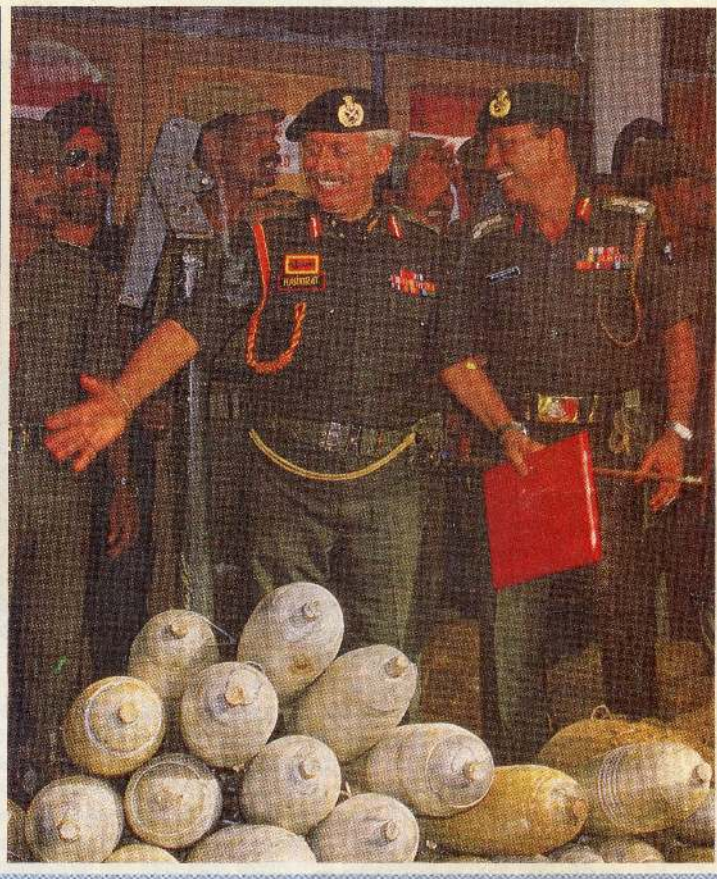


**DOUBLE ISSUE**  
With Special Supplement

Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship

# CHRISTIAN WORKER



## The Indo-Sri Lanka **PEACE ACCORD**

- The Travails of Local Government** — *Samuel Segan*
- The Emergency** — *R.K. Sureshnan MP*
- Economy in Crisis** — *Dr. H.D.S. Ramachandran*
- The JVP and the Ethnic Conflict** — *C.A. Chandrapana*

## The Local Government Elections and the Left



- Exclusive Interviews**
- Colonel E. de Silva*
  - K.P. Silva*
  - Vijaya Ramaniyanga*
  - Yanuchra Panagabakera*



## A Way Out of the Impasse

### (CWF Statement on the Indo-Lankan Accord)

After over four years of what President J. R. Jayewardene has himself described as a "useless war" in which over 6,000 lives by official estimates have been lost, an effective cessation of hostilities has taken place with the signing of the Indo-Lankan Peace Accord by President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on July 29 in Colombo. The Tamil militant groups after some initial reluctance have now signified their readiness to surrender their arms to the Government and the Indian troops who at President Jayewardene's request have arrived in Jaffna as a Peace Keeping Force temporarily in terms of the Agreement reached.

This Agreement or Accord has come at a time when the prospect of a settlement to our Tamil problem seemed well nigh impossible and indeed the manner in which the settlement was effected amidst opposition and rioting, would itself reflect the critical state of the situation that prevailed. Those truly desirous of seeing an end to the fratricidal slaughter that has for four years accompanied the failure to resolve the Tamil problem, would therefore find it difficult to stand in the way of the settlement spelt out in the signed Agreement, representing as it does now the only practical way out of the present impasse.

It has to be recognised of course that for the Government too, however difficult of resolution the Tamil problem had become, a speedy settlement was an imperative. The Finance Minister's repeated warnings that the country's economy could not continue to bear the strain and financial drain of the war against the Tamil militants and the prospect that foreign aid too would not readily be forthcoming if the senseless carnage continued, were no doubt factors which weighed heavily in favour of the settlement. That such a settlement could only have been effected by an agreement with India despite the recent displeasure between the Indian and Sri Lankan Governments, was also part of the inescapable reality of the situation.

### Our Position

It may be noted that we of the Christian Workers Fellowship (CWF) have consistently stood for a negotiated political settlement to our vexed "ethnic" problem, based on a form of regional autonomy through the devolution of power from the Centre. More particularly we have been supportive of the efforts made by the working class parties in this regard to advance the system of Provincial Councils not merely in the north and east to solve the Tamil problem alone, but throughout the island as a means to counter also the unhealthy trends towards authoritarian rule that have become so painfully evident especially in more recent times. We are happy therefore to note that the Peace Accord signed between Sri Lanka and India on July 29 ensures that Provincial Councils will be so constituted and that elections would be held throughout the island to these bodies before the end of the year.

The Agreement provides that the proposals negotiated from May 4 to December 19, 1986 are to be acted upon as further refined through discussions. As regards the thorny problem of the north-east merger demanded by the Tamil groups in conformity with their concept of a Tamil homeland (which the Government has rejected until now), the Agreement envisages the setting up of a single Provincial Council for the Northern and Eastern Provinces (inclusive of the Ampara electoral district) subject to a referendum to be held before December 31 next year (1988) in the Eastern Provinces to determine by a single majority whether the people of the Province wish to continue to be so linked with the North or wish to have a separate Provincial Council of their own.

While the CWF has not favoured the creation of separate "homelands" for our different communities and has preferred to regard our island as the "common homeland" of all such communities (due regard being had of course to the distinct cultural identities of such communities resident in different parts of the island), we have consistently stood also for the democratic right of the people of the Eastern Province to determine through a referendum whether they would wish to be administered together with the North or to have a separate Council of their own for that purpose. Although the present Agreement now provides for a single Provincial Council in the first instance, the provision for a referendum to be held before December 31 next year at which all persons displaced by ethnic violence or other reasons will have the right to vote and determine their future as people of the Eastern Province, safeguard this democratic right and we do not therefore find it difficult to accept this proposal as formulated in the Agreement as a practical solution.

As regards the other controversial issue of the official language, the Agreement provides that while Sinhala will be the official language, Tamil and English too would be official languages. We would have thought that the provision for Tamil should have been sufficient. In fact it was this position of both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages that was from the very inception advanced by the Left parties but was opportunistically opposed by parties pedaling Sinhala chauvinism to isolate and defeat the Left.

Continued on inside back cover



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SECOND + THIRD QUARTER 1987

Annual : Rs. 30 (Local)  
Asian : U.S.\$ 6.00  
Others : U.S.\$ 12.00

Cheques in favour of  
CHRISTIAN WORKERS FELLOWSHIP  
39, BRISTOL STREET,  
COLOMBO 1 -- SRI LANKA  
TELEPHONE : 27708

Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

This issue was delayed due to The Censorship  
We apologise to readers for the inconvenience caused.

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Cover Photos : Frontline, Sriyantha Walpola

# From our readers

## Appreciation

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed an article of mine to be considered for publication.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation in reading a journal of such quality as the Christian Worker is. Its news, views and comments, threaded together with an underlying concern for justice, has given me much food for thought.

Sincerely yours,  
Sgd. C. R. A. Hoole  
4322, Walnut St.,  
Philadelphia, USA  
03.04.87

## The Two Hands of Fundamentalism

The critiques of fundamentalism appearing in the issue of CW, Jan. 1987, collectively express a view that is commonly associated with the political left. Based on data collected from the American Continent, the writers uniformly perceive fundamentalism as an essentially right wing movement opposed to socio-political changes, which at the same time gives religious sanction in defence of the established order. Some dangerous trends are discerned in Central America, where covertly and overtly, fundamentalism is seen to be justifying the rule of military dictators,

while showing callous disregard for the plight of the vast majority who are poor and oppressed. Luis Palau's association with Rios Montt is cited in support of this claim.

While these observations may be accurate, I still have some difficulty in accepting the view that fundamentalism is universally a right-wing movement. In the last analysis, evidence cited by the authors appears selective, since they have conveniently ignored most of the available data.

In fact, it is possible to make a completely different case for fundamentalism by taking Eastern Europe as the field of inquiry.



From a phenomenological perspective, fundamentalism in this region bears all the hallmarks of a left wing movement. In a political order that breeds elitism and absolute authoritarianism, the Baptist fundamentalists are a unique embodiment of egalitarian values.

It was Lenin who first endorsed the validity of the personal dictator. At the Ninth Congress of the Communist party of Russia, in 1920, he declared: "Socialist Soviet democracy is in no way incompatible with the personal power of dictatorship. The will of the class is occasionally carried forward by a dictator, who sometimes does a better job by himself, and often is more necessary..." He never ceased to repeat that theme. From this point on, the drift towards the cult of the person was inevitable. The dictator became a fervently adored man who concentrated in himself all the hopes of the people. The Baptists have a remarkable record of showing resistance to what is basically a traditional imperial religion. Against this background, the Baptist fundamentalists have consistently affirmed the right of the congregation, which finds its theological basis in the general priesthood and kingship of all believers — the cornerstone of modern democracy.

In relation to the state, the fundamentalists are by far one of the most active groups protesting against human rights violations. As a result, the state has condemned many of these protestors to The Gulag Archipelago. Many young Baptists still refuse to take military oaths, and so render their services in Siberia instead of Afghanistan. Within a system that advocates Victorian morality and demands servile obedience, the fundamentalists emerge as a "progressive" force in East Europe.

Also, they represent the truly poor in this region. The fundamentalists have suffered much from political poverty. They lack the means of intervening with the authorities. They are those who lack influence, those whom the administration thinks of as the "vulgar herd". As people who do not share in any decision making, they are completely lost in anonymity.

Although different in shape and orientation, doctrinally, the East European Baptists have a great deal in common with their counterparts in Southern United States. Hence in common solidarity right wing fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell, have taken upon themselves the task of championing the cause of the poor in East Europe! The left, by contrast, has shown no interest in the fate of these people.

Fundamentalism, it needs to be recognised, has a long and complete history. Its left wing roots are to be found in the Anabaptist tradition. In the U.S., the Mennonite and Amish Churches with their stronghold in the Pennsylvanian country side represent this tradition. The Mennonites have an impressive record in peace work. One of their current projects involves rebuilding hospitals bombed by the American air force in Cambodia.

Finally, I wish to ask why these writers have singled out fundamentalism alone for their criticism of U.S. activities abroad? It is a well known fact that American foreign policy has remained fascist, irrespective of the political party in power, be it liberal or conservative. This policy, moreover has received religious undergirding through the support of all the churches, including the mainline. This is because civil religion — as Martin E. Marty has argued in his book, *The Nation of Behavers* is the real religion of the American

people, in which all Christians and other religionists participate. Fundamentalism of the right is then only one of several manifestations of American civil religion. Today it remains the most visible since it is growing at the expense of others, but that trend may not last. How else are we to explain American military adventurism in Southeast Asia during a liberal era?

— C. R. A. Hoole

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## In Defence of the LSSP

The Statement of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party published in the last issue of the *Christian Worker* on the current conflict deals with the progress made by the Peace Seeking Forces in Sri Lanka. It acknowledges the success these forces have achieved in bringing the Government to accept the need to devolve and decentralise the powers of the central government to regional and local units, and put forward concrete but improvable proposals for a Provincial Council system and points out to the remaining task to bring the armed Eelamist organizations into the peace by negotiation process.

This statement appears to have aroused attack on the LSSP from some quarters.

The call is not to the Tamil Community which includes peace-seeking forces but to the armed Eelamist organizations. In the statement the LSSP requests the peace seeking forces who have succeeded in bringing the Government to accept the need to devolve and decentralise the powers of the central Government to regional units to press on the armed Eelamist organisations to come to the negotiating table.



Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

## Tiger Trouble (s)

Just before this issue of *Christian Worker* was to be released from the press, events in the North and East have made necessary yet another comment by us, however brief. This was prompted further by recent visits of the Christian Workers Fellowship (CWF) leadership in Colombo to meet with CWF groups in Jaffna and its Trincomalee group in the East.

### RESPONSE TO THE ACCORD

While the people in Jaffna are obviously supportive of the Peace Accord and relieved that the fighting between the Government troops and militants have stopped (for it was they who were apparently also the chief victims of that war), it was also clear that a significant minority and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in particular were not at all pleased with the developments. This displeasure at first hidden for the most part has now turned to open hostility and bitter criticism of India and the Indian Peace Keeping Force stationed in the North and East on the ground that the terms of the Peace Accord were not being honoured, questioning also the impartiality of the Indian Forces.

This hostility of the Tigers can well be understood in the context of their being deprived of the degree of armed power they previously enjoyed and with the suracing now of rival militant groups whom they had earlier liquidated physically in

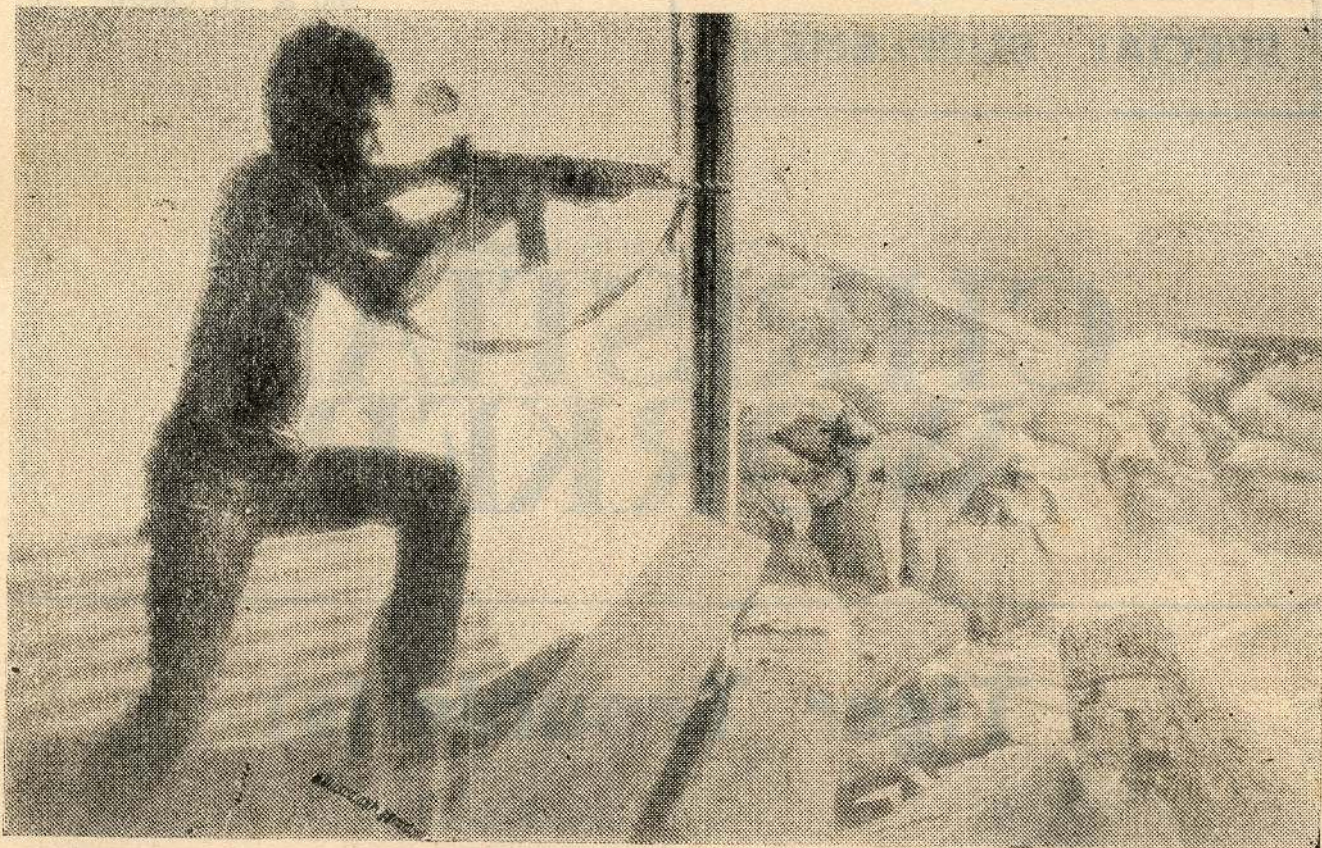
numbers. The re-appearance therefore of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamileelam (PLOT), the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) with the "Three Star" red and black flags and the ENDLF (Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front) banner of these groups being much in evidence south of the Peninsula from below Elephant Pass to Vavuniya, would undoubtedly have added to their chagrin. Armed confrontation between the LTTE and other militant groups in such a situation was therefore a foregone conclusion, given the history of these groups and the nature of their in-fighting. The LTTE have alleged that the Indian Peace Keeping Force is supportive of the operations of the other rival militant groups who have apparently now formed an alliance. Perhaps as a retaliatory action to the shooting down of certain LTTE militants and to the challenge posed to the LTTE by other militant groups, LTTE cadres recently killed PLOT deputy leader Vasudevan at Kiran along with many other unarmed members of PLOT and EPRLF in the East, forcing several others to take shelter with the Special Task Force in Batticaloa.

On September 15, an LTTE leader Amirthalingam Thileepan started a fast to death at the Nallur Kandasamy Temple in Jaffna followed by picketing of Government offices by LTTE members in support of five demands made by the LTTE, namely the release of the remain-

ing Tamils held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the stopping of Sinhala colonies being set up within the "Tamil home land," the surrender of arms by all home guards to the Indian Peace Keeping Force, withdrawal of all army camps in the schools and non-establishment of police stations in the North and East, and commencement of rehabilitation work only after an interim administration was set up. Not unnaturally these non-violent protests have also been accompanied by not so nonviolent demonstrations particularly at police stations in the North. A fast to death commenced in Batticaloa by the LTTE on the same demands has since been given up. Unlike in Jaffna and Batticaloa, the LTTE protest at Trincomalee led to clashes with some Sinhalese and the imposition of a 36 hour curfew after Indian Peace Keeping Forces had to fire to disperse the two groups, resulting in three deaths. (Significantly in Trincomalee it is the Sinhalese groups who are apprehensive of their security with the withdrawal of the Sri Lankan troops and unhappy with the Indian Peace Keeping Force).

It is however expected that Thileepan who is in a critical condition as a result of his fast in Jaffna will die soon leading to yet another outburst of Tiger sentiment in the North.





## Goodwill Mission Harrassed

In the context of the LTTE agitation, the harsh treatment meted out to a recent goodwill mission to Jaffna is significant.

This goodwill mission comprised of several prominent individuals, including clergy, involved in religious and social work, went to Jaffna on 14th September. Among them were Fr. Yohan Devananda (leader), Canon John Isaac, Kingsley Perera of the Christian Workers Fellowship, Dr. Sunil Ratnapriya General Secretary of the Government Medical Officers Association, the Ven. Delgalle Padumasiri, Chief Incumbent of the Kankesarturai Buddhist Vihare and almost incongruously Mr. Shelton Ranaraja, Deputy Minister of Justice. People were at first confused as to how a prominent Government politician could be on a mission along with certain other individuals who had been so highly critical of the policy pursued in the past by the Government *vis-a-vis* the Tamil issue. However according to the information available to us, Mr. Shelton Ranaraja had always shown himself to be a very humane person devoid of racial prejudice as was acknowledged by the Tamil militants themselves who made no attempt to do him any harm during his stay in Jaffna.

This goodwill mission was able to move about freely with people in Jaffna during their stay and the doctors who were in the group held medical clinics too in the KKS area. Food and money were also given to the most needy. The members met several Government officials, doctors and prominent citizens, visited several Hindu temples and toured the badly affected Vadamarachchi area in the company of two LTTE members. They met LTTE leaders, saw an LTTE demonstration at Velvettuturai and the crowd gathered at the Nallur Temple to support the LTTE leader fasting there.

Since the hartal declared by the LTTE was in operation at the time of their return to Colombo, a member of the mission had received LTTE approval for the journey back. Travelling in two vehicles, the members of the mission got past several LTTE check points and barriers set up at different places. They however also noticed that a van seemed to be following them all the way from Jaffna town.

After passing Pallai near Yakachchi, this van overtook their two vehicles. After Yakachchi, the travellers noticed the same van parked by the side of the road in a deserted spot. On passing the parked van for about 100 yards, about six youths were seen to jump on to the road stopping the vehicles armed with machine guns and hand grenades, one of them carrying a walkie-talkie. They spoke threateningly and abusively to those in the vehicles even dragging some of them out of the vehicles. Two of the youth having snatched the vehicle keys from the drivers turned the vehicles around while the others had the travellers lined up on the road with hands upraised at the point of the gun. No one was allowed to talk. "We know who you are — you are Indian supporters" said one of the youth. Having then jumped into the two hijacked vehicles they left the stunned travellers standing on the road while they sped off with the two vehicles, luggage and all, and their own van, back in the direction of Palali. Their parting shot shouted from one of the vehicles was "We are Rajan's group. Don't come here again!"



The travellers had no option but to travel on foot towards Elephant Pass which was about 4 miles away until after a two mile walk they caught a bus in which they were able to get back home. People in the area from whom they inquired as to who the armed youth could possibly have been, said it was the LTTE. In any case the claim to be "Rajan's group" was obviously a ruse to cover up the identity of the gang. That it was the LTTE that was in exclusive control of this area with no other militant group being permitted to operate cannot however be disputed. The anti-Indian sentiments voiced by the youthful armed gang too would only go to confirm this suspicion. The message however was clear and unambiguous: leave us alone, don't interfere!

We have related this whole episode only to show how inter-racial amity and the very promising prospect of at least

reaching towards a settlement of our Tamil issue on the basis of a devolution of power to the provinces, appears to be in danger of being fouled by sinister forces. The failure to get the peace process fully moving can be seen in the use of unsundered weapons in the internecine fighting that has now erupted between rival militant groups. While the Indian Peace Keeping Force is here admittedly for the purpose of ensuring peace between the Government Forces and militants, decisive action has obviously to be taken now to stop the present outburst of violence between the Tigers and other militant groups in order to ensure in terms of the Peace Accord that civilian administration will properly be restored in the North and East without delay.

It so appears that the gun tends to evolve a logic of its own, turning its user into

an extension of itself. The higher technology represented by the gun marks a qualitative leap *vis-a-vis* human relationships in a conflictive situation. Rational thought and human communication is subsumed in the "final solution" offered by the gun. We have already seen this on a massive scale in Lebanon. Now do we ourselves have to go through a very personalised reproduction of a similar situation where everybody seems to be shooting at everybody else? Sri-Lankan politics has always appeared to many as a pantomime. But now the drama seems to be turning rapidly into a tragedy on a large scale. We can but hope that firmly action will avert it.

23. Sept. 87.



Picture - Courtesy : *Asiaweek*





## LATE NEWS

Indian High Commissioner J. N. Dixit had a meeting in Jaffna with LTTE leader V. Prabakaran at the latter's request on September 23.

According to reports, Mr. Dixit had effectively answered the five demands made by the LTTE. A new demand however was made by the Tiger Leader which involved the LTTE's role in the interim

administration and the powers it would exercise. Informed sources stated that the LTTE demand amounted to a monopoly of power in the North and East. It also wanted the interim administration given the same powers as would be devolved on the proposed Provincial Councils, these sources said.

25. Sept. 87

# Point Pedro Revisited

Rajan Hoole

The NRTB's route 751 took us through the towns of Udupiddy and Valvettithurai, where the damage close to the town centres had been quite extensive. The worst scenes of destruction were away from the main roads. Most people have been driven so destitute that hardly any repair work had commenced. At Udupiddy, the Church was about the only building left standing in the premises that housed the American Mission School. The wrath of the bulldozers had even been let loose on those long dead, for even their tombs had been flattened. Perhaps, they do represent an army more formidable than those living.

Late in the night at Manthikai, some soldiers greeted us. "Are you Indian or Sri Lankan?" I asked. "Well, you must be new here" replied a soldier, "all Sri Lankan troops have left Manthikai. We are from the 'Madras regiment', here are several of us here including regiments from Punjab and Andhra. You are now in safe hands, and can get about without fear anytime". The expression 'Madras Regiment' was not without emotional significance for a people who for a generation have increasingly looked across the Palk Straits for comfort.

In Ward 6 of Point Pedro hospital, a young boy from Valvettithurai who lost his leg to a shell-blast whilst fleeing his home, told us that Mr. Selvarajah

who occupied the bed opposite had passed away. Mr. Selvarajah from Udupiddy had been badly burnt by a petrol bomb - a Sri Lankan variety of chemical weaponry. The Sri Lankan forces have been at great pains to deny that this weapon was ever used. The last time we had seen Mrs. Selvarajah, sad but composed, nursing her husband who was groaning in pain.

Despite his accustomed calmness, a sign of relief was evident in the smile on Dr. Anandarajan's face. He had been at his post through nearly all the worst of times. His surgical patients have now been taken over by a French surgeon. Unlike their emigre compatriots, those like Dr. Anandarajan may have missed out on what was latest in medical science and on other attractions of employment in the West. But what they have gained is the satisfaction of having obeyed the highest call of duty by having stayed in their land through a crisis, where the need for them was greatest.

## THE PEOPLE

One soon discovers that before you can get down to business with people in Vadamarachchi, you will have to hear them out as they relate the trauma they went through. Unlike in suburban Jaffna, their welcome of the Indian forces is unqualified. The former have escaped the necessity of having to make the dis-

inction between what is desirable and what is possible. People of all ages will readily admit, 'it is because of the Indian forces that we are leading peaceful lives'.

Mrs. Balendra from Goldsmith's Lane whose children together with her sister's children narrowly escaped an aerial bomb blast, told us about the alleged pin-point accuracy of Sri Lankan bomber pilots against terrorist targets. The pilots had made four attempts to bomb a house occupied by militants 100 yards south of hers, and managed to destroy several civilian dwellings, killing at least 8 people. The target remained standing. Pin-point accuracy was brought to bear after 'Operation Liberation' when the army brought a bull-dozer to do the job. The tracks made by the bull-dozer as it turned in from the tarred road are still visible.

Towards the sea, most of the destruction had taken place west of 3rd Cross Street. At the point where 3rd Cross Street meets Beach Road stood the militants' sentry point, a short distance to the east from the Sri Lankan sentry. We could see several houses, including the fishermen's rest which have been reduced to rubble by both naval guns and land based cannon. It was evident from the holes in some of the walls, that they were caused by firing from the sea. Many of the coconut trees were dying because of shrapnel injuries. Mr. Mariadas who had his house on the beach is now left with a pile



of broken concrete, one coconut tree, his old catamaran and a fishing net. One of his daughters is being taken care of by Nuns in Jaffna. The rest of the family including 5 children, had been allowed to stay rent-free in a house belonging to friends who had left Point Pedro. The friends are coming back at the end of the month. Mr. Mariadas is likely to find himself without a home as the rains come. To rebuild his house on his income derived from fishing is likely to prove a task beyond him, considering his enlarged family obligations.

Mr. Anthonypillai, whose retail shop catered to the needs of the area is minus both his capital and income. He hosted us with kurumba from his only bearing coconut tree. The destruction further west along the coast towards Thondamanaru is even more extensive. The task of rehabilitation is so vast that no effort can begin to do justice to the task unless grass roots democratic organisations are rebuilt to ensure continual accountability. Relief can then be channelled through smaller representative organisations based in the areas concerned, with perhaps a centralised system of inspectors to monitor complaints and inadequacies. If not, the task of minimising corruption, which has shown an increasing tendency, and ensuring justice to the worst affected, will turn out to be an impossible one. The last vestiges of democracy went out of the window when the old citizens' committees were meddled with.

## POINT PEDRO TOWN

The city centre at Point Pedro is a mess of rubble. Rain water had collected on the floors of roofless shop buildings. Veeravagu building which was being built as a multi-storeyed complex is beyond repair with gaping holes and parts in a state of semi-collapse.

Moving towards Main Street, you find the statue of Mahatma Gandhi with its head missing. Creepers have covered and even penetrated shop buildings, giving the scene a jungly air. One need not go far to discover that a very thin line separates civilisation from barbarism and what a delicate thing civilisation is. Walking up Main Street the emptiness reminds one of the lively streets of former days and of the cool-bar that used to do a brisk trade in iced lime juice, which now lies shuttered.

To the north one sees the barrier of sand and unarmed Sri Lankan troops lounging about. Some troops were shifting tiles from a damaged house within the perimeter to one that was more habitable preparing for the on-coming rains. The Pillaiyar temple remained more or less intact. But the houses in front have been given the bull-dozer treatment and the boundaries had been obliterated. A militant who had lost an arm stood surveying the scene with emotion. Another

remarked, "whoever, is responsible for this destruction has done a great service to the lawyers and surveyors who are going to come back in a big way when litigation over boundaries begins".

Kugan studio, the destination of every couple upon their nuptial eve, of proud parents with daughter who passes from tittering girlhood into blushing womanhood or with son, newly clad in cape and scroll, stands desolate behind military lines, its forlorn character being emphasised by sandbags piled against its upstairs windows to accommodate snipers. Lines of people came and went, treading cautiously on the tarred portions of the road, lest they trod on mines, treacherously awaiting the unwary. With grave faces they stood and gazed, wondering when symbols of life, like Kugan studio, will triumph over the symbols of death which confronted them.

## THE MILITANTS

At Munai beach life was stirring once again. People whose fear of the sea had been dispelled came once more with children and dogs, to build sand-castles and lakes at the edge of the rising tide; or simply to sit down to the feel of mystic repose as light from the full moon mingles with the fading evening twilight, and Venus appears through wisps of passing clouds.

A young boy was seated with his little sister and friend, with whom my wife struck up a conversation. His name was Thevaraja and was 17 years in age. He and his friend had been trained members of the LTTE, attached to the Point Pedro sentry. During 'Operation Liberation' they had been without proper food for about 5 days. After 3 gruelling days they had withdrawn from Point Pedro and had spent 2 days surrounding the new army post at Mulli. It was only when they reached Thenmarachchi they did eat properly. They were very much grieved that the people did not appreciate their sacrifice and kept blaming them for leaving them and going away during 'Operation Liberation'. "It is we who have liberated our people", they said, "It is because of us that the Indian forces were able to come and give us peace and security". The people for their part had their own sufferings. But one could not help being moved by the sincere conviction of these boys.

They said that they had surrendered their guns to their group and were now disbanded. They had been told that those 18 and above would be called up for Police duties. But they were not interested as they felt that their task of winning freedom for their people was done, and besides they had their own profession - that of fishing. Their families too were displaced persons from near Pedro pier. They related an argument that had taken place that morning between some retired militants and some Sri Lankan Black

Shirts who had brought a vehicle from Point Pedro to be washed at the CTB depot. The militants has asked "how was the Nelliady Operation?". The Black Shirts replied "how was Operation Liberation?". "You succeeded only because you had bombers and helicopters", responded the militants. "But you ran away didn't you?" answered the Black Shirts. The argument had proceeded in this vein. They had heard one Black Shirt telling another "these chaps are teasing us".

The following evening at the same place I introduced a Sinhalese friend to these boys and told them that this person was of an independent mind and had tried to present the case of the Tamils to others. "We are glad to know there are such Sinhalese and are pleased to meet you" said Thevaraja, "but if you had come earlier, we may have taken you for a spy and have shot you". The conversation which followed was most cordial. My Sinhalese friend was invited for a kurumba feed and a ride on a catamaran. This was accepted two days later. Thevaraja had also made a most singular offer to my Sinhalese friend. This was to take him to Point Pedro camp and introduce him to Sinhalese Sri Lankan troops - their erstwhile foes.

## THE SRI LANKAN FORCES

A few days later in the company of an American friend and another Sinhalese friend, we approached the entrance of the Point Pedro army camp on First Cross Street. Hopping over the barbed wire roll we spoke to the soliders on sentry duty. A request was made to see the Officer-in-Charge. All Sri Lankan soldiers appeared unarmed.

Karunaratne, a young Sinhalese soldier, appeared very much at ease. He had discarded his boots for rubber slippers. He was friendly, perhaps a little shy, and surprisingly open-minded. He was evidently happy that the fighting was over, but was reluctant to admit that he was happy with the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. However, he admitted that his mother would certainly be happy. Asked whether his mother was happy with his joining the army, he replied that she was at first unhappy, but had later accepted it. He accepted the Indo-Sri Lanka accord at face value - that there was no loss of sovereignty and that the Indian troops will soon leave. When it was put to him that the war had been unwinnable and that by Tamils and Sinhalese foolishly fighting each other, the real winner had been India, he readily concurred. Asked if it would have been much better had a political solution been when the problem began in 1974, he replied that it should have been settled then with decisive action. He was surprised that a Sinhalese had come to Jaffna and asked how he had managed. My friend replied that he had simply come by bus. Karunaratne then asked if there were Muslims left in



Jaffna. My American friend replied that he had seen Muslims in Jaffna. Karunaratne said that they had no problems with militants and that many of them came regularly and spoke to them. Karunaratne from the Gemunu Watch was neither angry nor disappointed. But he was puzzled by the manner in which reality differed from what he had been made to believe.

