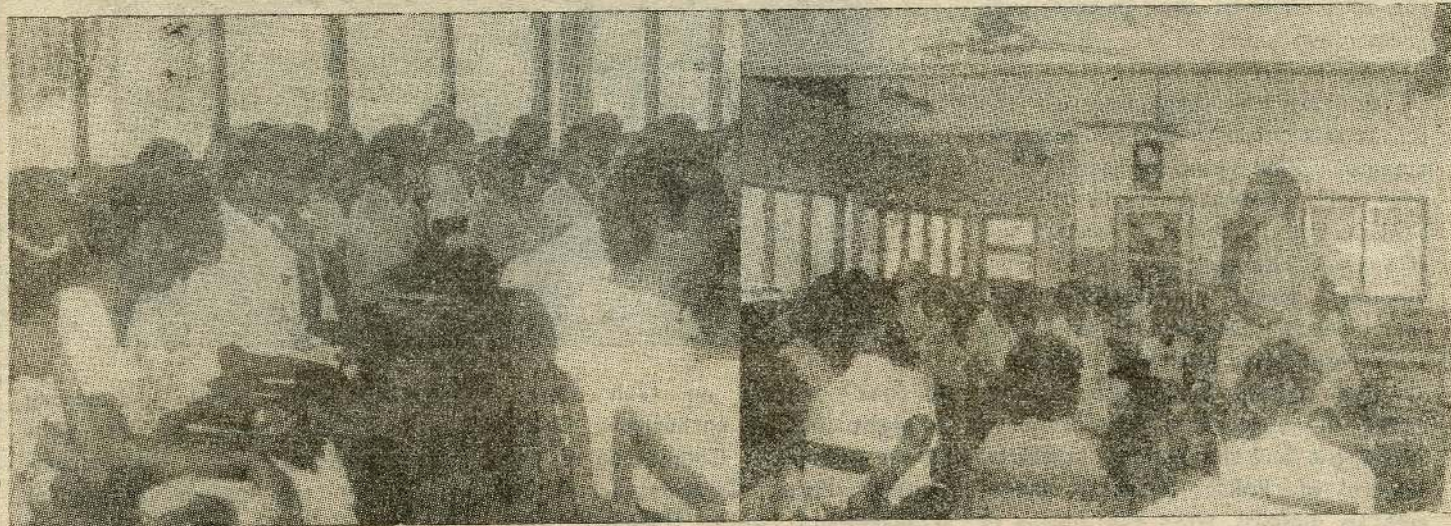
and also as members of their Trade unions, religious and social organizations. There was determination writ large on many faces and a seriousness of purpose was clearly visible. It was after all no picnic - to attempt a walk of twenty one miles through Dickoya, Norwood and Maskeliya to Nallathanni and thereafter to climb the Peak. By the time the procession reached Dickoya the marchers numbered about 2000 and at the first stop at Norwood for breakfast, about another 3000 persons (including school children) from the Bogowantalawa - Norwood area had joined. At St. Joseph's Maha Vidyalaya where the marchers stopped for a small meeting, lunch and a rest, they were joined by about another 2000 persons.

Some people estimated the total number of marchers at about 10,000, while others said that the total number was in the region of 7000. Nevertheless the total number of registered marchers was 6,65. What was amazing - and a sign of great devotion and commitment to the cause of peace - was the fact that **about 5000 persons are estimated to have climbed the Peak as well on that memorable, historic Poya**

night. The songs and shouts of devotion, peace songs and musical blessings heard during the climb and the descent were inspiring and of course the actions of solidarity, generosity and mutual help were in the best traditions of this pilgrimage. The receptions accorded and refreshments provided to the marchers at Kuda Maskeliya, Glentilt and other places by plantation workers resulted in the supportive participation of about 5000 persons. The marchers arrived at Nallathanni at about 6.30 p. m. After dinner and a rest at Place Pagoda, pilgrims began the climb in batches throughout the night.

It is estimated by the Organizers that participating groups and trade unions numbered about 30, while religious groups also numbered the same; about 6 schools also participated and the presence of students and teachers was a promising sign. In fact the popular participation of the people far exceeded the expectations of the Central Peace Committee in Hatton. A local event undertaken in faith - and with some courage too at a time when racial tensions had not fully subsided in this area and with some hostility

shown by a minority of extremists both Sinhala and Tamil - had obviously had its national impact. Some women had heard of the event and come all the way from Tangalla in the deep South! Curses of fearful Sinhala Buddhists against all who were preventing their annual pilgrimage turned into relieved and joyful cries of devotion. Tamil school children and devotees shouted blessings and praises (Haro Hara!) in bursts of confident exultation. The mingling of three races and adherents of four religions took place naturally at the little restaurants on the Peak and at the Summit. There were no ugly incidents reported anywhere during this entire pilgrimage - a vindication of the essential goodness of Sri Lankan people. In fact the whole exercise revealed that the spiritual strength of a people can be mobilized to serve noble ends given enlightened leadership. This first step in the peace programme planned by the Central Peace Committee in Hatton has indeed challenged us all to greater efforts in this cause. May the people in the hill country - a microcosm of Sri Lanka - continue to be inspired towards further creative endeavours.



Participants at the Holy Week Bible Studies

CWF Holy Week Programme

The CWF Holy Week programme this year of Bible Studies and liturgies was very well attended, having also a number of participants who were new contacts of the Fellowship. Some of the regular participants could not attend the sessions fully since they had fallen ill

after the arduous Peace March and climb to Sri Pada which commenced two days earlier.

The programme consisted of full day Bible Studies beginning on Maundy Thursday morning and ending on the evening of Easter Eve. All three days sessions ended with the celebration of the Liturgies for the day specially drawn up and arranged by the CWF in a local cultural and working class context.

The Study Programme

The Bible Studies covered the socio-economic and political backgrounds of both the Old and New Testament time with a discussion of their relevance and meaning for us in our present situation. The last day's Bible Study on Religion: Oppression and Liberation was conducted by Fr. Rienzie Perera of the Theological Seminary of Lanka. This was followed by presentations made by representatives of the four major religions in the country on the oppressive and liberative aspects in the practice of each of them. Mr. C. Sivanesan dealt with the oppressive and liberative aspects in the practice of Hinduism followed by the Ven Wellawatte Gnanabhivansa Thero who dealt with the situation in the practice of Buddhism. In the afternoon sessions that day Mr. M. I. M. Aluharuddeen led a lively discussion on the same theme in regard to Islam followed by Fr. Paul Caspersz who made a forthright critique of Christianity in practice. Others who led Bible Studies on the preceding two days were Fr. Lionel Peiris, Fr. Nicky Rose, Kingsley Perera, Jeffrey Abayasekera and Vijaya Vidyasagara.

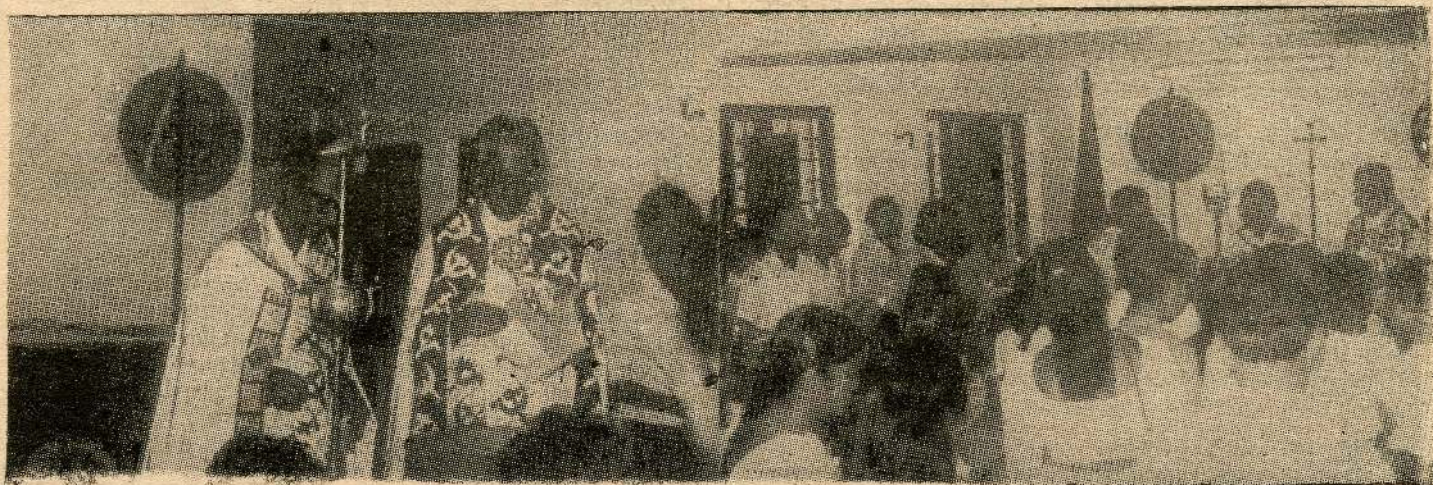
Worship in a living context

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 in 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 terminating abruptly and in confusion after a hurried communion of the people.

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

Landslides

On 1 March 1986, I was part of a small team from the Christian Workers Fellowship (CWF) which went to the village of Padiyapallella, to make a preliminary survey of the effects of the recent landslides, and to attend a mass-meeting of villagers from the surrounding area, which had been called in response to the situation. Our examination suggested that the landslides in Padiyapallella, Maturata and Walapane had four major categories of effect; on communications, agriculture, housing and human life.

Essential communications destroyed

Communications in that remote area are tenuous at the best of times, and it is clear that as resources and facilities improve the road system will have to be improved also, to meet the needs of a greater volume of traffic. For the time being, however, the existing roads are just about adequate, in favourable conditions. Conditions were very far from favourable during the ten days in February when the majority of the landslides occurred. Before the road from Kandy reaches the village itself, it winds along the side of the valley, occasionally branching into an upper and a lower road. At one such fork, where the right-hand road pursues a course higher into the surrounding mountains, we saw that a bridge had been completely destroyed by falling boulders and the sudden movement down the steep slope of the earth in which the bridge's foundations were laid. The upper road was rendered totally impassable, and the surface of the lower had been badly damaged. Beyond the village, nearer the top of the valley on the other side, we observed the effects of subsidence. The road surfaces are very shallow, and as the topsoil on both sides of the road gave way, the fragile surface fragmented. In addition there were many deep cracks and fissures split the ground, running through the road and reappearing in the floors and walls of nearby buildings. At this particular place, an entire village had been cut off, access being now by foot only, involving a six-mile walk. The importance of the roads in this area cannot be over-stressed, since there is often only one route between a village and the source of their supplies, and medical and emergency services. So in this case, anyone requiring hospital treatment, for instance, would simply have had to do without.

The whole landscape altered

From one side of the valley, it was possible to look across to the other and see great rifts in the mountain-side, sometimes reaching from the top of the mountain to the valley-floor. The effects of the landslides on the local agriculture, which is the livelihood of the people, was to a great extent, obvious. In places, areas of the sides of the valley appeared simply as sheets of mud, where the topsoil had been completely dragged away, taking with it the carefully terraced fields containing the farmer's valuable crops.

Living under threat

Like the roads, the destruction of people's houses had resulted from both the bombardment by falling rocks and boulders, and the earth movement and subsidence of the ground on which they were built. One



Landslide at Okandagala

old man wept openly as he pointed down at the pile of rubble which had been his home, in a place where all the buildings are now affected by great cracks, and are clearly in an appallingly unsafe condition. For many residents, these homes represent the investment of their life's work. I was given to understand that many who had been made homeless had been placed by the Government in refugee-camps, but that these were generally ill-supplied and devoid of amenities. At the meeting, I was approached by several people who wanted to express their fears for their own safety. Many people have decided to cut their losses, and have left the area. Most cannot afford to do this, and so they stay on in terror, wondering when it will be their turn to feel the earth shift beneath their feet, and to find themselves carried away inside a collapsing house.

Buried alive

The first I heard of the fatalities brought about by these disasters was when someone mentioned that in one place a family of thirteen had been buried alive in a landslide. These deaths apparently account for around a quarter of the total death-toll. The villagers have every reason to fear for their lives, as well as their livelihoods.

Mass meeting

The meeting was organised by the young leader of the CWF group at Badulla, Neville Gunsekera, whose

parental home is at Padiyapelella. It was an extraordinary achievement in so short a space of time, and the massive response was indicative of the extreme seriousness of the situation, and of the desperation of the villagers to start working on both the results and the causes of the landslides. The large school-hall was packed to the doors, and many people were quite prepared to stand outside the windows in the pouring rain, in order to participate. At the special request of CWF, a group from the University was also present, led by the Revd. Rohan L. Wijesinghe, a University chaplain. The villagers at the meeting numbered some eight hundred.

A number of speeches were made by various leading figures, both civil and religious. I am indebted to a report by Fr. Wijesinghe for details of these speeches.

The Revd. Bhikkhu, who opened the meeting, brought out the sociological implications of this event. He explained that this meeting was the first attempt to unite the villagers to seek solutions to their common problems. He made the point that those who were able had left the area, leaving the poor and those who had already been affected by the disasters to seek relief wherever it was to be found. He also made the vital point that the present need to find common answers to common problems transcended all political and other divisions, finding in this fact grounds for hope. (This is, of course, precisely the sort of response which CWF seeks to evoke in all such situations.)

The meeting recognised the need for expert help in solving their problems, and it was for this reason that CWF had involved the team from the University right from the start. It was felt that there should be contact and co-operation between the local people and the experts from the earliest possible stage. Fr. Wijesinghe had hoped to include Prof Witharana, of the Dept. of Geology, in his group, but the professor had felt this to be inappropriate just then as he had already been appointed to the Government team which was to visit the area later on. The University team, although obviously unable at this stage to speculate on the causes of the landslides, noted the interest of the meeting in the following questions:

(1) Did the blasting of the rocks and the erecting of the Kotmale and Randenigala dams contribute to the tragedy?

(2) How far can the blame be placed on deforestation and the cultivation of tobacco?

(3) Are the unusually heavy rains that have been experienced in recent months, and the distinct change of weather patterns, a direct result of the erection of dams?

(4) Was there some hitherto unknown natural phenomenon that caused these disasters? A recent article in the newspapers stated that there are deep cracks (up to twenty-five miles deep) occurring across the Hanguranketa area; if so, are the shock-waves this article created justified?

(5) Although there have been landslides in the distant past, at no time has an entire ring of mountains leading up to the dams been affected. Is this due to natural causes, or to human interference and error?

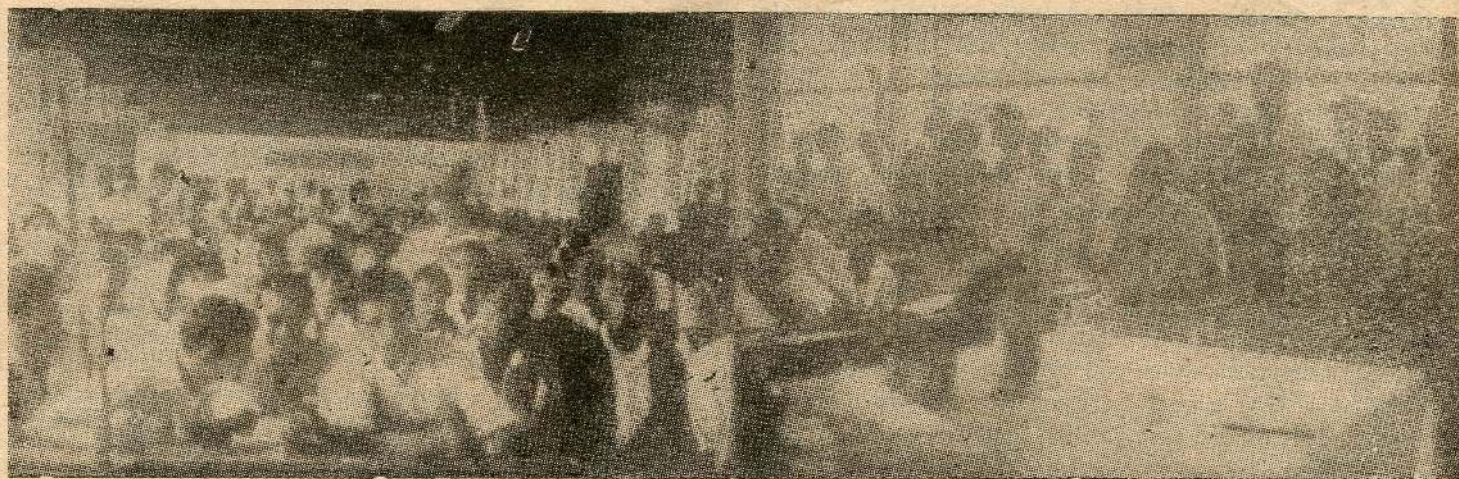
(6) As ninety-five per cent of the people in this area are dependent on farming for their livelihood, they have a right to know whether they can continue to live where they are, and live off the produce of the earth, or whether they have to move elsewhere, to alternative sites. If the tragic situation has been caused or aggravated by human interference, with nature, or by human error, then adequate compensation must be paid to the farmers so that as they move to new land, they do not have to start again from scratch. Who will give them assurance that alternative land is safe and suitable for farming, and who will pay compensation if it becomes necessary?

