



**LANKA**

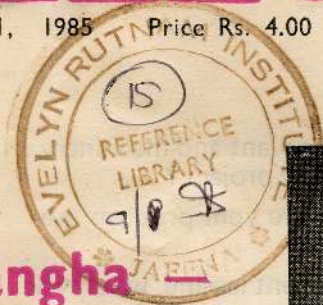
# GUARDIAN

Vol. 7 No. 17

January 1, 1985

Price Rs. 4.00

Registered at the GPO, Sri Lanka QJ/75/N/83



A. P. C. DEBATE

## The Maha Sangha the Power of Veto

— Mervyn de Silva

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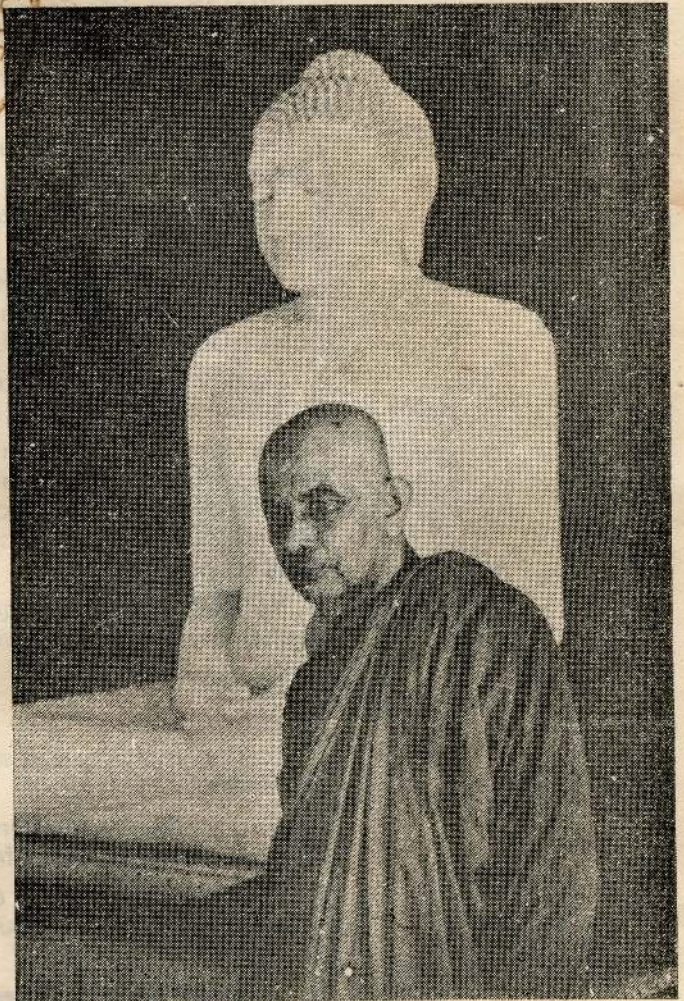
S. W. R. D :

“Federalism, the  
only answer”

\* \* \*

**Vijaya : Yesterday's man  
or tomorrow's voice ?**

— Dayan Jayatileka



- The 1982 polls — Mick Moore
- Third World Left and Democracy — Eqbal Ahmed
- Culture and Communication — Wimal Dissanayake

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## TWO LINES

In the now crucially important field of foreign policy, the UNP seems to be in two minds. To employ the Chinese term "two-line struggle" may be to exaggerate the significance of these emerging differences but the all-too evident fact of sharpening differences calls for serious attention. Especially because the divergences relate to India. And India is no longer just a huge and powerful neighbour. If ever the dangerously unresolved ethnic conflict and the problem of escalating violence is to be eased, Indian cooperation would be indispensable.

Foreign Minister Hameed's one-two punch ("deafear", "blind eye") was quickly followed by Premier Premadasa's sustained anti-India onslaught at the UNP's annual conference. New National Security Minister, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali interprets the President's mind somewhat differently.

In the first place, Sri Lanka, he argues, has only **one** problem with India, the issue of terrorism. Otherwise, the friendship is as firm as ever. (There are moments of friction between the best of friends, he explained). Secondly, the President's policy is to widen Sri Lanka's circle of friends, not to narrow it, the Minister stated. The scheduled visits to Pakistan and the Soviet Union could well be evidence of this Presidential line of thought. The trouble is that in the minds of many top UNP'ers and their big business backers, the USSR is an enemy whom they would dearly love to implicate, along with Gaddafi, PLO and perhaps North Korea, in the Eelamist murder and mayhem. Such UNP'ers belong to the same wall-poster school of global politics as the Lake House cartoonist who placed the polar bear behind the jackal and Eelam Tiger, perhaps for the special attention of General Vernon Walters.

## DIFFERENT TUNE

A trifle, but... the music director H. M. Jayewardene has refused to accept a Presidential Award (Bronze Lion) for his work in the movie "MUHUDU LIHINI". He was also nominated for another award — the best tune. This too was rejected by Mr. Jayewardene who said that these coveted awards properly belonged, in his own view as a music director, to the famed composer Premasiri Khemadasa. Mr. Khemadasa's music in the film "Thunveni Yamaya", he added, far surpassed his own creative effort. "For me to accept these awards would be an insult to our greatest composer", Mr. Jayewardene told the press.

Mr. Khemadasa of course is a composer whose melodies are far from sweet to the ears of the UNP heirarchy not because Sri Kotha music lovers are deaf but because they don't really like Mr. Khemadasa's views on art, politics and life. At least Sri Lanka's creative artists have now sufficient courage to stand up to Sri Kotha's self-appointed patrons of the arts.

Judging by the apologetic note struck by a Film Corporation official, composer H. M. Jayewardene is unlikely to be waylaid by some J. S. S. thug whom the police will fail to identify.

TRENDS  
+  
LETTERS

## BHOPAL TRAGEDY

People's memories are very short, especially in our country. We have seen in all the papers and on the television the horrible disaster in Bhopal. Through the courtesy of your magazine I would like to ask all Cabinet Ministers and senior officials and particularly those scientific experts of the government to read the reports on the Bhopal tragedy appearing in the Dec. 17 issue of NEWSWEEK.

The first report has the title "COULD IT HAPPEN in AMERICA?". Then there is another report called "A WORLDWIDE PROBLEM".

The second article which I must say has much information gathered from various countries starts by asking "In Mexico City, no one asks 'Can it happen here?'. In a sense it is already here". This is because 452 people died, 4248 persons were injured, 1,400 houses were destroyed and 1,600 families dislocated through an explosion in a liquefied petroleum gas storage facility. What

(Continued on page 17)

LANKA

# GUARDIAN

Vol. 7 No. 17, January 1, 1985

Price 4/00

Published fortnightly by  
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co.Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,  
COLOMBO-2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva

Telephone: 5 4 7 5 8 4

Our cover picture shows Ven Madihe Pannasiha Maha Thera.  
The picture was taken by India's top photographer Raghu Rai.

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# A.P.C. — casualty of a double veto

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

Publicly at least, every major political party and significant political force endorses the idea of a negotiated political settlement of the ethnic issue and the connected problem of the now rapidly escalating clash of arms in the north. Many of these groups would in ideal circumstances, prefer a decisive military victory. But the actual conditions on the ground (i.e. the military situation and the present balance of forces) suggests that such a solution, if possible at all, is beyond the reach of the regime and its small armed services.

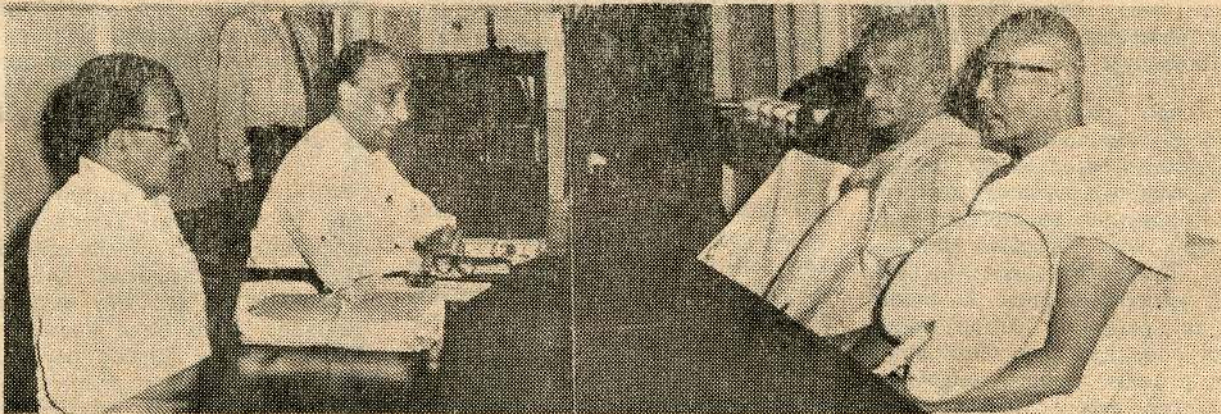
Freedom Party, the main Opposition party, which made a token appearance and withdrew.

The TULF's predicament was rather shrewdly and tersely described by correspondent Eric Silver of the GUARDIAN. Commenting on the military operations in the north in November he wrote: **"The TELO fighters have demonstrated yet again that the relatively moderate Tamil Politicians cannot reach a settlement without their acquiescence. They hold a veto over an inadequate bargain"**

language, religion and culture, it is the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist personality that prevails. But the SLFP was not present.

## The Sangha

Who better to assume that role than the even more authentic custodians of the Sinhala-Buddhist cause — the Sangha? By virtue of ecclesiastical office and tradition, the Mahanayakes of Malwatte and Asgiriya, played the part of spiritual leaders, with Asgiriya's Ven. Palipananda as the more articulate and active. The role of spokesman



The Mahanayakes of Malwatte and Asgiriya speaking to President Jayewardene and Cultural Affairs Minister E. L. B. Hurulle

If then the national political will had expressed its formal commitment to a negotiated settlement, we are now confronted by a buzzing paradox. It is not simply a case of the APC mountain labouring to produce a mouse. It is rather the stark contradiction of a self-styled "All parties conference" producing a document the Draft District and Provincial Council Bill, which all parties have all too readily repudiated! And this includes, the UNP, whose leader, the island's all-powerful President convened and chaired the conference, the TULF which dutifully and patiently participated in all its deliberations, both open and back-stage, and the Sri Lanka

With even greater force it can be said that the Maha Sangha held a veto over a bargain which they perceived as over-generous, perhaps even suicidal. This position was strengthened by the absence of the major (Sinhala) opposition party, the SLFP and to some extent, the SLMP. While the young men with the guns hold the power of veto over their moderate constitutionalist representatives, the TULF, the Opposition (Sinhala) parties would normally have exercised the same function vis-a-vis the government to prevent it from making a more-than-adequate bargain. From its inception the SLFP has had a dual character, populist and nationalist. When the issues are

fell to Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula. But the crucial role of chief ideologue belonged to Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha, Nayake Thera of Colombo's Vajiraramaya. (Cover).

From the very start, the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha took a firm stand — District Councils and no more. In fact, it was President Jayewardene himself who described "the unbridgeable gap" in the most strikingly sharp terms. There was the gap between "District Councils and no more" and the TULF's "Regional councils and no less". Apparently the TULF was prepared to adjust its position somewhat but not sufficiently accommodating for a workable compro-

mise because somebody else held the power of veto. The APC consensus, the President's proposals, call it what you will, fell through the gap, joining Annexure 'C', the Delhi document, into limbo.

So that was the APC (and political settlement) that was.

Why does this problem of conflicting interests simply defy resolution? The most vocal Sinhala spokesmen and the vanguard of the propagandist agitation put the blame squarely on the Tamil separatists, especially those who have taken to the gun. Others accuse the TULF of intransigence. Single-mindedly Mr. Mathew, seeing no difference between the two but only a division of labour, blames the TULF for the terrorism. (Dr. Neville Fernando ex-MP, one of the UNP "dissident" group that is now quite active, sees Mr. Thondaman rather than the TULF as the main enemy).