## OFFICERS

We were later met by the Major-in-Charge of the camp and by two other officers who came to the entrance unarmed. One officer who was in a black uniform which resembled a tight-fitting boiler suit, denied when asked, that he was trained in Pakistan. He said he was trained in Ceylon and that the uniform was that of the armoured corps. The Major admitted that the 'terrorists' came frequently to the entrance and talked to the low ranks. But that he had not seen them and did not know who they were. When asked if he still insisted on calling them terrorists, an answer was not forthcoming. The Major then said that with the Tamils surrendering their arms, he did not anticipate many problems. He was asked if it was not the error of their entire approach that the Tamil people at large were thought of as bearing arms, and besides if a person in his position thought that way would not be flawed..... To this he replied, "you know whom I mean. I am referring to the LTTE". While talking about a solution, the officer in black said, "it will have to be an 80% military solution, and then we must win the goodwill of the people".

It was then put to him, "during this Vadamarachchi operation over 300 non-combatant civilians had been killed as a result of military action. Is it not then meaningless to speak of goodwill?". The officer, the shortest of the three then snapped in, "What 300. It is over 500". We were not sure if he was being sarcastic or factual. He went on, "many people died in the cross-fire. An army must protect the government and must protect itself. When we see a young man, we cannot immediately say if he is armed or not. So we shoot". It was then asked of him, "how do you then explain the several instances of people over 60 years old being killed?". The short officer replied, "we had asked people to go to places of refuge. But many of them stayed in their homes and in trenches. What do we then make of it? Is it not because the terrorists promised them protection and asked them to stay?". It was put to him, "many places of refuge such as

Marianman temple in Alvai and Murugan temple at Nelliady had been shelled, killing several people. It was then natural for people to think that the government was deliberately shelling these places of refuge, causing them to keep away". "That is an exaggeration" said the officer in black, "there may have been a few accidental instances. But the rest is terrorist propaganda".

Asked about militant casualties, the Major replied, "I cannot give you an accurate figure. But we got a good deal of information by tapping their communications".

The short officer went on, "you know, in Malaysia and Singapore the majority of the people who were killed during the insurgency were Chinese". Perhaps he meant to say that it should naturally be the Tamils here. My Sinhalese companion said, "simply because others do the wrong thing, it does not mean that we should do likewise". The short officer added, "Well, we follow orders and do what we are asked to do". He was then asked, "is it not why you lost the war?". At this point the two officers glanced at the Major. Perhaps, they thought they were unable to communicate sense. The Major said, "it is all over now. Let us not talk about the past". We exchanged handshakes and parted.

One could not help reflecting on the difference between the officers and the ranks. The latter had a greater sense of realism. The officers were living in a past that had slipped them by. They were trapped in ways of thinking which had let them down. While they talked about a military solution, it was hard for them to understand that India had imposed a solution where the iron military fist was carefully concealed beneath a velvet glove. While India has knocked sense into the political bosses at the top, and the ranks have learnt some sense from the world that they were directly exposed to, the officers in their mental and physical fortresses will face serious problems of adjustment.

## INDIAN FORCES

One notices very quickly that the Indian forces are very much at home with the civilian population. At Manthikai we saw children playing with helmets belonging to Indian troops. One soldier was telling a civilian that Jaffna was very much like Kerala. They are generally taken aback by the knowledge young boys have of weaponry. On one occasion some girls riding bicycles, dressed in frocks with their legs exposed were asked to get down and walk by Indian troops, who said that it was not a thing that girls should do. On another occasion an Indian Officer slapped both an Indian soldier and a local youngster who had

offered toddy to the former, saying that civilians should avoid actions which would vitiate their peace keeping role.

The peace keeping force has so far maintained a low profile in Jaffna as the Sri Lankan forces were only too glad to get back to barracks and the problem of rival militant groups was minimal. Their role in Jaffna has been mainly confined to mine clearing. The grief felt in Jaffna was both deep and universal at the deaths of Major Dilip Singh, Mohinder Rao and Lieutenant Vickram from the 8th Battalion (Engineers) in a mine clearing accident. These were men who gave their lives in a mission of peace for others.

The situation in Batticaloa was different. Right up to the signing of the peace accord, the Special Task Force enjoyed a license to kill which they used with total immunity. On the day the accord was signed (29 July) the STF was ordered to suspend operations. Crowds celebrated the accord in town while the STF watched sulkily. (There was joy in Jaffna, but this was not publicly displayed - again an instance of how perceptions in the North have drifted from those in the East). Seeing this, some of the community leaders informed the Indian embassy in Colombo that the situation in Batticaloa was explosive - just one hot-head could trigger off a catastrophe. The Indian embassy told them not to worry without committing themselves further. Within two days the Indian forces were in Batticaloa. In Batticaloa they have been strict with all parties. It is understood that the Indians have called for a closure of the dreaded STF camps. In one incident a militant group tried to prevent another from holding a public meeting. The Indian forces intervened and allowed the meeting to proceed in the name of democracy.

Some fear of Indian forces resulted from unsubstantiated propaganda to the effect that Indian forces in Bangladesh had gone on a raping spree. We heard an allegation from a lady at Manthikai, who seemed to believe it, that an Indian soldier had raped a woman at Thondamanaru, who had been admitted to the hospital and had just been discharged. On checking with the hospital we were told that a 45 year old woman from Thondamanaru was admitted to Ward 2 with abdominal pains on 3rd August. She had alleged rape and had made a Police report. But the party against whom the allegation was made had no connection with the Indian army.

An Indian soldier Kalyanasundaram, addressing members of the public near the Jaffna Fort said, "many people have



asked me about the alleged sexual misbehaviour of Indian forces in Bangladesh. Such allegations are malicious, and I am greatly pained. We are only here to protect you and bring you peace".

## THE PUNJAB

A new phenomenon for people in this country is how the Indian army, a multi-racial unit knitted together under a secular democracy can operate efficiently with a spirit of genuine comradeship. Some friends of mine speaking to a senior Sikh army officer asked him several questions which he parried with considerable diplomatic finess. On being asked if the situation in Panjab had any similarities to the situation here, his answer was in contrast non-committal. There was no doubt that he was loyal to the Indian Federation. But on the subject of Punjab he was stricken by a touch of sadness. It is remarkable how India, which has been so far surprisingly successful in tackling the Sri Lankan problem, has not put its vision and wisdom to bear in tackling the Punjab issue. Perhaps, they should make a close study of how the situation in Sri Lanka deteriorated over the years.

A senior government official who is doing a doctorate in ethnic studies at Harvard told us "the Barnala government consisting of the Akali Dhal, was handling the problem as best as it could be handled. Rajiv Gandhi dismissed that government in the hope of winning the Haryana elections and made the problem much worse by imposing direct rule. Almost anyone could have told him that it was not going to work". An American who was in our company said that in such problems, 90% of the solution consists in unwinding the damage that has been done.

If India cannot solve the Punjab problem while there are a large number of responsible Sikhs, like the army officer,

committed to and having a vested interest in the Indian union, one hates to think of the outcome. There seems to remain in the Indian mind, an unresolved tension between violent and non-violent approaches.

## DAWN

The catamaran bearing Thevaraja and his friend glided through the gap in the reef, and plunged into the spray as foamy breakers crashed round about them. Symbolic of the labours of the new day, their struggling forms were silhouetted against the golden disk of the rising sun. Squalling sea-gulls dived and then floated along, their enfolded feet barly touching the shimmering ripples.

For Thevaraja and his friend, it was the end of a trust with a strange destiny. Theirs had been a modest role in a large drama of interwoven plots, involving powers great and small. Actors would appear on the stage, make extravagant claim to authority, and then slink away. They would go down with more or less dignity on the generosity of their adversaries. India for its part allowed its rivals the dignity of face-saving public protestations. No single party in this country was big enough to allow a rival the courtesy of stating his case: they were traitors or criminals by definition. There was a great deal of heroism and sacrifice from many young men like Thevaraja and Karunaratne — even when the cause was obscure. They were in general innocent of the miry intrigues and evasions of those who led them. Many of them died abjectly and even in humiliation, and the suffering was intense. No less was the suffering of thousands of ordinary people.

The two boys were unheeding of the labyrinthine nature of their saga. They simply believed themselves to have been soldiers, whose work as done. They

were only dimly aware of the even greater mysteries that lay beneath the surface of the sea, the scene of their daily toil. Beneath the endless blue burgeoned myriads of living forms, from the tiny amoeba to the mighty whale. In its bosom lay the moral remains and vanished hopes of men, who braved its perils in search of fortune; from the men of Portugal, Kalinga and China, way back to men of Rome, Persia and Phoenicia. Its tempests were only less perilous perhaps, than our spiritual storms. The hardest lesson to learn of all, is that all strife is labour in vain, except it be to serve the will of the Almighty.

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

A group from the Christian Workers Fellowship visited Jaffna in late August to meet with CWF members and see for themselves the conditions prevailing there in the wake of the Indo-Lankan Peace Accord and visit the Vadamarachchi area in particular. The sense of relief at the cessation of hostilities was seen on the faces of people everywhere. The group also found the people open and ready to speak. The Buddhist monk who was part of the group attracted a lot of attention and questions too wherever the group went. While the majority seemed to favour the presence of Indian troops as being necessary to maintain peace in the present situation, a significant minority — especially those from the LTTE — were non-committal and even showed resentment though for the most part hidden, of the Indian presence.

The impressions received by the CWF group are very much in line with the mood and response of people captured by the writer of the above article exclusively written for *Christian Worker* which reached us about the same time that the group got back from Jaffna.



# The Historical Context of Two Attempted Political Assassinations

The rather naive and ill-conceived attempt on the life of the Indian Premier on the 29th of July was followed by the more sophisticated attempt on the life of President Jayewardene at the Parliamentary Complex. These attempts on the lives of two heads of governments comes in the wake of the signing of the Indo-Lanka accord to end the dirty fratricidal war which has been raging for over four years.

*Christian Worker* unreservedly condemns these cowardly acts of individual terrorism. These are acts of desperation perpetrated by the most unthinking, irresponsible and bestial elements in Sri Lankan society. They are also elements spawned by the ten-year conflict in which such elements held sway on both the contending sides. It can be seen from these latest attempts that they are in no mood to relinquish the position of ascendancy which they have been accustomed to.

Political destabilisation through individual terrorism has apparently become the main strategy of the more sinister of the Sinhala chauvinistic forces, who were unexpectedly defanged by the Indo-Lanka peace accord. They oppose the Indo-Lanka accord though they have no viable alternative of their own to offer.

The attempts of such diabolical forces to drag us once again into the abyss of a "no winners" war, must be firmly countered and exposed for what they are.



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# **Sinhala - Tamil Conflict**

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Our critic questions as to what the LSSP did about the "political decapitation of up-country Tamils". For his information, this question came up in Parliament in the form of two Bills — The Citizenship Bill and the Immigrants and Emigrants Bill. The Second Reading of these two Bills was debated in Parliament on 4 days — 19th, 20th, 24th and 25th of August 1948. The verbatim record of the proceedings is found in the Hansard, column 1679 to 1860 and 1871 to 1970. This would clearly reveal the stand of the Samasamajists who "approached this question from a class angle, independent of racial questions and above racial questions" as Dr. Colvin R. de Silva stated in his speech. Dr. N. M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and Robert Gunawardane, spoke on behalf of the Samasamajists. The Bill was passed 53 to 35. All Samasamajists who were present, 13 in number, voted against. While these 13 voted along with the 7 members of the Ceylon Indian Congress, Messers C. Sittampalam (Mannar), C. Suntharalingam (Vavuniya), V. Nalliah (Kalkudah) and U. S. Ethirimanasingham (Pad-diruppu) voted for the bill. This stand of theirs was vindicated, when their predominantly Tamil speaking constituencies returned the first three to Parliament in the general elections of 1952. Perhaps our critic would like to comment.

Our critic also demands the LSSP to reveal what it did when the members of the Tamil Community were attacked repeatedly culminating with the progrom of July 1983. From 1955 onwards, after Sir John Kotelawala was crowned the king of Delft, the minority question in Ceylon centred around the language question. The LSSP's stand on equality for Sinhalese and Tamil; its denouncement of discriminatory legislation and administrative action, the battles

waged in Parliament on behalf of minorities are too well known. Even to list these instances is a formidable task. This fight continued right up to 1977 when the LSSP ceased to be represented in Parliament. Our critic could not be ignorant of this record of sacrifices the Party, its leadership and membership underwent on its principled stand on the question of minority rights. The LSSP has done whatever it could for all oppressed sections of the Sri Lankan community including the minorities. I am confident that it will continue to do so in the future as well.

— Sydney Wanasinghe

## A Philosophical Note

Dear Sir,

Yours is a journal that seriously attempts to antidote the 'evil' we see and experience daily and for that reason you would increase your 'Service' to humanity if you can arrange to appear in public more often. The 'antidote' you courageously attempt to administer is ineffective (or may I say) less effective because it is so infrequent. I was wondering, therefore, whether if I express some of the thoughts I have it will be of any use. Anyway, here they are.

In this last quarter of the 20th century, is man really civilized? What happens when there is a breakdown in relations? "Civilized" man reaches for the gun or the knife or looks for ways and means of destroying fellow man. That is the picture we have today. Since the end of World War 2 in 1945 (a War to end all wars!) there has been continuous wars and mayhem all over the world (including our poor Sri Lanka) where an estimated 25 to 30 million people have perished.

This, the world calls 'evil', meaning the opposite of 'good'. Plotinus in his Tractate on the Nature and Source of Evil says: "Evil is from the Ancient Kind which we read is the underlying Matter not yet brought to order by the Ideal Form." To the mind of man in his present stage of evolution, this appears as a conflict between Spirit and Matter; or in Chinese terms Yin and Yang, which sounds are reflected in the English words, 'Spirit & Matter'. So to us, at present, Matter appears to resist Spirit. But so does the fulcrum of a lever; yet without a fulcrum leverage is impossible in this world of name and form. So, apart from human values and human experience, evil as an actual Creation does not exist. How does one explain 'Evil?' The origin of evil is in the mind of man of which Satan is the symbol. All things can appear as either evil or good, according to human experience and human use of them. Bacon echoed this teaching in his words: "Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking made it so." The Forces of Darkness or Evil are the Forces of Nature turned to destructive purposes. The Powers of Darkness are those **human beings** who thus turn and distort the Forces of Nature, who resist evolutionary progress, who seek the will of the individual self against the will of the Universe. Here the will of the individual can also mean the will of a group of people who do not reflect the will of the majority but in seats of power seek to impose their will through well-ordered propaganda, through the press (captive) T.V. Radio, plays, speeches etc. etc. *These are the true enemies of man.*

At this time, above all, the world needs men and women who are living dedicated lives, who are under strong self-discipline, who are aiming high intellectually and spiri-

Please Turn to Page 3! →



# The Indo - Sri Lanka Peace Accord

*Events have moved with amazing rapidity while this issue of Christian Worker was being finalised in the press.*

*Agreement reached between President J. R. Jayewardene and Premier Rajiv Gandhi after some hurried negotiations resulted in the sudden visit of the Indian premier to Sri Lanka on July 29 to sign a Peace Accord between the two countries designed to put an end to the four year old war between the Government and Tamil militants which is said to have cost over 6,000 lives.*

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi came to Sri Lanka on this occasion not simply as a mediator in our ethnic conflict but as an interventient and a party ready to enter into an agreement with our Government and guarantee the implementation of its terms by the Tamil militants as well. In this sense, the Peace Accord of July 29 could be regarded as the crowning effect of the military option pursued by our Government more determinedly since May 25 this year. It was also the only way open in the circumstances to put an end to the hostilities.

### TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT

The Agreement signed by Sri Lanka and India recognises the need to preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka which is acknowledged to be a multi-ethnic and a multi-lingual and multi-religious plural society, where "each community has a distinct cultural and linguistic identity which has to be carefully nurtured". It recognises also that "the Northern and Eastern Provinces have been areas of historic habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil

speaking peoples, who have at all times lived together in this territory with other ethnic groups."

- ★ In terms of the above, the Agreement signed between President Jayewardene and Premier Gandhi states that the Northern and Eastern Provinces will have one elected Provincial Council under the proposals for a devolution of power to the provinces, but subject to a referendum to be held on or before 31st December 1988 to enable the people of the Eastern Province to decide whether they would wish to continue to be so linked with the Northern Province or have a separate Provincial Council of their own. This referendum will be monitored by a special committee headed by the Chief Justice and be decided by a simple majority. All persons displaced by ethnic violence or other reasons will have the right to vote in this referendum. (The Agreement states that the Sri Lankan Government also recognises the right of other adjoining provinces in the island to link up in a single provincial council and de-link thereafter by referendum if they so wish).



- ★ Elections to all Provincial Councils in the island will be held before 31st December 1987.
- ★ A cessation of hostilities within 48 hours after signing the Agreement and surrender of arms by Tamil militant groups is provided for, after which the army and other security personnel will be "confined to barracks in camps as on 25th May 1987". The Emergency in the Eastern and Northern Provinces is to be lifted by August 15.
- ★ The President will grant a general amnesty to political and other prisoners now held in custody under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and other emergency laws and to combatants and persons accused or convicted under these laws.
- ★ The Agreement provides the acceptance of proposals negotiated from 4.5.1986 to 19.12.1986. This is conditional to the Indian Government co-operating in their implementation and taking action if any militant groups do not accept this settlement to the extent of affording military assistance to implement the proposals if the Sri Lanka Government so requests it.
- ★ Indian territory will not be used for activities prejudicial to the unity, integrity and security of Sri Lanka in such a situation and the Indian Navy will co-operate with the Sri Lankan Navy in preventing Tamil militant activities from affecting Sri Lanka.
- ★ The Indian Government will expedite the repatriation from Sri Lanka of Indian citizens to India together with the repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The official language of Sri Lanka will be Sinhala but Tamil and English will also be official languages.

There are two other documents that go with the Agreement.

The Annexure to the Agreement spells out further the understanding as regards the Elections to the Provincial Council in the North and East and the Referendum, the surrender of arms by Tamil militants and the Indian Peace Keeping Contingent that may be invited by the Sri Lankan President to guarantee and enforce the cessation of hostilities if required.

There is also an **Exchange of Letters** indicating the intention between the two countries to preserve their good relations which covers matters affecting India's security concerns such as "the employment of foreign military and intelligence personnel" (which would affect the presence of Israeli, Pakistani and British mercenaries) in Sri Lanka, the use of Trincomalee and other ports and the use of facilities granted to "foreign broadcasting organizations" (the Voice of America is obviously intended) to ensure that they are not used inimically for military and intelligence purposes. Trincomalee is to have an oil tank farm as a joint venture of India and Sri Lanka. It is also stated that India "in the same spirit" will (1) deport all Sri Lankan citizens "found to be engaging in terrorist activities or advocating separation or secessionism" and (2) provide training facilities and military supplies for Sri Lankan security forces. India and Sri Lanka have also agreed to set up a "joint consultation mechanism to continuously review matters of common concern" and to monitor the implementation of matters now agreed upon.

### OPPOSITION

Although this Indo-Sri Lankan Accord came at a time when the prospect of a settlement to our "ethnic" conflict seemed to be quite hopeless, there was widespread opposition to it in predominantly Sinhalese areas for understandable reasons. In the first place, the people were not really aware of what the Accord was all about. There was bewilderment and even a sense of outrage on the part of many with this event following upon India's violation of Sri Lanka's airspace and the resulting anti-Indian climate that prevailed and had been deliberately fostered through organized demonstrations and the mass media in the immediately preceding period. In this context the JR-Rajiv Agreement now appeared to be yet another violation of Sri Lanka's independence and national integrity. This was sought to be played up as such and the situation utilised for mass demonstrations of protest by bankrupt and opportunist right-wing political elements led by Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike and her Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) with a motley array of Sinhala racist allies. The activity of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) was much in evidence and the widespread destruction that ensued was no doubt helped by such political gangsters and other criminal elements. President Jayewardene has had also to face opposition in his own party ranks over his decision to sign the Accord. Prime Minister R. Premadasa who has consistently questioned India's goodwill more recently kept away from all proceedings connected



with the signing of the Agreement together with SLFP Opposition Leader Anura Bandaranaike. Certain Ministers too were notable absentees. The cowardly and shameful act of a member of the naval honour guard in hitting the Indian premier with his rifle butt at the farewell ceremony also marred the occasion besides further tarnishing the image of our country.

#### "FORGIVE" SAYS J.R.

Asked if he had a message for the Sri Lankan Tamils who have currently their political representatives in India, Mr. Jayewardene said: "The message is: Forgive. I have forgiven them — If they lay down their arms. Join the mainstream of political life and be elected into positions of power".

The political veteran sounded a self-critical note, admitting "mistakes" made by his party, the UNP, along with various others in the Sinhala political spectrum. In the interview, he elaborated on the nature of the major mistakes made on the Sinhala Only question (the language question) saying he now believed in the soundness of the observation by Colvin R. de Silva in the Fifties: "One language, two nations. Two languages, one nation".

— N. Ram in *The Hindu* of July 31.

#### THE PRESIDENT ANSWERS

Answering Agriculture and Food Minister Gamani Jayasuriya who opposed the Accord as a *volte face* in the context of the President's and his own party's history of opposition to the merger of the North and East, President Jayewardene counselled him on the need to understand the Buddhist truth of Anicca (impermanence of all things). When questioned at the press conference following the Agreement why there was rioting at the time of signing the Accord, the President replied that it was due to Ignorance (Avijja), adding however that the details of the Agreement could not have been explained to the people earlier because they were confidential.

As regards fears expressed about the single Provincial Council for the Northern and Eastern Provinces under the Accord, the President has pointed out that the Eastern Province will now include the electoral district of Ampara (and not minus it as was contemplated in the December 19 proposals). The Eastern Province he said was 33 per cent Muslim, 27 per cent Sinhalese and the balance 40 per cent Tamil,

half of whom are Batticaloa Tamils. Since Jaffna Tamils in the Eastern Province number only 20 per cent, the others could out-vote them easily in any referendum he said.

At the press conference addressed jointly by President Jayewardene and Premier Gandhi, when questioned what had been the turning point in the deadlock, the President amid laughter replied: "The combination of stars and planets changed". Asked whether he was partly responsible for prolonging the ethnic conflict and continuing the war, the President answered "Yes". He added "I've got to tell the people a lot more, that I lacked courage, that I lacked intelligence, that I lacked foresight". Prime Minister Gandhi who was asked why he had signed an Accord with a Government he had recently accused of vacillating and lacking political guts said: "President Jayewardene has shown tremendous courage and statesmanship" in formulating the peace proposals.

The President has certainly shown commendable firmness and determination during this critical period in carrying through this Accord (he has even threatened to dissolve Parliament if it did not pass the necessary legislation to implement the Accord and leave it to a new government that may be elected thereafter to do so.) Indian troops are now present in the Jaffna peninsula at his request to ensure the implementation of the surrender of arms by Tamil militants and the ceasefire. It is unfortunate however that our country's leaders have had to take so much time to better understand the geo-politics of our region.

#### A PROPHECY

In 1985, *Christian Worker* (3rd Quarter) made the following comment in these columns: "Both our Government which now looks to India for assistance as well as the Tamil militants who have sought to make Tamil Nadu a haven, must now reckon with India as the paramount power of the South Asian region... And Rajiv Gandhi can hardly permit a Tamilian South India of some 50 million persons to be disturbed for long by Sri Lanka's racial strife. He can as little permit separatist politics on an island bordering Tamil Nadu (itself rife with anti-Hindi and pan-Tamilian sentiments) as ignore anti-Tamil or anti-Indian moves on the part of its rulers. And indeed we have through our conflictive politics and the seeking of our petty chauvinist and capitalist politicians been brought dangerously close into becoming a client state of our big neighbour. The sooner we recognise this reality the better". Events have now more than vindicated our position.

31 July, 1987





# Background To The Accord

*The following article was originally meant to be the editorial. It will be of interest to readers as it sets out in detail the events that led up to the signing of the historic peace accord between Sri Lanka & India.*

## BOMB BLAST AND AFTERMATH

In the stop press columns of our last issue we were able to briefly report and comment on the massive bomb explosion outrage at the Central Bus Station in Pettah Colombo on April 21 evening during the rush hour and the events that followed. While the immediate backlash in the vicinity was swiftly brought under control, a riot among prisoners at Welikada jail quelled and a demonstration led by Buddhist monks at the General Hospital morgue easily dispersed with tear gas, the Government also acted to assuage the outraged feelings among the Sinhala masses in particular by launching a massive military offensive including aerial bombardment on the Jaffna peninsula, in which casualties were bound to be high and destruction widespread.

In this context the following excerpt from the statement of the Christian Workers Fellowship (CWF) of April 23 appearing in the inside cover of our last issue is pertinent: "Although our Fellowship has repeatedly had to deprecate the unrealistic and intransigent attitude of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) as being obstructive to a settlement (as much as the vacillations on the part of our Government have delayed it), we do not see the present punitive military offensive in Jaffna as a solution to the problem. Even if Jaffna is subjugated militarily its grievances will remain and the continuing repression will only foster bitterness and hatred. In fact we can well approach a situation

similar to that in Northern Ireland where in consequence of a protracted struggle, bomb attacks and killings have become a common occurrence. There obviously can be no victors in such a conflict.

"A realistic appraisal of our present condition should make us recognise more than ever the need now for a negotiated political settlement which alone can ensure the national integrity of our country and help weld our different racial and religious communities into a truly united Sri Lankan nation. That this cannot be done by force of arms should become evident to anyone".

Significantly, at least two Tamil militant groups saw the danger of terrorism and the adverse effects that the violence and bomb attacks on innocent civilians on the part of Tamil militant groups could have. The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) condemned the bomb blast and said this would act as a filip to the "racist atrocities" of the Sri Lankan Government. The People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil-Eelam (PLOT) also condemned the "repulsive" explosion at Colombo and said that such actions would only force the Sinhalese masses into supporting the regime which was suppressing the Tamils and also **make all Tamils appear enemies of the Sinhalese people who were also part of an oppressed class.**



Obviously the highly charged situation called for the highest degree of discipline and restraint the need for which was apparently understood only by the working class parties. For restraint appeared to have been thrown to the winds in that situation by even people in high places. Thus Prime Minister R. Premadasa speaking in Parliament on April 23 stated "Any friend who tells us to find a political solution will be considered as the biggest enemy". He announced the Government's decision in effect to suspend all efforts to find a political solution and stated: that proposals for a negotiated settlement would be considered only after "peace was restored". Said the Prime Minister: "When the lives of our people are in danger we are not prepared to go in for a political solution Prime Minister Premadasa could not resist yet another dig at India: "At a time when our people are being brutally killed, they should help us destroy those elements that are trying to destroy democracy. If not, we will look for solutions from other quarters". In this situation, the three party Left Alliance of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL) and the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP) in a statement warned that "those who promote a military option through racism or confrontation with India are playing with fire. Action along the lines they advocate can well turn Sri Lanka into another Lebanon, Cyprus or Nigeria".

### CRITICISM OF INDIAN POLICY

In fact, it was only when the aerial bombing of the Jaffna peninsula went into its fourth day that the Government of India "strongly condemned the escalatory violence represented by the aerial attacks and other military measures taken by the Sri Lankan Government" a circumstance that did not escape the notice of some Tamil sections, especially since India had promptly condemned the Good Friday massacre at Habarana and the bomb explosion attack in Colombo allegedly the work of Tamil separatists. There was also a sharp criticism of India's handling of the Lanka policy by India's former Foreign Secretary A. P. Venkateswaran who remarked that the Indian Government was not as sensitive to the problems of the Southern States as to those of Northern India. The aspirations of the Tamils in Sri Lanka were not understood by the Indian Government, he regretted. According to Venkateswaran, Indian foreign policy on Sri Lanka lacked consistency and credibility as quick solutions and instant "fixes" were attempted. He said "everything is still being sought to be done in fits and starts leading to a general state of drift in the situation". This indecision and haphazard approach had helped Colombo to ignore the feelings of the Tamils in India.

He blamed the Central Government for removing G. Parathasarathy who had understood the problem. Hastily arranged meetings between the Sri Lankan and Indian leaders only added to the confusion and convinced Sri Lanka that it could act with impunity.

In the meantime, the action of the Tamilnadu Government in announcing its decision to grant Rs. 40 million Indian rupees as "humanitarian" aid to the Tamil militants only made the situation worse. On April 29 President J. R. Jayewardene in an interview with visiting Western correspondents ruled out talks with Tamil militants as long as "they do not surrender their arms". He took strong exception to the Tamilnadu Government's decision to gift aid and described the LTTE and TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation) as the "private armies" of Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran and DMK leader M. Karunanidhi respectively, adding that the situation in the island was "part and parcel of the murky politics of Tamil Nadu" (*The Hindu* of April 30).



Chief Minister Ramachandran

Courtesy India Today

### NOT UNPRODUCTIVE

Despite the exchange of protests and counter-protests between India and Sri Lanka, New Delhi's desire to have the Tamil groups to process the negotiations already had, was an indication that the Indian Government obviously felt that the dialogue it had initiated in the recent past had not been unproductive. This would be evident from a comparative analysis of the proposals contained in Annexure C of 1983 and the December 19 package of last year (1986) which India felt could now form a reasonable basis for a new round of discussions. *The Hindu* of May 2 reported that attention had been drawn to the following

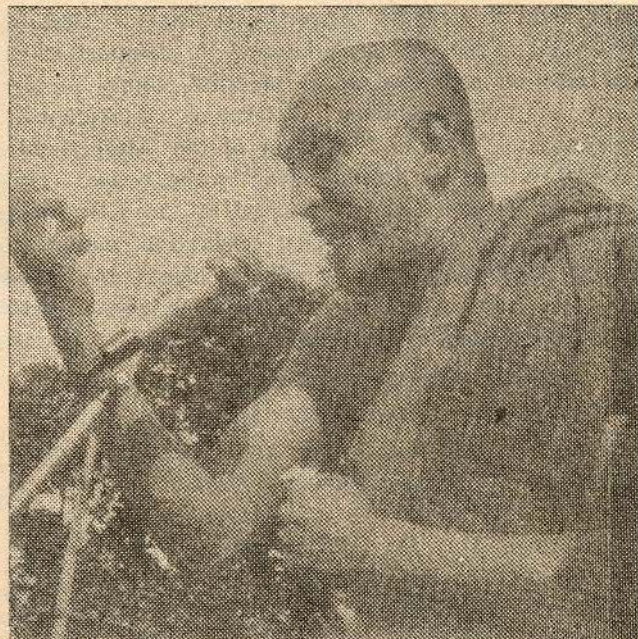


points : (1) In the new package, the provincial councils were to be the units for the devolution of power — a more meaningful unit than the district development councils in the earlier proposals. (2) The December 19 proposals envisaged reconstitution of the Eastern Province with the exclusion of the Ampara electoral district to form a Tamil majority area along with another, Jaffna. (3) In 1983 merger of Northern and Eastern provinces was not envisaged. In 1986 the Sri Lankan Government was agreeable to consider a constitutional amendment in this regard subject to the wishes of the people concerned as ascertained through agreed formalities. (4) There was on linkage in the old package but the new one provided for an inter-ministerial council and common institutions like Governor, High Court and educational systems. (5) The new package clearly demarcated areas of authority for the central and provincial authorities in the form of provincial, reserved and concurrent lists of subjects. (6) The Sri Lankan Government was now agreeable to defining and limiting the Centre's powers. (7) The land settlement policy was to be a devolved subject under the new plan, and (8) There was willingness to consider the creation of the post of Vice President (belonging to a minority).

President Jayewardene in an interview with the *Associated Press* (May 2) said his Government would even go ahead and unilaterally implement the nationwide system of provincial councils, except in the troubled Northern and Eastern Provinces. He said a draft had been prepared for discussion by the Cabinet, his Party and Parliament. But Mr. Jayewardene said : "The chief terrorist group must come to the table and talk without weapons, but they are not prepared to talk. So the Government must restore law and order in any way possible. We cannot let terrorism go unchecked".

Although at India's instance the military offensive launched in the North was suspended or checked, limited actions said to be for law and order enforcement by the Security Forces continued.

On the question of a military or a political solution, Opposition (SLFP) Leader **Anura Bandaranaike** in an interview with *the Island* (May 10) claimed that the Government was now following his policy of a "partial military solution". Mr. Bandaranaike stated : When I brought this up at the emergency sessions in Parliament both the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security laughed at me. Are you telling us to be like Adolf Hitler they retorted. Now they are going for a partial military solution themselves. For them to go for that hundreds of civilians have to die. In the north Tamils and Sinhalese in the south. I think



**The Ven. Sobita: In defence of the Motherland**

a partial military solution is absolutely imperative. There is no other way to bring these Tigers to the negotiating table because India has lost its clout".

