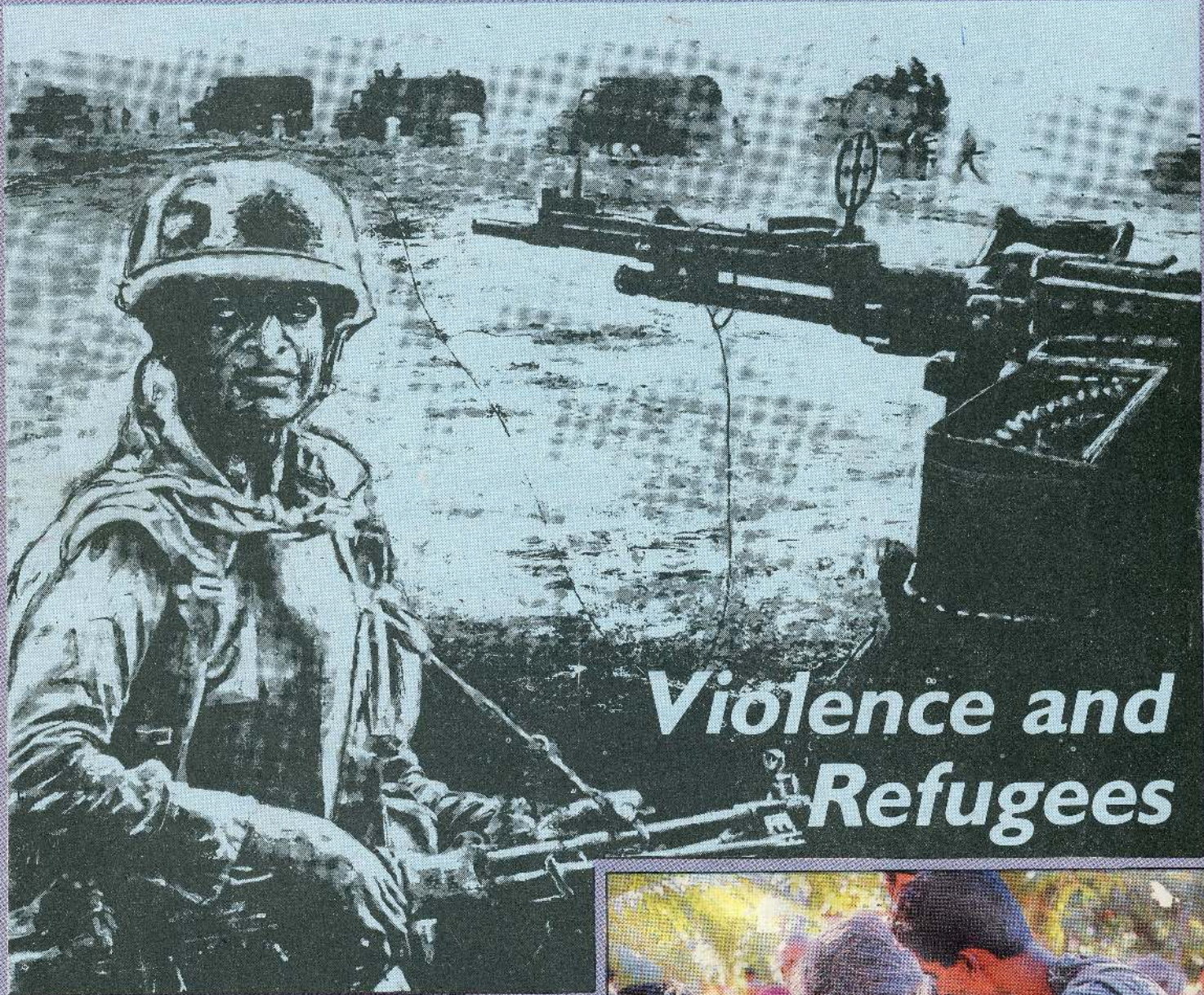


Inside  
1988 CALENDER

Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship

# CHRISTIAN WORKER



## Violence and Refugees

- **Shades of Pol Pot** –  
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- **Winds of change in the  
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and Martyr





## **STOP PRESS:**

The latest victim of political killings has been the Chairman of the ruling United National Party, Mr. Harsha Abeywardena, who was gunned down in his car with three others on December 23.

**Christian Worker** has consistently condemned such cowardly acts of individual terrorism. These acts of desperation calculated to create political destabilisation can be counter-productive and provoke retaliatory violence besides strengthening the forces of reaction and further undermining the democratic processes.

See also Editorial Comment **Violence and Refugees.**

24 December, 1987.

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## **WORKERS' LEGAL AID TRAINING PROGRAMME**

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What I find particularly distasteful is the type of conclusion he draws from this dubious proposition. He says that the Tamils will be more accomodating of U.S. interests (broadcasting facilities and the like) than the Sinhalese. In this he fails completely to see the wisdom of Sri Lankan policy towards capitalist and imperialist interests. This is another area where the Tamils can be open to learning from the Sinhalese. Sri Lankans under the Bandaranayakes and the Senanayakes because of the influence of great leftist leaders like Colvin, N. M. Perera, Philip Gunawardene, Bernard Soysa and many others, did wisely change their tactics in relation to whatever agreements they had with the West. Thus it is rather unwise to fail to admire the foreign policy of the successive Sri Lankan governments, and even their openness to the Left, specially under the SLFP. JR's, unprincipled antics of the last few years should not make us oblivious of Sri Lanka's bold and enlightened stand on foreign affairs.

Tamils do not need to pose as pro-American or anti-left in order to fight for self-determination and basic human rights. Nor should we disown Sri Lankan foreign policy of the last few decades which rightly fought colonialism, feudalism and imperialism.

To conclude: the Tamils' individualism — even if it be true — is not a virtue that should exclude a healthy democratic socialism. The Tamils' purported education by American missionaries (which may have affected a small minority) cannot be construed as making the Tamils more reliable partners in agreements with the West or the U.S. The Sinhalese have qualities which we have to acknowledge, and even learn from; and our dubious 'virtues' should not be exploited in our dialogue with the West or the U.S.

While we deplore Sinhala Buddhist extremism, nationalism and chauvinism, let us not fail to appreciate the qualities and achievements of the Sinhala nation as a whole. Honesty is the best policy, even if it may not be the best politics in certain situations.

**Fr. C. A. Joachim Pillai.**

*Fr. C. A. Joachim Pillai is presently Professor of New Testament Studies at the Toronto School of Theology, and a member of the Faculty of St. Augustine's Seminary of Toronto.*

## Liberation as Americanisation

It is common in scholarly writings to consider the idea of political liberation as characteristically Marxist, and therefore to trace the origins of third world liberation struggles to certain experiences arising from Europe. In line with this thinking, even liberation theology has been labelled as Marxist at its core. On the other hand, it is also not uncommon in many writings to regard the United States as the archetype of imperialism, a subversive power that undermines all those movements which aspire for freedom and justice.

Today, in many parts of the world the United States is perceived as the incarnation of unrelieved evil. Through imperial schemes, the archetype, according to this view, has taken historical form in the creation of a global empire that keeps the rest of the world in the grip of capitalist exploitation. Not satisfied with economic domination the United States is also actively involved in undermining the free governments that revolution had given the people and replaces them with puppet ministers and presidents who will dance to its orders. Hence everyone knows the empire established by the Central

Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), with its foul deeds and world wide plotting.

The above view leads to the one inevitable conclusion : Americanisation of the world is the very antithesis of liberation. Such an equation is however based on a popular misconception that arises from the ambivalence of American messianism: the ambiguity between universalism and particularism. The failure to recognise what is here an unresolved tension, is largely responsible for this one-sided emphasis. What follows then is an attempt to clarify this ambiguity in American messianism.

First, political messianism is characteristically future oriented and proclaims the gospel of liberation. Hope and promise are the contents of the gospel. Operatively, hope inspired by a historical vision of the kingdom of God, or realisable utopias, is responsible for generating liberation movements and people's struggle for justice.

Secondly, political messianism seeks its eschatological fulfilment in terms of either particularism or universalism. Generally, messianism has exposed particularist ideals, since they have a greater capacity to incite and generate mass movements. Fascism and Nazism are the best known exponents of particularism. Similarly, Buddhist messianism in Sri Lanka, was shaped by the ideals of Dhammadipa (Buddhist island) and Sihadipa (Sinhalese island), and is therefore clearly particularist. Particularism is marked by exclusivism. It is neither open to others, not to the future.

Finally, the alternative to particularism is universalism. Universalism affirms the oneness of humanity and thus seeks a utopia for humanity as a whole. As long as human beings remain alienated from each other by race, caste, class, and nation, as long as they live in enmity with each other and



not for each other, this utopia is not capable of historical realisation.

Universalism has its antecedents in Judaism. For the Jews the first man is not Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race, but Adam, the father of all humanity. "Through Christianity and Islam, Judaism has significantly influenced the modern world. In this respect, the messianic ideals of Soviet Union reveal traces of universalism. In fact, it is not surprising that its critique of religion should reveal traces of the Mosaic commandment against graven images. The commandment was given in order to sharpen the difference between Yahweh (universalism) and baalim (tribalism). It was then radicalised in the Jewish prohibition against speaking the name of God or representing his being. All this indicates that atheistic messianism in its functional criticism of religion takes its major precedents from the Jewish prophetic tradition. (Real difference however arises in the critique of the essence of the religious).

Universalism, it needs to be said, cannot co-exist with particularism without contradiction. That is why Stalin's establishment of socialism in "one country" may have effectively destroyed through race identification, the socialism of humanity.

No other country on earth—with the possible exception of the Soviet Union — has so intensively disseminated messianic ideals as the United States. As political religion, American messianism displays a future hope that is combined with faith in its realisability on earth. Americans thus transform every hope into a programme, every opinion into a message, every task into a mission, every struggle for the good into a crusade, and every new experience into a resurrection.

America's political contribution to world history is regarded as democracy. The United States, it is said, twice entered world wars "to make the world safe for democracy". Democracy means the rule of the people as opposed to a state of ruling authorities; the state of law as opposed to the state of power, and truth, not the authority of rule must make those laws.

In the establishment of democracy American messianism anticipates, the kingdom of God and thus liberation in the earthly happiness of the greatest number of human beings. For non-Americans to understand this, it is necessary to grasp its religious roots in the Judaeo - Christian tradition.

American messianism stems from the Exodus story of the Old Testament. The Exodus from slavery in Egypt into the freedom of the promised land was the root experience of Israel. The journey to freedom entailed the destruction of Pharaoh and his army. Hence in Israel's experience, the messianic era began with the death pains of the old and the birth pains of the new world.

The memory of the liberation also ruled the hope of the Jewish prophets who lived in the anticipation of the new messianic exodus. Following this tradition, the Puritan Pilgrim fathers experienced and interpreted as an exodus their emigration from European oppressions into the freedom of American wilderness. Untold numbers who came after them entered into and experienced emigration according to this archetype.

At least for the Pilgrim fathers the exodus motif had universal significance. America was to be a land of justice without privileges and a place of refuge to the politically oppressed, the religiously persecuted, the socially humiliated and racially defamed.

From the Pilgrim fathers this motif was transferred to the liberation struggle of the black slaves. Thus long before liberation theology gained official recognition the black preachers in the nineteenth century were reputed to have widely used the Exodus imagery. For it gave the slaves much needed hope and dignity in the midst of oppression and abandonment. From the black struggle the motif came into the Women's Liberation Movement.

So it is out of the ideology of the United States that the exodus motif is today wandering into Latin American liberation theology. This theology has now found its way to every corner of the globe. Traces of the exodus motif are also found in Maoism. Therefore, in this general politicising of the exodus motif, there lies hidden in the modern spreading of the motif a certain Americanisation of the world.

The transfer of the American ideology to the Asian and African soil has however become a burden rather than a blessing. It springs from messianism's natural orientation towards particularism. When the United States claims to have its troops in Korea in order to make it "safe for democracy", it becomes an ideological self-justification of the American empire and the free enterprise of the multinational corporations. Similarly, the self image of America as "this nation under God" (Abraham Lincoln) and "champion of democracy" have become self-justifying labels for covert aggression or outright military incursions.

The fact is, very little of the religius idea of the exodus is left over in the modern consciousness. What remains leads to shadow existence of what is today known as civil religion. Without inner renewal the democratic institutions of a country remain empty and are quickly filled up with the bureaucrats who take over decision making. As a result, power becomes con-



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## From our readers

### Comment on "The JVP and The Ethnic Conflict"

In the above article Chandraprema tries very hard to underplay the significance of the world economic crisis and its effect on the colonized nations now known as the Third World. No group calling itself progressive can ignore the world capitalist order that rules the world today. To ignore it is to play right into the hands of the bourgeoisie, who would be delighted at the turning away from central issues or causes of disease to the symptoms of disease. They would like nothing better, for ethnicity is one of the prime factors that ruling classes have always used to break up the unity of the working class and

thereby destroy the latter's struggle for a world socialist order. It always suits the world capitalist order to have the working class divided ethnically in order to prevent the unification of the workers of the world in a common struggle to overthrow a rapacious world system. Chandraprema's article is conspicuous for the effort he makes to obfuscate this fact, i.e. the universal nature of the capitalist order and the world wide nature of its crisis and its effects on Third World countries. Wijeweera's analysis, whatever else its shortcomings are, at least tries to pin point the world economic crisis and its effects on poor countries. It is in this light that the ethnic issue has to be viewed. Once this is done, the need for the unification of the

working class in a common struggle against world capitalism becomes clear. No progressive force engaged in the struggle to bring about socialism can afford to ignore a world perspective. In this respect at least Wijeweera's analysis is right and therefore I would like to have this recorded in your magazine which I believe is one committed to a struggle to change the World Capitalist Order.

O.V.J.  
Colombo  
8, 12, 87.

### Editorial Comment :

The article concerned is an individual contribution appearing under the name of its author and does not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the Editorial Board.



## Congratulations!

Dear Sir,

Enclosed a few comments I made in reference to two articles that appeared in the 'Tamil Times' (of London). You are free to use them in your pages, since they refer to an orientation which your Journal has always wisely defended.

Congratulations on the good work you are continuing to do, by showing how leftist politics can be humanized and Christianized. The focus on the people and on workers, as also on social justice and religious awareness, is very much needed on any path to true liberation.

With best wishes,

Sgd. C. A. Joachim Pillai, O.M.I.

P.S. — 1. Colvin Gooneratne need not have taken 3 pages to make his very valid points on Ralph B's trivia. That book does not deserve such close scrutiny.

2. Sp. remembrance and greetings and congratulations to Bishop Gnanapragasam. I think I knew his Dad who was so active in the Anglican Church in so many ways.

Fr. C. A. Joachim Pillai  
2661, Kingston Road,  
Scarborough, ONT.  
Canada M1M 1M3.

## Temptations from the Right

I did appreciate the two pieces in the April '87 issue of Tamil Times one by Mr. Ed Benedict (p. 6) and the other by Mr. A. J. Wilson (pp. 12-13). Mr. Benedict convincingly argues why the Tamil Boys who are freedom-fighters should not be too glibly described as terrorists, communists or separatists.

Mr. Wilson shows the wise alternatives open to the Sri Lankan Government to resolve the ethnic crisis.

While agreeing fully with most of the points made, I have serious reservations about how both authors try to make Sri Lankan Tamils attractive to the West and to the U.S. regime, and how both take their distance from leftist politics.

The fact that the Tamils are naturally conservative, individualist and family-oriented does not mean that they have to remain closed to liberal, community-oriented socialist options. If they have not been as left-oriented as some of our Sinhalese brethren, it is not necessarily a quality; nor should that fact be used as Benedict tries to — to make the Tamils' cause attractive to U.S. public opinion. It can be counter-productive.

Mr. Benedict writes: "It is against the very ethos of the Tamil people to be communists." Now, that is an over-statement. It is not against the Tamil ethos to grow into a more leftist, socialist frame of mind. In fact, some of the new groups fighting for liberation, independence and self-respect seem to find inspiration in the life and work of great Asians like Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Mao Tse-Tung and Ho Chi Minh, who all knew how to take their distance from certain capitalist and nationalist ideologies. So, let us not for the sake of convenience and Western acceptability think that the Tamils are better than the Sinhalese because the leftist movements made no serious inroads in the Tamil homelands. It is not necessarily a plus. It just shows how conservative, insular and fenced—in most Sri Lankan Tamils have been. No wonder, communal politics became an attraction.

In fact, in spite of their occasional opportunist betrayals, the leftists in the South (much more than even the religious organisations) seem to be the only voice of sanity for a just settlement in Sri Lanka. Thus, it is unwise to try to buy U.S. support by portraying the Tamils as individualist, capitalist, and family-oriented. If that is true, then it is time they become more community-oriented, socialist and left-leaning too, as most of the revolutionary groups happen to be. We can learn from our Sinhala brethren in the South.

The same argument used to be made about China, India and Indochina. And these conservative lands, without losing their traditional values have all become left-leaning too.

As for Mr. Wilson, true, he was speaking to the U.S. sub-committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs; but we do not have to bend over backwards to show our closeness to U.S. ideology as compared with the leftist outlook. I agree with most of Dr. Wilson's fine analysis of the situation, and the wise alternatives he proposes. What seems totally exaggerated and unacceptable is when he says: "There has been a long tradition of education through American mission in the Tamil unit. The Tamil people feel morally obliged to the U.S. institutions which spent so much time over their education. Any agreement therefore with the U.S. Government will be honoured." First, it is not historically true. Though the American *Christian* Mission made a significant contribution to education in the North, one should not canonize it the way he does. There were many other more significant ways in which education took place for the Tamils both in the North and in the rest of Sri Lanka.



centrated and the interests of the State dominate policy making. If religious messianism is to once again recover its universalism, it needs to be resolutely christianised. Only the recognition of the suffering God in the cross of Christ makes messianism unambiguous and hopeful for humanity as a whole. Christ of the cross is not a nation, a fuhrer, a people, or a phantom but Jesus of Nazareth, the liberator of the world sent from God "to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18), who through his death creates salvation for those condemned to death. The recognition of this fact, entails voluntary suffering for others and readiness for sacrifice. Without this commitment, messianism cannot expect to transcend particularism, and thus liberate the truly poor.

The Rig Veda identifies the primaeval man as Purusha, who becomes the founder of the four Varnas, the four classes of the Hindu society (RV, X. 90).

C. R. A. Hoole  
Philadelphia, U.S.A.

## SATI

### A Sarage Surriral

A blushing bride of just eighteen  
But hardly eight months wed,  
Sat calm upon the funeral pyre  
On lap, her husband's head.

Steeled for the awesome sacrifice  
By creed, tradition bound,  
Where widow burning still persists  
'spite law and reason sound.

The turbaned Rajputs  
steeped of yore  
In religion and myth,  
Are heir to male supremacy  
And crimes that go therewith.

Decked in her bridal finery  
Roopwati waits the flames,  
Four frenzied thousands  
through the pyre  
None feels revulsion, shame.

A youthful kinsman sets the torch  
The fierce flames leap high,  
Consuming 'midst dense smoke  
and drums  
The bride condemned to die.

Barbaric, macabre the rite,  
That custom, creed ingrain,  
By Sati, savage sacrifice,  
A goddess new will reign.

The lakhs pour in a shrine to build  
Upon the Sati Sital,  
To glorify and venerate at  
Another man made Baal.

Mervyn Casie Chetty

## On apartheid

From the Poet Laureate of Hulftsdorp

The legend of Lord Nelson's known—  
He used his sightless eye  
The danger signals to ignore  
And force the foe to fly.

What of the other Nelson Man  
A hero black is he,  
A lifetime spent behind the bars  
Of White supremacy?

His freedom he will not purchase  
By compromise or plea,  
But win the battle of the Blacks  
For justice, liberty.

His winsome wife,  
brave Winnie's been  
Through house arrest and jail,  
No threats or persecution can  
Force that stout heart to quail.

Mervyn Casie Chetty

## B. A. Siriwardena

*Christian Worker* regrets to record the death of B. A. Siriwardena who was editor of the Left-wing Sinhala Daily *Aththa* for many years.

Sinhala journalism is undoubtedly the poorer today by the loss of "Sira" as he was known to his friends. His racy Sinhala with its inimitable wit and invective will sadly be missed by many. The fact that a considerable number of presons regularly bought the *Aththa* especially to read his editorials is itself an eloquent tribute to Sira's genius.

As a result of his outspoken journalism, Sira was of course invariably in trouble, having to face charges of defamation in the Courts or alleged infringements of

parliamentary privilege, all of which he took in his stride with his accustomed humour. His sturdy sense of independence even led him to leave *Aththa* for a time but he later returned to serve the paper so closely identified with his name, until his last illness. His loss will be felt all the more in these days when bold and courageous journalism is becoming increasingly rare.

To meet Sira and to have a discussion with him was an altogether enjoyable experience. We in *Christian Worker* will certainly miss him. He was appreciative of our efforts and supportive too of the work of the CWF. We extend our sincere sympathy to the staff of *Aththa*, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and to members of his family for the loss they have suffered through his sad and premature death. □



# Violence and Refugees

Widespread violence including bomb blasts in Colombo, military actions following clashes in the North and East and a heavy exodus of refugees from these areas of death and destruction have marked the months from October this year.

### Refugees All

People of all communities — Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim who had lived peaceably together for long especially in the East, have been rudely uprooted from their hamlets in the wake of violence, taking what they could with them in a flight to safety, many of them carrying only the clothes they wore and most of them losing what little they had possessed with the destruction of their dwellings. These people now dependant on dry rations given to them by the authorities and on the charity of others, eke out a pitiable existence today as refugees in their own homeland of Sri Lanka. The situation is not much different if not worse in Jaffna where many have had to leave their homes in the context of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) offensive to take Jaffna from the defiant Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). And all this ironically after the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of July 29!

### The Why and the Wherefore

Why troubles should again have erupted in the North and East after the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord and more especially when another agreement had admittedly been reached on September 28 between the Indian Government and the LTTE which provided for a clear dominance of the latter in the interim administration to be set up immediately in the North and East and agreed to also by President J. R. Jaye-

wardene, is a question that has puzzled many. Yet, this last agreement was reached after the LTTE protest actions particularly in the North and the death of 23 year old Thileepan on September 26 after a 12 day protest fast in Jaffna over the five demands put forward by the Tigers and reported in our last issue.

That there were genuine fears on which the LTTE was able to conduct these protest actions is understandable. The alleged attempts to settle new Sinhala colonists in the East under cover of the steps taken to re-settle those dislodged earlier by ethnic disturbances and the opening up of police stations in the North manned by Sinhalese policemen before the setting up of the interim administration envisaged in the North and East would obviously have caused some misgivings.