For their part, the TULF and the Tamil Community, particularly the Colombo-based Tamils, caught in the crunch, psychological and physical hostages to the situation finds fault with Sinhalese communalists. They argue that the talks proved abortive because the monks were not prepared for any compromise, and that the whole negotiating process went wrong when the clergy was "dragged into politics".

But the clergy in politics is no recent phenomenon. The UNP was backed to the hilt by the Catholic Church right up to the 1960's when the schools' take-over and the abortive coup of 1962 taught it a salutary lesson and forced it to mend its ways. The UNP enjoyed the patronage of the conservative Sangha in the days of the Senanayakes. Between the abuse of that vulgar buccaneer, Sir John and the clever co-optation of a rival group of monks by S.W.R.D., we saw the institutionalisation of this role in the Eksath Bhikku Peramuna.

Some monks rallied to the UNP's agitational cause when a vanquished

Sri Kotha adopted Sinhala-Buddhist Patriotism as its only refuge and hope of recovery in 1958. J.R.'s "holy march to Kandy" (how History plays cruel, ironic tricks on politicians) doomed the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact which in the light of today's event may well have saved this nation a great deal of strife and pain. Mr. Bandaranaike's assassination by a demented monk saw a temporary eclipse of the so called "political bhikku".

Comes 1966, and it is Mrs. Bandaranaike's turn to hit the road in white saree from a park named after Sri Lanka's best loved queen and heroine, Vihara Maha Devi. A monk is shot in the street demo and Mr. Prins Goonesekera carries the blood-stained saffron robe to Parliament to herald the death of the Dudley-Chelvanayakam pact. The UNP-SLFP tit-for-tat completes the circle of irony but History repeats itself again, today. Marx was wrong. History does not repeat itself first as tragedy, then as farce. Here in this land of paradise, it is farce first and tragic farce next.

Politically-minded monks have associated themselves with prominent politicians (Philip Gunawardene R. G. Senanayake, K. M. P. Rajaratne) or dedicated and militant polemicists and agitators (L. H. Mettananda, F. R. Jayasuriya, N. Q. Dias etc) in recent times. **Although they have belonged to organisations, exclusively ecclesiastical or lay, their direct interventions have been few and principally issue-oriented.**

The current crisis is of a different order. Communal tension, it is true, is the chief component. The causes of this tension, the chief contributory factors, are varied and complex. Contributors to this journal like Dr. Newton Gunasinghe have ably analysed the economic factors while Dr. Kumari Jayawardena placed today's conflict in a much broader historical perspective.

Politics in my own view, are very much in command — politics, ideology, ethnic consciousness, identity.

## Nation-state

In the brilliantly composed opening passage of his essay on 'Racism and the politics of under development', A. Sivanandan (RACE AND CLASS Sept 1984) observed that colonialism "devised in order to rule what it integrated in order to exploit". Those deep divisions were not healed through the unifying force of an anti-colonial national independence struggle, which embraced the nation's elite and its people. In India, in Indonesia, in Vietnam and other places, the historic and heroic experience of genuinely popular nationalist struggle forged a national consciousness. Today, in India, this same consciousness, four decades after victory, is engaged in fierce battle with other types of identity, regional, disparate. In Pakistan, the military dictatorship tries to cloak itself in a popular legitimacy from the only source from which the nation-state, by birth and being, derives such legitimacy, Islam. The concept of the European nation-state, the British implantation itself is under grave threat.

The stepped-up military activities of the Tamil separatists, the surprising range of the operational terrain, the casualties, and, most disturbing of all, the exodus of refugees, have been deadly body blows on the Sinhala psyche. It almost makes the primordial fear of division a real, physical threat.

Meanwhile the high-visibility of the Tamilnadu connection, and the war of words with Delhi and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi himself have also rekindled the atavistic dread deep in the Sinhala mind — the danger of incursion and intervention from the hostile North, the historic enemy.

In the absence of a strongly welded national consciousness (at best, an idea to which polite ritual homage was paid by the western-educated Sinhala and Tamil middle class) these profoundly unsettling threat perceptions result in a compulsive and defensive reflex — the retreat to and reinforcement of what an American

(Continued on page 24)

# VIJAYA : GOING AGAINST THE TIDE

Dayan Jayatilleka

There is a conspiracy of silence. It extends from the mainstream press to the traditional left. It is directed to ignore or minimize the significance of one of the most interesting political interventions in recent times, namely Vijaya Kumaratunga's speech at the New Town Hall, on the 7th anniversary of the Nava Sama Samaja party. The mainstream press ignores it to teach Mr. Kumaratunga a lesson: even he isn't big enough to challenge chauvinism. The orthodox Left minimizes it because he has outflanked them.

But Vijaya has "dared to go against the tide". Early in his speech he posed questions of fundamental importance: "They tell us there's a war on, but whose war is this anyway? And against whom are we fighting? They report the number of alleged terrorists killed in letters as large as a coconut, but they report the increase in the price of coconuts, in print as small as lice! One UNP statwart wants us to defend the nation with spades and sickles, but is it the nation he wants us to protect or the ill-gotten loot of this corrupt regime?"

There is only one real enemy and that is State-Terrorism, and only one real war, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, said Kumaratunga. A cliché, left sophisticates might exclaim, but in this atmosphere of growing hysteria some of us would prefer, following Debray in 'Prison Writings' to "stick by the old truisms, even if is a little late".

Then a step back into history: 1944 — J. R. Jayewardene's policy

of Sinhala Only at a time when the Left and Bandaranaike stood for Sinhala and Tamil as official languages. 1951-52 and the SLFP's original, principled position. 1957 — the UNP's march to Kandy opposing the B-C Pact. Much to my surprise, Vijaya went on to remind the audience, that in 1961, Mrs. Bandaranaike sent the Army to Jaffna to crush a peaceful Satyagraha campaign. Now it is customary for anti-UNPers to blame the UNP for the deterioration of relations between the two peoples, but Mrs. B's act in sending the Army North in '61, is remembered nostalgically as an example of the plaintive cry is "Richard Udu-gama, where are you when we need you now?" For Kumaratunga to denounce the 1961 decision was an act of remarkable courage.

Kumaratunga went on to vilify the SLFP on the 'language of the courts' issue of the '60s. In the North and East, he said, the judge was Tamil, the Plaintiff was Tamil, the defendant was Tamil, the jury was Tamil, but the Govt insisted on the trial being conducted in Sinhala!

As for the current crisis, he blamed it on the UNP's failure to implement its own 1977 Election pledge and convene the RTC much earlier.

What was striking was the genuine emotion with which he spoke of the suffering of the Tamil people today. He spoke of the devastation of the fishing community, the disruption of agriculture and the lack of foodstuffs, making an explicit critique of the Prohi-

bited Zone and the 61 hour curfew. But what was most stunning was when he took on the hardline sections of the Buddhist clergy. Turning to those members of the (progressive) clergy who were in the audience, bowing low and beseeching, with clasped hands, their forgiveness, he then straightened up and challenged those who, when they say 'May all living beings be happy', actually mean, 'May all Sinhala beings be happy'. "How can we be happy when we read in the newspapers of hundreds shot dead, and we know they are not terrorists; when innocent people are being starved out, and children cannot be fetched milk-food because of the 61 hour curfew? No, we are not happy. Our hearts are filled with sorrow. There is no limit to our unhappiness," cried Vijaya to sustained applause from a two thousand strong audience.

Criticizing the Govt. for opening up new airstrips in Vavuniya, he went on to observe that in the North, even if one has the money, there is nothing to buy or one cannot safely go outdoors to buy it. In South, there are goods to buy but only the rich can afford them while the majority of Sinhalese cannot.

Vijaya retains a faith (touching, under the present circumstances) that neither the Sinhala nor the Tamil peoples are racist, and points to the rejection of Ratne Deshapriya Senanayake's Sinhala-Buddhist tune in Minneriya, an electorate which has no Tamil voters on its rolls, and on the other

hand, the vote for Hector Kobekaduwa over Kumar Ponnambalam in Jaffna. He pleads strongly for unity of Left, and under its leadership, a united struggle against "the UNP regime and the capitalist class". He still confuses 'unitary' with 'united' and needs reminding that SWRD Bandaranaike was once a committed federalist, and in any case, the only way to keep Sri Lanka united, if that is what he wants is to abandon the unitary system in favour of what the much-quoted (pro-Sri Lanka) 'Indian Express' calls "a liberal federal structure".

Vijaya clearly stole the show at the New Town Hall, outflanking the CPSL, Gen. Sec. K. P. Silva who made the kind of speech that has succeeded in making CPs very unpopular with guerilla movements throughout the Third World. ("Individual terrorism, dividing the working class, weakening the anti-imperialist struggle" etc. etc.) Vasu compared J. R. J. to Louis Bonaparte. He also said that a united Left could evoke considerable sympathy within the lower and middle echelons of the Armed Forces, which after all, is a microcosm of society." At the end of the evening, it was clear that Vijaya, making the kind of speech that Vasu used to in the early — mid 70's, has emerged as the best speaker in Sri Lankan politics today, with the exception of Rohana Wijeweera, and perhaps Rev. Madoluwawe Sobhitha.

Vijaya and Chandrika Kumaratunga have told this writer on separate occasions that they stand for a genuine devolution of power as a solution to the National Question and that they consider the B. C. Pact, basis for discussion though they think that certain revisions are necessary. Vijaya has also sent an article to the major newspapers calling for the Govt. to commence negotiations with the militant Tamil youth, using if necessary, the TULF and the CWC as intermediaries. He suggests that the talks take place in a country other than Sri Lanka and India.

Doubtless Vijaya's levels of consciousness is far ahead of his party, and he is supposed to have said that even if half the party deserts him, he will not depart from his present stand. A leading member of the Citizens Committee for National Harmony exclaimed that Vijaya's speech signals something qualitatively new in Sri Lankan politics, going on to comment that the country is looking for rational, courageous and imaginative leadership. If Kumaratunga goes public on the need for substantial devolution and a dialogue with the militants, and sticks to it consistently, he just might fill this political vacuum. But will Vijaya help build the Peace and anti-racist movements? Will he maintain even his present line consistently? There are always doubts, given the vacillatory nature of the petty bourgeoisie and the impulses of parliamentary politics. We have after all, the examples of conscious Marxists like Philip, the LSSP and CPSL in 1966, and Rohana Wijeweera who slid down the slippery path of opportunism and social-chauvinism ('socialism in words and chauvinism in political practice' to use Lenin's definition.)

For now, at any rate, Vijaya has taken a stand, risking the loss of his mass base. He says "they will denounce me now, but in the long run, the people will realize." In this he has set an example for the Left parties and progressive intelligentsia, and with much less to lose than Vijaya. And it won't be the first time in the 'Third World' that a non-Marxist but left-populists consistent liberal-democrats, revolutionary democrats have outflanked 'conscious Marxists' — after all, in the Philippines, Senator Jose Diokno and 'Butz' Aguino (Benigno's brother) are considered by the NPA and the people, to be more progressive than the Communist Party.

The final judgement on Vijaya's performance came from Tissa Wijeyaratne, ex-Communist, ex-Ambassador, and always an incisive intellectual: "Either he is finished, or he is the future."

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# Sangha ready to lay down their lives — Ven. Dr. Rahula

“The proposed legislation set out by the All Party Conference will enable the creation of a Eelam that terrorists are asking for. Therefore we are totally against it and will in no way allow it to be implemented” declared Ven Dr. Walpola Rahula, the Secretary of the Supreme Sangha Council and the Vice Chancellor of Kelaniya University on Saturday.

