

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 16

No. 3

June 1, 1993

Price Rs.10.00

Registered at GPO, Sri Lanka QD/43/NEWS/93

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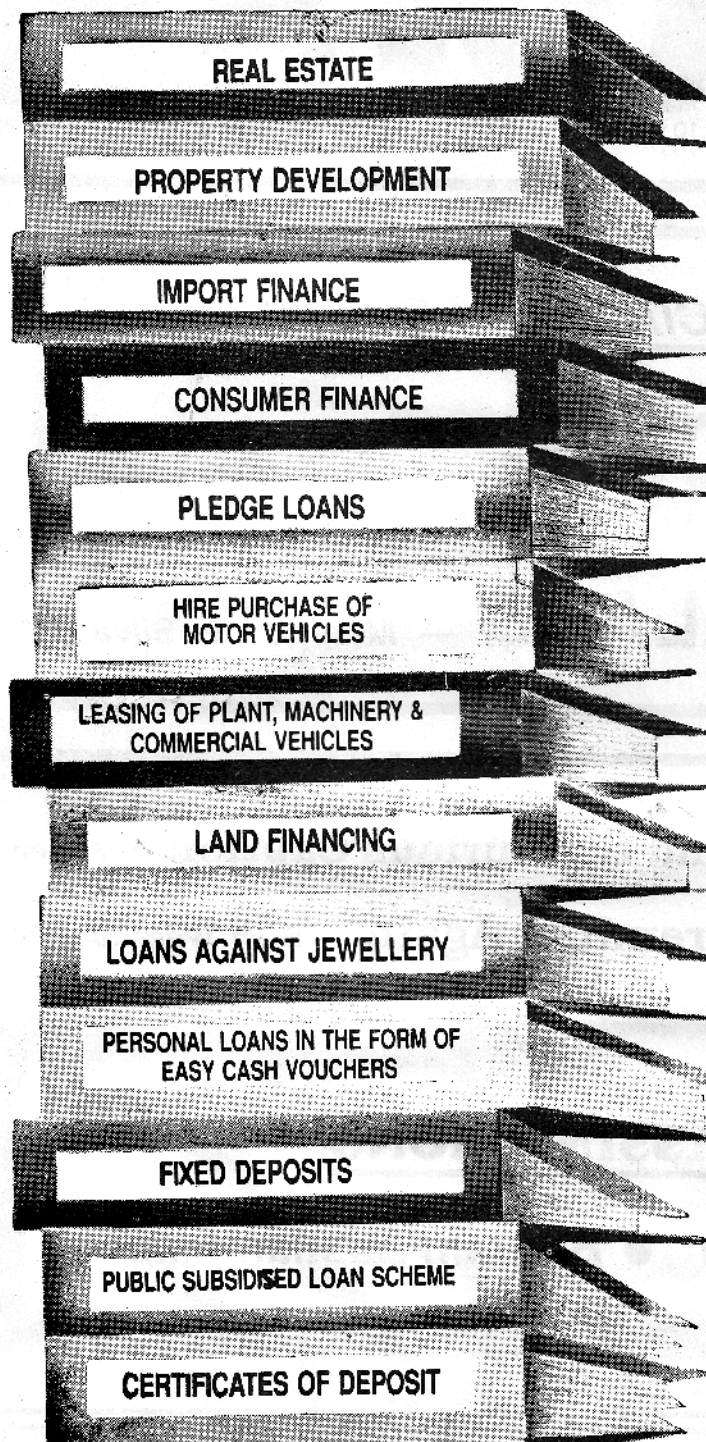
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PROVINCIAL POLLS: A TURNING POINT

Mervyn de Silva

In an unusually calm and orderly election, an achievement recognised by the international observer group, the May 17 provincial polls, could be regarded by a future historian, as an important turning point. Consider the following:

- 1) The turnout, close to 75%, was much closer to the national average in the past decades. But it is fair to contrast this figure with the unusually low 50-55% at the 1988 and 1989, presidential and parliamentary elections that were seriously affected by the JVP insurgency and the tough government crackdown. In many a constituency, the turnout was not more than 50-55%.
- 2) No serious acts of violence were reported by the police who said that in many parts of the island there were

no incidents at all, no altercations that required police intervention. In 14 days after the funeral, the atmosphere had changed. It is not possible to disregard the new, much quieter presidential style as the key factor in this remarkable change of atmosphere.