However, it was alleged by the Indian Government that the LTTE's fasting campaign was really calculated to divert attention from its most recent butchery of over 60 Tamils including leaders belonging to rival militant groups and further that the LTTE manoeuvres were aimed also at creating illwill between the IPKF and the general public. As stated in our last issue, the hostility of the Tigers to the IPKF could well be understood in the context of their being deprived of the degree of armed power they had previously enjoyed and with the surfacing again of rival groups of militants whom they had much earlier decimated in numbers and who they alleged were now being supported by the IPKF in their re-emergence after the Peace Accord.

In any case, the agreement of September 28 between the Indian authorities and the LTTE records the fact that the Sri Lanka President had agreed to establish an Interim Administrative Council for the Northern



and Eastern Provinces with a composition that assured hegemony for the LTTE. There were to be 6 LTTE nominees including a Muslims, 2 from the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and 2 Sinhalese on the Council. In addition to these, the Chief Administrator was to be also selected by President Jayewardene from a panel of names submitted by the LTTE. Again, at the insistence of the LTTE, India had persuaded President Jayewardene to agree to "delegate his executive powers" to the Administrator-in-Council during the interim period that is until Provincial Council elections were held. The LTTE had agreed that the establishment of an interim administration would facilitate fulfilment of the five demands associated with Thileepan's death fast and Prabakaran was reported to have agreed to co-operate fully and ensure the "smooth functioning" of "all aspects of the civil administration" committing himself also to the holding of "free and fair elections".

In accordance with this agreement, President Jayewardene picked V. Sivagnanam, a former Jaffna Municipal Commissioner out of the panel of names submitted by the LTTE. The LTTE however wanted changes in the composition of the Interim Administrative Council and above all in the choice of Chief Administrator. Although President Jayewardene accepted the two changes asked for by the LTTE in the composition of the Council, he firmly refused to consider the LTTE's demand for Namasivayam Pathmanathan as Chief Administrator. Pathmanathan had been detained earlier on a charge of helping the militants and was considered relatively junior for the post. Efforts to end this deadlock through the submission of a fresh panel of names by the LTTE or its acceptance of a name from a list given by the Sri Lankan Government were all rejected by the LTTE.

The Indian authorities alleged that the LTTE had in the interval replenished its stock of arms through clandestine shipments from Singapore (having surrendered some 20 per cent of its arms earlier at Palaly in August) and was preparing for a showdown. The allegation made by other groups too that the LTTE in fact feared to risk facing a future election in which it could not possibly secure the hegemony it had been earlier able to establish by force of arms, is not without foundation. The intransigence of the LTTE on this small matter of the interim administration when it had already wrested so many advantages and its rashness then in challenging the IPKF would otherwise be inexplicable. That the LTTE feared for its position and distrusted the Indian Government's intentions is anyway beyond dispute.

A situation already simmering with Tiger rage, degenerated rapidly after the arrest on October 3 of 17 LTTE personnel by the Sri Lanka Navy on a boat off Point Pedro. They included the two regional commanders of the Tigers in Trincomalee and Jaffna — Pulendran and Kumarappa. On the Sri Lankan Army preparing to transfer them to Colombo (against the advice of the IPKF which feared a worsening of the existing situation) the 17 men swallowed cyanide capsules resulting in the deaths of 12 of them including Pulendran and Kumarappa. In retaliation, the LTTE executed the 8 Sri Lankan soldiers it had held captive since March 23 and abducted and killed 5 Sinhalese employees of the Sri Lankan television Rupavahini who were travelling back after they had dropped a Tamil employee at home. The Tigers thereafter indulged in indiscriminate violence and massacred at least 200 Sinhalese civilians living amongst the Tamil hamlets in Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, including defenceless women and children. Some Government officials regardless of their race were also killed. Large numbers of Sinhalese and Muslims living in the Eastern Province were forced to leave their homes and members of all three communities were soon reduced to the position of refugees.

#### The Role of the IPKF

The role of the IPKF during these troubles especially in the Eastern Province and the Trincomalee district in particular where the three communities of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims lived in appreciable numbers calls for some comment.

The IPKF which after the Peace Accord established camps all over the North and East to prevent the outbreak of violence and to ensure the physical security and safety of all communities living in these areas in terms of the Accord, lost credibility when its troops turned a blind eye to the happenings in the Trincomalee district especially. The result was that large numbers of Sinhalese and Muslims were affected by the Tiger outbursts and were killed or had to flee the area in safety for their lives. In fact it is even alleged and not without reason that the "Tamil ethnic soldiers" of the IPKF turned partisan to the Sri Lankan Tamils during these violent outbursts. IPKF personnel were also alleged to have beaten up police officers of the China Bay station and several Sinhalese civilians and figured in a road block incident where a Buddhist monk too was killed. In fact it was after these incidents that President Jayewardene directed Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh, Chief of the Indian Army's Southern Command, to work in close co-operation with Gen. Cyril Ranatunge Chief of the Joint Operations Command of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces "to restore law and order.



immediately in the Trincomalee town and district". The President also declared that if the IPKF did not do so he would direct it to withdraw from the Trincomalee area and the Sri Lankan security forces and police would act to restore order. Many of the Sinhalese who are as yet refugees have however refused to return to the Trincomalee area without the protection of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces since they could not trust the IPKF.

Muslims too have been adversely affected and displaced in numbers. It is alleged that some sections of the IPKF have apparently viewed Muslims as "pro-Pakistani" and shown them hostility. Following the killing of some 30 civilians mostly Muslims in the Batticaloa district after IPKF-LTTE clashes in December 2, the IPKF was to deploy two Muslim brigades of the Indian Army in a bid to ease tensions in the area.

Nor is the position of the IPKF a happy one in Jaffna especially after its "Operation Pawan" (Gust of Wind) launched with the twin objectives of securing control of the peninsula and disarming the Tigers.



Maj. Gen. Harkirat Singh, General Officer Commanding of the Indian Peace-keeping Force, with Ajit Mathaiya, LTTE's regional commander for Vavuniya and No.2 in the hierarchy, and (centre) Kumarappa, the Jaffna regional commander who died after consuming cyanide.....

The IPKF at first welcomed in Jaffna and in the East as the "saviours and friends" of the Tamil people also sought to preserve this image and not do anything to offend Tamil sentiment. But the discomfiture of the Tigers at this Indian presence and its distrust of Indian intentions *vis-a-vis* the other rival militant groups made the situation difficult. The fateful decision of the Tigers therefore to go back on the September 28 Agreement and defy the Indian initiative gave the Indian Government no option but to deploy the IPKF militarily to disarm the LTTE and crush its resistance. This was done following high-level discussions and the visit of Indian Defence Minister K. C. Pant to Colombo on October 9.

The result was the IPKF attack on Jaffna town which until then had stood as a symbol of LTTE power defiant of Sri Lankan authority and whose capture by the Sri Lankan forces could not even be considered in the face of Indian reaction. (In any case it was clear from the results of the Indian offensive in Jaffna that the Sri Lankan Army would in such an event have sustained very high casualties with possible serious consequences in Sinhala areas as well).

The taking of Jaffna by the IPKF was followed by fanning out operations elsewhere to secure the peninsula — a 40 day operation that resulted in well over 1000 deaths of both civilians and combatants and in more than double that number being seriously injured. The damage to property was severe. Ironically, allegations of atrocities made earlier against the Sri Lankan troops were now made against the IPKF, many even asserting that the Sri Lankan army had been more restrained in its operations and much less ruthless. D. B. S. Jeyaraj quotes a Jaffna University student as saying "the effects of 4 years of pre-Indo-Sri-Lanka Accord violence has been telescoped into 4 weeks of post-Indo-Lanka Accord strife". (*The Island*, December 6).

The people of Jaffna were obviously bewildered by the IPKF action. They had gone through over 4 years of violence and were with the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord preparing for peace with a genuine sense of relief. Now their hopes were shattered. India whom they had looked on as saviour and protector was now unleashing violence on them. Not unnaturally, they felt betrayed.

A two day cease-fire observed by the IPKF from November 21 following the release of 18 Indian soldiers captured by the LTTE once again raised expectations of a possible settlement but the LTTE stipulation that the IPKF should "move back to their positions prior to October 10, 1987" the day operations to disarm the Tigers began, was found "totally unacceptable" to the Indian Government. And so sporadic violence goes on with some of the Tiger forces having taken to the jungles south of the peninsula after they were dislodged from their urban strongholds to carry on a protracted guerilla war if necessary.

### Tiger Tactics

It would be clear from the foregoing that the LTTE leadership by its lack of flexibility and its intransigence has brought disaster both on itself and on the people of Jaffna especially, besides also precipitating destruction in other parts of the North and also the East.



This is primarily because the LTTE functioned as an essentially military formation but without a coherent political understanding that was based on social analysis or on geo-political realities. It is this political immaturity that obviously led it into making an over-assessment of its own ability to withstand on its home ground the foreign invader that it now saw in the IPKF. While the LTTE was able with its knowledge of the terrain and effective urban guerilla tactics to inflict considerable losses on the IPKF, it was still in no position to take on a military power of such proportions in the present context especially. (The LTTE guerilla force would total 2000 at the most while the IPKF number around 40,000 today). The LTTE over-estimated also the possibility of rousing up Tamil Nadu in such a confrontation and of utilising the sentiments there to stay the hand of the Government of India in its favour. No doubt the influence of the IPKF offensive was soon felt in Tamil Nadu with Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran expressing his concern and distress and even meeting Premier Rajiv Gandhi over it and with D. M. K. leader M. Karunanidhi declaring that the incident proved that President Jayewardene had duped both the Government of India and the Tamil militants. But although the Dravidian Movement Leader announced that Prabhakaran had "sought the support of the D.M.K. and the people of Tamil Nadu for his cause" and organized public meetings, picketing and protest actions against the IPKF offensive, it was clear that public opinion in Tamil Nadu was divided and there was no big response. These were therefore the costly mistakes made by the LTTE leadership on which also it gambled and lost disastrously.

But while the LTTE has certainly had a crushing blow dealt to it with the loss of Jaffna town, the fact is that it still has cadres and popular sympathy in some areas at least. It could therefore if it chose, prolong instability almost indefinitely by small ambushes, selective killings, massacre of Sinhalese civilians and the like. This would necessarily mean also a continued Indian presence on the island which could be embarrassing to both Governments and be resented also by the local population whether in the North or South. Obviously it is not a military 'pacification' but a political solution that could effectively counter insurgency by putting an end to conditions that engender and foster it. This is in fact what was sought to be achieved in some measure at least through the Indo-Lankan Peace Accord. A further step in this direction has been the passage of the Provincial Councils Act and the 13th Amendment through Parliament on November 12 by a two-thirds majority in pursuance of the terms of that Accord.

As for the Indian military presence in the North and East today, such a step became almost inevitable when in the context of the conflictive racist politics engaged in by our petty capitalist politicians, problems were created which also invited intervention on the part of our big neighbour. The sooner we draw lessons from these events and learn to put our own house in order by ourselves, the better for everyone. It is in this way too that we can ensure that the Indian presence will not be with us longer than is really necessary.

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**"It is not a military 'pacification' but a political solution that can effectively counter insurgency by putting an end to conditions that... foster it..."**

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But the tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction that must now follow the damage and destruction brought about through our own folly, will necessarily be massive for a small country like ours.

#### Troubles in the South

Two bomb blasts in Colombo on the 9th of October and of November respectively symbolised as it were the two de-stabilising forces operating in our country today from its extremities of North and South.

While the massive bomb blast of November 9th in Maradana has been apparently traced to Tiger insurgents, the October 9th bomb blast that occurred in a Union office of the ruling United National Party (UNP) in the Colombo Port has been ascribed by the authorities (as in the case of the August 18 bomb blast in Parliament and the attempts on October 2 to start fires in the Colombo party offices of the LSSP and CPSL) to the activists of the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Whatever may be the truth behind that explosion in the Port, it is certainly a fact that a type of insurgency has begun to show itself strongly in the South as well and identified with the JVP.

It is common knowledge that State-owned newspapers no longer sell in the South in the wake of threats made to their vendors. Local UNP politicians in the deep South have begun resigning from their posts and some even advertising this by putting up posters outside their homes. Death threats have been issued and selective killings carried out of informers and allegedly anti-social elements. State officers too have been affected in their duties. In Matara and Galle they have had to



desist from field work and tax collections following the receipt of death threats. The pattern that is emerging is in fact very similar to that followed by the militants of the North although not on that big scale. In any case, it is also significant that the social base of this Sinhala JVP group in the South is similar to the social base of what constituted the backbone of the Tamil militant movement especially in Jaffna, namely sections of petit-bourgeois youth with their own fears and frustrations.

It may even be said that the JVP politics in its own way reflects the deep-going nature of the crisis in our society today. In any crisis, it is but natural that the less stable social layers should be the first to become restive and to erupt. The underlying economic and social causes therefore that contribute to the attraction that the JVP has for sections of our petit-bourgeois youth today must first be understood as part of our social reality if any worthwhile remedial measures are to be taken to dispel the fears and frustrations of such youthful sections or win them over to a different political course.

Furthermore, it has to be recognised that the brutalisation of our society following repeated waves of violence and the unhealthy totalitarian trends that have manifested themselves especially since 1977, have also had their effect. The flagrant violation of election laws, the reliance on force whether of the State apparatus or of hired musclemen, the destruction of human values and the enthronement in their place of money-values, the growing self-aggrandisement and blatant corruption of those in high places and above all the devaluation of human life have only served to push such youthful sections into losing completely their confidence in the Government and in constitutional processes. To wean such youth away from the politics of despair and consequent recourse to the gun will by no means be an easy task in the present conditions. Furthermore, the absence of a proper political alternative and a class force strong enough to show them a way out of the present morass, makes that task doubly difficult. Hence the ready response of such youth to Sinhala chauvinist cries in a fashion similar to the Tamil Eelamist cries of corresponding youthful sections in the North. The displacement of Sinhala people from the East following

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**Government counter - terror and private armies will not improve the climate; it could result in unbridled violence and the elimination of all opposition.**

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the Peace Accord many of whom have their roots in the Southern parts of the island has tended to strengthen such tendencies. Furthermore the uncertainty of people as to whether there will in fact be another General Election — a demand made by all opposition parties today — complicates the situation further. This doubt needs to be dispelled by the Government if the Provincial Council elections too are to be taken seriously and not looked upon as a means of avoiding a General Election in the coming period. Such fears have naturally been played up by the JVP in its campaign. The proscription of the JVP has itself enhanced its glamour in the eyes of the more radical and militant youth.

The reaction of the Government has been to intensify the efforts to suppress JVP activity even if some of its leaders have from time to time made overtures to the JVP and offered an amnesty with legalisation too if that party renounced violence and entered the regular political processes. The Government has in retaliation to JVP tactics also unleashed counter-terror in the form of "Green Tigers" who now issue their own death threats to people and through "home guards" — 150 of whom are to be appointed by each Member of Parliament for personal protection. That such private armies and counter-terror will hardly contribute towards improving a climate already charged with violence should become evident to anyone. It would in fact well result in unbridled violence and in the elimination of all legitimate opposition to those now in power. Indeed the JVP threat itself could conveniently be utilised by armed hoodlums as cover for such a process. On November 11, the banner headline on the front page of the *Daily News* gloated: "Outraged public kill JVPers, burn homes" in reporting incidents on November 10 at Buttala, Monaragala, Siyambalanandua, Hambantota and Tissamaharama. Interestingly enough it was precisely on this day that Fr. Michael Rodrigo who had identified himself with the peasants was shot to death while celebrating his evening Mass at Buttala. (See separate article inside).

We have in our last issue of *Christian Worker* sought to highlight the dangers involved in having recourse to the gun in conflictive situations. For the gun tends to evolve a logic of its own turning its user into an extension of itself. Rational thought and human communication is then subsumed in the "final solution" offered by the gun. Have we now really reached a stage when on account of the political bankruptcy of our leading Government and Opposition parties and the apparent absence of a viable political alternative, we have to go through a situation found in certain other countries where everybody is shooting at everybody else? It looks as if timely political action alone can avert such a tragedy.





# Shades of Pol Pot

— Hector Abhayavardhana —  
(In Conversation with CHRISTIAN WORKER)

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are not stable political parties. Both were responses to developments of politics in separate parts of the country. The JVP was a response to what happened in 1964 when the Lanka Sama Samaja Party joined the Government of Mrs. Sirima Bandranaike and formed her first Coalition Government.

It was thought that by the recruitment of the forces of the Left by the SLFP there would be a vacuum in the Left which the JVP leadership could fill. Events showed that no such vacuum really existed. It is possible to say that the JVP insurgency of 1971 was an ultra-Left adventure. Because it was an attack on the Left from positions to the left of the Left. But one cannot equate that situation with the situation that exists today when the JVP is once more engaged in an assault on an existing government. This time the government that exists is a patently Right wing government. And the attack is taking place not from the Left of the government, but from the Right of the government. So the JVP today, programmatically to the extent that it has any kind of stable programme would represent a movement which can be said to belong to the extreme Right, as against the movement in 1971 which appeared to belong to the extreme Left.

The point is, how do you explain an ultra-Left adventure in 1971 developing into an ultra-Right adventure in 1987? I think here the conclusion one has to come to is that this is not a stable political formation. This is some kind of an organised movement round the personality of a single leader which becomes always an attempt to exploit a situation that exists. And it adjusts its tactics and its programme to the need to take advantage of a situation.

The LTTE was a response to the situation in which the Tamil minority found itself in especially after 1983. And the response to that situation also attempted to take maximum advantage of the opportunities presented to a person who can be called a leader with a certain militaristic bent — and as events have shown — with a certain genius of military organisation, which was the best mode of seeking to exploit the breakdown of the State that had taken place especially after 1983.

If we are to compare these two therefore, it is necessary to confine ourselves to the present manifestation of these two movements. You can't compare them in their historical evolution as political movements or political parties. Because from that angle there would be differences. But if you look at them from attempts to exploit for the purpose of their respective leaders certain situations that currently exist in the country, then there is a certain basis of comparison of the JVP and the LTTE.

## The Local Naxalites?

There are parallels in what took place in West Bengal between the CPI(M) and the Naxalite movement and the rise of the JVP in 1971. It is well known today that all these ultra-left movements that appeared in various parts of the world were sought to be manipulated by various foreign agencies, especially the CIA. The Naxalites were not in any sense a mercenary formation. (I think they were moved by the highest idealism). Still, they considered themselves as confronting the left movements that existed in India as their principal adversaries and thus they enabled all kinds of reactionary forces to utilise the struggle that they were conducting against governments and Marxist political parties in various States in India.



In the case of Wijeweera, it is very difficult to understand how anybody who was seriously interested in capturing political power could take the step of launching an insurgency against a government that had been popularly elected less than one year previously. It was unthinkable that the insurgency could draw the masses into action against the government. It would have taken several years for the characterisation of that government as one that was betraying their promises to the people to become transparent to the people.

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**The JVP and the LTTE both represent the same rural social strata amongst their ethno-linguistic groupings. But their relationships to the State are different.**

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When an ultra-Left force views as its principal enemy the other Left forces in the country, it points to a non-class approach to politics. Even a Left force that has made mistakes or consciously betrayed class politics would still remain based on the classes on whose support they came into power. In Germany, the attacks of the Communist Party directed against the Social Democrats eventually contributed in a large measure to the triumph of Hitler. This is a dangerous kind of political irrationalism because it is supposed to be operated in the name of Marxism.

#### **Creatures of Agrarian Unrest**

The JVP and the LTTE both represent the same rural lower middle-class social strata amongst their respective ethno-linguistic groupings. But the relationships of the Tamil petit bourgeoisie to the State and that of the Sinhalese petit bourgeoisie to the State are different. And therefore the context of the politics of the LTTE and the JVP as attempts to serve the interests of these rural middle classes, would tend also to differ somewhat.

In the post independence period the Tamils sought to come to some kind of bargain with the Sinhalese leaders regarding the use of the State to solve their respective problems. The Sinhalese leaders made it impossible for them to conclude that bargain. They were interested in monopolising the State to solve **their** problems as the leaders of the Sinhalese. To that extent the Tamil middle classes found themselves being steadily alienated from the State.

With the use of the State to show preferences to the Sinhala petit bourgeoisie at the expense of the Tamils, the Tamils found themselves being increasingly forced into opposition to the State. First it was alienation, then it was opposition. With the monopolisation of power in the hands of an Executive President, under the new Constitution of 1978, they found that the State was completely inaccessible to them and therefore even an oppositional role was of little advantage, and that they would have to seek ways of functioning in some kind of extra-constitutional manner against the State.

If we look at Wijeweera's position and that of the JVP, the Sinhalese petit bourgeoisie were not in such a disadvantageous situation. But, this did not mean that the Sinhalese middle classes as a whole had solved even their basic economic problems. On the other hand, the marginalisation of large sections of the Sinhalese lower middle classes was taking place and there was in the villages an increasing section of educated middle classes who were finding it impossible to secure accommodation within the economy.

Those at the bottom of the middle classes were finding themselves increasingly marginalised and shut out of economic activity. These people are actually being thrown out of the ranks of the middle classes. But they are not being "proletarianised" because there is no expansion of industry that can absorb them into the ranks of the working class. Moreover, having been put through an absolutely unsuitable and futile formal education in our schools system they find themselves absorbing values which are non-productive and do not allow them to use their labour power to sustain themselves. It is these categories (who you might say belong to that category of the **wretched of the earth** with absolutely no prospects) who are the real counterpart of the broad Tamil middle classes that have been behind the Federal Party and ran until recently the armed resistance in the North and the East.

However, the LTTE has drawn into its activity many middle class elements of considerable academic education (some of them even having acquired professional skills) who are not really marginalised, in any sense of the term. This is due mainly to the "national" character of their struggle against Sinhala hegemony.

It is said that the JVP also has been able to attract some middle class academic types. But there is no clear evidence of it. It can be said that in the case of the JVP, the JVP is being drawn into the movement which has always existed among the Sinhalese of anti-Tamilianism and anti-Indianism. The JVP therefore, far from providing a leadership to these academic or upper middle class elements is actually being drawn as a tail to these elements. It is true that from the angle of its militancy and its ability to organise military



action against the State, it has qualities which the traditional Sinhala leadership of the anti-Tamil movement does not possess. But it is still functioning only in an auxiliary capacity, seeking to make use of a broad movement of Sinhala anti-Tamilianism which it cannot really head as the accepted leader of that movement.