#### **KARANDENIYA CALL, MAY DAY BAN AND CRACKDOWN ON "SUBVERSIVES"**

Apart from taking punitive military action in the Jaffna peninsula in the wake of the Colombo bomb blast, President Jayewardene at a UNP meeting in Karadeniya, called on all "democratic" parties to co-operate with the Government to combat terrorism. He stated that his resignation or that of his Government could not help to resolve the crisis. Nor would a general election, he said since elections will be held only after the crisis is over. There may be a need therefore to go before the people once again and seek a referendum until terrorism is wiped out. (General Elections are due in 1989). The President said he had no intention to betray the trust reposed in him by the people and a resignation at this time would amount to cowardic and folly. Under the Constitution the elected President resigned only on grounds of ill health or lunacy. "This is not relevant in my case" he said.

"Strictly as a security measure" the Government also imposed a ban on May processions and meetings. Demonstrations and meetings held in defiance of the ban were attacked by armed police in Colombo. Outside the LSSP office in Union Place the crowd addressed by Left Leaders were attacked just before their dispersal and veteran Left Leader



Dr. Colvin R. de Silva injured by a tear gas grenade which fell at his feet at that time. A demonstration and meeting organised at a Buddhist temple in the name of the Mavubima Surakeema Sanvidanaya (Organisation for the Protection of the Motherland) resulted in 2 deaths through firing by the police. The May Day Workers Mass organised by the CWF was apparently the only May Day celebration permitted by the authorities to go without incident. Ironically May Day was well celebrated in Jaffna though banned by the Government in the rest of the Island.

This was followed by a government crack down on "subversives" in the South. On May 5, President Jayewardene announced that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) were planning another uprising as in 1971. He charged that the Mavubima Surakeema Sanvidanaya May Day demonstration was organised by the JVP. The Secretaries of this Mavubima Surakeema Sanvidanaya or Protection of the Motherland Organisation whose president is Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike promptly disassociated the organisation with the holding of this rally! However some two weeks later Prime Minister Premadasa offered the olive branch to the JVP stating that the Government was prepared to lift the proscription on the JVP to enable it to function openly if it was prepared to give up its politics of violence and join in the democratic processes. The Prime Minister was no doubt remembering the yeoman service rendered by the JVP to the Government in the past with its virulent attacks on the Left parties and its undermining of mass struggles. Undoubtedly Prime Minister Premadasa would find JVP services invaluable in the present difficult situation and in any political manouevres and power struggles in the offing.

The Prime Minister also indicated that elections for local bodies and Pradeshiya Sabhas for which a bill had been rushed through would be held before the end of the year.

#### ACTIVITY ON THE NORTHERN FRONT

Meanwhile news came in of preparations being made in Jaffna for a new military offensive. A feverish building of bunkers or air-raid shelters was reported especially among residents living around security camps in view of the intermittent shelling that was experienced. Iqbal Athas reported in the *Weekend* of May 17 that Jaffna residents had "a unique offer" from the LTTE. They were told to pay a fee of Rs. 1500 to build a bunker or shelter in their homes or in default to pay a fine of Rs. 500, LTTE cadres going on inspection to ascertain whether residents were observing the decree. It was reported that many residents had followed suit, paying Rs. 1500 and providing materials to the Tigers

to have bunkers built in their homes or paying for the materials separately. Athas stated that at least three pregnant mothers had given birth inside bunkers and that professor S. Vaithianadan, Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University had told a Government official that while in Jaffna he sleeps in a bunker. Sleepers were being removed from miles of railway tracks to form the walls and roofs of the bunkers or air raid shelters in homes. In fact when Jaffna was subject to bombing, strafing and shelling after the Colombo bomb blast in April, the Co-ordinating Committee of the Citizens Committee in Jaffna had with some macabre humour stated that since in this International Year of Shelter and Housing, hundreds of houses in the North built with the life savings of people were being destroyed within minutes by shells and bombs (with civilians killed in the process) that the Hon. Prime Minister allocate funds to the Tamil speaking Areas not to build houses but to construct Air Raid Shelters! (*Saturday Review* April 29).

The ill-conceived and hasty decision of the Government (later abandoned) to temporarily shut down the General Hospital, Jaffna on the ground that its premises were used by the Tigers to launch mortar attacks on the Fort and that it anyway would be affected by the cross-fire, confirmed fears that the hospital was being shut down to make way for a military offensive in the peninsula. Bunker building activities increased and this issue only helped the LTTE to rally the Jaffna public to resist the moving of the Hospital and threaten to even run it with their own resources if the government cut off supplies.



LTTE Leader Prabhakaran

The newspapers on May 22 reported that the Tamil Nadu Government had released the cash assistance



of Rs. 40 million Indian rupees to the LTTE and EROS and that the TELO Secretary-General S. Selvam had in a press statement protested against the favouritism shown to these two groups by the Tamil Nadu Government. This naturally occasioned strong protests again on the part of our Government. A representative of the Indian High Commission was summoned to the Foreign Office by Foreign Minister A. C. S. Hameed on May 22. Mr. Hameed said the reported acts in Madras completely cut across what the Government of India is now attempting to do in Delhi. He stated that in the present context India had three responsibilities. First as a neighbouring country, secondly as a country extending its good offices to resolve the present conflict and thirdly as a non-aligned nation. These reported actions challenge the very foundation of these responsibilities. The Minister told the Indian embassy First Secretary that Sri Lanka appreciated that India had a federal form of Government but the Indian Centre "cannot claim ignorance or lack of control over the actions of constituent states". He added "Tamil Nadu stands further condemned of flagrant violation of all established norms of good neighbourly conduct". The Government controlled *Sunday Observer* of May 24 announced an "All out war to crush LTTE" even alleging that India had given Colombo the "green light" for a military crack down on the LTTE (denied strongly by India). The report also stated that the Colombo Government believed that the money given by the Tamil Nadu Government to the LTTE and EROS was to be used to buy weapons and that "military analysts" believe that the LTTE and EROS will go for anti-aircraft weaponry to try neutralise Government's air power. The report said "The analysts expect the Government troops to strike before the LTTE and EROS can make their arms purchases and ferry them across the Palk Straits....". However correct or otherwise this report may be, a massive military offensive was in fact launched after an air drop of leaflets "To all the people of Jaffna" on May 26th, asking them to "move away from areas where armed youth have set up camps, bunkers and stockpiled weapons, explosives, grenades etc." and requesting them to "move into Kovils, Churches and Schools temporarily". The leaflet added: "We greatly regret the inconvenience caused to you and your family. Your safety and our security is our primary concern. Thank you for your co-operation — Security Forces".

#### "OPERATION LIBERATION ONE"

So it was that with the imposition of curfew in the peninsula, "Operation Liberation One" was launched "to restore law and order and extend control to specific areas of the Jaffna peninsula". Sea borne commandos

beached at Vadamaratchi covering the area of Point Pedro, Thondamannaru and Velvettiturai, while air borne contingents moved into position and troops on two flanks under the command of Brigadier Denzil Kobbakaduwa and Colonel Vijaya Wimalaratne commenced their attack. The main thrust of "Operation Liberation One" was to seal off Vadamaratchi a land mass of some 35 square miles which forms a quarter of the territory that makes the Jaffna Peninsula. This is the coastal seaboard flanked on the one side by the Palk Straits and on the other by the lagoon, encompassing Point Pedro, Thondamannaru, Velvettiturai, and Kankasanturai. This operation was to be carried out while troops in other camps came out to engage the militants elsewhere in bunkers that surrounded military camps and beyond — to keep them from beefing up their strength in Vadamaratchi. President Jayewardene was quoted by the *Daily News* of May 28 as saying "we have decided to fight and the fight will go on until they win or we win". The same paper reported the President the very next day as stating that "he as a Buddhist a religion based on **ahimsa** abhorred violence. But as Leader of the nation, it had become his painful duty to issue orders to the army to wage war on the terrorists in the North". The President said: "We are compelled to use violence against those who use violence against innocents. We have to use force against those who break the law in order to maintain law and order. Even Karl Marx said an element of violence was inherent in statecraft. If a state is to sustain itself it has to use force against those who use violence".

#### INDIA'S REACTION

The Indian reaction was this time not slow in coming. On May 27, in a strongly worded statement India's External Affairs Minister N. D. Tiwari condemned the massive assault by the Sri Lankan armed forces on the Jaffna peninsula despite its earlier announcement that it would pursue the path of negotiation. He saw evidence of the increasing influence of external elements in Colombo's latest move. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi too reviewed the situation in the light of the reports from the island. Mr. Tiwari drew the Sri Lankan Government's attention to the tragic consequences of its action which apart from other things would add to the sufferings of the people of Jaffna and lead to a further influx of refugees into India.

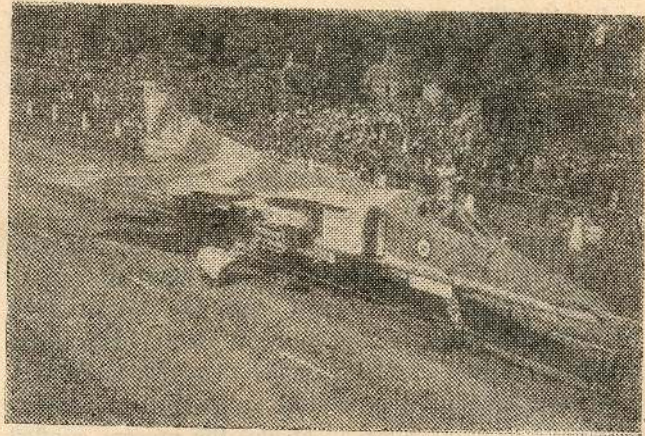
Earlier too, Sri Lanka had in the Indian news figured prominently; even in the Rajya Sabha the Opposition demanded Indian military intervention to protect people of Tamil origin in Sri Lanka. While



this was turned down by the Indian Government, it condemned the Sri Lankan Government's actions and the remarks made by both the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in favour of a military solution to the "ethnic" problem. Union Minister Natwar Singh had characterised as "intemperate" and "astonishing" the remarks of both our President and Prime Minister against Indian advocacy of a negotiated political settlement. "People holding responsible positions in Government should have the wisdom to use words carefully" he said. He regretted that military action should have come at a time when there was a chance of some progress towards a negotiated settlement on the basis of the December 19 proposals. India had also received messages from Sri Lanka that these proposals were still valid. But it was difficult to do serious business if the Government there changed its mind so often (*The Hindu* 13 May). On the same occasion in the Indian Rajya Sabha, Union Minister Natwar Singh said that though what was happening in Sri Lanka was an internal matter, there were certain peculiarities in the Sri Lankan situation which made it one of grave concern for India which India could not disregard. It was an outrageous state of affairs that two million Tamils who had lived for centuries and contributed to the development of the country had been denied basic rights in their country. The second peculiarity of the Sri Lankan situation related to the involvement of foreign powers. Naval activities had taken place around Trincomalee from time to time which caused concern to India. Within Sri Lanka, there was involvement of Israel, Pakistan, South Africa and a private agency from the U.K. We cannot be oblivious to the international environment in and around Sri Lanka. The Prime Minister (Rajiv Gandhi) has brought this to the attention of Sri Lanka. "I also had told the Sri Lankan President if the activities of these powers increased in Sri Lanka, the security environment, which is already bad, will become worse. We simply cannot let that pass" he said. (*The Hindu* May 13).

#### THE INDIAN RELIEF AIR DROP

Indian sentiment however was not confined to words. Reports of the death and destruction resulting from "Operation Liberation One" (a conservative estimate puts the number of Tamils killed to at least 600, mainly civilian) and the mass trek of civilians out of the Vadamaratchi area as refugees to the Thenmaratchi area (especially Chavakachcheri and Kodikamam and other parts of Jaffna and to South India) resulted in a wave of sympathy for the afflicted and strong indignation



**Impressive Air power**

against the Sri Lankan Government, especially in Tamil Nadu. The Indian Government too was hardly pleased with the action taken by our Government.

The six-day-old "Operation Liberation One", ended on Sunday May 31. Indian High Commissioner J. N. Dixit called on Foreign Minister Shahul Hameed at noon the very next day, June 1, and handed a note which said that "the Government and People of India propose to send urgently needed relief" by sea to Jaffna City starting June 3rd. The note setting out the reasons stated "the population of Jaffna, already suffering extreme hardship under the five months old economic blockage imposed by their own government are now becoming the victims of an all out military assault. Thousands have already been killed and hundreds more are dying... Although attempts have been made to keep the tragic story from the world by a communications blockade by sealing off Jaffna... reports are already filtering out... thousands homeless and acute shortages of food, medicine and shelter... The note sought the concurrence of the Sri Lankan Government.

President Jayewardene on being informed took action and after consultation with Opposition Leader Anura Bandaranaike it was agreed there should be a Joint Resolution at an Emergency Session of Parliament specially summoned to condemn the Indian move as an infringement of Sri Lanka's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This was later dropped to Mr. Bandaranaike's chagrin and the Government decided to act alone. The Government stated there was no situation calling for outside assistance but the sending of any persons or goods from India should in any case not be thought of until the modalities of supply and distribution are worked out by the two governments. Any



unilateral action by the Indian Government was to be therefore considered a violation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

Since the Indian boats with aid were to come notwithstanding Sri Lanka's protests, it was decided to prevent the entry of the Indian flotilla. Our surveillance command vessel 'Edithara' therefore radioed the approaching flotilla of 19 boats to refrain from entering our territorial waters. An Indian official on board the Indian vessel in command responded saying: "We are bringing food for the starving people of Jaffna" prompting the retort from the Sri Lankan end: "Please give them to the starving people of Tamil Nadu!". In the parleying that followed the Sri Lankan commander of the Northern naval area explained that the armed services were distributing food and the Sri Lankan Red Cross had not sought relief. "If you still want to give, hand it over to the Government of Sri Lanka" he said. The flotilla ultimately left unable to accomplish its mission. But that was not the end of the story for India sent the threatened relief by air. Five AN 32 aircraft of the Indian Air Force were to execute the air drop with four Mirage 2000 fighters to fire if there was any attempt to obstruct. Sri Lanka could only reply to India that "it is a naked violation of our independence. We have no military or other means of preventing this outrage". Protests were not long in forthcoming and a protest was even lodged by the Government with the UN Secretary General but it did not proceed further advisedly, for as the UNP Government's first representative in New York Mr. B. J. Fernando warned, such a step would only have the issue, something which we could hardly afford after the Human Rights Commission resolution on Sri Lanka a few months ago. And apart from Pakistan and China who were open in their protests over India's violation of Sri Lanka's sovereignty, the Sri Lankan Government's other friends preferred to remain silent or express pious hopes that the disagreement between India and Sri Lanka would be resolved. Although Sri Lanka contemplated keeping off the SAARC Foreign Ministers' meeting in Delhi, India's decision to postpone the meeting in such an event made all the other SAARC members persuade Sri Lanka to attend that meeting.

There can be no doubt of course that Sri Lanka was wronged by India's action in sending vessels with goods and medical assistance without the consent of our government and violating Sri Lanka's air space thereafter by the air drop of such relief over the Jaffna peninsula. Such an action not only harmed the cause of non-alignment, regional co-operation and peace

but also tarnished India's own image as a leader of non-aligned movement and damaged badly its position as mediator in Sri Lanka's "ethnic" conflict. The mediator now appeared as an arbiter seeking to impose its will on a small neighbour.

It must however be also recognised that the foreign policy pursued by our Government had contributed to this situation. The UNP Government's deviation from the policy of non-alignment by handing over some 1200 acres for a Voice of America station in our Island, its reported willingness to give facilities in Trincomalee harbour to the United States endangering the objective of having the Indian Ocean as a peace zone, its pro-U.S. stance and the deployment in Sri Lanka of Israeli and Pakistani military advisers as well as purchases of arms from countries unfriendly to India, all contributed to our Government being suspect in Indian eyes and even regarded as a threat to India's security. The manner in which our Government vacillated in solving our "ethnic" conflict despite India's assistance and the repeated military attacks on Jaffna which showed its preference for a military option and gravely disturbed the 50 million Tamilian inhabitants of Tamil Nadu besides aggravating India's refugee problem by a further exodus there of people from our shores, only exhausted India's patience. It worsened the situation and made Sri Lanka's *bona fides* doubly suspect. Our Government cannot therefore make a pretense of outraged innocence in the situation.

The situation was improved after Foreign Minister Shahul Hameed's participation in the SAARC Foreign Ministers' Conference in Delhi. Said Minister Hameed: "The scars of course will remain. It will take time but certainly there is now a better understanding in Delhi". He said India had promised to do its best to bring Tamil separatists to talk with the Sri Lankan Government. Modalities were also worked out for further Indian relief to Sri Lanka by agreement between the two countries with Sri Lankan Government representatives inspecting the supplies before loading and representatives of the Sri Lanka and India Red Cross, as well as those of Jaffna Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society helping in the distribution with the presence of two representatives of Indian High Commission too. As for India's future role in our conflict Foreign Minister Hameed when questioned, said: "I have not said India should be the mediator or talked of mediation. But to solve the problem Indian participation is necessary because it is an internal problem of Sri Lanka with an external dimension. We would not need India's assistance if the terrorists did not operate from South India" (*The Hindu* June 22.)



## THE "MESSAGE" TO SRI LANKA

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi according to a AFP report of June 17 and quoted both in India and here said that the Air drop of relief supplies was "a message" to Sri Lanka. He said the message "we have sent has to some extent registered". The "message is that India will not just sit back".

It would appear that the "message" was not only to the Sri Lankan Government but perhaps also to the LTTE and the people of Jaffna that in the end it was India that was the real protector of the Tamil people. That this was understood in this way was also underlined by the massive welcome that the Indian High Commission representatives and Red Cross officials received in Jaffna on the arrival of India's "mercy mission" on June 25. They were cheered and garlanded and taken in procession along the decorated streets. Thousands lined up along the roads to wave and cheer at them. Slogans were shouted in praise of Rajiv Gandhi and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran. LTTE representatives also greeted them and an appeal was made to recognise the LTTE officially, the freedom struggle of the Tamils and the Tamil homeland. Both Mr. Puri and Captain Gupta of the Indian High Commission received piles of petitions. *The Hindu* of July 3 also reported that "people put up posters saying they wanted SAMS (surface to air missiles) and not food." The same paper quoted a free lance Australian journalist saying the civilians swarmed in such huge numbers that he "could see the steam rising from the people. There was an old woman yelling 'Save us, we are having a terrible time'". The Indian High Commission answering criticisms made said that the Indian Red Cross "strictly adhered to the performance of their tasks" and added that it was the two High Commission officials (Mr. Puri and Captain Gupta) who had "meetings with representatives of citizens groups in the peninsula" explaining that "such meetings were unavoidable". But as been pointed out in the press, reports also showed Captain Gupta, the High Commission Defence Attache indulging in actions which were clearly avoidable, such as going round the Fort camp viewing its outer perimeters from within 100 yards. Small wonder then that Prime Minister Premadasa himself remarked that that there is a big "doubt whether India is trying to do by good means what they failed to do by bad and illegal means".

Whatever be our Government's position as regards the adequacy of food stocks in the peninsula, it has to be recognised that while middle class employees and those receiving regular incomes were able to secure food (despite some shortages such as that of flour) at

a price in even the most difficult situations, the hundreds of refugees ever on the increase during the "Operation Liberation One" made the distribution of free food a dire necessity. These refugees had nothing on them except what they carried and had nowhere to stay until they were accommodated in friendly places and in refugee camps located in Kovils, Churches, Schools and other public places. Furthermore, with the disruption of economic activity in Jaffna, self-employed persons too were reduced to destitution as were also fishermen who were prevented from going out to sea and displaced by surveillance zones and villagers whose livelihood depended on their cattle and who had to leave their areas. So it was not merely a question of the availability of food supplies but of **purchasing power** as well, which large numbers now reduced to destitution simply did not have. "The economy of the Jaffna peninsula too was in shambles owing to the six-month-old economic blockade and closure of several industries" reported *The Hindu* of June 29. It quoted Mr. R. Balasubramaniam, Vice Chairman of the Jaffna Citizens Committee as saying that more than 200,000 persons were unemployed in the peninsula. They included 20,000 fishermen, 6,500 cement workers, several thousands of textile workers and construction workers, toddy tappers, tinkers and glass factory workers. The two cement factories at Kankesanturai had been closed three months ago for 'security reasons'. Other industries closed included eight textile mills and two aluminium factories. Tinkers were not able to work owing to the shortage of gas and the Government's ban on aluminium transport fearing their use by militants to make arms, led to suspension of construction work in Jaffna. So it was in fact a massive problem.



An informant at Vadamaratchi wearing gunny bag to avoid recognition.



## CONSOLIDATING AT VADAMARATCHI

It was only after "tremendous resistance" by the militants even according to official sources that the Security Forces were able to secure portions of territory in the Vadamaratchi area. Booby traps and land mines laid by the militants caused the most serious damage to the advancing soldiers claiming a heavy toll.

With Colombo's suspension of the offensive, attention had necessarily to be turned towards "winning the hearts and minds" of the people and making preparations to try restore normalcy and a degree of civil administration. This was by no means an easy task in the context of army actions such as the general rounding up of males between the ages of 18-35 years in the area by the forces (2351 in number according to official statistics) for screening after being removed by ship to Boosa in the South from where they were gradually returned barring those suspected of being 'Tigers'. The result has been that most of the youth not involved with the Tigers have left the area preferring to shift to places like Colombo or if possible leave the island altogether.

### TARGETS FOR 'TIGERS'

A series of mini-camps set up by the Forces to consolidate their defence soon became the targets of LTTE militants resorting to their accustomed guerilla tactics. It was to be expected that the take-over of the "Tiger heartland" including Velvettiturai the birth place of its leader Prabhakaran would not go unchallenged and that the LTTE would soon mobilise its forces to strike back.

On June 3rd the LTTE carried out a daring raid elsewhere — on a mini-camp near Jaffna Fort capturing 3 soldiers and destroying completely the 3-storeyed Telecommunications building. The Tigers claimed, that some 100 soldiers were killed in the operation.

Before that on June 2, in the Eastern province, Buddhist monks travelling from Ampara in a bus to attend a Upasampada (higher ordination) ceremony at Kandy were stopped at Arantalawa and massacred: the dead totalled 31 monks and 3 laymen.

On June 16, the LTTE launched an attack on the mini-camp at Kurumbacheddy 3 klms from Palaly and on June 20 it raided a camp 3 miles from Point Pedro in both places with mortar and rocket fire, withdrawing tactically when reinforcements arrived. On June 24 however it was reported that the 'Tigers' had unilaterally suspended military operations to facilitate the orderly distribution of Indian relief supplies to Jaffna. The news of this ceasefire had been formally

conveyed to Sri Lanka by the Indian Government which urged Colombo to reciprocate. On Government orders, it was directed that there should be no offensive operations and that firing should be only in defence.

On July 1, there were clashes outside the peninsula at Mulativu in which the LTTE claimed to have killed 12 soldiers. On July 4, however a two hour battle raged at Udupidy in the Vadamaratchi area and on July 5 night came the news of a devastating attack on the Nelliady Base Camp housed in the two storeyed Nelliady Central College. Nelliady was thought to be secure since it was surrounded by major base camps at Thondamannaru, Velvettiturai, Point Pedro, Puloly and Karaveddi. While mounting this attack, the Tigers had also laid ambushes and booby traps to cut troops from these last named camps (all in Vadamaratchi area) from coming to the help of those at Nelliady. Troops could not be air dropped that night since the Tigers used Fifty Calibre guns against the helicopters and it was only in the morning that there was a lull in the fighting which had gone on continuously for 12 hours. The militants obviously have an enormous arsenal as shown by their use of Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) mortar and small arms. This certainly baffled experts since two LTTE ammunition factories had been destroyed by the troops. "Their main supply lines don't seem to have been, affected at all" said one official. On July 7, the Government media centre recorded sporadic mortar fire at 5 security camps in the peninsula — Iddaikaddu, Valaly, Tholagatty, Vasavilam and Kurumbasetty. The Tigers claimed that 100 soldiers were killed in their offensive at Nelliady (the official death toll was 17 soldiers). The next Friday night, the Tigers attacked the base in Polykandy (also in Vadamaratchi and so it could go on. For LTTE units which had penetrated deep into the region, were consolidating their position and harrassing the troops, affecting their mobility in certain areas.

After the Nelliady attack, it is reported that JOC Chief General Cyril Ranatunga phoned Indian High Commissioner Dixit to tell him that the LTTE had violated its own ceasefire. Later Mr. Dixit is reported to have told Defence Secretary General Attygalle that the Tigers resorted to that action in retaliation because the Special Task Force (STF) commandos had killed a group of 17 civilians during its operations in Batticaloa. But in New Delhi, official Indian Government spokesman G. Parathasarathy was reported as having said that the LTTE claim that it had killed hundreds of Sri Lankan soldiers in the Vadamaratchi region was probably exaggerated. But if it was true, it would prove a serious set-back to India's



efforts to provide goods and other essential commodities to Tamil civilians in the Northern province. In view of the LTTE claim of STF atrocities against civilians in a Batticaloa operation, the Indian High Commissioner was invited to send a nominee of his to Batticaloa to see for himself and Defence Attache B. K. Gupta accordingly visited that area. He is said to have questioned villagers there on whether the STF was harrasing them. When however Captain Gupta wanted to go out on his own, the STF officials objected since they were responsible for his safety. So Captain Gupta was not satisfied. He said : "The villagers were brought to me. They (STF) have secured the area with about 70 to 80 commandos. When I visited the place, I even saw some people tremble in fear because of 'military presence'" (Iqbal Athas in *Weekend* of July 12). This incident was not helpful, to say the least.

However the Tiger attacks on the military mini-camps set up in the Vadamaratchi area and the retaliatory firing by soldiers in response have resulted in bigger numbers of civilians leaving the Vadamaratchi region. The fighting has now compelled almost 90 per cent of the population to move southward to Thenmaratchi. *The Hindu* of July 12 reported, that residents mostly from Nelliady, Karaveddi, Polikandi, Thunnalai, Puloly and Point Pedro have moved out. This situation, if correct, would preclude any attempts to restore normalcy and civil administration in the Vadamaratchi region, rendering the "Operation Liberation One" a fruitless exercise!

#### OPTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

What has happened through this exercise would again go to pin-point the futility of resorting to the military option either to subjugate Jaffna or to use it as a means of bringing the LTTE to the negotiating table. Military force and bloodshed may result in the securing of territory for a while but will also inevitably provoke hatred and bitterness on the part of the conquered. The LTTE reaction is seen in a PTI report appearing in the *Daily News* of July 11 that the 'Tigers' had ruled out early talks with Colombo since the Sri Lankan government was bent on a military solution. 'Tiger' spokesman A. S. Balasingham said the "ground reality" was one of war. He stated "If at all there is a possibility of resumption of negotiations, Sri Lanka has to reverse the situation by withdrawing the troops to pre-offensive positions, by releasing 3500 youth arrested in Vadamaratchi and by creating a conducive climate which I seriously doubt Sri Lanka will do...after SAARC and Aid Consortium meetings, Sri Lanka may launch a major offensive on the Jaffna peninsula to bring the area under the LTTE control under its own administration".



**Mrs. Bandaranaike : counting on ambiguity**

Speaking in London Prime Minister Premadasa for his part bitterly complained : "It has been said that Sri Lanka has been buying time for a military solution. But the truth is that whenever the terrorists were losing ground against the armed forces, India bought time for them by bringing pressure on Sri Lanka under various pretexts". Referring to India's invasion of Sri Lanka's air-space to drop food supplies over Jaffna, Mr. Premadasa said New Delhi was offering various excuses to justify its actions. "It said the air-drop was due to Sri Lanka's flippant attitude. But the world knows that we have always stood for a peaceful settlement. In fact we have offered much more than any other Government would have been able to do". The fact however remains that all such offers beginning with the famous 'Annexure C' were not resolutely pursued and implemented by the Government in the face of opposition in its own ranks and that sought to be whipped up by other racist forces led by Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike and her Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). In fact the Government could well have settled for less if it had not kept delaying a settlement of this vexed problem. It was interesting therefore to read Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's reply to a question posed to her recently whether she thought the SLFP giving less autonomy than what the UNP has already offered, will be acceptable to the Tamil groups. Said Mrs. Bandaranaike : "The basic problem is the Tamil groups not trusting the leadership of this Government. It may be their demands are high because the UNP is in office and they don't expect



the Government to honour any agreement reached. But with a new government and a fresh approach their attitudes could change. If they stick to their demands, we will persuade them to be more reasonable". (*The Island* July 5). While this is certainly an improvement on Mrs. Bandaranaike's earlier position of simply beating Sinhala war drums in a nakedly opportunist manner, it would be surprising if she with her bankrupt right-wing politics and the complete absence of any proffered SLFP 'solution' to the national problem can make an impact now on the Tamil speaking people.

A serious difficulty in any future negotiations would of course be the Tamil militant' insistence on the merger of the North and East as a "Tamil homeland". While we in these columns have not favoured separate homeland for any community and have preferred to regard the whole of our country as a "common homeland" for all our different racial and religious communities (due regard being had of course to the distinct identities of such communities resident in different parts of the island) we have stood also for the democratic right of the people in the Eastern Province to decide whether they should constitute a separate region or be combined with another province. Our position as set out in *Christian Worker* of 1983 (4th Quarter) needs therefore to be underlined: "The devolution of power as envisaged by us must necessarily mean the right of the people of each province or region to participate effectively in running their own affairs. In this context, whether the people of the Eastern Province (be they Tamil, Sinhala or Muslim) would desire to conduct their own affairs separately as a region as would be the case of other regions in the country, or whether they would rather wish to be combined with the Northern Province, should surely be a matter for the people of that province or region to decide and not be imposed on them by those 'playing politics' above. A referendum in the Eastern Province may therefore well decide the issue."

Meanwhile the Indian Government awaits a reply from Sri Lanka with regard to the re-starting of negotiations for a political settlement. Indian External Affairs Minister N. D. Tiwari has stated that India still believed that the December 19 proposals remained "a valid basis for further discussions on the ethnic issue". He hoped "that the Sri Lankan Government will take measures to assuage the sense of embitterment and alienation which has arisen in the minds of its Tamil citizens following the report military operations in the Jaffna peninsula" (*The Hindu* of July 7). The continuance of violence in the Jaffna peninsula in the context of a counter-attack by Tigers and retaliatory action by the troops is obviously not a "conducive climate" for negotiations. And according to reports

coming in, "mopping up" operations by the STF go on in the Eastern Province too with sickening ruthlessness. But in Jaffna itself, while bitterness undoubtedly exists among its residents (how can it be otherwise when there is not a single family here that has not lost a family member or close relative?) there is also now more open criticism of LTTE intransigence and the growing desire for negotiations to end the present senseless killing and wanton destruction. It is also known that the other militant Tamil groups are in favour of negotiations on the basis of the December 19 proposals, but progress on the resumption of negotiations is slow perhaps because of the Government's inability to go very much beyond them. One option for the Government certainly is to now implement unilaterally what it has already agreed on by way of provincial councils and the devolution of power and so demonstrate its *bona fides*. The other course is to work out an acceptable settlement with all concerned helped by the Indian Government. We have in these columns repeatedly drawn attention to the need for for both our Government and the militants to be mindful of the repercussions that our own conflictive politics can have on our big neighbour India. It would be best even at this stage to learn from the mistakes already made instead of simply seeking to vent grievances.

The situation is indeed bleak and depressingly so. But it is our hope that the present seemingly hopeless state will itself shock us and also give rise to sober and realistic thinking free of rancour, prejudice and arrogance. In this connection we would also draw attention to the recent warning made by Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel: "If we go on like this our whole country will soon be ruined. This is an intolerable and impossible situation for any country and we have must a negotiated peaceful settlement soon whether we like it or not. We must have a practical and pragmatic approach to this problem.

"As we cannot alter our geographical situation or our location in the world we must learn to live with our big neighbour India and do everything possible to improve our relations with India. It is only with the help of India that we can settle our ethnic problems whether we like it or not.

"If small countries like Finland can live in harmony with big countries like the Soviet Union, I see no reason why we cannot live in peace and harmony with India and also settle our present problems with the help and support of India" (*Daily News* July 17). Our Government's leaders would do well to heed these words and act on them.

17th July 1987





# The Local Government Elections and the Left

In mid - May 1987 the Government announced elections to 12 Municipal Councils, 39 Urban Councils and 257 new Local Government units called "Pradeshiya Sabhas" which were constituted on the basis of A.G.A's divisions. About a week before the Government called by Gazette Notification for nominations for these elections, the Three Party Left Alliance comprised of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party put out an appeal "Save Democracy by Joint Action" which was signed by the General Secretaries of the three Parties. This declaration was put out at a time when the Government had only announced its intention of holding such elections. The latter part of the statement reads as follows :

"Moreover, the Government has recently declared its intention to hold a "mini-General Election" throughout the country to set up 257 Pradeshiya Sabhas and have them functioning by January 1st, 1988. If, in the Government's view, conditions permit this, on what basis can a General Election, which is nearly five years overdue as compared with the Pradeshiya Sabhas that are just being introduced for the first time, be denied?

A new Presidential Election must also not be put off. Binding guarantees must be given by the Government that this election will be held on or before the due date.

In our view, it is best for the country and the people if the present Parliament is dissolved, and the President and his Government are made to quit **NOW**".