The University team made the following statement, through Dr. Jayakkody, of the Dept. of Agricultural Chemistry:

(1) We came to Padiyapelella because we were concerned and wanted to be with you and to find out just what has happened and what we can do.

(2) We have no answers just now, but we have come as observers, and what we have observed will be reported to the proper authorities. We would like to come again, and do something more specific later on.

(Continued on page 21)



The mass-meeting of villagers in progress

Liberation and Development

—Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios

Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios is a President of the World Council of Churches and a Bishop of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India. He also heads the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, Kerala. Tradition traces the beginnings of Christianity in India to the visit of St. Thomas the Apostle.

Development and Ideology

In a world where the economic structures are unjustly tilted in favour of the propertied classes, more development may mean that more of the fruit of the labour of the working classes will be appropriated by the propertied classes, and the gap between the rich and the poor will thus only become wider. In this sense development-alism can be seen as an ideology of the propertied classes designed to make these classes richer at the expense of the working classes.

It is in opposition to this developmentalist ideology that liberation theology has now arisen. And the opposition to liberation theology in certain influential Christian quarters, we believe, comes at least in part from their identification with the propertied classes to which some of the rich church establishments belong.

We have to scrutinize carefully some of the recent declarations of the Sacred Congregation on the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church condemning liberation theology on the flimsy ground that it is tainted with Marxist elements. It is our responsibility to help Christians to re-examine traditional theology and contemporary attempts to rehabilitate a mythical theology within a conservative politico-economic ideology, in the light of the charges made by liberation theology and to assess the programme recommended by liberation theology to overcome and change the structures of injustice.

It may be the case that liberation theology has often tended to neglect certain fundamental aspects of the Christian faith which understands, for example, the Kingdom of God as both historical, or this-worldly, and transcendent or eschatological. If that is true, that must be pointed out clearly and liberation theologians admonished to have a more comprehensive approach. It may be a fact that liberation theology has been



primarily a product of European colonial settlers in Latin America and does not adequately represent the aspirations and perceptions of native Americans. If that is so, that should certainly be pointed out. It may also be the case that liberation theology has not given adequate attention to certain dimensions of meaning in the Christian faith and especially to the personal and sacramental dimensions of life in the Body of Christ, and that it has emphasized political, economic and cultural liberation at the expense of questions of personal salvation and sacramental

spirituality. If that is so, then the issue should be debated and clarified. But it cannot be Christian to dismiss liberation theology mainly on the grounds that these Christian theologians have learned to see the truth with the help of Marxist analytical procedures. One of the things that we have learned from recent discussions on hermeneutics is that **there is no perception of truth that is completely free from all pre-conceptions.** The Marxist preconception can be just as valid as any other, if it fits the facts.

Panic over Economic Trends

Why does the Old Order object so strenuously to liberation theology? I believe that the world's market economy system is in a panic over four disturbing trends of the eighties: (a) stagnant production (b) growing unemployment (c) shrinking world trade and (d) the growing debt burden of the developing countries. The following table will make this clear:

	Growth Rate	Unemployment
1980	1.2 %	21 million
1981	1.2 %	25 million
1982	-0.5 %	30 million
1983	0.5 %	34 million
	Increase in World Trade	Debt Burden at the beginning of the year
1980	1 %	\$ 406 billion
1981	-0 %	\$ 465 billion
1982	-1 to -2 %	\$ 530 billion
1983	-1 %	\$ 626 billion

The debt of the developing countries is approaching the astronomical level of \$ 1000 billion in the current year (1985). And the paradoxical situation is that despite all these debts, the private banks of the market economy world are overflowing with liquid credit, and are looking around for borrowers. Equally paradoxical is the fact that even though some large developing countries, like India, have growth rates of up to 5%, it is the commercial banks of the market economy who would have the liquid cash to spare, despite near-zero growth rates in market economy industrialized countries.

This is what we mean by "tilted international economic structures". We of the developing countries produce more wealth and the banks of the developed countries grow richer. How does it happen? There are many ways of making that happen. Here are some:

1. **Investment money goes from the developing to the developed countries:** e. g. in 1983, the Six Gulf States of the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council invested \$ 338.46 billion, of which 85% was invested in industrially developed countries.
2. **Debt servicing charges** alone come to billions of dollars a year, flowing out to developed countries, so that more than half of the so-called international aid is swallowed up by debt-service charges.
3. **Profit outflow** from developed countries by TNCs becomes in four to five years more than the capital invested. After that, it is poor people's money that flows continuously to developed countries and their banks.
4. **The international trade and price fixing techniques** are so fitted together, as to facilitate higher prices for developing country imports without a corresponding increase in the prices of exports and sometimes even a fall in the prices of raw materials exported. More of poor people's products have to be exchanged for less of developed country products.
5. **The native or industrial magnates** prefer to keep their capital invested abroad for reasons of capital security.
6. **Much of the borrowed foreign exchange** of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America change hands from government to government official and gets deposited in private accounts in western banks.

There are many other subtler systems, like the international monetary system, which I will not analyze here.

Role of TNCs

It is precisely against such a tilted system that liberation theology directs its forces. The system works in favour of an international elite that exploits the majority and concentrates economic power in the hands of the propertied classes. **The role played by Transnational Corporations in such a system** should also come under survey in our meeting here. The entrepreneurial system, far from being one of free enterprise, is now working in favour of the large corporations over against smallscale private businesses. In a typical market economy, industrialized nation like Japan, there were 19,155 small companies which failed or went bankrupt in 1983, and more than 20,000 in 1984. In just one month last year (August 1984), 1,682 companies went under, leaving a liability to shareholders and creditors of 264.7 billion yen. **Power becomes concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer corporations as the years roll by.**

The life of these corporations is heavily dependent on the military market and defence contracts. Lockheed, one of the largest military contractors, disclosed last week plans for a ten billion dollar expansion (*Herald Tribune*, March 21, 1985) mainly directed to war production. They are not banking on any great expansion in the civilian consumer market, but on plans like that of the Reagan Administration to spend 1,800 billion dollars on armament in 1985-89. Already this year the defence expenditures of the world reaches a trillion dollars, and without this expenditure, most of these corporations could not survive. **Genuine disarmament spells death to these companies and their beneficiaries, including millions of shareholders.**

The Strategic Defense Initiative, or "Star Wars" programme, is only part of a giant economic race to privatize and commercialize space itself. It seems clear now that those who can afford to manufacture pharmaceuticals, semi-conductors and certain other delicate products in space-based factories can capture the market in these commodities. Here the Americans feel cheated, because the U. S. government does not directly subsidize research in these fields by private companies, whereas European companies, heavily subsidized by W European governments, seem to be several steps ahead in this field. Ariespace, a private French company whose largest shareholder is the French government, holds ownership rights on the Ariane rocket, developed by the European Space Agency (a council of 11 European countries that supervises nearly all major space projects in Europe). It has sent up about five communications satellites, each costing about \$25 million. Americans cannot compete:

for, without state subsidies, their Delta rocket charges about \$42 million for each launch (**Herald Tribune** March 21, 1985).

One of the products they want to perfect in space is a cure for diabetes, which involves separating tiny particles from a solution by electrophoresis or imparting an electrical charge to them in a no-gravity environment. The American shuttle sent up this month (March 1985) has, they say, an experimental space factory to produce just 1—5 litres of this cure. If successful, next November the American company McDonnell Douglas will send a production plant weighing only 2½ tons into space by November this year. Once the Food and Drug Administration approves this drug, enormous profits are within reach of McDonnell Douglas.

The hope of the establishment elite in world capitalism is to capture the world market in food, health, communications and armaments within a few years. That seems the only way to forestall the collapse of the capitalist system. This requires (a) that the western nations, with or without the collaboration of Japan, should have unquestioned military superiority over other nations, and (b) within the western nations a few trans-national corporations should be able to control the political and economic process directed to higher profit for the corporations. Both western dominance of the world, and the dominance of governments by TNCs are essential.

Their Last hope

Military spending helps these corporations in so many ways:

- (a) **by boosting the capitalist economics through growing military spending and gaining a larger share of the arms market:**
- (b) **by using secret military research** for commercial purposes, without research costs to the company itself;
- (c) **by charging exorbitant prices** to the defence establishments and thereby enhancing the corporation's profits.

You may have read about **the disclosures made by US Representative Barbara Boxer** last September that:

- (a) General Dynamics charged the Defence Department \$7.417 for an alignment pin costing 3 cents;
- (b) McDonnell Douglas charged the Defence Dept. \$2,043 for a nut costing 13 cents;
- (c) Pratt and Whitney charged the Defence Dept. \$1,118 for a plastic stool cover costing 22 cents;

- (d) Hughes Aircraft charged the military \$2,543 for a circuit breaker costing \$3.64 (**Herald Tribune**, Sept. 29/30, 1984).

The same newspaper reported that the Army had overpaid \$84 million to Ford Aerospace for one anti-aircraft gun.

The Trans-national Corporations have a big stake in military spending; their financing of the political process in any country demands that they get a very big share of the fruit of other people's labours, so they can kick back some money to control the political process.

We need to look here at the **TNC's role in making western decisions to intervene in Nicaragua or Poland**, to carry out military exercises in the Pacific, to keep U.S. forces and missiles in South Korea even 40 years after the war there is over, to keep Diego Garcia as a bastion of western nuclear power over the world, to keep up the white minority regime in South Africa and not to allow Namibia to have its freedom, to keep supplying arms to Afghan guerrillas so that the U.S.S.R. will not be able to withdraw its troops from that country, and to **promote de-stabilization moves in all countries which do not serve the interests of the TNCs**. We should, as workers for peace with justice, expose that role sufficiently clearly to win the people of America. Western Europe, Australia and Japan, and of all countries as allies and co-workers in the struggle for peaceful and just societies.

Our fight is not against the West, but against an international elite who want to uphold the system that provides affluence for the few at the expense of the poverty of the majority, that permits hundreds of thousands in Africa to perish through famine and drought without coming to their aid in a determined and farsighted manner, and who would want to oppose all movements for detente and reduction in armaments for they perceive these movements to be against their privileged interests. **These are the principalities and powers from which we seek liberation today. Formidable indeed is the power of the military-industrial-financial complex—which includes TNCs and banking establishments, as well as arms makers and traders. But by far more powerful is the hand of the Lord.** and when the human spirit gives itself to the Spirit of the Lord, in silence and repentance, but also in committed action, the Lord will act. Justice with Peace will come. For that day of the Lord, we will pray and work. □

(Courtesy: **Christian Peace Conference 11/1985**)

"No Way We Can Pay Debt!"

The following letter was sent by Brazil's Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns to the approximately 1,200 delegates attending the Conference on the Latin American Debt held in Havana from July 31 to Aug. 3, 1985. The letter was first read by Dominican theologian Fray Betto, the cardinal's personal representative to the conference; it was read again by Fidel Castro who used the prelate's words to close the historic event.

Esteemed Delegates.

I am grateful for the invitation to participate in the joint analysis of Latin America and the Caribbean's foreign debt within the context of the present international economic crisis. Unable to attend because of innumerable duties, I would like to express my desire that this gathering be especially beneficial for the great majority of the poor who inhabit our countries.

In light of Christ's Gospel, the social doctrine of the church and the words of Pope John Paul II, I want to specify some basic points which seem fundamental to the theme being debated.

1. There is no realistic way in which the Latin American and Caribbean people can assume the weight of paying the colossal debt incurred by our governments. It is not even possible to continue paying high interest rates at the expense of sacrificing development and well-being.

2. The problem of the debt is not just financial, but fundamentally political and it must be faced as such. What is at risk here is not the accounts of international creditors, but rather the lives of millions of people who cannot suffer the permanent threat of regressive measures and unemployment which bring misery and death.

3. Human rights demand that all people of good will from the continent and the Caribbean, that all sectors responsible, unite in the urgent search for a realistic solution to the debt problem, as a way of preserving the sovereignty of our nations and defending the principle that the fundamental commitment of governments is not to creditors but to our people.

4. The relentless defence of the principle of our peoples self-determination requires an end to interference by international organizations in the financial administration of our countries. In that the government belongs to the public, any contracts signed with such organizations should immediately be made known to public opinion.

5. It is urgent to establish concrete bases for a New International Economic Order, in which unjust relations between rich and poor countries are abolished and the Third World is guaranteed the inalienable right to manage its own destiny, free of imperialistic meddling and exploitative commercial relations.

Certain of the success of this important event I implore God to fill our hearts with the Beatitude of a hunger and thirst for justice, so that we may be always faithful to the aspirations of our peoples' freedom.

Receive my fraternal greetings.

Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns

Latinamerica Press 26 September 1985.

The Third World ?

A Vision

"Conspirators against freedom
Own this Train
Now overcrowded", my escort said
And departed, as I entered it.

Walking in the midst of this crowd,
I looked around. Instinctively
I closed my eyes.
Nothing so wretched
Have I seen before.

Spectacle worse than Lepers Asylum
Was what I saw, the visible
disintegration
Of living human bodies.
Mocking look in their eyes
Said, "Naught for our comfort
Nor for thine, O yet healthy one".

"Where do you get down?"
I asked loud, all to hear,
"No one gets down
Only new ones enter"
Answered all in a chorus.

I have heard of Hiroshima,
May be I am seeing it, I thought.
Yet in the decaying bodies,
There were closer resemblances.
Smell of evil being so unbearable,
I woke up.

— **Basil Fernando
Wattala.**

The 8 myths of hunger

MYTH No. 1

People are hungry because of food scarcity.

This is wrong. Measured globally, there is more than enough to feed everyone. Considering only grain, enough is produced to provide everyone with ample protein and more than 3000 calories a day, about the caloric intake of the average American. (A third or more of this grain is now fed to livestock, 7/8 in industrialized countries.) In addition, the so-called food-poor countries are exporting agricultural products while they are lacking food.

Examples:

- During the 1971 drought, the Sahelian countries exported about 15 million kilos of vegetables, mainly to Europe;
- In Bangladesh, after the 1974 floods, 4 million tons of rice were accumulated because the great majority was too poor to afford it.

MYTH No. 2

People are hungry because of land scarcity.

This is wrong. Only 44% of the world arable land is actually cultivated, mainly because the big landowners are considering the land more as an investment than as a food resource. In addition, a large part of the land (the best) is used for export crops.

Example:

- In Africa, during the last twenty years, coffee production quadrupled, tea production multiplied by six, cocoa and cotton production doubled, and sugar cane production tripled, to the detriment of food crops.

MYTH No. 3

Hunger results from over-population.

This statement is wrong. Indeed, hunger depends more on the land tenure system and the peasants' control of the land than on the population density.

Examples:

- China has merely half the cultivated acreage for each person that India has. Yet in only 20 years the Chinese people succeeded

ed in eliminating visible hunger while so many Indians still go hungry;

- Brazil has more cultivated acreage per person than the United States and yet its under-fed population increased from 45 to 72% during the last few years.

MYTH No. 4

To solve the problem of hunger the top priority must be on growing more food.

This is wrong. To increase the yield one encourages the use of new technologies (fertilisers, pesticides) which are benefitting those who already have land, money and political influence. Those who would need these improvements cannot afford them. On the contrary, unemployed and landless are increasing.

- In Sanora, Mexico, prior to the "Green Revolution", the average size of the farms was 160 ha. After 20 years of modernisation, in Hermosillo city, the average had increased to 800 ha., in certain cases even to 10,000 ha., while 75% of the peasants were landless.

MYTH No. 5

Only big landowners can solve the food problem.

"We have to rely only on big landowners to reach food security as it is the fastest way to increase food production."

This is wrong. In fact, small peasants are more productive, as was shown by surveys made in Latin America, United States and Soviet Union. By concentrating investments on large landowners, one allows them to increase their farms and to produce more profit, but they do not solve the problems of the hungry. In addition, that policy does not allow the poor to earn enough to buy food.

Example:

- In Senegal, development aid funds have been used to irrigate the desert in order to grow egg-plants and mangoes for the Europeans.

MYTH No. 6

Food production must be increased, even at the expense of the ecological integrity of our food-producing resources.

This is wrong. There are many efficient alternative solutions to chemical pesticides: crop rotation, hand-weeding, hoeing... In addition, pesticides are very expensive.

Examples:

- China has reduced to the minimum the use of insecticides, thanks, to a preventive information system at the national level;
- Thirty years ago American farmers used 2,265 tons of insecticides and lost 7% of their crop before harvest. Today, farmers use 12 times more insecticides, yet the percentage of the crop lost before harvest has almost doubled.

MYTH No. 7

Each country has to specialise in producing what is easiest for it to produce.

It is dangerous for a country to rely only on one or two types of products for financing its imports. Then, it would be economically and politically dependent on those fixing the prices on the international market. In addition, those who are benefitting from exports are not those who need food. Many countries are using their export earnings to import weapons, luxury goods, etc.

Examples:

- In Niger, export earnings have even been used to import ice-cream directly from a shop on the Champs-Élysées, in Paris.
- President Bongo of Gabon has imported by plane, marble for the construction of a sumptuous palace.

MYTH No. 8

Hunger is a contest between the Rich World and the Poor World.