Ven. Thero speaking at a meeting convened by the Sinhala Balamandalaya to protest against proposals put forth by the All-Party Conference to solve the country's ethnic problem vowed that as in history the Sangha was ready to lay down their lives in fighting this threat to the sovereignty of the country.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting about 500 participants which included Nayake Theros from all parts of the country offered white flowers to the Bodhi and carried out a Satyak Kriya.

Ven. Dr. Rahula explaining the Sangha's plan of action against the proposals said all possible peaceful avenues would be used to prevent it, failing which “there is a weapon that Sangha has. Using that weapon will wage a battle all over the country. The police, the armed forces or any other force will not stop us” he said.

If anything should be sent before Parliament for legislation it should be the set of proposals that the Supreme Sangha Council submitted to the APC and no other, he demanded, adding “not even an inch more can be given beyond the District Development Councils.”

As a beginning, he said the Sangha would organise protest meetings in temples throughout the country and would pressurise the MPs to reject the proposals.

“If the government still insists on going ahead with the proposals we will appeal to the President to hold a referendum, on the issue.

The patron of the Sinhala Balamandalaya, Ven. Madihe Pannasiha said they examined the proposals for four hours and “We cannot agree to four of the conditions.”

He said “the proposed facility for DDCs to merge is very dangerous. There is no necessity for DDCs in the south to get together, but all five DDCs in the North will definitely get together. Then the North will immediately get the Federal status. One Minister will control all five districts. At present there are no Sinhala people left in the North. If a Federal state is created then they will bring trained soldiers from South India. It will also be easy for them to get arms and ammunition.

“If the 15,000 trained people there obtain new weapons then they can invade Sinhala areas. If that happens can we who cannot control terrorism be able to face their arms and their troops.

“We are also opposed to the Second Chamber as a large sum of money needs to be spent on it. If these proposals are implemented Buddhists will have to obtain visas to go to the Temple of the Tooth and Sri Pada. This is the time when the Sangha must be united and show their power,” Ven Pannasiha said.

The President of the Sinhala Balamandalaya, Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha pointed out that the purpose of the APC was to solve the problems of the Tamil people “but todate the terrorists activities have not diminished. They don't care at all for the proposals. How can you find a cure when you don't know the problem of the Tamil people? No one has

inquired into this question”.

He said “all the time we have been trying to find a cure without knowing what the disease is. By these methods terrorism will not be eliminated nor will Tamil problem be solved.

“There must be relief to the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people who are crying in pain as a result of being affected by acts of terrorists. While terrorism flourishes there is not much point in putting forth proposals. This is like putting a fingerprint on a deed while the patient is on the death bed. First we must cure the patient and then we can sign the deed.

“If by some way these proposals are approved then the Sangha will be willing to sacrifice the lives of ten theros for every clause. We have no families nor any wealth. If one can die before you grow old that is also a comfort. We are ready to sacrifice our lives, for the sake of our country, race and religion, if not future generations will ask whether we were sleeping while the proposals were being approved.

“The Sangha is even prepared to beg and get food for the soldiers” he said adding “while the Sangha make all effort to get these proposals withdrawn, there may be a need for the Sangha to give an injection to the patient if he cannot be cured with ginger and corriander”. The Nayake Thero of the Bellanwila Raja Maha Viharaya, Dr. Bellanwila Wimalaratne Thero said that steps must be taken to eliminate the incalculable suffering imposed on the preace loving Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim people, while the nation's development activities have been stopped. If these proposals are implemented Eelam will be written in the form of a deed for terrorists, while the conflict between the communities are heightened”.

—“Island” (Dec. 24)

# Mrs. Bandaranaike's statement

Many people who are deeply concerned with the future of our land, have sought my views on the Draft Legislation, placed before the 'All Party Conference' on December 14th 1984.

As the President stated, the purpose of the 'All-Party Conference' was to discuss, and to seek solution, to the daily growing problems in regard to ethnic affairs, and terrorism. The question is, whether the draft legislation, provides a solution which the people of Sri Lanka can accept.

I believe the Government had several purposes in view, having regard to the way in which the 'All-Party Conference' was conducted. **Firstly**, to wear down the terrorists by military action, while the Conference dragged on, so that the terrorists, and by the same token, the Tamil leaders, would become more amenable to peace on any terms, to gain a respite. This in my opinion was a wrong assessment; the terrorists are actually extending their operations Southwards, in Padaviya, for example. **Secondly**, to change the image of Sri Lanka internationally, from that of a nation mistreating its minorities, to that of a nation embattled by terrorists. **Thirdly**, to get Opposition parties to solve for the Government many problematical issues, ranging from devolution to University education and language rights. Upon these matters the Government was wary of committing itself without a corresponding commitment by Opposition political parties.

The elimination of political opposition, of course, has always been a major objective of this Government — the most glaring instance being the deprivation of my civic rights, by a Special Presidential Commission, one of whose members was subsequently discredited by a judgment of the Supreme Court. The Government really dissipated its energies in such useless exercises instead of making



a genuine and compassionate attempt to solve the real problems of the people, and eliminating the roots of terrorism which has been a continuous feature from 1977. The terrorism inflicted by the Government on the process of free elections at the Jaffna Development Council Elections in 1981 greatly aggravated the situation in the North. It is pertinent to mention at this stage that it took the SLFP-led Government only two months to successfully deal with the Island-wide Insurrection in 1971, although the Emergency was continued as a preventive measure, in accordance with the best advice in the country available at that time.

I wish to make it abundantly clear, that discussion and compromise in the abstract, or upon academic terms, is meaningless unless it leads to fruitful results — the result in this case being, the abandonment by the Tamils of their 'Eelam' demand, the acceptance by them of Sri Lanka as a unitary state, and the turning away from terrorist methods by those who engaged in them. If a settlement is arrived at, which is satisfactory to the representatives of the Sinhala and the Tamil people, which will end terrorism in the North and East, and which will make it possible for the writ and authority of the Government of Sri Lanka to run from Devinuvara to Point Pedro and from Puttalam to Batticaloa, then, even if I think that such a settlement is far from perfect, I would do

nothing to agitate against it. On the other hand, if the so-called 'solution' consists of nothing more than a series of legislative 'give-aways' devoid of results, with the problems of terrorism in the North and the East unsolved, and awaiting a resolution by military means, I would have no choice but to declare that the so-called 'solution' is unsatisfactory — whether the Tamil leaders accept it, or not.

How should the people judge the draft legislation, to see whether it endangers the fundamental interests of the people, and whether it provides a solution to the 'daily growing problems in regard to ethnic affairs and terrorism.

I would suggest the following tests:

1. Would these draft laws, if passed, really bring about a new relationship between the Tamil people and the Sinhala people? Would the Tamils feel that the ties that unite them to the Sinhala people, transcended the sympathy they feel for their own terrorist youth, as well as their affinity for those across Palk Strait, who speak the same language?

2. Would these draft laws ensure an end to terrorism in the North and East? The Tamil leaders would probably say that they do not exercise any control over the terrorists. But if they really feel that they want terrorism to end, they could —

(a) appeal to the terrorists to lay down their arms and to surrender to the security forces, and appeal to the Government for an amnesty;

(b) appeal to the State Government of Tamil Nadu to repatriate all 'refugees' from Sri Lanka and to close all their camps;

(c) appeal to all foreign Governments, not to accord 'refugee status' or 'asylum' to expatriate Tamils; and

(d) appeal to all expatriate Tamils, not to engage in propaganda hostile to Sri Lanka;

Would the Tamil leaders be willing to do these these things? — I sincerely hope that they would be able to do so.

(3) Would these draft laws, be acceptable to the Tamils, to use their own words, as a 'viable alternative for Eelam?' Would they be willing to publicly renounce the goal of 'Eelam' and appeal to all Sri Lankan Tamils to do likewise, both in Sri Lanka and abroad?

(4) Would these draft laws, make the writ and authority of the Government of Sri Lanka, effective from Devinuwara to Point Pedro, and from Puttalam to Batticaloa? Or would it, in the absence of a Sinhala population in the North, become an empty mockery?

Frankly, I am sceptical whether these draft laws can constitute the basis for a 'political solution' to the ethnic problem, or to the problem of terrorism; and after a careful consideration of the draft legislation, I have come to the conclusion that all the questions I have posed here must be answered in the negative, and that the people of the country would be well advised to reject the draft legislation, clearly and categorically.

Let me begin with the General Elections of 1977. Commencing with August 1977, there have been serious outbreaks of communal violence between the Sinhala and Tamil peoples, the worst being the outbreak in July 1983, with the brutal killing of Tamil political prisoners held in Government Jails, not once, but twice. Though there has been outbreaks of communal violence before as in 1958 when my late husband Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was the Prime Minister, the whole country, including the Tamils know that the law was being enforced even-handedly and that successive SLFP Governments accepted their obligation to protect Tamil lives and property, by punishing wrongdoers

But after 1977, there was a significant difference. In September 1981, President Jayewardene, speaking to the All-Island Executive Committee of the U.N.P. at the Ramakrishna Hall at Wellawatte declared: "members of my own party, both inside and outside Parliament, have incited the communal violence, and the arson, murders, looting and rapes, that had taken place. "He said he was ashamed to lead the Party in such circumstances. But the Government significantly refrained from taking any action under the Criminal Laws of the land, against these Party men who were known to the wrongdoers. Likewise, in 1983, no serious steps were taken to punish anyone for the horrors committed. Is it surprising that many Tamils are bitter and have suspicions that the violence in 1983, was inspired in the first instance by Government thugs and hoodlums and which later got out of hand.

Another aspect of the draft legislation is the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution, in the draft Tenth Amendment, setting out the powers of the Central Government which are 'out of bounds' for District Councils and Provincial Councils. But this provision can be meaningful only if the political authority of the Central Government is accepted by the people in the Districts concerned. The Eighth Schedule reserves some twenty four subjects to the care of the Central Government; these include subject like National Policy Defence, Internal Security, Foreign Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, Justice, Ports and Harbours, Aviation and Air Force, National Transport, Shipping and Navigation Customs. The policy of the Central Government in areas of this magnitude can be effectively enforced only if it has the political power to do so.

Furthermore, having regard to the provisions of Sections 92, 93, 94, 108, of the Draft Law on Provincial and District Councils, one is not quite certain if in the actual constitution of the first District and Provincial Councils it is intended to consult the wishes of the people in regard to the

membership they would like to elect for the District Council or whether they desire to form Provincial Councils; it would appear that the proposed legislation is merely to legalise the handover of the North and East of Sri Lanka to the T. U. L. F. as Provincial Councils, which would then be exercising 'the legislative power of the region' as contemplated in the document called ANNEXURE C, which is described as "the proposals which.....emerged as a result of discussions in Colombo and New Delhi". The Ordinances enacted by the District Councils and Provincial Councils are not like the by-laws under the old Development Council Act, which have to be confirmed by Parliament; these Ordinances are presented to the President; and Parliament has nothing to do with them.

It is also clear that the concept of Provincial Councils with Chief Ministers and Boards of Ministers for the different Provinces will, without a doubt, lead to the division of the rest of the country too, on narrow sectarian and personal interests.

Furthermore, the proposed Council of State is not a Second Chamber as normally understood, but only a permanent bargaining or agitational forum for narrow, racial and sectarian interests. So far as I know the problems referred to the 'All-Party Conference' did not include any minority grievances in the seven provinces, outside the North and East. I am completely at a loss to understand why, in these circumstances, the President has found it necessary to recommend the creation of such an 'agitational base or forum' — unless, of course, the purpose is to divert attention from the areas where the real problem exists, i.e., the North and the East. But, I can see many dangers in such an approach, especially in the Kandyan areas; I think it is the President's express intention to grant citizenship to all Indians who at present come under the category of 'stateless persons'. The SLFP is firmly of the view that the problem of 'stateless

(Continued on page 12)

# Mahanayake writes to the President

The Ven. Palipane Chandananda Mahanayake of Asgiriya Chapter has, in a memorandum sent to the Presidents on behalf of the Supreme Council of Maha Sangha, explained, among other things, why he opted not to participate in the All Party Conference (APC).