### **The Political Heirs of Pol Pot**

It would not be inaccurate to characterise this tendency as agrarian irrationality, and adventurism, or even as Pol Potism. Sinhalese ideology always had some kind of self-preservationist emphasis. And this self-preservationist emphasis itself reflects the illusions of messianism that were given to them by the priesthood of the fifth century.

The Sinhalese do not have confidence in themselves and their society and their ability to face the world. And not having that confidence they are unable to make a realistic assessment of their political and geo-political and social relationships. The best way of running away from that reality would be by burying themselves in the myths of their early origins.

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### **The movements of Wijeweera and Prabakaran are basically negative in character.**

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This also applies to the Tamils. When young Tamil militants went to Tamil Nadu after the 1983 pogrom against them, they went there in an extremely desperate situation. And they were unable in that situation to make a rational assessment of trends that were in evidence in Tamil Nadu society. So they projected their own illusions into what was taking place in that society and they thought that Tamil Nadu was going to provide leadership to a new transnational Tamil revivalism. They thought that the DMK and AIDMK were real Tamil vanguard revivalist movements

But with the spread of industry in Madras and other cities in Tamil Nadu, a new bourgeoisie had arisen. The industrialisation that had taken place had given the Tamil Nadu middle classes and the bourgeoisie a very vital stake in the preservation of an undivided Indian market — for capital, commodities and labour. They had, therefore, subordinated their Tamilianism to Indianism. They are **Indian Tamils**.


These illusions that the LTTE and other people had of a vast Tamil movement which would also embrace the Tamil settlers in Singapore and Malaysia, and the Tamil expatriates in the Western countries and become a new world movement of the Tamils has proved to be absolutely unreal. That is why the LTTE has been unable to understand the nature of this Accord that has taken place between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka and to adjust themselves to the new situation.

### **Political Irrationalism and Foreign Intervention**

The movements of Wijeweera and Prabakaran are basically anti-intellectual, anti-rational and anti-modernist. These forces are negative in character. They are not creative. And therefore, they have no real programme for the future of this country. This is particularly true of the LTTE. The line that they have taken with regard to the Accord reveals a total inability to understand the Accord as a political phenomenon and, therefore, their relationship to the political process as it is developing in the North and East and in the country as a whole.

In the case of Wijeweera, the movements that he has always led have been primarily negative and destructive. Even when he formed the JVP in 1964, its programme was basically negative. The destruction of the plantations, the driving away of the Tamils from the plantations, the more concrete programme of the blowing up of the Police Stations. But nothing at all as to what should be done immediately afterwards. They did succeed in 1971 in driving out the Police from a large number of villages. But they didn't know what to do next. This is really some kind of nihilist political perspective which is more concerned with destroying what exists than constructing anything new. They cannot bring about the transformation of our society.

What is serious about this whole thing is that it is taking place in the context of a crisis in our society which is so deep and has gone so far in the direction of disintegration that hopelessness and fear which seem to be the principal feature in people's attitude in our society today, will tend to reinforce movements like the JVP and the LTTE. This will further bring about destruction and disintegration. In that context I think one can see that it is not accidental that Indian military force has projected itself into our situation, because a society that is in turmoil, with no prospect of solving their problems by themselves, must constitute a standing invitation to powers outside the country to intervene. More than any other power, India has special reasons for such intervention.





# The economic implications of the Accord

— H. N. S. Karunatilake —

*We publish this article by Dr. H. N. S. Karunatilake, a former Senior Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, as being representative of majority Sinhala responses to the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord and the general idea of the devolution of power to Provincial Councils. We however feel constrained to observe that it is not widely accepted that the constitution of Provincial Councils will in the short term achieve a solution of all outstanding economic problems. What is envisaged in our understanding, is the evolution of a new administrative framework within which the sharing of power on the part of the majority with the minorities can take place in practice. This does not mean that the process of sharing is either complete or even fully meets the needs of the minorities. What is hoped is that as the first substantial step in that direction, it will lead to further acts of sharing.*

*Dr. Karunatilake himself suggests that the financial powers of the Provincial Councils do not suffice to promote autonomous economic decision making. All that needs to be observed here is that proper economic decision-making demands almost as a pre-condition that appropriate politics are in command of the State.*

—Editorial Board.

A large volume of writings have appeared on the Peace Accord in the last two months. The mass media and the press have by some hidden hand been prevented from expressing different points of view on the Accord. Certain sections of the press have even gone to the extent of not giving publicity to lectures and seminars where the speakers have been against the Accord. There is obviously an element of belief in certain quarters that the public should not be made privy to all aspects of the Accord, and that they should only be briefed on the official point of view. Several articles strongly supporting the Accord have appeared in the newspapers but most of them deal with themes such as the importance of devolution of power, decentralisation of authority, the rights of the minority Tamil group to manage their own affairs and the need for a solution on these lines to overcome the ethnic crisis. Most of these articles have been academic and these same writers have maintained that the Accord was the only solution to the ethnic problem. However, forgetting the fact that the UNP government had allowed the

ethnic conflict since 1980 to progressively worsen like a malignant cancer. So far hardly any studies have been made on the economic implications of the Accord, both in the short and the long term.

## The Devolution of Power

Those who speak in terms of devolution and transferring power, the rights of the minority Tamils to manage their own affairs and to participate in government have not asked the question why the Tamils want to do so? Is it for its own sake or with economic objectives in view? It must not be forgotten that the ultimate aim of administration is to serve the people and to fulfil people's needs in the form of goods, services and facilities and to develop the physical environment. Administration is not an end in itself. It is only the means, and in the modern economic context, it is an important means because economic goods and services as well as social and cultural goods and services are made available to the people through the process of



good administration. A bad administration obviously fails to deliver the goods.

Already, at the district and village levels there are several parallel administrative organisations which have been entrusted with administrative functions. These include, the village councils, the town councils, the *pradeshiya mandalas*, *gramodaya mandalas*, the urban councils and the municipalities. All these are democratic and representative bodies because they are run by persons elected by universal franchise. The existing system of franchise enables even the minorities to gain adequate representation on these bodies, or even exercise majority rule, depending on the ethnic composition of each district. For instance, in the Jaffna peninsula and the Northern Province, where the Tamils are in a majority, all these local bodies have been almost exclusively represented by Tamils. It is even so in the Eastern province where the Tamils represent about 40 per cent of the population. The Tamils, therefore, have always had the means to improve their welfare if the local government institutions in these areas functioned effectively.

The argument is that the proposed Provincial Councils will enable the Tamils to pass legislation in specified fields, particularly in respect of economic development, social and cultural matters. But there is a big gulf between legislation and the effective implementation of economic programmes. It does not follow that by new legislation the Provincial Councils will have the means and the capacity to solve the economic and social problems of the Tamil people. The Central government will always have full control over the financial resources of all provinces of the Island, including those that come under Provincial Councils. Although regional economic planning is possible, its successful implementation depends of the availability of financial and other complementary resources. In addition there must be an effective and competent management and administration.

#### **A Question of Economic**

For general development and for industry, finance is always the key input. In addition, as far as the Northern and Eastern provinces are concerned, both are heavily dependent on power and water resources from the South of the Island or the wet zone. Thus for the implementation of economic programmes the Provincial Councils in the North and East are heavily dependent on the rest of the island for vital resources. No economic plan can be formulated without considering the availability of power and water. This is essential not only for industry, but more so for agriculture, because the North and the East have been traditionally dependent on agriculture and this would continue to be so for a long time to come.

If the sponsors of Provincial Council think that the power of legislation in the hands of the Tamils would help them to solve their problems, they are obviously very short sighted. The success of devolving power on the Tamil minorities, who would be expected to solve their own problems, depends essentially on the success of their economic programme. The economic problems of the people of Sri Lanka are common and there are no particular problems that are confined to particular ethnic groups. The high cost of living and unemployment are the main economic problems common to both the Sinhala and the Tamil people and other minorities. The establishment of the Provincial Councils and the Accord pre-supposes that the Tamils would now be expected to solve their own problems. By carving out a separate cultural and ethnic region, although it might fulfil the language and the cultural aspirations of the Tamil people, they cannot subsist and survive on language and culture for very long.

The promotion of Tamil culture and language alone would not satisfy the aspirations of the youth who are now seeking a good economic future and an even better and more congenial and stable economic environment. The question has to be asked whether the Tamil Provincial Councils can solve their problems from the outset? It has been quite obvious for a very long time, that the move for devolution and a separate state has been motivated not by economic considerations but to fulfil the whims, fancies and the personal egos and aspirations of a few Tamil politicians, most of whom first appeared as members of the Federal Party, the Tamil United Front and later on as the TULF. Many of these Tamils politicians had hopes of becoming Governor, Chief Minister and holding other high positions in the Provincial Council set up, even though they have not proved themselves that they had the requisite qualifications and economic and administrative skills.

#### **The Resource Base**

Devolution and an independent administration would work only in a decentralised administration where the resource base is quite large and self-reliant enough to meet the economic problems of the ethnic groups that live there. Has the Provincial Council administrative set up the capacity to bring down the cost of living in their respective areas? It is very clear that this could be achieved only through the intervention of the Central government and would have to be part and parcel of the national economic policy rather than that of particular regions. Equally, can the Provincial Councils in the North and the East provide more employment for the Tamil youth without depending on the other provinces?



Looking at the resources base in the North and East, even if the capacity was there to provide additional employment, these jobs will mainly be in agriculture and fishing. In both these sectors labour absorption has reached saturation levels and one must look elsewhere for new employment opportunities. Furthermore in both these sectors, jobs are seasonal. The educated youth of today would not be satisfied with seasonal employment and with the prospect of uncertain or fluctuating incomes. Moreover, the educated youth in the North and the South would not be happy with employment mainly in agriculture and fishing, they are looking for jobs which would provide better opportunities for them in industry and the services sectors.

On a rough estimate, it could be said that unemployment today is about 25 per cent of the labour force or 1.5 million. As a corresponding percentage of the Sri Lanka Tamil population, it would mean that about 200,000 Sri Lanka Tamil youths are looking for employment. Have the northern and eastern provinces the capacity to provide employment of this magnitude, especially for the educated youth who are not always willing to do manual work or engage in agriculture? Most of educated youth ultimately gravitate into Colombo and the metropolitan areas in search of employment. Professional jobs in law, medicine, accountancy and engineering are mainly found in the urban areas in the wet zone. The North and the East offer poor opportunities for professional employment, and even where such opportunities are available, due to lack of development of institutions, the earnings are poor. No Tamil lawyer, for instance who is practising in Colombo, and who enjoys a very high income, would want to practice permanently in Jaffna, Killinochchi, Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. The same is true of the other leading professions, unless they hold appointments as senior government specialists and consultants in these areas.

Even if the Northern and the Eastern councils draw up plans for development, which is one of the main concessions given in the Provincial Councils bill, they must ultimately obtain all the funds from the central government. There is no means by which they can obtain funds from foreign governments and other overseas private organisations. In regard to the allocation of the funds, the Central government will have its own problems. Provision has been made in the Provincial Council bill for a Finance Commission consisting of five persons whose main task is to "allocate from the Annual Budget adequate funds for the needs of the Provinces". The Commission is required to formulate principles for the allocating of funds with the "objective of achieving balanced regional development." For this purpose it has to take into account

the population of each province, the per capita income of each province and the need to reduce economic disparities among the several provinces.

### Financial Constraints

If these criteria are adopted, the amount of funds made available to the Northern and Eastern provinces would be small because they are sparsely populated, except the Jaffna Peninsula proper. In regard to the Jaffna Peninsula, as the per capita income there is much higher than in most other areas, it will have to be allocated less funds. Therefore, there is no rational economic basis on which financial allocations could be increased either to the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. In the latter provinces the prospects of obtaining more funds through regional taxation will be limited on account of the undeveloped nature of industry and the services sector. Taxing agricultural produce will raise their prices, making these products uncompetitive because the rest of the Island produces the same items.

Moreover, the Northern and Eastern Provinces will have to compete for funds with the more densely populated provinces such as the Western the Sabaragamuwa and the Southern Provinces and also those with even lower per capita incomes such as the Uva and North Central Provinces. The composition of the Financial Commission is important, if the Secretary to the Treasury happens to be a Tamil, with one other appointed member being Tamil and if the Governor is connected or partial towards the Tamils then there would be an in-built bias in the Commission.

Since the Northern and Eastern provinces combined contain about 2 million people, or about 13 per cent of Sri Lanka's population, they would therefore be entitled to only about 13 per cent of the total budgeted expenditure. With such limited funds, obviously, their capacity for rapid investment will be weak. With total budgeted expenditure say of Rs. 70 billion the Northern and the Eastern Provinces will get only Rs. 9 billion both on account of current and capital expenditure. It is however likely that some Tamil businessmen will set up a few industries in this area. But here again they will be confronted with a poor infrastructure with limited water and power supplies and very small internal markets. These industries and enterprises would also have to compete with their counterparts in the South. In the most recent annual report of a hotel company it was indicated that this company which had made a cumulative loss of over Rs. 45 million was considering establishing a hotel in the East coast where the tourist industry in the last 3 years had virtually disappeared. The reasons for



this interest is obvious because the hotel group is controlled by Tamil businessmen. They may have good intentions of promoting the development of the so-called Tamil homelands but with a loss of over Rs. 45 million how could this proposal be justified to the shareholders since this is a public company with a widely diffused share ownership?

### Peasant Colonisation

The wet zone has always been the most densely populated part of the Island and the bulk of the Sinhala population resides in this area. The Sri Lanka government from even as early as 1920's has taken steps to settle the excess population in the wet zone in the dry zone areas where land is available. It is with this intention that successive governments have taken steps to provide water for agriculture through extensive irrigation schemes. Settlement of people in the dry zone which includes the Northern and Eastern Provinces, has been a very important component of development policy. The demand for settlement and resettlement has throughout come from the Sinhala people on account of acute land hunger. The Tamils have not experienced such an acute land hunger because Tamil agriculturists are mostly in the Northern and Eastern provinces and they have adequate land, except perhaps in the Jaffna peninsula proper, where the land man ratio is not very favourable.

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### The bulk of the Tamils living outside the so-called homeland are more prosperous than those in the North and East.

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The pressure of population on land therefore can be relieved only through continuing with the policy of settling Sinhala people in the new Mahaweli lands which includes substantial areas of the Eastern province, particularly around Maduru Oya. It would be unfair the Tamil people to prevent the settlement of Sinhala people in the Northern and the Eastern part of the country on the grounds that they are their homelands. Today there are more than 500,000 Tamils living in South and elsewhere in the Island. Whatever the form of administration, the people of Sri Lanka must have the freedom to live in any part of the country because the land is owned by all its citizens and no part is reserved for a particular group.

The 13th amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Council Bill gives the power to the Provincial Councils to legislate on a wide variety of subjects which include, the alienation of land, rights over land use, land settlement irrigation planning and the power to promote establish and engage in agricultural industrial, commercial and trade enterprises. It is obvious that the policy of the Tamil dominated Provincial Councils would be to directly influence land settlement and the ownership of lands. From an economic standpoint this would be very disadvantageous because through legislation 12 per cent of the population could have land owning rights over 20,000 square kilometers of land, or about on third of the country. If the land area is allocated on an ethnic basis then the Tamil population would be entitled to only 12 per cent of the land area. Which means that their entitlement would be about 7000 square kilometers and this only means that they have a right to only about 2/3 of the Northern Province which has an extent of about 8900 square kilometers.

### The Tamil Homeland

If the case for a Tamil homeland is further pursued it has to be expected that, sooner or later, more than half a million Tamils who live outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces must eventually go back to their homelands. The bulk of the Tamils who live outside the so called homeland area are relatively more prosperous than their fellowmen who live in the North and East. They consist of the social and economic elite among the Tamils. The question arises whether they would be in a position to make a lucrative living in their homelands? Not only are the economic prospects dim but equally, the dry zone would be uncongenial living for most of them. They will not enjoy the social and cultural amenities that are available to them in the west coast. If the Tamils finally decide to move into the homelands, or to go overseas, then, there would be economic gains for rest of the population that live in the wet zone. More business opportunities will arise. There will be more land and housing available for the Sinhala people, and population pressure would be reduced. A large number of vacancies would be available in the professions and the unemployment problem of the Sinhala youth would, at least at the outset, be greatly reduced.

From an economic and social point of view the most disadvantage provisions of the peace accord are contained in the Annexure and the Exchange of Letters. The 13th Amendment to the constitution makes English and Tamil also official languages. Sri Lanka will have another first to its credit being one of the very few countries in the world with three official languages. This has far reaching economic implications for the



people who have been educated in Sinhala in the past thirty years and millions of school children who are now being educated in Sinhala and whose knowledge of English is very poor will be adversely affected. After Sinhala was made the official language in 1956 equal opportunities of work were available to all irrespective of social background and wealth and the rural backward youth had access to the highest jobs in the country. For the first time they had equal opportunities of bettering themselves economically.

### The Sinhala Only Policy

Up to 1956 higher education was exclusively in English and those who came from the rural areas with their secondary education in Sinhala which the British called Vernacular, had no opportunities of social and economic advancement. After Sinhala was made the official language for the first time, the poor rural people who had received an education in Sinhala had an opportunity of receiving an university education and proceeding further for post-graduate studies. This adversely affected the privileged English speaking, Sinhala minority and the English speaking Tamil minority. The latter groups who held the most important positions in the professions, the administration and politics were adversely affected with the Sinhala only policy. The Tamils were not willing to learn Sinhala and their children were educated in the Tamil medium when they could have easily given them an education in Sinhala. Had the Tamils learnt Sinhala they would have overcome their present problems, but perhaps, some hidden hand influenced the Tamil people not to do so. The Eelamists, the separatists and the Sinhalese who cannot speak their own language have made Sinhala only a major issue and have attributed the emergence of the ethnic crisis to this policy, forgetting the fact that the language spoken and understood by nearly 75 per cent of the population has throughout been Sinhala. The Sinhala speaking rural population have been denied opportunities of expressing their aspirations and expectations through the mass media. Hundreds of letters published by English speaking Sinhalese and Tamils in the press have attributed the ethnic crisis to the Sinhala only policy. Even today, there are no spokesmen for the poor rural Sinhala masses. It would appear that English has once again been introduced with a view to denying the rights of the majority of the people to have their education in their mother tongue.

The economic implications of this policy are most dangerous and far reaching. For employment, particularly in the private sector, the basic requirement once again would be a good knowledge of English. Although it could be expected that children who are born now, by the time that they have reached adulthood no doubt will acquire a good knowledge of English

the question remains as to the fate of more than 10 million youth who have been born and educated after 1950, that is in the last 35 years, in Sinhala and who have been working and studying in the secondary schools and universities in Sinhala? Today of the 16 million in the country about 12 million can only work in Sinhala. This decision in the Accord will now require this 12 million to learn English at this late stage in life and to work in English. Would it be fair, therefore, to expect them to acquire proficiency in the new official languages both English and Tamil. Employment opportunities hereafter would be largely available to the English speaking people.

### The Ascendancy of English

Private firms and establishments will now openly insist that all applicants should have a good knowledge of English. This is advantageous from the point of view of the management of commercial concerns. Private firms have, as a rule, never worked in Sinhala. Upto now, hardly a single Board or public company meeting has been held in Sinhala, they are all conducted in English. Even in the Cabinet most of the deliberations are in English, despite the fact that Sinhala has been the official language.

The case for reactivation of English has been on the grounds that educational standards have fallen. While this is tenable, the solution is not to make English once again an official language. English can be taught widely, so can any other foreign language be taught to students and others so that they may have a good, working knowledge which would enable them to read, speak and write in English. This can be done without giving English an official status. India with per 230 languages has only one official language, although Hindi is spoken only by about 30 per cent of the total population. The Tamil population of Tamil Nadu is only about 7 per cent of the total Indian population. But India has never considered it proper to put any one of other state languages on par with Hindi. Furthermore, although English is also very widely spoken in most parts of India and many courses in Indian universities are conducted in English, India has not thought it fit to make English an official language. The damage that this policy is going to cause to the Sinhala people is immeasurable. The fate of one whole generation is at stake, its benefits are obviously going to be to the Tamil and Muslim minorities who have given an education to their children largely in English. It will result in the economic advancement of the minorities at the expense of the Sinhala majority. The rural masses will be relegated once again to the backward economic status they held under British colonial rule where English meant everything. ☀



# The Accord and our Administrative framework

## Implications of the Indo-Lankan Accord

The Indo-Lanka Accord, even if it may not have been so perceived by its signatories, constituted objective recognition that (a) the people of Sri Lanka have failed to build a national State in the country despite the lapse of almost forty years; and (b) Sri Lankan society has failed to throw up a class force capable of leading the people towards the establishment of a unified, self-governing and self-reliant nation.

The State that was transferred to native hands in February 1946 was a bureaucratic state that the imperialists had fashioned for defending the property and privileges of the rulers and concentrating power in their hands against the mass of the people. Instead of seeking to change the bureaucratic State into a national State, successive governments stripped it of its democratic and secular features and reduced it to a sectional instrument of the racial and religious majority. In the communal holocaust of July 1983, the State repudiated its obligation to provide protection to the lives and belongings of the Tamil minority and generated an armed insurgency against it. For a period of four years from 1983, the writ of the State has failed to run in the Northern Province and militant groups, especially the LTTE, have improvised an administration, levied taxes, dispensed rough justice and imposed their will on the people. Today the Indian Peace Keeping Force is in occupation of the Province and busies itself with the task of reviving the administration and the economy. The Sri Lankan State, with its headquarters in Colombo, does not have any control over Jaffna and the rest of the Province, except indirectly through the high command of the IPKF.

The Indo-Lankan Accord addresses it self to the task of repairing the broken down Sri Lankan State, modifying its structure to suit new conditions in the country and restore its lost authority. Lacking in both adequate military force and administrative resources to execute this task, the Sri Lankan Government has been compelled to summon the assistance of the Indian armed forces to disarm the armed militants, especially the LTTE, pacify the Northern and Eastern Provinces and instal a functioning interim adminis-

tration. For its part, the Sri Lankan Government has completed the passing into law of two parliamentary bills to amend the Constitution and devolve certain powers on Provincial Councils in the nine Provinces of the country. Though there will be Chief Ministers and Ministers in these Provinces, the unitary character of the state will not be disturbed and the Executive President will retain far-reaching powers including those of dismissal of the provincial governments.

## Provincial Councils - A Key Instrument

The Provincial Councils are a key instrument in the reconstitution of the Sri Lankan State and the re-integration of all parts of the country and all sections of the people. The elections to these Provincial Councils must be held by the end of 1987 under the Accord. The disturbed conditions of many parts of the country currently may not permit keeping to this time schedule. The Government must be pressed to hold these elections as soon as possible in all Provinces. If they cannot be held simultaneously everywhere, they should be held as and when they can be held.