The "rich world" versus "poor world" scenario makes the hungry appear as a threat to the well-being of the majority in the industrially-developed countries. However, the interests of the majority in the industrialised countries are linked with those of the hungry majority in the under-developed countries through a common threat: the tightening of control over food—both within countries and on a global scale.

ECOFORUM (Kenya) December 1982

LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT BY THE DEPARTED WHO ONCE LIVED BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

I was hungry — but the new rich you created by your economic policies fed their cats, dogs, and pets with my food. You even imported food for cats and dogs while I starved.

I was hungry — and you encouraged multinationals to plant winged beans and waste money for five years to produce yard long Dambala, instead of using that money on research to produce more and cheaper subsidiary food crops and cowpea for my family.

I was hungry — and because the billionaires you produced within a short space of time, did not give up their T-bone steak in the big hotels, you subsidised them heavily

I was hungry — but you allowed multinationals to cultivate sugar cane at Moneragala in order to sell their sugar at higher prices, while I was deprived of the land that grew my daily meal, I was reduced to an agricultural labourer.

I was hungry — And you made cricket the country's first priority spending money and time to giddy limits that eroded the productivity of people in all walks of life, and made cricket the opium of the people!

I was hungry — while you allowed waste and corruption to increase despite the pleas of your own Minister of Finance and the resultant price increases reduced my family's food basket.

I was hungry — And money that could have been used to produce food on available irrigable lands was used for constructing Dams that made your 1977 promises a set of damn lies.

I was hungry — but you removed the food subsidies only to waste the money saved on unproductive projects and opening ceremonies that have now become carnivals at all odd times of the day.

I was hungry — but you watched unconcerned local and foreign cartels control food production and imports, and allowed my Lakspray which was Rs. 6.50 per lb. to be raised to Rs. 29.50 per pound.

I was hungry — but you never cared to learn that all the food the world produces in one year, if distributed according to need, will ensure that every single person on earth gets a ton of food that contains more than adequate protein and energy.

I was hungry — but you allowed millions to be spent on seminars and training of the trained, and re-training, and training trainers ad nauseam.

I was hungry — but you did not ask yourself the priority question why people in Sri Lanka go hungry, outline the main food issues and demand solutions to those problems. Instead you surrounded yourself with expatriate Sri Lankans who are nothing but conduits for business interests in their land of adoption, and may soon entice you to start a Star Wars Program!

I was hungry — but you never took action on the reports of increasing malnutrition, although those we have left behind, the surviving victims, will be physically less developed, mentally less alert and more susceptible to disease.

I was hungry — but you remained unaware of the facts that stale bread, spoilt vegetables and fruits in the dust bins of rich homes and the big hotels you put up could have fed me and thousands of others who had to shorten their sojourn on Earth.

I was hungry — but you never ask your friends who got you into the debt trap the morality of wasting food deliberately by dumping food into the sea in order to keep the prices of food high.

Real human development and social justice are closely related to peace. Many of the causes of conflict in Sri Lanka relate to the sharp polarisation of wealth and poverty among all races.

Gandhi said poverty is the worst kind of violence.

Dr. Mervyn de Silva,
Former Advisor, Ministry of
Plan Implementation

The World's Swirlpools of Lethal Garbage

—by Beryl Kendall

Early August 1983, world attention was focussed on one aspect of marine pollution - the dumping of chemicals in the sea. On that occasion, **Greenpeace** staged peaceful demonstrations at sea, winning against German authorities who had allowed an industrial firm to dump 500,000 tons of chemical waste per year. Other German companies had received similar concessions.

This incident illustrates man's attitude that the seas are large enough to absorb dangerous wastes forever.

Dumping has been going on throughout this century. Germany, one of the first countries to start throwing lethal garbage into the sea, is reported to have dumped large quantities of mustard gas after the First World War. By the 1960s, it was dumping 375 gallons of sulphuric acid per day as the Dutch threw in 750,000 tons of sulphur dioxide annually. The process escalated until the 1980s when a US study revealed that the Americans were also polluting the seas with 48 million tons of wastes.

Even as dumping on this scale and the resulting pollution are gradually being brought under control, it still continues to pose a serious threat to marine life.

Land-derived chemicals

A lot of pollution of the oceans occurs from land-derived chemicals, including heavy metals, PCBs and agricultural chemicals like pesticides. DDT, Aldrin, Dieldrin, Lindane and Chlordane are among the deadliest substances known and are not biodegradable, i.e. they are not easily

broken down into harmless chemicals and remain chemically active for years.

In marine systems, toxic chemicals are absorbed very quickly passing through the walls of phytoplankton—the start of all food chains—and are concentrated in the surrounding water. DDT has been shown to enter cells in an algal culture in less than 15 seconds. It is a lipid soluble and therefore passes through the cell walls into cells where it is stored in fatty compounds.

Residues are further concentrated as they are eaten by one organism after another. First consumed by zooplankton and then by other organisms, the residues build up to a very high level in organisms that are at the end of the food chain, such as fish, birds, mammals and man.

The discovery of DDT in the milk of American mothers, for example, shocked the world as it was a higher level than would have been tolerated in formula milk.

Chlorinated hydrocarbons, a group of pesticides, are known to affect the growth and reproduction of marine invertebrates. In low concentration of DDE, for instance, eggs of *Cepeo Calenus* - a small crustacean - will not develop. A whole population can therefore be quickly wiped out. Large crustaceans like crabs also showed a 100% mortality within 20 days of exposure to low concentrations of DDE.

The hazards posed by these concentrations are real. For example fishing for mackerel was stopped in California in the 1960s because the level of toxic residue in these fish rendered them unsafe for human consumption. In another development,

1,000 aborted sea lion pups were washed up on the beaches in 1971. Organochloride residues and PCB's were found to be higher in the tissues of pups that aborted, than in those which were born normally. The sea lion, a predator of fish, is at the end of the food chain, and hence receives massive concentrations of toxic residues.

Apart from the reproductive system of these mammals being affected, they are becoming prone to more diseases than before and show little resistance to parasites. The immune system shows signs of damage.

A survey across the mid-Atlantic showed PCB's in almost every organism tested plankton, invertebrates, fish and mammals, even those found far from the shore.

Populations of sea birds are falling worldwide as residues accumulate in their fatty tissue and produce nervous disorders. Sex hormones are affected and this leads to infertility. Residues upset enzyme processes and serve to weaken egg shells. This weak-shell syndrome is presently threatening the survival of Bermuda petrel, the brown pelican, the osprey, and the peregrine falcon.

DDE residues of between 4 and 5 ppm can result in a 15-per cent thinning of the pelican's egg shell as was the case in a recent study of the birds in Florida, California and South Carolina. A DDE level of 71 ppm was associated with a 35-per cent decrease in shell thickness. One source of DDT was a Los Angeles factory which discharged between 200 and 500 kilogrammes into the city's sewage system.

Heavy metals and mercury compounds

Heavy metals are dumped at sea or pass into the oceans as industrial effluent. Cadmium, for example, builds up in marine organisms, and accumulates in the liver and kidney of people who eat contaminated marine food. It is also concentrated in bone tissue where it replaces

calcium, leading to brittle bones. It contributes to high blood pressure in rats and may be linked to cardiovascular diseases in man. In Japan, 500 people died of a disease called 'Itai-Itai' as a result of cadmium poisoning.

Between 400 and 500 tons of mercury, another heavy metal, probably enter the oceans each year as a result of human activities. Organic mercury compounds have been used as fungicides (for seed dressing) pesticides and catalysts. In water, the mercury compound is changed into a very toxic methyl compound. Mercury in marine organisms can accumulate to several thousand times the concentration in sea water. **Methyl mercury is now found at dangerous levels in tuna fish in some parts of the world and in 1970 all cans of this product in the US were withdrawn from the shops. In Minamata Bay, Japan, methyl mercury poisoning killed 43 people between 1953 and 1956 and caused permanent damage to the nervous systems to 70 others.** The source of this disaster was the nearby Chisso Company which was discharging mercury-laden effluent directly into the sea.

In 1971, the average Swede consumed 56 grams of fish per day. Fish from Sweden at that time contained 0.5ppm of mercury and therefore 10% of the Swedish population may have carried the maximum tolerable level of mercury in their body, i.e. just less than the amount which could produce symptoms of the dreaded Minamata Disease.

Sweden's problems began with the use of methyl mercury as a seed dressing in the 1940s which produced a high level of mercury in both terrestrial and aquatic food chains. In 1966 these mercury-containing compounds were banned and mercury levels in the environment dropped.

Mercury levels still remain high in the marine environment because of the discharge of mercury-laden effluent and run-off from some pesticides. The Swedish Government has blacklisted fish from certain areas at certain times as being unfit for human consumption.

Sweden and the US have adopted a 0.5 ppm limit as the acceptable level of mercury in fish. In 1976, mercury became one of the substances blacklisted at an ocean dumping convention.

The average content of lead, another heavy metal in the surface and the Gulf of Mexico receive the waters of the huge Mississippi River which, having drained 41% of the United States, deposits its load of agricultural chemicals into this semi-enclosed sea. Industries along the Gulf Coast, the site of some major fishing grounds, produce sulphur and related products and synthetic rubber. Oil refineries, as well, contribute to the pollution. Agricultural chemicals and industrial effluents are thus combining with oil production to put pressure on the area.

The present situation poses a considerable challenge to both national and international institutions and a solution depends on effective collaboration between governmental and international activities such as UNEP's Regional Sea Programmes. **A failure to contain marine pollution will have serious implications for life-systems not merely in water, but on land and in the air.**

—Courtesy: Ecoforum (Kenya)

No. 1 1984.

Landslides...

(Continued from page 13)

(3) We have been asked to inform you that before April, later this very month, Prof Witharana and a team will be visiting Padiyapellella to begin doing what he can to help you discover for yourselves the answers to some of the questions you yourselves have raised.

(4) We are glad we came, and that you allowed us to be with you as you discussed this pressing problem. Until proper and thorough investigations are done, no one can give answers and solutions. You have raised several questions by which we understand that several factors are involved. No single discipline of study can give you all the answers. Some matters are even beyond our spheres of study and research. But we would like to do all that we can in terms of our knowledge and research. I, for one, am an agricultural chemist, and can help you with matters relating to the fertility of the soil and increasing production by proper application of fertilisers.

The meeting ended with the election of an action committee from among the villagers.

It remains to be said that CWF is maintaining close contact with all the parties involved, including those conducting research into the important questions raised at the meeting.

R. B.



Landslide damage: hospital (above) and a house (below)

PHILIPPINES

DOWN FALL OF MARCOS

The Filipino masses sick of two decades of corrupt and brutal tyranny poured onto the streets to form a human wall to block the tanks of Marcos—loyal troops and ensured the downfall and removal of a hated dictator. Marcos too knew he was finished when the “people’s inauguration” of Aquino was broadcast over the formerly government T. V. Channel, while his own “official” inauguration was blacked out. Marcos had hoped with the gimmick of a “snap election” and the use of the traditional “three Gs” of Filipino politics—guns, goons and gold—to ensure his continuance in office but his gangland tactics only fueled popular rage. It was out of pent-up hatred for this used-up U.S. strongman that millions of Filipinos refused Marcos’ bribes, dodged his bullets and guarded ballot boxes with their lives to prevent the dictator’s henchmen from stuffing or stealing them. It was a volcanic eruption of popular discontent that Marcos could not repress without massive killing and Washington could not contain without sending Marcos and Imelda the way of “Baby Doc” Duvalier of Haiti.

The constraints

The U. S.’s main concern in the Philippines is still to prevent the growth of “Communism”, particularly given the strategic importance of the Clark Air Force Base and the U. S. Navy base at Subic Bay—the largest American military installations outside the United States and the linchpin to U.S. strategy in Asia. And though the elections brought the Filipino masses onto the streets it was firmly under bourgeois leadership. A more “democratic” capitalist regime however can hardly deal with the bankruptcy of Philippines capita-

lism which has fueled a widespread worker and peasant unrest and a deep-rooted popular insurgency. The inclusion of former Marcos loyalists and new businessmen in the new Cabinet is a pointer to what is possible. Juan Ponce Enrile retains his post at the National Defence Ministry, as does Jose B. Fernandez at the Central Bank. General Ramos, Marcos’ vice-chief of staff has been promoted as Armed Forces chief of staff. Marcos’ former executive Secretary, Ernesto Maceda, is now Minister of Natural Resources and heading the Commission on Government Reorganization is Marcos’ former Trade Minister Luis R. Villafuerte. Among the new faces in government are businessmen Jaime Ongpin, Jose Conception Jr. and Ramon del Rosairo and doctors Alfredo Bengzon and Mitar Pardo de Tavera. And inherited from the dark past is a civilian and military bureaucracy too which Marcos built, moulded and nurtured for 20 years. All of which gives little room for encouragement.

U.S. influence

As they gathered with their supporters in the Defence Ministry on the capital’s outskirts, Ramos and Enrile declared that their act was no coup d’etat but a “people’s revolution,” an example of “people’s power.” The presence of hundreds of thousands of Manila residents surrounding Camp Crame testifies to the popularity of the military revolt. But these “democratic” military men were Marcos henchmen only a few days before. Enrile declared that he personally ordered the falsification of 350,000 votes for the president in the sham election. Ramos, a cousin of Marcos, has since the mid-1970s been

the head of the notoriously brutal Philippine Constabulary, which last September shot up dozens of protesting sugar workers on the island of Negros.

Every major figure in the new regime is intimately connected to the U.S. Ramos graduated from West Point and Enrile is a product of Harvard Law School. Cory Aquino’s slain husband Benigno spent virtually his entire political life in the service of the CIA, first participating in the suppression of the Communist-led Hukbalahap rebellion, then acting as control for a U.S.-sponsored insurgency in outlying Indonesian islands. Corazon Conjuangco Aquino is herself one of the wealthiest landowners in her home province of Tarlac; her cousin Eduardo Cojuangco is a leading Marcos crony and head of the Philippine government’s coconut monopoly. Her Yale-educated running mate (and rival), “Doy” Laurel, is a typical Filipino wheeler-dealer politico who only split from Marcos in the last three years.

The United States intervened in every aspect of the recent elections. Marcos called the election exercise in the first place to satisfy White House pressure for a “credible” mandate, so that the military could get on with counterinsurgency against the Communist Party’s New People’s Army (NPA). To ensure that this vote would go down well in the U.S. Congress, Washington insisted on official status for poll watchers from NAMFREL, an organization funded by the U.S.’ “Endowment for Democracy”. In addition, there were observation teams from the Democrats, the Republicans and the White House. And then, when the balloting was over, everyone looked to Washington for the verdict. When the administration finally issued a statement on February 24 declaring that “attempts to prolong the life of the present regime by violence are futile,” a Filipino opposition politician declared, “That’s it—the election’s over.” Reagan had cast the decisive vote. □

Philippine Mass Upheaval and Role of the Church

February 25, 1986 is a memorable event in Philippine history. It marked the end of twenty years' rule of tyranny. A new dawn heralds the promise of the much longed-for justice, peace, and human dignity for all.

People power, woman power, and church support were combined efforts that galvanised the people into non-violent action. People representing all walks of life courageously took great risks as they formed human blockades between the two opposing forces. The time of crisis spontaneously brought out the best in the Filipino soul.... a peasant embracing a soldier, people praying on the streets, a young girl offering flowers to a soldier, an old woman squatting on the ground to prevent the advance of an armoured tank. Such were demonstrations of courage and reconciliation. For the first time in history, civilians were the ones shielding the military from danger! Indeed the tide has turned.

However, the event was just the beginning of a long and not easy process towards attaining full justice and peace in the nation. Ironically, this four day wonder of a revolution has served to strengthen the hold of the old evils upon Philippine socio-

political life. The entire military establishment....the main instrument which Marcos used to defraud and oppress his people....has swung over to the side of the people and Cory Aquino, and it is now becoming quite clear that this switch over was brought about by Reagan's agents. Too, pressures from vested interests had caused Mrs. Aquino to fill her cabinet whose thinking by reason of background and education are elitist, a perspective that contradicts that of people whose power has brought about the change in government. **The ideology of allowing market forces a free play is now ever more deeply entrenched in Mrs. Aquino's cabinet. One can predict that once these forces are allowed to pursue their own interests they will unleash upon the nation once more the demonic socio-economic process of enslaving the many for the sake of so few.**

The Church must never stand idly by and watch the old evils frustrate the hopes of the people's revolution. During the oppressive Marcos era some perceptive elements of the Church boldly exposed its evils, and risked life and limb to take up the cause of people. Such pro-

phetic role must continue and courageously speak on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalised. The Church must continue to listen to people's struggles in the pursuit of justice. She must constantly interrogate the moves of government and other centres of power in society from the perspective of the poor and the feelings of the masses to percolate immediately to the corridors of economic and political power, and if need be, serve as powerful political pressure points upon the government.

A culturally pluralistic society, the Filipino people cannot afford to be divided. Here the Church can exercise with sensitivity the role of mediator and reconciler to bring the various segments of society together to dialogue on their differences and work towards mutual understanding and respect. The irruption of people power in the four days of February 22-25 revealed that the Filipino is genuinely sensitive to the moving mystery that makes people human. The Filipino soul has demonstrated that it can muster the resolution, the courage, and the power to conquer the forces of hate and evil through non-violent action. This is perhaps the new "shalom" that has broken into Philippine history. It is the mission of the Church to keep it burning in Philippine society in the days to come.