It can be seen from these words that while the Three Party Left Alliance did in fact anticipate these elections, no clear strategy was laid down as to how

they should respond to such a situation. The Gazette Notification calling for nominations between the 26th of June and the 3rd of July came like a bolt from the blue spreading confusion amongst the Three Party Left Alliance. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party has decided to contest the Local Government Elections on the grounds that it affords an opportunity to mobilise the masses against the Government by a method which the People of Sri Lanka have been accustomed to use for decades. The Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party have on the other hand decided that the best that can be done in the circumstances is to boycott the Local Government Elections and thereby pressure the Government to hold a General Election. Hence they have joined up with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, the Nava Sama Samaja Party and the Democratic Workers' Congress to form a Six Party group to boycott the Local Government Elections and demand a General Election instead. The CPSL and the SLMP see this as a continuation of the stand of the Three Party Left Alliance as stated in the above mentioned document. A relevant excerpt reads as follows :

"The fight to defend and restore democratic rights and to stop the Government's attempt to extend authoritarianism into open dictatorship cannot be waged successfully by any single party or organisation **alone**. It requires the active participation of all political parties, public organisations, social groups and persons who value the right of the people freely to choose their Government and representatives.

Our three parties appeal to all such forces in Sri Lanka, whatever their differences on other matters may be, to wage a joint struggle to ensure that democratic rights, processes and institutions are restored and that the people are not once again robbed of their right to choose in free and fair elections those who represent them."



While this statement calls for joint action with regard to the battle for democracy, it has not specified any joint strategy in the event of an election. CPSL General Secretary K. P. Silva has stated (see interview) that their decision to boycott the elections was arrived at after studying the reaction of the main opposition party, i.e. the SLFP. He specifically states that it would have been futile to call a boycott of the elections in the event of the SLFP going to the polls. The idea being here (quite rightly) that when **all** the opposition parties decide to boycott elections it has a greater effect on the Government.

#### THE CWF POSITION

It so appears that the statement entitled "**Save Democracy by joint action**" which has proved to be the last statement put out by the Three Party Left Alliance evoked an enthusiastic response from the opposition parties to whom it was sent. Before the Three Party Left Alliance could 'pursue the matter further, these elections were announced by the Government. There is generally a consensus on the fact that the projected elections constitute a democratic revival at the Local Government level (see interviews). Going on this basis the LSSP has decided to contest the elections so as to register a protest against the Government through the ballot. But the CPSL and the SLMP have embarked on a course of action leading to a total boycott of the elections in order to demand a General Election. We do not propose to express any judgement of their decisions here. But *Christian Worker* has always been consistent in its views on such matters. This excerpt from an editorial note in *Christian Worker* (1st Quarter 1984) entitled **On the National Question : The Opposition to Regional or Provincial Councils** is relevant in this connection.

"...the present UNP Government has seriously debilitated local government by doing away with the village committees and Town Councils — elected bodies which have in the past been at least responsive to the needs of their rural and semi-rural electors, and thus served as a proper democratic base of popular representation. In place of these smaller local bodies, the Government has set up a new farcical system of District Development Councils without effective powers and heavily loaded in favour of the Central Government at the expense of the local areas with position and powers given to the District Ministers together with the pressures exercised by the Minister and M.Ps. All this together with the appointment of M.Ps in place of bye-elections has negated the very process of promoting a genuine participation of people in deciding matters relating to the local level. **The revival of genuine local government throughout the island would**

**therefore be a necessary pre-condition for any genuine devolution of power from the Centre for any system of regional administration.** (emphasis as in original). Only in such a context too could we have an effective and properly constituted system of regional or provincial councils throughout the island which would then have to cover the North and East as well. While we cannot see the present Government genuinely interested in such a shift of power in favour of the people, it is indeed ironical that some opposition parties either blinded by fears and prejudices or seeking to play a Sinhala chauvinist card should fall prey to reaction by refusing to utilise the present position to press for such a devolution of power from the Centre to the regions based on a genuine revival of local government. We know of course that President Jayewardene has thus far been able to skilfully utilise or divide opposition forces to suit his own ends and so keep himself in power. But how long will the people be content to let the opposition operate on Mr. Jayewardene's terms?"

We do not seek to censure the CPSL and the SLMP for having decided to boycott the elections. Neither do we seek to criticise the LSSP for having taken the decision to contest the local government elections alone. We only express our deep regret that the Three Party Left Alliance was unable to agree on a common strategy on this matter.

#### OPTIMISM IN SOME QUARTERS

The call for democracy as expressed in its last statement would have real meaning for the working people only in a situation where The Three Parties were able to dynamically spearhead such a movement at the head of a wider grouping. However not only individual party leaders within the Six Party group but also various political commentators have opined that it is now the SLFP that is at the helm of the Six Party group. One journalist even underscores the situation as follows :

"June 1987 sees the isolation of the UNP and a coming together of all anti-UNP forces **under the leadership of Mrs. Bandaranaike.** Among the principal supportive groups objectively speaking are the unions and the students".

"The Six Party Front incidentally has also paved the way for a family re-union, apparently a minor subjective factor but not so negligible when one remembers that this a **political** family, the last surviving dynasty, which is precisely the reason why the UNP engineered the break-up of the party and family". (Lanka Guardian July 15 1987).

An interesting situation has now arisen with regard to the signing of the controversial peace accord between India and Sri Lanka. The jubilant prognostication



of the *Lanka Guardian* about the unification of all opposition forces under the leadership of Mrs. Bandaranaike and the re-unification of the Bandaranaike family has proved to be far too sanguine. Irreconcilable differences have emerged within this Six Party front with the bankrupt SLFP and its smaller partner the MEP vehemently opposing the recent peace accord. Vijaya Kumaratunga of the SLMP has openly come out in favour of the accord in an article published in the *Sunday Observer* of August 2, 1987. The Democratic Workers Congress which is a part of the Six Party group has also expressed its willingness to support the accord. The CPSL is also generally in favour of the accord. Though Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara had earlier opined that the present Government is incapable of solving the ethnic crisis he would of course endorse even with some reservations the present attempt towards a negotiated settlement. Whatever the stands the SLMP, CPSL and the NSSP take with regard to the India - Sri Lanka accord, they cannot without detracting on their principles, endorse the stand taken by the SLFP and the MEP on this issue. The shameful exploitation of the fears and prejudices of the Sinhala masses for short-term political gain as the SLFP and the MEP are now doing clearly does not tally with the stands taken by the SLMP, CPSL and the NSSP in the past.

The divisions that have arisen within this Six Party grouping on this paramount question — one that is far more important than any other political question in this country today — may prove to be its undoing. According to the accord, elections to the Provincial Councils should be held before the end of this year. The SLMP and the CPSL as parties that have advocated the setting up of provincial councils will no doubt welcome this. In fact, Vijaya Kumaratunga stated long before the India-Sri Lanka accord was even mooted that the SLMP would not boycott elections to the Provincial Councils even if they are held before the General Election that the six parties had got together to agitate for (see interview). The fragility of the Six Party group was due mainly to the lack of any kind of programmatic agreement. The simple slogan of “General Election and Democracy” was far too wide a platform especially in the context of the complicated political situation in the country.

#### A QUESTION OF TACTICS?

The same issue of *The Lanka Guardian* euphorically stated that “Tactically, the SLFP has moved leftward even accommodating on its platform Trotskyist world revolutionary Vasu!” and there is a further statement that “SLFP Chauvinism has been softened markedly”.

“The co-incidence of SLFP-led six party front’s rejection of “bogus” local elections and the TULF’s “travesty of democracy” vis a vis the by-elections was fortuitous. Yet it could be an opening, first to the Tamils in the South and then to the TULF.” These (to put it mildly) are hasty statements. Both the Leaders of the CPSL and the SLMP who were interviewed by us on the 26th of June and 1st of July respectively opined that there was no essential difference between the UNP and the SLFP and that the right-wing nature of the SLFP was more in evidence today than ever before in its history (see interview). And as for the softening of SLFP chauvinism, their response to the India — Sri Lanka accord has not indicated anything of the sort. Not having any alternative plan themselves, they oppose all that the Government has done — thus openly playing the game of communal politics which has already brought our country to the brink of total ruin. Despite the efforts of publicists, to whitewash the image of the SLFP, it has not yet demonstrated its ability to engage in political action without resorting to the basest opportunism and chicanery.

How long can the Six Party group last amidst all these differences? Does it exist now? Will it survive till at least the end of the local government elections? If Provincial Council elections are held before the end of the year, the SLFP will boycott it. But certain other Parties within the Six Party group have already decided to contest. What then?

These questions point in our view to a very negative situation vis-a-vis the Six Party grouping. We look forward to the reunion of the left forces after the dust settles on the local government elections. The need to present a left alternative as opposed to the appallingly opportunistic right wing “alternative” that seems to be benefiting from the current situation is today a vital necessity. The presence of a united left in the political arena may well be a decisive factor for the future of our country in the trying days ahead.

The Three Party Left Alliance served as the rallying point for the broad left forces in the country. In this regard we were greatly encouraged by the response of the leaders of the Left Parties. Nobody ruled out the possibility of getting together again. And everybody expressed regret that their parties could not agree on a common strategy.

We publish below for the edification of our readers the full text of interviews with left leaders held on the 26th of June, 1st of July and the 20th of July, respectively.







## K. P. Silva

### Communist Party of Sri Lanka

**Q.** Mr. Silva, can you please explain why the Communist Party of Sri Lanka decided to abstain from contesting the Local Government elections announced by the Government?

**A.** The Government has announced elections to Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and 257 newly constituted "Pradeshiya Sabhas" on an island-wide scale and has expressed its intention to have these institutions of Local Government operative by the beginning of next year.

There are certain considerations to be taken into account here. These elections have been announced at a time when there has been a persistent demand for a General Election. There I think, is a unanimity of opinion amongst all except the Government, that the present Parliament is an incorrectly constituted one. The means by which its life has been extended can be described more as a "pillaging of the popular vote" rather than a referendum. The report on the 1982 referendum put out by the Commissioner of Elections amply bears out

this point. The present Parliament therefore, does not have the **right** to function as a Parliament.

This was the reason why there arose in the country, a cry for General Elections. The argument of the Government was that the present situation in the country, especially the unstable situation in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, did not make the holding of such a General Election possible. How then is the Government going to have island-wide elections for Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas? If it is possible to conduct Local Government elections on an island-wide basis, we cannot understand why a General Election cannot be held in a similar fashion.

We fully acknowledge the fact that these Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas are democratic institutions. But today we have a situation where legality and democracy are utilised to erode the foundations of democracy. The Prevention of Terrorism Act

and the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution were passed democratically and legally! So it is in the case of these elections. The democracy accorded at the Local Government level is being used by the Government to stall the even more, effective democratic device of holding a General Election.

There is a strong desire within all democratic sections in the country for a General Election. It can be seen that these Local Government elections have been called with the intention of "defusing" this huge build up of popular opinion, we see this as an attempt to direct this popular opinion towards "less harmful" "outlets".

It is the intention of the Government to use all forms of state terrorism and thuggery — as they did at the referendum — as these Local Government elections too. We must remember, that this election is not a General Election that would bring about a change of Government. It is at a level that has no effect on



the President, Prime Minister, the Cabinet or any other repository of political power. In such circumstances, the fear of the people to come out to vote against the Government may facilitate a UNP victory.

If the Government wins the elections with such a combination of outright coercion and indirect intimidation, they will bring up the question as to why a General Election would be necessary at all. They will claim on the basis of the "vote" that the people are still supportive of them and their policies.

There is also the fact that any Party coming forward to contest these Local Government elections, will have to expend the same amount of effort and resources on it as on a General Election. They will then not have the strength to contest a General Election for a considerable period of time after that. Judging by the talk of the Government in the recent past, they may call another referendum soon after the Local Government elections. This could either be to extend the life of Parliament or to extend the term of the President.

This will enable the Government to continue its dictatorial and autocratic rule. There are certain indications that the Government plans to do exactly this. The speech made by the President at Karandeniya to the effect that "until terrorism is eradicated, there exists the need for a strong Government like the present one" seems to point in this direction. The President has also instructed Government M.Ps to form local para-military units to counter a 1971 style putsch by the JVP. We all know that the Government has been beefing up the armed forces on a large scale.

However, private armies of this sort are far more dangerous than the regular state forces.

These are signs that the subtle fliching away of democratic rights by the Government has now turned into a blatant and open thrust to tear away from the people their basic democratic rights including their right to elect a Parliament of their choice.

The Three Party Left Alliance comprised of the LSSP, CP and SLMP saw these signs of the times and addressed an appeal to the people to come forward to agitate for democratic rights and a General Election. We also wrote to all non-Governmental political parties about this matter. And we received a very favourable response. That is to say that all these parties were agreeable to a course of action to agitate for a General Election.

The moment the Government got wind of this, they called a snap election and gazetted for nominations between the 26th of June and the 3rd of July 1987. Actually, the Local Government Authorities are to be operative only from the beginning of next year. It would not have mattered even if elections were held in October or November. But the Government wanted to stall the build up of the democratic forces by rushing the elections. It was the intention of the Government to thereby spread dissension and disunity within the ranks of the Opposition.

It was after taking all these matters into consideration that we decided that the best way to expose the true nature of the Government was for all opposition parties to unite in boycotting the elections.

Q. But don't you feel that by contesting the elections, you could use the electoral platform to expose the authoritarian tendencies of the Government?

A. That is what we have done up to now. But today, the situation is different. The boycott of an election can be as much of a platform to expose the Government as contesting that election. This is not simply a case of "refraining from voting". We intend launching a united campaign to explain to the people why they should boycott the elections.

Q. What sort of a programme do you have in this connection at the moment?

A. We have not yet decided that. But firstly, we will have to explain this matter to the people. What I said earlier has to be explained to them. We see that there is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm among anti-UNP people about this matter.

Q. Do you feel that the people will heed your call? Its generally accepted that it is more difficult to **stop** a voter from casting his vote altogether, than to induce him to cast it in your favour.

A. In comparison to what the situation was ten or fifteen years ago, we see that the masses today are more politically mature than they were. We feel that they would be able to clearly understand the issues involved in this instance. So the probability is that they will refrain from voting.

But, but! the Government can always either forcibly appropriate the votes of those who come forward to vote, or fraudulently use the votes of all those who refrain from voting to show that the Government has received the



majority of the votes. They adopted a similar modus-operandi at the 1982 referendum. To illustrate, in a situation where the opposition parties have boycotted the elections and consequently, no polling agents of these parties are present at the centres, the UNP could well cast for itself the majority of the votes on the relevant list and claim that they have won the elections. But the world will not acknowledge such a "victory" when the Opposition Parties have boycotted the elections.

We strongly feel however, that the sympathisers of these Parties will refrain from casting their votes. We feel that the supporters of each of the Parties that will be boycotting the elections will heed the call of their respective Parties to refrain from casting their votes. This effect would be amplified when all the Parties get together in exposing the projected elections as a fraud and a gimmick on the part of the government. Not only will the masses not vote, but they will also come forward to participate in the future struggles against the Government.

Q. But in previous instances when such a boycott was resorted to we saw that the masses voted anyhow to whoever was available. In 1981 for instance, the District Development Councils, were boycotted by almost all the Opposition Parties including the SLFP. But we saw that the people nonetheless went out to vote. In the absence of other Opposition Parties, the JVP managed to win some places in the DDCs.

A. Yes. But why did that happen? You see, in 1981, none of these Parties contested the DDC elections except for the JVP. But in that instance, there was only a

non-contesting of elections. There was no campaign or even a little leaflet to explain the situation to the masses and to request them to refrain from voting for such and such reasons etc. We only abstained from contesting the elections.

What we have in mind today is not a similar action of simply not coming forward to contest. We intend having an island-wide campaign to appeal to and explain to the voters and the people that they should avoid casting their votes for such and such reasons etc. It won't be like the rather "tame boycott" of the DDC elections.

Q. Have you come to any agreement with the SLFP as to how the campaign to call a boycott of the elections should be conducted?

A. We have agreed to a boycott campaign as a principle.

Q. Have you put down on the agenda any discussions with the SLFP to plan out such a programme?

A. There will have to be many such meetings as the days go by. Yesterday (25.6.87) we signed a joint declaration calling for a boycott. When we meet next it will be decided what the next step should be.

Q. What have you to say about boycotting Parliament as a first step in the protest campaign?

A. We have already expressed our view on the matter. We should in fact boycott the Parliament. This is one step in the process.

Q. Now in launching such a campaign to inform and explain to the voter why he should refrain from voting at these elections,

there is always the problem that the Government may construe it as an attempt to scuttle the electoral process and thereby seek to clamp down on the movement. Can the Parties who are planning this campaign face up to that kind of government repression? What sort of a modus-operandi do you have in mind with regard to this?

A. The Government may simply not stop at declaring that the boycott campaign was an attempt to scuttle the electoral process. They may go so far as to deprive this campaign of all legal means of protest. They may for instance, not permit the holding of meetings and rallies for this purpose. Hence, the question arises whether we are going to submissively bend our heads to this or to use in defiance of it every possible means available to reach out to the masses. If the people see that the decision to boycott the election is correct, there will be no dearth of means to reach out to them.

Q. How do you see the action of the LSSP on this issue?

A. Every Party has a right to embark on the course of action they consider correct. I do not intend criticising their stand. However, I do regret the inability of the LSSP to see things in its proper perspective. They seem to feel that the best way to oppose the UNP would be through contesting the elections. We on the other hand feel that the only way in which the UNP can really be slapped in the face would be for all anti-UNP forces to jointly boycott the elections.

Q. Do you feel that the LSSP's stand on this issue would result in the breaking up of the Three Party Left Alliance?



A. Unfortunately, yes. The purpose behind forming political alliances is to embark on joint struggle with the classes and the social strata that have rallied round various parties. But there can sometimes be "accidents" like this. However we have not yet given up the attempt to win them over.

Q. There is generally the opinion that the stand of the LSSP on this issue is similar to their action in abandoning the joint 21 demands campaign of the CP and the LSSP in favour of joining with the then SLFP Government of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, in 1964. What do you feel about this?

A. I would not like to make any statement drawing historical parallels at this stage. We are still trying to win the LSSP over. However if there are any such historical precedents, we should take note of them too. As for us, we have corrected the mistakes we made self-critically and publicly. Since this is a revolutionary movement such self-criticism is imperative. Let us wait and see how things turn out in the future.

Q. Mr. Silva, would you see the action of the LSSP as being an attempt to white-wash the image of the UNP? In other words do you feel that the LSSP is indirectly helping the UNP to stay in power by legitimising in the eyes of the world these projected Local Government elections?

A. Most certainly. Whatever the actual motives of the LSSP, this is what will happen in practice. Actually speaking, the interest shown by the masses in this matter is not simply because there is an attempt to boycott the elections. The crucial factor

is that all parties (except the LSSP) have decided unanimously to boycott the elections. The Communist Party of Sri Lanka can never get together to form a government with the SLFP. We believe in Socialist development while the SLFP believes in Capitalist development. Today the question is not whether a SLFP Government is brought into power or whether a left government is brought into power.

Today we are in a situation where both possibilities are debarred. The very existence of democracy is at stake. And the main task is to remove this menace. We firmly believe that it would be correct to tie up even with any UNP faction that opposes the current dictatorial trends. This is not a case of agreeing on principles.

Q. Supposing the SLFP did not decide to boycott the elections what would you have done?

A. The situation then is different. The suggestion to boycott was actually our idea. If all Opposition Parties boycott the elections it has an impact on the Government. There would be no point in our boycotting the elections while the SLFP and the other Parties go to the polls. You must understand that this is not a case of standing on principle. If it is a case of standing on principle, we should contest the elections and make it a platform for our ideas. But what is at issue here is pragmatic considerations.

Q. How would you respond to the allegation that the CP is dancing to the tune of the SLFP?

A. We would be the least susceptible of all to such an allegation. From the very inception of the

SLFP, we had no illusions about it. We do not under any circumstances subscribe to any of the policies of the SLFP. We frankly admit that all things taken into consideration, it was wrong of us to have joined the United Front Government of 1970. It was correct to join together to defeat the UNP. But it was a wrong move to enter the Government. We believe that policy-wise there is no difference between the UNP and the SLFP. We will certainly not participate in forming a government with such elements. Neither will we join a front with such a programme in view. But we will combine with the SLFP for the defence of common democratic rights.

Q. You frankly admit that within the framework of Parliamentarist politics, nothing much can be achieved without the SLFP?

A. Today, yes. That is the reality, isn't it? But as for dancing to the SLFP's tune, you know that from the time of Comrade Sarath Muttetuwegama, the CP has always voted against the emergency. Subsequently we were joined in voting against the emergency, firstly by the MEP and later also by the SLFP. But do we go around claiming that both the MEP and the SLFP are following our lead?

It was actually the Three Party Alliance that first suggested agitating jointly for democratic rights — not the SLFP. The Three Party Left Alliance was not able to take this forward because of the actions of the LSSP. Consequently, the initiative has been grabbed by the SLFP. And now they are at the helm of the movement.

Date : 26th June, 1987





## Dr. Colvin R. de Silva Lanka Sama Samaja Party

**Q.** Dr. Colvin, the LSSP has struck a very controversial pose with regard to the projected Local Government elections. It alone, of all the major Opposition Parties has decided to contest the elections. Can you explain the rationale behind this decision?

**A.** You see, we are having the elections to the Municipal Councils, to all the Urban Councils and to a new set of Councils which will cover the entire countryside which for ten years has been deprived of the presence of any local body at all. Now, such an election would then draw in the whole body of electors in this country. We see in that a golden opportunity for the people of this country in all their various areas to express their opposition to this UNP Government which is repressively ruling the country today. It is a mode of expressing hostility to the Government which our people have been accustomed to use for over 50 years. They have ever since the granting of universal franchise in 1931, learned

to use their vote as a political weapon. In the last six occasions in which they have had the chance of voting in respect of the overall governments, they threw out the government of the day each time. So this is a method by which in fact they can engage in an action against the government. We feel that this is a good opportunity that should be fully utilised.

On the other hand, what precisely is being proposed? Let us not be misled by mere language. What is being proposed and why? Though the word boycott is sometimes being used, the proposal actually is to refrain from participating in the election. The reasons given in the main are interwoven in the following way. "This is an election that is being staged by an illegal government ruling through an illegal Parliament". If this is so, then surely the protest must start and can start with the centre of illegality. If you have an illegal Parliament it is not worth talking about boycotting elections etc. You

surely start the action by withdrawing the M.Ps they themselves have in this illegal Parliament. That might be the act that rouses the masses to the possibility of serious positive action against the Government.

Now I find this morning (26/6/87) that Mrs. Bandaranaike has said (as the papers report) that their M.Ps will not attend Parliamentary sessions except on occasions when they think it necessary. That is, they will not leave Parliament but only partially function there. Now this is what you call trying to eat your cake and have it.

**Q.** As the *Attha* reports, Mrs. Bandaranaike has stated that they would if necessary withdraw their MPs from Parliament.

**A.** If you are in fact launching a boycott that is the first step that should be taken. A boycott is not this negative action of refraining from going to the vote. It is a positive mass action which is directed towards taking a mass



movement that is already at a certain level forward by reason of the action that is being taken. And if you look anywhere where there have been boycott of elections you will see that they come with a mass movement against the government already at a certain level. Then it carries forward that mass struggle further. Where is this movement? The whole problem is how to get the masses moving isn't it? That is why we say, here is an opportunity to get the masses moving in a form in which they are accustomed to. In the way that this Government has been behaving in those matters, there are certain things to be faced up to. And we have to train our people to face up to those things. Then if a massive vote against the Government could have been registered in that way successfully, this would have increased the confidence of the masses in their capacity in one way or another to express their opposition and to move forward against the tyranny that prevails. Thus there might have been created a setting that could have got going the beginning of a movement of the masses against the Government.

Q. Mr. K. P. de Silva of the Communist Party has stated most emphatically that the 'boycott' as such will not merely be the negative action of refraining from voting only, but that they have in mind a plan to take it forward to more positive action.

A. So why don't we hear about this plan? We have told them that the simple start to anything is the withdrawal of your M.P.s. And in a sense the step they are announcing is an admission that our point is a correct one. Then is it an answer to say we will refrain from going to sessions but we will go when we think

we will be needed there? So the "illegal" Parliament is to be kept running while the reason why you are asking the people not to vote is the very illegality of that Parliament!

Q. From what we have come to know from Mr. K. P. de Silva, the Parties taking part in the boycott of the elections do have the intention of launching a campaign regarding the boycott.

A. What they have in mind I do not know. They have no plan. But in the light of the fact that these things are now coming out — they say to you they will have a plan. You are going to launch a major mass action, called a boycott without having made a plan? What if one or another of their colleagues of today say No! No! not "that" kind of plan. Where is he to retreat to? Mrs. Bandaranaike has said in this morning's paper, (far more important than what Mr. K. P. de Silva says — that's the decisive factor in this group) that "we shall act only democratically and non-violently". I wonder what her present colleague Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara has to say about this?

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**I think that if we had stuck to our principles and we had that any question of non-participation should be on the basis of unanimity amongst ourselves, This situation would not have arisen.**

— Colvin

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You are asking me why didn't I go with people without a plan to do some fight that they cont-

emplate against the Government to which they give the name of **boycott**. Look here, you are wanting to lead the masses into action. But you say "no plan"!

Q. Not yet.....

A. "Not Yet" is no plan! When you start out on your campaign if you have no plan you are **humbugging**. What did you agree with Mrs. Bandaranaike and the others on when you said you will do this? Each will have its own reasons. These are different political parties coming together for an "unplanned possible future action." Now already two things stand expressed. The first is that they were not thinking boycott when they started out on the footing that they remain in the "illegal" Parliament. Now, they say they will plan towards what they are talking about. And they want us to join in a **non-plan**. Do you think that's a serious political proposition for struggle?

Q. Supposing the Parties boycotting the elections come up with some positive action against the Government, will the LSSP join them at that stage?

A. I don't talk hypotheses. These are hypothetical questions. Election day struggles don't begin on nomination day morning. This is already nomination day afternoon.

Q. But don't you think that it is the normal practice of Governments in power to call snap elections so that the opposition could be taken unawares?

A. But we were prepared! The three of us had discussed this thing. It may have been a surprise that it was called at this



moment. But I assure you that the Three Party Alliance discussed this thing several months ago. I'll tell you another side of this. When the UNP Government came into power it abolished all the local bodies in the rural areas, namely, the Village Committees, and the Town Councils. It kept the main local bodies: the Municipal Councils and the Urban Councils. In fact they abolished only the most valuable democratic institutions and centres of political action in the countryside. It was in relation to these village councils that a considerable portion of political activity took place in the country. We have all spent a lot of our time in struggles to gain control of village committees and to win the chairmanship and so on. Local politics and politics of the countryside ebbed and almost disappeared during the past ten years. The LSSP has never interrupted the fight to restore the local Government bodies with greater powers. And we carried that fight ultimately, using an opportunity that arose first of all at the All Parties Conference. You see there was raised the question, what is to be done to at least ease this so-called ethnic problem? We put forward very specific proposals there. You see our party has given a lot of thought to the question of what is the governmental structure, which would be appropriate to the situation in which if the left came into power, it could enter successfully on the task of a transition to a socialist state. For this was needed structures in which the masses are actually taking part. We had come to the conclusion of setting up a three tiered structure, subject to the presence of a Central Government. If we wanted the principle of self management operating in our politics all over the coun-

try, we said let us start with where they live. And that we should set up what we call "Praja Sabhas", with much greater power than the usual local bodies.

We saw that the structure we had created would bring a tremendous amount of self-government and self-management into the localities and applied in this situation would substantially also in terms of distribution of population ethnically, enable people in matters of great substance, to run their own affairs. So we proposed this in the All Parties Conference. Ultimately, the proposal for local bodies of this sort attracted the whole All Parties Conference and it unanimously adopted the idea and compelled the Government to accept our proposal.

At a committee meeting at which the Prime Minister was presiding, he presented us with material which was intended to show that the village committees in far too many cases were too small to bear the burden of the responsibilities and rights we had given them. He proposed ultimately, that we should have bodies which are based upon the AGA's divisions. It is in terms of that undertaking that these new Pradeshiya Sabhas — although with many defects and back-slidings from what was undertaken — has been proposed. We got it re-confirmed at the Political Parties Conference that took place about a year ago. With that, we knew this thing was coming. So the three parties discussed it. As far as we were concerned, we instructed our party to be ready. We did not know when it was coming, but definitely you are going to have a new set of local bodies with greater responsibilities and rights and this is what is called the Pradeshiya Sabhas.

What has been the surprise is their timing and the short time given up to now for the campaign. This I think is one of their characteristic manoeuvres. We had ourselves discussed these questions. And we saw the advantage here. However badly done, this is a tremendous restoration of democracy in the countryside.

Q. We understand that the proposed Pradeshiya Sabhas are a very truncated version of what the LSSP originally proposed.

A. They are most certainly not what we originally proposed. For instance, for Local Government we hold the view that we can't have this proportional representation system. The 12.5% cut off point is far too excessive. I showed at the last Dehiwala-Galkissa election that if you fall one vote short of the 12.5%, all your votes are cancelled. And by the vote you have got have been entitled definitely to two seats and if you had only about another 1% you could have three seats.

So we understand all this. If we got together and fought, we could face these, explain these and also try to surmount these. We don't expect progressive things from this Government. We seek to extract something that has a progressive character from it.

Q. There is the general idea that the action of the LSSP regarding these elections has caused the break up of the Three Party Left Alliance.

A. It was proposed to us, i.e. to the LSSP that if all of us agree and can also come to an agreement with the other parties in



the opposition — that is, the three of us, and these other Parties can agree to this step regarding the election, then it is proposed that we carry through that step. On the very occasion that it was put forward it was immediately made clear that we don't agree to this proposal. In other words, the three of us did not already have agreement. Nevertheless, negotiation has taken place with the SLFP and agreement has been reached for the step to be taken with the SLFP. That's the situation in which this thing emerged.

What is or was the alliance? The alliance has from the beginning proceeded on the footing of what is popularly called **consensus**, that is, the Three Parties would act together on matters on which they were agreed and from time to time as questions arose we have discussed them and when we agreed we have walked together. It was hoped that in this way we would come to a level of agreement which would enable us to get to something closer than an alliance that is to say a United Front on an agreed programme of action. Now that had not yet been reached. We were all hoping to get to it and to make towards it. In that way working together in the country the alliance was aiming at making the country understand that here is not merely the electoral alternative but the true political alternative to the right and reaction.

When you think of the matter that way I would remind you that it is manifest to anybody who studies the politics and the programmes of the SLFP that there is very little difference or distinction you can find from the main programme of the UNP itself. So to a contraposition

of the alliance to right wing reaction included the question of correct politics in relation to a party which it has been announced by its leadership is not even intended to be a left party. That is the SLFP.

We the LSSP has not in all our life, refused when it came to political action in appropriate circumstances, to join with forces for action which are not necessarily electoral. That is part of the theory and practice of the United Front itself. So now what is all this about we have broken the alliance? I mean, what would you say if I told you that the two of them had broken the alliance?

A. But in terms of majority....

A. That is the point I am making to you. The alliance does not, did not and never could act by majority of Parties. The alliance could act only by joint agreement of Parties. It is no answer for anybody to say that "oh those two constitute the majority against you!"

Q. Now in view of the fact that every Party in Sri Lanka including the largest opposition party has decided to boycott....

A. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party's policies are not decided by other Parties. Let's get that clear.

Q. However, it appears that the organised masses as represented by these parties have come to some sort of a consensus with regard to the boycott of elections.

A. I don't think so. As we go along things will get clear. At present you have a lot of newspaper opinion. Artificially formed. They are only too happy to find an opportunity to whack at the LSSP. We are not so unaccus-

omed to that sort of thing. If your course of argument is correct, the LSSP could never have conducted the illegal struggle for independence of this country during the last war.

It did so in associating itself with the same struggle for independence of the Indian people during the war; the success of which also brought independence to our country. But everyone else was with the war. Only the LSSP stood resolutely against it. Hence it is not the size of the organisation but the will of the organisation properly formed on a correct basis in terms of the needs of the masses.

Q. Parallels have been drawn between the current action of the LSSP and its abandoning of the joint CP - LSSP - MEP 21 demands campaign to join the then Government of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike in 1964. How would you respond to such allegations?

A. Our fight is against the UNP in this election. This is an incidental thing. Which cannot be as far as we are concerned, allowed to complicate the simple fact that **our** guns are pointed directly at the United National Party. Let people draw false parallels. These are the men who when we fought during the war for our freedom called us "fascists" and as the war was over had to eat their terms, and publicly at a conference apologise for that remark! These are people who in their history thought it proper to link up with the National Congress and with the United National Party when it was born to fight against the LSSP! That's where you must start if you are going to talk about such things. But this is not the matter at hand. The question is this, we say the way to carry



the people forward into the level of a beginning of a mass movement is to participate in this election and to get the masses to express their feelings against the Government — by the method they understand best — that is, the custom of the vote. We are not here to discuss history. It is not an issue here whether somebody was right in 1954 or 1964 or nineteen hundred and anything. The question is are we right here? Are they right here?