The importance of holding the Provincial Council elections without delay is that these Councils provide the institutional framework for co-operation of the different communities in the country with an immediate emphasis on the development of local economy and the expansion and better management of basic amenities and essential services. Talk in the air of communal harmony and reconciliation has little meaning without the concrete basis on which the communities can come together and find new identities capable of overcoming earlier conflicts and frictions. The holding of elections to Provincial Councils will demonstrate the irrationality of hatreds and fear that prevented proper appreciation of simple devices of decentralisation and devolution of powers that have found acceptance all over the world where democracy exists. Moreover, whether one approves or disapproves of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord will not be the issue that those elections will be called on to decide. It will be possible

for a political party to remain opposed to the Accord, but its participation in the Provincial Council elections will help to stabilise the main rearrangement of relationships between the communities of Sri Lanka that the Accord sought to introduce.

Since the Provincial Council elections are due to follow a Budget that displays an incredibly massive deficit, the closing of which is going to depend on borrowings both from banking and non-banking sources, inflation seems destined to have a disastrous impact on the masses. The necessity of measures to combat such a situation has to find a prominent place in the election platform. Already all income earners of below Rs. 3,000 per month are in difficulty about maintaining their families. All of them must be provided with family cards entitling them to purchase a weekly pack of basic food items at subsidised prices. The present value of food stamps per individual should be increased to Rs. 1,000 per month. A two-year compulsory national service scheme should be introduced for all male youth between the years of 18 and 20, while introducing income support for those who are unemployed. A national minimum wage not less than a Rs. 1,000 per month should be granted while all present wages and salaries are increased by 50 percent for both the public and private sectors.

At the same time the forces of the Left must be called upon to address themselves to the task of rescuing the country from the disastrous communalist policies of bourgeois, upper middle-class and lower middle-class parties and organisations, Sinhala and Tamil. It is also necessary to wean the youth in the North and South away from the politics of terrorism to class politics and the course of progressive mass struggle.

The LSSP must make an all-out effort to bring all progressive forces together to fight the Provincial Council elections throughout the country. A necessary first step in this direction is the restoration of the alliance of the LSSP, CP and SLMP. It will be the immediate task of the alliance to set about building a broad front of Left, liberal and generally progressive elements free of communalism, in all provinces who will seek to present an alternative consolidation to the party in power.

*Resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party on 22.11.87. (Excerpts)*



# Budget Claims Exploded

— D. E. W. Gunasekera

Some of the main myths that the government sought to spread regarding its Budget for 1988 were debunked by Kalawana M. P. D. E. W. Gunasekera of the Communist Party in Parliament.

He pointed out that the main reason for the financial crisis in which the government now finds itself after over a decade in office, is not its expenditure on the ethnic civil war.

This, he pointed out, had only aggravated and made still worse a crisis which stemmed directly from the so-called 'open economy' of the government, dictated by the World Bank.

## Private Sector Performance

The government's assumption that economic development should continue to be left to the private sector, which should be freed from all tax and other restraints and given generous incentives, had proved self-defeating.

Giving facts and figures, D. E. W. Gunasekera showed that never had the private sector been given such vast reliefs and encouragement as under the present government in its decade in office.

Since 1977, it had been given sweeping concessions by the removal of controls and by way of tax relief, tax holidays, and the abolition of Capital Gains Tax, Estate Duty, Gifts Tax and various other taxes.

The private sector has made big profits and much money. But where had this many gone? he asked.

Quoting from the reports of the Central Bank and other government institutions D. E. W. Gunasekera showed that one place where these big profits had NOT gone was into capital formation.

He showed that, in the past ten years, capital formation was not merely meagre in general, but had followed a downward trend as far as the private sector is concerned.

This had taken place under a government that gave pride of place to the private sector in the hope of enlisting their contribution to economic development.

He showed that capital formation in the private sector that had been 52 per cent in 1977 "had tumbled down to about 41 per cent in 1986" despite all the government's concessions.

The vast increase in profits was not reflected in either investments or in bank deposits. Even those reflected in the tax-dodging "certificates of deposit" was marginal — a total sum of between Rs. 1 and 2 billion.

Most of these vast profits had gone into smuggling operations through over-invoicing, into export abroad into secret accounts, into the "black money market" or into consumerism.

As a result of big concessions given to the private sector, the Minister of Finance had, more and more, to seek the money he needs from foreign borrowing or from direct and indirect taxes on the people and public sector enterprises.

Quoting Central Bank figures for 1986, D. E. W. Gunasekera showed that the government had got only 25 per cent of its revenue from taxes on the private sector, while 75 per cent came from taxes on public sector enterprises and from indirect taxes of the people such as BTT Sales Tax and import duties.

## Promises of Jobs

The second claim made by the Minister of Finance that was debunked was his claim that the government policies in the budget would provide 500,000 new jobs in the next 3 year.

He pointed out that 175,000 people enter the labour market each year. This alone would amount to finding 525,000 new jobs in this period.

But the government itself has admitted that 12 percent of the existing work force is unemployed. This 12 per cent total unemployment was calculated at a period when the economic growth rate was around 6.2 per cent.

But the Minister of Finance had conceded that the growth rate had slumped to 3 per cent this year and would continue to decline for a period. Unemployment may reach 20 per cent of the workforce in this period. So how did the Minister hope to keep his promise?

On top of this, the Minister had endorsed the observation of the Wanasinghe Report that there is excess cadre in the public sector and that various methods must be sought to get rid of this "excess". Many more existing jobs were being reduced through the processes of privatisation, which will continue unabated.

The government's actual performance in giving jobs in the public sector was negligible.

With a notable and growing lack of capital formation in the private sector, it would be foolish to imagine that this sector could supply many jobs. All that the government could really hope for was an extremely problematical increase in self-employment.

## Wage Hike

The third bluff in the budget was that it had granted an unprecedented wage hike, especially for the middle and lower rungs of the service.

But if one takes into account the various increases in the cost of living allowance that the government had granted in dribbles since 1980, which total Rs. 480 a month and which is part of the take-home pay that employees now get, the increase of the allowance to Rs. 504 a month by January 1988 is only a nominal one and, in any case, less than should be granted if workers are to be fully compensated for the cost of living, even according to the Government's own defective index.

(Courtesy: Forward)





# Winds of Change in the Soviet Union

*What follows is an interview with Mr. Reggie Siriwardane on the subject of the current trends towards political and economic reform within the USSR. Mr. Siriwardane is the editor of publications for the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) Colombo. He has been involved in research into the events and trends now under discussion.*

Q. Mr. Siriwardane, how would you interpret the new reforms in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev?

A. I would like to place these events in the context of Soviet history, particularly since we are celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Revolution this year. Now if we look back on these seventy years, you'll find that Stalin's death in 1953 occurred almost at the mid-point of these seventy years. So I think that in these first thirty six years after the revolution, there was a progressive trend towards concentration of power in the hands of the State, the ruling Party and then *within* the ruling party, first in a small group, and finally under Stalin, in the hands of a single man. I don't believe, unlike some anti-Stalinists, that this tendency

began under Stalin. Stalin only consolidated it. The evidence of this trend was already there in Lenin's lifetime, particularly in the banning of opposition parties and at the latter stages of Lenin's lifetime, the banning of organised factions within the Bolshevik Party. No doubt those were made necessary by the conditions of the Civil War and all that. But nevertheless, that created a trend which Stalin extended.

The thirty four years since Stalin's death have shown an attempt on the part of successive groups within the Soviet Union to modify this trend in various ways. The principal effort in this direction before Gorbachev being made by Khrushchev, I want to say here, that if we try to understand Stalin's regime we can adduce many factors which gave rise to this dictatorship.

One can refer to the Byzantine tradition of Russian Society, to its economic backwardness, to the over-centralised character of Lenin's own State and Party. All these can be regarded as contributory factors. But I think the main determinant was the necessity the Soviet Union had of accelerating industrial and economic development in an extremely backward country. In short, the whole process of primitive socialist accumulation of capital. Given these iron necessities which exerted themselves on the Soviet regime and Soviet society at that time, I think there were precious few options left and although the price paid in human lives and liberties was immense, perhaps there was no viable historical alternative at that stage.



But though economic necessities generate political and ideological structures, it isn't true that once the economic base has changed, the political and ideological structures will automatically cease to exist. In other words, although bureaucracy and dictatorship were a product of Russian economic backwardness in the 1920s, even after the Soviet Union had become one of the world's leading industrial powers, still the ideological and political structures built up during that period exerted a certain inertia. And of course the bureaucracy itself had a vested interest in perpetuating that. Even in the 1950s and 60s when Khrushchev attempted to overhaul the structures and bring in a certain amount of liberalisation and soften the legacy of Stalinism, he found that the bureaucracy successfully fought back and there was another period of retrogression, which now Gorbachev is attempting to reverse.

### The Hungarian Revolt

Q. If Khrushchev was so much in favour of de-Stalinisation, why did he crush the Hungarian reform movement of 1956?

A. This was one of the contradictions that Khrushchev faced. He wanted to dismantle the structures of Stalinism. On the other hand he inherited the relations between the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc as they had been established during Stalin's time — which was one of Soviet hegemony. Though he wanted to loosen up within the Soviet Union itself, the consequences of that liberalisation were that they released in Europe forces which wanted to go much further than Khrushchev at that stage was prepared to go. And so he was caught in this dilemma that on the one hand he wanted a

certain degree of liberalisation; on the other hand he did not want to loosen the hegemony which the Soviet Union exercised vis-a-vis the Eastern Europeans. And after Khrushchev this was repeated in Czechoslovakia in 1968. To some extent, Gorbachev faces some of the same problems in Eastern Europe. And you will see that the East European regimes are not willing to go as far as Gorbachev is willing to go. Thus today you find this contradiction that the people of Eastern Europe who have always complained of Soviet dominance over their countries, would now wish that Gorbachev imposes "Glasnost" (openness) on their Governments.

### Representative Government

Q. In *structural* terms, has there been any attempt to resuscitate the old 1917 style of representative bodies of workers and peasants etc.?

A. Yes, I would say that Gorbachev is attempting at present to modify the monolithic, authoritarian structure tightly controlled from above by the Party leadership. And he tried to make a whole range of appointments within the Party and the economy elective. It is evident that the ruling group within the Party did not want to go so far immediately. And he met with quite a lot of opposition from that quarter. So what is happening now is that a select range of officers are being made elective, so to that extent his original proposal has been modified. We cannot forget the fact that there

is a certain amount of resistance from the old guard within the ruling faction. What has happened however is that certain groups have mobilised from below not merely to support Gorbachev's "Glasnost" policy but to try to carry it further.

An interesting development took place in Moscow in September this year when about fifty popular organisations, (they were partly ecological groups, cultural groups and local community groups) held a delegates conference with about six hundred delegates. It was a non-governmental affair. But interestingly enough, the hall for the conference was provided by the Moscow branch of the Communist Party. So though it was not a government venture, it had to some extent the blessings of the Government, and the event was reported in the Soviet press. The people who took this initiative came from what I might call the *centre* group of dissidents in Soviet society. You have on the one hand the right wing groups who generally are opposed to the whole Soviet system. And many of them look for support from the West. At the other extreme you find the *left* dissidents who would like to change the system by revolutionary action from below. This is a relatively small group. In the middle, you find groups which generally support the Soviet system but want to see it modernised, democratised and want to support those sections of the Party led by Gorbachev who are moving in that direction and counter opposition from the more con-



servative bureaucracy. At this conference I referred to, the speakers said that they accept the leading role of the Communist Party, they strongly support the policy of Glasnost, but consider that in order to make that policy succeed, the democratic groups should mobilise from below to counter opposition from the die-hard sections of the bureaucracy. And they passed two resolutions at the end of the conference. One was demanding a monument to honour Stalin's victims, and the other that democratic organisations outside the Party be given the right to put up independent candidates to any election even against Party candidates. So that shows that there is a section of Soviet society, intellectuals particularly, who are in support of the reforms but want the pace accelerated.

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**“A movement away from the statification of the economy and also in the direction of political liberalisation.”**

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#### Parallels with China

Q. Would you see any similarity between the changes taking place in China and the Soviet Union?

A. I want to make a qualification when you say that there are resemblances between the developments in China and the developments in the Soviet Union. There are resemblances in certain fields. But these are mainly in the *economic* sphere. Because the liberalisation that took place

in China was largely an economic liberalisation. An element of free enterprise was introduced and concessions made to small enterprises and small farms and so on. That means that there has been a movement away from the statification of the economy. This is of course precisely what is happening in the Soviet Union also in the economic sphere. In fact one of Gorbachev's spokesman on economic policy has said they expect that by the 1990s, only thirty percent of the economy will be run directly by the State. This is not to say that the entire rest will be *private*. But much greater autonomy will be given to the individual enterprises and other institutions like co-operatives will be utilised to a greater extent. There will be a moving away from direct centralised control.

This is a lesson that all of us, and particularly we in the Third World, should study. Because socialists in the Third World and particularly in Sri Lanka do tend to equate socialism with statification. But I think the whole experience of the Soviet Union as well as China has shown that statification and direct centralised control are *inefficient*. And that is the reason why the Soviet Union is moving away from it. Because it was over-bureaucratised and there were few incentives for individual effort. And also it tends to threaten democratic life because when everything is centralised in the State, you have tremendous concentration of economic and political power in the State, which stifles free discussion and free organisation etc. That's why the Soviet Union has moved away from it.

But I want to say that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev is going much further in the direction of political liberalisation than China ever did. Because

earlier under Mao and now under Deng, the economic liberalisation has not been accompanied in any appreciable extent by *political* liberalisation. The only major move that Mao made in that direction was the hundred flowers policy. But when the liberal intellectuals came out in response to the hundred flowers thesis, they were crushed. Now very recently Deng has cracked down very strongly on the students who demanded freedom of expression and democratic rights. I don't think there's any comparison between that and what is taking place in the Soviet Union today. Because if you look at the Soviet press today, the amount of free discussion and criticism that exists is simply unprecedented and breathtakingly unexpected, when compared with the situation that existed two or three years ago. And this is not merely toeing the line and supporting Gorbachev and criticising the die-hards. There's criticism even of the new policy.

A case in point is an article which appeared in *Moscow News* which was a dialogue between a writer and a journalist. The writer talks about how easy it is to promote openness from above—people just toe the line because it is *now* the orthodox position! And then he talks about how just as under Stalin's time, the names of old Bolsheviks who took a prominent role in the revolution were suppressed, so in Khrushchev's time Stalin's name itself was never mentioned! And then he says that today when you see the news reel, showing Yuri Gagarin's first space flight, you find that he is shaking hands with somebody who is off screen who has been cut out and that's Khrushchev!. So the writer goes on to say that we are still keeping to the policy of suppressing the past, and not facing up honestly to the whole of our



history. Of course, Gorbachev himself has come out against these practices. In a speech made last year, he said that we cannot afford to have blank spaces in our history, and there has been promised a new Party history for the 70th Anniversary of the Revolution. It will be interesting to see how figures whom Stalin purged will be treated in this new history.

### The Cultural Sphere

Q. Would you see any parallels between what already exists in Yugoslavia and the new reforms in China and the Soviet Union?

A. Actually, Yugoslavia has gone very far in the direction of *economic* liberalisation. But Yugoslavia is to my mind not all that *politically* free. With the kind of reforms taking place in the Soviet Union, I am sure that it will very soon outstrip Yugoslavia in that respect. Particularly in the intellectual, cultural and artistic spheres, there is, really an unprecedented degree of freedom, so many of the suppressed works of the past are coming out.

For instance, there's this great sequence of poems written by Anna Akhmatova who is perhaps the greatest woman poet of modern Russia. She wrote between 1935 and 1940 a poem called "Requiem" which was written when her son was in prison during Stalin's purges. And for fifty years this work has been available only in *Samizdat* — underground publication. But this year it was published in Moscow in full. Then so many works which were written in recent years and turned down by Soviet Publishing houses are coming out. There's a novel, appearing in instalments in a journal

called *Children of Arbat* by a well known Soviet novelist called Rybakov. He served a period in the forced labour camps in Stalin's time. And the story is based on his own experiences. Its called the *Children of Arbat* because Arbat is a street in Moscow. When he comes back at the end of the war, having been released from the forced labour camp, he finds that the children whom he played with and grew up with in the street are all dead. Some died in the war, the others died in the forced labour camps. So that the whole truth is being uncovered.

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### The amount of free discussion and criticism today if simply unprecedented.

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And there's a very remarkable film called "*Repentance*" which is again based on the experience of the purges, and a lot of it centres around the suffering of women whose husbands had been killed in the purges. Even some of the artistes who had emigrated because they did not enjoy artistic freedom are being invited back. And some of them have already gone back. There's this man Lyubimov who was the leader of the *avant garde* movement in the Soviet Theatre, but he was attacked as being "formalist", and condemned. He emigrated and was working in Paris. But he was invited back and he's now in the Soviet Union again. The outstanding Soviet director called Andrei Tarkovsky also emigrated to Western Europe. He was invited back, but before he could return he fell ill and died. But at this year's Moscow film festival they held a retrospective of all his films and he

was acclaimed as one of the great Soviet directors.

Q. Have there been any moves to "rehabilitate" Solzhenitsyn?

A. Not as far as I know. Because Solzhenitsyn belongs to that group of dissidents who totally rejected Soviet society, and in fact his opinions are extremely right-wing and they are not acceptable even to Western liberal opinion. When the Western liberals regarded him as a martyr to freedom and so on, they thought he was a Western style liberal democrat. But they were in for quite a shock. Solzhenitsyn wants *theocracy* in the Soviet Union and he's not at all in favour of democracy. This section of dissidents — there are people like that even within the Soviet Union — are not likely to be converted. But people like Sakharov who is a liberal, have recognised that the "Gorbachev" reforms are the best means at the moment of carrying Soviet society forward. And there's another woman intellectual called Chukovskaya a great friend of Anna Akhmatova, and a writer herself who also subscribes to the same position as Sakharov and she is also now supportive of the reforms.

### The "Pro Moscow" Communist Parties

Q. How would Gorbachev's reforms affect relationships between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the other "pro Moscow" Communist Parties in the world? Would it result in the relaxing of the control exercised by the CPSU over the other CPs?

A. I should think that the corollary of liberalisation in the Soviet Union would also be greater freedom and independence for



the entire Communist movement. To some extent of course this has already happened even before Gorbachev. The total monolithic control by Moscow had ceased to exist by the time of the Czechoslovak intervention. Many of the Western Communist Parties criticised the intervention. And then the rise of Euro-communism - whatever one thinks of their theories — showed a capacity on the part of the European Communist Parties to take a different position to that of the Soviet Union. I think that this tendency will grow. **However if I may say so, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka has shown little awareness or responsiveness to these trends. In fact, it has remained unaffected and unruffled by the enormous changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union since Stalin's death.**

#### Prospects for the Future


Q. Do you think Gorbachev's reforms will succeed? Or would it end in Gorbachev being ousted after some time by the entrenched conservative faction like what happened to Khrushchev?

A. To begin with, we will have to note the contrasts in direction and momentum between Khrushchev's reforms and those of Gorbachev's reforms. Although Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation policy and his denunciation of Stalin were a dramatic event at that time, still, that de-Stalinisation was very limited in many ways. Now let us remember to begin with that the famous Twentieth Congress speech (in 1956) was a closed door speech. It was never publicised except to insiders. And the Soviet people were kept in the dark regarding the Twentieth Congress speech. That meant that Khrushchev was very wary. He didn't want to go too far or too fast.

Secondly, if you examine the contents of that speech, you find in his critique of Stalin's purges and repression, he refers mainly to the victims who belonged to the Stalinist faction itself. Having crushed the Trotskyists, Zinovievists and Bukharinists, Stalin then in the consolidation of personal political power, wiped out sections of his own faction in his latter period. The names that Khrushchev takes as that of innocent Communists who were victimised by Stalin are mainly of these individuals. That is because he was appealing still to the ruling faction within the Party. He did not want to go beyond that.

Then, he was faced with the fundamental problem that he and most of the others in the ruling group had themselves participated in Stalin's purges. Issac Deutscher quotes what he says is a conversation which went on in the Central Committee in 1957 when Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov were expelled: Since Issac Deutscher is a responsible historian who had sources of information within the Soviet Union, I believe we can count on the authenticity of this—"He (Khrushchev) pointed to Molotov and Kaganovich and said, Your hands are stained with the blood of our party leaders and of innumerable innocent Bolsheviks! 'So are yours!' Molotov and Kaganovich shouted back at him. 'Yes, so are mine!' replied Khrushchev, 'I admit that. But during the great purges I only carried out your orders. I was then not a member of the Politbureau and was not responsible for its decisions'. You see, the whole ruling group had themselves been involved in these crimes. So it was a very delicate task for them to uncover the past because they would be branding themselves also.

The thorough going de-Stalinisation process had to wait for another generation of rulers who were not culpable in that sense. Gorbachev was still a child when the great purges took place. And also we have to take into account the enormous changes that have taken place in Soviet Society since Stalin's death. A whole new educated generation of youth have grown up who really demand change. This I think is Gorbachev's strength. Whereas Khrushchev tried to impose reforms from above, and that also as I said, warily, cautiously and half-heartedly because he had his problems, Gorbachev is really responding to a demand which exists from below. Also from the comments I have read from journalists who have studied the situation, they say he's a much more skilful promoter of these reforms than Khrushchev was because while as I said Khrushchev tried to impose it from above, Gorbachev has gone out to build a base of mass support.

He has certainly got the support of large sections of the intelligentsia and also obviously sections of the broader masses are responding to these changes. From that point of view, his reforms are likely to be more secure than Khrushchev's. However, even if the worst should happen and by some inner party coup at the top he were deposed or his reforms halted, even then I think that would only be a temporary set-back. Because I think that the general direction of these changes are determined by the fundamental needs of Soviet Society. In short Soviet society today cannot progress without democratisation. And that direction is bound to reassert itself even if there is a temporary set-back. 



# Human Rights

## Police stops Human Rights meeting

### CWF Demands full Investigation

On November 25th afternoon Sub-Inspector Peiris of the Wattala Police together with a posse of police officers from the same police station entered the Wattala Urban Council Hall and stopped a public seminar on Human Rights that was in progress.