March 1986. **Priscilla Padolina**

PAKISTAN

Civil Martial Regime

THE MOST CRITICAL PERIOD for an authoritarian regime is often when it begins to reform. This paraphrase of de Tocqueville is an apt description of the situation in which Pakistan's military ruler, General Zia ul Huq, has found himself. The general has discovered that having launched a process of limited democratization, it is not easy to control it. While promising to gradually restore civilian rule, General Zia's objective in holding strictly-controlled, non-party elections in February 1985 was to create national and provincial assemblies, subordinate and acceptable to the generals, yet credible enough to

placate the growing demands for democracy. Central to his strategy was to keep the reins of power firmly in his own hands.

The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), an alliance of eleven opposition parties covering almost the entire political spectrum, boycotted the February polls, describing them as a sham. But what the MRD dubbed as an assembly of 'lackeys and loyalists' has been demonstrating that it is not prepared to be simply a rubber stamp, doing the generals' bidding.

In September, a group of vocal independents first forced the suspension of debate over a controversial indemnity bill, compelling its withdrawal, and then stormed out of the assembly, accusing the government of trying to bulldoze a revised bill.

After more changes, the new bill was eventually adopted in October. Although a substantial number of MPs stayed away, the fact that no negative vote was cast led critics to claim that the assembly's show of independence was shortlived and ineffective. Nonetheless it did illustrate that Zia's own creation could pose problems.

The start of the fourth session of the national assembly, originally earmarked to consider the legislation allowing for the revival of political parties, banned since 1979, saw instead the introduction of a government

sponsored indemnity bill known as the Eighth Constitutional Amendment. Portrayed by the law minister as a necessary prelude to the promised lifting of martial law, the bill encountered stiff opposition in the assembly and produced a public outcry.

The bill sought a blanket indemnity for all the actions taken by the military regime in the past and those it may take in the future—in fact, making all martial law edicts and decrees a part of the constitution. It sought validation of last December's referendum on Islamization policies which Zia took as an endorsement to continue as president for five more years, despite the abysmally low voter turnout, which signified his rejection by the people. The bill also sought to cement the sweeping amendments unilaterally made by Zia in March to the revered 1973 Constitution, passed by the last civilian government. This gave him virtually unlimited powers as president, circumscribed the powers of parliament, and provided for the creation of a Turkish-style military-dominated National Security Council (NSC), which could overrule the measures of a future civilian government.

Bill condemned

Not surprisingly, the bill was widely condemned as an attempt to constitutionalize military fiat and make the lifting of martial law a meaningless technicality. The independent group of MPs made it clear that they were not prepared to write martial law into the Constitution, and that its acceptance would be tantamount to signing their own death warrant. As one MP, Haji Saifullah, put it: 'the nation has neither empowered parliament to support the continuation of martial law nor to declare it valid.' Describing the amendment as an effort to usher in 'a civil martial law', some thirty independents in the 237-member assembly demanded a host of changes to the bill. 'We are prepared to indemnify military measures for a specified period', said MP Dr Shafiq 'but they should not be incorporated in the Constitution, and should be subject to parliamentary amendment by a simple majority.' In return, he said, 'we want the restoration of the 1973 Constitution and the supremacy of parliament'.

But it was dissent among the government's own supporters, the Official Parliamentary Group (OPG),

that came as a surprise. OPG members also demanded 'major surgery', their objections focusing on the all-embracing powers of the president and the NSC. Consequently, the debate on the bill was postponed three times. On the third occasion the session turned into a shouting match which ended only with the imposition of a guillotine. Hectic government efforts got under way to hammer out a consensus outside the assembly. This proved evasive, despite the formation of a series of committees, marathon meetings, and much cajoling and coaxing. Zia was said to have been so furious that he asked OPG members, in a meeting on 16 September, whether they wanted to reduce him to a Zail Singh (the Indian president, who has only nominal powers).

Finally withdrawn

Eventually the bill was withdrawn. At a press conference on 29 September Prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junejo announced, in Zia's presence, that the NSC proposal was being dropped and that a fresh bill incorporating other changes would be presented. Significantly, Zia gave a public assurance that the armed forces supported the process of democratization. 'There is no crisis in the armed forces', he said. This was aimed at dispelling rumours of restiveness in the military, especially the speculation that some generals did not want an early end to martial law.

On the face of it, the regime's concessions appeared substantial. Scrapping the NSC was certainly a major climbdown, and was an acknowledgement of the wide public rejection of according the military a permanent, institutional role in the country's political system. Other concessions included some minor scaling down of the president's discretionary powers to dismiss the assembly and the prime minister, as well as the provision that only such new executive edicts would be issued as facilitated the removal of martial law. This display of relative flexibility was explicable in terms of Zia's concern to prevent the floundering of a process that he himself had initiated. A university lecturer from Islamabad explained: 'having staked so much on this, if Zia allows it to collapse, he risks discrediting himself—his own future has become linked to the assembly's survival.'

Essentials unchanged

However, in its essentials, the revised bill was much the same as the original one. According to one opposition leader, 'first it was the wolf, now it is the wolf in sheep's clothing.' MRD leaders called the concessions 'an eyewash'. Independent MPs declared that the bill was unacceptable, as it concentrated all powers in a single individual, failed to ensure parliament's sovereignty and changed the parliamentary nature of the 1973 Constitution to a presidential one. Moreover, they argued that the centralization of authority was a dangerous portent for the future in a country already racked by provincial tensions.

When the fresh bill was moved on 30 September, 34 independents walked out of the assembly, accusing the government of steamroller tactics. Both General Zia and Prime Minister Junejo called off their foreign trips to work out a compromise with assembly members. Eventually the bill was approved on 16 October, after the government had announced more concessions that had eroded the presidential powers. No one voted against the bill, but 66 MPs absented themselves. The fact that the retrospective indemnity clause, validating virtually all military actions including the referendum, remained intact in the bill, led critics to argue that the assembly had finally capitulated to official pressure. This is likely to renew doubts about the assembly's effectiveness. However, *The Muslim*, a leading English daily, argued that the assembly's performance had to be viewed within the context of 'objective realities where an entrenched military regime is being forced to concede in certain areas and give a firm commitment for the lifting of martial law'.

Benazir Bhutto's return

The parliamentary drama over the bill served to deflect public attention away from the earlier embarrassing episode of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's arrest. The daughter and political heir of the former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, executed in 1979, was placed under house arrest on 29 August, soon after her return from self-exile in Europe to bury her younger brother, Shahnawaz Bhutto, who died in mysterious circumstances in France. The recently installed civilian officials, including Prime

Minister Junejo, had assured Benazir that she was free to return. She herself had struck a conciliatory tone when she announced in Karachi that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), headed by her, would desist from political agitation against the regime to give Junejo a chance of fulfilling his pledge to lift martial law by January 1986.

Against this background, her arrest under martial law suggested that the regime was unnerved by the tumultuous reception she received and by the numbers that attended her brother's funeral. By arresting her the regime acknowledged the wide public perception of her as one of the most potent symbols of resistance to military rule and underlined its fear of the impact she could have in galvanizing opposition if permitted to be free. Above all, the episode demonstrated how easily civilian assurances were overridden by military orders, thereby badly denting the credibility of Zia's soldierly democracy.

But her detention also highlighted the organizational ineffectiveness of her party—unable to do anything to press for her release other than carp at the regime's highhandedness. The emotional resonance of the Bhutto name was confirmed by the episode but so was the PPP's organizational weakness.

Indeed the dilemma of the PPP, still regarded as the largest party in the country lies in its repeated inability to translate the continuing popularity of the Bhutto name and its public support into any kind of sustained campaign of popular protest and demonstrations to dislodge Zia's regime. This is largely a reflection of its organizational inability and the weakness of its second line leadership. The PPP has also borne the main brunt of repression, with the constant jailing of much of its activist cadre.

Most observers agree that, in a free election, the PPP would win a majority. A senior founder member of the party succinctly summed up the problem: 'the PPP has become an essentially ballot box party, able to demonstrate its support electorally, but lacking the capacity to compel the military to hold fresh elections.' Until it can do this, the military with all the resources at its command, can probably continue, as in the past, to contrive ways of keeping it out?

Uncoordinated opposition

This also applies to the other parties in the MRD. These have constantly been out-manoeuvred by the military regime through a mixture of coercion and manipulation of the differences within the alliance, which run deep, despite the outside veneer of unity. Moreover, as one MRD leader, Aitzaz Ahsan acknowledged after the February elections and the creation of assemblies, 'the opposition needs to go back to the drawing board to formulate a new strategy, in order to pose an effective challenge to the authorities.' He also conceded that 'barring 1983'—a reference to the opposition campaign of civil disobedience that took off only in Sind province—'the MRD has been fractured and generally inactive. The MRD—including the PPP—has been unable to channel disaffection or to coordinate protests that have erupted sporadically during Zia's rule on a number of fronts—students, teachers, industrial labour, lawyers, women, minorities, and others. A new problem, as Ahsan sees it, is that while the MRD was still regarded as the only political alternative before the assemblies were formed 'now, if political attention continues to focus on the assembly—as it did during the indemnity bill controversy—the MRD's weaknesses will be further highlighted.'

Consolidation of power

The opposition's problems and weaknesses do not detract from the brittle nature of the Zia regime and the fact that it remains narrowly based. Zia's efforts to extend his constituency beyond the military, bureaucracy and big business have not met with success, as the referendum vividly illustrated. Zia's eight years in power are largely attributable to his firm grip over the armed forces. He has shown himself to be an adroit manipulator, edging out virtually all the members of the original coup team and using patronage to keep senior generals happy. According to Mushahid Hussain, editor of a leading English daily, 'there have been no cracks within the "club"—the armed forces have been, by and large, free of serious dissensions in their highest echelons.'

Zia has also been helped by a relatively buoyant economy, propped up by remittances from Pakistani workers in the Middle East and a

succession of bumper harvests. However, in the last two years, benefits accruing from both these factors have been sliding, producing a sharp deterioration in the country's current balance of payments position, and some critics of the regime are pinning their hopes on a worsening economy.

But of all the factors that the opposition believes have helped sustain Zia, most important are the external ones. US backing for the regime, ever since the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan transformed Zia's Pakistan in American eyes into a 'front line state' against communism, has led the opposition to argue that the US is the mainstay of the military dictatorship. Talks are already under way for the continuance of US military and defence-related economic aid to Pakistan after the current \$3.2 billion, five-year package ends in 1987. Islamabad has asked for this to be doubled to \$6.5 billion.

Notwithstanding General Zia's promise to transfer power to civilian hands, few people in Pakistan believe that the military will relinquish power except under compulsion. At best, Zia's step-by-step revival of the political process is seen as leading to a system of power sharing between the army and acceptable civilians. But the extra-parliamentary opposition is convinced that Zia's only purpose is to create a civilian facade behind which military rule will continue. There are as yet no indications that military officers inducted into the bureaucracy, police, state corporations, and foreign service over the last eight years are being, or will be, sent back to the barracks. Nor are they likely to be enthusiastic about losing their power, patronage, and other privileges of office.

Nonetheless, the effects of opening up the political system are hard to predict, and may be even more difficult to control. Democratization, however controlled and limited, often generates its own compulsion. The elections, and General Zia's democratic promises, have unleashed expectations among the people. Disappointment can breed anger which in turn could fuel protest.

Maleeha Lodhi is a journalist on a *Third World* magazine.

Courtesy: **Inside Asia** (UK)

Nov-Dec. 1985

SOUTH AFRICA

Bishop Tutu's call for economic sanctions

The Press reported on April 3rd that **Bishop Desmond Tutu**, Nobel Prize Laureate and Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg called for economic sanctions by other countries against South Africa. **"Our land is burning and bleeding and so I call on the international community to apply punitive sanctions.... to help us"** he told a news conference at his church. At this news conference Tutu attacked as hypocrites those (mainly whites) who opposed economic sanctions on

the grounds that they would hurt black people, nearly 1400 of whom have died in 25 months of protest violence. "In South Africa, the most vehement in their concern for blacks have been the whites. Very few blacks have repudiated me for my stance. They are not stupid" he said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Bernard Kaib told reporters that the U. S. did not believe punitive sanctions would help promote change in Africa. "In the U.S. view, punitive sanctions would hurt South Africa's economy..." he said. While white business associations in S. Africa have criticized Tutu's

call for economic sanctions, several major black political organizations have supported Tutu's call. Among those backing Tutu's move are the giant black **Congress of South African Trade Unions** (COSATU) of some 50,000 members and the **United Democratic Front** (UDF) the country's largest legal anti-apartheid grouping.

With Tutu's threat in the more recent past to issue a call for economic sanctions against S. Africa **there has also been renewal of interest in many parts of the world for dis-investment from S. Africa** along with a policy of economic boycott of that country.

EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF APARTHEID

It is all too simplistic to place the problem of apartheid within the hearts and minds of the white Afrikaaner population, for the Afrikaaners themselves are but a part of an evil structure, built up over long period of time. It is only through a radical change of structure therefore that a political solution could be found.

We reproduce below excerpts from a paper presented at the most recent Conference of the South African Council of Churches held in Johannesburg that seeks to explore the real roots of racism and apartheid.

Capitalism and Apartheid

The birth of apartheid as an explicit ideology and political structure is generally regarded as taking place in 1948, when the Nationalist government first came to power in South Africa. However, it is also clear that the roots of the system can be traced back through measures.

The pass laws, for example, have become a notorious symbol of the oppression of apartheid. Yet these laws were already in existence in the late 19th century. The diamond

mining companies found that their operations were hampered by widespread desertion by African workers, and so they looked to the government to provide a more efficient administration of these laws in order to overcome the problem.

Later, when the mines needed the supply of labour to be more tightly controlled, so that the urban areas were not flooded with work-seekers, the State provided the legislation to meet this need by way of the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937. Thus the whole system of influx control was already in operation before apartheid as such had been instituted: as a result of the needs of the mining companies.

In a similar way, the greatest need of the mining industry during its early years was to have a large supply of cheap labour. The African population was seen as the obvious source of this labour, but the vast majority of Africans were happy to remain in rural communities. This meant that means had to be found to 'encourage' people off the land and into the mines.

When other measures failed, the Native Lands Act of 1913 was passed. This was the first Act to allocate different pockets of land to different race groups. Africans were restricted to only 8.8 percent of the land. Further steps were taken under the Native Land and Trust Act of 1936, which again restricted African ownership of land. This legislation became the basis upon which the apartheid regime created the 'homelands', which are now being presented as the means through which blacks can participate in political structures in South Africa, but which are regarded internationally as instruments of further repression in South Africa.

In reality, these 'homelands' continue the policy of the Native Lands Act: to create pools of cheap labour in South Africa. The intention has never changed. Africans have been pushed onto small areas of land, so that an agricultural economy could no longer support their needs, making labour in the mines and urban areas a necessity.

We can see, therefore, that even before apartheid came into being as government ideology and policy, structures of racial oppression had already been created in South Africa in order to meet

the needs of capital investment, principally in the diamond and gold mining industries.

Recent history in South Africa presents the opposite side of the same coin. When industry found that there was a shortage of skilled labour, and that not enough whites could be found to meet its needs, pressure was applied, with a good deal of success, to the government with regard to the system of job reservation, which had previously operated to prevent blacks from occupying many skilled jobs.

And in the past year, industry has called upon the government to abolish the whole system of influx control. For the first time the government is beginning to talk about citizenship and political rights for urban blacks. This will lead to an African urban elite (the skilled workers required by industry) with an increasing number of unneeded unskilled workers being pushed into the homeland areas where they can be conveniently ignored by both government and industry.

It would be simplistic to suggest that the whole problem of apartheid and racial oppression in South Africa has been created by industry and the profit motive over the past century. Undoubtedly there has been racial prejudice for centuries, which has developed quite apart, from any financial motives. And many of the measures introduced by the apartheid regime were introduced purely for ideological reasons.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the interests of capital have played a very significant role in South Africa's history exploiting racial prejudices in accordance with its needs. Maximum exploitation of labour has been justified on the grounds that those exploited most frequently were of another, 'lesser' race group.

Condemnation of apartheid not enough

In recent years it has become customary for governments and peo-

ples worldwide to condemn apartheid in South Africa. But the above analysis of the role of the use of capital in South Africa has interesting implications in this field.

It is possible to condemn the South African system in very strong terms. The Church has been correct in pointing out that the attempts to justify apartheid in theological terms is nothing less than a heresy. But such condemnation can lead to a misplaced self-righteousness, which keeps the problem at arm's length. The temptation is to think, 'It is those whites in South Africa who are doing such awful things, and they must stop it right now'.

If, however, South Africa can only be assessed adequately in the context of the international use of capital, this approach cannot be justified, for at least three reasons:

1. Firstly, the West (and also the East) continues to make huge profits out of investment in South Africa. This is, of course the major reason why investors are reluctant to consider disinvestment. Capital invested in South Africa at present is likely to provide better returns than investment elsewhere in the West, where labour legislation and unionisation makes exploitation of labour more difficult.