Q. But considering the fact that it will be only the LSSP that will be contesting these elections with the UNP.....

A. Well why not? Is the LSSP prohibited from fighting the UNP alone? The LSSP has fought the UNP and greater things, called imperialism alone. If anybody thinks we are going to be alarmed by the fact that we are up against bigger forces than we would have liked to have faced in this matter, we have taken all that into consideration.

Q. Don't you feel that contesting the elections would be a legitimisation of UNP tyranny?

A. Would you explain that to me?

Q. Well.....

A. Why are they then legitimising it by staying in that Parliament? That's the answer to that! You have put every one of these humbugs that they are using. That's quite right. That's what you want from me, the answers.

Q. Yes.

A. So that's the answer to that. They are legitimising that Parliament which they themselves say is an illegal Parliament.

Q. Wouldn't you feel that all things taken into consideration, it would be advantageous in the

long run to the left and the progressive forces in the country, to preserve unity within the Three Party Alliance? Because, during the past two or three years, it had drawn towards it all left forces who were intent on a political solution to the ethnic crisis. It was a rallying point for progressive minded individuals and groups especially with regard to the polarisation of opinion concerning the Tamil issue.

A. Don't you think you should address that question to the, other two parties? After the progressive forces in the SLFP had broken away and formed their own organisation, we have been trying to work more and more together so as to ultimately form a United Front. Shouldn't we ask them whether it was worth the while to lose the advantages and unities we had achieved for a supposed unity on the basis of a non-existent plan? Each thinking that it is something other than what it may ultimately prove to be?

Q. Do you think that the CP is acting in concert with the SLFP on this issue?

A. I think that if we had stuck to our principles and we had that any question of non-participation should be on the basis of unanimity amongst ourselves, this situation would not have arisen.

Q. Would you say that the CP and the SLMP are playing second fiddle to the SLFP?

A. That kind of question, I wouldn't like to answer. But clearly, I think, they have thought that an alliance with the SLFP is a greater thing than an alliance with the LSSP.

Q. Is this the end of the alliance?

A. I don't think so for the simple reason that if the CP and the

SLMP are indeed concerned about whom they will replace this government with when they down it, then as they go along, they will find no alternative but reunion with the LSSP.

Q. So you feel that after the elections the pieces could be picked up and things could go on as usual?

A. I don't think anything. I don't know. The new alliances may create their own momentum. There is also the question, how will they conduct their attack upon us?

Q. Does any possible future reunion depend wholly upon this last point?

A. No. But it can. The way in which it is already happening does not suggest a very nice plan of attack. There are already signs that it is not going to be just a political attack. There could also be very personal attacks, especially on our leaders. However, we have not ceased to tell them right to the very end: "Let's get back together and fight this election". We have not refused to discuss anything. We have not even refused to discuss even the question of this so-called boycott. May I say that if only the three parties had stood together to fight this elections with the SLFP boycotting it as obviously it intended to do, we would have appeared for the first time clearly as the true political alternative to the United National Party. I think it is a great pity that this tremendous opportunity has been missed.

Date: 26th June 1987





Sriyantha Walpola



## Vijaya Kumaratunga Sri Lanka Mahajana Party

**Q.** Mr. Kumaratunga, we understand that the Communist Party and the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party have concurred in the idea that they should boycott the forthcoming Local Government elections. Is there unanimity, between the CP and the SLMP on the reasons for the boycott or have the two parties taken that decision on a differing set of criteria?

**A.** We have not decided to boycott the elections because the CP decided to do so. We feel that this Government will make use of these Local Government elections to take away from the people their right to democratically elect their representatives to the Parliament. It was pointed out by Mr. Chandananda de Silva — the Commissioner of Elections — that the 1982 Referendum was rigged. They will rig the forthcoming Local Government elections too, using all the thuggery and State power at their command. Then they will show the world the result of the "vote" and claim that they

still have the confidence and support of the people. And, I simply cannot understand what the Government means when they say that the Local Government elections will be held island-wide. It is quite obvious that no such elections can be held beyond Anuradhapura. The situation in some parts of the Eastern Province also would be very much the same. If these Local Government elections are held as announced then the Government will show the world the exact territorial limits to which their rule extends. The claim that these elections will be held island-wide is totally nonsensical. The Government has also announced that it intends to hold by-elections to the seats vacated by TULF M.Ps when they refused to take the oath against separatism under the Sixth Amendment. But Mr. Amirthalingam himself has said that there can never be any by-elections in these former TULF constituencies until a political solution to the ethnic conflict is arrived at.

**Q.** So you feel that there is no point in holding elections which though technically are supposed to be held island-wide, will in effect only be held in certain areas of the country?

**A.** It makes sense, doesn't it? If we are to enjoy democracy, let us all do so **together!** What will happen now is that the Government will hold Local Government elections in the Sinhala areas, rig them, steal the votes of the people and use the result to postpone Parliamentary Elections once more through the device of a referendum. How would the common man in Sri Lanka have benefited at the end of this process? The situation in the North and East will remain very much the same and so will it in the South. That is why we have been so particular in asserting that what we need today is a General Election and not Local Government elections. What we need is the kind of election that would make possible changes at the very centres of political power.



Q. Now this six party alliance . . .

A. A clarification please! There is no Six Party 'Alliance' as such. The SLMP, CP, SLFP, MEP, NSSP and the DWC have joined together to demand a general election from the Government. That is all there is to it. There is no agreement on principles amongst these parties. We do not intend fighting the general elections that we now demand on a common platform or go on to form a government together. There is only one aim in view here—to pressurise the Government to hold long overdue Parliamentary Elections.

Q. What I was going to ask you was, that according to what Mr. K. P. Silva of the CP has told us, the aim of this Six Party group demanding a General Election was to carry on an active boycott campaign rather than to merely refrain from contesting . . .

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. As youthful leaders, individuals like you and Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara would have an especially important role to play in such agitation. What do you have on the agenda for this campaign? How are you going to start and what are you going to do?

A. We are going to have a public meeting tomorrow . . .

Q. Yes, on the 2nd at Campbell Park. But that is only a meeting where speeches will be made. After nominations close on the 3rd no public meetings will be allowed till the elections are over. The Government has not announced the date of the elections. What do you intend doing in the meantime? How are you

going to persuade the people that they should not vote? How are you going to get the message across if public meetings are banned?

A. We will organise pickets and canvass from house to house.

Q. Have all the Six Parties agreed to such a course of action?

A. Actually no, but we will be discussing this matter in the next few days.

Q. So the only action the Six Parties have agreed to and are willing to implement right away is this Campbell Park public meeting which will be held tomorrow?

A. Yes. But we will be meeting soon to discuss a further course of action.

Q. We have been told by Dr. Colvin R. de Silva that the concept of the Pradeshiya Sabhas was first suggested by the LSSP at the All Parties Conference. They had seen this as one institutional reform that could bring about some degree of self government for the people of this country and especially the minorities. These Pradeshiya Sabhas were part and parcel of the proposals put forward by the LSSP as steps in the devolution of power which it hoped would accord the Tamil people a significant degree of self-government and thereby help ease the ethnic crisis. The **Provincial Councils** also were according to what Dr. Colvin told us a part of these proposals. You have decided to boycott elections to the Pradeshiya Sabhas. Are you going to boycott Provincial Council elections as well if they are held before a General Election?

A. No, certainly not. The Provincial Councils are something that we, i.e. the Three Party Alliance always has agitated for. How can we possibly boycott elections to these?

Q. The Three Party Alliance agitated for Provincial Councils mainly as a means to solve the ethnic crisis through a devolution of power. Wouldn't you feel that the Pradeshiya Sabhas also constitute a devolution of power? Even Mr. K. P. Silva of the CP admits that the Pradeshiya Sabhas constitute a significant restoration of democracy at the Local government level.

A. Yes, but in this instance the Government is trying to use the Pradeshiya Sabha elections to deprive us of the even more democratic and far reaching device of a General Election. I am not saying that the Provincial Council elections will be the same as elections to institutions of the Central Government. But definitely, the Provincial Councils will be at a different level to the Pradeshiya Sabhas. The position of the Provincial Councils vis-a-vis the Central Government will be much stronger than that of the Pradeshiya Sabhas. We will not boycott elections to those!

Q. Will you be speaking at the Campbell Park meeting?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't you feel that your presence on the same stage as Mrs. Bandaranaike would make people think that you have gone back to her?

A. How can that happen? Mrs. Bandaranaike will only be another speaker there. Each party will have only one speaker and there



will be no Chairman. What I am saying is that I won't be getting on Mrs. Bandaranaike's platform. That meeting will be a common platform for all the six Parties.

Q. No doubt that is so. We will be able to understand the situation that way. But when the common man on the street sees you sitting on the same platform as Mrs. Bandaranaike, they will naturally assume that it is one step in the process of the reunion of the SLMP and the SLFP and that it is only a matter of time till your party is re-absorbed into the SLFP.

A. You must understand that the political differences between the SLFP and the SLMP are so great that such a "reunion" is impossible. Let me tell you this. I never "broke away" from the SLFP on my own accord. I was sacked from the Party by Mrs. Bandaranaike along with my colleagues Mr. Y. P. de Silva and Ossia Abeygoonesekera because of our differences of opinion concerning matters of principle. The people who left the SLFP following our removal originally formed the SLMP. Today however we have in our ranks many who never were within the SLFP. Hence the SLMP today is not just a break-away group of the SLFP. It's a qualitatively new thing. There have been many break-away groups of the SLFP since it was first formed around thirty five years ago. In the SLMP are people who were the first to break away to the left in the entire history of the SLFP. Individuals like Mr. C. P. de Silva and Mr. Maithripala Senanayake broke away to the right. But we joined the left. Today the right-wing nature of the SLFP is more clearly to be seen than ever before. There can be no

question of our ever re-joining the SLFP!

Q. Your appearance on the same platform with Mrs. Bandaranaike will be the first such occasion since you formed the SLMP. Don't you feel that this would be made use of by the SLFP to strengthen their standing amongst the people by claiming that you have come back? The mere presence of both the SLMP and SLFP within this Six Party group has already given rise to plenty of gossip, speculation and rumours. This will no doubt increase when you are seen on the same political platform as Mrs. Bandaranaike. Don't you feel that the SLFP would deliberately fuel such speculation and gossip to their advantage? You of course realise how crucial such factors can be in the context of our personality politics?

A. I understand the point you are raising. We have taken steps to explain to our supporters that we have raised our voices in harmony with the SLFP only on one point, i.e. to demand a General Election. We will clearly present our position to the people as we go by.

Q. Don't you feel that SLFP would be the final beneficiary from this whole campaign?

A. Certainly not. We will all benefit from it. Each party boycotting the elections will benefit in its own way from the campaign.

Q. But the SLFP is the largest force in the Six Party group. People generally see it as the decisive factor. Don't you feel that in joining up with the SLFP you have joined up with a customer you cannot handle?

Mr. K. P. Silva of the CP has openly admitted that the SLFP is now at the helm of the boycott campaign.

A. I would disagree with that last point. The SLFP is **not** at the helm of the boycott campaign. They do not call the tune. Tomorrow's mass meeting which will be the first step in the campaign will not be an SLFP meeting — it will be conducted jointly by all of us. As for not being able to handle the SLFP, I would like to remind you that I was once a leader of the SLFP myself. I know what its inside workings are like. And I know Mrs. Bandaranaike and what her capabilities are like. There's no problem about that.

Mrs. Bandaranaike and her SLFP cohorts were at one time taking a hardline vis-a-vis the ethnic crisis. But now she is talking about a negotiated political solution and asserting that there can be no such thing without holding discussions with the Tamil militants. In other words she has left her ethno-religious Sinhala chauvinism and joined us in calling for a negotiated settlement. I am not trying to say that she has taken the cue from us. But the fact of the matter is that she has come to a stand that has long been advocated by our Three Party Left Alliance. Even with regard to the emergency, the situation was the same. The SLFP and the MEP have joined the CP M.P. for Kalawana in voting against it. So you see, it is not always a case of the SLFP calling the tune and us following. Judging by the events in the recent past, don't you get the feeling that the very opposite has been happening?



Q. Why didn't the CPSL, SLMP and the NSSP decide to launch a boycott campaign independently of the SLFP? That way you could have shown the people that the left stands separate and plays second fiddle to none.

A. But this is not a case of playing second fiddle to anybody. It was the Three Party Alliance and not the SLFP that initiated this joint struggle for democracy. It was we who invited the SLFP to join this campaign and not vice-versa. The whole idea was to unite all anti-UNP forces in common defence of democratic rights.

Q. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva has expressed the view that the first step that should have been taken if a really serious boycott campaign was contemplated, was to withdraw all Opposition M.Ps from Parliament. His argument is that if it is the so-called illegality of the Parliament that has given rise to this demand for a General Election, then any protest campaign should begin from the centre of illegality itself. What have you to say to that?

A. I cannot express any views on that because our party does not have any M.Ps in Parliament.

Q. But the SLFP, MEP and the CP do. As a member of this Six Party group have you not discussed this with the other Parties?

A. No.

Q. Does that mean that this question has not been brought up at all for discussion within this Six Party group?

A. No.

Q. But why not? Didn't anybody feel that this was a good starting point for the whole campaign?

A. The beginning of the boycott campaign will be the public meeting to be held tomorrow at Campbell Park. That is all the Six Party group has agreed on at the moment.

Q. How do you see the decision of the LSSP to contest these elections?

A. That's what I don't understand. About a week before the Government announced these Local Government elections and called for nominations, the General Secretaries of the SLMP, CPSL and the LSSP jointly signed a letter which was sent to all opposition parties calling for joint action to restore democracy. Mr. Bernard Soysa himself signed the document on behalf of the LSSP. This joint letter evoked a good response. There were discussions held with the parties who responded to this letter. The SLFP was one of them. When Local Government elections came up for discussion, the parties that had thus got together to jointly launch a campaign for the restoration of democracy all agreed that they should boycott these elections and demand a General Election instead. But the LSSP was not agreeable to this.

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**I, for one am very anxious that the Left Alliance be preserved intact.**

— Vijaya

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Q. Some say that the CP and the SLMP had secret discussions with the SLFP on this matter and then invited the LSSP to join them.

The allegations are that the CP and the SLMP had already unilaterally decided the matter in collaboration with the SLFP before they invited the LSSP to join them.

A. That is not correct. Neither the CP nor the SLMP had any 'secret' discussions with the SLFP. The letter to the SLFP and other Parties inviting them to join us in agitating for democratic rights was signed by Mr. Bernard Soysa himself.

Q. It is known that the close working relationship between the current SLMP leadership and the CP dates from 1982 when the latter supported Mr. Kobbekaduwa at the Presidential Elections. It is also well known that, when Mr. Kobbekaduwa approached Dr. Colvin R. de Silva to request him to step down from candidacy at the Presidential elections, this was refused. The Three Party Left Alliance took form only after these events.

A. Yes.

Q. By virtue of such differences, was there an inner coterie within this three party alliance comprised of the CP and SLMP leaderships which excluded the Sama Sama-jists?

A. I can assure you that there never was any such thing.

Q. Do you think it would be possible to re-unite with the LSSP after the dust settles on the elections issue?

A. We certainly hope so. I for one am very anxious that the left alliance be preserved intact.



We do not intend launching any kind of undue attacks on the LSSP and its leaders. The LSSP will realise its mistake after the elections. Many of its rank and file members are vehemently opposed to the decision to contest the elections. I don't think the elections issue would affect the possibility of getting together again all that seriously. Anyhow we intend going ahead with our plan to boycott the elections without attacking the LSSP for having contested it. Even at this late hour however, we are still trying to persuade the LSSP to join the boycott.

*Q.* Wouldn't you feel that getting together with the LSSP after this would be like having a very unpredictable guest in your house who might at any time slit your throat and escape with your valuables? That is, considering the fact that as you say they backed out just a week after they signed that letter to the opposition parties? It is quite obvious that one of the Gov-

ernment's main motives behind calling these snap elections was to spread confusion and dissension within the opposition. Of all the opposition parties, the LSSP appears to have been the most susceptible of all to the blandishments of the Government.

*A.* Yes. I understand what you mean. But I would not make such caustic remarks about the LSSP. They have made a serious mistake here no doubt. They will realise it in due course. But we must not for a moment forget what the LSSP has done for the common man. They were the first political grouping in this country that stood for the rights of the common man, and they have been champions of the common man's struggle throughout our post-independence history. We cannot lightly dismiss that.

*Q.* Don't you think that by being the only major opposition party that will be contesting the elections, the LSSP is helping to white-wash the image of the Government and help keep it in power for some more time?



*Vijaya sitting next to Mrs B at the July 3rd rally of the six party group held at Campbell Park. On the far left is Dr Wickramabahu Karunaratna of the NSSP.*

Courtesy ANCL

*A.* That is certainly what they are doing right now.

*Q.* An interesting situation has arisen with the distancing of the LSSP from the other two parties over this elections issue. It is generally known that the most cherished ambition of the Nava Sama Samaja Party was to come into the Three Party Left Alliance and thereby convert it into a Four Party Left Alliance. The NSSP is wholly with you on this elections matter. But the LSSP is not. So will the NSSP take the place of the LSSP in the left alliance?

*A.* That is a difficult question to answer at this stage.

*Q.* It is known that the Party opposing the admission of the NSSP into the left alliance was the LSSP....

*A.* Not only and solely the LSSP... you see...its not just that..

*Q.* What is your personal opinion with regard to this matter?

*A.* I have actually not found it difficult to work together with the NSSP.

*Q.* If you get back together with the LSSP later, would that be on a new footing with the NSSP included so that there would be a Four Party Left Alliance?

*A.* That I cannot say at this stage. But as I said before, I have no problems about working together with the NSSP. They have on many occasions come forward to work with us in a true spirit of comradeship and genuine dedication.

Date 1 - 7 - 1987







## Vasudeva Nanayakkara Nava Sama Samaja Party

**Q.** Mr. Nanayakkara, how does your Party relate to the six party group that has been formed to boycott the forthcoming Local Government elections? More, specifically, how do you relate to the Communist Party and the Mahajana Party both of which were formerly within the Three Party Left Alliance?

**A.** We have clearly worked on the basis that we will come together with any political party or other organisation for the purpose of moving the masses into action with a view to confront the Government's present dictatorial regime. This is an instance we find, that by coming together with these parties and perhaps with other groups, we might be able to enthuse the masses to move into a series of activity — would encourage the strike actions of the workers, the student struggles in the Universities and even the struggles of the plantation workers and so on and so

forth. Apart from which there would now be a co-ordinated plan of action around the question of the elections, which will become a widespread thing in the country where people would be in a simultaneous protest movement for a period extending over several weeks and culminating at a high point. Where there could be as our "Haraya" lead story said, "Podi Hartalayak!" (a small Hartal) on the day of the election in the country. That is precisely what we expect out of this combination.

We try to keep the left identity in this combination with the prospect of fostering a left programme for a future government which is necessary we think, at this time. It appears that the Government is now on its last legs. With the three parties and possibly if we can get other left elements, we should also have them included, with a view to present a left programme and how we can create a left

government. If the Government is collapsing and the General Election that will be announced is not an adequate way forward for the people who have aspirations higher than a General Election then the left must have an offer. So therefore the left identity and the left formation in the middle of the grouping of a wider range of parties should have a more particular programme.

**Q.** What steps have you taken with regard to this boycott campaign?

**A.** Committees have been formed at the electorate level. A leaflet has been printed with the signatures of all six parties. This is now going to be distributed starting on the 23rd of July. People will be going from house to house canvassing. Polling booth committees will be formed and meetings would be held at different levels. We hope that this would bring about mobilis-



ation of the masses for a general protest. It will be democratic and non-violent as far as the intentions of the grouping is concerned. But our intentions are not finally going to determine how it would evolve, because we have always known in the past that violence has been used by the Government and the Government's goondas against all democratic oppositional forces. Such violence would naturally demand that the people should defend themselves.

Q. What sort of steps have the six party group taken to face up to Government repression, both legal and illegal?

A. Firstly, we are bringing about a consciousness among the people that we have to face up to the Government and not cow down. That is the first requirement. Secondly, we have to organise the people in committees to be able to act in terms of what our pursuit is, irrespective of the counter measures the Government would take. All these things are in the abstract today. The concretised form would emerge as we go on.

Q. But you don't feel that protest against the Government could be registered through the ballot?

A. No I believe what could be registered by way of the general protest movement is far more important and far more decisive in bringing about the re-establishment of democracy than falling within the four corners of the Government's rules. If you come within the Government's formula for these regional elections you get tied up with the Government's power. And the Government will have the fuller advantage of its position and power in registering its own victory, in spite of the opposition.

Q. You were saying that the left movement is generally trying to preserve its identity within this six party group. Have you arrived at an agreement for a common course of action?

A. We have a problem there.

Q. Do they see you as being too radical?

A. Possibly so. For instance, we are of the view that with regard to the boycott campaign, we should go to the polling booths in force and cancel off our votes. Some of the other's don't agree with us. There are differences within the co-ordinating committee on this issue. Some have put forward the suggestion that we should simply refrain from casting our votes on election day. We have pointed out that passivity does not constitute a boycott campaign.

Q. Wouldn't the left forces within this six party grouping be swamped by the populist centre-right combination?

A. There is the danger of that happening. But objectively everything is against it. Unlike in 1964 or the 1968 to 1970 period, everything is against it. There is no dissolution of Parliament immediately. So therefore there is the task of having to overpower the Government, overwhelm the Government which is possible only by the activation of a mass movement. Therefore, the scenario that followed 1964 or 1968 is not the kind of activity envisaged in the present situation. The general trend of events is a head on collision between the Government and the people. If that means anything, what would the right-wing SLFP do in that situation?

Q. Mr. K. P. Silva of the CPSL has expressed the view that it was the Three Party Left Alliance that first mooted this whole idea of agitating jointly for democracy. But the LSSP's detraction has deprived the Three Party Alliance of the initiative of the whole movement.....

A. That I will agree with.

Q. ....And that therefore the SLFP is at the helm of it.

A. What do you mean by helm of it?

Q. Well....for instance, being the biggest Party.....

A. Biggest Party....for what?

Q. In terms of numbers — votes commanded and popularity etc.

A. That's the point! Objectively, the condition is a confrontation with the regime which means active participation of the masses in ACTION.

Q. Confrontation with the regime in a situation where the calling of a General Election would make the SLFP the biggest opponent of the Government, and therefore, also the biggest beneficiary?

A. If a General Election should come as a result of this situation and if such a General Election is acceptable to the people within the present constitutional framework, it is a different thing. As we go on fighting against the Government our slogan would be, and is, and had been "down with the Government!" Not to ask this Government to hold a General Election in terms of their constitution, in terms of their laws, which does not happen to suit us.



Q. You see this boycott of elections as a step to down the Government?

A. Yes! And that very process of conflict would bring about a situation we believe, in certain given conditions when the people will say "to hell with your General Election too!" That is what we are working towards!

Q. So you are not actually interested in the General Election?

A. We are **not** interested in the General Election. We are interested in the power of the people being established in the work places, the areas, in the armed forces and in the Universities.

Q. So you differ from the others in the six party group?

A. **Of course** we differ from everybody else who are in the combination.

Q. All the others are interested in the General Election. Isn't your presence within the six party group anomalous?

A. No, we are not anomalous, because we are not saying we don't want an election. We have never said that, we are not sectarians to say we don't want an election. But we hope election would become **irrelevant** as we go on.

Q. Irrelevant to the masses?

A. To the masses! An election given by **THIS** Government! because the antipathy towards the Government would have mounted to such heights when the masses would say, to hell with your elections!

Q. What is the alternative that you envisage?

A. We envisage a constituent assembly, made up of the people's representatives.

Q. Are you envisaging a revolutionary situation?

A. A **pre-revolutionary** situation. There will be a number of transitional and provisional Governments.

Q. What makes you say so?

A. The conflict will naturally produce it. The capitalist class is divided. It is the fissure of the ruling class that brings the energy and the courage to the oppositional forces to move forward.

Q. Would you see Mrs. Bandaranaike as the local Kerensky? At one time people thought that Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was the local Kerensky.

A. We don't see Mrs. Bandaranaike as a Kerensky. I don't even see a comparison between Cory Aquino and Mrs. Bandaranaike.

Q. So you want to use this boycott campaign as a way to arouse the masses into action? Dr. Colvin R. de Silva has expressed the opinion that when it comes to a **boycott** of elections, it should come with a mass movement that is already at a certain level. The boycott should come when the mass movement has gained some momentum. What he says is that there is no such mass movement at the moment.

A. He seems to have forgotten the last May Day which was a defiance of the Government's ban. He seems to have forgotten that the masses have confronted the Government. The students have confronted the authorities and the workers in the plantations have confronted the Police and the employers on so many occasions during the last period. And that the absence of a coordinating centre prevented these

areas of struggle maturing into one great force. The people in the peasant areas fighting against the monopolies, have jumped before bulldozers and confronted the police. Students have sacrificed their lives in Peradeniya and Colombo. Plantation workers have been shot dead and the struggle is in spate. And therefore, we believe there is a mass movement.

Q. So you say there is a mass-movement albeit without a coordinated thrust.

A. Yes. It is diffused at present. Thanks to the absence of a leadership.

Q. You feel that this boycott campaign of the six parties would in some sense provide leadership to this diffused mass movement?

A. Yes.

Q. Who will ultimately be the beneficiary from all this?

A. That depends on how it will end. How it will end and how it will be shaped is finally something to be determined by the dynamics and processes of the conflict. We must prepare as the left for a revolutionary left government, in the course of the process. Which means we will even have to oppose the SLFP at a later period.

Q. Will this six party group that you are in extend to a general election as well?

A. A General Election is a different kettle of fish altogether. The answer is NO!

Q. Will the CPSL and the SLMP also stop short of combining for a General Election?

A. I am sure that the SLMP's forces will follow suit. As for the CPSL, I **hope** they will.



Q. Why do you have reservations about the CPSL?

A. Well the CP has had a history of collaboration with the bourgeoisie — what they call the progressive bourgeoisie. To help the lesser enemy so as to defeat the bigger enemy and so forth.

Q. Would you see the withdrawing of MPs from the Parliament as a step towards the declaring total war against the Government?

A. Most certainly!

Q. Have you discussed this within the six party group?

A. No. But this would come about as we go to the next stage of developments. But to make that a precondition as the LSSP has done to join the boycott is ridiculous to say the least.

Q. Don't you feel that the LSSP has a point there?

A. The point is this: When you are beginning to work out an oppositional movement at a lesser level, you ask for a higher level of activity. And if that higher level of activity is not agreed on, you are not prepared to join in the lesser level. That is a way of hiding behind dishonest intentions!

Q. Isn't it a good starting point?

A. It is a very good starting point to boycott the local government elections. When you say here, let's boycott the local government elections, what Dr. Colvin should say is "Yes let's boycott it, very good! But we will not stop at this. This should end next in boycotting the Parliament as well". But if that is made a precondition when you are starting at a lesser level then you are certainly a humbug.

Q. What Dr. Colvin says is that if you are boycotting the local government elections on the grounds that the Parliament is illegal, then boycott the Parliament too.

A. That is a legalistic argument. We are not interested in legalistic arguments. What you are saying is a better thing to have happened and a thing that ought to happen as we go along. But to make that a condition to do what has been asked to be done is dishonesty and humbug. Merely because you have no representative in Parliament, you can't make that demand so that you will feel better that others also don't have representatives in Parliament.

Q. The whole idea of the Pradeshiya Sabhas can be seen as a step in this process to devolve power to the lesser units of the country. This Government abolished local government as soon as they came into power and had only Municipal Councils and Urban Councils with a District Development Council system that has proved to be totally ineffectual. These Pradeshiya Sabha elections came in such a situation. Supposing the Provincial Council elections are held before a General Election, will you boycott that also?

A. No. The question does not arise that way. We are confident that the Government is incapable of bringing about any formula that would resolve the conflict of the nationalities in the country. They will go in to crisis and further crisis not being able to resolve their own contradictions between the chauvinistic forces on which they rest and their objective needs. But in the abstract, if Provincial Councils are proposed, we will support it.

Pradeshiya Sabhas are a renegade step which is in no way going to meet the needs of the people.

Q. Wouldn't you see the Pradeshiya Sabhas as a step towards the devolution of power and hence a solution to the ethnic conflict?

A. It is **not** a step in that direction. It is a substitute. This is Premadasa's substitute that he has been proposing instead of the Provincial Councils.

Q. But in the sphere of local government.....

A. Local Government is not in issue. This is a red herring.

Q. But don't you feel that it would be a restoration of effective representative Government in the rural areas?

A. In the abstract, Yes! But in the concrete, No! In concrete, it is a ruse, a devise the Government has innovated in order to extend its period, and in order to show that the Government has got a mandate from the people.

Q. Would you see the Provincial Councils as some sort of a solution to the ethnic conflict?

A. Of course! It would certainly be some kind of concession to the Tamil people.

Q. If Provincial Council elections are held will you contest these elections?

A. We are not interested in contesting any elections. We are interested in bringing down the Government.

Q. How do you see the action of the LSSP on the matter of these elections?



A. Objectively, factually, they have become the tool of the UNP in keeping within the framework of the UNP's constitution. There is an opposition to the Government rising outside the constitutional framework. The LSSP has become the instrument of the Government to try and draw that opposition **within** the constitutional framework that the Government has laid down. But of course, the LSSP also has its own reasons. Having occupied positions in the different Municipalities and Urban Councils, etc they hope to base the future building of the Party on that and again become a very big party in the country. But by then they also become part of the Government's scheme and would be of no use to the people. Perhaps they may occupy some positions. But by that time they would have become totally alienated.

Q. It is known that the LSSP has objected to admitting you into the Three Party Alliance. How would you see your relationship to the Left Alliance now that the LSSP has distanced itself from the other two parties?

A. The fact that the LSSP is now no longer with the other two parties has not brought us automatically within the left alliance. We presently have consultations with the other two parties on and off. But we are still not an acknowledged member of the left alliance. This is arising out of the absence of a common programme and a common perspective.

Q. How would you see your future prospects of joining the Left Alliance?

A. We hope as we go on and as the movement of the people begin to take a higher level of activity, the left will have to

definitely offer its own programme and its own perspective.

Q. With regard to left unity, would you see as possible any kind of collaboration with the LSSP after this?

A. I wish the LSSP's forces who have not yet left and deserted the leaders would come over even at a later stage. I hope, or rather I **wish** even the leaders will follow the same. But quite independently of the LSSP's decision on this election, the left alternative will become a viable fact in the country's future politics.

Q. You would welcome the reunion of the LSSP with the others after the elections?

A. Most certainly. We have no aversion towards the LSSP for what it had done today, for any future possibilities of forging a left alternative. And we have the urgent need of doing so. Therefore, if the LSSP would retrace its steps, that is a most welcome thing.

Q. Your party is a break-away group from the LSSP. Don't you feel that your presence within the LSSP would have been more effective? In a situation like this, you see that the LSSP polit-bureau is divided. The party is going to the polls limping because half the party is against it. So in a situation like that you would have been a decisive factor.

A. We wanted to remain within the party and become a decisive factor in its whole future. But we were thrown out much against our wishes. We demanded that a Congress be held and the matter be taken up. But that did not happen. Those who were instrumental in throwing us out later left the party and abandoned it

and joined on worse terms other parties.

Q. Are you referring to Anil Moonesinghe?

A. He's one of them. Yes. Even today if we can be within the LSSP we would very willingly go there and take up our positions.

Q. Even today?

A. Even today!

Q. So what's stopping you?

A. They wouldn't have us. They can have a party congress and let us attend it and air our views. But they wouldn't permit that. Bureaucratically they have kept us out.

Q. Opinion has been expressed that the break-away of the NSSP succeeded only in debilitating the LSSP and that they have not been able to present a viable alternative.....

A. The LSSP succeeded in debilitating itself, by vomiting out what it could not digest at that time. Namely a revolutionary line of politics combined with a total alliance with the national liberation movement of the Tamils.

Q. At that time, one of your main criticisms was that the LSSP combined with the SLFP.

A. Yes, the coalition was a mistake.

Q. Why have you not made a concerted effort as you have done with regard to the three party alliance to get back into the LSSP?

A. We have done so, for the first three years since we were ex-



pelled. Until 1979 we called ourselves the "LSSP New Leadership". But we had to subsequently change our name because the LSSP objected to that name when we were negotiating with the CP and the LSSP to form a front in that particular year. We did not want to even change our name, so much was our desire to identify ourselves with the LSSP and to work on the basis that we are the LSSP. Finally the front was formed with the CPSL, LSSP and us as the NSSP. Since then the historical flow has been on a different footing.

Q. It has been said that the condition of the NSSP to go back to the LSSP was that Dr. Wickramabahu Karunaratne be given the General Secretaryship. Is that correct?

A. No. That is not correct. The condition for the NSSP and the LSSP to merge is that our programme be accepted.

Q. The LSSP has gone into the elections with a lot of dissension within its ranks. What has been the tendency of LSSP dissidents to join the NSSP?