The full text of the memorandum is as follows:

## Proposed Draft Legislation

We have already proposed to you on 14.12.1984 that,

- the proposals you placed before the APC on 14.12.1984 be deferred in the absence of an atmosphere conducive for discussing draft legislation

- the press censorships be lifted to enable publication of draft legislation so that the people would be able to freely air their views

- and also informed you that we would submit our views after discussing the proposals with the Sangha and acquiring a proper understanding of them.

We have, however, been informed that a plenary session of the APC would be held on 21.12.1984 to discuss the proposals.

I received some of the relevant documents only on 18.12.1984. I am not in receipt of certain other documents. I have not received the Schedule I mentioned in Section 17 of the District and Provincial Councils Draft Bill either. It is something important which I should necessarily know.

The duties and responsibilities that should be entrusted to the District Councils were spelt out in the memorandum submitted by the Supreme Council of the Sangha earlier. Reference to these duties and responsibilities has been made in the United National Party's memorandum on Proposals for Decentralized Government dated 20.2.1983.

Your Excellency, we hope to express our views in detail after studying the draft legislations and the Schedule I, which we are yet to receive, and discussing them with the Sangha. In the meantime, we wish to refer to the following basic matters.

(1) District Councils should be elected by the people. We, therefore, are opposed to the arrangement envisaged in 93 (1) (2) (a). It is anti-democratic to extend the tenure of a democratically elected Council without holding a due election.

(2) We are opposed to Section 94 as well that "and the President shall nominate all the members of such District Council" nullifies the sovereignty of the people.

(3) We are opposed to the establishment of an inter-district authority as provided for in Section 95 and relevant sub-sections. We have been against this from the outset.

(4) The President stated on several occasions that one District Council should be allowed to merge with another or several others if the people concerned expressed their consent through a referendum.

We on such occasions opposed such procedure explaining the repercussions that could follow therefrom.

(5) Section 107 provides for merging of District Councils into Provincial councils by a majority vote of the membership, and not by a referendum.

(6) As a result the power to extend the tenure until the dissolution of Parliament becomes operative under this Act thus preventing holding of an election for six years. This too is tantamount to depriving the people of their right.

For the present we confine our protestations relating to the District and provincial Councils Draft Bill to above. And we hope to make more submissions after receiving the Schedule I.

(7) Tenth amendment to the Constitution. We have earlier lodged our protest against the proposed Council of States with reasons. It is our belief that this Council will not help either contain terrorism or eradicate communalism and it will only create "a political sanctuary" for a certain section at a massive cost of the national wealth.

We hope to make more submissions when time and opportunity permit us to do so.

Ven. Palipane Chandananda Mahanayake Thera of the Asgiriya Chapter on behalf of the Samastha Lanka Uttara Maha Sangha Sabha.

—"DAILY NEWS" (Dec 24)

# Unfair dismissal, says Mathew

Former Industries Minister Cyril Mathew complained that he had been unfairly sacked "without calling upon me to explain my conduct" and declared that the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Special Envoy G. Parthasarathy himself had requested the government that he be removed from the Cabinet.

"The reason given by the President for my dismissal was that I had broken the principle of Cabinet Government by criticising the APC proposals". But Mr. Mathew claimed that to date those proposals had not been placed before the Cabinet, nor were they approved by the party.

He told newsmen who gathered at his residence at Barnes Place that the President had taken exception to his making public his views on the APC proposals, while the President himself had welcomed free discussion of the proposals at public meetings. "I was only exercising my right to criticise".

"What is the point in being a Minister or a MP if you can't speak on something which is not a policy decision of the party or the Cabinet?"

He said he had no desire to drop his opposition to the proposals or resign from his parliamentary seat "because I opposed for valid reasons".

"In fact I have written to the General Secretary of the UNP and Secretary General of Parliament withdrawing my undated letter of resignation I submitted in 1982, along with other MP's, he added.

Mr. Mathew pointed out that most government MP's opposed the proposals put forward by the APC to resolve the ethnic problem. They could become victims of those letters as a result. Therefore, they too, should withdraw those "blank letters of resignation".

"However according to information I have received, these proposals will be withdrawn by Wed-

nesday", he said adding "If they want to implement them they must hold an election".

He called on all Sinhalese to drop all political differences and unite to fight such proposals. "There is a war in the country; we must finish the war before we talk peace".

Replying to questions about his personal security as he would no longer get any police protection, he quipped; "How can police protect me if they can't protect themselves? People will protect me."

Mr. Mathew also lamented that none of his colleagues had bothered

to come and see him nor even call him since his dismissal.

Asked by reporters whether his dismissal was the culmination of a TULF campaign against him, Mr. Mathew said leaving aside the TULF, Mr. G. Parthasarathy himself had requested his removal from the Cabinet.

Questioned as to whether he would go before the Supreme Court or a Parliamentary Disciplinary Committee in the event of the President wanting him removed from Party and Parliament, Mr. Mathew said the things haven't come to that position yet for him to decide.

— "Island" (Dec. 25)

## Respect human rights, democracy say Asian youth

YOUTH delegations from over 20 Asian and Pacific countries meeting in the Asian Youth Assembly in Delhi recently have unanimously called on the Sri Lankan government to "withdraw immediately" all legislation undermining human rights in the country.

Sponsored by the regional inter-church organisation of Protestant Christian churches in the Asia/Pacific Region, the Asian Youth Assembly brought together delegations of church youth as well as of related secular peoples' movements to arrive at a common understanding of Asian realities and to project a better vision for the future role of Asian youth in their various societies.

In its resolution following discussion of the Sri Lankan political crisis, the Assembly condemned the "increasing harrassment of peoples' organisations by the State, including the banning of popular political movements". It also called on the Sri Lankan government to fully restore university student rights and to take action against police personnel responsible for the recent student killings in the Colombo and Peradeniya Universities.

In its comment on repressive laws, the Assembly specifically urged the withdrawal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the power given to the armed forces to dispose of dead bodies without recourse to the normal and proper judicial process.

The Assembly further cautioned the government of Sri Lanka over its "increasing involvement with the strategic interests of the United States of America" urged the government to "reject the use of the techniques of Israeli State terror", appealed to Sri Lanka to pursue a genuinely Non-Aligned foreign policy".

The nearly 300 young women and men from Asian and Pacific churches and related social action groups also passed resolutions warning against "super-power support for military-dictatorial regimes which protect their economic interests" in the region and in particular, condemning Japan's military build-up, and opposing "any triangular military alliance between South Korea, Japan and the USA".

(Continued on page 14)

# Amirthalingam's statement

The following statement was issued by Mr. A. Amirthalingam, Secretary-General of the Tamil United Liberation Front after the All Party Conference on Friday.

In response to an invitation from President Jayewardene dated December 28, 1983, the TULF agreed to attend the All Party Conference summoned for January 10, 1984 on the basis of certain proposals "to enable them to arrive at an acceptable solution to the present problems facing the Tamil community in Sri Lanka".

When those proposals were abandoned, the TULF would normally have withdrawn from the conference. But, we continued to participate and pursue the search for an acceptable viable alternative to our demand for an independent State of Tamil Eelam.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India, who "offered her good offices to enable a final solution to be reached" and her Special Envoy Mr. G. Parthasarathy played a very big part in persuading the TULF to continue the negotiatory process.

In view of certain aspersions cast by some people on India's role in this matter, it behoves me to place this fact on record. India has been the biggest factor working for a peaceful political solution.

In the very first statement we made at the Conference, we indicated that though we were elected on a mandate to work for a separate State, if an acceptable and viable alternative is offered, we were willing to recommend it to our people.

Even in the face of total absence of positive response on the part of leading Government Members — even when the major Sinhala Opposition party avoided the responsibility by walking out — we continued to participate because of our party's commitment to non-violence an integral part of which is the path of negotiation.

We indicated that a solution based on a Tamil linguistic region consisting of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, granting regional autonomy to the Tamil nation as contained in the proposals placed before this Conference by the Ceylon Workers' Congress may be one we could recommend to the Tamil people.

We also said that the regional body should be, "empowered to enact laws and exercise executive powers in relation thereto on certain specified listed subjects, including the maintenance of internal law and order in the Region, the administration of justice, social and economic development, cultural matters and land policy".

A careful study of the provisions of the draft bills placed before the Conference will convince anyone that they fall far short of the regional autonomy indicated above.

When we accepted the scheme of District Development Councils in 1980, it was clearly understood that it was not meant to be an alternative to our demand for a separate State.

It was hoped that it may help to solve some of the pressing problems, like colonization, and ease tensions thereby creating the climate for a solution to the larger political question.

The total failure of the Government to work that scheme in the proper spirit has largely contributed to the present situation. The repetition of the provisions of the same law in the present draft is totally unacceptable to the Tamil people.

The bills do not embody a proper scheme of devolution or autonomy. Devolution to the larger unit should be done by the Constitution and that unit may delegate any functions to the smaller unit.

I am surprised that even these meagre and inadequate provisions are

being opposed by some responsible persons.

We have endeavoured both in the All Party conference and in informal discussions outside to work out a peaceful solution.

Time is running out. The Tamil areas are under virtual seige. Normal life has come to a stand-still. Death, arson, rape and looting, stalk our areas. Starvation is staring the poor people in the face.

This is the grim reality of the situation in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

We are constrained to state that the two Bills before this Conference do not embody any scheme of autonomy which could be accepted by the Tamil People, or their accredited representatives the Tamil United Liberation Front.

— "DAILY NEWS" (Dec 24)

## Mrs. Bandaranaike's . . .

(Continued from page 9)

persons' should not be linked with the present burning questions concerning the North and the East.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party withdrew from the 'All-Party Conference' because it was felt there was no sincere effort at working out a national solution on a national consensus, but was directed only to delay, to save face, to confuse and to divide, while at the same time displaying to the world that a serious effort was being made here to arrive at a political solution. The position of my party, however, has always been a principled one, which placed the interests of the people of Sri Lanka, before sectarian, party or communal interests. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party has refrained from saying or doing anything to inflame communal passions.

# 'Federation as the only solution to our political problems'

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike

Under the auspices of the Students' Congress Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, B. A. (Oxon), Barrister-at-Law, delivered a very interesting lecture on "Federation as the only Solution to our Political Problems". Dr. Isaac Thambyah presided.

Mr. Bandaranaike said that it was necessary in the first place to realise the importance of the present time. A revision of the constitution was due in 1928. A satisfactory measure of self-government was expected. It was therefore necessary to think very clearly and realise in its entirety the whole political question. A false step taken, a false proposal made now would be very difficult to retrieve in the future. They all wanted self-government. The question remained what was the measure of self government they were aiming at.

There was briefly two forms of Government met with in Ceylon. One form was the "Nindagama" system of land tenure, the other was the Headmen system of provincial administration.

The Nindagama system was a feudal form of Government. As long as the feudal dues were paid (they were always paid in kind) no notice was taken of anything else. In the Headmen system, the village was considered as the unit. The King had his various Disawas, Rate Mahatmayas, etc. The various provinces were divided and subdivided till one came to Gansabawa. The Gansabawas was composed of the head of each family of all those in the village irrespective of wealth. The litigants had the right to appeal to the King himself but the Gansabawas' decision was rarely upset. All that meant that the whole land was a loose federation bound by

one common oath to the King. When the British came to the island they introduced a centralised form of Government. That centralised form of Government as introduced had a semblance of a free institution. Even to the present day it was nothing else but a bureaucratic form of Government.