In this sense, the problem is not 'out there', but right on the doorstep of investors. Criticism of others' white South Africans in particular, is not enough. Those who have invested in South Africa must recognise their own role in making the nation what it is today, and those who continue to invest need to see their own involvement in the oppression under which the majority of blacks suffer.

This realisation should lead to an effort to disengage oneself from such injustice, either by removing one's capital from these structures, or by finding ways in which one's capital can be used to create a more just system for all of South Africa's people.

2. If it is true that fundamental economic change is required in South

Africa, as well as the dismantling of apartheid in political terms, then an attack on the political structures will prove to be inadequate. Recent events have shown that it is possible to consider political changes, without there being any basic changes in the system. The offer of more rights for urban blacks is an example of this. It could be seen as a major political shift in South Africa, removing racial factors from the social framework.

Yet for the vast majority of Africans there will be no change. They will continue to suffer in the 'homeland' and rural areas, industry will get its supply of skilled labour so that it can run more 'efficiently' and profitably, and investors overseas will continue to reap very high rates of return. In this light, condemnation of apartheid simply as a political system is both naive and cynical. Investors must recognise that fundamental change will not take place without investment returns being affected.

3. It has become clear that the measures adopted in South Africa are closely linked with the pursuance of capitalist policies in general, and monopoly capitalist policies in particular, to their logical conclusions. If this is correct, then the same kind of phenomena will begin to occur increasingly in the international community as a whole.

As new technology is introduced more and more in industry, there will be a need for fewer and fewer workers, particularly in the unskilled sector. If the profit motive is the major criterion for the structure of industry, and society in general, then it will become attractive to discard such people, and those whom they support.

The disinvestment debate, therefore, may not only put pressure on the South African government and business community to bring about genuine change. It may also bring South Africa out of its international isolation, and help to bring about fundamental changes in worldwide economic thinking as a whole.

NICARAGUA

THE POPE AND NICARAGUA

We reproduce below two letters appearing in the January 4th issue of the prestigious Roman Catholic journal **The Tablet** in England including one from the English novelist **Graham Greene**, himself a prominent Roman Catholic.

Sir: The Pope when he speaks of religious persecution in Nicaragua seems to be lamentably ill-informed. I have just returned from that country, and I can only speak of what I saw — big placards displayed on the roads marked "Revolution Yes, But Christian", the open churches and the traditional celebrations on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception held in the cities and villages. I walked between six and eight in the evening along the streets of Leon in the **barrios** of the poor. Every little house stood open to the crowds and displayed altars decked with flowers and the image of the Virgin. The crowd would shout "Who has brought us happiness?" and the answering cry was "Mary the Immaculate" while the host of each house distributed sweets, if he could afford or find them, or cheap jewellery or in one case small home-made brooms. This may be described as Mariolatry but hardly religious persecu-

tion, nor were these celebrations a protest against the government. My companion that night in the streets of Leon was my friend **Tomes Borge**, the minister of the Interior, whom no security guard could possibly have protected in those crowds.

Graham Greene
Antibes

Sir: Your Church in the World section (14 December) quotes from the letter sent by the Pope to the Nicaraguan bishops, in which he sympathises with them in the "painful situation in which for so long you have had to live day by day, suffering privation, grief and uncertainty" and refers to the obstacles placed in the way of the Church in that country. But:

(1) On 7 October, 1980, less than a year after the revolution, the Sandinista National Directorate published a statement on religion which was a historic document. For the first time a modern revolutionary movement already in power broke with the rigid view of religion as an opiate of the people and a brake upon history, and acknowledged the contribution of Christians to the liberation struggle and the positive role of religion in the nation's life.

(2) The revolutionary government has from the first counted priests among its ministers. This is true of no other left-wing regime. And **Fr Miguel d'Escoto**, minister of foreign affairs, recently entered upon the time-honoured Christian practice of fasting for peace.

(3) The treatment meted out to church people actively against the government, while regrettable, must be seen in the context of the war imposed on the country by the **contras** the counter-revolutionaries directed and funded by the United States. Furthermore, this treatment cannot be compared with what right-wing regimes in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have been doing to Christians for years. Archbishop **Oscar Romero** of San Salvador, murdered by right-wing death squads in 1980, and the four American church-women raped and murdered by Salvadoran military in the same year, are only the best known of countless Christian men and women who have been tortured, "disappeared" and murdered for no other reason than that they were working on the side of the poor for a just social system and freedom to live in peace with human dignity.

Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua. In which of these are Christian values being given a chance? There is only one possible answer.

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BISHOPS NICARAGUAN EXPERIENCE

The following interview with Bishop **Pedro Casaldaliga** of **Sao Felix do Araguaia, Mato Grosso, Brazil** took place in a restaurant near **Panama City** on Sept. 23, 1985. The Bishop was returning from a six-week stay in Nicaragua where he offered the Brazilian church's support for **Father Miguel D'Escoto**, who had begun a fast for peace on July 7. It was the first time in 17 years that the Spanish-born **Claretian** had left his "self-imposed exile" in Brazil.

What prompted you to finally leave your diocese in the Amazon and come to Central America?

Casaldaliga: To offer my solidarity and that of 23 other bishops and the people of our dioceses as well as that of countless indigenous peoples, workers and peasants to the Nicaraguan people. Specifically, our hope for peace and self-determination for that people. To unite our prayers and fasting to those of **Father Miguel D'Escoto** in favour of peace and against aggression.



Central America, and Nicaragua in particular, has become a crucial axis for Latin America. What is happening here is challenging the church to acquire a new way of being, to take on a new historical vision, to develop the capacity for sensitivity toward the suffering and hopes of each one of these small, believing and oppressed peoples that seek to realize their own potential, free of imperialism or outside intervention.

We are speaking here of acquiring a "revolutionary will" (if that phrase

is not too startling) and of doing away with the arrogance of the large landowners, of assuring that all men and women learn how to read and write. Of halting the oppression of a privileged oligarchy at the service of one empire after another.

The church as an ecclesiastical structure (bishops and priests) has been remiss, timid. We have accommodated ourselves to the status quo. We have frequently been afraid of history, and even of justice. But if there ever was a revolutionary document, it is the Gospel of Christ. Its revolutionary spirit is in individuals, in families, in society. To deny the people's struggle is the worst thing the church, which should be the leaven in this process, could do.

You have written poems and articles on Nicaragua without ever having been there. After finally visiting the country, do you find that your writings match what you have now seen?

I leave convinced that the truth is in Nicaragua. I grieve over the

blood that has been shed, but I think the only way out was the Sandinista revolution. I believe that victory will come to the Nicaraguan people despite the constant aggression of the Reagan administration. I left the country deeply concerned over the attitude of the Nicaraguan hierarchy. I beg God that we bishops do not let the church down in this dramatic and prophetic hour.

What would you recommend to bishops, priests and local Christian communities throughout Latin America at this time?

That they look at Central America and feel a sense of our common destiny, of our historical fraternity - and also see the challenge to us all. To come to understand with freedom of spirit what is really happening in this region, especially what is being done by the empire that is

brutally subjecting it. I would ask them to make gestures of solidarity. I would ask a day of fasting, reflection and prayer for Central America, concentrating especially on Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala - without forgetting the Honduran people, who fear they could suffer massacres in the near future; and the people of Costa Rica, who are being manipulated and misinformed.

— Raul Leis

Latinamerica Press 17 October 1985

Nicaraguan Confession of Faith

The Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua—which is still fighting for its life against U.S. backed counter-revolutionary groups—is unique among recent liberation struggles in that it has been essentially a Christian revolution from the beginning. Its understanding of itself is proudly and overtly Christian and many of its leaders are practising Christians who see their faith as integral to their support for the revolution.

Four of these leaders, Miguel d'Escoto, Ernesto Cardenal, Edgar Parrales and Fernando Cardenal, are Catholic priests, although three of those have been forbidden by the pope to practise their priestly functions as long as they hold political office in Nicaragua. (The fourth, Miguel d'Escoto, is a priest in the Maryknoll order, and therefore not answerable to the pope. He has the support of his superior). The following confession of faith was issued by these four in response to opposition by the Nicaragua Bishops' Conference to their participation in the revolution.

(From Ministers of God, Ministers of the People, by Teofilo Cabestrero. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1982.)

We believe in God the Father, Creator of the world and human beings.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Brother and our Saviour.

We believe in the church, the visible Body of Christ, to which we belong.

We believe in justice, the basis of human community and communion.

We believe in love, the first and principal commandment of Jesus.

We believe in our priesthood, which is our vocation to serve our brothers and sisters.

We believe in our country, that great family to which we belong and to which we owe our being.

We believe in the Nicaraguan people's revolution, fashioned by the people in order to overthrow tyranny and sow justice and love.

We believe in the poor, who will be the ones to build a more just homeland, and who will help us to be saved ourselves.

This is our faith and our hope—and in accordance with these beliefs of ours, we have sought to serve our compatriots in the offices in which we have been placed by them. And we shall continue to do so in whatsoever place our presence and service may be necessary.

For our offices and tasks have given us:
the power to serve, not the power to dominate,
the power to divest ourselves of our comforts, not
the power to enrich ourselves,
the power to be like Christ in the service of our brothers and sisters,
the power to exercise our priesthood, not to
separate ourselves from our vocation, and
the power to be available and open to hear and
obey the voice of God.

In order to remain steadfast in our faith, hope, and love,
as well as in our firm resolve to serve,
we stand in need of the good will,
the understanding,
the counsel,
and the prayers of our brothers, the bishops,
our brother priests,
and our brothers and sisters, the laity.

Finally, we affirm our unshakable commitment to the

Sandinista Popular Revolution,
in loyalty to our people—which is to say in
fidelity to the will of God.

(Reproduced from Present at the New Birth 1985, Anglican Church of Canada)

Reagan's 'Star Wars' scheme Explodes

Space: The final free-fire zone

Since the day the Russians launched man's first Sputnik, the "space race" has been an integral part of the U. S. imperialists' arms race. Science and engineering were put at the top of the agenda for American schoolchildren. NASA, a civilian space agency created by Eisenhower, churned out propaganda about the pursuit of science in challenging the "space frontier." But veteran space scientist James Van Allen (discoverer of the radiation belt around earth named after him) knew the real truth:

"For those of us who remember the national trauma following the successful launching of the first Soviet satellite in October, 1957, there is little doubt that the military uses of space have provided the most powerful incentives for our subsequent effort. Indeed, President Lyndon Johnson once said that the benefits of the U. S. system of satellites for military reconnaissance had more than paid for the entire national program in space."

—"Space Science, Space Technology and the Space Station." *Scientific American*, January 1986.

The space program has always been propelled fundamentally by imperialist—more specifically, anti-Soviet—military considerations. Any scientific benefits have been secondary by-products, while the expensive manned vehicles helped sell the program to the public.

This is particularly true of the space shuttle, authorized by Nixon in 1972, in the waning days of the Vietnam War when NASA's civilian budget was being squeezed by the military. As the *New York Times* (21 December, 1984) revealed: "By the mid-1970s, with



Apollo winding down, NASA wooed the Air Force into the shuttle project by promising to build a launching vehicle whose design would be dictated by military missions of the future." In 1980 NASA and the Defence Department signed a deal giving the military priority in getting on board the shuttle, and in the Reagan years the Pentagon has virtually taken it over. According to a February 1985 Reagan directive, at least eight shuttle launchings a year are to be devoted to military missions. The Pentagon has built its own shuttle launch facility at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

More than anything else, the manned shuttle is slated to play a key role in Reagan's first-strike "Star Wars" scheme.

"Challenger" disaster: inside story

Ironically, imperialist plans for the shuttle were undermined by the very system of "free enterprise" which it was supposed to promote. The investigations into the Challenger

disaster read like Federal Aviation Agency postmortems of the skyrocketing number of plane crashes since airline deregulation went into effect. Except instead of squeezing in more seats in front of emergency exits in the scramble for profits, NASA was trying to squeeze in larger spy satellite payloads to the detriment of safety considerations. Recently the head of NASA, James Beggs, was forced to step down after being indicted on charges of defrauding the army on a weapons contract years ago. Now it has been revealed that:

- the original shuttle Columbia had ejection seats and many more sensors for detecting troubles, but these were removed on Challenger to save weight for the big payloads;
- the Lockheed company has been speeding up the ground crews to meet the accelerated schedules—up from four missions in 1983 to 15 this year—resulting in many more safety violations and accidents;
- seeing pictures of ice on the launching pad, Rockwell International, the prime shuttle contractor, called up NASA minutes before liftoff to request the launch be aborted because of potential danger to heat-shield tiles from icicles;
- it was known all along that the solid fuel rocket boosters (SRBs) fuel core could crack in cold temperatures below 40 degrees, leading to flames cutting through the 3/8 inch side of the SRB (on the morning of the launch the temperature dipped to 28 degrees);
- the solid fuel rocket boosters now suspected of being the source of the disaster were considered "not susceptible to failure", according to NASA's acting administrator William Graham, and so they had no sensors.

The issue was discussed as early as 1982 and repeatedly from July to December 1985, but nothing was done except to note the problem was a "budget threat" because it would be expensive to correct!

Conquering space was to be America's new Manifest Destiny, with Star Trek fantasies of orbiting space stations with killer lasers replacing the Great White Fleet. But Starship Free Enterprise just blew up in Reagan's face. Those who died were the victims of the U. S. imperialist anti-Soviet war drive, like the 200-plus dead Marines in Beirut or the passengers on the KAL 007 spy plane.

There was a noticeable frenzy in White House spokesman Larry Speakes' denial of any connection between the rush to launch the shuttle in cold weather and the president's State of the Union speech that very day lauding the accomplishments of high technology. The persistent rumor is that "White House chief of staff Donald Regan had called the space agency, allegedly saying, 'Get that thing up,'" (Cable News Network, 26 February). And Democratic Senator Ernest Hollings has

demanding White House "logs of calls between NASA and nine presidential assistants", including chief of staff Regan, *New York Post* 21 March).

Russian advances

Meanwhile, the Soviets successfully launched an elaborate space station a few weeks after the American shuttle exploded. The station, named *Mir*—a Russian word meaning world, peace or commune—has six docking ports for spacecraft. The feat was proof positive that the Soviet Union is light years ahead in space exploration. *Aviation Week & Space Technology* (10 March), unofficial mouthpiece of the U. S. Air Force and the aerospace industry, was dripping with jealousy, quoting analysts who said the Soviets are "poised for a technological quantum jump" in space. In 1985, the magazine noted, the Soviets conducted "98 space mission launches" while the U. S. "launched only 17 missions." The Pentagon brass must be kicking themselves for putting all their eggs in the space shuttle basket as part of Reagan's "Star Wars" fantasies,

To top it off, when Halley's comet made its historic return this year, international scientists did not gather in the U. S. for observations—NASA had dropped its plan for a comet fly-by for budgetary reasons—they gathered instead in Moscow, where Soviet officials opened the doors of their Space Research Institute so the world could witness the pictures from the two Russian spacecraft Vega I & Vega II as they flew by the comet to provide man's first close-up view of that age-old space traveller. U. S. scientists even had an experiment on board the Soviet craft, which they kept very "low profile" for fear the White House would nix it on some bogus charge like providing the Russians with sensitive technology.

And despite the best efforts of the presidential cover-up commission on Challenger, talk of a "Shuttlegate" hasn't been suppressed.

Reagan's antics are not the insanity of a single individual but the desperation of a dying class.

Excerpts from **Workers Vanguard** (U. S. A.)

THREE MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT

Is nuclear war inevitable? Whatever the answer, the indisputable fact remains that Asia, at least part of it, has indeed felt the devastation of nuclear bombs. As a United Nations Disarmament session succinctly put it: "Only Asia carries the scar of previously used nuclear weapons." And 370,000 *hibakusha* or survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are living testimonies to the fact.

The threat of nuclear war is the *New Fact*, states the philosopher Karl Jaspers. The world's nuclear arsenal contains some 50,000 nuclear weapons with the explosive yield

equivalent to 1,200,000 Hiroshima bombs, and nuclear weapons production continues unabated.¹ Some 45 million people worldwide are engaged in military activities, either as military or para-military forces or producing weapons and other military material.² Military expenditures have reached nearly one trillion dollars in 1984, or approximately two million dollars per minute. US President Reagan's pronouncement that increased weapon production is "not to prepare for war but to preserve the peace" is no less reassuring. As the Prussian militarist Count Helmut von Moltke said: "Nobody ever built a cannon to display in a public park."

The *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* doomsday clock, which symbolically measures how close the world is to the nuclear holocaust, now stands at three minutes to midnight. Jonathan Schell imagines a corollary clock which would represent the actual time people would have left to be prepared for the ascertained eventuality of a nuclear holocaust. The hands of Schell's clock stands at a fraction of a second before midnight (or from 11.59.01 to 11.59.99) for as he pointed out, "None of us can be sure that at any second we will not be killed in a nuclear attack."³

In a recent interview with *Time* magazine, former President Richard Nixon disclosed that the United States considered the use of nuclear weapons not once but

at least eight times since 1945. The nuclear option has been considered at every major international military crisis the US and its allies had faced in the last thirty years: Korea, 1950; Suez Canal, 1956; Berlin, 1959; Cuba, 1962; Vietnam 1969; Indo-Pakistan War, 1971; Chinese border conflicts 1970-72; and the Yom Kippur War, 1973.