A. A few have already joined and a few others are contemplating. But the majority of the LSSP dissidents would join either the SLMP or the CPSL. Because their political perspective approximates more to them than to us. Particularly on the national question.

20th July 1987

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# The Travails of Local Government

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Bernard Soysa

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The present impasse that local government institutions have reached in Sri Lanka is best judged in the context of the various changes that have taken place over the years.

The British used the country's headmen system together with Rata-mahamayas, mudaliyars and minor headmen for revenue collection and for the general administration of the country. In course of time village committees were created in the rural areas and first Municipal Councils and later Urban Councils were created in the towns. The Colombo Municipal Council was established a hundred and twenty years ago and that was followed by the setting up of the Galle and

Kandy Municipal Councils. Urban councils and the other municipalities came later; and still later a UNP government set up the Town Councils to separate the built-up areas of the countryside from the merely rural. The creation of pockets of political power in the townships dominated by the wealthy traders of the countryside was not far from their intention.

The powers, duties and functions of these bodies were enlarged from time to time, the village committees however remaining the most backward. For many years the "Gansabas" were treated as a comic institution in the circles of the elite. The village committees however gave the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandara-

naike the Minister who really fostered the development of local government his first political base for his Sinhala Maha Sabha, the Association of village councils providing him with a powerful lever for the manipulation of rural opinion.

## CHANGES BEGIN

The abolition of the "Headman System" had of course, reduced the power of elitist families in the areas. When the civil servants who for years functioned as chairmen of local institutions were replaced by elected chairmen there was some attempt to make the institutions more democratic. There was nevertheless no real attempt to move towards the establishment of any degree of



local autonomy. The central government dominated the local scene through a few decentralised departments, but principally through the concentration of delegated powers in the Government Agents who were the lords of the Kachcheries in every District. The struggle for local government reform took two forms. The first was a struggle for larger powers — principally financial — and resources for the local body. The second was the more informed political demand that the kachcheri system inherited from British times should be replaced by the creation of more democratic institutions.

### A NEW DEPARTURE

The whole question of local reform however took an entirely different qualitative character when to meet the question of federalism and then of "separation", government after government sought to fashion instruments for a larger sharing out of power from the Centre to the periphery.

Lin Yutang once said that the dress of women through the ages was the expression of a contradiction: the contradiction between the expressed desire to dress and the unexpressed desire to undress. Alas for these efforts at "sharing out"! All the proposals put forward from time to time are the expression of a contradiction: the contradiction between the expressed desire to decentralise and the unexpressed desire to centralise.

The Choksy Commission on Local Government (1954-1955) recommended some pertinent reforms. The village committees came to be called village councils. The Report cautiously explored the possibility of setting up Regional Councils or District Councils. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike as prime minister of the government of 1956 intended to create Regional Councils armed

with larger powers duties and functions. When the negotiations were held between Mr. Bandaranaike and the late Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam it appears to have been agreed that "land distribution" would be one of the functions of the Council. However there was nothing to indicate what was intended by the word "land". After the monks performed satyagraha at Rosmead Place and the protest march to Kandy had been thwarted, the Banda-Chelvanayakam Pact broke down, one cause mentioned on both sides being the contradictory meanings given to the phrase "land distribution."

### DISTRICT COUNCILS

Again as part of the attempt to settle the problem of majority-minority relations the late Mr. Dudley Senanayake brought to Parliament a White Paper embodying a draft bill for District Councils. There was however no real decentralisation contemplated in that draft bill. Even the Municipal Councils would have lost some of their powers if that bill became law. The "line ministers" of the Central Government could go into a District Council meeting and determine the decision of matters affecting their ministries. That Bill never came before Parliament to pass into law.

For some years not local government but other matters engaged the attention of people. Then the late Mr. Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike when he became Minister of Local Government genuinely felt that local government had become a comparatively neglected sector of the administration. Of the village councils a few were found to be corrupt. Many more were ineffective. He developed an attack on that front, using his powers of dissolution. All local bodies he said were not doing what was expected of them. He insisted on "Program Budgeting".

He said that if he could ensure properly monitored expenditure, larger resources would be provided for these bodies. Even the Colombo Municipal Council had to operate under the severe ministerial gaze. He armed the Minister of local government with more powers under the law. All his proposals were not desirable ones. His proposed reforms however could not take final shape before the Government went out of office.

### THE INTRODUCTION OF PR

Many changes have been instituted under this Government. When the system of proportionate representation was adopted for the election of Parliament through the change of the Constitution the same system with the high "cut-off point" of twelve and a half percent was brought into local elections too, the ward basis of election being abolished. In proportionate representation, as is understood, the people of the area would vote for one of rival lists of nominees of political parties or groups of independents. The contenders who get below the cut-off percentage of votes are eliminated. The seats in the council are shared in the proportion of the votes polled by those who qualify above the cut-off point. The leading party or group gets one "bonus" seat (or more) in order to ensure a stable regime.

This system can be said to help reflect in the composition of the council the relative strengths of the political parties in the area of the council. The close relationship that exists between the member elected for a ward and the residents of that ward is lost in this system. P.R. is intended to give every political trend an opportunity of representation. For this either the cut-off point is usually kept very low or there is only the natural cut-off point of the number of votes polled divided by the number



of seats in the council. The abnormally high cut-off point of twelve and a half percent only succeeds in abolishing from the council all relatively small parties. Those who vote for them are virtually disfranchised.

There are other accompanying changes. The party or group that polls the highest at the election remains forever the ruling group. No council can on its own motion change the character of a regime in the council. Only the Minister can do so. Even minority rule is possible. In the Panadura Urban Council at the last election the ruling party got the highest number of votes of an individual party and was given three seats on the proportion. The "bonus" seat was also given to it. However, the other parties and groups have together five members against the ruling Party's four. The Chairman's budget is amended or defeated by the council. However he can, introduce his original budget two weeks later and whatever happens it is deemed to have been passed! These things lead to a negation of local government democracy. The law allows it.

### VILLAGE REPRESENTATION

The Minister then proceeded to abolish all village councils and town councils. The government in the meanwhile was seeking ways of fulfilling the undertakings given to the TULF in regard to the devolution of power to authorities below the Centre. To satisfy this demand as well as to provide a substitute for the local bodies that had been abolished a District Development Councils' Act was passed. It is not necessary here to go into the electoral and other misdemeanours that took place at the elections, particularly in Jaffna. What is relevant here is the fact that it should have been seen even before commencement that the councils

as envisaged in the law could not work. They have not worked. The DDCs have been a tragic failure everywhere.

There was no devolution of power under that Act. An "executive committee" led by the District Minister is given all the power under the law. The executive committee's will prevails over the will of the Council. The District Minister's will prevails over the will of the Executive Committee. The Minister over the District Minister. The District Minister as has been said, becomes a new ratamahatmaya. The Councils are elected on PR, the same position as described earlier applies to all resolutions and the Budget of the DDC.

The future of the DDC's is uncertain. It has been said many times that they would be done away with. Despite this however in the latest amendments to the Municipal Council's Ordinance these councils are enjoined to carry out tasks delegated to them by the DDC of the District. So it is with the new Pradeshiya Sabhas too. If the DDCs are to be preserved and to have this kind of relationship to other local bodies the, resulting hierarchical structure would be an insupportably heavy one upon the people. Besides there can be much confusion.

### CENTRALISATION

Further acts of centralisation, have taken away powers and functions hitherto exercised by the Municipal Councils and Urban Councils. For instance the Urban Development Authority encroaches upon the functions of the municipality. Overlapping tasks have not been sorted out. The poor ratepayer does not know where the authority of one ends and the other begins. In Colombo the Municipal Council handled water services. Through the creation of a Water Board the council has

been superseded by a board subservient to the Ministry.

With the new Pradeshiya Sabhas the village folk get some kind of local representation again. But this too is vitiated by the election being on the system of PR with the high cut-off point of twelve and a half percent.

The demand for the restoration of Village Councils was strongly urged by Dr. Colvin R. de Silva at the first meetings of the All-Parties' Conference in 1984. The LSSP was supported in this effort by the CP SL. Government's reply was that some village council areas were too small even to generate enough revenue to pay the officials. After much discussion the creation of "a grassroots organisation" to cover an Assistant Government Agent's division was more or less agreed upon. That is the Pradeshiya Sabha.

The agitation for such an organisation was further carried forward in the subsequent Political Parties' Conference of 1986. Here the SLMP too supported the idea. These conferences were summoned for the purpose of exploring solutions to the inter-communal problem. On that question the principal proposal that emerged was the creation of Provincial Council for the exercise of large of Powers. That still awaits its finalisation. However, since administrative structures were being discussed at the PPC it was appropriate to seek to win back through them the democratic institutions lost when the Village Councils and Town Councils were abolished. What was decided — not by a consensus only but by a resolution adopted unanimously — was that all local bodies, Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and the new Pradeshiya Sabhas should be elected not through the system of PR but on the basis of delimited



wards. This decision has been ignored.

### BREACH OF FAITH

Government is guilty of a breach of faith in that the system of election through PR with the present high cut-off points is not only preserved in regard to Municipal Councils and Urban Councils but made in the electoral system of the newly created Pradeshia Sabhas.

It is a welcome sign that the agitation conducted by the LSSP at the Political Conferences to have other sources of revenue for local bodies besides the rates and taxes has had some result. The Pradeshia Sabha is empowered to engage in industrial and commercial ventures but of course ringed round with many safe-guards. The scope of local government can even in

this way get widened. However the most unfortunate development is that the heavy concentration of power at the Centre continues unabated.

Powers taken by the Minister and his officials to remove even elected representatives are enormous. The weight of the Ministry rests heavily upon the local bodies. They can be punished. The threat of dissolution looms large. It is correct that where there is serious misconduct, mismanagement or incompetence on the part of a local authority the Minister should have the power to take remedial action including the removal of the council. But here no room is left for a proper appeal. In the Pradeshia Sabha Act one of the causes for removing a Chairman or a member from office or for dissolution of the Sabha reads as follows :

“Persistent disobedience to or disregard of the directions, instructions or recommendations of the Minister or the Commissioner..” Total obedience can be expected from a body created by the Central Government acting through a Minister, like the Oils and Fats Corporation or the Transport Board. But to demand it from an elected body is an insult to the voters and a negation of local government democracy.

With the present system of election and the other implied procedures taken together with the removal of some functions from the councils and the controls newly established, what we have got is not an encouragement of local initiative and autonomy but an *imperium in imperio* a heavy, centralisation and a denial of the rights of the people.

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# Ten Years of Emergency Rule

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**D. E. W. Gunasekara M.P.**

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The U.N.P. Government led by His Excellency J. R. Jayewardene, completes its Tenth Year on July 22nd, 1987. The most striking feature in its uninterrupted rule was the continued operation of Emergency Regulations from its inception, with, of course, intermittent breaks.

The post-election violence of 1977 was the beginning of the decade of Emergency Rule, followed by communal disturbances in 1979, 1981, and 1983 in the South. The Emergency clamped in July 1983, after the outbreak of violence in

the city of Colombo continues to operate. Ever since then, the monthly Debate on the Emergency in Parliament has become a ritual in which a detailed monthly account of deaths is tabled.

The Eelamists or ‘boys’ in the North had nothing to do with the post-Election violence of 1977, or with the communal disturbances in 1979 and 1981. Though the 1983 July riots were regarded as a backlash to the murder of 13 Sinhalese soldiers in the North, it has now been acknowledged that it was a calculated and engineered plan

on the part of certain forces in the South with definite ulterior motives and sinister designs.

His Excellency the President, addressing a UNP meeting at Ramakrishna Hall, Wellawatte in August, 1981, referred to the communal disturbances of 1981 that occurred in the Estate areas particularly in the Ratnapura District.

He said thus: “I regret to say that some of my own Party people are responsible for this. I am ashamed”. (මමගේ පක්ෂයේම සමහරක් අය එයට වගකිව යුතු බව කියන්නට කණගාටුයි - මට ලැජ්ජයි.)



So, the need for promulgation and enforcement of Emergency Regulations in the years 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983 was caused by the forces remotely or closely connected with the Ruling Party itself.

Since 1983, the Emergency Regulations continued to operate more rigorously throughout the country. The Government sought to rely on the Emergency Regulations to perpetuate its rule in the North and as a result the Emergency Regulations have not only become ineffective but also counter-productive. The Government instead of taking serious steps to eradicate the root causes of terrorism by finding a political solution to the ethnic problem, relied upon the possibility of combatting terrorism through military means for which operation of the Emergency Regulations was a legal requirement. Today, the civil administration in the North has totally collapsed and the Emergency Regulations have no force for its enforcement. If at all they are enforceable and effective in any sense, they are so only in so far as the innocent civilian population is concerned. They have become victims of the Emergency Regulations.

It is really in the South that the Emergency Regulations are most rigidly and solidly applied. The operation of the Emergency Regulation has almost been absorbed into the normal maintenance of, law and order. In fact they have ceased to be regulations of an emergency nature. They are being used regularly against workers, peasants, students etc.

The application of Emergency Regulation in the normal process of administering and maintaining law and order causes untold hardships and misery to the innocent, law abiding citizens of the country. Several cases have already been

highlighted in the applications made to the Supreme Court as instances of grave infringement of Fundamental Rights.

### SUPREME COURT HOLDS EMERGENCY REGULATION INVALID

The most revealing instance of a gross violation of Fundamental Rights was brought to light by a Divisional Bench of Five Judges comprising the Chief Justice Sharvananda, Justices Wanasundera, Atukorala, L. H. de Alwis, and Seneviratne. The petitioners namely Messrs. Joseph Perera, M. S. Lawrence Perera and Lionel Dias, were arrested, and detained by the Chilaw Police for several months for the alleged offence of distributing a leaflet and organising a lecture entitled "Attack on Free Education."

All the five Judges of the Supreme Court in their judgement delivered on 25.5.87 agreed unanimously that the Emergency Regulation 28 was invalid. Chief Justice S. Sharvananda and Justice E. A. D. Athukorala held that petitioner's fundamental rights of freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention and freedom of speech and expression secured to them by Article 13 and 14 have been violated by executive administrative action.

Though Justice Wanasundera says that the arrest can be justified, he firmly holds that detention was illegal and that the right of freedom of speech and expression had been transgressed. He says, "I yield to none in the protection of those fundamental freedoms." Justice L. H. de Alwis, remarked that the detention was unjustified and unlawful and that it was not in the exercise of the Magistrate's judicial discretion to have detained them under the Emergency Regulations. Justice O. S. M. Seneviratne, too agreed that the detention was illegal and unwarranted.

The Emergency Regulation 28(i) under question is worded as follows :—

"No person shall, without permission of the IGP or any police officer authorized on the behalf by the IGP affix in any place visible to the public or distribute among the public any posters, handbills or leaflets."

It is now common knowledge that the Police resorted to this Emergency Regulation in the arrest and detention of a large number of people belonging to various political parties and groups. All the documents relied upon by the Chilaw Police to justify the arrest and detention of these petitioners referred to above did not contain any subversive literature which was likely to arouse, encourage or promote feelings of hatred or contempt to the government likely to incite any person — to take any steps towards the overthrowing of the government.

Apparently, the Government (Executive) acted upon the theory that the Executive President is omnipotent and that his powers are unlimited. They would have been carried away by the provisions of Section 8 of the Public Security Ordinance which says that the Regulations cannot be questioned in Court of Law. The Police may have thought that they can arrest and detain people as and when they wish and want, using the powers conferred on them by those regulations which relate to public security and preservation of order. The Supreme Court has now ruled that the President has the power to make all types of regulations but he cannot over-ride the provisions of the Constitution. It further says that President's power is not unlimited and that President is not competent to restrict via Emergency the exercise and operation of fundamental rights of the citizens.



The Communist Party of Sri Lanka, which I represent, singly opposed in Parliament the extension of the Emergency Regulations continuously for over four years. Its principled position has been defended and justified by the Supreme Court's decision which expressly states that Emergency Regulation 28 violates Article 12 of the Constitution. The Supreme Court ruled as follows :—

“Regulation 28 confers a naked and arbitrary power on the Police to grant or refuse permission to distribute pamphlet or posters as it pleases, in the exercise of its

absolute and uncontrolled discretion without any guiding principle or policy to control and regulate the exercise of such discretion.....”

In addition to the Emergency Regulations, the Prevention of Terrorism Act is also being used by the Authorities to arrest and detain people continuously for eighteen months. Although it was said that the PTA would be used to meet the terrorist activities in the North, now it is being enforced brazenly to have any type of suspects arrested and detained. When the period of 18 months expires,

the suspects so arrested and detained under the PTA continue to be kept in custody under the Emergency Regulations.

**There was constitutional requirement that the extension of Emergency over a period of 3 months should be approved by the Parliament with a two-thirds majority. This requirement was taken off the Statute Book with an amendment to the Constitution and such extension can now be approved with a single majority.**

The Emergency Regulations have now come to stay. It has become the main instrument of repression.



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# Economy in Crisis

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**H. N. S. Karunatilake**

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*Dr. H. N. S. Karunatilake is a former Senior Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. In this article and others that are to follow, he presents his viewpoint on the myths and realities of economic progress in Sri Lanka with special reference to the past ten years.*

*Subsequent articles in this series will review in a little more detail the major problems that have been mentioned here specifically, and others to which passing references have been made in the text.*

Although the UNP Government claims that the economy has fared well in the last ten years with a very high growth rate, plentiful supplies of consumer goods, and indications of opulence in restricted urban areas, the underlying major economic problems which continue to affect the common people have remained unsolved. These problems which will be referred to in this note have progressively worsened in the ten year period, bringing along with it considerable social and political unrest and tension. Growing political instability and

the emergence of subversive movements in all parts of the country, are in a large measure, due to the fact that the government has failed to grapple with the basic economic problems like the high cost of living, poverty and unemployment. In its economic thinking and action, the UNP government has lost sight of the basic needs and aspirations of the people. Economic performance has been judged and identified with the following: (1) A high growth rate irrespective of where this growth has occurred. (2) Making consumer goods plentiful with-

out endeavouring to prevent price increases. (3) The curtailment of welfare and social service expenditure and the diversion of resources to investment. (4) Enormous expenditure on large scale development projects. (5) The ability to win the confidence of donor countries and international agencies and obtain aid on an continuing basis.

## **BEFORE AND AFTER 1977**

In broad terms Sri Lanka's economic problems could be ide-



ntified as falling into two categories: those which have been present over the last three decades despite the changes in policy affected by the UNP in 1977. The other set of problems could be identified as those which have emerged after 1977 with the introduction of the new economic policy package. In regard to the first set of problems a fundamental issue is the continuing dependence of the economy on the three major export crops and the very limited structural change that has taken place since 1948. As a result the country has been plagued with balance of payments difficulties thus making it dependent on the outside world. The attempt to diversify the economy and to make it less dependent on primary export crops has been successful only to a limited extent. There has not been a major breakthrough in production at any time. After 1956, a large number of private sector and state owned industries were established. A new economic activity that emerged after 1965 was tourism. After 1970 the government was successful in getting more revenue and foreign exchange from gem exports. Thus exploiting a considerable part of the potential that has always existed in the gem industry and the trade to make available more financial resources. After 1977 tourism received a major filip with large capital investments in the sector. Along with this foreign remittances from overseas employment became an additional source of foreign exchange. The post 1977 new activities, both tourism and foreign employment remittances, cannot be considered to have contributed to diversify the economy because they have not proved to be of a permanent nature, because both are subject to trends and developments in other countries.

## CUTS IN WELFARE

Emphasis is needed, in particular on the problems that the country has had to face in the last decade and these have manifested on a variety of fronts and they have had major social and economic dimensions. A significant characteristic of the policies launched in 1977 was to heavily prune the social welfare programmes and expenditures that were in effect in the period 1948 to 1977, on the premise that funds must be diverted from consumption to the development programme. Subsidies were severely curtailed and a food stamp scheme was introduced for very low income earners. The food stamp scheme did not function within the framework of stable prices.

The prices of essential consumer goods have in the period 1978 to 1987 risen at a much higher rate than at any time before. As a result the value of food stamps have fallen sharply. Without exception, all essential items particularly food and clothing have risen by more than 400 per cent. In 1977 the UNP said that prices of essential goods were far too high when a lb of bread was available at 60 cents, while today the price at Rs. 3.20 is 500 per cent above this. Likewise a coconut which was available at 30 cents in 1977 now sells at Rs. 4.00 which is an increase of over 1000 per cent. After 1977 prices have risen very sharply and there has been very little addition to people's real and money incomes. Wages have been sticky and after 1983 hardly any wage increases have been granted to the majority of workers. The real wages of all categories of workers have fallen considerably.

The government has used two arguments against wage increases. Firstly that consumption must be curtailed to undertake large in-

vestments such as the Mahaweli. Secondly, after 1983, the government maintained that the anti-terrorist defence effort was costing a lot of money and that the government could no longer afford wage increases. The only compensating feature after 1978 has been that there has been a slight increase in the number of income earners in each family and Middle East earnings have been able to sustain a larger number of persons both young and old in each family. But the increase in income earners per family has occurred mainly in families already having one or more income earners. As against this there are a large number of families that have not been able to find employment for a single person.

## SOME PERTINENT QUESTIONS

If the high growth rates and economic progress have benefited the people the answers to the following questions must be most favourable.

1. By how much have real incomes of all categories of persons increased since 1977?
2. Has there been a decrease in the number of families living below the subsistence level?
3. Have not the prices of all essential goods risen by more than 350 per cent between 1977 and 1987?
4. How many are now out looking for work and is this figure higher or lower than in 1976?
5. Have the nutrition standards, particularly of children, improved in the last 10 years and has the calorie intake of the poor increased in the period 1977 to 1987?

The answers to these questions are of fundamental importance in mak-



ing a proper assessment of the impact of the 1977 new economic policies on the well being of the people. The improvement in living standards is the critical factor in the development process. The high growth rates and very high rates of capital formation expressed in terms of a percentage of GDP do not mean anything unless the living standards of all segments of the population have risen and poverty has been appreciably reduced. Social indicators and the physical quality of life cannot be ignored in assessing the ultimate outcome of economic development, particularly in Sri Lanka where more than 50 per cent of the population live well below the poverty line.

Since 1977 the high level of investment, exceeding on the average Rs. 15 billion per year, has undoubtedly produced very high statistical growth rates. However a disaggregation of this growth, shows that the bulk has been in the construction and the services sector. The Mahaweli development programme, housing and other construction, together with a booming retail and wholesale trade and a buoyant banking and finance sector has made the major contribution to these high average growth rates. In the last ten years production other than in paddy has fallen. This is best exemplified in the traditional export crops where the response of production to the incentives offered such as the progressive depreciation of the exchange rate has been very poor. The gem trade which received a filip in 1970-77 has declined markedly with the intrusion of the Thai traders and their virtual takeover of the gem trade. Thailand has developed its gem industry and strengthened its balance of payments position at Sri Lanka's expense after 1983. The extensive infrastructure created for the tourist industry has now turned out to be white elephants and unproductive because there is

no prospect that an appreciable revival of the trade will take place within the next two years.

### ECONOMIC EYEWASH

The foregoing shows that the large investments in the preceding decade have not contributed to economic diversification or to an increase in production. The problem has been compounded by the setback that domestic manufacturing industry received when the floodgates were opened to imports of all varieties of consumer goods, even from sources which Sri Lanka had earlier not maintained trade relations such as South Africa, South Korea, Israel and Taiwan. In the context of diversification of the economy the open economic policy has been fundamentally detrimental. After 1978, a large number of industries that were producing for the domestic market had to curtail or totally cease production because they could not compete with cheap imports. Import trading and domestic marketing got precedence over production. The government thereafter stressed that production must be primarily for export and whatever incentives given to industry must be for the export sector. Even in this context, some of the advantages that the export sector had enjoyed progressively disappeared with the continuing devaluation of the rupee on the advice of the IMF. Devaluation repeatedly raised the cost of production of exports particularly non traditional exports because they were heavily dependent on imported raw materials. To add to this there was the pressure on prices which was being exerted by the monetary expansion that was being caused by the large budget deficits which were also responsible for cost increases of export products as well as of all other domestically produced commodities

The contraction of the industrial

base of the economy had far reaching repercussions, these included (1) reduction in employment and a progressive movement of employment opportunities from the production to the services sector. (2) The continuing dependence on foreign manufactured goods. (3) Heavier expenditure on imports with corresponding large foreign exchange outlays on imports, (4) The dismemberment of the vertical links in manufacturing industry which had progressively developed since the early sixties.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

The country's biggest problem is the increasing level of unemployment in the economy. No survey data on unemployment has been available since 1981-82 when the last socio-economic survey was undertaken. The government continues to quote figures on unemployment which are at least six years behind time. Politicians and very senior ministers who are handling economic and financial matters, but who have never had a proper understanding of them, still claim that unemployment has been brought down to 11 per cent, which is a figure only relevant for 1981-82. Even in 1981-82 with unemployment at 11 per cent there were over 620,000 persons who were still looking for work. In talking about unemployment it is not the percentage that matters, but the number of persons that have been found jobs and how long the majority of them have been looking for employment.

Independent surveys undertaken in 1986 show that since 1982 there has been a very sharp increase in unemployment and over 1.2 million are unemployed which is over 20 per cent of a labour force of some 6 million. The task before the government is to provide jobs for at least 600,000 immediately and reduce unemployment to manageable levels. Its present economic



policies and strategies do not give an indication that it will get anywhere near this objective.

Looking at past performance, after 1978, the major achievement of the government in regard to unemployment is that it permitted those who had been looking for work to find employment in the Middle East. In the period 1978 to 1983 more than 350,000 were able to find employment overseas and this was about 30 per cent of the 1.2 million who were unemployed in 1977. The open economy policy contributed to provide about 250,00 jobs at home between 1978 and 1983 which was

of course much less than the number of jobs that were available overseas. The government was therefore in a position to deal with the unemployment problem by "exporting" unemployment. This required no effort and expenditure on the part of the government and was achieved without any investment. Had it not been for Middle East employment, in 1983 the government would have still had nearly one million unemployed despite the reported favourable impact of the open economy policy.

In regard to internal employment generation between 1978 and 1984, during the construction phase

of the Mahaweli project, about 40,000 directly and indirectly had found employment. Retail trade and the services sector would have provided about 100,000 jobs. The Free Trade Zone has generated about 35,000 jobs, although not all of them are new jobs, especially where the garments industry is considered. The other employment opportunities after 1978 have been in housing and general construction, electricity and water supply, transport services and to a limited extent in paddy production. In the industrial sector there was a sharp reduction in employment where some of the employees moved into the services and construction sectors.



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# The JVP and the Ethnic Conflict

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C. A. Chandraprema

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**A commentary on JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna-Peoples Liberation Front) leader Rohana Wijeweera's 315 page magnum opus entitled 'The Solutions to the Tamil Eelam Struggle.**

Among the many aims of the book as stated in the preface, such as making explicit the 'true' Marxist-Leninist stand on the 'national question' as opposed to the distortions of it by various Trotskyist, Maoist and Catholic (!) Guerilla groups; is the over-riding one of purging the minds of the party rank and file of various 'subjective' errors and confusions on this score. It is also stated that the book aims to explain to the membership and sympathisers, the position and strategy of the party in the current crisis and to bring the

whole party into a complete ideological agreement on 'the national question in Sri Lanka and the proletarian solution therefore' (page 9) Mr. Wijeweera (hereinafter referred to as RW) has not failed to start off by insisting that his analysis is 'dialectical' and based on 'objective truth'. It is also supposed to be based on the 'scientific' party programme which was accepted by the entire membership in 1977 and the first party congress in 1980. (page 10) We shall have cause to regard these assertions. With more than a little scepticism.

## REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM

RW has at the very outset attempted to brush aside the ethnic issue as being a completely peripheral problem "spawned" and nurtured by the economic crisis. However, he certainly has not felt constrained to explain himself at any length. To examine this fount of all our woe he has allocated only one and a half pages of his 315 page tome. And it consists entirely of the repetition of many trite commonplaces: To wit:

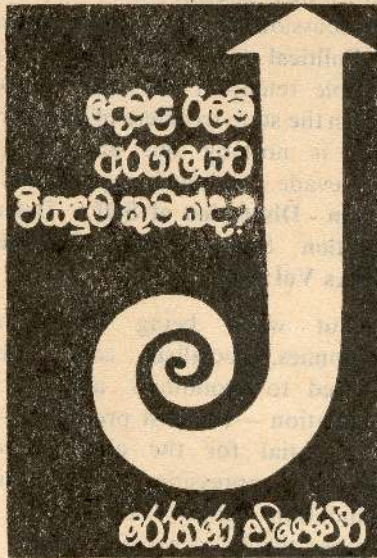


The world capitalist system entered into a common crisis at the beginning of the 1980's. And consequently there is unemployment, inflation, deterioration of real wages, and the increased exploitation of the under-developed countries. This has also given rise to the increased indebtedness of the latter etc. (1st para pages 12-13) The present world economic crisis is second only to the great depression of the 1930 and it has had very adverse effects on the Sri Lanka economy. (2nd para page 13) The crisis of the capitalist system in Sri Lanka has its roots in the colonial economy. The crisis which has developed and deepened for well over a century, today holds the whole of society in thrall. This has given rise to a deep-going socio-economic and political crisis. The economic crisis is the foundation of the current crisis. Therein lies its main cause. (3rd para page 13)

And now hold your breath! Here comes a real gem - "These facts have been concealed from the masses by the ruling bourgeoisie led by President Jayewardene, by posting the national question as the main problem. **It is quite clear that the crisis arising out of the national question has as its main cause the economic crisis.** However, there are some charlatans in Marxist garb who sing along with Mr. Jayewardene on this matter." (4th para page 13)

The rest of this brief chapter consists of more commonplaces on corruption, drug trafficking, the increase in foreign debt and President Jayewardene's famous appeal to the big capitalist countries at the Delhi Non-Aligned Summit to write off all outstanding Third World debt. Anyone who takes RW's reductionist theories seriously is bound to feel cheated at the end of the chapter.

RW has again touched on this problem in pages 187-192. He talks of standardisation in higher education and the attempt to apportion



tion available jobs (at least in the state sector) according to ethnic criteria as having pushed many Tamil youth to armed struggle. The fact is that though there exists both a shortage of jobs as well as opportunities for higher learning, the fascination of the ethnic ratio system with successive post independence governments was not due to the economic advantages it had to offer. There is no net gain or loss for the economy by apportioning poverty and deprivation according to an ethnic ratio. When hundreds of thousands of Indian Tamil labourers were dis-franchised overnight by our first post-independence government, it was not because they had outlived their usefulness to the economy or because there was a large excess labour force on the plantations at that time. These Indian Tamil labourers continue to fulfill their vital role in the economy to date. The decision to dis-franchise them was purely a political move to cut down on Tamil representation in local politics.

(Another motive was of course the reduction of working class (the Indian Tamil labourers on the plantations constituted the largest body

of organised labour in the country) representation in Parliament. The bourgeoisie realised at the 1947 General Elections that the Indian Tamil vote in the plantation areas gave "too much" prominence to working class organisations like the Ceylon Indian Congress and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party which were then influential in this sector.)

So it is with the introduction of the ethnic ratio system in apportioning jobs and opportunities for higher learning.

The introduction of ethnic ratios was one way in which Sinhala majoritarian domination would be established on a firm and lasting foundation. Every post-independence government including the present one has had to pander in one way or another to the supremacist aspirations of certain powerful sections of the Sinhalese. Plausible sounding excuses were always available. When the Indian Tamils were disfranchised in 1947, it was because their loyalties were supposed to be more towards India than Sri Lanka. Frequent visits to India and remittances of money was cited as evidence. Likewise, when the introduction of ethnic ratios with regard to employment and education is brought up, the stock argument is that the Northern Province has always had a lead over the rest of the country with regard to education because of the establishment of various missionary schools during colonial times. (The truth of it is that most of the labour on the plantations—around 80% according to Sri Ivor Jennings — were permanent residents of Sri Lanka when they were deprived of citizenship. And as regards the advantages the Northern Province had with regard to education, the establishment of missionary schools was not the only factor contributing towards it. The over-populated Northern Province did not afford many middle class and lower middle class youth any option other than to seek emplo-



ment through better education. It is a historical fact that many Jaffna Tamils migrated to places like Malaysia and Singapore in search of employment during British colonial times. The agrarian economy of Jaffna simply could not absorb the excess population.)

So the actual motive behind the introduction of ethnic ratios is to redress this so called 'imbalance'. Political expedients like this have nothing much to do with any real or imagined economic crisis. It would be a serious mistake to treat these political moves of Sinhala majoritarian governments as mere attempts to sweep economic problems under the carpet. In economic terms such a thing is not possible by bringing in ethnic ratios. Such matters pertain purely to the realm of power politics and sectional interests.