As for the results, the UNP did well but not well enough to believe that all's well. On the contrary, it would be silly not to face up to the fact that the breakaway DUNF, minus Lalith Athulathmudali, came close to polling 15% of the vote — and 95% of that, it is reasonable to assume, was part of the traditional UNP vote.

The UNP'ers who grudgingly concede the point and are therefore disturbed, like to explain the DUNF vote away by pointing to the post-Lalith assassination "sympathy vote. But the same can be said for the UNP. There was a swelling tide of pro-Premadasa emotionalism after the May Day tragedy.

A closer look suggests that the sympathy vote did help the DUNF in Colombo but that did not help the DUNF in other parts of the island — in the Central province for instance where the Kandyan duo, Gamini Disanayake and Sarath Amunugama should have together performed much better. The explanation favoured by their supporters leans heavily on the countervailing force of the presidential persona — the Kandyan President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge, the first since William Gopallawa, and the latter was only a ceremonial head of state.

Far more to the point is another personality — Mr. Saumyamurthy Thondaman, the CWC chief and Minister of Tourism who did extraordinarily well in Uva, Central province and Sabaragamuwa. Between the new President and his Minister, Mr. Thondaman, the DUNF was cut down to size.

So the UNP and its partner, the CWC took four of the seven provinces and came first in two others — the South and the North-west. To come first in 6 out of 7 must seem a pretty good showing. In fact, it's not good enough, considering that this was a three-cornered contest. If we can

presume that the two post-assassination sympathy votes cancel each other, the UNP has reason for concern about Colombo and the Western province, the important Southern, even if it ignores the setback in the NWP.

The West, the most populous, with Colombo, the country's capital and the commercial centre, was a serious blow to the governing party's prestige. The international media made much of it, partly of course because Chandrika Kumaratunge was automatically province's Chief Minister. The image projected is not all "glamour", but of a woman who has become the powerful "Mayor" of an internationally known city. With the "open economy" internationalising such standard images, Chandrika can now face brother Anura, the party's National Organiser, with much greater self-confidence.

A closer look at the figures reveals an interesting sociological fact — the city itself has remained loyal to the cosmopolitan UNP but the city has also been surrounded by hostile SLFP forces. There must be some socio-economic explanation that rests on the impact IMF-World Bank policies on different income and social groups.

IMF IMPACT

Both the SLFP and the PEP must lend an attentive ear to the comments of Mr. Hector Abhayawardena, the eminent LSSP intellectual:

"It is interesting that the opposition did not win a single constituency in Colombo city, all going to the UNP which means that the professionals, the upper and the upper middle classes did not support the opposition", said political analyst Hector Abhayawardene.

"It is a great disadvantage for opposition parties to try to form governments without the support of these groups. It would be difficult to sidestep those classes and make a bid for power", he said.

Mr. Abhayawardene said one of the lessons of the poll was whether the opposition had made a close enough examination of the problems of the

LANKE GUARDIAN

Vol. 16 No. 3 June 1, 1993

Price Rs. 10.00

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.
No. 246, Union Place
Colombo 2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 447584

Printed by Ananda Press
82/5, Sri Ratnayothi Saravanamuttu
Mawatha, Colombo 13.
Telephone: 435975

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economy in which the business and professional classes have appeared to have taken a fairly clear stand — that they are for the present economy.

"On that issue the opposition will have to do some rethinking. They can't turn their back on global trends and the importance of the world markets for our existence cannot be ignored, and also the assistance of the international lending institutions. These are problems the opposition will have to carefully consider", he said.

The SLFP has accused the government of wasteful spending on political carnivals and on uneconomical projects. But it has also failed to offer its own solutions to the problem, merely hiding under the cover of "if we say so, the UNP may use our prescription".

The reference to the professional classes is interesting. One had too easily concluded that Lalith and Gamini had picked up these groups alienated by the aggressively populist style of President Premadasa who had also other disqualifications, caste-and-class, which did not help him in winning their support or natural sympathy. Indeed, they were hostile. The upper middle-class clubs in Colombo constitute the natural habitat of the upper middle-class professionals and the new 'generation' FAX-CELLULAR businessmen.