In the same interview, Nixon lists the most probable circumstances under which nuclear war would occur as (1) an accident (2) proliferation (3) a small war in which US and Soviet interests collide (4) a miscalculation by one superpower of the other's interests (5) a Soviet pre-emptive strike against China.

Accidents involving nuclear weapons, euphemistically called "broken arrows" or "bent spears", occur at the rate of one every 10 weeks.⁴ A 1980 US Congress report said that in one 18-month period 147 false alarms of potential nuclear attack were reported, three of which were later found to have been caused by "atmospheric disruptions", or thunder and lightning.⁵ According to John Cox, *Doverhill: The Story of Nuclear Weapons*, once a bomber loaded with an H-bomb had its electronic key activated by a tune from a Spanish pop station and was set to explode before it was disarmed in time. In 1961 a US early-warning system's erroneous interpretation led to US bombers flying to Russia on a bombing mission. It was two hours before the mistake was rectified.

Among other accidents that teetered the world on the brink of nuclear holocaust:

- March 11, 1958: a B-47 bomber on field manoeuvres accidentally dropped a real live atomic bomb on the little town of Mars Bluff, South Carolina. While the nuclear warhead did not explode-

the chemical detonator did, resulting in a wide ring of plutonium contamination.

- 1965, Haipong, North Vietnam: An F-102 fighter pilot accidentally fired a nuclear missile at North Vietnamese gunboats. The mistake was apparently due to faulty firing mechanism.
- 1966, Palomares, Spain: A B-52 bomber and a KC-135 refueling aircraft collided in mid-air causing the B-52 to crash after dropping four H-bombs. Although none of the bombs exploded, two leaked radioactive material to local villagers.
- 1968, Thule, Greenland: A B-52 bomber crashed with four H-bombs which got lost without a trace.
- 1976, Ionian Sea: A Soviet nuclear powered submarine accidentally rammed the US frigate *Vago*.
- 24 January 1978: The nuclear powered Soviet satellite *Cosmos 954* carrying some 110 pounds of Uranium 235 crashed into the North Canadian Tundra. It could have landed in New York City.

In the final analysis, the relatively brief experience of the nuclear age serves to demonstrate the truism that in the handling of nuclear technology, in general, and nuclear weapons, in particular, the law that governs all is Murphy's Law: anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.

Meanwhile in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, the charred remains of a building that was once the Hiroshima Prefecture Industrial Promotion Hall is carefully preserved, now called Atomic Bomb Dome. At the centre of the Peace Park a stone

monument bears the names of each and every one of the dead victims of the Hiroshima bomb blast. In front of the monument an "eternal flame" burns incessantly, to be extinguished only when real world peace is achieved.

Virgilio S. Labrador

Courtesy: *Balai Asian Journal*
Philippine, No. 13.

Notes:

1. "Who Wants the Bomb", *South*, September 1958.
2. United Nations Disarmament and Development, 1982.
3. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, New York, 1982. pp. 108-9.
4. Frank Barnaby, "Bent Spears and Broken Arrows", *South*, September 1985, p. 19.
5. Inga Thorsson, "The Domsday Clock Closer to Twelve", IFDA Dossier, May-June 1981.
6. Data culled from "Oops! Accidents that Could Lead to Obliteration", *New Internationalist*, March 1981, and Clyde Burleson, *The Day the Bomb Fell on America: True Stories of the Nuclear Age*, New Jersey 1978.



Credit: *Earthscan Bulletin*

Test-tube babies

Newest tool for social control

Although compassion for infertile women is usually touted as the main reason for the rapid global spread of in-vitro fertilization (IVF, the "test-tube baby" technique), the actual motives have **more to do with corporate profits and political control of pro-creation**, according to participants at an international feminist emergency conference on new reproductive technologies.

The conference, which took place in Vallinge, Sweden, in July, was sponsored by FINNRET, the Feminist International Network on the New Reproductive Technologies. More than 70 women from 18 countries attended the emergency meeting; most participants were from northern industrialized nations, with Brazil and Bangladesh the two Third World countries represented.

Among the results of the conference were plans for a 1987 International Tribunal on Medical and Scientific Crimes Against Women, which will expose the emergence of such phenomena as **"the international traffic in women, specially for purposes of reproductive prostitution,"** and **"experimentation and egg snatching under the guise of fertility research in the developing countries"**. Sterilization abuse and other issues will also be discussed.

Infertile women seeking to have children are often manipulated by IVF practitioners, some of whom claim success rates that count every pregnancy as a success, even though IVF pregnancies, frequently miscarry, notes Quaker bioethicist and conference participant Helen Bequaert Holmes.

Broader Application

While IVF was originally introduced for infertile women, proposals for broader applications are already common. Among the suggested candidates are women whose husbands have low sperm counts, women who have had several miscarriages, or women whose eggs may have been damaged by workplace exposure to toxic substances. As one conference statement points out, **"a pattern has emerged in the spread of a new reproductive technology. When it is introduced, it is presented as something for a small proportion of women . . . But physicians quickly expand the indications so that it is used on a large proportion - or even the majority - of women."**

The same pattern, according to the statement, is evident **with electronic foetal monitoring, ultrasound, amniocentesis, cesarean section, and genetic testing and counselling.** A chilling illustration was offered by Brazilian public health physician Ana Regina Gomes dos Reis, who reported that her country may have **the world's highest rate of cesarean births - 40% of births to poor women and 70% of births to upper class women, even though many women's health needs go unmet.**

Genetic screen and genetic manipulation top the list for expanded uses of IVF. **And more than a few doctors are beginning to advocate the extension of IVF until it becomes the "preferred" way to reproduce.** Holmes told NWP, **"Every embryo could then be checked for defects, they say, and only those**

meeting certain criteria (whose?) would be replaced in their mothers' wombs. Already routine genetic screening - of workers in certain industries, of newborns, of members certain ethnic groups - seems to be on the increase.

Eugenics

This resurgence of eugenics as a respectable scientific pursuit was one of the most ominous trends discussed at the conference. **Eugenics, or the production of genetically "improved" human beings,** was broadly espoused by Western scientists and politicians until the 1930s, when it was discredited by its close association with Nazism; soon after emerged the ideology of **"overpopulation"** as a threat to civilization - and a rationale for state control of procreation. Now that coercive population control programs have repeatedly been exposed and sterilization abuse has become an issue for women of many nations, eugenics is making a comeback, this time allied with vastly more sophisticated technologies for reproductive and genetic control.

Disabled people as well as people of colour are the particular targets of such policies. As the conference statement notes, **"the category 'genetic defect' is one capable of infinite expansion.** As early as 1976, a pioneer in the development of the embryo flushing and transfer procedure termed genetic asthma a severe genetic defect." Women at the conference also reported that in Hamburg, West Germany, one geneticist recently ordered 233 sterilizations - mostly of young mentally retarded girls.

A key conference resolution states, **"We resolutely oppose all attempts . . . to bring about a racist and fascist division of women into**

valuable' women in the industrial, world, who should have children, and 'inferior' women in exploited countries, who are forbidden to have children. In our own countries, we oppose differential treatment of poor, disabled, lesbian, Black, and foreign women by patriarchal medicine." Conference participants also voted to change their group's name to FINRRAGE, or the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering.

In South Korea, where 23% of women under 44 have been sterilized, IVF is being advocated as a means for such women to bear children, according to two Japanese participants in the conference. Their report prompted a resolution condemning "institutions that inflict

infertility on women by violence . . . and repeat the damage through violent 'repair' technologies."

IVF visions

If the visions of some IVF advocates come to pass, women would lose virtually all control over procreation. We would instead become, in the words of the conference statement, **the raw materials in a fragmented industrial process - with babies as the commodity produced.** The number of women could be dramatically reduced, the statement warns, as sex predetermination technology "translates sexual prejudice (a 'preference' for male children) into sexist reality."

At first glance such predictions seem the stuff of cheap science

fiction. Yet recently, the statement notes, directors of three U. S. IVF clinics forecast that "in the future test-tube embryos will be screened to eliminate those of a sex their parents do not want or those with birth defects." In so saying they joined a growing chorus of technocrats who are calling for unprecedented corporate control over women's bodies and our capacity for procreation.

We are indebted to Helen Bequaert Holmes, a Quaker feminist biologist and bioethicist who edited "The Custom - Made Child?", for supplying much of the information used in this article.

Courtesy: Listen Real Loud (American Friends Committee, Fall 1985, U. S. A.) ☐

Human Rights

IN A SOUTH AFRICAN PRISON CELL

After the ritual of early rise, breakfast passed through the door bars and eaten together squatted on the floor, we - all 29 of us awaiting-trial prisoners - congregated in our prison cell turned chapel, and celebrated the Holy Communion. We were awakened that Sunday morning in the way that all prisoners are usually awakened at Pollsmoor - too early to collect yourself and the left-overs of your dignity and be somebody in your own right. **The more "political" your "crime" is considered to be by the law makers, the less would you come into consideration for prison privileges.** For us, so-called awaiting-trial prisoners, how quickly we came under the subtle pressure to fit into the prison rhythm, settling down to a life of absolute unfreedom.

We were here only three nights after that fateful march for Mandela, and already it was happening to us. Underneath the laughter, behind the

strong words, deeper than the frustration. In the way we sat pressing against the shiny thick-grey walls, or lay bent on blanket mattresses, or muttered curses over sugarless porridge. The emergent nakedness of this powerlessness which we hid with smiles and words of comfort and exhortation was in direct contrast with the power of this institution - Pollsmoor - and what it has come to symbolize in Apartheid society. This stripping away of our humanity - were we not all mostly clerics, Muslim and Christian, and respected in our communities? - till it hurt and, deep in the night, burst into sobbing, was yet another crash course in the reality of the greater powerlessness under apartheid beyond these walls. We were reminded what we were struggling against.

The little vanity bag, placed over the towel embroidered with colourful flowers and green leaves, was the communion table. In strange

anticipation, someone had kept the apple juice, smuggled through hastily at court on Friday.

Along the square walls we made our circle of unity. Muslim and Christian, in comradely love, we read lessons from the Psalms and the Gospels. One of us preached his most passionate sermon about the righteousness of God, and His Zeal for justice, and the great challenges which His love put before us. We prayed, sobbed, embraced, sang Senzentna (What have we done, Lord, What have we done?), ate and drank together and thanked the Lord Allah for his closeness with us. We closed our worship in the same way we close all our protest meetings - with the singing of iNkosi Sikelela iAfrika - to the anger of the black warden whose white brand of christianity could not stomach this liberation prayer.

(Courtesy: Belydende Kring Bulletin (S. Africa) 15 December, 1985) ☐

Focus on torture in South Africa

Amnesty International's **File on Torture** of March 1986 has focussed attention on the reports of widespread and systematic torture in South Africa.

Torture appears to be used primarily to intimidate detainees to force them to "confess" and to implicate others in political offences. Some detainees have died as a result of torture.

Methods of torture

Detainees are reported to have been hooded, beaten and given electric shocks. Some have been threatened

with execution, with pistols pressed against their temples. Others have been subjected to the "helicopter" torture - the victim is handcuffed by the wrists and ankles, hung upside down on a pole inserted between the knees, spun around and beaten.

Other common methods of torture include partial suffocation, beatings with sticks, whips and other implements, being forced to stand for long periods holding heavy objects above the head, exposure to extreme cold and prolonged sleep deprivation.

In September, 1985, the University of Cape Town published a report on

torture based on interviews with 176 former detainees. Of these **83 per cent reported some form of torture while in custody.**

Seventy-five per cent of those who said they were tortured reported beatings, including punches, kicks and slaps as well as blows from a variety of implements; 50 per cent said they were forced to crouch or stand on their toes for a prolonged period; 25 per cent said they had been subjected to electric shocks and 18 per cent to choking; 14 per cent said their bodies had been suspended in various ways; 15 per cent said they had been chained or manacled for prolonged periods; five per cent said their hair had been pulled; three per cent reported abuses to their genitals.

AI on torture in Sri Lanka

AI has again appealed to Sri Lanka President J. R. Jayewardene to stop torture. Its latest appeal came after the Government of Sri Lanka had dismissed reports of torture published by AI as "unfair, biased and untrue".

The statements were made at a press conference on 4 December, 1985, called by the government in response to a "File on Torture" on Sri Lanka published in the October AI Newsletter.

The "File on Torture" contained sworn testimony describing persistent torture.

In the appeal, sent on 24 December, 1985, AI regretted the government's failure to respond positively to numerous reports of torture which AI has submitted in recent years, some alleging that the victim had died.

The government has repeatedly denied that torture takes place, has not ordered impartial investigations into allegations of torture and has taken no effective action to stop torture. In a letter of 30 December to AI, the government said only that "As and when we come across

such reports signed by you... we will respond to them and state our position."

AI received no response, for example, to its appeal on 30 April, 1985, for an investigation into reports (detailed in the "File on Torture") that Menendran Kesavapillai, a student at Jaffna University, was tortured by Special Task Force personnel in January 1985, suspended from a wooden beam, had nails driven into his skin and chilli powder rubbed into the wounds, and was burned with a metal rod. He is believed to have lost the use of one hand.

In preparing its report AI had interviewed torture victims and studied sworn affidavits. Three Sri Lankans had been examined by medical experts experienced in this field, who found evidence consistent with their allegations of torture.

At its press conference, the government said that AI had not given reliable evidence such as copies of affidavits or the names of victims, witnesses or doctors. However, AI had to withhold the identities of many of the victims, as they and their relatives have repeatedly expressed fear of the consequences should their identities be revealed. Some former detainees have said they were threatened with rearrest and further torture if they told of their treatment. However, AI has

expressed its willingness, with the permission of the individuals concerned, to submit the affidavits to an independent body mandated to investigate allegations of torture.

AI has received no information about any investigations into allegations of torture or any proceedings against security forces personnel. Although Lieutenant-General Cyril Ranatunga, Commander of Joint Operations of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces, stated at the press conference that two charges against two members of the armed forces were being investigated, he gave no details of either the incidents under investigation or the charges.

Government representatives also stated that AI is not concerned with "terrorist activities". In its "File on Torture" AI referred to the use of violence by opposition groups demanding a separate Tamil state and stressed its condemnation of the torture or killing of prisoners by anyone, including opposition groups. However, AI urged that in bringing to justice those responsible the government's actions should conform to international human rights standards. The Sri Lanka Government has reinforced this obligation by depositing with the United Nations a Unilateral Declaration Against Torture.

(AI File on Torture March 1986)

Mothers Reenact Good Friday

After killing her son
they turned him over to be mourned
And the mother wept, Lord,
over her young assassinated son.

In these terrible years, mothers of
Latin America
increasingly reenact Good Friday's
sorrowful mystery
Mary of Nazareth, that wounded
but strong Pieta,
is the older sister of that unending
sorority
of mothers pierced with sorrow
and strength.

In these terrible days, the Pietas
of the churches
have come down from their niches.
Fine-hewn wood becomes throb-
bing flesh
and the plazas and the countryside
and the houses
have become living calvaries.

Wasn't that first Good Friday
enough?
Or are we still to be buried in its
brutal darkness?
Today, hunger, bullets and oblivion
kill.
Yet pity still flowers over death
and the assassins.
Crime multiplies,
but compassion grows even faster.
Solidarity entwined with still fresh
blood
becomes the fabric of new life
overcoming death.

Through this Good Friday of
Latin America
we have understood the mystery
that pulsated
on that first **Viernes Santo**:
Mary was capable of compassion:
she lost her only son.
and in so doing,
became mother of us all.
The victim gained the power
to forgive the executioners.
And, as would be revealed three
days hence,
he who lost his life to implant
your kingdom,
regained that life from you forever.

That is why contemplating Calvary's
mystery gives us hope.
Not only does dignity dwell in us,
your people, Lord.
But so does future glory.
Compassion will give birth to life
shared together.
Mary of Nazareth will also be
older sister.
to that community of joyful mothers
whose children have, indeed, risen.

Pedro Trigo, SJ

(taken from: **Cristianismo Hoy**
Centro Gumilla, Venezuela)

Chile's Armed Forces turn Evangelical! Sequel to the Church's Defence of Human Rights

Santiago (IPS). The Catholic church's historically prominent position among Chile's armed forces is steadily being replaced by the evangelical sects as a result of the church's defence of human rights, according to a recent study.

The study, **La Religion en Las Fuerzas Armadas y de Orden**, was undertaken by Chilean sociologists Arturo Chacon and Humberto Lagos and financed by Lutheran World Relief and Church World Services. It has been published by the Evangelical Theological Community here, and is being distributed through the archdiocesan book store.

The study says that in the traditional military concept, "God is viewed as the Super Warrior, the Jehovah of the armies who maintains the purity of religious faith through the armed forces." However, the Catholic church's criticism of the military dictatorship has led many military personnel to join evangelical churches that offer unquestioning support to the government.

According to the study, the Chilean armed forces see themselves as having been formed "beneath the protective shadow of God and through the mediation of Mary, the 'Virgin general.'" The armed forces have traditionally viewed the Catholic church as the pillar of ideological cohesion and a unifying force within the country. In Chile's struggle for independence, the country's liberator Gen. Bernardo O'Higgins gave the Virgin of Carmel the title "general of the Chilean army."