### THE PANACEA

The attempt to reduce the ethnic issue to one of economics is meant to undermine the positions of minorities agitating for their rights. As the hackneyed phrase goes, 'only socialism can give a lasting solution to the national question! Therefore, by implication the minorities should actually drop their 'parochial' demands and concentrate on building socialism in the country. This means in practice, according to the claims made by RW in this book helping to bring the JVP into power. We shall have cause to contest these assertions later on. For the time-being let us see what Lenin had to say about RW's type of economic reductionism with regard to minority issues.

"We know well our opponents reasoning that socialism will abolish every kind of national oppression since it abolishes the class interest that leads to it. What has this argument about the economic prerequisites for the abolition of national oppression which are very well

known and undisputed to do with a discussion of one of the forms of Political oppression namely, the forcible retention of one nation within the state frontiers of another? This is nothing but an attempt to evade political questions!" (Lenin - Discussion of Self - Determination Summed up - Collected Works Vol: 22)

"But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation — socialist production — is essential for the abolition of national oppression. But this, foundation must also carry a democratically organised state, a democratic army etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism, the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national oppression. The possibility becomes a reality only, only! with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres including the delimitation of state frontiers in accordance with the sympathies of the population including complete freedom to secede. (Lenin - The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination - Collected Works Vol: 22)

### A CONJURING TRICK

In his anxiety to show how minor and insignificant a issue the ethnic problem is RW has conjured away existing realities and substituted in their place figments of his imagination.

The content of chapter 2 of this book has been plagiarised wholesale from chapter 14 of the 'Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy' (Progress Publishers — Moscow). RW has acknowledged certain quotations like for instance, the definitions of 'nationality' and 'nation' as having been extracted from this book. But he attempts to convey the general impression that the rest of the chapter is an original piece of writing. What

he has actually done is to produce a precis of chapter 14 of 'The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy' which deals with 'The Historical forms of Human Community: Tribe, Nationality, Nation; and translate it into Sinhala. The end product is palmed off on the reader as an original socio-anthropological study!

The purpose of this chapter becomes clearer as one reads on. At page 276 we come to the following piece of brilliant 'dialectical' reasoning :

"Capitalist relations constitute the basis of the nation. There cannot be a 'nation' in this sense without an integrated common economy. A nation differs from a 'nationality' precisely by this feature of a common integrated economy. What existed within the Asiatic system in Sri Lanka was a Sinhala nationality and a Tamil nationality. Scientifically(!) speaking, this was so. Sri Lanka was centralised under the sovereignty of Queen Victoria prior to the introduction of capitalist relations of production into the country. Therefore, with the introduction of capitalist relations into the country, the Sinhala nationality and the Tamil nationality did not form separate integrated economies. A centralised multi-national state was created and the economy of this state was common to both nationalities. Therefore, the nation created here was the Sri Lankan nation(!) Scientifically(!) speaking there is no other nation here. The Sinhala and Tamil nationalities though existing within the framework of a single integrated common economy have not fused and melted into one another and continue to exist as separate nationalities within a multi-national state. Therefore, scientifically (again!) speaking, it would be wrong to talk of a Tamil nation or a Sinhala nation. "What actually exists is a Sinhala nationality



**a Tamil nationality and a Sri Lankan nation!!"** (emphasis R.W's)

Thus RW has in a few sentences achieved what over one and a half centuries of continuous co-existence within a single state structure has not been able to achieve — the creation of a Sri Lankan nation! The reason why he plagiarised the Soviet text mentioned above was to lend credence to this inane phantasmagoria.

Let us go back to the nationality dichotomy and see how 'scientific' RW has been in drawing his conclusions. There is a curious schizophrenia throughout RW's reasoning. On the one hand he seeks (as we shall see later) to dismiss what Lenin had to say about the 'National Question' on the grounds that it was written with specific reference to Russia. But on the other hand he sees fit to employ and even plagiarise ideas and theories put forward by Russian academicians steeped in the very same Russian background. If as RW argues in his book the specific situation regarding ethnic groups and nationalities in each country has to be examined in its own particular context (here we agree with him!); how then can he liberally use "generalised" theories and definitions published in Soviet texts? So the enemy of "generalisation" has, in fact, emerged here as the arch-generaliser!

The confusion arising from indiscriminate use of generalisations can be seen in what follows. According to the original source of the plagiarised chapter, a nationality is defined thus :

"Formed on the basis of the class production relations that superseded the primitive communal relations, the nationality is a community of people who live in one territory and are bound together by a common language, mentality, cultural features and way of life,

as expressed in their customs, morals and traditions." (**Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy — page 392**)

Going by this standard, many would agree as does RW that the Tamils and the Sinhalese constitute separate nationalities. Now let us see what the same source has to say about nations.

"The patriarchal - subsistence economy gives way to commodity production. Commodity capitalist relations do away with the economic isolation of the different economic regions and strengthen the ties between the people of a given nationality and other nationalities, help to give them a common language, common cultural features and bring people together in even more stable communities - **nations**."

"...There can be no nation without a common economic life. But this feature produces a nation only in combination with other features that arise in the earlier, pre-capitalist period but develop on the basis of close economic ties. Besides the community of economic life, the basic features of a nation include a common language, a common territory and certain peculiarities of people's social - psychology, as expressed in specific features of culture."

"...Thus a nation is a stable community of people bound together by a common language, common territory, community of economic life and certain peculiarities of social psychology as expressed in the specific features of the culture of the given people, which distinguish its culture from that of other peoples." (*ibid*: **Pages 393-94**)

Both these definitions appear in RW's book on pages 28, 29 and 30. Only he himself would know how he can assert the existence of a

'Sri Lankan nation' on the basis of these definitions. The Sinhalese and the Tamils do not have a common language or a common culture. As for a common territory, though large numbers of indigenous Tamils (or Ceylon Tamils as they are called — distinguished from the Tamils of recent Indian origin who are mainly resident in the hill country) are resident in predominantly Sinhalese areas due to economic reasons, they are mainly concentrated in the Northern and Eastern provinces of the Island. It is also seriously debatable whether there even exists 'a community of economic life' within the present frontier's of Sri Lanka.

Community of economic life implies much more than mere exchange and market relations. The exchange that takes place between the Northern and Eastern provinces and the rest of the country **alone** does not constitute a community of economic life. Capitalism has produced extremely uneven regional development in this country. The distribution of economic benefits has been extremely unequal. Industry is almost non-existent in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Hence, the 'community of economic life' within the present multi-national state of Sri Lanka can be gravely called into doubt.

On what basis then does RW lay his claim to the existence of a 'Sri Lankan nation' as such? His claim on page 276 can be refuted by his own (plagiarised) arguments on pages 28, 29 and 30.

### **IMPERIALISM!?**

One last point on this score. As can be seen from the excerpt above, RW rightly points out that the advent of capitalist relations into the country coincided with the creation of a centralised multinational state structure. Official JVP dogma as stated in its policy



declaration has it that the capitalist system was superimposed on the country by foreign imperialists. We all agree on that point. When the centralised state was formed under the Colebrook-Cameron reforms in 1833 to embrace the whole Island, the separate "nationalities" were not consulted as to their opinion about such a 'unification.' In such a situation the nation-nationality dichotomy takes on a new dimension.

As feudalism gave way to capitalism in Europe, the emergent bourgeoisie began to find the particularism of the feudal political structures a barrier to the development of capitalism. The fragmentation of the market by innumerable little states and principalities; each with its own laws, taxation systems, etc, directly conflicted with the interests of the bourgeoisie. Hence, as the bourgeoisie became more powerful the political geography of Europe began to change into larger state structures which were formed on the basis of nationality. The first great nation-states of Europe namely Spain, France and the Netherlands came about through a 'natural process' generated by forces from within the nations themselves. The belated unification of the numerous German feudal principalities and states by the representative of the German bourgeoisie - Bismark - as a prelude to the great leap in German capitalist development is a case in point.

But in countries like Sri Lanka there was no such 'internal dynamic' or 'natural process'. Both capitalism and the centralised state were foisted on us. The centralized state was more for the convenience of the imperial power than for the benefit of the nationalities concerned. To talk of a 'Sri Lankan nation' as something that actually exists then amounts to a defence of the political actions of the British imperialists. And the continued forcible retention

of "nationalities" that were thus brought together into a single state structure for the convenience of the British, amounts to a continuation of colonial policy. On page 181 RW has inveighed against the term 'Sinhala imperialism' used by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the militant groups. And he rants and raves against the Trotskyist, Maoist and other petit-bourgeois 'rif-raf' who encourage such slander. However in the context of the general policy of successive post-independence governments towards the Tamils, can the prevalence of Sinhala hegemony honestly be denied?

### MARX AND LENIN PILLORIED

The title of chapter three is 'The National Question and Marxism.' This and the next chapter which is entitled, 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination: An Assessment of the Formula', contains wholesale distortions of Marx and Lenin. The attempt here has been firstly, to show Marx as a 'great centralist' who was vehemently opposed to any kind of breaking up of states or devolution of power. Secondly, he sets out to show that Lenin himself was mistaken when he parroted this 'formula' (as RW derogatorily refers to it) and that he later abandoned it. RW also traces the origin of the phrase 'right of nations to self-determination' to the Second International and Karl Kautsky who was its leader. This phrase first appeared—according to him—in the programme of the Communist International in London in 1896. Thus he disassociates the phrase from the founders of Marxism — Marx and Engels who were both dead at that time. RW has gone out of his way to point out that Engels, who had out-lived Karl Marx, had also been dead for five years when the 'formula' first made its appearance on the Communist agenda. To further substantiate his rejection of the 'formula' he

does not forget to point out that its 'true' author Karl Kautsky later turned traitor to the international Communist movement. By dismissing Kautsky as a traitor, he seeks to dismiss the 'formula' as well.

"Marx and Engels never thought of the national question as being of fundamental importance to the revolutionary movement. They always subordinated it to the dictatorship of the proletariat which is the very core of Marxism-Leninism. They examined the national question within the framework of the international struggle of the proletariat, socialism and social progress." (page 40)

So according to RW Marx and Engels never considered the national question as being of fundamental importance to the revolutionary movement. How then does one explain Marx's position with regard to the Irish question? (RW has of course avoided any mention of this problem in his book.)

"Quite apart from all phrases about international and human justice for Ireland — which are taken for granted in the international council — it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland. And this is my fullest conviction and for reasons which in part I cannot tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the New York Tribune. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. **The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland. The English reaction in England has its roots in the subjugation of Ireland. (Marx On Britain Quotation taken from : Lenin — The Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Collected Works vol : 20)**



Thus it can be seen that Marx in fact did consider the national question to be of paramount importance (in certain circumstances) to the proletarian revolution. It can also be seen that the 'formula' was not merely a fabrication of Karl Kautsky which was subsequently lapped up by Lenin. Marx was only too well aware of the political implications of the chauvinism of dominant nations for the working class movement. While of course the situation in Sri Lanka cannot be compared with Ireland in all respects, the utilisation of racism by the Government and various opportunistic opposition parties against the Tamil community has prevented the Sinhala community, as a whole, including even its oppressed sectors from rising up to the task of radical social change. Lenin comments thus on the Irish question :

"At first Marx thought that, Ireland would not be liberated by the national movement of the oppressed nation but by the working class movement of the oppressor nation. Marx reconsidered his view and corrected it. 'What a misfortune it is for a nation to have subjugated another'. The English working class will never be free until Ireland is freed from the English yoke. Reaction in England is strengthened and fostered by the enslavement of Ireland. (Just as reaction in Russia is fostered by her enslavement of a number of nations.)" (ibid)

Furthermore, this is what Lenin had to say about the 'formula' long after he broke with Karl, Kautsky and the Second International :

"Repudiation of the right to self-determination or to secession inevitably means in practice, support for the privileges of the dominant nation." (Lenin — **Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Collected Works vol : 20**)

"The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression and it is this content that we unconditionally support." (ibid)

"The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may under certain conditions be utilised by another great power for its own equally imperialist aims, is just as unlikely to make the social democrats refuse to recognise the right of nations to self-determination as the numerous cases of bourgeois utilisation of republican slogans for the purpose of political deception and financial plunder are unlikely to make the Social Democrats reject their republicanism." (Lenin — **The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Collected Works: vol: 22**)

"Mr. Kokoshkin would have us believe that recognition of the right to secession increases the danger of the disintegration of the state. This is the viewpoint of constable Meymretsov whose motto was 'grab em and hold em'. From the viewpoint of democracy in general, the very opposite is the case; recognition of the right to secession reduces the danger of the disintegration of the state." (Lenin — **The Right of Nations to Self-Determination: vol: 21**)

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**Marx and Engles never thought of the national question as being of fundamental importance to the revolutionary movement.**

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- Wijeweera

"The working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken all nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means in effect pandering to nationalistic prejudices; ie, recognising 'one's own nation' as a model nation. (Or we should add; one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state)". (ibid)

"To accuse those who support freedom of self-determination ie, freedom to secede, of encouraging separation is as foolish and hypocritical as accusing those who advocate freedom of divorce, of encouraging the destruction of family ties." (ibid)

"Those who stand by democratic principles ie, those who insist that questions of state be decided by the mass of the population know very well that there is a tremendous distance between what the politicians prate about and what the people decide. From their daily experience the masses know perfectly well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantages of a big market; and a big state. They will therefore, resort to secession only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse." (ibid)

"Whether the Ukraine for example is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle guesses we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state." (ibid)

"...The recognition of the right does not exclude either propaganda and agitation against separation or



the exposure of bourgeois nationalism. But it is absolutely indisputable that the denial of the right to secede is playing into the hands of the most thorough placed reactionary Great Russian chauvinism!" (Lenin — The National Programme of the RSDLP: Collected Works: vol: 19)

### WAS LENIN AN OPPORTUNIST?

On Page 77 RW asserts that "By this time (ie, soon after the Bolsheviks came into power) the documents of the Communist International and the Russian Revolution indicates that Lenin had long abandoned the song, singer and concert hall ie, the 'formula', Karl Kautsky and the Second International. That is due to the open capitulation of the 2nd International to the imperialists and the emergence of Karl Kautsky as the arch opportunist of the international social-democratic movement. He also abandoned the 'formula' of the 'right of nations to self-determination, because it was too ambiguous and inconsistent in presenting the stand of the proletariat towards the national question."

To substantiate his assertion RW quotes as proof section 9 of Lenin's article 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution' — which is as follows:

#### (9) The tasks of the Party:

- (a) Summoning a Party Congress immediately.
- (b) Altering the Party programme: especially concerning —
  1. Imperialism and Imperialist Wars.
  2. Our attitude towards the state and the demand for a Communist state.

#### 3. Rectification of our outdated Party Programme.

RW counts mainly on (b) 3 to support his thesis that Lenin **Theoretically** rejected the right of nations to self determination after the October revolution. How it constitutes a theoretical refutation of the right of nations to self determination God only knows. By implication he means that the Bolsheviks preached the right of nations to self-determination while out of power and abandoned it overnight once they came into power. (So we should actually, appreciate RW's straight-forward and honest attitude to our "ethnic issue" in directly rejecting the "right of nations to self-determination." He's not a dirty little opportunist like Lenin!)

While it is true that all the colonies of what was formerly the Tsarist Empire did not secede from the Soviet Union after the October revolution, the reason for it is not Lenin's alleged theoretical renunciation of the right of nations to self-determination. The reality of revolutionary Russia was more complex than what RW has made it out to be.

Poland and Finland did in fact exercise their right to self-determination after the October revolution. Both these countries seceded under bourgeois governments. There are many reasons why for instance the Ukraine did not follow suit.

The Bolsheviks were consistent in standing in favour of minority rights and the right of nations to self-determination and thereby won the confidence and support of certain sections of the oppressed minorities. Trotsky states in his memoir's (My Life) that there was a lot of controversy about his appointment as the head of the Red Army and War Commissar

because he was a Jew. The counter-revolutionary forces also made capital of the fact by stirring up the anti-semitic sentiments of the Russian peasantry. But the party leadership and especially Lenin was deaf even to Trotsky's own suggestion that he should relinquish such duties in consideration of his Jewish origins.

The bourgeois nationalist movements in some of the minority territories tended to cast in their lot with the counter-revolutionary armies which operated from their areas. The main reason for this was the land decree which was signed the day after the October revolution triumphed — turning over land to those who tilled it. The Russian Mir's or village communes were to supervise the division of the land. Since the decree was formally in force in the whole territory of what was formerly the Tsarist Empire, the landowners of the minority territories tended to combine with the 'White Armies' sponsored by the newly dispossessed landowners and foreign imperialist forces like Britain, the USA and Germany — in common defense of their interests. During the civil war the Red Army under the leadership of Trotsky, smashed the white armies and along with them went the bourgeois nationalist movements that had tied up with them. That is why the Ukraine for instance continued to be within the Soviet Union though Lenin seems to have vaguely anticipated the secession of the Ukraine in the years before he came into power.

There is also the fact that after the granting of self-government to the minorities under Bolshevik rule, the whole rationale for separation has been effectively annulled. The Soviet constitution guarantees the right of any national minority within the Soviet Union to secede. The procedures for seceding have not been spelt out



in detail in the constitution, but according to the officially accepted Marxist — Leninist standpoint, the decision to secede has to be taken by the highest legislative body of the unit that wishes to do so. (Lenin always referred to the secession of Norway from Sweden by a decision taken by the Norwegian territorial legislature.)

Hence RW's assertion that Lenin later dropped the 'formula' of the right of nations to self-determination, is nothing but a blatant lie and an attempt to find theoretical sanction for his own opportunism.

### THE ERITRIAN QUESTION

Before we go on to examine RW's analysis of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, there is an interesting point to note. Pages 102 to 105 of his book are devoted to the Eritrian question. Many readers may wonder as to why such a question in the backwaters of the world should merit that kind of attention in RW's book. The crux of the matter is that the JVP was at one time in the recent past so much in favour of the right of nations to self-determination that they supported the Eritrian nationalist movement against the Soviet backed military government of Ethiopia. The JVP in an internationalist euphoria declared itself totally supportive of the right of the Eritrian people to secede even from the Marxist controlled state of Ethiopia.

This is what RW now has to say about the Eritrian question: "The Eritrian question and the Ogden question have to be looked at within the framework of the class struggle. In the present circumstances no Marxist can support either the Eritrian or the Ogden attempt to secede from Ethiopia." (page 103) The trouble we had in correctly assessing the developments in Ethiopia was

due to its uniqueness. The Emperor Haile Sellasie was deposed by his armed forces chief. Soon after another army coup deposed the new military ruler and Maperi Benti came into power at the head of a three man junta. Shortly thereafter, another military coup led by a member of this three-man junta Col. Menjistu Haille Mariam ousted Benti and assumed power. We as Marxists should be careful in assessing the present situation there. Today we can actually see a new development in Ethiopia. (ibid) RW's **volte face** on the Eritrian question is symptomatic of his opportunism with regard to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

### A CIA CONSPIRACY?

In his analysis of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka RW has reduced the whole issue to a CIA conspiracy. Many examples are taken from international politics to drive home his point. His main arguments can be summarised as follows:

- \* It is in the strategic interest of the USA to divide the Indian sub-continent for more convenient domination. (Page 124)
- \* The division of India into Pakistan and Bangladesh is a case in point. The USA supported the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan even though the latter was its devoted ally. Today, both states are effectively under US control. A similar strategy is being adopted with regard to Sri Lanka. (pages 139-40)
- \* Likewise, the USA is squarely behind the Sikh separatist movement in the Punjab. (page 143)
- \* The Dravida Kasagam Parties in Tamil Nadu are the tools of this imperialist plot in the South of India. They work in close collaboration with the

nationalist regional parties in the Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. (pages 171-72)

- \* The Tamil separatist movement led by the TULF and the various 'petit — bourgeois' terrorist groups' are in close league with this Dravidian chauvinistic movement. And their main objective is to form a separate Dravidian state comprising of the south of India and the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. (page 177)
- \* This separate state will be another bulwark of reaction like Pakistan and Bangladesh. (page 157)
- \* The current Jayewardene - Thondaman UNP regime being in close collaboration with the US imperialists, is in favour of a division of the country. The UNP is also therefore in league with the TULF and both parties are plotting the separation of Sri Lanka. This is the reason why the TULF has been allowed to operate openly while the JVP has been banned and its leaders have been driven into hiding. (page 181)
- \* India is fully aware of the separatist tendencies of the Dravidian chauvinistic movement in the south and its links with the Sri Lankan separatist movement. Yet she continues to aid the Sri Lankan Tamil terrorists. The reason is that the Indian central government has subordinated strategic considerations for mere tactical ones. ie, she supports the terrorists so as to have some hold over the US backed reactionary government of Sri Lanka. But such action can be harmful to the Indians in the long run. (pages 162-67)



The reduction of the Tamil liberation struggle in Sri Lanka to a CIA plot is to say the least, simplistic. We do not deny the possibility of CIA involvement in the Tamil separatist movement. However, any information to this effect is bound to be sketchy and inconclusive. It is alleged by Uma Maheswaran of PLOT (Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamileelam) that the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation) are hand in glove with the US government. No conclusive proof has come to light. But of course one may surmise with a fair degree of accuracy that the CIA does have at least a toe-hold in the troubled regions of Sri Lanka since the very logic of its existence requires such 'involvement'.

Whatever the affiliations of individual militant organisations, it would be foolish as RW does to seriously ascribe the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka purely to the machinations of the CIA. The roots of the present ethnic problem goes back to the dawn of our civilisation and history. We cannot go into the historical roots of the problem here. But let us examine how the problem was handled by the successive post-independence governments of Sri Lanka. Some extracts from Fr. Tissa Balasuriya's pamphlet 'Interplay of Violence and Non-Violence in Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka' would be very helpful at this stage.

#### POLICY OF BETRAYAL

"In the 1930's and 1940's the means used by both sides were those of persuasion and non-violent protest. In the early 1930's there was a boycott of the state council by the people of Jaffna."

"In the late 1940's and early 1950's the plantation workers

of Indian origin boycotted the registration under the citizenship laws."

"In 1936 the Sinhala majority in the State Council used its majority position to vote in a pan-Sinhala Board of Ministers. Thus there was no Tamil Minister among the 7 Ceylonese Ministers because the Sinhala leaders wanted to present a united front to the British government in negotiating for constitutional reforms. This was a non-violent means, but it was used to exclude the minority from the exercise of executive power. This unwise manoeuvre was frustrating to the Tamil leaders who felt they could thus be excluded from power even though they had 43% of the seats in the legislature. They responded with the demand for 'balanced' representation or 50 : 50 representation of majority and minority in the legislature. The Sinhalese felt this was asking for too much legislature. Both these were non-violent actions but tended to deepen the lack of understanding among the ethnic groups."

"From 1956 the majority pushed through the language policy of Sinhala only with reasonable use of Tamil. There was a protest Satyagraha by the Tamil leaders at the Galle Face green. The mob used physical violence on them. They had to abandon the protest. The Police adopted a nonchalant attitude of ignoring the violence, apparently not without the acquiescence of the government. When the Tamil MP's returned to the Parliament, one with a bandaged head, the Prime Minister of the day showed little sympathy for them. On the contrary, they were received with ridicule, if not scorn. The response to the non-violence of the Tamil leaders was the violence of the mob, the indifference of the Police, and the ridicule or the scorn of the responsible Sinhala political authority."

"Two years later non-violence was resorted to by the Sinhala extremists to oppose the implementation of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957-58. Two Sinhala leaders, Prof. Felix Jayasuriya and Mr. K. M. P. Rajaratna undertook a fast on the steps of the Town Hall in Colombo, and about 2000 Buddhist monks converged towards the house of Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike to protest against the B-C Pact. The famous march to Kandy was led by Mr. J. R. Jayewardene for the same purpose."

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#### The Ethnic issue was given scant attention by the Public.

- Fr Balasuriya

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"This was followed in 1958 by the worst communal violence that the country had seen up to then: 50,000 Tamils were chased away from the south due to the violence of the mob against them. The Tamil people were not violent, except in a few places."

"In 1961 the Tamil leaders organised a non-violent protest in the North — as they could no longer expect respect for non-violence in Colombo. They held a Satyagraha campaign in front of the Jaffna Kachcheri. They defied the government by activities such as an alternative postal service."

"To meet this protest the army was sent to the North to stop it." "Gradually, the conviction was being built among the Tamils that non-violence even in the North would be met by the violence of the State's forces."



"The concerns in the south were with issues like the schools take over, the attempted Coup of 1962 etc. The ethnic issue was given scant attention by the public, while the government used strong arm tactics to contain Tamil discontent."

"The Dudley - Chelvanayagam Pact was agreed to in 1965. A UNP government under Mr. Dudley Senanayake came into power after the general elections of 1965. When it wanted to implement the agreement concerning the use of the Tamil language, the whole opposition led by the SLFP, LSSP and the CP engaged itself in non-violent protest. The state used the security forces to disperse them. The regulations concerning the use of Tamil were passed in 1966. But two years later the proposed District Council Bill had to be dropped due to the campaign against it by the opposition and within the government itself."

"1970 saw another implicit contrast between the TULF and the SLFP that came to power at the general elections. In 1972 the Sinhala led majority government pushed through the 1972 constitution without listening to the minority or paying heed to their proposals and protests. This constitution made Parliament sovereign. Since 1970 the government has generally had a 2/3 majority in Parliament due to the extra representation enjoyed by the Sinhala people, after the disfranchisement of the people of Indian origin."

"Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam then resigned his seat in Parliament to test the acceptability of the new constitution by the Tamil people. No by-election was held for over two years till 1975. In the meantime there was a growing radicalisation of Tamil opinion in favour of a separate Tamil Eelam.

Standardisation of marks for admission to the university was seen as grossly unfair to the Tamil youth. Little by little relations worsened in the North. Youth protests were met by repression arrests and torture. In January 1974 nine Tamils were killed by electrocution when the Police dispersed the Fourth International Tamil Conference in Jaffna. The government did not hold an inquiry or even express sympathy for this loss of lives. This is considered a turning point in the relationship."

"Young Tamil people in the mid-1970's began to get together and arm themselves. They took to sporadic violence such as the killing of the pro SLFP mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiappah. This was the first political murder in Jaffna. The state retaliated with the detention of more than 100 Tamil youth for over a year without anybody being charged for murder. Thereafter, there were attacks on individuals such as police officers, collaborating politicians and informants—mostly Tamils."

"Already by 1976 the relationship had deteriorated so much that the TULF adopted the Vaddukkodai resolution on 14th May 1976."

"The first National Convention of the Tamil Liberation Front, meeting at Pannakam (Vaddukkodai Constituency) on the 14th, day of May 1976, hereby declares that the Tamils of Ceylon, by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history of independent existence as a separate state over a distinct territory for several centuries till they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders and above all by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct

and apart from the Sinhalese and their constitution announces to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Sinhalese, who are using the power they have wrongly usurped to deprive the Tamil nation of its territory language, citizenship, economic life, opportunities of employment and education and thereby destroying all the attributes of nationhood of the Tamil people.

And therefore, while taking note of the reservations in relation to its commitment to the setting up of a separate state of Tamil Eelam expressed by the Ceylon Workers Congress as a trade union of plantation workers, the majority of, whom live and work outside the Northern and Eastern areas.

This Convention resolves that the restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent in every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation of this country."

"This was the position to which liberal political leaders of the Tamil people had come by 1976. We have to remember that this change took place during the regime of the last Government. In fact both the President Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike have said that all our Governments in the post-independence period are responsible for this, breakdown of relationships."

"In spite of all these, there was another agreement in 1977 drawn up in the house of Mr. S. Thondaman. The TULF, the CWC, and the UNP joined hands to bring the present Government to power. The electoral vote was so



favourable to the UNP that they obtained 3/4 ths of the seats in Parliament. Instead of inviting the TULF to help resolve the ethnic issue through an All Party Conference as pledged in its election manifesto, the UNP proceeded to form a Government without the TULF. The TULF proposed a motion in Parliament demanding Tamil Eelam. This was followed by large scale violence against Tamils in August 1977."

"In 1977 too, the rulers, the security forces, the legal systems and the mass media all failed to defend the Tamil minority. 50,000 were chased away or fled North as refugees from the South and the estates. The majority of the Sinhala people of good will merely looked on at these sad events."

"Violence increased in the North in 1978 and 1979, the Government sends a special army Commander to wipe out terrorism in six months. The 'Prevention of Terrorism Act' empowers the State to detain persons upto 18 months without trial. These did not resolve the problem, on the contrary, the option for violence became more definite on the side of the youth militants and the State. In 1981 District Development Council Elections were interfered with by 'unknown' forces from the South. There was a large measure of violence in 1981 especially in the plantation areas against the workers of Indian origin .

"In July 1983 the TULF MPs were about to resign from Parliament at the end of their 6 year term when the President invited them to an 'All Party Conference, on 20-7-1983 to deal with terrorism. As the TULF did not accept this invitation, the President invited, them again for an 'All Party Conference' on 27th July 1983 to deal with terrorism and 'other matters'. The TULF was deliberating at

Vavuniya whether to accept this invitation when 13 Sinhala soldiers were killed by a bomb blast in the North on the night of 23rd July. This led to the unprecedented massacre and anti-Tamil violence of July 25th to early August."

"The 6th amendment to the constitution passed in August 1983 made the Tamil MP's opt out of Parliament rather than take the oath of renouncing a claim to Eelam. Many Tamil members of the local government bodies in the North and East also lost their seats due to not taking the oath. Thus the elected Tamil representatives who were not with the government were sent out of Parliament and the District Councils. Representative government came to a halt as far as the North and East were concerned. Violence became the main language of ethnic relations."

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**The proletariat cannot agree to the decentralisation of a centralised state through Federalism.**

- Wijeweera

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RW has not even touched upon this evolution of the Tamil struggle from peaceful to violent means over the decades. The openly discriminatory approach of successive Sinhala governments has not been dealt with. And the propensity of Sinhala political parties (as RW himself is now doing) to use the Tamil issue as a pawn in the power game and the frustration arising there from is not taken into account. Again and again he repeats, its a CIA plot! its a CIA plot!!

**IN DEFENCE OF DEVOLUTION**

It was Lenin who said that 'the categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within definite historical limits, and

if it refers to a particular country, that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch' RW has used this same argument to justify his rejection of any concessions to the Tamil people. That notwithstanding however, one feels constrained to point out that all things taken into consideration, a devolution of power to territorial units would be the most feasible solution to our ethnic crisis. One is of course bound to accept the final decision of the Tamil people on this matter. But total separation may create more problems than it solves.

This is what RW has to say about the devolution of power or the decentralisation of administration as a solution to the ethnic crisis :

"Marx was a true opponent of de-centralisation and federalism. Lenin himself has described Marx as a great centralist. Realising the advantages of large states, Marx resolutely stood for them. He was only opposed to arbitrary, centralisation. He strongly advocated democratic centralisation." (Page 267)

"Having invoked the authority of Marx he goes on to state his own stand specifically regarding the situation in Sri Lanka. (Chapter 10 — The Proletarian Solution to The National Question in Sri Lanka.)

"When the transition from a centralised state to a federal state is meant as a first step towards the division of the country, the proletariat cannot acquiesce in it." (page 268)

"The federal system can be used to bring together various nations and countries as well as a transitional stage to divide a centralised



state. Therefore, the proletariat cannot agree to the decentralisation of a centralised state through federalism" (page 272)

"The Sri Lankan proletariat will under no circumstances permit the division of the country or the creation of a federal system to debilitate the centralised state of Sri Lanka." (page 273)

RW even goes to the extent of opposing even simple decentralisation of administration on the grounds that it would interfere with a centralised planning system. The objective behind RW's rejection of such a devolution allegedly on Marxist grounds, is to win the hearts and minds of the racist Sinhala petit-bourgeoisie. RW has put all his eggs into the basket of Sinhala ethno-religious chauvinism.

And he is trying to use Marxism to justify his position! Let us see what Marx and Lenin actually had to say about federalism and decentralisation. Going back to the Irish question — which was an instance where a centralised state faced a minority based secessionist movement....

"Marx advocated the separation of Ireland from England although after the separation there may come federation."

"...The economic ties between Ireland and England in the 1860 were of course even closer than Russia's present ties with Poland, the Ukraine etc. The 'unpracticality' and 'impracticability' of the separation of Ireland (if only owing to geographical conditions and England's immense colonial power) were quite obvious. Though in principle an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federation as well, if only the emancipation of Ireland was achieved in a revolutionary,

not reformist way through a movement of the mass of the people of Ireland supported by the working class of England. There can be no doubt that only such a solution to the historical problem would have been in the best interests of the the proletariat and most conducive to rapid social progress." (Lenin-**The Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Collected Works vol 20**)

"Recognition of self determination is not synonymous with recognition of federation as a principle. One may be a determined opponent of that principle and a champion of democratic centralism, but still prefer federation to national inequality as the only way to full democratic centralism. It was from this stand — point that Marx who was a centralist preferred even the federation of Ireland and England to the forcible subordination of Ireland to the English" (Lenin-**The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Collected Works vol: 22**)

RW has also attempted to show that there has been no change in the JVP's policies in this regard over the years. To prove this he uses two clauses in the JVP policy declaration put out in 1977. (page 266)

- 2 (2) Autocratic centralisation as well as the division of the country will be opposed.
- 2 (3) The defence and maintenance of the territorial integrity of the country will be based on true egalitarianism and **autonomous rule** by the various minorities.