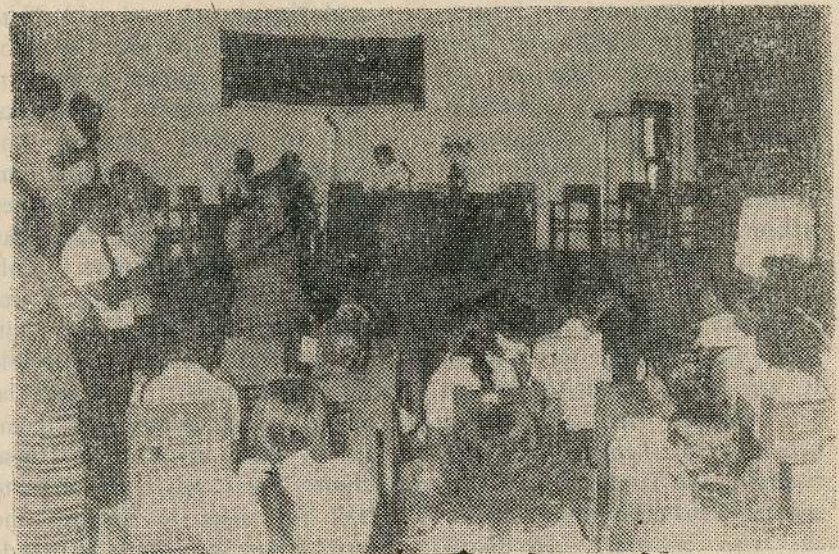
This Seminar organized by the Wattala Branch of the Christian Workers Fellowship which was to also cover decided Supreme Court cases on Human Rights had been widely advertised in the Wattala-Kandana area especially, through posters, handbills, banners and cinema advertisements. Personal invitations had also been sent by the organizers and newspapers such as *Divaina*, *Gnanarthaprdoeepaya* and *The Catholic Messenger* had carried news items about the Seminar.

The authorities of the Wattala-Mabole Urban Council who had granted the organizers permission to use the Hall for the meeting months earlier, sought to object to the holding of the Seminar a short time before proceedings were to commence. Their objection to the holding of the Seminar was that the application made for the use of the Hall had stated that it was for an "adult education seminar on Human Rights" while the advertisements announced it as "A Seminar on Human Rights cases decided by the Supreme Court". The request made by the meeting organizers that the Chairman of the Council, Mr. Reginald Perera, give his objections in writing was turned down by him. The organizers thereupon informed him that,

they were in the circumstances proceeding with the Seminar.

The Seminar commenced in the Urban Council Hall at about 4.30 p.m. after the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by the Revd. Bro. Edwin Ambrose (who chaired the Seminar) and some others present. The Chairman Bro. Ambrose then spoke briefly on the theme of the Seminar. He remarked that the education of the public on their constitutional rights and the imparting of knowledge about important Supreme Court decisions on human rights had become a very necessary task today. The Chairman introduced as the first speaker at the Seminar Attorney-at-Law Basil Fernando who was a well known lawyer in the Wattala area as well as Secretary of the CWF Wattala Branch. As Basil Fernando began speaking, Sub-Inspector Peiris

of the Wattala Police entered the Hall and interrupted the proceedings. He ordered the suspension of the meeting until he spoke to the Seminar organizers outside the Hall. At this discussion with the organizers outside on the Hall corridor, Sub-Inspector Peiris wanted the organizers to stop the Seminar. When the organisers explained to him that there was simply no reason for them to stop a lawful meeting that was proceeding peacefully, Sub-Inspector Peiris had at first wanted to consult his superiors the Police Superintendent, but later decided to stop the meeting himself. He then entered the Hall and announced to those who were present that he was stopping the meeting and that those assembled in the Hall should immediately disperse. People who were still coming in to participate in the Seminar were stopped and at least 500 to 600 persons turned away after the Seminar had to be abandoned. The speakers invited to the Seminar included Attorneys-at-Law Siri Nanayakkara, Neil Wijeratne, Basil Fernando and Vijaya Vidyasagara.



"I am stopping this meeting now!"



The Chairman and organisers of the Seminar along with some of the speakers later made statements recorded by the Police. The Christian Workers Fellowship lodged a strong protest the next day with the Inspector General of Police stating that "the Fellowship viewed the high-handed action of the Wattala Police as a serious infringement of the Fundamental Rights of lawful assembly and freedom of speech". The CWF requested a full investigation into this matter. Protests have also been made to the Superintendent of Police, Kelaniya and the Officer-in-Charge of the Wattala Police. A number of organizations in the area have also made their protests to the authorities. Legal action in this regard is also contemplated.

## 'Christian Worker' article in Fundamental Rights Case

The Supreme Court yesterday granted the Assistant Manager of a Press at Dehiwela Mr. S. G. Chandradasa, leave to proceed with a Fundamental rights application by which he challenges his arrest and detention by Kohuwala Police.

The petitioner states that he was arrested by Kohuwala police on 25th October 1987, without a valid warrant being shown to him and thereafter kept in custody at the Kohuwala Police station for ten days.

The police he alleges confiscated an article lying at the Press on the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord, which was an English article found in the 'Christian Worker' meant to be translated into Sinhalese, for publication in the *Sanvada* Magazine.

The bench comprised the Chief Justice S. Sharvananda, and Justices Parinda Ranasinghe and H. D. Thambiah.

—*The Island* of 04.12.87 (Excerpt)

## Supreme Court issues notice in Fundamental Rights Cases

A Bench of the Supreme Court consisting of Chief Justice S. Sharvananda and Justices R. S. Wanasundera and O. S. M. Seneviratne ordered issue of Notice on the Respondents in three Fundamental Rights applications on 23rd November. These applications were supported by Attorney-at-Law Siri Nanayakkara with Basil Fernando.

The petitioner in one case is S. W. R. D. Wijewardene who has complained that he has been detained under the Emergency Regulations without any reason to suspect that he had violated any regulation. He has also complained that he was not informed of the reason for his arrest at the time he was taken by the police, that he has been treated unequally before the law and that he was assaulted in violation of his rights guaranteed under Articles 11, 12(1), 13(1) and 13(2) of the Constitution. The Supreme Court ordered Notice on Mr. T. R. Zain, the Office-in-Charge of the Pamunugama Police Station, Mr. P. B. Ekanayake a

Deputy Inspector General of Police and the Attorney General.

In the two other applications supported before the Supreme Court Attorney-at-Law Channa Anthony Goonewardene was the petitioner on behalf of two persons who were unable to sign any affidavits since they were detained at the Ganemulla Police Station. These two persons — A. S. Ratnayake and K. Ananda Randunu have complained that they were arrested on 4th October 1987 and kept for a period of over 30 days blindfolded and handcuffed at the Police Station. They have also complained that they were often assaulted, hung on to a beam of the roof

and questioned about persons of whom they knew nothing. The petition further states that the relatives of the detainees were not allowed to meet them or give them food and that there was no reason to keep them in detention under the Emergency Regulations and/or Prevention of Terrorism Act as they have committed no offences coming under that law. The respondents in these two cases are Messrs C. N. Whatmore, the Office-in-Charge of the Ganemulla Police Station, P. C. Bandara and P. C. Nimal of the same Police Station and the Attorney General.

The Court ordered that the three cases be taken up together for hearing.

The Christian Workers Fellowship Legal Aid Team initially assist in these cases.





# Crackdown on Dissidents in Malaysia

The Malaysian Government headed by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed arrested 94 people under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in a prolonged sweep from October 27 till November 7 this year. The persons arrested include the President of Aliran Dr. Chandra Muzaffer, politicians, members of social action groups, civil rights and religious bodies, human rights lawyers, trade unionists, academics and even rubber-tappers and night-market hawkers. The authorities said that some of the detainees had "acted in concert" to "destabilise" the country" but no specific charges have been made against any individual. The arrests were said to be made in order to "defuse a dangerous escalation in racial tension".

Those held include parliamentary opposition leader Mr. Lim Kit Siang, Mr. Karpal Singh and M.Ps from the Democratic Action Party (DAP), 3 members of Prime Minister Mahathir's own United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and 6 senior members of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), UMNO's partner in the ruling National Front Coalitioh.

## Common Thread in Arrests

The only common thread is that all these people appear to have periodically opposed government policies or offended the leadership of UMNO. The feeling is that the Special Branch (secret police) is using the situation as an excuse to rope in everybody they have been keeping tabs on for the past 2 years. More arrests have since been made and the number detained is expected to reach 150. Under

Section 73 of the ISA anyone who is deemed by the authorities to act or be likely to act "in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia" may be arrested without a warrant and be held for 60 days without either being charged or having to appear before a Court and may thereafter be given detention orders up to 2 years at a time. The orders may be renewed indefinitely. The present arrests are the second largest since the Act was enforced in 1960.

## Newspapers Banned

Three newspapers have also been banned — the English daily *Star*, the Chinese language daily *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and the Malay language biweekly *Watan*. No official reason was given but Mahathir in his statement in Parliament said the newspapers had become increasingly brave in reporting stories dealing in racial sensitiveness.

## What "Sparked Off" the Arrests

Malays form just over half of Malaysia's 18 million people, ethnic Chinese one-third and ethnic Indians and others the rest. The Chinese community and the UMNO - dominated government have been at odds over an Education Ministry's plan to give teachers who cannot speak Mandarin, administrative positions in Chinese schools. Large rallies have been held over this dispute, including a Chinese boycott of primary schools in some states.

UMNO had earlier planned a mammoth rally in Kuala Lumpur to celebrate its 41st anniversary

on November 1st. It was to be a show of Malay unity and a direct condemnation of the Chinese boycott of schools. However there was a strong challenge to Mahathir within UMNO itself which was said to result in UMNO members from 3 states preparing to come to the rally with anti-Mahathir banners. Arms were rumoured to have been smuggled into the city and trouble between the two UMNO factions which would have marred the PM's image and position was imminent. The wide-spread arrests of people made, therefore enabled Prime Minister Mahathir to cancel the UMNO rally without having to appear weak.

Mahathir who is also Home Affairs Minister and Minister of Justice, on October 28 banned all rallies, gatherings and public meetings, saying that "the Government should not wait until a riot has broken out before taking appropriate action. Measures to prevent riots must be taken immediately to save the country from possible danger and calamity". The P.M. also rekindled memories of racial riots in 1969 in which hundreds died, saying the Government's liberalism had been abused by its opponents who had raised racial tensions to a dangerous level.

It is a fact however that after more than 6 years in office, Mahathir's avowed goals of "clean, honest and efficient government" and a more dynamic prosperous and economically independent country have all but disappeared. The economic situation has deteriorated and the fragile but symbolically crucial facade of multi-racialism in the Government too has been cracked. It is said that the trouble makers were members of the Government who allowed the trouble to develop to save their own skins. In fact political observers suspect a more sinister motive of fostering disorder



to the point when the Government might justifiably declare a State of Emergency when the judiciary could be dispensed with and Government's critics sharply dealt with to help the Mahathir faction within UMNO to assert its control of the party, since the P.M. now has only the support of a slim majority within it. The likely reasons for the present detentions therefore are to undermine opposition to Mahathir within his own party and to cripple all form of dissent by non-governmental organizations and individuals to his government.

### Protests

Malaysia's revered first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman has condemned the arrests made saying that the country's parliamentary system could be threatened and that the country is heading towards a dictatorship. Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez has urged the government to release all detainees immediately or have them brought to open Court. In a statement on October 30, the Bishop stated: "the ISA (is) against basic human rights, especially the right to open trial. We are perturbed that the elected representatives of socially concerned organizations have been detained without such fair and public hearing.. Br. Anthony Rogers who has been working for many years with us in the field of human development is such a person". Eleven organizations have formed a support group for the detainees called ISA Detainees Support Group and embarked on a nation-wide campaign to free the detainees and called for a repeal of the ISA. The Police have in the meantime begun intimidating families of detainees who have been meeting together since the arrests to stop such gatherings. Some of the detainees have filed writs of habeas corpus challenging the legality of their detention.

# Justice in Singapore

In our last issue we dealt with the Singapore crackdown on prominent social activists, church workers and people drawn from the fields of law, drama and journalism as part of the 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.

The latest measure against dissidents is the action taken to have the name of J. B. Jeyaratnam struck off from the roll of Advocates and Solicitors. Ben Jeyaratnam, a well-known Advocate, is also the Secretary General of the Workers Party in Singapore, the only open political opposition to the ruling Government Party. Until more recently, Ben Jeyaratnam was also a Member of Parliament and a vocal one-man Opposition there to the Government. A case was filed against him thereafter involving a charge of misusing Workers Party funds. It was alleged that a certain donation made by cheque to the Workers Party was not credited to the funds of that party but used instead to directly pay the costs awarded against the petitioner in an election petition case in the Courts. Ben Jeyaratnam was acquitted of the charge brought against him in Court but the Prosecution appealed and the Chief Justice after the hearing of that Appeal was reported to have under the Singapore law substituted a sentence of conviction in place of the original acquittal by the Lower Court. Ben Jeyaratnam was on this "criminal" conviction

deprived of his position as a Member of Parliament. Now it has been reported that the same Chief Justice has recently also struck Ben Jeyaratnam's name from the roll of Advocates, as a result of this conviction on the Appeal. Jeyaratnam is therefore not only deprived of his rights as a Member of Parliament but also prevented now from exercising his profession as a lawyer. Significantly, Jeyaratnam was also Counsel for some of the detainees in the recent Singapore crackdown on dissidents. He was not even given time by the Court to wind up his affairs professionally, thus causing grave inconvenience to the litigants who were his clients. So much for the Singapore variety of democracy and justice!

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## Singapore

Man must imitate  
The pig  
Is now the motto  
Of this city  
Clean like  
A well shaven dead pig.

State tastes news  
Before passing on  
The intelligence control  
All thought  
To keep a proper mixture  
Those refusing pig food  
Are exiled or jailed.

— Basil Fernando —



# Michael Rodrigo

## Priest and Martyr

In the late evening of November 10, Fr. Michael Rodrigo was felled by the bullet of a killer towards the end of the Mass he had just celebrated with his little community at Buttala. This murder while celebrating the Eucharist was to many of his friends reminiscent of the killing of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador and in any case behind both killings were unmistakably the forces of right-wing reaction.

Mike Rodrigo born on 30 June 1927, was first a professor at the National Seminary of the Roman Catholic Church at Ampitiya from 1955 to 1971. He later served at the Centre for Society and Religion and became in 1972 the director of Sevaka Sevana in Bandarawela, which was the Badulla Diocesan Seminary set up by Bishop Leo Nanayakkara of blessed memory and closed by Church authorities soon after the Bishop's death. Since July 1980, Fr. Mike was released by the same Bishop to live at Buttala in a community comprising himself, two sisters and a young Buddhist. "Suba Seth Gedera" (Good Wishes House) was the name of the cottage in which Mike sought to commence a Buddhist-Christian dialogue and a village conscientisation effort and in the area.

The choice of Buttala for this venture was significant. Buttala was in the area of Veeassa (meaning in Sinhala a hundred thousand rice fields) which in the days of the Sinhala kings was a veritable rice bowl of the island. The people of

Vellassa have had a tradition of rebellion and sturdy independence and the great rebellion of 1817 against the British also based in the Vellassa region was suppressed with annihilating thoroughness by the Colonial government. Writing of these happenings, Fr. Michael has remarked: "There took place in the year 1818 unwonted reprisals against the peasantry, their tanks or reservoirs, their homes and all their possessions were destroyed. An imperialist power governing the island through a Christian governor brought to nought the work of generations of Buddhist peasants in one fell stroke. This event, seared into their memory and willy-nilly upheld in mind and imagination even a hundred and sixty five years later produces in them a traumatic shock."... It was in such a setting that Mike Rodrigo decided to bear true Christian



for Michael Rodrigo

witness in sharp contrast to the institutional forms of Church life identified in the popular mind with proselytising, foreign culture and vested interests.

Michael succeeded in establishing close rapport with the villagers and the youth in particular and gave them a new understanding of what it meant to be a Christian and to be truly the church in the village setting of Alukalavita in Buttala. His understanding of Buddhism and identification with village life, its culture and its poverty, his grasp of the problems confronting the peasants, his espousal of justice and intervention whether on behalf of the poor villagers or the workers of the multinational close by at Pelwatte, more than established his bona fides and endeared him to the people. Not unnaturally he was for that very reason seen as a threat to the vested interests of the area and to the status quo. Unfortunately, the absence of a movement to effectively back him in his witness both at the local and national level made Michael vulnerable to the unscrupulous reactionary forces at work. Indeed the very continuance of his mission in the area now poses the need for a proper resolution of this question.

The quality of Mike's witness and its impact on the people he served cannot however be disputed. When the Buddhist villagers found his dead body lying on the ground, they reverently gathered up the pieces of his brain and the eyes which had fallen out and buried them in the garden, putting up two crosses to mark the spots. In doing so they said: "these were the eyes which saw our condition and this is the brain that guided us. These were the most precious parts of his body and since we have them, Fr. Michael still remains with us." How different with the response of certain church authorities. Some of them are even



said to have been embarrassed at the sight of a priest, who had celebrated his last Mass dressed in a sarong, forgetful perhaps that their own Master had offered his great Sacrifice of Calvary stark naked on a rebel's Cross!

Although not a Member of the Christian Workers Fellowship, Michael was very appreciative of the work of C.W.F. and of its Workers' Mass. After the CWF Mass for Bishop Leo Nanayakkara (presided over by Bishop Laskman Wickremesinghe) which he attended, Mike remarked that although Liturgy was his speciality, he was so caught up in this Mass from the very start that he was not aware of himself. He said that he could not pay a bigger compliment to any Liturgy. So it was with this same Workers' Liturgy that the CWF decided at short notice to honour Mike on the day of his funeral, at the lunch hour in the YMCA Chapel in Colombo Fort. It was a Mass for a Martyr with clergy of different Churches clad in red vestments decorated also with the hammer and sickle-symbols of the worker and peasant. A young



C. W. F. Mass for Mike

priest spoke movingly at this Mass of his experience in living at Buttala with Fr. Michael during the last few weeks of his life. He related an interpretation of the sign of the Cross that he had learnt from Fr. Mike: The forehead (symbolising intellect) has to be linked to the breast (feeling) and lead on to action represented by the arms. And so our Martyr's Mass for Mike which

was sung in Sinhala, began with reading and reflection and after being movingly climaxed in the communion ended appropriately with a call to action in the full-throated rendering of our traditional working class movement hymn which is also the local equivalent of the Internationale.

— Christian Workers Fellowship

## The Seventh Day

Seven days after he was killed  
his voice was not yet stilled.

In his name they met and spoke  
the village monks and village folk  
"He is with us. He lives", they said,  
"Let the dead bury their dead".

"In His name we've come to share  
the **dana** — bread, our simple fare".  
They mourned and wept their bitter tears  
but resolved to quell their fears.  
"Through his death we've learned to rise  
We've learned our worth — the world denies."

Some heard High Priest to Levite say,  
as they took charge the following day,  
"Had we not warned: 'Come off the cross',  
Can Holy Church afford this loss?  
To waste one's life on barren sod  
Ill-becomes a priest of God.

Lock the room and seal the tomb  
not for priest this place of doom  
See, he was clad in white sarong  
Jesus forgive this grievous wrong  
Did he use unleavened bread  
or was it **kiri-bath** instead?

The seventh day they wish to celebrate  
A Buddhist Sabbath \*inaugurate!  
Fathers, sisters, pray; stay away,  
Could get out of hand some day  
Some even say, 'Father Michael Rodrigo  
(not me) is their good Bishop Romero!"

Nalin Swaris.



# To Michael

— Nalin Swaris —

For one brief moment Michael  
in the Christian Church  
of Lanka  
Rite and Reality  
became one.(1)  
When the gun roared  
ravaged your gentle face  
and the deep dark engulfed you,  
in that flash of light  
the Temple veil was rent  
and the Christ-event became clear  
to the poor.

Out of the depths you cried,(2)  
'Father if it be possible let this cup pass.  
But your will be done'.  
Just then, the Beast struck  
the Shepherd  
to scatter the sheep,  
your body broke  
your blood shed.  
It was accomplished.

Far from that distant hill where you died  
we gathered with the High Priests.  
We dared not look at you  
inhumanly disfigured  
no form or beauty to attract us (3)  
between you and us once more  
a mystic curtain fell.

From far away they came  
the workers of the land  
whose native tongue you spoke  
whose toil you knew,  
ill at ease, at Temple's edge they stood.  
Others had taken their Master from them,  
exalted ones  
garbed in the togas of Imperial Rome  
— innocent white, not the Boody Red of Martyrs.  
They spoke of you in their preferred tongue (4)  
of another imperium, England.  
The accents polished did the Queen proud  
The phrases guarded appeased the ruling crowd.

The peasants whom you loved looked on  
bewildered.

They felt no part of this  
(were not meant to be).

The "bread" held high in sacred hands  
was not the bread they know  
for which they work the land  
and see each time their meagre harvest  
pass on  
to alien hands.

The grain they know — but not the bread  
now become a distant alien god,  
alien as the wispy wafer white  
which, shaped like coin  
Mammon and Caesar conjoin. (5)

But the poor you loved Michael,  
understand, free  
from learned argument  
what is meant  
by Liturgy  
— the Paschal Mystery —  
in the way your life was spent.  
The Sign and Signified  
Ritual and Reality  
God's son,  
were one  
in the Truth you tried  
for which you died.

The poor you loved Michael  
understood, when  
not the white-robed innocent men  
but saffron-clad Sakyamuni's son  
declared in their own tongue:  
'Not in the Temple's tumult  
can the people's cry be heard  
Not midst palatial pleasures  
can the people's woe be felt.  
Not in the learning, rank or title  
is the priesthood seen.  
He indeed is truly priest  
who for the common people is.'(6)

Thanks to the Father you loved Michael,  
who has hidden this from the wise and the mighty  
and revealed it, to  
the poor, the simple and the lowly.



- (1) It was generally known that Michael Rodrigo celebrated the Eucharist every evening around 7.30 p.m. The assassin struck as the service was drawing to a close.
- (2) After the agonised decision to stay on in spite of threats to their lives, the little community at Buttala recited Psalm 130 together.
- (3) Isaiah. 52 : 14 - 53 : 1 - 17. The gun shot shattered Micheal Rodrigo's face.
- (4) Michael rejoiced that the language of the people was restored to the liturgy by Vatican II. At the funeral service in Colombo the language used was English — still the language of privilege. Apart from two in Sinhala and one in Tamil, even the hymns were in English. The eulogies were also in English.
- (5) The theology of money has yet to be unmasked. When money as a means of exchange came into general usage in Europe, the Roman Rubric prescribed that the eucharistic bread should take the form of a coin — “forma denarii”. (Cf. Jungman S.J. — *The History of the Roman Liturgy* — The Chapter on the Offertory). There is a close parallel between the theory of transubstantiation developed around this time and the theory of Money.