Until the 1973 military coup, the Catholic hierarchy routinely endorsed all military policy as ethically correct, a relationship that was politically advantageous to the armed forces. After the coup, however, the church began to speak out in

defence of human rights; as a result, church-state tension increased and the armed forces began to lose the moral justification for the way in which they governed. Many then became attracted to the evangelical church because of its uncritical social attitudes and its policy of non-interference in temporal affairs.

In a recent interview published in the magazine APSI, Bishop Pablo Lizama of Illapel, a former police chaplain, explains why so many military personnel have left the Catholic church: "They view the church as an enemy because of its defence of human rights. In contrast, the evangelical churches are silent - a position more acceptable to them. So they leave the church. This phenomenon has taken place only during the current government and is a direct result of the dictatorship."

In their study, Chacon and Lagos found that converts to evangelism within the military are "zealous proselytizers, anti-communist and anti-Marxist" who believe in the divine origin of authority and project this belief onto the hierarchical command of the armed forces and the government. God is perceived as "combative, and an ally of political authority that punishes evil. And evil is the political opposition."

Some 15,000 members of Chile's armed forces are now members of an evangelical church. Many have joined an organization called the Evangelical Mission of Military Personnel, an affiliate of the U. S. based World Association of Christian Military, which is scheduled to hold its annual meeting this year in Arica in northern Chile.

— Latinamerica Press 6 March 1986



"The Power of the Powerless", drawing by the
Mexican artist Rolando Zapata (1976)

Religion, Power and Property

Two Reviews

CHURCH: CHARISM & POWER

By Leonardo Boff

Crossroad, New York, 1985,

192pp. \$ 14.95

(LP) Through their writings, many liberation theologians have helped to raise awareness about social, political, economic and cultural oppression and the structures which cause and perpetuate it. With this book, however, a leading liberation theologian turns his attention to **oppression within the Catholic Church itself and its roots in present church structures.**

It is a powerfully honest and truthful book. Boff describes a church that "follows the criteria of pagan power in terms of domination, centralization, marginalization, triumphalism and human pride, all under a cloak of divine power". But it is also a very hopeful book; the author argues a biblical and theological basis for what he calls "ecclesio-genesis", the birth of a new church "among the downtrodden of humanity".

It is little wonder that of all Boff's many books this one merited the author's call to Rome for an "interview" with the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith last September. He had already made clear in this work his opinion of such a practice when he described the "Kafkaesque doctrinal process in which the prosecutor, the defence, the legislator and the judge are all the Sacred Congregation itself".

Boff describes in a concrete and direct way the many human rights abuses within the church. For example, he mentions the way leaders at all levels are chosen without really taking into account the opinion of the great majority of church members, the treatment of priests "as

episcopal appendices", discrimination against women and its "almost inquisitorial control... over Catholic media". He has particularly harsh words for the authoritarianism of bishops and describes how they can dismantle the grassroots work of so many pastoral agents who are left with no mechanisms of appeal against such arbitrary abuse of power.

Boff traces the roots of these abuses, or "pathologies" as he calls them, to the authoritarian structure of the church, its doctrinal idea of authority and the division and inequality between clergy and laity. Those who have come to monopolize power within the church, he argues, "elaborate a corresponding theology which serves to justify, reinforce and socialise their power, attributing divine origin to the forms in which it has historically been exercised."

Boff goes back to the so-called "conversion" of the Roman empire under Constantine in 312 which he describes as "a paganization of Christianity and not a Christianization of paganism." **A movement before, the church then became an institution,** taking on many secular power forms that continue to define the way it exercises its power today, says, Boff.

Particularly since the Reformation, he goes on, "Christianity was reduced

in the pathological Catholic understanding of it, into a simple doctrine of salvation: what mattered were the truths rather than converting them into any praxis of following Jesus Christ." Suspicious of the world, the church called Catholics to be **loyal to the institution rather than to the message.**"

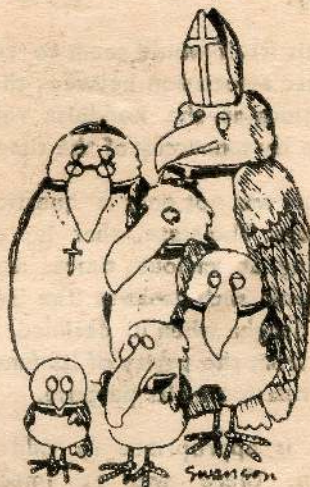
This church, which defines its power in terms of domination, has given all it can, says Boff. "We have finished with reforming; it needs to be re-created." Syncretism, argues the theologian, has always been central to Catholicism, since it has used the historical forms of the society around it to incarnate its message. But now the time has come to "renounce its syncretism with all the cultural glories it has accumulated and risk a new syncretism", a new incarnation in the poor and oppressed.

Boff describes such a new syncretism as a true paschal experience from which a new church could be born. In the network of Christian base communities, to which Boff devotes two chapters of the book, he sees this happening. He describes the various national meetings of the Brazilian base communities as being like the synods of the early church.

As the Vatican's statement on this book rightly said, these are dangerous ideas. But instead of concentrating on peripheral points made in passing by the author, it is a pity that the Sacred Congregation did not address itself to the central critique of the book. **Indeed, its form of response has largely sustained the thesis of the book.** There must be millions of Catholics who can confirm from their own experience the truth of that thesis.

— Peadar Kirby

Courtesy: Latinamerica Press,
9 May 1985.



BUDDHISM IN SRI LANKA IN THE 17 AND 18 CENTURIES

by **A. H. Mirando**

Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd,
135, Dutugemunu St,
Dehiwala (Price - Rs. 150)

This little book of 161 pages is a thesis which brought its author, Dr. A. H. Mirando the Ph. D. (Lond.) degree. Much research has obviously gone into this work and, as any good thesis should, it provides a fresh view of the subject matter on aspects of which others also have made their contributions.

Running through this thesis is an argument which is conveniently summarised in the preface itself. Witness the following passage:-

"I felt that there existed a misconception that the period immediately prior to Valivita Saranankara Sangharaja was a dark period in the history of Buddhism, and that it was in the time of Valivita Saranankara that there occurred a revival in Buddhism. I have been able to, I hope, disprove this notion by the present thesis by pointing out that the revival in fact began in the Sitavaka period, paradoxically enough in the reign of Sitavaka Rajasingha, who is reckoned to have brought immense destruction upon Buddhism when he only punished the Buddhist monks who conspired against him with the Portuguese, and also pointing out that what is reckoned to be the revival in the time of Valivita Saranankara was only the climax to the revival that began in the Sitavaka period.

Let there be no misunderstanding in this matter. The genuine esteem in which our author holds Velivita Saranankara is shown by the very fact that we find in the text the following passage:

"The most important of all the events in the reign of Vimaladharmasuriya II, occurred in 1698, and was destined to have a very great effect not only on Sinhalese and Pali Literature of Sri Lanka but also on Buddhist revivalist activities in the succeeding centuries.

Valivita Saranankara, afterwards Sangharaja, the most illustrious and predominant personality in the sphere of Buddhist activity until about the middle of the eighteenth century, was born in the village of Tumpane."

In this connection the writer notes an interesting fact about the period preceding Velivita Saranankara's activities. Says he:

"One marked fact about this period is that all the writers of religious works were laymen, whose efforts to sustain religious literature became eclipsed by the activities of Valivita Saranankara and his school.

We also know that in the period immediately prior to Valivita Saranankara there were priestly scholars like Vatambulue Maha Thera, the teacher of Palkumbure Atthadassi and Levuke Rala under whom Valivita Saranankara himself studied, Urugamuve Rajaguru, the teacher of Kulasekera Appuhamy, the author of the poem *Manicorajatakavaya* and Kotthasa Maha Thera. What in effect seems to have taken place in the time of Valivita Saranankara was not so much a revival in religious literature, but its climax to which end Valivita Saranankara no doubt contributed in no mean measure."

A basic fact which finds illustration in this work is the close relation between the flourishing of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and the prevalence of political and social peace in the country.

This itself would seem to reflect the close association between the key institutions of the Buddhist religion and the lay monarchy of the time.

This was not only a question of patronage. The state, that is to say the King, at various times actively undertook such tasks as the reform of the Sangha when it declined perilously from the purity of its functioning in relation to its purpose.

It is appropriate to add that, in turn, there was at important

periods of state activity in various fields, close association and mutual consultation between the King and the upper reaches of the Maha Sangha.

There is also illustration in this book of the extent to which Kings and Sangarajas had recourse to other and foreign well-springs of Buddhism to restore the flow of Buddhism itself in Sri Lanka.

It is to these resorts to such assistance that the origin of the principal nikayas of the Maha Sangha in Sri Lanka is traced. This is indeed a most interesting aspect of the contents of this book.

So also is another aspect which is discussed in Chapter IV as:— "The Buddhist Order". Royal patronage of the Buddhist Order often took the form of the granting of lands, often of wide extent, to support the institutions of Buddhism including the Maha Sangha itself. These grants were made to the Maha Sangha as a whole, taking the form of what is called Sangika property.

The evolution of the ownership of these lands is set out in the following telling passage:-

"In time these lands became no more the lands dedicated to the community of priests as a whole, but the property of individual priests or of individual temples.

In effect, these lands became subjected to a high degree of secularisation, and the Buddhist priests were beginning to emerge as if they were a land-owning class given to the most tempting acquisition of material wealth to the neglect of self-denying ordinances of the Buddha."

In other words Sangika property became transferred to what is called pudgalika or private property.

The author presents this development as a feature of the Sixteenth

Century when, according to him the Buddhist Order was "at its lowest ebb." But he adds:-

"The vested interests of the Buddhist priests assumed greater proportions during the 17th and 18th centuries with their coming into possession in diverse ways of large extents of land which distracted them further from following the pursuits enjoined by their vocation."

Quoting page after page of examples of land grants the author reaches the following conclusion:-

"From the foregoing survey it becomes clear that during the period under review, the Buddhist priests had come to receive large extents of land more as personal endowments made to individual priests or individual temples than as offerings to the community of priests.

"Consequently, the priests became veritable landlords greatly conscious of their vested interests to safeguard which they evolved a system of lineal succession called the the parampara system."

There follows a description of the three distinct divisions of this system, namely the - Sisyanu Sisya Paramparawa or pupillary succession.

Varga Paramparawa, or succession through relationship, and Sivuru-Paramparawa - whereby a priest may grant his personal property or that of the temple of which he is head, to a relation who must necessarily be a priest.

In order to illustrate the profound interest of this book it is proposed to end this review with a final quotation:-

"The growth of private ownership of land among the Buddhist priests not only undermined the pristine purity of the Buddhist Order, but it also led to the growth of a sectarian movement on caste lines within the community of priests, a movement unparalleled in the history of the Buddhist church in Sri Lanka.

The Buddhist priests as a class of veritable landlords, needed an organization by means of which they sought to secure the services they themselves and their temples required.

Out of this necessity therefore arose a system of service tenure pertaining to ecclesiastical manors or viharam, and this system was founded on the same feudalistic basis as in the case of the state where holding of temple lands by tenants depended upon the

rendition of certain services to the temples, the services to be so rendered being determined on caste principles.

In advocating a system of this nature, it is not surprising that the Buddhist priests should have become caste conscious, with the result, caste played an important part when it came to the question of selecting those who were to be admitted to the Order.

So we see that at the beginning of the period under review, admissions to the Order became confined to those who were regarded as of "good family" or of 'good birth'.

For the first time in the history of the Buddhist church in Sri Lanka a distinction was drawn as regards those who were eligible for admission to the Order."

It would appear that the author is here providing us with another proof that environment determines consciousness.

May I urge to the author the desirability of his publishing this book in a Sinhala version. The association in Sri Lanka of the Sinhalese and Buddhism warrants this request.

—Dr. Colvin R. de Silva
(Daily News 14. 10. 85)

The Latin American Church and Vatican Politics

Penny Lernoux, an expert on Latin American affairs, is the author of **Cry of the People and In Banks We Trust**.

Bogota (LP)—Latin America's Catholic Church has come a long way since its first hesitant step toward regional consensus at the founding meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in Rio de Janeiro in 1955. In the intervening decades, the largely reactionary institution has undergone an amazing metamorphosis to become a world

leader in theology, community organization and the search for social justice. Much of the transformation was brought about by CELAM, which celebrated its 30th anniversary on Nov. 2.

In the 1950's, when the bishops held their first extraordinary conference in Rio, few could have foreseen such developments. Physically isolated by the lack of roads and other communications, the bishops had little knowledge of events elsewhere

in their countries, much less of happenings in neighbouring nations or the world. Each diocese was its own fiefdom, related to the rest of the Church only through Rome.

Although the results of the Rio meeting were inconsequential, the fact it took place was a milestone in the church's progress, as it brought the bishops together in one place...

While the Latin American Church made few contributions to Vatican II, the council had a profound impact on the Latin American participants, and when they returned home, they began preparations for a second extraord-

inary conference to be held in Medellin, Colombia, to interpret Vatican II in light of the region's situation.

Medelin

In contrast to the first CELAM conference in Rio, regional communications structures had been established by the late 1960s and there was considerable consultation among theologians and bishops during two years of preparatory meetings and workshops. Equally important, many Medellin delegates had extensive pastoral experience, which meant theological reflection and sociological analysis would take a bottom-top view. Or as one journalist wrote of the conference, it was a meeting of the "people of God," not the "hierarchy of God."

Many Latin American historians now recognize Medellin as a watershed in the region's development. Since colonial times, the church had been one of the three pillars of Latin American society, along with the military and the land-owning and industrial elites. But at Medellin, the bishops renounced that alliance by condemning the "institutionalised violence" of unjust social and economic structures. They also effectively switched sides, from the elites to the powerless, by making a preferential option for the poor.

Two other interrelated events occurred at Medellin. One was the formal baptism of the **theology of liberation**, which strongly influenced the Medellin documents. The other was the acceptance of the "**see, judge, act**" methodology popularized by the Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The shift was fundamental, because it forced the church to offer pastoral direction based on concrete situations experienced by the poor instead of on outdated dogmas.

Not all the bishops at Medellin were in accord with such developments; the Colombians in particular objected to the direction things were taking. Rome also began to express qualms, and by 1972 a counter-revolution was underway, led by Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, then president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and his Colombian protege' Bishop Alfonso Lopez Trujillo.

The attack centered on CELAM because of its sponsorship of the Medellin conference and with Rome's support, Lopez Trujillo rose from a minor position in the Colombian hierarchy to the powerful office of CELAM secretary general. A purge of CELAM institutions soon followed, the aim being to eliminate the influence of liberation theology and stack the institution with Lopez sympathizers. By 1979 Lopez, who had become an archbishop, was poised to roll back the advances spawned by Medellin at a third extraordinary CELAM conference in Puebla, Mexico.

Advances at Puebla

But the plan boomeranged because a majority of the delegates refused to reject the commitments made at Medellin. On the contrary, they reaffirmed Medellin's preferential option for the poor, underscoring the importance of Christian base communities as vehicles for religious and social awakening.

Conference participants agreed that two important reasons for that reaffirmation were the presence in Puebla of Latin America's most outstanding liberation theologians, who provided a strong intellectual counter-point to Lopez's conservative ideas, and the forceful leadership of the Brazilian bishops, particularly Cardinal Aloisio Lorscheider, then CELAM president.

Although the dike held at Puebla, CELAM split soon after-

ward as a result of the election of Lopez Trujillo as president after strong lobbying by Rome. The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) ceased to be an active force in the organization, which came under the control of the conservative Colombian and Argentine hierarchies. When Lopez retired as president, Argentine Bishop Antonio Quarracino was elected in his stead, and Colombian Bishop Dario Castrillon, a Lopez protege, became secretary general. Pope John Paul subsequently named Lopez cardinal of Medellin in what for many was a cruel twist of irony. But by then CELAM had ceased to be a prophetic voice, the banner having passed to the Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR) and the millions of poor Latin Americans in base communities.

While CELAM's current leadership has tried to disrupt the linkages among progressive groups, the networks spawned in the late 1960s now include so many committed people and organizations that it is impossible to turn back the clock. Washington regards this loosely knit movement as a challenge to political and economic hegemony in Latin America, as shown by the Santa Fe Document, written by Reagan's transition team in 1980 and statements by White House officials against liberation theology. Rome, too, fears its authority may be undermined, particularly through the base communities and more independent bishop's conferences such as that of Brazil.

Liberation theologians say conflict is often necessary for institutions to grow. Although church sources do not expect CELAM to play a pivotal part in the continuing struggles about theology and Catholicism's relationship to politics, it is responsible for opening the door to new religious forces in Latin America.

Re-reading the Good Samaritan: Grassroots Theology

Latin American church historian Enrique Dussel recently addressed a World Council of Churches meeting on theological reflection by the poor. In the following excerpts, Dussel describes one such reflection experience.

A Christian base community in Brazil re-reads the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke. 10:25-37). A traveller falls prey to robbers on the road to Jericho; they strip him, and go away, leaving him half dead. A priest passes by, then a Levite. Finally, a Samaritan has mercy on the traveller.