So the DUNF has some serious rethinking to do. President Wijetunge and his Minister Thondaman has robbed the Gamini-Sarath duo upcountry victories, while admiration and loyalty made the westernised middle class work hard for Lalith. How long will such a support-base remain intact even in Colombo with the hero gone. So the DUNF vote is in danger of rapid shrinkage.

CHIEF MINISTERS

Just when one thought that President Wijetunge was keen on lowering the temperature and abandoning the confrontational style of his predecessor, he decided that the UNP which won the largest number of seats in the South and North-west had a right to have their Chief Ministers. This was after the PEP-DUNF had publicly announced that they would support a common candidate, whose identity was disclosed. The governors believed that the law allowed them to choose any member who in their opinion could command a majority. The result — back to the Cold War. . .

Tigers Still at Large

The Tamil Nadu government's request to declare the area over Jayalalitha's house a no-fly zone indicates that the LTTE is far from being wiped out in the state, reports G. V. Krishnan

In early February, the Tamil Nadu governor, Bhisma Narain Singh, in his address to the assembly declared that the LTTE would not be allowed to gain even a toe-hold in the state. Since then there have been many incidents that point to a perceptible LTTE presence in the state.

Within three weeks of Narain Singh's statement, five LTTE militants are believed to have infiltrated into the state. A 30-foot speed boat, Sea Tiger, belonging to the LTTE fleet was found abandoned on the Karaikal coast. The boat was believed to have carried a consignment of weapons. The police have reason to believe that the boat could have brought into Tamil Nadu the militants strike squad that was responsible for the recent 'rescue' of Kirpan and two other TADA detenus from police custody.

On February 21 six rockets with propellants, a rocket launcher, a medium machine gun, one AK-47 assault rifle and two grenades were recovered at the instance of a 17-year-old LTTE activist, Kannan, who was captured by fishermen off the Nagapattinam coast. And on March 3, the LTTE as a goodwill gesture, announced the release of 12 Nagapattinam fishermen, after having intercepted two trawlers at mid-sea and held the fishermen in custody for two weeks at Mullaitivu in Sri Lanka. Informed sources reckon that there are 15 known LTTE men active in the state. They include a senior member of the LTTE politburo.

In this light, the Prime Minister's call to intensify curbs on the LTTE is interpreted in Congress circles here as a reflection of the centre's misgivings about the state government's performance on this score.

One reason why the previous DMK government got the sack was the Centre's perception of a DMK-LTTE nexus and new Delhi's suspicion that sensitive information provided to the then DMK government found its way to Jaffna. It is said that a central intelligence agency intercepted an LTTE wireless message, confirming the suspicion.

The LTTE message pertained to a proposal by the Chandra Shekhar government to repatriate to Colombo the Sri Lankan Tamil militants rounded up in Tamil Nadu during the Karunanidhi regime. Informed sources said the man who conveyed the message to the LTTE supremo V. Prabhakaran, was Kirpan, who was then in charge of the LTTE operations

in Tamil Nadu.

Kirpan, arrested twice in the last three years, is at large again, this time, because of a security botch-up. Twenty-six year old Kirpan alias Saleem, an accused in the Padmanabha murder case, was initially held in 1990 and released on bail. He was re-arrested under TADA in February 1991 in a state-wide crackdown on the LTTE, following the dismissal of the Karunanidhi government.

Kirpan and two other hardcore LTTE men broke out of police custody on April 29 near Chengalpeta as they were being taken from the Madras Central Jail to Pattukottai, in southern Tamil Nadu, for a court appearance.

Available reports of the escape of the LTTE detenus point to a glaring security lapse on the part of the police escort party. The policemen reportedly shared a meal with the militants at a wayside eating house. They were attacked by the LTTE rescue squad as the policemen came out of the eating house. One of them was killed and another injured as three of the four TADA detenus were spirited away by the LTTE squad in a vehicle they had hijacked earlier in the day.