The lecturer then referred to the course of political agitation for larger measure of reforms. It didn't start till 1915 when the riots took place. The lecturer then referred to the great part played by Sir P. Ramanathan then the Educated Ceylonese Member. Sir P. Arunachalam started the National Congress. It was he who fathered the movement for agitation for reform. When the Congress was started the articles to which all the members subscribed themselves was that their aim and goal should be self Government within the Empire. Beyond the securing of a few more seats in the Legislative Council nothing else was done. Those who agitated for reform concentrated their whole energies on arguing in two directions on fallacious bases. The system was not questioned as to its suitability, secondly they aimed at copying the type of Government as existing in England. The result was that the Legislative Council at present was a most mongrel assembly. It was an assembly of the people in theory but in reality it was utterly useless. Various compromises were made. They were Government Members who were not responsible to any body of voters. The territorial principle was acknowledged, the communal principle acquiesced and when all was said and done the assembly had no real power. The Legislative Council had a certain measure of control over the

*From the Ceylon Morning Leader, Saturday July 17, 1926*

finances, but that did not amount to much. The Executive Council was divorced from the Legislative Council which looked like a School Boys Debating Society. That was the nett result of the agitation of the last few years. The price paid for it was the Sinhalese-Tamil split and the Low Country and the Kandyan Sinhalese split. The minorities, looked with mistrust one at the other. It was wrong to think that the differences were not fundamental. There were men who thought that the differences were created by a few ambitious persons and when those persons died the differences would disappear. A hundred years ago there were no such differences. They did not appear because the Englishman sat on the heads of the Tamil, The low-country Sinhalese and the Kandyan Sinhalese.

The moment they began to speak of taking the Government in their hands, then the differences that were lying dormant smouldered forth. If they considered past history they would see that the three communities, the Tamils, the Low Country Sinhalese and the Kandyan Sinhalese had lived for over a thousand years in Ceylon and had not shown any tendency to merge. They preserved their language, their customs, their religion. He would be a very rash man who would pin his faith on the gradual disappearance of those differences.

The lecturer then proceeded to outline the difficulties that would crop up. The legislative Council would under the anticipated reformed Government, elect their Prime Minister and the various Ministers. Now there was a certain proportion of members to represent the various

communities. If that proportion was maintained, in the ministry too the communities would demand a certain proportion.

A centralised form of Government assumed a homogenous whole. He knew no part of the world where a Government was carried on under such conflicting circumstances as would be experienced in Ceylon.

Those would be the troubles if a centralised form of Government was introduced into countries with large communal differences.

In a Federal Government, each federal unit had complete power over themselves. Yet they united and had one or two assemblies to discuss matters affecting the whole country. That was the form of Government in the United States of America. All the self-Governing dominions, Australia, South Africa, Canada had the same system. Switzerland afforded a better example for Ceylon. It was a small country, but three races lived there. French, Germans and Italians. Yet Switzerland was a country where the federal form of Government was very successful. Each canton managed its own affairs. But questions of foreign affairs, commerce, defence

etc., matters about which differences and controversies would be at a minimum were dealt with by the Federal Assembly. In Ceylon each Province should have complete autonomy. There should be one or two assemblies to deal with the special revenue of the Island. A thousand and one objections could be raised against the system but when the objections were dissipated, he was convinced that some form of federal Government would be the only solution. He had not dealt with the smaller communities. For such communities temporary arrangements could be made for special representation. Those temporary arrangements would exist till the fear existed about one community trying to overload the other. He would suggest the same for the Colombo Tamil seat. The three main divisions in the island were the Kandyan Sinhalese the Low Country Sinhalese and the Tamils. It was difficult to find a system that would completely satisfy everyone. That is in brief the Federal system. He would be amply satisfied if it was recognised that the problem did exist. If there were a better form of plan he hoped someone would think about

it and place it before the people. (Several speakers then made comments and asked questions).

Mr. Bandaranaike in reply said that the question of religion was hardly a matter to be dealt with by legislation. The question of financial inequality was a serious objection, so also was the question of education. The common fund could be shared among provinces that required help. The subject was full of controversy. The last speaker had hit the nail on the head. Why not remain under the British? Why all that worry and discussion? No nation deserved the name of a nation if it did not want a measure of self-Government. It deserved to be wiped out of the surface of the earth.

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### Respect human . . .

(Continued from page 11)

Other Assembly resolutions urged the withdrawal of Indonesian armed forces from East Timor, an end to military rule and restoration of democracy in Bangla Desh, and the repealing of anti-democratic "black laws" in India. The Assembly further "strongly denounces the Marcos Government's repressive actions".

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# United States involvement in Latin America

Richard Gott

This paper was presented at a recent seminar held in Penang, Malaysia. The interview on the next page was given at the end of the week-long conference.

The history of Latin America during the 1980s has been characterised by two extraordinary developments: on the one hand what can only be described as a religious war, conducted by the United States by a variety of methods in the countries of Central America; and on the other the permanent threat of default by most of the important countries of Latin America on the debt enthusiastically incurred during the 1970s — a threat that hangs over not only the governments of the countries concerned, but over a significant number of major United States banks, and indeed over the entire Western capitalist system itself.

As so often happens, this latter and far more important development is shrugged off by the United States Administration as a difficulty that time, technique, and good sense will overcome, while the rather less awesome threat posed to American interests by the revolution in Nicaragua and the consequent upheaval in Central America is regarded as an excuse for embarking on an ideological crusade — of an intensity and fervour that has not been seen since the days of the Vietnam War, now more than a decade ago.

Indeed American actions in Central America today often look like a pale carbon copy of what occurred nearly quarter of a century ago in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution: the rhetorical emphasis on democracy, the obsessive enthusiasm for counter-insurgency and CIA assisted brigands, the desperate search for friends and allies to underpin a shaky diplomacy, and the sudden availability of apparently inexhaustible funds where once there was famine —

to finance war chests or the mechanisms of reform, almost at whim.

Of course there are also differences. Ronald Reagan, though popular at home, cuts much less of a dash on the world scene than John Kennedy. The United States, though militarily more powerful than it has ever been, is also infinitely more isolated. It fights its wars in Central America almost singlehanded and alone.

At home, the Congress, the churches, and public opinion — while having no veto on executive action — are able to exercise a restraining influence, to put a curb on some of the more delirious schemes of government. (Though, as was shown with the invasion of Grenada, there are strict limits to the power of internal opposition.) While abroad, particularly in Western Europe, America's allies have been dismayed by the overblown rhetoric, the low calibre of Reagan's ministers, and the chaos and confusion that has characterised the Administration's foreign policy. For the first time for nearly 40 years the continuing existence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation — the cornerstone of the present international system — has been seriously called into question. Far from endorsing American policy in Central America, the Europeans — both by the decision of their Foreign Ministers and through the Socialist International — have been continuously exploring ways of getting the Americans off the hook.

Yet in spite of the differences in presidential style over the years (perhaps most pronounced in the change-over from Carter to Reagan), it is the continuities of policy that most strike the non-American observer. Whether under the

Democrats or the Republicans, United States policy continues much the same — essentially the policy of a large and economically powerful landmass next door to a bunch of weak and disunited states with no very clear idea of what role they wish to play in the world. (Indeed one might even go so far as to suggest that even when the last capitalist has left the American scene, the United States will still find it difficult to come to terms with its southern neighbours).

Yet two things have happened in recent years that have forced the United States to look afresh at Latin America, and caused outside analysts to re-examine their explanations of American policy. It is no longer possible simply to say that the United States is a great imperialist and capitalist power, pursuing the ambitions of a few crazed executives at the top, or obeying the dictates of great transnational companies. A guide to this change can be found in the rhetoric of Fidel Castro. Twenty years ago he used to emphasise that the people of Cuba had no quarrel with the people of the United States, only with their leaders.

Today, in the aftermath of the invasion of Grenada, he has had to admit that the American action was popular in the eyes of most Americans. A sizeable chunk of the American population in the Reagan era has actually begun to identify with the imperialist posture of its rulers. (A similar change occurred in Great Britain in the 1970s when imperialist expansion suddenly became a popular cause).

The reasons for this change in perception are not difficult to find. One cause is that the two

halves of the western hemisphere are now so economically enmeshed that, for the first time, Latin America can actually do harm to a significant segment of the United States population. Thirty years ago, if Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala had chosen to expropriate the United Fruit Company (which he didn't) and with like-minded presidents had formed a banana

cartel (which actually began to happen in the 1970s), the worst that could have happened to the United States would have been a temporary shortage and disruption in the supply of bananas, and perhaps the suicide and ruin of a few corporation executives (which did happen in the 1970s). Sad, but not disastrous, and not politically upsetting. But today,

if Mexico is forced to stop buying so many United States imports — not because it wants to, but because it can't afford to — quarter of a million American jobs are at risk. It has been estimated, for example, that between 1981 and 1983, as a result of the debt crisis, the United States suffered a \$33,000 million drop in exports. Almost half of this was accounted for by the decline in exports to Latin America. According to one survey, it may have cost the American economy some 400,000 jobs.<sup>1</sup>

## Gott on Central America

**R**ichard Gott was there in Vallegrande, Bolivia, on that October day in 1967 when Che' died. He was the first journalist to make a positive identification of Guevara's body. At that time Mr. Gott was Latin American correspondent of the *Guardian* as well as a Research Fellow at the Institute of International Studies Santiago, Chile, having been for 2 years before, leader writer on the *Guardian*.

Together with James Petras, Richard Gott is easily the English speaking World's foremost expert on Latin America. Regis Debray in his encyclopaedic two volume work *'A Critique of Arms'* states that that work was not meant as a substitute for Richard Gott's classic study *'Rural Guerrillas in Latin America'*. That book originally published as *'Guerrilla Movements in Latin America'* was first completed in 1969, and appeared in print in 1970 and 1973. Mr. Gott was not only the General Editor of the path breaking Pelican Latin American Library Series which has published Castro, Guevara, Debray and Marighela, but he also wrote the introduction to the slim volume of Marighela's essays *'For the Liberation of Brazil'* which included the famous *'Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla.'*

Gott remembers meeting Guevara in 1963 and having a long conversation with him. I asked him, as I had asked Egbal Ahmad, "what was he like?" Gott's response came instantly: "He was a very genial man". "In those early years after the Revolution, Fidel and Che' took it rather easy during the day, but worked hard till late in the night", he added.

I asked him about Bolivia, and put the obvious question: "how come Che ignored his own guidelines as set out in his *'Guerrilla Warfare?'*" Bolivia was not as much an adventure as it seems, replied Gott. Remember that guerilla fighting was not meant to commence in Bolivia that early. It was to act as a base area and training camp for revolutionaries from the bordering countries. It was ill-luck that forced the guerillas prematurely into combat, but the earlier plan was quite a good one, well-worked out and with what looked at the time, as considerable chance of success.

Gott was 'optimistic', about the situation in Central America, especially in El Salvador. The negotiations will buy time for both sides. Meanwhile the guerillas' military performance is getting more and more impressive, and they were fielding larger units than ever before. He was delighted, he said, when he heard news of the death of Lt.Col.Domingo Monterrosa, the Americans' favourite counter insurgency expert in the Salvadoran Armed Forces and commander of El Salvador's north-eastern region. His helicopter, which carried three other senior officers, was shot down by FMLN gunners. Gott doubted that the U.S. would permit a fascist coup by Roberto D' Aubisson. He was deeply worried though about the possibility of U.S. military invasion of Nicaragua, and the overall buildup of U.S. direct military interventionist capability, signalling a propensity towards efforts at 'recolonization' as a response to the decline of imperial hegemony.

— Dayan Jayatilleka

The second cause of the change has been the dawning realisation that social upheaval and revolution in Latin America in itself, with necessarily an accompanying civil war, create patterns of migration with which the United States is ill-geared to cope. In the years after the Cuban Revolution perhaps a million Cubans came to the United States, changing the nature of Florida and — joining the counter-revolutionary stream that has flowed intermittently from Europe for the past seventy years ever since the Russian Revolution — helping to change the course of American politics, reinforcing its more reactionary strands.

Now in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution and the upheaval in El Salvador, the Americans are being taught to see the floodgates being lifted once again — and (to change the metaphor) their beloved melting pot overflowing onto the stove.