The consecrated Host and the Coin, not only appear similar, but retain the attributes of common bread and metal. Under chemical analysis they would react exactly as ordinary bread and metal. Yet they have taken on an extraordinary value, miraculously in the one case and mysteriously in the other. Bread is the very substance of life, and like metal is nature transformed by the social labour of human beings. In the consecrated bread the substance of everyday life, it is taught, is “trans-substantiated” into the substance of spiritual life. Bread as the source of human life, is a symbol of God who is the very Source of all Life. But this is mystified. The same for money. It becomes the socially accepted value against which all

goods and services can be exchanged. Its real value is a derived value, but now mystified to conceal its inner essence which is congealed, living, human labour. In the form of money, human labour and its products can now be appropriated and accumulated. Bread, the very source of life has a price tag. Thus, No Money = No Bread = No Life = Death. Money in the form of Capital is the ultimate blasphemy, because it takes on all the functions attributed to the Divine Mediator. In the practical life of the world, it becomes “enabling grace”, the miracle worker. Without it the hungry cannot be fed, the sick healed, the naked clothed, Each need must first be converted into money-value, before the services of even the noblest of professions, of priest, physician or teacher could be had. God and Ceasar have become one. The U.S. Dollar carries the words “In God we Trust”. The Dutch Guilder, “God is with us”. When Jesus referred to himself as the Heavenly Bread, he meant the new state of affairs he had initiated, in which God's will being done on earth as it is in Heaven, the daily bread would be given to all.

John in his Book of Revelations, speaks of money as the Idol of Death, bearing the sign of the Beast and “his number, 616”, which adds up to ‘Ceasar-God’. Everyone rich and poor, citizen and slave are under the sway of this Beast and it becomes “illegal for anyone to buy or sell anything unless he had been branded with the name of the Beast or with the number of its name.” (Revelation 13 : 16 - 17, and footnote New Jerusalem Bible.) For the new state of affairs as Michael Rodrigo understood it see The Acts (Praxis) of the Apostles 2 : 42 - 47.

- (6) Eulogy spoken in Sinhala by a Buddhist monk at a service in honour of Michael Rodrigo in Bandarawela.

This poem was prompted by the remark of a villager outside Fatima Church. “Me okkoma Ingrisiyeng karapu eka, Apey Michael suwamita aphasayak.” (Doing all this in English is a Sjur to our Fr. Michael).

## Poem for Fr. Michael

Within your brain  
Caught up in prayer  
A bullet exploded  
In evening silence.  
On a path ridden  
With land mines of ignorance  
Your search  
Has been long  
To reach bonds of love  
Where history has sown  
Hatred  
Five hundred years  
Of tensions.

Your blood-confirmed convictions  
Made infallible by martyrdom  
Will now enrich the heritage  
Of the young defying vanity.  
Stupidity and villany  
Of prejudices,  
unscrupulously implanted  
By those who live to  
“Divide and rule”.

Clad in sarong and banian  
Man among men  
At deeply rural Buttala  
You contributed your word  
Sweat and blood gratuitously.  
The fruit of blood being bountiful  
Your assassins behind the scene  
Will soon see your  
compassionate face  
Smiling over the hills.

Basil Fernando



## Christmastide Reflection

# The birth of Jesus and peace earth

When Jesus was born, Luke who has been called the Evangelist of the Poor, tells us "There were in the countryside close by, out in the fields shepherds keeping guard over their sheep". It is to them that an angel announces the "news of great joy", "Peace on earth for those whom God favours.."

To those who read with discernment, it is clear whom Luke means "by those whom God favours.." Luke's infant narrative is woven around the poor. Shepherds keeping watch over their flock, the old man Simeon, the aged widow Anna.

### Third World Conditions

The shepherds were out in the countryside, and Jesus was born "closeby". Thus away from the City. Palestine in Jesus' time was no different to most Third World countries today. A capital City where the country's wealth is concentrated; the centres of political, cultural and religious life, parasitic of the countryside.

The birth narrative begins with a Roman census, periodically carried out particularly to determine the exact tribute due to the Emperor from his subject people.

Each year, or once in two years the peasants had to pay a tribute equivalent to a fourth of their harvest. In addition there were the less clearly defined exactions in kind and in services for the maintenance of the Roman army of occupation. Linked to colonial oppression was the oppression by the national Temple-State. The City and Temple economy were one, and was based on the exploitation of the working people, artisans peasants and fishermen. Every year 21 percent of a peasant's income had to be given to the Temple as tithes. There was an additional tithe for the support of the poor who gathered around the Temple.

Over and above this were the gifts and sacrifices of animals prescribed as expiatory offerings for various infractions of the law and or ritual purification. Luke draws attention to the poverty of Joseph and Mary when he states they could only afford the offering of a pair of turtle doves.

Thus the people were weighed down by a double oppression of colonial power and local authority. One used the threat of physical punishment, the other of spiritual damnation.

### Political Options

The lives of the ordinary people were characterised by extreme poverty and hardship. No wonder then that an insurrectionist group had arisen, calling themselves the Zealots. They had their bases in the countryside, particularly in the northern province of Galilee. They waged a guerilla warfare against the Romans, for God and Fatherland. Apart from periodic raids on Roman camps in the countryside, they also resorted to urban guerilla warfare, their tactics no different to those employed today. They would mingle with the crowds on occasions when the city was filled with people, as during a major religious feast and create a major disturbance by stabbing a Roman soldier or collaborator to death. Hence their popular nickname "sicarii" (Sicca=dagger) or "dagger men".

The Zealots advocated a violent overthrow of the colonial and collaborationist state. Galilee was a hot bed of rebellion and a ready recruiting ground for the Zealots.

Jesus began his teachings in Galilee. When Jesus proclaimed that in him the Kingdom of God had arrived, many saw in him a political leader. Eager young men left home and family to follow him. Prof. Oscar Culmann has convincingly demonstrated that many of Jesus' first followers were in fact drawn from the ranks of the Zealots. Mark explicitly names one of them as Simon the Zealot (3:19). Simon Peter's title Bar-Jona meant "terrorist". "Iscaiot" most probably signified 'sicarius'-dagger man. Jesus himself, no



doubt aware of their violent temperament called James and John "the sons of thunder".

To the end his followers did not understand what he meant, when Jesus said "My Kingdom is not of this world", or that he was speaking of a different peace. Not the peace imposed on a subject people by a conqueror, of which the Pax Romana was the supreme example. His communitarian ethnic was not the social morality imposed by amoral rulers on their subjects; a morality whose aim is to ensure the legality and order of the dominant groups. For six centuries in Palestine, the priestly land-owning class had been the ruling class. The religious ideology with its symbolic centre in the Temple was the principal justification for and the concealment of class domination and exploitation in Palestine. And this ideology, Jesus unambiguously opposed and demonstratively attacked in his storming of the Temple celebrated by us on Palm Sunday.

The Zealots wished "to restore the Kingdom of Israel". A restoration of the past would make no difference to the poor and oppressed. Jesus's was a radical vision for the future, in which all social relations based on power would be abolished. His was a King of Righteousness and Peace, in which there would neither be Jew or Gentile (religious persecution), male or female (sexual oppression), free or slave (class oppression), Greek or barbarian (racial oppression). Considering his immense popularity and his triumphal entry to Jerusalem his immediate followers may have felt that the time was ripe for a general insurrection. At Gethsemane it was clear that they had come ready with their weapons. But Jesus did not opt for a path of violence. The Romans, who only understood the language of force, found him amusing. They used him to ridicule the very notion of Jewish nationalism. Pilate cyni-

cally offered an amnesty, asking the people to choose between Jesus the 'mock-king' and Barabbas. Angry, humiliated and manipulated by the priestly class, the people demanded the release of the latter.

Within thirty years of Jesus' death, the Zealots succeeded in leading a violent insurrection against the Romans. Jesus' policy of not opting for violence was based not simply on a deep commitment to ultimate truths. It was also the result of a sober assessment of political realities. To take on the mightiest army of his time was fanatical and suicidal folly. It would bring untold misery to the people.

By the time the Gospels were written Jesus had been fully vindicated. The war lasted four years. The Romans laid seige to Jerusalem for six months. When the city fell, most of its citizens had died of starvation, the few survivors were massacred or marched to Rome. It was the end of Jerusalem. Those who had fled to the mountains or took refuge in the countryside were left to eke out a miserable existence from a ravaged and pillaged land. They had to pay a bitter price for the reckless fanaticism of their leaders.

Looking back from the horrors of war, they began to understand the teachings of the rebel Jesus, who would rather die than lead his people into the valley of death and destruction. Now they understood the nature of true peace, which is more than an absence of war.

#### Relevance to Lanka

For us in Sri Lanka today, the state of affairs in Jesus' time are immediately recognisable. Be it Buddhist vihare or Hindu Kovil, we have seen the "abomination of desolation standing in the Holy Place". Almost every family in the


North and the East, be it Sinhala Tamil or Muslim, would have its own tragic tale. People have fled to the jungle and the mountains. Others have died in the fields or on the roof tops before they had time to flee to safety. And alas, for those with child or who have infants at their breast. (Matthew 24:15)

In the many refugee camps that dot our countryside, how many children have been born — homeless like the Christ-child? What sort of peace do these victims of war yearn for this Christmas?

Are the values taught by Jesus, noble but impracticable ideals? Are the values on which the "mainstream of politics and economics" of our country are based the only alternative? What have been their practical outcome? The victims too have their particular truth and understanding. Ask those in the refugee camps who have lost everything, or the oppressed poor who have never had much — or the poor shepherds out in the fields.

Those who have a stake in the system would like to end the war, so that the economy on which their present happiness is based may flourish further.

Those who are the victims of the system dream of a radically different world based on justice and peace. It seems an impossible possibility. Perhaps the poor are right when they say that only God is their refuge and only a God can make their dream come true.

Placed in its social context, one sees that Luke's narrative of Jesus' birth is a subversive (literally — from down upwards) story. It is the story of people at the bottom of the social ladder — a poor mother giving birth to her child in a strange place, of workers in the fields, that God's glory and power was revealed there. 



# Mammon and the Vatican

*“And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them ‘It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.’”* (Luke 19 : 45)

As of late the Vatican has attracted a great deal of attention for reasons other than being the abode of the spiritual leader of nearly one fifth of the world's population. It also became the abode (and sanctuary) of one of the world's most wanted men for financial crimes. The stench raised by this scandal was pungent indeed with allegations being even made of the murder of Pope John Paul I, who tried to cleanse the Vatican as Jesus did the Temple in Jerusalem. Much has been written about this affair in the prestigious Roman Catholic Journal *“The Tablet”*. And Mr. David Yallop's (a Roman Catholic layman) well documented and thoroughly researched book *“In God's Name”* has raked up this whole matter from under the ecclesiastical carpet in what one may easily describe as one of the most brilliant pieces of investigative journalism ever produced. We thought it expedient to bring to the notice of our readers some of the salient aspects of this whole affairs as reported in *“The Tablet”* and Mr. Yallop's book, including some snippets of information emanating from the International press. Lets start with some excerpts from Mr. Yallop's book.

## The Great Benefactor

“The modern wealth of the Vatican is based on the generosity of Benito Mussolini. The Lateran Treaty which his Government concluded with the Vatican in 1929 gave the Roman Catholic Church a variety of guarantees and measures of protection. The Holy See obtained recognition of itself as a Sovereign State. It was exempted from paying taxes both for its properties and its citizens, exempted from paying duty on imported goods. It had diplomatic immunity and accompanying privileges for its own diplomats and those accredited to it by foreign powers...The benefits for the Vatican were many, not least the fiscal ones.”

“**Article One** (of the Lateran Treaty): Italy undertakes to pay the Holy See on the ratification of the Treaty, the sum of 750 million lire and to hand over at the same time consolidated 5 per cent State Bonds to the bearer for the nominal value of one billion lire.”

“At the 1929 rate of exchange this package represented 81 million dollars. A 1984 equivalent figure is approximately 500 million dollars.

Vatican Incorporated was in business. It has never looked back.”

“..To handle the windfall, Pope Pius XI created on June 7th, 1929 the **Special Administration**. He appointed to run the Department the layman Bernadino Nogara. Apart from having many millions of dollars to play around with, Nogara had another very important asset. One hundred years earlier the Roman Catholic Church had completely reversed its position on money lending. In the classic sense, usury means all gain from money lending. For over eighteen hundred years the Roman Catholic Church had dogmatically stated that the charging of any interest on a loan was **absolutely** forbidden as being contrary to divine law.”

“The prohibition was restated in various church councils. Arles (A.D. 314), Nicea (A.D. 353), Carthage (A.D. 345), Aix (A.D. 789), Lateran (A.D. 1139) — at this council usurers were condemned to excommunication — various state laws made the practice legal. It was still heresy, that is until 1830 — lending money at **exorbitant** rates of interest.”

“Self interest produced a total reversal on the Church's teaching



with regard to money lending. Perhaps if celibacy was no longer the rule for priests, it might change the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on birth control".

### Bernadino Nogara

"...Nogara was reluctant to accept the job and did so only when Pope Pius XI agreed to certain conditions. Nogara did not wish to be trammelled by any traditional views the Church might still hold about making money. The grounds Nogara insisted upon included the following:

1. Any investments he chose to make should be totally and completely free of any religious or doctrinal consideration;
2. He would be free to invest Vatican funds anywhere in the world.

The Pope agreed and opened the doors to currency speculation and to playing the market in the Stock Exchange, including the buying of companies whose products were inconsistent with Roman Catholic teaching. Items such as tanks, guns and contraceptives might be condemned in the pulpit, but the shares Nogara bought for the Vatican in companies which manufactured these items helped to fill the coffers in St. Peter's."

"Much of the speculation Nogara indulged in on behalf of the Vatican certainly contravened Canon Law and probably Civil Law, but as his client was the Pope who was not asking questions, Nogara remained untroubled by such niceties. Using Vatican capital, Nogara acquired significant and often controlling shares in company after company."

"Textiles, Telephone communications Railways, Cement, Electricity Water, Bernadino Nogara was

everywhere. When Mussolini needed armaments for his invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, a substantial proportion was supplied by a munition plant which Nogara had acquired on behalf of the Vatican."

"In 1933, Vatican Incorporated again demonstrated its ability to negotiate successfully with Fascist governments. The Concordant of 1929 with Mussolini was followed with a Concordant between the Holy See and Hitler's Reich."

"...For the Vatican, one of the major assets to emerge from the very lucrative deal with Hitler was confirmation of the "**Kirchensteuer**" Church tax. This is a state tax which is still deducted at source from all wage-earners in Germany. One can opt out by renouncing one's religion. In practice, few choose to. This tax represents between 8 and 10 per cent on income tax collected by the German Government. The money is handed over to the Protestant and Catholic Churches. In the Vatican, Nogara put the German revenue to work alongside the other currencies which were pouring in."

"...This one man, who demonstrated that wherever Christ's Kingdom might be, that of the Catholic Church's was most assuredly of this world, was given a memorable epitaph by Cardinal Spellman of New York, "Next to Jesus Christ, the greatest thing that has happened to the Catholic Church, is Bernadino Nogara."

"...On June 27th of 1942 Pope Pius decided to bring another part of the Vatican into the modern world and into the ambit of Bernadino Nogara. He changed the name of the **administration of religious works** to the **Institute of Religious Works**. The change did not capture the front page of the world's newspapers. They were rather preoccupied in the 2nd World War. The I.O.R. or the Vatican bank as it is known

by all but the Vatican was born. Vatican Incorporated had sired a bastard child. The original function of the **Administration** set up by Pope Leo XIII in 1887, had been to gather and administer funds for religious works. It was in no sense a bank. Under Pius its function became the custody and administration of moneys, (in Bonds and cash) and properties transferred or entrusted to the Institute itself by fiscal or legal persons to the purpose of religious works and works of Christian piety. It was and is in every sense a Bank."

"...A year after Nogara's death in 1958 the Vatican had urgent need of his expertise...."

"...In any list of years purporting to be worst in the Church's history 1968 would feature very near the top..It was the year when the Gorilla and the Shark as they were known, were let loose on the 2 Vatican Banks. The Gorilla is Paul Marcinkus, the Shark Michele Sindona". — (**David Yallop - Vatican Incorporated**).

### The Murder of a Pope

The above were some excerpts from Mr. Yallop's well documented book. It would no doubt have made extremely interesting reading for anybody interested in knowing something about the Vatican and its wealth. Mr. Yallop goes on to catalogue a vast web of intrigue and corruption which included shady links between the Vatican Bank and Banco Ambrosiano controlled by Roberto Calvi. The triumvirate of Paul Marcinkus, Michele Sindona and Roberto Calvi amongst misappropriating Vatican funds were deemed to have extensive links with the extreme right wing and fascistic group of Free Masons Lodge P 2 (the 'P' stands for Propaganda). The head of which was one Licio Gelli, the King — maker of all Italy and



several Latin American countries amongst them the Argentina of General Peron known to be a protege of Gelli. Among the activities catalogued in Mr. Yallop's book as having been the work of these individuals is the engineering of the return of General Peron into power after his ouster in 1956.. the downfall and rise of numerous and various post war Italian Governments and the funnelling of around 100 million US Dollars (under the present Pope — Pope John Paul II) to the **Solidarity** organisation in Poland. And the main thrust in Mr. Yallop's book has been to show that Pope John Paul I (Albino Luciani) was murdered by those very same individuals for having attempted to cleanse the Vatican of its reeking corruption.

In *The Tablet* of 14th January 1984, a book review by Andrew M. Greeley regarding the books '**God's Banker**' by Rupert Cornwell and the '**Calvi Affair**' by Larry Gurwin has this to say about the whole episode. "Both Cornwall and Larry Gurwin — author of **The Calvi Affair**, are sober and careful journalists.. Neither attempts to push speculation too far beyond the evidence and neither seems to be either sensationalists or anti-Catholic. Both arrive at remarkably similar tentative answers to the three questions. (1) In all probability Calvi was murdered (Roberto Calvi was found dead in London on the 18th June 1982 in what was made to look like a suicide — ed.) (2) It is difficult to exonerate the Vatican Bank of responsibility. (3) Some of the money went to shadowy figures in the elite Italian underworld organised around P 2 Masonic Lodge. Some went to anti Communist efforts in Latin America and some may have gone to the Church perhaps even to support Solidarity in Poland — though this last suggestion could not be proven."

"..There are two extremely disturbing aspects of the Calvi Affair. First of all, the world of unreality which one can find in the spy novels of John Le Carre and other lesser practitioners of the kind in which most of us do not really believe, may be if anything our under-estimation of the conspiracies which exist beneath the surface of public life. As Gurwin comments, there are incredibly extensive links among a vast array of underworlds, including intelligence agencies, organised crime, intelligence agencies, terrorists and drug traffickers."

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**The U. S. Government  
and the Vatican in their war  
against communism have  
allied themselves with gang-  
sters, drug pushers and  
terrorists.**

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"Moreover, as Gurwin continues, respectable individuals, government leaders, churchmen and business leaders use these networks. The U.S. Government and the Vatican, for example, have in their war against communism allied themselves with some of the most loathsome people imaginable including gangsters, drug pushers and terrorists."

"..The second disturbing aspect is that financial corruption in the Vatican seems to be incurable. The Calvi-Ambrosiano scandal coming in the wake of the Sindona scandal will make it seem even to those sympathetic to the Church that the Vatican is incapable of

putting its financial house in order. The two together must certainly be considered the worst manifestation of corruption in the history of the Church, making the sale of indulgences for the construction of St. Peter's which led to The Reformation look mild by comparison."

"..The fundamental moral weakness which is at the root of the problem is the conviction that, illegal action perhaps even morally reprehensible actions done for the good of the Church are acceptable when the Church is under attack from its many and varied enemies — and of course in the Vatican, only slightly less paranoid than the Kremlin or the Nixon White House, the Church is always under attack. One can therefore lie, cheat and even steal if it is done in the name of the Church."

**The Fugitive Archbishop**

These words of Fr. Andrew M. Greeley in 1984 proved to be prophetic. Early this year (ie. 1987) the Vatican adamantly refused to extradite Archbishop Paul Marcinkus and two others wanted by the Italian Police in connection with various financial scandals. *The Tablet* of 7th March 1987 reported as follows:

"The Vatican has reacted with profound astonishment to the issue by an Italian Court of a warrant for the arrest of Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, President of the Istituto per le Opera di Religione (IOR) commonly known as the Vatican Bank. The warrant is in connection with investigations into the failure in 1982 of the Banco Ambrosiano, once the largest private bank in Italy. It charges the Archbishop of being an accessory to fraudulent bankruptcy. The IOR had been a minor shareholder in Banco, Ambrosiano and had issued letters of patronage in support of bad debts which led to the collapse."



"The Vatican statement gave strong support to Archbishop Marcinkus as an United States citizen, who has been working in the Vatican for more than 20 years. It said he had given "substantial and sincere collaboration" to officials in Milan who have been conducting the investigations, providing memoirs, briefs and other documentation. Noting Section II of the 1929 Lateran Treaty, which "exempts the central agencies of the Catholic Church from any interference on the part of the Italian State", the Vatican has said that the Archbishop and two others who are similarly charged do not come under Italian jurisdiction because the investigation concerns their action as officials of the IOR."

*The Tablet* of the 14th March 1987 carried a **viewpoint** article on this matter written by Michael Dummett, Professor of Logic at the University of Oxford.

"An Archbishop who has been responsible for managing the finance of the Catholic Church, lurks within the Vatican, unable to emerge for fear of being arrested by the Italian police and charged with fiscal irregularities or worse. We must assume that this happens with the approval and agreement of the highest authority within the Church, the Supreme Pontiff himself, since it is unthinkable that the affair has escaped his notice. The Vatican having no extradition treaty with Italy, permits this man to cling to sanctuary within its boundaries, appealing in justification to an obsolete concordant made with Mussolini. The operation of the Vatican Bank has been revealed to be entangled with complicated corrupt practices involving other banks, the Mafia and the seamiest type of freemasonry, culminating in what was possibly the bizarre suicide but more probably the, grotesque murder of an Italian banker in London. From all this

the most pungent stink of corruption arises...."

#### Be Not Gullible

"..It is no part of the teaching of the Church that Catholics must repose childlike trust in the moral probity of high ecclesiastical authorities, even the highest, and history shows what a grave mistake it would be to do so."