The escape of the militants and their propensity to hold out against a state-wide manhunt launched by the police speak for the support base the LTTE continues to have in Tamil Nadu. Besides, it has established that 1) the LTTE is capable of organising 'rescue' operations through strategic infiltration into the state and 2) that the militants have an effective intelligence network. There are still 14 hardcore LTTE men detained under TADA. Over 600 militants and their families are held in a special camp at Vellore.

The Congress-led opposition faults the Jayalalitha government for slackness in dealing with the LTTE.

Refuting the allegation, the AIADMK leadership charged the Congress with attempting to tarnish Jayalalitha's image as a no-nonsense chief minister who took on the LTTE in utter disregard for her personal security. The state government recently sought adequate security cover for the chief minister against possible attack by the LTTE.

Notably, the state government's perception of increased threat to Jayalalitha's security is in stark contrast to its earlier position that the LTTE activity in the state had been effectively curbed.

A Tragedy in Two Acts

Noelani Tiruchelvam

Within a short span of ten days Sri Lanka has plunged into one of the most serious political crisis in recent decades. Both DUNF leader Lalith Athulathudali and President Ranasinghe Premadasa, leader of the United National Party, have been assassinated in quick succession.

Since the assassination of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1958, Sri Lanka's history of representative democracy and competitive party politics has been marred by several dramatic assassinations. The leaders of almost every political party including TULF leader Appapillai Amirthalingam, SLMP leader Vijaya Kumaranatunga and the KPRLF leader K. Radmanabha were slain at some stage of the island's troubled history. The anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983 was perhaps the darkest period in the post-independence history. Within the past decade the country has been besieged by two insurgencies, and the militarisation of civil society.

Will Sri Lanka ever exorcise the evil of political violence from its body politic? Will the political parties be jolted by the recent tragedy to work in unison towards an orderly transition? Or will political animosity and intolerance drive the nation to further fratricidal violence and destruction?

Critical to the resolution of Sri Lanka's crisis of democracy is the urgent and immediate need to resolve the crisis in the North-East. President Premadasa was widely regarded as the political leader most likely to succeed in evolving a political resolution of the national question, and yet his approach to these problems was deeply flawed.

First, he endeavoured to isolate the North-East economically and psychologically from the South and to insulate the South from the consequences of the civil war. It was a strategy which enabled him to project the South as a haven for investment, trade and infrastructural development. The strategy, however, accentuated the economic disparities between the regions and made the populace in the South indifferent to the severe deprivations to which more than a million refugees and internally displaced were exposed to in the North. The Government further downplayed the financial and human costs of the civil war and thereby did little to develop a peace constituency.

Secondly, the President distanced himself from the efforts of the Parliamentary Select Committee engaged in the search for a political solution. While he underlook

to implement a consensus, he did very little to forge such a consensus and allowed the Committee to drift for months without political direction. The Committee could have been energised if President Premadasa had devoted even a fraction of his extraordinary energy and enthusiasm to the substantive issues relating to the unit and substance of devolution. The Government has been further accused of eroding the existing devolutionary arrangements and creating divisional secretariats which in effect would strengthen the centralised and authoritarian character of the state.

On the other hand, President Premadasa was free of the envy, rivalry and inhibitions which constrained the ethnic attitudes of the Sinhala middle class. He empathised with an urban underclass which was effectively bilingual and socially uninhibited. He was the first head of state to speak in Tamil or otherwise to insist that his public speeches be simultaneously interpreted.

Although he was the least secular head of government in modern Sri Lanka, he was no Theravada Buddhist purist. He openly embraced a form of popular religiosity, which recognised the syncretism between Sinhala Buddhist and Hindu practices, rituals and beliefs. He regularly engaged in religious worship in Hindu temples and devales, and less frequently in mosques and churches. Tamil and Muslim entrepreneurs and traders felt that Premadasa's policies created a more even economic playing field than what was possible in previous regimes. However, President Premadasa failed to build on this goodwill and to move decisively towards a political resolution.

Many legal and political commentators link Sri Lanka's present woes to the Second Republican Constitution of 1978. Radhika Coomaraswamy forewarned in the early 1980s that the executive presidential system could be the harbinger of authoritarianism and the first step towards dictatorship. Power inevitably gravitated towards the Executive President, who was able to secure undated letters of resignation from members of Parliament.