Of course the phenomenon is not new. For years the United States has been forced to live with the consequences of its colonial occupation of Puerto Rico — the puertoricanisation of American cities — and of its proximity to impoverished Mexico — creating an Hispanic population in the United States of such dimension that by the beginning of the next century the United States might become the largest Latin American country in the world. According to the 1980 census, there are 14 million persons of Hispanic origin living in the United States a hopeless underestimate. New York, with a

total population of 7 million, has a black population of 1.8 million and Hispanics number of 2 million — if you include the three-quarters of a million without papers or legal existence. "The Hispanic presence is obvious," writes one recent visitor, "In New York, whole parts of the city are Hispanic. The advertisements on some buses and many subway cars are in Spanish. Many young taxi drivers do not have enough English to understand without difficulty where you want to go. In Florida, the east coast and the city of Miami are predominantly Hispanic. In Texas, which you might assume to be pure ten-gallon-hat all-American, sprawling barrios have sprung up outside Houston. In California, San Diego and Los Angeles are apparently being retaken by the Spanish empire which lost them."<sup>2</sup>

Until recently much of the United States establishment had watched this process with benign amazement. The Wall Street Journal, for example, in an editorial entitled "There shall be open borders", argued that America's traditional open door policy had made her the envy of the world—even though there has not really been such a policy since 1921 when Congress first legislated to curb the flow of European immigration. "America, above all," wrote this conservative newspaper earlier this year, "is a country founded on optimism. The Republic will prosper so long as it does not disavow this taproot. The issue is not what we offer the teeming masses but what they offer us: their hands, their minds, their spirit, and above all the chance to be true to our own past and our own future."

But the upheavals in Central America have forced a wholly new assessment of the problem. The Reagan rhetoric has begun to concentrate on the dangers that revolution in Central America will pose to the cultural balance within the United States itself. And more convincing case can be made for this than for the other plank of his rhetorical platform — that the Soviet Union will turn Central American isthmus into a base for

attacking the United States. And there is also little doubt that the alarm raised about the Hispanics finds an echo in substantial sections of American public opinion. (At the same time, of course, it is the presence of hundreds of thousands of illegal Central American refugees in the United States that has been the principal cause of the grassroots radicalisation of the established American churches — churches that are themselves under pressure from the evangelism of the radical right).

So there is now a situation where the United States — at all levels — perceives itself to be much more vulnerable to unfolding events in Latin America than at any stage in the past. The paradox is that the real threat — the debt crisis — is perceived rather dimly, while the pseudo-threat — the revolution in Central America and the consequences that might flow from it — occupies the centre stage for most of the time.

When the Reagan Administration first took over in 1981, there was no doubt that they planned to hold the line in El Salvador. The Americans stated openly that they did not intend, to allow the "triumphalism" of the Central American Left, in the wake of the overthrow of Somoza, to have its way unchecked. And indeed there was a good deal of facile revolutionary optimism at that time — a belief that the tidal wave which had swept Nicaragua would also submerge the dictatorships of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. It was never going to be as easy as all that, and the Americans soon made it seem exceptionally difficult. Military advisers were sent to El Salvador, clandestine help was given to Guatemala, and plans were made to establish bases in Honduras. A tremendous diplomatic campaign was launched to persuade the world that the United States had a genuine interest in democracy in Central America.

But although the guerrilla war in Guatemala was brought under partial control, it became clear in Washington after a couple of

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## Letters. . .

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happened in Ehopal had also happened in France. The West German government takes special precautions and a political party called 'The Greens' has made it an important platform for their campaigns.

Today, even a 'O' level student knows that the big multi-nationals regard the poor countries, the Third World, as a dumping ground for drugs that they never sell in their own countries. It is the same with multi-national concerns using poisonous and dangerous chemicals. The precautions they take in their countries, they do not bother to take in developing nations because they want to save the money, and because human lives in the Third World are cheap.

The last government, especially through the efforts of Dr. Bibile, who was truly national-minded, did not bend their knees before the mighty combines. It is a different story today. For many people in prominent positions the multi-nationals are "our saviours".

Of course we must blame our officials and businessmen too. The businessmen who are local agents or collaborators think only of the money they can make, not about the danger to the people. The officials who know the risks do not pay enough heed to the need to have very strict laws. The NEWSWEEK says that in America "a similar disaster is unlikely but the potential is enormous". How about Sri Lanka? Let it not happen here.

The big international combines, however powerful or rich, must not be allowed to do as they like. And they must not be permitted to open factories unless they accept our conditions and these must be legal and very strict.

Otherwise, Bhopal can happen here

**Dr. A. D. E. Seneviratna,**  
Colombo 3.

# Implications of the Presidential Election

M. P. Moore

On the other side, there has recently emerged a network of militant Sinhalese Buddhists, including some priests, who have openly attacked the President for dereliction of duty towards Buddhism and for appointing too many Christians to senior posts. In early 1982, a public meeting at which these kinds of points were being made was broken up by what were officially described as loyal UNP members enraged at attacks on the President. As C. R. de Silva has shown in the preceding essay, all candidates during the presidential election campaign were presented with demands from the Council of Sri Lankan Buddhist Societies to make Sri Lanka a fully Buddhist state. It is significant, however, that the most sympathetic response came from the SLFP candidate.<sup>16</sup> It is widely believed that these Buddhist militants have close connections to the SLFP.

The statistical analysis summarised above indicates a relative swing of Sinhalese Buddhists to the SLFP between 1977 and 1982, and a corresponding movement of members of minorities to the UNP.

## The Group B District — Nuwara Eliya

Nuwara Eliya District has been treated separately because of the weight there of Indian Tamil voters, whose precise numbers are unfortunately unknown. However, the election results there — a very strong swing to the UNP bloc (Table 3.2) — conform very closely to conclusions derived from the analysis of Group A districts. For a very close political alliance has been forged since 1977 between the UNP and the CWC, the main

representative of the Indian Tamil estate labour force. The leader of the CWC, S. Thondaman, is the sole CWC MP, and represents a Nuwara Eliya electorate. As Minister of Rural Industrial Development since 1977, he has been able to direct additional resources to his community, partly through his control of the livestock industry, for commercial dairying is an important secondary source of income for the estate populations of the tea-growing areas. President Jayewardene has also taken an unprecedently favourable public stance towards the Indian Tamil community, calling for example for their full integration into Sri Lankan society in a speech made only a few weeks before the election.<sup>17</sup> The Indian Tamil voters appear to have responded very positively by throwing their full weight behind him.

In these four electoral districts with a third or more Sri Lanka Tamils in their populations, interpretation of the 1982 results is complicated by the behaviour of the Tamil parties. The main Tamil party, the TULF, decided not to participate, and thus led many of its supporters to abstain. Yet the TULF stopped short of calling for a total boycott of the polls, and left its supporters free to vote for another Tamil candidate, Kumar Ponnambalam, who also called for a separate Tamil state. Little can be said directly about changes in the degree of support either for Tamil separation or for the TULF. However, some significant conclusions can be drawn from the figures in Table 3.3, which in this case relate to the total electorate rather than, as in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, to those actually voting.

These conclusions derive from contrasting changes in voting patterns between the districts of Jaffna and Wannai on the one hand and Batticaloa on the other. (The results in Trincomalee District do not fall into any clear pattern and are very hard to interpret.) It can be seen from Table 3.3 that in 1977 Batticaloa voters very much more integrated into the national, as opposed to the Sri Lanka Tamil, pattern of party competition than were those in Jaffna and Wannai. In Batticaloa 46 per cent of the electorate voted for the Sinhalese parties, and only 40 per cent for the TULF, the recognised Tamil party contesting at that time. The corresponding figures for Jaffna and Wannai were 4 per cent 59 per cent, and 15 per cent and 46 per cent respectively. This reflects a long-standing difference — and even antagonism — between two Sri Lanka Tamil populations oriented to two different urban complexes: Jaffna on the one hand and Batticaloa on the other. Jaffna, the larger of the two and the main centre of Sri Lanka Tamil culture, has always been the home of Tamil separatist sentiment, while the Batticaloa Tamils have been more favourable to the idea of continuing to live in a unitary, Sinhalese-dominated state. Batticaloa Tamils have tended to give substantial support to the UNP.<sup>18</sup>

The significance of the 1982 results lies in the fact that they illustrate an increasing polarisation between Jaffna and the Wannai on the one hand, and Batticaloa on the other. This polarisation was expressed in the changing ratios between the votes cast for the two main Sinhalese party blocs.

Since almost all the votes cast for these blocs in these districts were, especially in 1982, either for the UNP or the SLFP, we will henceforth talk in terms of these parties themselves rather than of the blocs which they dominate elsewhere in the island.

In 1977, the number of votes obtained by the SLFP and the UNP in Batticaloa District were approximately equal (Table 3.3). In 1982 the district as a whole swung very strongly to the UNP relative to the SLFP: the percentage of UNP votes was 92 per cent in 1977 and 200 per cent in 1982. This was mainly because the SLFP vote fell by 50 per cent in absolute terms (Table 3.3). A swing of this size, in a district in which Sri Lanka Tamils comprise 71 per cent of the population, must certainly owe something to changes in voting behaviour by Sri Lanka Tamils. The results strongly suggest that in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka Tamils and also Sri Lanka Moors (who comprise another quarter of the district population) behaved like minorities elsewhere in the island and between 1977 and 1982 switched from the SLFP to the UNP.

Jaffna and Wannu District behaved in the opposite fashion. While the proportion of the total electorate voting for the UNP increased to a small extent, the SLFP vote increased dramatically from a very small base. In 1977, the number of votes obtained by the UNP and the SLFP in the two districts collectively were 31,000 and 5,000 respectively. In 1982 they numbered 81,000 and 101,000, increases of 160 per cent and 1,719 per cent respectively. How is this big increase in SLFP support from Sri Lanka Tamil voters in Jaffna and Wannu to be explained? It appears that the answer is two fold.

First, the UNP government, despite the President's generally successful attempts to project himself as the guardian of the ethnic minorities, has come into open and violent political confrontation with both the TULF and Tamil separatist sentiment generally. This is manifested both in the increasing rep-

ression associated with the *de facto* 'occupation' of Jaffna and Wannu Districts by the armed forces and, more particularly, in the violence in Jaffna in 1980 and 1981 stemming in large part from attempts by the government to manipulate the results of the 1980 elections to the Jaffna District Development Council in favour of UNP candidates. The vote for the SLFP may have been in part an expression of protest against the UNP government, and was no doubt in part motivated by Kobbekaduwa's promise to repeal the anti-terrorist laws. This is, however, not a complete explanation, for abstention or voting for the TC candidate were other and perhaps more convincing modes of expressing the same sentiments. A second and more concrete reason for Tamil support for the SLFP can be found in material interests. The reason, as President Jayewardene has reportedly said, lies in 'potatoes, chillies and onions'. The rural areas of Jaffna and, to a lesser extent, parts of the Wannu, specialise in the production of these and other high-value vegetables. During the rule of the 1970-77 SLFP-led government, in which Hector Kobbekaduwa was Minister of Agriculture, imports of various vegetables and other so-called 'subsidiary food crops' were severely restricted or banned. Producer prices reached unprecedented heights only to collapse after the UNP government permitted unrestricted imports.<sup>19</sup> It is reported that Kobbekaduwa's election campaign promises to restore these import restrictions evoked a favourable response from Tamil farmers, for the five Jaffna electorates in which Kobbekaduwa topped the poll appear to correspond to those areas where vegetable cultivation is more important.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, he obtained fewer votes than both the TC and the UNP candidates in Jaffna town and the adjacent suburban Nallur electorate.