What these two clauses actually meant was a centrist stand with regard to the ethnic issue; to grant self-government without total separation. Let us examine in this regard an article submitted by Mr. Lionel Bopage (the then General

Secretary of the JVP) to the 'Lanka Guardian' on the JVP's stand on the ethnic issue.

"Without a stable and democratic federal system of state administration that guarantees equal rights to all races and languages, national oppression cannot be eradicated from capitalist society."

"What exists in Sri Lanka is a multi-national state comprised of Sinhala and Tamil people. They are at a transitional stage from nationalities to nations. Whether they wish to live together with the Sinhalese or not or whether they continue to live together in one state or separate into two states, is left entirely to the Tamil speaking people. This is what the JVP means when they accept the right of the Tamil speaking people to self-determination. The attempt to forcibly retain the Tamil speaking people within the existing state structure and the attempt to ignore their aspirations is a rejection of their right to self-determination. (The JVP and Self-Determination:" Lionel Bopage: Lanka Guardian 1979 May 1st)

This was essentially the stand of the JVP till RW decided that Sinhala racial chauvinism was a surer path to power than socialist internationalism. What clause 2(3) of the JVP manifesto actually means is self government by the minorities. This in practice means the devolution of power to territorial units as the Three Party Left Alliance has always pointed out. Today RW is against federalism as well as simple decentralisation of administration. He has construed clause 2(3), to mean some sort of autonomy for minorities which does not constitute any devolution of power. (pages 274-75) Regional autonomy for the minorities without any devolution of power! What on earth will RW come up with next?





# The Singapore Government's Crackdown on Church Workers

In the early hours of the morning of May 21, sixteen people (nine women and seven men) were arrested under Singapore's Internal Security Act and detained by the Internal Security Department of the Singapore Government. The Singapore authorities have made it clear that they have absolutely no intention of bringing the arrested to Court to stand trial, but rather to bully "confessions" out of these persons now held as political prisoners. The families of the people arrested who were allowed to visit them some days after their arrest have reported signs of ill-treatment ranging from "looking haggard" to visible bruise marks on faces. One prisoner complained to her lawyer that she had been beaten up while another had to be hospitalised after one day of imprisonment.

### THOSE ARRESTED

The arrested who include prominent Church Workers and volunteers, community welfare workers and people from the fields of law, drama and journalism, were accused by the Singapore Government of being part of a "Marxist conspiracy" to overthrow the Government and establish a Communist state. Among the arrested were Vincent Cheng, Ex-

cutive Secretary of the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission who has worked with the Jurong Industrial Mission, the Student Christian Movement, the Geylag Catholic Centre and a Cultural Group called "Third Stage". Others included former Student Leaders, a lawyer, "Third Stage" Drama Group officials, Church workers and three others involved in helping with the official publication of the Opposition Workers Party 'The Hammer'.

### REASONS FOR THE ARREST

Despite the sensational headlines in Singapore's *Straits Times* there is really no evidence to back up the wild claims of the Singapore Government. The International Commission of Jurists has commented that the allegations made are of a very general nature. The arrests are in fact seen as a move by the Government and the ruling People's Action Party to suppress popular discontent and growing opposition to the present repressive regime headed by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Significantly, the Singapore Government has also recently announced a wage cut for public servants. The last wage increase received by them in 1984 will be

cut by 30% from July this year and the customary 2 week bonus is also not to be given to them this year. It is interesting to note that the 16 detainees were engaged in exposing the hardships of ordinary wage earners until their arrest!

"Preventive detention" and by this means the obtaining of forced confessions is routine in Singapore from people detained without trial under the Internal Security Act. The Act is used precisely because the Government has insufficient evidence to get a conviction in an open Court. Thus the detainees are forced to confess and implicate others as the price for their release. The Government will then point to the confessions as proof of the charges it made against the detainees. However, making confession is also no guarantee of release.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (who took a double first in Law at Cambridge University) is reported to have told journalists that the 16 detainees would in any case not be tried in Court. Said Mr. Lee: "It is not a practice, nor will I allow subversives to get away by insisting that I've got to prove everything against them in a Court of Law (or produce) evidence that will stand up to the



strict rules of evidence of a Court of Law (*The Independent*, 4.6.1987, London). In fact "preventive detention" has been used by Mr. Lee consistently as a means of repressing and discouraging legitimate non-violent opposition in Singapore. The Amnesty International Mission to Singapore (10 November to 5 December, 1978) in its Report stated: "Amnesty International believes that the Singapore Government has employed a variety of techniques to induce mental and spiritual collapse, including the denial of medication to persons suffering from diabetes and epilepsy, with the aim of extracting self-incriminating statements which can be portrayed as "confessions". It is a common practice in Singapore for the authorities to have broadcast on television interviews with and or statements from political prisoners purporting to be 'confessions'. Amnesty International cannot accept that such interviews and statements have any legal validity and vigorously questions the assertion that they justify detention for indefinite periods without trial under the Internal Security Act. Such televised interrogations are never a substitute for fair, open trial. The practice of imputing guilt by such means, through media controlled by the Government instead of establishing the validity of evidence through normal legal procedures, violates elementary rules of law." In fact the Internal Security Act under which the arrests were made constitutes a complete negation of the due process of law - and the independence of the Judiciary in Singapore.

#### THE "VINCENT CHENG SHOW"

As was to be expected, a forced "confession" of Vincent Cheng one of the prominent persons arrested was staged on June 9, on the Singapore TV in the form of a

discussion on religion and politics. It was an unconvincing show since the editing of the tapes was also done poorly and parts were also obviously rehearsed. The "confession" concluded with an apology for using the Church and for manipulating young people.

#### DETENTION ORDERS AND MORE ARRESTS

On June 20th, it was reported that Vincent Cheng had been given a **2 year detention order**. Eleven others were to be held for **one year** under what the Government terms "rehabilitation" and four were released.

These orders were followed up on further arrests made at 2 a.m. on June 20 of six others who still remain under detention. One of them is an 18 year old girl who is Acting President of the Singapore Polytechnic Students Union, another a Lecturer and three others past Student Leaders or activists.

#### ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

While the above actions could be expected from a repressive Government, what is disturbing is the cowardly attitude adopted by Church Leaders and the betrayal by Roman Catholic Archbishop Gregory of his own Church workers and priests.

Obviously Premier Lee Kuan Yew was worried about Church support. On May 27, a Mass celebrated for the 16 detainees drew a congregation of over 2000 people and a Joint Statement by the Archbishop and his clergy raised the possibility that the faithful Christian service of 10 of the 16 detainees would produce widespread sympathy from those at home and abroad. There was also increasing disbelief at the Government's "Evidence". So the Government acted to cut the det-

ainees off from the Church and make organised support from Christians difficult. For this purpose the Prime Minister used Government supporter and Roman Catholic layman Dr. Peng Liang to contact the Archbishop and arrange a meeting of pro-Government Church people with him (the Prime Minister). At this meeting the Archbishop said he accepted the Government's evidence.

The Archbishop then went further. He announced the resignation of 4 priests who he stated wished "to avoid a conflict or collision between the Church and State" though the priests themselves made no statement. In fact these priests who had volunteered to take the place of the 16 detainees were forced to resign. And the Archbishop informed them that he would not support them at all if they were arrested along with the others and branded as subversives or Marxists.

The four priests involved are (1) Fr. Joseph Ho, Chairman of the Justice and Peace Commission (2) Fr. Patrick Goh, National Chaplain of the Young Christian Workers Movement and member of the Justice and Peace Commission, (3) Fr. Edgar D'Souza, Associate Editor of *The Catholic News*, and (4) Fr. Guillaume Arotcurena, Director of the Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers.

Further the Archbishop banned the June 14 issue of *The Catholic News* which was ready for distribution and closed down with immediate effect the Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers.

#### NO POLITICS!

It is widely believed that Archbishop Yong has in all this given in to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's threat that if the Archbishop cannot control his own Church then the Government will do it for him.



While he himself has thus acted on the basis of pressure from secular politicians, the Archbishop has banned all his clergy from "mixing religion and politics" in their sermons. On June 5, he suspended the 4 priests, a measure which prevents them from preaching at all. He also prohibited them from having anything to do with their former organizations.

### **EVEN PRAYERS FORBIDDEN!**

The Archbishop has also forbidden the saying of public prayers for the detainees and their families.

It is reported that the Archbishop is very relieved that the detentions now, in his view have nothing to do with the Church. The families have written to the Pope telling him of the sequence of events and of their disappointment that their Archbishop has surrendered his pastoral responsibilities to the Government.

Mean while, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Soter Fernandez of Malaysia has made a strong statement condemning the arrests and a great many Christian Organisations the world over have condemned the position taken by Archbishop Yong of Singapore and expressed solidarity with those who have been subjected to arrest and torture.

### **ACTION NEEDED**

We must in this situation take steps to protest immediately against this gross violation of democratic and human rights by the Singapore Government. While expressing concern at the continued detention of Vincent Cheng and the 11 others as well as the six new detentions, we must urge that these 18 people now detained be brought to an open trial where they can be defended and the

accusations against them substantiated. Otherwise they should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Solidarity Actions on the above lines are already being taken by Church and human rights groups in Europe, Asia, Australasia and America. The support of all religious and human rights groups in Sri Lanka in this situation is seen as an urgent requirement by us. And techniques used in Singapore may well become a pattern for action by repressive governments in other countries as well.

We must also in no uncertain terms condemn the cowardly and treacherous role of the Archbishop Gregory Yong of Singapore and other Church leaders involved. It is reported that the Anglican Church in Singapore headed by a "charismatic" Bishop has threatened to withdraw from the National Council of Churches in Singapore if it raises the issue of the detentions. We are aware that this particular charismatic episcopal monster though in name a Chinese has engaged in vandalism by defacing Chinese works of art in his own Church—especially that of the Chinese dragon which he looks upon as being especially sinful. However, the very real sin of betraying those who witness for the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and of the burning of incense to Caesar represented by Lee Kuan Yew seems to be completely lost on him! What price salvation?

(For the information above we are indebted to the Singaporean and Malaysian British Association News Letter and the Emergency Committee for Human Rights in Singapore in New Zealand).

### **CWF LETTER TO THE ARCHBISHOP**

13th July, 1987

The Most Revd. Gregory Yong,  
Archbishop of Singapore  
Archbishop's House,  
Singapore 0718.

Dear Archbishop,

This is to express our strong indignation and abhorrence over your recent action in—

- (a) accepting at face value the "evidence" of the Government including "confessions" in the case of Vincent Cheng and others who have duly exercised their prophetic ministry and faithfully served in your own Church organisations;
- (b) forcing four priests exercising an important ministry in the cause of God's Kingdom to resign from their posts at the behest of Caesar (petty Singapore variety) and suspending them from their priestly functions as well as preventing them from having anything to do with the respective organisations in which they worked before their removal;
- (c) banning all your clergy from "mixing religion and politics" while you yourself have cringed and bowed the knee before insolent secular might and repressive political rule in your own institutional self-interest;
- (d) forbidding the saying of all public prayers for the detainees and their families in complete violation of the Spirit of Christ and His Gospel.

A Bishop of the Church is called upon to be a shepherd, not a wolf. We must, therefore, unreservedly condemn your actions enumerated above as being unworthy of a Bishop and even anti-Christian in



that they constitute nothing short of treachery to the flock committed to your charge and a dangerous precedent that could be followed by other cowardly spirits of your ilk who may be at the helm of Church institutions elsewhere.

We are further of the view that you have by your actions completely forfeited your right to be a Christian Leader and call upon you in the interests of the Universal Church which is meant to be the Sacrament of God's Kingdom, to make reparation by at least tendering your resignation without delay.

Yours Sincerely,  
**Christian Workers Fellowship.**

**LETTER TO LEE KUAN YEW**

**Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew**

Prime Ministers Office  
 The Istana Annex  
 Orchard Road  
 Singapore 0922

Dear Sir,

**CONTINUED DETENTION OF  
 CHURCH AND  
 COMMUNITY WORKERS**

This is to express our grave concern at the continued detention of Vincent Cheng and the other eleven people who were also arrested at the same time.

We are distressed to learn further of the arrest of six more persons who are also presently under detention.

None of these detentions reflect well on your Government. Several of these detainees who are known to us have a clean record of Christian service and witness, despite the attempts now made to brand them as "subversives" on the basis of "confessions", while the others are recognised and known community workers, lawyers, dramatists and intellectuals who are engaged in perfectly legitimate activities.

We must express our abhorrence at the violation of elementary democratic and human rights in the continued detention of these persons without trial on the basis of such "confessions" and call upon you in all fairness to have these 18 persons brought before an open trial where the charges, if any, made against them could be substantiated and they could be properly defended according to law.

In the alternative, we strongly urge that they should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

**Names of Organizations**

- Christian Workers Fellowship
- Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners
- Wayside & Open Theatre Group (Street drama) Sri Lanka
- National Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
- Student Christian Movement of Sri Lanka
- Community Resource Centre
- Catholic Student Movement
- Janodaya Kendraya
- Socio Economic Training Centre
- Ecumenical Institute
- Community Education Centre
- Movement for the Defence of the Democratic Rights
- All Lanka Peasants Congress
- Asian Workers Solidarity Link
- Women's Centre
- People's Bhikku Organization
- Progressive Lawyers Front
- Progressive Women's Front
- Women's Commission of the N.C.C.
- Development Commission of the N.C.C.

Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, Sri Lanka Section

Centre for Society and Religion

Women's Education Centre

Women and Media Collective

Citizens Committee for National Harmony

Service Civil International

Gami Seva Sevana

Chief Incumbent, Suvisuddharama Buddhist Vihare

Christian Leadership Movement

Diocesan Committee for Social Study and Action.



*Continued from Page 3*

**A Philosophical Note . . . .**

tually, not the kind of person who is clever enough to use hypocritical forms (like paying lip-service to democracy, religion etc) to distort the substance and bamboozle the people. This spirit is exemplified in the words of Thomas Jefferson, the great American President who ranks with Washington and Lincoln. He said: "I have sworn upon the Altar of God eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

Evil will be overcome and banished from the earth when a sufficient number of awakened enlightened, dedicated men and women overcome it in themselves, and band together to destroy it in the world. Happily, noble men and women are everywhere coming forward. Humanity is awakening, and so there is certainty of *Victory*.

R.S.

3.7.87

Colombo 6.





# An ode to Lee Kuan Yew

I AM NO OTHER  
BUT, LEE KUAN YEW  
the great ruler  
Of the small sea-port  
SINGAPORE,  
A nation, in my time  
Became famous  
For no small sins.

Let me say  
A little about myself  
And about these sixteen subversives  
And then also of course  
About my beloved Archbishop.  
Speaking of myself  
I am no believer of such  
Old fashioned things  
As for example FREEDOM,  
FAIR TRIAL, and that stupid  
Nothing, called DEMOCRACY.

I say very clearly  
MAN EXISTS FOR THE STATE  
and state is LEE KUAN YEW  
that is myself

And as you already know  
Am perfect.  
So the simple logic is  
MY STATE is perfect,  
Not even slightest change  
Is necessary at all  
All is well  
In this nation.

Perhaps not all  
We cannot forget  
These sixteen subversives  
Who like their predecessors in the past  
Worry about such old fashioned things  
As I mentioned earlier about  
And goes on to say, can you imagine  
That Jesus Christ himself  
Believed in such things  
But of course my Archbishop  
Disagrees with such views.

They make me laugh  
Who speak of human rights, plead for trials  
For example the International Com-  
mission of Jurists who seems to me  
very subversive)

And ask me to reject  
The taped, videoed words  
Of the accused  
Given, of course, under utmost human  
conditions  
Of preventive detention admitting guilt  
Under the Internal security Act  
One most civilized piece of our legislation.

The great Christian  
Our Archbishop is  
Who has no illusions  
To the state the church  
If not a lover a prostitute  
Must be. And no blessing  
The red cap. And mitre will give.  
To such subversive slogans  
As Justice freedom, Fair trial and  
Democracy,  
and consider as no betrayal  
To hand over to the state Christian  
subversives.

## BASIL FERNANDO

Read at Poetry International, 1987  
Conducted by the Human Rights  
Programme of the Institute of Social  
Studies, The Hague.  
June 9, 1987.

## FP in Japan - Case Put off

Roland S. Fujiyoshi did not have his hearing before the Osaka High Court of Appeals as was scheduled for Thursday July 2, 1987 because the judges refused to proceed with the hearing till two disabled persons on wheel chairs who were on the aisles were removed. The judges were of the opinion that the two handicapped persons would be a "distraction".

The July 2 Hearing was supposed to have been devoted to the six proposed witnesses, and whether or not they would be recognized by the court. Fujiyoshi's four

lawyers were to open the hearing with their arguments on the necessity of hearing their witnesses.

A large number of letters, including one from England, were sent to the chief judges requesting (1) recognition of the witnesses, and (2) a hearing of the "Assimilation and Control Policy" of the Japanese Government. This policy, Fujiyoshi contends which underlies the Alien Registration Law, violates the human rights of long-term foreigners in Japan.

During Fujiyoshi's June 4 Hearing before the Osaka High Court of Appeals, his lawyers presented both Fujiyoshi's and their own statements about why the lower court verdict was unfair. The prosecution, however, upheld the lower court's decision.

Fujiyoshi, 47, a lay missionary and a third-generation Japanese American from Hawaii, refused to be fingerprinted on November 9, 1981. Under the Japanese Alien Registration Law, all foreigners residing in Japan for one year or more, must be fingerprinted. Fujiyoshi was indicted and brought to trial on September 27, 1982; this was the first of 21 hearings in the Kobe District Court.

It is not yet known when Fujiyoshi's next hearing will take place.



## The Potery of Cecil Rajendra

A review of *Child of the Sun* Published by Bogle

- L' Oureture Publication London.

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Basil Fernando

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Some Sri Lankan elitist literary critic reading this book may ask "Are these poems?" The literary consciousness of our elites is so backward that it shuns the creations of a poet which challenges the apathetic and ill educated moral world outlook of theirs. Cecil Rajendra is indeed a very challenging poet, 'who has not adapted himself to this world.'

Most of the poems in this collection are satirical in nature. In *Beyond Nationalism*, he speaks of the absurdity of "having to trumpet our nationality, when from a distance shorter than the moon continents are a blur and one cannot tell one country from another." Throughout this collection one would feel the internationalist spirit of the poet who is not the sort who will quarrel over the neighbour's fences. Though he is a Malaysian poet the experiences he discusses are equally valid for any country in Asia or Africa. What he has caught up with in these poems is the human condition of the millions who live in the countries which have been rather ironically called the Third World or the under-developed world.

In a poem entitled "A Prescription for Development" he speaks of how "A model of under-development" becomes to be called the 'developing nation of the year. It satirises the mockery that goes on as "development thinking" which has resulted in the horrible destruction of our nations. The following words are significant.

"You must import mineral water and a medium sized nuclear reaction and a score of foreign psychiatrists to service your expat industrialists.

We beg your pardon, but pollution is the hallmark of development To qualify as an advanced country you have to boast a proper degree of noises/smog/dumps and derangement"

In another poem "Time Past" he says —

"In our rush to 'Progress' we bulldoze history..."

In all his poems there is the awareness of War, destruction and poverty which is at the very heart of the crisis of mankind today, and dehumanisation of everything.

In "Home" he writes :

"Home  
is the place  
this continent  
of damned children  
will never taste!"

In 'Lips' he continues the same theme and writes :

"Where are those yester —  
year lips rich and sultry  
now the jackals of war  
had overrun their country?"

Most poems are directed to expose and condemn the false values promoted by the ruling class (like our own Dharmista ideology) "Obituary for a Rt. Hon. Mr. Nobody" fits any successful politician of the Third World today who "had no other talent save an extraordinary bent to cajole toady and wheedle". He speaks of the omnipotence of the Sycophant, in a Society such as ours. In one place he writes "the Sycophant is the King."

Speaking of Doctors he says "They have no inhibitions to taking all your monies and sending you away — a Pauper!"

Rajendra who is a practising lawyer in Penang had this to say of Justice. "A few candles lit on that altar called natural justice but God is 'procedure'. Homes jobs do not matter, if their papers were not filed on time, or in order



they have no rights." In "More equal than others" he speaks of a stripling who is summarily despatched to prison for pinching a portion of cheese from a market while fattened Bankers play catch-if-you-can after emptying the country's coffers for over two million and a Rt. Hon. Minister is accorded Royal pardon for a cold premeditated murder, while the Constitution declares "every citizen is equal before the law."

There is constant reference to the "Ecological Suicide" which is caused in the name of development, progress and what not.

In "A Squatters' Lament" we find the love of the poet for land "This earth!

i have loved more than  
i have loved any woman."

the poet laments the destruction of this earth.

The title poem "The Child of the Sun" is a beautiful poem which expresses the enormous contradiction involved in contemporary living. He speaks "I am lamentation, I am celebration".

He further speaks of "What if I am thunder, I am a Rainbow of song and dance also". He ends the poem in the following manner :

"I am who I am  
child of the almighty sun."

Cecil Rajendra is a contemporary poet in the full sense of that word. He has grasped the core of the crisis of mankind today. He is no escapist poet who tries to find a way out of this central, crisis. In his world outlook he is fully committed to the victims, and sufferers of this crisis.

Honest and outspoken, sharp and intelligent, mature and deeply committed, this poet represents the finer aspects of Malaysian, we may even say Asian, liberalism.

The Sri Lankan reader will find that the contents of these poems closely resembles the experiences we have undergone in the recent decades.

## Two Books by Donovan Moldrich

H. A. I. Goonatilake

**HANGMAN — SPARE THAT NOOSE.** (*A historical and analytical survey of the death penalty with special reference Sri Lanka*) Ranco Press, Colombo, 1983.

**SOMEWHERE A CHILD IS CRYING.** (*A plea for the abolition of corporal punishment of children and adults*) Ceylon Printers, 1986.

Donovan Moldrich has been a committed and informed journalist in the highest reaches of that profession all his life. Escaping from the deepening quagmire of the capitalist press seven years ago his inquiring mind and probing pen have now broken free to uncover the little known horrors of the human condition with a finer point and to more effective purpose. Man's inhumanity to man is the

central theme of his most recent books **Hangman— Spare That Noose** (1983) and **Somewhere A Child Is Crying** (1986).

Both exhibit an exceptional range of data gathered from a variety of sources and both display a depth of understanding of the issues involved in these cruel and callous areas of organised human conduct. Moldrich draws our civilized attention to these evils which have long besmirched the face of twentieth century society and his persuasive prose calls us to task for permitting our ignorance and apathy to encourage this systematic violence to continue in an age of supposed enlightenment. No one who has read these depressing yet eloquent exposures will fail to be moved by feelings of salutary revulsion.

In the frightening and ever — widening whirlpool of pervasive violence and public brutality, these marginal examples of judicial cruelty and a faceless sadism may seem of trifling import. But let us remember that the techniques of state — sponsored terror and the fascist excesses of pseudo — democracies anywhere have their roots in a heritage of ingrained intolerance of human dignity, and a historical avalanche of assaults on the human personality. Such a society falls more easily prey to the casual disposal of human life and the infliction of degrading punishment.

Moldrich has done well to jolt us out of our complacency and to rouse our sense of compassion at a critical juncture in our affairs. One looks forward to further such exercises of therapeutic revelation which our religious hypocrisy and moral cynicism have joined hands to conceal despite the festering crisis of civilization in which we have suppurated for too long.



## Fellowship in Action



### MAY DAY MASS

With the ban imposed by the Government on May Day meetings and demonstrations this year, our May Day Workers Mass became the only public celebration of May Day that was held without police interference in any part of the country except Jaffna. A large number who attempted to attend the Mass were however prevented from doing so because of the official ban on private vehicles entering the city and the skeleton bus service designed to prevent people from getting there. Even some of our Ratmalana workers and supporters arrived only after the procession outside the Church before the Mass had already commenced.

As in past years, clergy of all the mainline churches — Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant participated in the concelebration of the Mass which this year was held on May 1st morning at St. Michael's Church, Polwatte in view of the Emergency. The clergy were led by the Anglican Bishop-

elect (then Archdeacon of Colombo) the Ven. J. J. Gnanapragasam, Bishop Andrew Kumarage of Kurunegala who presided over our last year's May Day Mass was out of the island and therefore unable to attend the Mass this year. A short play took the place of the Sermon. As usual the stress was

*LLSP and CPSL Gen. Secretaries at the May Day Mass.*

on lay workers participation. The Mass ended with the workers representatives receiving back the Red Flag and implements, after communion and marching out to the strains of a full-throated rendering of the Sri Lankan version of the Internationale.

Among the large crowd present were General Secretaries Bernard Soysa and K. P. Silva of the LSSP and CPSL respectively, and SLMP Vijaya Kumaratunga, all of whom left the service for the Three Party Alliance meeting held later that morning which was disrupted by the police.

*The concelebration led by Bishop Gnanapragasam.*





## BISHOP'S CONSECRATION

Later that month, on the Feast of the Ascension (May 28) a representative gathering of CWF members attended the consecration of Bishop Gnanapragasam at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Living Savior in Colombo. Several portions of the Consecration Mass were sung to the words and musical setting of the CWF Workers' Mass, which significantly has influenced the new revised Liturgy of the Church of Ceylon. We extend our warm wishes to the new Bishop and look forward to continued co-operation with him in the cause of God's Kingdom.

## JAFFNA

### A May Day Celebration

For the first time, the CWF Workers Mass was celebrated on May Day in the Jaffna peninsula at Kaddaively, and well organised by our group there. Other CWF members and supporters including those in the Jaffna town also participated in this celebration. The Mass was preceded by a procession with the Kummy dance and the Red Flag and implements of work being carried by the workers. At the Ministry of the Word in the Mass, passages from the CWF pamphlet "Sinhala-Tamil Conflict" and the Bhagavat Gita were also read. During the offertory procession in the Ministry of the Sacrament that followed, the Red Flag and implements of work were offered with the bread and wine for the Eucharist. And of course the Mass ended as usual with the signing of the Sri Lankan version of the Internationale and this time to the Tamil wording. The Service attracted many outsiders to the CWF and its work in the Jaffna areas. Milk rice was served to the participants in the simple

social that followed the Mass. There was a seminar held thereafter on the theme "Struggle" in which over a hundred people participated.

### Refugees and Relief

On a request made by the Government Agent, Jaffna to the CWF organiser there that we help in the care of families who are refugees from the Trincomalee district and who could not return because of unsettled conditions, the CWF decided to raise money to help provide relief to 30 families assisted by our friends.

Later on the refugee problem in Jaffna itself became acute with large numbers leaving the Vadamatchchi area following the army offensive there. Hundreds of men, women and children were reported lying on the road sides exhausted after walking 20 to 25 miles living on coconut and water and what else they could get or were given by others. It became a massive problem and resulted in a series of refugee camps having to be set up in kovils, churches and schools in various parts of Jaffna. In fact, members of our CWF group at Kaddaively also in the Vadamatchchi area were themselves displaced and are now in the process of re-grouping in order to do what they could by way of relief and rehabilitation work in association with CWF members elsewhere.

## WATTALA

The newly formed CWF group at Wattala has been able to help in securing a stay in the quit notices served on the unauthorised residents at Muthurajawela, through the intervention of their M.P. to whom they made representations.

The group has started a pre-school for the poor children in the 'New Acre' which was a felt need and are now organising free tuition for talented but needy students

of this area. It is also proposed to start a reading room for the use of the residents.

The group recently had a meeting with fishermen of the area on the problems faced by them.

## RATMALANA

On July 18, the third batch of students of the Workers School at Kamkaru Sevana, Ratmalana were awarded certificates on their completion of one year's training as machinists. The training at our Workers School seeks to, combine technical education with social studies and a religious dimension.

Students who had completed a special 6 month course as welders were also awarded their certificates. The head of technical studies, Mr. Yogaratnam, Chief Instructor Ranjith Ruwansiri, Kamkaru Sevana organiser Kingsley Perera and CWF Secretary Vijaya Vidya-sagara addressed the gathering. Parents and past students also spoke on the benefits that had been received through the training given by the Workers School. The proceedings terminated with a 'graduation' lunch shared in by the students, staff and invitees.

## BADULLA

The efforts of the Badulla CWF Branch to build working people's unity cutting across racial barriers is obviously bearing results. A bus load of CWF members and supporters from town, plantations and village areas which included women both Sinhalese and Tamil, travelled together to Colombo and participated in the CWF May Day Mass.

The CWF Centre at Badulla has regular educational programmes and Co-ordinates the work of CWF groups in Uva - Vellassa.





Cont: from inside front cover

The Peace Accord signed envisages also that the Emergency will be lifted in the Eastern and Northern Provinces after the cessation of hostilities and the surrender of arms by the Tamil militants. With the return to normalcy in these provinces, it should not be difficult to do away with the present emergency laws and regulations operating in the country as a whole and advance rapidly towards the full restoration of the democratic processes including the lifting of the prevailing censorship. In any case we do not see why there should be a total censorship of all news and views even at present.

### Background to the Accord

Our Fellowship has unambiguously opposed "military solution" to the Tamil problem as being both unrealistic and counter-productive, apart from obvious moral considerations. We have had also to repeatedly deprecate the intransigent attitude of the Tamil militants and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in particular as being obstructive of a negotiated settlement as much as the vacillations on the part of our Government have delayed it and in consequence also affected adversely the credibility of the Government's leaders.

We have been apprehensive too, of the manner in which the Tamil problem had dangerously spilt over into India through an exodus of Sri Lankan refugees and given rise to serious problems in that country; a situation aggravated further by the way in which our Government by certain actions (and the intemperate pronouncements of some of its leaders) contributed to its becoming suspect in Indian eyes as being involved with hostile foreign powers and consequently even a possible threat to India's own security. It is perhaps not surprising in this context that our Government's move in May this year to pursue a military option in Jaffna and the effects of that option more particularly on Tamil Nadu should have made intervention on the part of India almost inevitable. India's "message" through the forcible air-drop of relief supplies over the Jaffna peninsula was in this situation unmistakable.

We have had occasion to point out as far back as 1985 that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi could hardly be expected to permit a Tamilian South of some 50 million persons to be disturbed for long by Sri Lanka's racial strife. In his situation he could as little have permitted separatist politics on an island bordering Tamil Nadu, (which itself was rife with anti-Hindi and pan-Tamilian sentiments) as have ignored anti-Tamil or anti-Indian moves on the part of our Government - a fact that appears to have been completely lost sight of by both the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil militants. Furthermore, the foreign policy pursued by our Government would apparently have given India cause for misgivings.

It is significant in this connection that while the Agreement now signed between President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi deals with the terms of settling the Tamil problem and steps to be taken to end hostilities, the Exchange of Letters between the two leaders that also go with the Agreement mainly cover matters affecting India's security concerns such

as the presence of foreign military advisers, the use of Trincomalee and other ports and the use of broadcasting facilities by foreign organizations, clearly reflecting India's uneasiness with the foreign policy hitherto pursued by our Government and the latter's apparent disregard of the strict principles of non-alignment that should have been followed in Sri Lanka's own interests. Of special interest in the Letters is therefore the agreement now to set up a "joint consultative mechanism to continuously review matters of common concern."

### Lessons

It is indeed unfortunate that our deviation from the policy of strict non-alignment and the conflictive policies of our petty chauvinist and capitalist politicians should have led to a situation where India felt compelled to intervene directly in our affairs, acting no longer as a mediator but playing in fact the role of an arbiter. The United National Party which leads the Government and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party which now heads the Opposition - major capitalist parties whose racist politics have thus far influenced the thinking of the mass of our people - must bear full responsibility for the present sorry state of this country. It is for our people however to recognise even at this stage the disastrous and bankrupt nature of the racist and reactionary politics opportunistically pursued by these parties and their allies which have distorted issues and concealed from the masses the real nature of the problems confronting them. The progressive forces of our country must no doubt assist in this process through education and patient work among the masses and so help to ensure that the monster of racism does not raise its ugly head again in our political life. In the context of the wanton destruction of public property and transport during the recent rioting and the individual terrorism indulged in by certain elements, the sinister role of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) too needs to be exposed.

The attraction that the JVP would appear to have for certain sections of Sinhala petit-bourgeois youth and the underlying economic causes that contribute to such an attraction need to be understood as part of our social reality, if appropriate remedial measures are to be taken to dispel the fears and frustrations of such youthful sections. It is not without significance that a similar social base has also constituted the backbone of the Tamil militant movement especially in Jaffna and indeed the work of rehabilitation of youth until now armed as guerillas in the Northern and Eastern Provinces will now need to engage our attention urgently.

But above all, the historic task confronting us today is none other than the welding of our different racial and religious communities into the building up of a truly united Sri Lankan nation. It is no doubt a formidable task but only in this manner could we ensure the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country. And it is only through the unity of the working people cutting across narrow racial and religious differences that we will be enabled to truly face up to the problems confronting us (including that of racism) which in the final analysis stem from the capitalist and neo-colonialist domination and exploitation of our land.

**CHRISTIAN WORKERS FELLOWSHIP**

5th August, 1987





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