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**The operation of the Vatican Bank has been entangled with corrupt practices involving other banks, the mafia, and culminating probably in murder.**

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"..If on the other hand, the behaviour in this affair of those who conduct Vatican policy springs from indifference to what ordinary Catholics feel and think about it, they will have no objection to what I am about to say. This is that. Until this matter has been thoroughly and publicly investigated, and until all those who manage the Vatican Bank's finances have either been proved to be guiltless of misdemeanour or have been punished for those they have committed and until the system has been reformed so that no comparable scandal can occur again, the Holy See either under the present Pope or under any successor, will stand robbed of all but its formal authority. No moral authority, no spiritual authority can continue to invest it so long as it resists the only step that could clear the government of the Church from suspicion of complicity in the murkiest of dealings and possibly in grave, crimes."

Events have proved Michael Dummett's fears expressed in this **Viewpoint** article to be more than justified. The public at large and

the Catholic faithful in particular **have been denied** the chance of arriving at a well informed opinion on these questions.

The *Newsweek* magazine on the 27th July 1987 reports as follows in an article entitled **'The Archbishop Banker : Free at last'**

"He was a prisoner in the Vatican for 5 months. American Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, President of the Vatican Bank has been held up inside the Holy City of Rome to avoid arrest by Italian Authorities. Two Milan magistrates signed warrants for Marcinkus and 2 other bank officials on February 20th 1987, charging them with complicity in the 1982 collapse of Italy's largest private bank Banco Ambrosiano. But last week the **Court of Cession**, Italy's largest Court declared the arrest warrant is invalid. .The Court apparently agreed with the attorneys for the Roman Catholic Church that a 1929 Treaty between Italy and the Church gave the Vatican statues of a Sovereign nation. Papal officials also had argued that the Vatican Bank was a 'central entity' of the religious city state — and that its officials were entitled to immunity."

"The ruling averted a show down between the Vatican and the Italian Government. Pope John Paul II and other Church officials had complained bitterly about the warrants; it appeared likely that even if the Court had upheld them, the Church would have refused to extradite the three men. Even so, the Vatican is still smarting from the Banco Ambrasiano affair. The Vatican Bank had issued informal guarantees for million of dollars in loans taken out of Banco Ambrosiano. And although the Vatican denied any wrong-doing or responsibility for the collapse, it reportedly paid out \$ 242 million to help make good some of the loans."



### The Unlucky Grandmaster

While the Vatican has managed successfully to protect Marcinkus, his alleged partner in crime Licio Gelli, the notorious Grandmaster of the P 2 Masonic Lodge has not been so fortunate. Once having been incarcerated in the maximum security prison of Champ Dollon in Geneva, Switzerland, he escaped from the prison on the 10th August 1983. 'The Island' of the 27th September 1987 contained a Reuter report to the effect that Licio Gelli, fugitive leader of the P 2 Masonic Lodge wanted in connection with the collapse of Italy's largest private bank and the 1982 bombing of Bologna station in which 85 people were killed, surrendered to a Geneva judge. The Swiss police and the Justice Department had confirmed the report. The reason why a man who could create history by escaping from the Maximum Security Prison of Champ Dollon should surrender to the Authorities is not quite clear. But the fact of the matter is that the law has finally got their hands on Gellias they have not been able to do in the case of Marcinkus. These events would lead us to agree one hundred percent with the great Roman Catholic novelist Graham Greene, who in a letter to the editor in *The Tablet* of the 4th April 1987 opines as follows:

"Sir: My congratulations on printing the excellent Viewpoint article by Professor Dummett 'Scandal in the Vatican'. The connection between the Banco Ambrosiano, the Mafia, the Free Masonic Lodge P 2 and the protection given by the Vatican to the Archbishop Marcinkus makes one think again about the circumstances surrounding the death of Pope John Paul I. Were we wrong to regard Mr. David Yallop's book *In God's Name* as merely sensational Journalism?" — **Graham Greene - Antibes.**

The successor to the much loved Albino Luciani (Pope John Paul I) is now confronted with the moral challenge of revealing and bringing to light the actual circumstances of his predecessor's death and unearthing the unholy crimes which have been perpetrated within the so-called "sanctum" of the Vatican. The present Pope is known as the Travelling Pope but not all his travels will defuse the stench that his Papacy is enveloped in. Reagan style Show Biz tactics which smack of the God in the Box style of evangelisation pursued by such individuals as Billy Graham and Jerry Fawell will not resuscitate and rejuvenate the Roman Catholic Church unless and until people are convinced that its leadership consists of truly spiritual and God fearing men and not murderers, bank robbers, hoodlums and the such like.

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### Poem for Luciani also known as Pope John Paul I

Haunt  
Haunt dear Luciani  
Haunt the Vatican

Murder most foul  
Is not the only matter  
Your wish for the church  
Go opt for the poor  
Makes you a martyr

That you had a conscience  
Makes you an exception  
Not only for a pope  
For anyone living — in  
Mammon's city

Haunt  
Haunt dear Luciani  
Haunt the Vatican

— **Basil Fernando.**

## Christmas Thoughts

Lord Jesus,

Centuries ago you were born  
into our fold  
And year after year to see  
your pure eyes we did dare,

This year in the crib there is  
a barrenness untold  
Traacherous events in our land  
have taken you elsewhere,

An empty crib without you  
makes Christmas meaningless.  
Have you gone to celebrate  
Your birthday among  
the hopeless?

Deepen my heart to discover  
the modern crib where it  
suffocates.  
In the midst of those grievously  
hurt by strife our  
arrogant perpetuate,

Let us discover your crib among  
those whose hearts have been  
twisted,  
By economic and social violence  
on them been inflicted,

With the spark you have ignited  
our mind is clarified  
Yes, your crib is among strikers  
a just salary denied,

Among children malnourshed  
because of the Scourge of  
poverty  
Among the workers as slaves  
who have lost their liberty.

Among disfigured refugees who  
get passing sympathy  
Among the despairing youth  
sick of a generation blinded  
with wealth and hypocrisy.

Christmas can be celebrated at  
your crib which is among these  
your sacred possession.

**Dr. Mervyn D. De Silva.**



# Buddhism and Social Change

*This article is the full text of a conversation between the Rev. Kenneth Fernando, Director of the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue and Mr. Prachar Hutanuwatra of Thailand, a Buddhist scholar and a leading light in the Thai Inter — religious Commission for Development. (Publishers of the magazine Seeds of Peace). An editorial staff member of the Christian Worker was present as moderator.*

## Moderator :

With regard to Christianity, there has generally been a tendency towards what one may call **social involvement**. Even at the founding stages it began as a group profoundly interested in social issues. And though down the ages there has been a tendency for it to be institutionalised and domesticated into the establishment, especially after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, still for all that ancient spirit of radicalism and vehement opposition to injustice has from time to time come up in one way or another. It was never smothered completely by the vested interests as can for instance be seen in the historical movements of the Anabaptists and John Ball of Essex who played a leading role in the famous English peasant revolt of 1381. But in the case of Buddhism, even at the initial stages, they did not actually have that kind of social involvement. And nothing of the sort emerged within the Buddhist tradition even later. A visiting Indian journalist — one Mr. Manoharan from Tamil Nadu — once told us that the reason why

Buddhism was totally wiped out of India was because it was a sort of **upper class religion** — highly intellectual, rarified and designed to bring peace of mind to the rich and comfortable via various abstruse intellectual exercises. The poor man who does not have such powers of intellectual agility would naturally look for something more easily comprehensible and providing immediate relief (which is why even in Sri Lanka you would find that the worship of Hindu deities has taken root very strongly in “popular” Buddhist practice). Hence in India Hinduism continued to remain the poor man’s religion while Buddhism in the course of time alienated itself from such strata by its intellectualism. What Mr. Manoharan says is that this very vulnerable position of Buddhism made it a easy victim for the Hindu revival which emerged from below. In other words, Buddhism disappeared from India as a result of the **ideological** conflict between the upper and lower strata in the Indian society of that period. What would you think about this aspect of the two religions, the poor

man’s religion of Christianity and the so-called elitist intellectualism of Buddhism?

## Elitist Intellectualism ?

## Mr. Hutanuwatra :

I think first of all we must get it clear that Buddhism is not a religion of the oppressed. It is different from Christianity. Christianity was from the beginning the religion of the oppressed. But Buddhism advocates on **compromising** positions according to my understanding. In the context of Thai history, the monks or the Sangha were the mediators between the ruler and the ruled. This is the basic difference. But when you say that Buddhism did not involve itself in social movements I cannot agree. It was a social movement from the beginning. But it was never a case of fighting on the side of the poor against the rich or something like that. The tendency in Buddhism has always been to compromise between the classes.



I also don't agree with your idea that Buddhism is a religion of the elite, because since the beginning, and up to now there is a belief in my country that you need not be an intellectual to be an Arahant. Even those who do not know how to read and write can be an Arahant. Its mainly a case of cultivating the heart. And it is very easy for the ordinary human to understand the concept of Anatta (non-self) or Anicca (impermanence). In my country the ordinary folk understand Buddhism much better than those at the University.

**Moderator :**

But does this not involve a lot of thinking? I am not talking in terms of literacy and that kind of book learning. It involves a kind of conceptual thinking which would be beyond the ordinary man.

**Mr. Hutauwatra :**

I do not think so. The central concept of Buddhism, Anatta (non-self) is very easy for everybody to understand.

**Moderator :**

Fr. Kenneth, what would you have to say about this?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

Firstly I would like to say I agree that Christianity has been socially involved. But socially involved on which side? So that although Christianity began as a religion of the oppressed very soon afterwards it became a religion of domination. And it has been on the side of the dominator and it has been a theology of domination. But at the same time, the theology of liberation has always been there. And there have been small groups of people who confronted and, challenged the theology of domination. So just at this moment there are the liberation theologians who have picked up those liberation

themes and reinforced them. And I would say that in Christianity both these elements always existed side by side. Now as for Buddhism, I think it is very important to realise that Buddhism began as a protest movement, against exploitation of religion and the corruption of the Brahmin priests. In the time of the Buddha there were very elaborate animal sacrifices, which were very expensive. And the Brahminic priests had to be given their various fees and remuneration and so on. And the Buddha protested against all that. So that naturally, he incurred the resistance and hostility of the Brahminical caste. So to that extent it was non-elitist. And it was a kind of reaction against what the Brahmins and the powerful people were doing. And I would fully agree with Mr. Hutauwatra that you don't have to be a great intellectual to be a Buddhist. The basic teaching of the Buddha is very simple. So it is not an intellectual exercise and I think the real reason why Buddhism got expelled from India was because it was a challenge to vested interests. To the religious establishment and to the powerful. They found Buddhism too threatening and that's why they saw to it that Buddhism was expelled from the shores of India.

#### Anti — Brahminism

**Moderator :**

How would you say that it was a threat?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

It threatened the Brahminical priestly caste who had made a business of religion and were thriving on it. And when the Buddha taught that these sacrifices were useless, he was cutting the ground from under their feet.

**Moderator :**

But in its place he himself set up another religious establishment .....

**Fr. Kenneth :**

But it was not an establishment that depended on priests and sacrifices.

**Mr. Hutauwatra :**

Its only after the Emperor Asoka that Buddhism became institutionalised.

**Moderator :**

When you say that Buddhism was not elitist, wasn't it actually a case of one elite trying to undermine and oust the dominant elite? Some would interpret the Buddha's anti-Brahminism in terms of Kshatriya — Brahmin rivalry.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

Well, its true that the Buddha had some well to do lay supporters like Anathapindika and so on who donated their wealth to the Buddha. But there are a large number of poor people who followed the Buddha. So although the Suttas record the powerful ones, the princes and the rich people who followed the Buddha, many of the Buddha's followers and especially many of the Bhikkhus would have been from very common backgrounds.

**Mr. Hutauwatra :**

Many Arahants came from a very low caste.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

I think we should understand the Buddhist movement as something that emanated from the social conditions of that time. And there has not been enough study of this aspect of Buddhism. Kosambi has attempted this. But very few others have attempted to understand the message of the Buddha in relation to its economic and social context. And I think the very fact that the Buddha set up the Sangha whose property is held in common and he himself gave up wealth shows



that he was challenging the social conditions and the social assumptions of his time.

#### PASSIVITY?

**Moderator :**

How then would you explain his passivity with regard to social realities?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

On the contrary, I think he was very challenging in his time. He established the Sangha which had a value system totally different to the social system that existed in his time. He rejected the caste system outright. He even accepted women, who were treated as the lowest of the low at that time. Therefore I would not say that the Buddha was passive with regard to society at large.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

The Buddha sent his disciples in various directions to preach. And the message they preached certainly had social implications. And he was very keen that they should go out in as many directions as possible and teach the word of the Dhamma in order that it may spread as widely and rapidly as people, for the well being of the people (mahajana sukkha).

**Moderator :**

But one of the Buddha's cardinal teachings was of impermanence, (anicca) and the futility of this life. He took a very negative attitude towards the very fact that we exist in Samsara. That's in total contrast to Christianity where life is all important.

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

For me its not negative. It helps you to look at life from another aspect. And it will make you more realistic about life including the ideal about the better society. At two levels — relative truth and absolute truth. These have to be complementary to each other.

**Moderator :**

What would you define as **absolute** truth?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

**Anicca** (impermanence), **Dukkha** (suffering), **Anattha** (non-self). These are absolute. Nevertheless at the same time that he taught **Anattha** he also taught the relation between father and son, the rich and the poor, and the King and the ruled. These latter are relative truths. The relative and the absolute should complement each other.

#### NIHILISM

**Moderator :**

The central concept of Christianity is eternal life. But in Buddhism its Nirvana. One cannot define it as nihilism, but its some sort of non-being, isn't it? I mean, its a case of **being** and also **non being**. Now in human terms, in anthropocentric terms it is not the kind of **life**, the **full life** that Christianity would aspire to.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

Nobody can really define what Nirvana is except in terms of negatives. That is what you get in most of the Suttas also. But I think most Buddhist scholars will agree that Nirvana is a positive concept—a **transcendental absolute**. Though it is not in any way to be thought of in Divine terms, or of a personal God. And it represents the **ultimate** that a human person can achieve. So to that extent it is a victory over life. And I would say that it is very very closely connected to what Christians mean when they talk about eternal life.

#### THE ABHIDHAMMA

**Moderator :**

Mr. Hutanuwattra, you generally don't consider the Abhidhamma Pitakaya to be of much relevance.

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

It is really meant for those who are intellectually inclined.

**Moderator :**

Are you saying that it is an intellectual exercise?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

Yes.

**Moderator :**

But then, is the **Abhidhamma** of any use?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

Yes, it can be used, if you like to use it. But it is not the very necessary heart of the teaching.

**Moderator :**

In that case is there any kind of truth embodied in it?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

Yes. It is based on the Suttas. But it is expressed in a more sophisticated way. The teachings have been — so to speak — intellectualised.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

The same thing happened in the case of Christianity also. Soon after the gospels were written, there was the **gnostic** interpretation with people trying to intellectualise them and make them very esoteric and so on. And the Abhidhamma is actually a gnostic interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. And like you I would agree that some people may not find it very interesting and even in Sri Lanka not very many people are Abhidhamma scholars. But the Suttas of the Buddha which really contains his teachings are very very fascinating. And are of very real relevance to those who want to live authentically.



## SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

**Moderator :**

What are the main Suttas of the Buddha that have emphasised social involvement?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

The *Agganna Sutta*, the *Sigalovada Sutta* and the teachings of the Buddha on the *Vajjis* in the *Maha Parinibbana Sutta* all emphasise the social involvement in Buddhism

But if you want to understand the social aspect of Buddhism, it is not possible to go to one Sutta and say that this contains the essential teaching. We have to look at Buddhism as a whole, especially the *Vinaya* system. *Dhamma* is the teaching. And the *Vinaya* the discipline. And the *Vinaya* is the guide to action in social life in accordance with the *Dhamma*. The organisation of the *Sangha* could be taken as an example of the application of this code of discipline.

**Moderator :**

Now in terms of social liberation, or emancipating the down-trodden how does the *Vinaya* come in?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

It expounds the ideal form of society according to Buddhism. In the Buddha's time there were two forms of Government. One is the Monarchy and the other is the Republic. And the Buddha did not pronounce upon the virtues of one over the other. If you have a Monarchy, he advocated rule according to the *Dasa Raja Dhamma* (the ten great virtues of kingship). He did not advocate Republicanism against Monarchy. But if we look at the *Sangha*, it is distinctly a republican body, an anarchistic-socialistic democratic entity. No personal property is allowed to a *Bhikkhu* and all decision making is through consensus.

## A BUDDHIST STATE

**Moderator :**

Now in the case of Christianity, I would say that Jesus made a very clear choice as to which side he was on. But in Buddhism, as you yourself pointed out, the tendency has been to retain things as they are albeit with a few improvements so as not to create unrest and upset the apple cart. The emphasis seems to be more on trying not to rock the boat too much and to quietly get along. Does this not reflect a lack of real interest in life as you call it?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

No, I didn't mean that. What I try to say is that the Buddha understood the nature of the State well enough not to have advocated any kind of 'ideal state', or encourage any class to capture state power to create an ideal society. No state can be ideal and no good society can be created through state power. But the state can be less evil and good society is possible by the movement of people not aiming at capture of state power but the reduction of state power and the empowerment of the people themselves. As for me, I personally hold the opinion that there cannot be and here is no ideal "State" in the world.

**Moderator :**

You see this ideal "state" as being something towards which we should aspire but will never be actually attained? Is that what you mean?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

The Buddha never did say anything about the ideal state.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

You are quite right in saying that there is no political theory

or programme in Buddhism. But I would say that there are the seeds of such thoughts. Now for instance, when the *Lichchavis* asked whether they would be defeated in the war, the Buddha said No, as long as you are able to meet, discuss your problems, take decisions and implement these decisions no power is going to defeat you. And I think the Buddha very clearly says there that real power resides with the people. And as long as the people's power is enabled to express itself, and also be put into practice, there is no power that can defeat it.

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

This is exactly the point of the teachings that was not emphasised during the past history of Buddhism.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

So that teaching is there very much in the Buddha, and I think at least in a sort of cryptic way it indicates the Buddha's wishes for a state and for society.

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

For society, Yes. But not for state. According to my understanding, the Buddhist teaching is that the state would have as little power as possible and the community itself must have self-determination at the basic village level.

**Moderator :**

Has the Buddha ever advocated something like that in his teachings?

**Mr. Hutanuwattra :**

Yes. In the way he established the *Sangha*. He had never nominated a *Maha Sangha Nayaka* and an elaborate hierarchical command structure. Buddha advocated the ideal society through the *Sangha Organisation*. But not the ideal state. The ideal state in Buddhism is a State with very little power.



**Fr. Kenneth :**

I really do not know whether he set up this Sangha as a model society. Because he did not expect everybody to be a follower of the Sangha. So it was only one way of life, and I think the Buddha would have agreed that not all could join the Sangha. So the Sangha is not necessarily a "model" society. But I would certainly say that the Buddha would have seen that the Sangha presents a challenge to society. So the Buddha's method of setting up an institution that challenges society is something that is of very great value.

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

I am in perfect agreement with this. But I also believe that it is a model society at the same time. If you are a real Buddhist society, you must try to arrange your society according to that.

#### THE SANGHA

**Moderator :**

If the Sangha is a model for society, what would the economic base for that society be? Isn't labour forbidden for monks in the Vinaya? The existence of the Sangha necessarily means that there will have to be a laity also. So it can't be a model society all on its own.

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

It is true that labour and production will have to be done by the lay community. But the values of the Sangha will have to be the guidelines for the new society, ie. a simple life, working for the common good, collective decision making, collective ownership, decentralisation etc.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

Within the Sangha Organisation, the Buddha did not want decisions

to be taken by vote. He wanted them to discuss the matter and arrive at a **Sammatha**, ie: consensus. And these traditions survive even today. Buddhist monks are generally very reluctant to take decisions by vote. They discuss the problem until everyone comes to an agreement. And this I think is something that we all must learn.

**Moderator :**

When talking of the emancipation of the poor from social, economic and political oppression, we are at the same time talking of emancipating the rich. Since the bringing down of the present social structures is a case of freeing both the oppressed and the oppressors from their bondage to the evil structures that perpetuate exploitation of man by man and human degradation. As Marx himself envisaged in **The German Ideology**, the inception of **Communist society would be the actual beginning of the history of mankind**. According to him, we are today still living in the brutalised and primitive pre-history of mankind. Such was the lofty humanism of Marx. So the overturning of unjust structures is the supreme act of "Metta" (or loving kindness) to one's fellow human being. But one reality that has to be faced up to is that both the preservation of structures and the overturning thereof is **contingent on violence**.

Now in Christianity, the attitudes which enjoin the Christian to "turn the other cheek" is purely a code of personal conduct — at a micro level. It does not apply to turning the cheek to structural violence — at the macro level. Likewise, in Buddhism, though there is this strong emphasis on **Ahimsa** and non-violence, wouldn't you feel that it is a code of conduct meant for the individual at the micro level and does not preclude violence against unjust structures?

#### RELIGIOUS MORALITY

**Fr. Kenneth :**

I would say that it is difficult to say that there is a macro-micro dichotomy in religious morality. Violence is always wrong. But when you think of the mechanics of social change and the necessity to change society and so on, there are a number of matters to be taken into account. Like for instance when we take social decisions, very often the choice is not between violence and non-violence, but between different forms of violence. Violence is wrong. But when we are faced with two different forms of violence we have to make a choice. For instance, in a violent situation, not doing anything is encouraging violence. Doing something may also be encouraging violence. But which is the lesser of the two evils? So that is a decision that has to be taken by each person in each situation. Not doing anything when there is a lot of violence can be a very violent action. And this is what people have to realise. The choice very often is between different forms of violence. Not doing anything when one should do something can be a very violent option.

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

Yes, but there is also the possibility of acting non-violently.

**Moderator :**

Isn't violence doctrinally justifiable in Buddhism at any stage?

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

According to my understanding, Buddhism is not pacifist. But we never justify violence. Lets take the case of eating meat. The Buddha did not say that the Bhikkhu could not eat all kinds of meat. But ten kinds of meat is absolutely



forbidden. If the Bhikkhu kills an animal, he is not expelled from the order. But he has to confess to his colleagues in the Sangha to purify himself. But if a Bhikkhu kills a man he is automatically expelled from the order. There is here a question of degree. So you see, an abstinence from violence is not something absolute.