There is little doubt that ethnic group identification was the main basis of changes in electoral behaviour in Sri Lanka between 1977 and 1982. It is tempting to

describe this as a partial reversion to the (rather turbulent) politics of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when ethnic (and caste) considerations seem to have been more salient in political conflict than they were in the more materialist politics of the late 1960s and 1970s. But, even leaving aside the question of the depth and permanency of these recent changes, it is clear that history is not repeating itself exactly. The SLFP had, by mid-1982, again become more closely identified with Sinhalese Buddhist sentiment. But its candidate, Kobbekaduwa, signally failed to make gains among one group of Sinhalese from whom he expected much — the rural Kandyans whom he once represented in Parliament, who gained most from his land reforms in the early 1970s<sup>21</sup> and to whom he made special appeals in 1982. Not only did he fail to gain more votes than Jayewardene in the electorate which he (Kobbekaduwa) represented between 1970 and 1977, but the Kandyan districts generally failed to rally to him. Indeed, Kobbekaduwa's share of the vote in 1982 was very significantly less than 'expected' on the basis of the regression results (report in the appendix) in two of the main Kandyan districts, Kandy and Kegalle. Antipathy between Kandyan and Low Country Sinhalese, which might have helped Kobbekaduwa, appears to have waned considerably.

Also in contrast to the earlier period, the Sri Lanka Tamils appear by late 1982 to have become polarised in their attitudes towards the Sinhalese-dominated polity. Those centred upon Jaffna had become somewhat more hostile to the UNP, the Sinhalese party with which they have traditionally felt the greater affinity (or the least antipathy). The Sri Lanka Tamils elsewhere in the island had identified themselves even more clearly with the UNP and the other minority groups. However, those concerned about the future of Sri Lanka as a unitary state may perhaps take heart from the fact that a substantial fraction of the Jaffna-centred Tamils were still prepared to engage in national

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# THE DEBATE ON CULTURE

Wimal Dissanayake

We can best understand the relationships and interlinkages between mass communication and traditional culture by examining them in as broad a context as possible. Mass communication, for understandable reasons, is always considered in relation to technology. Hence it is important to see the beneficial and harmful effects of mass communication on traditional cultures in terms of the general attitude to technology. This becomes all the more important in view of the fact that today we are in the midst of a communication revolution brought about by the new and astounding developments in communications technology. By the term 'communication revolution', we refer to the explosion in communication technology as manifested in the increasing use of satellites, microprocessors, computers, and advanced radio services and the consequent changes brought about in the social, economic, political, cultural spheres and in the general life styles of people. This is yet a phenomenon closely associated with the developed countries of the world. But before long, given the dynamics of the present global systems this is likely to impinge on the social fabric of many of the developing countries. Therefore any meaningful discussion of the relationship between mass communication and traditional culture needs to be conducted in the context of this communication revolution.

One can identify three broad sets of attitudes toward the communication revolution. The words, 'optimism', 'pessimism' and 'realism' can best characterize these attitudes. The optimists like Arthur C. Clarke and Buckminster Fuller assert that new communications technology will usher in a happy and exciting world for all of us. The pessimists,

on the other hand, see nothing but unmitigated disaster flowing out of the rapid development of technology. A large number of humanists and custodians of high culture comprise this group. Many radical thinkers and social commentators also seem to favor this viewpoint. For example, Herbert Marcuse and many adherents of the Frankfurt School maintained that technology has contributed immeasurably to the general dehumanization and trivialization of modern life. In contradistinction to both these groups, the realists maintain that we need to adopt a more sober and pragmatic attitude to technology and mass media. They voice the opinion that we need to be alive to the vast potentialities for social good contained in technology while not ignoring the full impact of social, political and cultural implications technology entails. I myself favor the stand point adopted by the realists. This means that we need to be sensitized to both the beneficial and harmful effects of technology.

Let us first consider the beneficial effects. Much has been written on this subject. It is generally maintained that new communications technology serves to promote participatory democracy, extend the lower of human talent, democratize education, stimulate greater global interaction and understanding meet more human needs. It is, also said that new communications media will respond to a wider spectrum of societal interests and concerns, facilitate communication with remote areas, increase efficiency in such diverse fields as medicine and education, enable social institutions to function more efficiently and responsibly. These, one need hardly add, are concerns

that are vital to any society. On the other hand, it is suggested that new communication media can undermine the values of representative government and media participation, encourage concentration of power in the hands of a few, threaten personal values and rights, invade privacy of citizens, promote cultural domination, make us see human beings in mechanical terms raise unfulfillable hopes, endanger human relationships and fragment human society into more rigid interests and competing groups. These are obvious dangers, and we need to be alert to them as well. Therefore, when we discuss the question of mass communication and traditional culture we need to bear in mind the advantages and disadvantages that are likely to accrue as a consequence of the introduction of mass communication. Such a realistic attitude, in my judgment, is a precondition for thoughtful planning.

A consequence of the introduction of mass media like radio, films and television into traditional societies is the creation of a hybrid artistic culture which is different from traditional elite culture and folk culture. In traditional societies, whether it was in the domain of literature or theater or music, there was in existence a courtly culture which was patronized by the elite of society and a folk culture which manifested the tastes and interests of the peasantry. Clearly, there were disparities between these two, but still they could be contained within the same broad tradition as for example say the Indian classical theatre and the folk theatre. However, with the introduction of mass communication, which is invariably associated with Western culture, a newer hybrid form of popular culture has

begun to emerge. Many of the custodians of high art see this as a debasement of standards and taste and something that needs to be eliminated. Others would be a little more cautious saying that one has to examine more carefully the possibilities of this new popular culture. What is urgently needed in my judgment, is a sober analysis of the situation born out of a newer cultural discourse. The writings of European scholars like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart can throw valuable light on this issue. Closely related to this is the so-called issue of cultural domination and homogenization. It is said that with the increasing importation of Hollywood films and American television programs a form of cultural homogenization is taking place. Once again this is a question that needs to be considered very carefully. Many of the developing countries are importing Western films and television programs, mainly American ones, because of economic reasons. It is far cheaper to import old American programs than produce new ones locally. So the economic question looms very large. But at the same time a greater sense of discrimination needs to prevail in the matter of selection of television programs for local consumption.

The antipathy to some important aspects of mass communication is felt not only in the developing countries but in the developed world as well. Apart from the usual argument to the effect that mass media tend to dehumanize life, trivialize social experience, enslave people in synthetic worlds the Czechoslovakian novelist, Milan Kundera, who is perhaps the most widely-discussed writer in the Western world today, who is perhaps the most widely-discussed writer in the Western World today, makes the point that in the final analysis the novel is perhaps the best guarantor of democracy. He then goes on to make the following observations:

'Now if the novel's *raison d'être* is to keep the world of concrete living constantly before our eyes and to protect us from "the forgetting of being", is it not necessary today

more than ever that then novel should exist. That is how it seems to me. But alas, the novel too is eaten by the beetles of reduction, which diminish not only the sense of the world but also the meaning of works of art. Like all of culture the novel is more and more in the hands of the mass media. As agents of the unification of world history, the media amplify and concentrate the process of reduction. They broadcast identical simplifications and stereotypes across the globe designed to be accepted by the greatest number by everyone, by the whole of humanity. It doesn't matter very much if different political interests are made evident by different organs of the media. Behind these surface differences reigns a common spirit. You have only to glance at American or European political weeklies of the left or right, from *Time* to *Der Spiegel*, to see that they all have the same view of life, reflected in the same ordering of the contents under the same headings, in identical forms of journalistic writing using the same vocabulary and the same style, in common artistic preferences, and in the identical ranking of things they find important or insignificant. The common spirit of the mass media, camouflaged by political diversity, is the spirit of our time. An this spirit seems to me to be contrary to the wisdom of the novel'.

Kundera, it seems to me carried the debate regarding mass communication and culture to a much deeper and sophisticated level of analysis.

So far I have been discussing at a conceptual and theoretical level some of the main issues connected with mass communication and traditional culture. I wish to conclude this address by focussing attention on some practical considerations. In this regard, I wish to call attention to four concerns. Firstly, all traditional societies grappling with the issues flowing out of the introduction of mass communication should give serious consideration to the formulation of a comprehensive cultural policy. Such a policy ideally, should encompass the vexing economic, social and political issues and lay the groundwork for future action. The question of mass communication and traditional culture should be studied in the widest possible context touching all spheres of national life. Secondly, there should be greater regional collaboration, sharing of ideas and experiences with regard to mass communication and traditional culture. This meet-

ing is illustrative of this need. Countries of this region are facing similar problems with regard to mass communication, and the greater the interaction that takes place among these countries the more rewarding it would be for everyone concerned. Thirdly, greater emphasis needs to be placed on media education — universities, higher seats of learning and the media themselves should strive to promote greater media education by discussing the vital issues, elevating the awareness and bringing about a greater refinement to taste. This would be the most productive way to eliminate some of the dangers associated with mass communication. Such an educational effort should lead to the widening of the scope of the media discourse. Fourthly, the question of research is important. If we are to adopt a more scientific attitude toward the question of mass communication and traditional culture it is of the utmost importance that we pay greater attention to communication research.

Broadly speaking, one can divide communication research into two groups, the positivistic and the interpretive. Communication as a field of study has grown steadily over the last forty years, and it is the positivistic school that has been dominant up till now. The essence of the positivistic school is to model communication research on the basis of natural sciences by paying closer attention to such desiderata as objectivity, quantification, replicability, prediction etc. The interpretive approach, on the other hand, places greater stress on subjectivity, language, humanistic concerns etc. So far, many of the most significant developments in the field of communications research have been accomplished through the positivistic approach. The efforts of such scholars as Lasswell, Hovland, Lewin, Lazarsfeld, Schramm, Pool, Rogers, Katz, Gerbner, to name but a few, are extremely important in this regard. During the last five or six years, there has been a greater interest in the interpretive approaches to communication research. Ideally,

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# THE LEFT AND DEMOCRACY

Eqbal Ahmad

There are objective bases of the popular support for democracy. Even its defective, parliamentary variety gives the majority a modicum of genuine control over the choice of government, and the certainty of exercising this choice periodically. Elections in which candidates compete for votes necessarily enhance the bargaining power of the dispossessed but enfranchised masses. They help turn attention upon forgotten peoples, and neglected questions of general welfare. Open competition among politicians, and wooing of voters produces a certain reversal of roles, and a certain demystification of power; it enhances people's sense of dignity, and enlivens their awareness of collective strength. For the mass of Third World people, the idea of democracy is inextricably linked to social justice; the electoral process often gives them the hope of attaining social justice without paying the extreme price of revolution. After all, the Third World confronts parliamentary democracy in its advanced, post-universal suffrage stage; and the electoral competition occurs in an ideological environment, with a full array of choices. Hence, if issues are well-articulated by progressive political alliances, elections can offer the framework of mass mobilization.

The Third World bourgeoisie recognizes the popular appeal of democracy and the threat it constitutes to its class interests. That is the basis also of the liberal West's hostility to liberal politics in dependent societies. Most praetorian coups, therefore, have been staged either to get rid of a democratic government or to prevent one from assuming power.

**By and large, the Third World left has failed to offer a viable, alternative view of democracy; it has not even developed a consistent tactical outlook for dealing with the problems which the democratic struggle poses in the Third World.** Ambivalent, the left either spurns the electoral process, or occasionally becomes entrapped in it; Indonesia and Chile are examples of entrapment; the Naxalites in India and the MKP in Pakistan of inflexible rejection of this "bourgeois" form. The left's revolutionary prescription can only be the last resort of cautious peasants and pragmatic workers. **Therefore, every revolution in the Third World has been predicated on the denial or rigging of the electoral process.**

How then to explain the survival of parliamentary forms in a few Third World countries? This, along with a discussion of the lessons of the process and price of democracy and fascism in the West, is the subject of the next section. Here, it should suffice to reiterate the obvious conclusion that pluralist politics have survived in those Third World countries where (i) there exist a sizeable indigeneous capitalist class, and a national bourgeoisie relatively autonomous of the state and enjoying a degree of hegemony in society; (ii) foreign, especially American security and economic interests are not dominant; (iii) the national security sector and its progenitor — the contemporary warrior class — have not become overbloated; and (iv) the masses are fragmented and have not yet produced a strong, progressive opposition.