All this is well-known. But the community's theological reflection begins in a novel and creative vein, breaking with tradition.

They ask: "Who is the poor traveller robbed and left by the wayside?" The professional theologian would have seen someone else and answered, "the poor person; Jesus, who identifies with the hungry." But the community answers differently: "We are the traveller. The man robbed and left half dead is ourselves, the people" (note the new subject, the change of perspective).

And who are the robbers? "Those who take our lands, who rob us by raising the fuel prices, the armed forces who abuse, torture and murder us..."

And who is the priest who passes by first? "He is like priests and pastors who talk much but do little for us. The Levite is like politicians who promise lots of things but never come through."

And who is the Good Samaritan like? "Like Archbishop Oscar Romero, who really was with his people; like Bishop

Pedro Casaldaliga (of the diocese of Sao Felix do Araguaia in Brazil's Amazon); like those who help us in our cooperative."

Traditionally, theological professionals would have stopped here. But the community goes on: "What must we do in this situation?" "We travel roads, like the man going to Jericho," they conclude. "We travel to work and back home. We cannot avoid using the road. What shall we do?"

They answer: "The traveller was assaulted because he was alone, he was only one. That is why the thieves could rob him and leave him half dead. We must travel together, we must organize and do everything in community, so what happened to him doesn't happen to us."

Once community members "recover" God's Word, they make it their own. They no longer depend for interpretation on a professional who seeks to understand the text's content only "in its historical context." The people appropriate God's Word with far more wisdom and use it to shed light on the Kingdom's "here and now" presence. The community has no epistemological problem in going on with Jesus' parable in the here and now.

What is this? Is it theology? ... What is certain is that "theology done by poor people" is a new possibility. ... It heralds a new age for theology; it is a new interpretation.

Christian base communities are the focal point for this theology's production, expression, sharing and growth, and it is not easy for professional theologians to fully identify with it unless they listen.

— Enrique Dussel, (From *Iglesias*, Mexico, July, 1984)

Camilo Torres: Latin American prophet, martyr

Feb. 15 marks the 20th anniversary of the death of Camilo Torres, the Colombian priest who in 1966 renounced the priesthood and joined a guerrilla movement in the mountains. Torres was born into a wealthy Bogota family, studied sociology at the Louvain in Belgium and then taught sociology at Colombia's National University. Witnessing the failure of peaceful efforts to bring about social change, he joined the guerrillas and died in the central Colombian highlands in his first skirmish with the army.

Torres was quickly hailed as a martyr by young Christians throughout the region. Many Latin American church leaders feared that his example might become a model for the continent's increasingly restive young clergy, who were eager to make a dent in the entrenched structural injustice they witnessed in their work with the poor. Since then, however, the vast majority of clerics have rejected armed struggle as a way of dealing with social injustice. Even Torres admirers, like Brazilian Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga, admit he was naive and impetuous. At the same times they recognize his profound faith and his importance in recent church history. "Many people, I among them, do not hesitate to call Camilo Torres a Latin American martyr and a prophet of our church," Casaldaliga wrote in a recent editorial. "He loved to the end. He passed the final test by laying down his life."

The following extracts are taken from a press release issued by Torres on June 24, 1965, to explain his reasons for leaving the priesthood:

"I opted for Christianity because I felt that it was there that I would find the purest way of serving my neighbour. I was chosen by Christ to be a priest forever, and motivated by the desire to give myself full time to the love of my fellow human beings...."

"But when there are circumstances that impede men and women from giving themselves to Christ, the priest's function is to alter those circumstances, even though it may cost him the

possibility of celebrating the Eucharist — a ritual that is not understandable unless it involves a total commitment on the part of Christians.

"I have found it impossible to continue exercising my priesthood through the celebration of the liturgy within the present structure of the church. However, the Christian priesthood is not just external liturgical celebrations. **The Mass, which is the final objective of priestly action, is fundamentally a communicarian act.** But the Christian community cannot offer that sacrifice in an authentic way if first it has not effectively put in practice the command to love one's neighbour....."

"Since there is no widespread move by the people to engage in actions proper to the laity, I have decided to take up that stance, with the understanding that part of my work is to show that it is love of one another that must lead to love of God. I believe this course of action is essential to my Christian and priestly life....."

"I believe that my commitment to my fellow human beings to effectively carry out the command of love of neighbor demands this sacrifice. Human decisions of this magnitude should be motivated ultimately by charity, by supernatural love. I will run all the risks this decision demands of me."

In a later "Message to Christians," Torres wrote:

"It is necessary to take away the power of the privileged minorities in order to give it to the poor majorities. When this is done quickly, it creates a revolution. **Revolution can be peaceful if the minorities do not violently resist.** Revolution is a way of bringing about a government that feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, instructs the ignorant, carries out works of charity, of love for one's neighbour that are not just occasional or transitory, and not just for a few, but for the large majority of our neighbours. **That is why the revolution is not only permissible but obligatory for Christians, who see in it the only efficacious and inclusive way to bring about love for all.**"

Latinamerica Press 20 February 1986

I Believe in the God of Life!

I believe in the God of life, not in idols that kill.

I believe in God, our Father
who believes in us humans.

I believe in the God of life.

I believe that God reveals himself to us,
is present in our midst
as the God who believes in people
when we believe in others
and gather to believe as one
in a cause that is worth believing in
and living for.

I believe in the God of life.

I believe in the Son of God
made flesh like us.

I do not believe in just any son,
in just any god...

I believe in the man Jesus of Nazareth,
who is the Son of God
just because in him was revealed
the God of life
who destroyed death.

I believe that God showed us his human face
because in Jesus of Nazareth,
he became poor in a stable
and joined the working class
in the carpentry shop of Joseph, his father.

I believe in the grace and salvation he brought us
for by becoming incarnate in this way
among the poor,
he taught us that the only way to be human beings,
the only way to save ourselves,
is to struggle on the side of the poor.

I believe in the Spirit of the God of life.
The spirit, as St. Paul says,
of the Law that gives life in Christ Jesus,

I believe this Spirit animates us,
gives us strength,
and makes us distinguish
between what is worthwhile and what is not.

I believe that the Spirit of life
is the Spirit of crisis, that is, of discernment
(in the biblical sense of "crisis")
who brings us to discern between
the forces of life
and the forces of death.

I do not believe in churches that think only of themselves

I believe in the church as the space
in which the Spirit of Discernment dwells,
in which the Spirit of Crisis passes judgment.

I believe that the church exists
to be a sign of human hope,
to bear witness to justice and love,
to proclaim liberty to the children of God,
to give space to organize hope and love.

I do not believe in the churches when they launch crusades
to defend their interests
saying they are defending a God
who never asked to have crusades to defend him.

I believe in the God of life
who desires that his church
struggle in favour of life.

I believe in life everlasting
simply because I believe in life,
life that is eternal because it has meaning now.

I do not believe in the immortality of the soul without
the body
because I believe in the resurrection of the whole
human person,
because I believe in the eternal meaning of human
life in the here and now.

I believe in the God of Life who makes belief in life
possible.

Amen, so be it (translated): that's how it is, folks.

Hugo Assmann, Brazilian theologian
(Taken from: *Expositor Cristao*. May 1985)

Violence and the Gospel

The Revd. Dr. Rowan Williams of Clare College, Cambridge, tells of a "nice, devoted, gentle, white Anglican priest of charismatic convictions" in South Africa. He had worked with generosity and dedication in the local black town, organising a lively youth club.

Some members asked him why he didn't have more to say in the pulpit about "the struggle". He replied that he had a ministry to all in his parish and had no wish to take sides.

"When the revolution comes", they replied, "what will you be saying then?"

"Just what I'm saying now. And you're not going to shoot me for that, are you?"

"Yes, we'll shoot you", they said.

Dr. Williams comments: "His shock and hurt were still very raw some years later when he told us this. The tragedy of the story is not, perhaps, what had so wounded him—

ingratitude, vengefulness or whatever. As far as we could gather there had been no personal hatred or resentment.

"But he had no means of coping with the fact that his commitment to a preaching of the gospel without taking sides had, unknown to him, prevented him from addressing the real situation of those he most longed to serve."

Network, USPG England, April '85

Fellowship in Action

MAY DAY

The May Day service this year will be held on Wednesday, April 30 in the YMCA Gym Hall following a short route procession which will start from St. Peter's, Church Fort at 5.00 p. m. As usual, clergy from all the major denominations — Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant — who are associated with CWF will concelebrate the Workers' Mass, assisted by the workers. The first part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, will be conducted by the workers. The sermon will take the form of songs.

The CWF Workers' Mass has been drawn up and arranged by lay-people so as to be meaningful, especially to the working people in the Sri Lankan context, and has been improved by CWF members over the years. The service is open to everyone.

COLOMBO

Chrishanthi Lama Sevana was opened by Vijaya Vidyasagara of the C. W. F. on Easter Sunday, March 30th afternoon.

This centre which has been built on the Kirillapona Canal Bank at Sri Siddharta Foot Path is the culmination of six years of work done amongst the shanty dwellers of the area. The C. W. F. has now come in with its support for the centre as part of its work among unemployed city youth and the workers. The Centre derives its name from an essentially Christian spirit of service which has inspired its founder: Chrishanthi meaning the Peace of Christ.

Funds for the building were collected at a Christmas concert in 1983 in Leiden, Holland. The money was collected and sent to Sri Lanka by Mrs. G. L. Vis, wife of the former Burgomaster of Leiden. She was also present to lay the foundation stone in February of this year.

The people of the area responded magnificently to build the centre in a remarkably short time.

The broad aim of the Centre is to build among the children an awareness of their condition which has, so far, been near hopeless, and to foster among them a sense of responsibility for their own future. The C. W. F. hopes to promote its own programme at the Centre which has been re-named Chrishanthi Jana Sevana (Chrishanthi Peoples's Shelter).

RATMALANA

The Centre has hosted the CWF Holy Week programme and also a well attended lecture by Basil Fernando on the subject of what you should know about the dangers of Industrial hazards.

Along with some other organisations the Centre held two public meetings commemorating the Bhopal disaster.

Some of our activity over the past few months has been the establishment of contacts with the shanty dwellers around the Ratmalana Railway Station, with a group of persons in Moratuwa and also with the coir rope weavers in Thelwatte, near Hikkaduwa.

Our trainees will be completing their course in April and it is intended to take in a fresh batch early in May. As it is, applications have already been received from those wishing to join the course.

Some of the trainees and others joined the Peace March organized in Hatton.

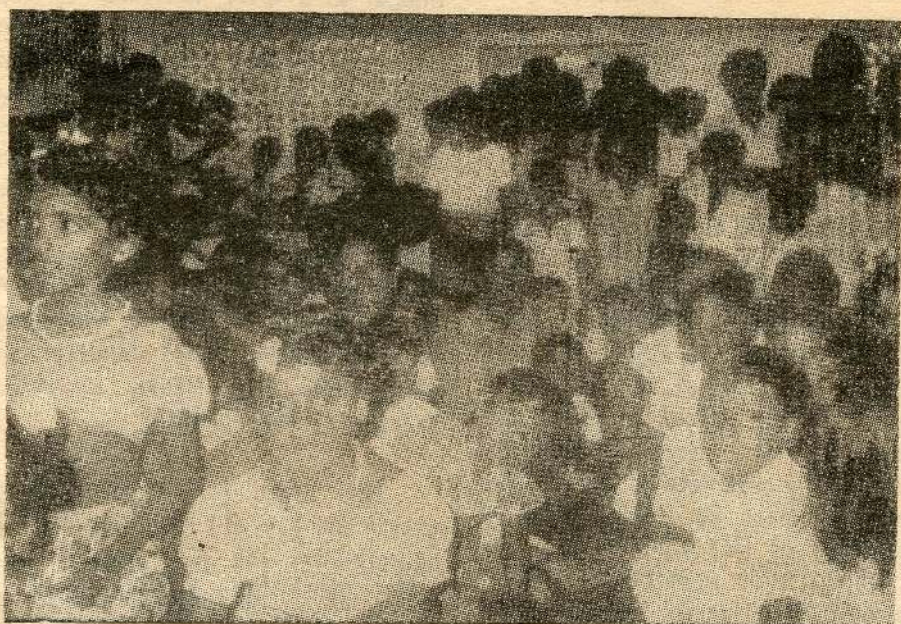
KATUNAYAKE

Two plays were staged by the centre on the invitation of the Youth Services Council of Negombo on February 23rd. The two plays were "Abin" and "Ghost of Peace".

During the month of February, in Duwa (Negombo), a religious and people's folk songs programme was organised by Anton Mihindukula. They also held a workshop with the help of Nanda Malini, Sunil Mihindukula and Sunil Ariyaratne.

On the 25th of March a "Peace March" was organised from Hatton to Adam's Peak for which seven (7) members from Katunayake participated.

Easter services and studies were held by the C. W. F. at Ratmalana, on the 27th, 28th and 29th of March for which four (4) members from Katunayake took part.



At the opening of the new Canal Bank Centre

A seminar on "Literature and Culture - Prabuddha" organised by the Kamkaru Sevana, Katunayaka was held on the 23rd of March, at the Thammita Catechetical Institute, and 28 people participated.

HATTON

A Youth Workshop on the theme of "Youth Leadership and National Development" was held on the 5th of January at Kamkaru Sevana Hatton. 26 Youth leaders from C. W. F. estate groups participated. The main talks on "Rural Agriculture and the participation of Youth" and on "People's Culture and the task of Youth" were given by Ranjith de Silva, Organizer of Gami Seva Sevana and Ranjith Gunawardene, Urban Council member Hatton respectively. Useful discussions followed the talks and Mr. Anthony Payoe, Chairman of the Urban Council Hatton, who was present throughout gave the concluding talk. The Workshop concluded with two Dramas staged by the Kamkaru Sevana Katunayake Drama Group and by the C. W. F. Group at Tillyrie Estate.

The fifth and last Workshop for teachers of English in the area was held on 12th January and was led by the VSO Co-ordinator in Sri Lanka, Jane Merivale and another VSO English instructor. 12 teachers completed this series of five Workshops and a good evaluation was held at the conclusion of the Workshop.

A Women's Workshop and Seminar was held from 17th to 19th January at Kamkaru Sevana, Hatton. About 22 women leaders from estates attended.

The unfortunate out-break of racial violence in the Talawakele - Bogowantalewa - Hatton area since the end of January was a great set-back to our work. For the first time houses and shops were set on fire on a big scale, on the evening of 2nd February. By 4th February

there were 2500 Tamil refugees and 500 Sinhala refugees in refugee camps in Hatton and 380 Sinhala refugees at the refugees camp in Bogowantalawa. The CWF Plantations Service Committee was thereafter involved in the work of relief to refugees in the camps. This work was undertaken with the support of the Co-ordinating Secretariat for Plantation Areas and St. Gabriel's Convent, Hatton, the Methodist Church, Hatton, and the Plantations Women's Group in Hatton. Donations for relief were also received from the Roman Catholic Bishop in Kandy and the Bishop of Kurunegala. The Government provided dry rations for the refugees while we concentrated on providing clothes to almost all the refugees. More recently we have provided clothes to a group of Tamil refugees from Kitulgala area who have temporarily migrated to this area in search of security. The problem of their future employment and residence has still not been settled. The problem of rehabilitation, namely - re-building of houses and shops are being tackled by the Peace Committee set up by the Government under the chairmanship of the G. A. Nuwara Eliya.

We understand that aid from REPIA is also expected. Such re-building efforts have not still commenced in most places.

In the wake of these events, a Central Peace Committee in Hatton was formed on the 11th of March following a Peace meeting by the Deputy Inspector General of Police (Central Range) at which the main speaker was Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, leader of the Sarvodaya Movement. This Central Peace Committee successfully organized a Peace Walk and Pilgrimage to Adam's Peak on the 25th of March (Medin Poya day) at which 10,000 people are estimated to have participated. (A full report of this event appears else where in this issue of **Christian Worker**

This historic event was the first step in helping to restore relationships between the Sinhala and Tamil communities. A further programme of action has been planned by the Central Peace Committee involving repairs to damaged houses through Shramadana and Training Courses for estate and village youth leadership etc., The CWF Organizer is an active member of the Central Peace Committee.

GALAHA

CWF - Gami Seva Sevana Galaha organized a public seminar and exhibition of posters on Bhopal at the D. S. Senanayaka Memorial Library Kandy on 27 February. The Mayor of Kandy opened the exhibition. He was not only appreciative of the effort but gave the Hall free of charge for the purpose. The Exhibition proved to be very popular and there already have been several requests for similar exhibition in other places in the district. The public seminar on Bhopal which followed the poster exhibition was chaired by Professor Upali Samarajeeva. The speakers included George Basnagala who had visited Bhopal as a CWF delegate to the CCA - URM Consultation in Delhi last year, Sirimal Peiris and Gamini Yapa. At the lively discussion that followed, it was strongly felt that follow-up action should be taken at the local level to protect the public from poisonous drugs and other dangerous consumer items. This suggestion is now being pursued by our group. A Petition addressed to the Indian Prime Minister on Bhopal was also signed by those present at the seminar.

The organizer of Gami Seva Sevana was part of a team that visited Kantale after the dam disaster. Information on this and other follow-up action will be reported in the next issue of this journal. □

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