**Moderator :**

Is there any kind of Kammic **absolution** for that kind of "necessary" violence according to Buddhist doctrine?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

In Buddhism, Kamma does not operate mechanically. If one has done something wrong, it does not necessarily and inevitably mean that you should suffer for it. You can change your Kamma by the way that you act **now**. By acting in the right way now, one can change one's Kamma. So to that extent we are not wholly the victims of Kammic forces.

**Moderator :**

So you say there is some similarity between the Christian tradition of "confession of sins" and the "deflection" of bad Kamma by present meritorious actions in Buddhism?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

I would say that there are similarities between the Christian possibility of amending one's way of life, of conversion, of change of heart and life, and the Buddhist option of changing your old Kamma by doing the right thing **now**.

### VIOLENCE AND METTA

**Moderator :**

What does Buddhism have to say about taking up arms in accordance with the concept of "metta"

(loving kindness for one's fellow human beings — the oppressed?) supposing your people are being murdered and your country being devastated as for instance the case of South Vietnam in the past, should the Buddhist response be restricted to sitting on street corners and burning themselves to death? I know that it was a very potent form of non-confrontationist protest. But couldn't they have as a duty to their fellow human beings taken up arms against the marauding invaders?

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

According to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, if you are Bodhisatva, and rid society of a persistent menace even going to the extent of exterminating human beings in the process, that Bodhisatva (one who is to attain Buddhahood in the future) will go to hell for his sin. But he would have undergone that suffering not for something that he did for a selfish motive but for the love of his fellow human beings.

**Moderator :**

This sounds quite like the Christian concept of vicarious suffering.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

Yes. But this is not a Theravada Buddhist concept. As I see it, in Theravada Buddhism, the **Panchasila** or five precepts is absolutely basic. And the first precept is, **Panathipatha** (to refrain from taking life). And there is no question of the Buddhist justifying killing. But in today's society, a Buddhist has to think in terms of social revolution, foreign invasions and so on. How does one act in such circumstances and are we not forced sometimes to choose between two evils?

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

When you spoke of the Vietnamese, I wanted to point out that they took another alternative. The Vietnamese Buddhists were very active in non-violent protest and agitation. In fact I have written a book about Buddhists in Vietnam during the war. You cannot say that they were passive. They were very very active.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

I wholly agree with that. We have to develop non-violent methods of political struggle.

### VICARIOUS SUFFERING

**Moderator :**

So this concept of vicarious suffering, suffering for others, comes in Mahayana Buddhism but does not come into Theravada at all?

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

Even in Theravada Buddhism you can see the concept of suffering for others in the Jathaka tales. That is the basic concept of **metta** and **karuna**. But it has to be a non-violent action.

**Moderator :**

So couldn't that vicarious suffering take the form of unselfishly bringing bad Kamma upon oneself in the service of mankind?

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

But as I pointed out earlier, in Theravada Buddhism there is no justification of that. One can offer oneself in any way for the common good but not to the extent of killing.

**Fr. Kenneth :**

The concept of **Ahimsa** has spread all over the world and the land from which it originated is India.



and South Asia. And even people like Albert Luthuli and Martin Luther King Jr. and others who have preached non-violence have learnt it from our part of the world. Now with regard to Christianity, it is true that there have been groups that have advocated non-violence. But the main structure of traditional Christianity has **not** been non-violent. And many wars have been fought in the name of Christianity from time to time. And there is also that medieval theory of a **just war**. But I think Christianity has a lot of rethinking to do about this especially in the context of a Nuclear Age. No Buddhist monk has served in an army as a Chaplain. Because that is against the **Vinaya**. Nor are Buddhist services held to bless the armies. That also is forbidden in the **Vinaya**. So Buddhism dissociates itself from military activities. It is now very difficult to make out a case for war. Recent experiences have taught us that limited war is also now no longer possible. Because a limited war can easily turn into an unlimited nuclear war. So we have to develop strategies for the non-violent resolution of problems.

### THE ASIAN ETHOS AND AHIMSA

**Moderator :**

Would you feel that there was something in the "Asian ethos" which made this concept of 'Ahimsa' take such firm roots in religions like Buddhism and Hinduism?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

Asians to be sure have respected all life, for the simple reason that Asians believe in the transmigration of souls. So that any life has the potentials of being a **Arahant**. So for that reason **all** living beings and all human beings are respected because everyone is deemed to be a potential Arahant.

**Moderator :**

But didn't the Greeks also have a belief in the transmigration of souls?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

A few like Pythagoras did. But certainly not all of them. In Christianity too we teach that human beings are made in the image of God which means that Christians also have a very high doctrine of human worth. So that destroying life, is not something that any religion can advocate. Actually what ought to surprise us is, that there are so many dying of hunger and malnutrition everyday. Now who is killing them? And why is there such a lack of concern about the violence that is being done to the poor? So we must condemn violence as strongly as we can in order that this wanton killing might stop.

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

This is **structural** violence. It is something that traditional religions have not understood or emphasised.

**Moderator :**

What has Buddhism got to say about **structural** violence? I think Christianity has some very clear and unequivocal things to say about this, but is Buddhism all that clear about this?

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

Since the time of the Buddha, the **Dasarajadharm** (the ten great guidelines for rulers) is the teaching of the Buddha at the structural macro level. But the question is that when the composition of society has changed down the ages, we have to understand the new social structure. But we can use the basic teaching to understand it.

In Buddhist terminology, this corrupt economic structure flouts

the first teaching of the Buddha **Panathipatha** (refraining from taking life). When we see the advertising of the multinationals, this is wholesale **Musavada** (falsehood).

### SOCIAL EMANCIPATION

**Moderator :**

The Buddha depended on the generosity of the rich towards the poor to eradicate social injustice. That would not strike anybody as a serious attempt to rectify structural imbalances.

**Mr. Hutanuwatra :**

I don't think the Buddha ever really advocated something like that for the poor. But he did emphasise that every one should help themselves and help one another without doing harm to others. So the poor have to fight (non-violently) to emancipate themselves, which in itself will emancipate the oppressors too. The structure itself should be changed.

**Moderator :**

Father Kenneth, in spite of you being a Christian, you have delved to some extent into the doctrinal intricacies of Buddhism. What are the Suttas that have influenced you most?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

I would say that the Sutta that has influenced me most is the **Maha Paribbana Sutta**. But it's a little difficult to say because there are some other Suttas also which I would like to place in close proximity like the **Sigalovada Sutta**, **Kutadantha Sutta**, **Agganna Sutta** etc. because all these suttas have something to say about the relationship between religion and society. I became a Christian Priest because of my interest in the social implications of Christianity. Now these



Suttas all address these questions. In the Kutadantha Sutta for instance somebody tells the Buddha that there is a lot of brigandry in a certain part of the country, and asks what should be done about it. The Buddha says, where there are farmers give them seed so that they can improve their farming. If they are traders give them more money that they may trade better. Please see to it that they are well established in their occupations so that there would be no need for them to steal. So the Buddha has taught that most of these evils come from poverty, and the most effective way to fight some forms evil is to eradicate poverty.

The **Agganna Sutta** talks about the origins of the world and expresses the point that all the present troubles which beset society are due to man's greed, selfishness and his unwillingness to share. That Sutta says that at the beginning, the world was a place where everybody had enough to eat, and they only had to gather and eat. But because of selfishness people began to gather too much, and that is the source of all evil. It is as a result of this that laws had to be formulated — what the Sutta calls "sam-mathas". So I feel that such suttas have very important things to teach us.

**Moderator :**

Would you see all religions as advocating the same "Universal Truth"?

**Fr. Kenneth :**

I don't see the various religions leading to the same truth. I think the different religions are very different. But the religions can be seen as being complementary to one another. Truth is a very many splendoured thing. The different religions draw attention to the different splendours of truth.



## Fellowship in Action

### Relief Work

Work in connection with refugees has recently had to engage the attention of the Fellowship and a CWF Relief and Rehabilitation Committee set up by the Working Committee.

This has been made necessary all the more because the members of our groups too have either been displaced or been injured and in some places even reported killed in the course of the military offensive in the North and East.

Our recent CWF Trincomalee group which was so active and was able to bring people of different communities together in the China Bay area, has been disrupted and several of the group are now refugees. Two of them have been interdicted when they objected to the attempts of Prima (Cey) Ltd. in which they were employees to take advantage of their situation and impose new conditions regarding their employment.

We have had information that our group in Kallar too has been adversely affected and more detailed information is awaited about the position of our groups in Jaffna peninsula. Attention has to be paid also to those presently at Kantale

with whom we have contact who have suffered earlier during the breaching of the reservoir dam and now suffer from the effects of the ethnic disturbances. A lot of work therefore remains to be done and we will have to count on the support of our members and well-wishers to help in this work.

### Badulla

In a CWF wedding rite that incorporates the customs of traditional Sinhala marriage as found in the poruwa ceremony, the young CWF organizer of the Badulla Branch, Neville Gunasekera, married Kanthi Edirisinghe on October 26 evening at St. Michael's Church, Polwatte. The wedding ceremony which took place in the context of the CWF Workers Mass was colourful but at the same time intimate with many members of the CWF Working Committee and representatives of the Badulla Branch present on the occasion.

A very successful two day CWF Study Camp was held at the Badulla Centre from 7th to 8th November, with about 30, participants both Sinhalese and Tamil. The sessions were conducted in both languages with common worship and living together which symbolized the unity of the working people cutting through racial divisions.



"Whom God has joined together...."

Reading rooms have been recently opened in the plantation areas of Passara, Demodara and Spring Valley where contact is had too with the village folk. Sewing classes have also been started in these areas to help provide a means of self support to young women.



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With every good wish for Christmas and 1988

Yours sincerely,

*Editorial Board of Christian Worker.*

**Questionnaire on Christian Worker**

1. Do you find the articles in Christian Worker informative and interesting?  
Yes  No

Further comments : .....

2. What do you think of the present format?

Satisfactory  Capable of improvement

Suggestions for improvement : .....

3. What do you think of our coverage of events and views?

Satisfactory  Inadequate

Further comments : .....

4. Do you think we should make *Christian Worker* a bi-monthly?

Yes  No

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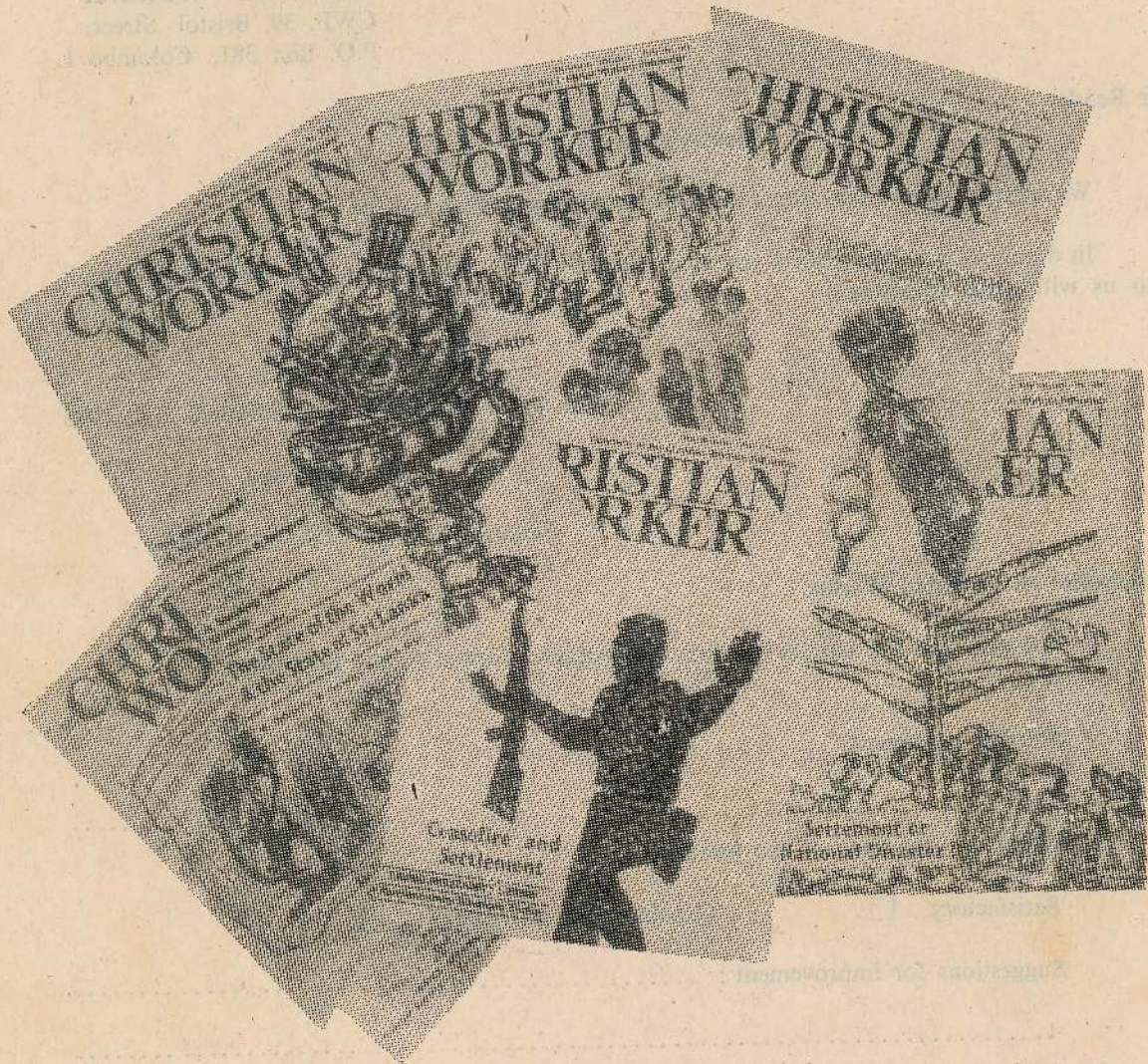
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The pre-school held at the Badulla Centre which has become increasingly popular had its "passing-out" ceremony on December 5 for children who will be leaving in order to enter schools as students in the coming year. Those who are to be admitted to the pre-school from next year were also present. There was a concert staged by the pre-school children and a party at which gifts were distributed.

The latest venture of the Badulla Branch has been the formation of a Worker-Student Music Group which has commenced regular practices at the Centre. It is hoped to communicate workers' aspirations through song by means of this group and also help raise the cultural level of working people in the area.

The Christmas programme of the Badulla Branch will be from January next year centering round January 6 the Feast of the Epiphany which is the 'Christmas' of the Eastern Church besides being the anniversary of the dedication of the Centre Chapel named "Mettalokha (Light of Love) Devalage".

### Wattala

The CWF Wattala Branch had to assist recently in flood relief work at the Aluth Akkaraya (New Acre) where about 200 homes went under water due to the incessant monsoon rains. The initial action taken by the CWF Branch led to other organizations too assisting in many ways. The residents of the area are very poor and mainly live by fishing.

The work of the Wattala Branch among the fishermen of the area has resulted in the formation of "Deevarayo" (Fishermen) an organization which is to promote education and self-help among the fishing community. This has followed several CWF meetings which have proved to be educative to the fishermen and other residents. Just now steps are being taken to draw up a work programme for the coming year.

The first issue of the local publication "Yahapatha" (Common good) sponsored by the Wattala Branch has been warmly received by residents in the Wattala area. "Yahapatha" is expected to be a monthly magazine in Sinhala to cater to the needs and interests of the local residents at a grass roots level.

The major action of the Wattala Branch recently however was the organization of

a Human Rights Seminar at the Wattala Urban Council Hall which drew about 600 people. However the meeting was stopped by the Police while people were still coming in, at the instigation of the Wattala Mabile Council authorities (see item under 'Human Rights' inside).

### Colombo

The Colombo Branch has commenced the Workers Mass during the lunch interval on the second Friday of each month at 12.30 p.m. for workers in and around the Fort area of Colombo. It was felt that this service could be source of inspiration to workers and those struggling for justice and fraternity and enable them to renew their commitment regularly through this Mass. The response of workers has been very good. The first Mass held in October concentrated especially on the plight of the refugees and our CWF Trincomalee organizer Sarath Jayapala, a worker at Prima (Ceylon) Ltd. in Trincomalee and himself a refugee, spoke at the Mass. The second Mass was held on November 13 and took place the form of a Martyrs' Mass for Fr. Michael Rodrigo who was brutally gunned down at Buttala while celebrating the Eucharist (see article inside).

The Branch has also helped to collect food and items of clothing for those displaced by the violence in the Trincomalee area especially. It also helped the CWF Centre to organize a meeting of representatives of refugees now in Colombo which was attended by concerned persons including Kalawana M.P., D. E. W. Gunasekera, Hector Abhayavardhana and the Revd. G. C. Jackson, a representative of the W.C.C. who was in Colombo at the time

The Colombo Branch recently made appeals to raise money for the medical expenses in India of well-known Trade Union leader H. N. Fernando who was suffering from a serious illness which could not be fully treated in Sri Lanka. The Branch targetted for Rs. 20,000 and was able to exceed that amount. We thank the following organizations for the contributions sent in to the CWF office in Fort :

CWF Centre	...	Rs. 5,000.00
Satyodaya Centre (Fr. Paul Caspersz)	...	5,000.00
Anonymous	...	9,000.00
NCC — Development Commission	...	5,000.00
(Ms Nimalka Fernando)		

SEDEC (Fr. Peter Charles)	...	250.00
Centre for Society and Religion (Fr. Tissa Balasuriya)	...	250.00
		Rs. 24,500.00

We wish "H.N." a speedy recovery after treatment in India.

### Galaha (Gami Seva Sevana: Rural Service Centre)

A Home-Garden programme was launched for selected school children with the help of Agricultural teacher of Durhinna Maha Vidyalaya. Packeted seed materials were issued for forty school children and it was expected that the children will pay back the value of seed materials by way of the vegetables which they had to grow with the use of organic fertilizer. One condition was that they should not use pesticides, weedicides or artificial fertilizer. On the World Food Day we had a seminar and an evaluation of the programme. We found that two-thirds of the students had done well and some students had even helped their families out of the income they earned.

We had a seminar on alternate technology and small farmer development at Palugaswewa on the 17th October. Here, with the assistance of FMRC at Mahailuppalama, we got twenty farmers trained in the use of mechanical transplanter of paddy which was made in Sri Lanka. This planting season, the Gami Seva Sevana group of Palugaswewa hopes to plant quarter acre of paddy with the new machine. A seminar was addressed by Mr. G. K. Upawansa on the possibility of doing paddy cultivation without using artificial fertilizer and chemical pesticides. The FMRC provided an official to discuss with the farmers the use of their mechanical rice planter and their weeder.

We had an Art Exhibition at Galaha on the theme 'Small Farmer Development.'

A seminar was held at Gami Seva Sevana for the benefit of the Tea Small Holders. The Tea Research Institute and the Tea Small Holder Authority discussed with the farmers how to develop their small holdings of tea land. They also demonstrated plucking and pruning of tea.

Another seminar was held in association with the Regional Rural Development Bank of the Central Bank regarding loans for dairy farmers. The team that repres-



ented the Central Bank discussed with the farmers how they could obtain loans and the methods of repaying them.

### Katunayake

The CWF group started in the fishing village of Duwa has launched a "Deevara Sahodarathvaya" (Fishermen's Fellowship) comprising some 250 families with a Working Committee of fifteen. Within the Fellowship are also representatives of fishermen from Kokilai, Nayaru and Mannar who are presently in the area following the 'ethnic' disturbances in the North.

The Katunayake Branch has been active over the issue of trawling in mechanised boats and as a result of these exertions the Fisheries Ministry has now appointed a commission to go into this matter.

A group of 30 women workers in the Free Trade Zone has been organized after 3 meetings at Amanduluwawatte and a discussion on the Free Trade Zone and its conditions is to be held by this group soon. Preliminary discussions have also been held with 10 other FTZ workers in the Katunayake town with a view to forming a similar group in that locality.

The CWF Branch participated in the local agitation organized over the dismissal of a woman worker from a FTZ

establishment on the ground that she had written in verse about the conditions in her work place in an area publication. This agitation resulted in the worker being restored to employment. The position of another FTZ worker who has lost her eyesight as a result of a needle piercing her eye in the course of her work has been highlighted by our Branch and this matter is now an issue for local agitation.

Several education programmes have also been conducted by the Branch including discussion on human rights, student issues and workers' problems. A seminar on the film 'Viragaya' is to be held in December with several well-known speakers participating. A Christmas programme is also planned. This includes a festival of carols and a play on peace arranged by our drama group. An inter-religious dialogue too is planned for December 27.

### Ratmalana

The Ratmalana Branch is now discussing its programme for the coming year.

A Ratmalana Workers Fellowship consisting of workers' representatives, from 10 workplaces has been formed. This Fellowship organized at the grass roots level and cutting across trade union and political differences is expected to

expand and cover around 75 workplaces in the coming year.

Facilities to officials of different unions to meet their membership in the area to discuss their problems has been provided by our Ratmalana Centre. Unions have now fixed on different days to meet their members at our Centre, obviating the need for these workers to visit the Union Head offices in Colombo to attend to their grievances.

The CWF Ratmalana and Moratuwa groups actively assisted in collecting relief in the form of clothes and foodstuffs for the refugees from the East.

The CWF organizer has had to attend a CCA-URM Consultation on Management held abroad and in an international conference on World Religions in Colombo. He has also been called upon to conduct programmes such as that for women plantation workers in the Centre for Society and Religion and in programme on Christmas organized by the National YMCA.

The normal programmes at the Ratmalana Workers Centre have gone on as usual and meeting facilities here have been afforded to other organisations too when not used for CWF and Workers Centre programmes.



**C. W. F. Martyr's Mass for Fr. Mike Rodrigo on November 13 at lunch hour in the YMCA Chapel in the Colombo Fort.**





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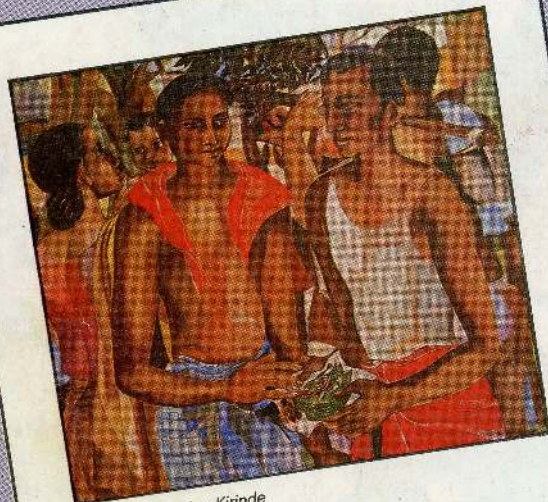
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