(1) Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Present Day Experiment in Western*

*Civilization*. London, Oxford University Press, 1962.

(2) For a short discussion, see: Eqbal Ahmad, "The Neo-Fascist States: Notes on the Pathology of Power in the Third World." "IFDA Dossier, 19. Sept.-Oct. 1980. Reprinted in Richard A. Falk, et al (ed.), *Toward a Just World Order Volume I*. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1982. For larger studies, see: Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*. Boston, Southend Press, 1979. David Collier (ed.), *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*. Princeton University Press, 1979.

(3) Thus Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1960. See especially Chapter xv., "The Erosion of Democracy in the New States." "The fragile mechanism of representative democracy which almost all of them adopted proved shortly to be unfitted to the needs and capabilities of most of them." (Emphasis added.) p. 273.

For other, less sympathetic than Professor Emerson, examples of this genre of Western literature, see Guy Wint, *The British in Asia*, London, Faber and Faber, 1947. "It is simpler to turn oriental man into an imitation Bolshevik, competent and ruthless, than into a imitation liberal." (p.131)

Guy J. Pauker, "Southeast Asia As a Problem Area in the Next Decade." *World Politics*, Vol. XI, No. 3, April, 1959. Since democracy has presumed doomed with the natives, in an influential article Pauker recommended rule by anti-communist officers corps which consist of men who are "products of an unusual process of natural selection (sic) .. dedicated patriots, committed to moral values, accustomed to command, and acquainted with modernity."

Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political



Legitimacy." American Political Science Review. Vol. LIII, No. 1, March 1959, pp. 69-105. Professor Lipset argues that illiteracy, poverty, intolerance, inequality, and absence of self-reliance — all characteristic of the third world — are inimical to democratic development."

Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Politics, Vol. IX, October, 1956, pp. 55-75. "The need for a single party is all the greater in a society where age old social forms are crumbling and the people, torn from their villages and accepted norms seek a new sense of belonging and new institutional forms to provide the security they desire." A sentence earlier, in the same article, the policy analyst who later became the National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, described the people he so wants served by pro-West single parties as "millions and millions of retarded, illiterate, often filthy, and certainly pliant masses..." who lack "Western religious tradition which influenced to such a great extent the concept of the dignity of man..."

(4) Thus, Mr. B. K. Nehru, Western Democracy and The Third World; A Further Comment." Third World Quarterly. Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1980, pp. 126-30, puts forth the "straightforward" proposition that the "vast majority of less developed countries have opted for non-democratic forms of government" because liberal democracy "was found unsuitable by the people..." For a more-than-usually sophisticated argument in favor of alternative forms, see Mr. Nehru's earlier essay: "Western Democracy and the Third World." Third World Quarterly Vol. I, No. 2, 1979. And a spirited response by Morris-Jones, "The West and the Third World: Whose Development." Vol. I, No. 3, 1979.

The statements of Third World dictators and their apologists are far too many to be documented here. There are seeds of differences in their rationalization for authoritarian government. These, in a later draft, would deserve delineation. Since the destruction of democracy has taken two charac-

teristic forms — the seizure of power by the military, and a turn to one-party systems by civilian leaders — their rationale for denying political pluralism, accountability, and civil liberties differ.

(5) No work of note on this subject is known to me; and even the most comprehensive anthologies have not included essays on the subject. A recent example is Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin (eds.), Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies". N.Y., Monthly Review Press, 1982. The editors are among the most respected Marxist scholars; and the MR Press has been bold and unorthodox. The anthology offers a selection of thirty-four articles. Of these, none addresses the question of democracy in the Third World. The book includes a generous, and useful, bibliography of "Further Reading on the Sociology of Developing Societies." None of its 291 titles divided by eight categories concern the issue of democracy.

(6) Since 1960, a majority of the putschists have been trainees and beneficiaries of MAP, the US military assistance program; the American military school in the Panama Canal Zone produced so many that it came to be known as the School for Dictators. Literature on this subject is considerable and growing. See: Jacques Languth, Hidden Terror; Penny Lernoux, Cry of the People; Michael Klare, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, Op. Cit.

(7) On this question see: Iftikhar Ahmad, "Pakistan: Class and State Formation," Race and Class XXII, 3, Winter 1981; Nubar Housepian, "Pakistan In Crisis: An Interview," Race and Class XXII, 2, Autumn 1980; Eqbal Ahmad, "Pakistan ed L'armee...", Le Monde Diplomatique, October 1977; and "Campagne pour la Democratie," Le Monde Diplomatique December 1983.

(8) On these points, see: Robert A. Packenham, Liberal American and the Third World, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973. Seymour Martin Lipset, Op. Cit.; Gabriel Almond and James S.

Coleman, eds., The Politics of the Developing Areas, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960; Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978; David Collier, The New Authoritarianism in Latin America, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

(Concluded)

## Implications of . . .

(Continued from page 19)

electoral politics on a transactional basis. Their support for the SLFP candidate over the question of vegetable prices suggests that they were prepared to respond positively to appeals to their material self-interest.

(To be continued)

### Notes

14. 'Old parliamentary constituencies because the next parliamentary elections will be on a proportional representation basis at the district level. Included in the Figures is the one independent MP who joined the UNP immediately after the election — see note 11.
15. M. P. Moore, 'The State and the Peasantry in Sri Lanka', D. Phil thesis, University of Sussex, 1981, p. 40.
16. For details see *Lanka Guardian*, 15 October 1982.
17. See *Observer*, 12 September 1982.
18. In 1977 Jaffna district returned 11 MPs, all Tamils and all from the TULF. Wannai also returned TULF members in each of its three electorates. Trincomalee district returned one Sinhalese and one Muslim MP (both UNP), and one Tamil TULF MP. Batticaloa district, despite the fact that Sri Lanka Tamils comprise 71 per cent of the population, gave very substantial support to the UNP. Of the four MPs returned, two were Tamil TULF men, one a Tamil UNP man, and one a Muslim UNP man. One of the TULF MPs, the first member for Batticaloa, defected almost immediately to the UNP. Details in... *Eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka* pp. 132-51.
19. See Moore, 'The State and the Peasantry in Sri Lanka', pp. 210-13.
20. These are the electorates of Kankasanturai, Manipay, Kopay, Unduppiddy and Point Pedro, *Daily News* 25 October 1982.

## A. P. C. — casualty . . .

(Continued from page 4)

social scientist has termed 'the persistent identity'. The hall-marks of that are race, religion, language. Historically, the Sangha has played the honoured custodial role.

Contemporary changes however should not be neglected. Parallels are never perfect but it is wise to remember a recent history-making event in which the dominant role in a fast-moving crisis fell to the Islamic clergy. In his book on the Iranian uprising, "**The Illusion of Power**", Robert Graham wrote that the Shah deliberately "weakened the authority of all individuals and institutions. His own power was buttressed by repression and a refined system of rewards." Political and military institutions were warped by his narrow conception of rulership. Only the mullahs in the mosque were relatively immune from this paralysing process. Only they could speak fairly free and speak to the masses.

Paradoxically, failure — in this instance the failure of the APC — is yet another veil stripped from the political reality. The negotiating process may begin again, especially now that the Indian election, yet another veil, is over. But for the time being at least, jaw-jaw has ended.

## A Broadcasting . . .

(Continued from page 21)

we should strive to draw on the strengths of both these approaches so that we will be able to understand the full complexity of mass communication and traditional culture.

The relationship between mass communication and traditional culture and the tensions and conflicts it generates can be studied at the conceptual and abstract level. This is vital to the attainment of a

deeper awareness of the issue. But at the same time, one should not lose sight of the historical dimension. The impact of mass media on traditional cultures and the ensuing dislocations and re-integrations are a part of the movement of history. Clifford Geertz, the well known anthropologist, uses two terms, 'essentialism' and 'epochalism' to denote two central phenomena connected with the modernization of traditional cultures. The first signifies the pull toward the preservation of inherited traditions while the latter is suggestive of the attraction and lures of modernity. Geertz says: 'The interplay of essentialism and epochalism is not, therefore, a kind of cultural dialectic, a logistic of abstract ideas, but a historical process as concrete as industrialization and as tangible as war. The issues are being fought out not simply at the doctrine and argument level though there is a great deal of both but much more importantly in the material transformation that the social structures of all the new states are undergoing. This insight of Geertz is important in understanding the impact of mass communication on traditional cultures. Commentators like Raymond Williams who have approached the problem from a different perspective have also made a strong plea for the study of the impact of mass communication on a given culture with a distinct historical frame in mind. A point of interest about this historicity is that not all societies traverse the identical path. While it is usual for Western societies to graduate from print media to radio and then to television and satellite communication, some other countries seem to be "leap-frogging" these stages.

What I have sought to do in this address is to use a metaphor drawn from mass communication to present not a close-up or medium shot, but a long-shot of the issue of mass communication and traditional culture. While a close-up seeks to delineate characteristics in detail and the medium-shot to capture the action graphically, the long-shot is concerned to display the topography of the

terrain. And that is precisely what I have attempted in my talk. Some of the issues I raised will, no doubt, receive more elaborate treatment during subsequent sessions, and newer ones will be introduced.

I commenced this paper by quoting from 'The Atlantic Monthly', which pointed out the need to take seriously the modern culture that has been fashioned largely by the mass media, and to adopt a rich humanistic standpoint towards it. This felt need becomes even more acute in the case of traditional cultures like Korea or Japan or India which can justifiably lay claim to strong and invigorating humanistic traditions. What I have sought to do in this paper is to raise some issues regarding mass communication and traditional culture which I hope will contribute to the widening of the discourse surrounding this topic. The construction of a philosophy of broadcasting for the Third World is as urgent as it is complex. It is my firm conviction that in order to construct such a philosophy we need to first address the issue of mass media and traditional culture. And this is precisely what I have attempted to do in this paper.

In conclusion, I wish to thank most sincerely the organizers of the International Broadcasters Symposium for allowing me to share some of these thoughts with you.

## United States . .

(Continued from page 17)

years that there would be no easy end to the war in El Salvador. Early in 1983 there was a debate within the Reagan Administration as to whether Nicaragua itself should not now be more directly threatened. The debate was won by the hardliners — notably Jeane Kirkpatrick.

(To be continued)

### Notes

- (1) The Debt Crisis and the World Economy Report by a Commonwealth Group of Experts, chaired by Lord Lever, July 1984, p 25.
- (2) "The next generation will speak Spanish", by Terry Coleman, Guardian (London), July 14, 1984.

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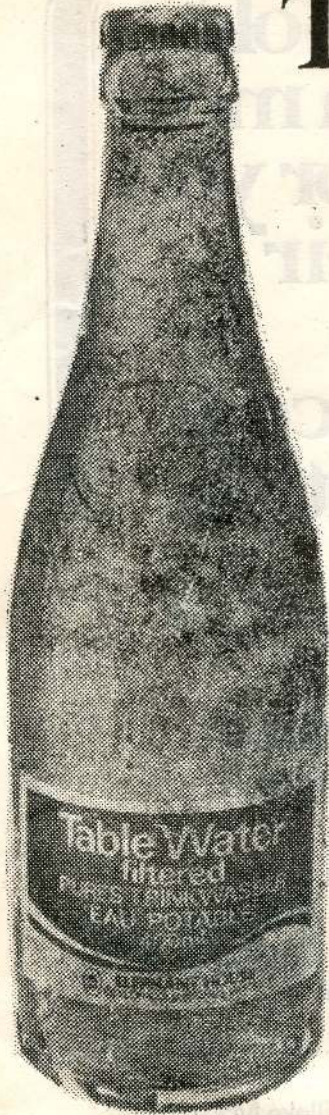
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