These centripetal tendencies were further accentuated by the bizarre entrenchment of the unitary state. The disenfranchisement of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the extension of the life of Parliament, the Sixth Amendment which expelled the TULF from Parliament, the abuse of emergency powers and of the electoral process, contributed to an erosion of confidence in constitutionalism.

On the other hand, it was the executive presidential system which enabled President Jayewardene to rise above popular passions and sign the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, which continues to influence political discourse on a negotiated election. President Premadasa transformed the Presidency with his activist and interventionist style. The Cabinet ceased to be a collegial decision-making body, and subordinate officials received instructions directly from the President and were accountable to him. Parliament's role further declined and it became less capable of scrutinising executive action or in ensuring financial accountability.

The state media projected the developmental vision, the personality and style of the President to the exclusion of other political actors. President Premadasa dominated the political life of the country, and his impatient and somewhat imperious style fuelled resentment and led to the impeachment crisis.

C.R.M. Statement:

THE POINTING OF GUNS

The Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka has sought clarification from the government regarding the repeal of the emergency regulation which provided that "no person shall, without lawful excuse, point at any other person any gun whether loaded or unloaded."

CRM's main reason for raising this query is the present context of arms remaining in the hands of private persons, and the past history of the wielding of firearms by or on behalf of political parties and candidates at elections held in 1988 and 1989. In regard to those elections the Commissioner of Elections himself had occasion to observe that

"A singularly disturbing development is the spread of fire-arms in the hands of several segments of society including Political Parties and Candidates", and that

"The liberal proliferation of firearms in private hands, especially those who engage in political activities have proved to be most disastrous in the field of elections."

At a UN meeting in August 1990 the representative of the Government of Sri Lanka said

"I would like to assure the Sub Commission that the Government... has issued clear instructions to law enforcement Authorities to also requisition weapons possessed by any person other than the security forces."

It is, regrettably, a well known fact that much remains to be done by way of implementation of this policy. In fact, if newspaper reports are correct, senior law enforcement officers have said they have not been ordered to recover the arms and ammunition issued to members of the recently dissolved Provincial Councils.

A compilation citing some 28 specific instances of the use of firearms to influence the result of the 1988 Provincial Council and the 1989 Parliamentary Elections, as described in the reports of the Commissioner of Elections, is annexed, together with some recent press reports relating to arms in the hands of private persons.

While emphasising its support of the principle that offences should be dealt with under the normal law, CRM expressed puzzlement as this particular regulation is not one which has been criticised by human rights organisations in Sri Lanka or internationally. Furthermore, though the government has stated that recent amendments are in pursuance of the recommendations of the University Centre the Study of Human Rights, this body too did not highlight or recommend the repeal of this provision. On the other hand, there have been strong recommendations against the continuation of other emergency regulations which have serious implications for human rights. The major part of these concerns has not been met by the recent amendments, though there have subsequently been some further relaxations to facilitate the Provincial Council election campaign.

In seeking to know the thinking behind the selection of this particular regulation for repeal, and why this was considered a priority, CRM has made it clear that its query should not be interpreted as a suggestion that the regulation be reimposed.

CRM's observations on the main human rights issues related to the amendments made to the emergency regulations were made in its statement **EMERGENCY REGULATIONS — THE RECENT AMENDMENTS** dated 25 February 1993 (CRM ref. EO 3/2/93).³ The present query was made after a further study.

Suriya Wickremasinghe
Secretary

ANNEXES

A) "Ex-Pc members still armed", "Democracy threatened by armed politicians" and "For a Fair and Free Election" — ISLAND 28 March 1993

B) **ELECTION AT GUNPOINT** — some extracts from reports of the Commissioner of Elections on the Provincial Council Elections of 1988 and the Parliamentary General Election of 1989

1 Regulation 38 of the Emergency (Miscellaneous Provision and Powers) Regulations No 1 of 1989.

2 Statement by Ambassador Wamasena Rasaputram on 23 August 1990, UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Forty-Second Session.

3 The amendments in question are those published in Gazette Extraordinary No. 752/14 of 5 February 1993

Correspondence

J R and Referendum

'If you injected truth into politics there would be no politics' — *Will Rogers*.

I deem it sheer effrontery that Mr. J.R. Jayewardena can emerge from wherever he has been, to claim that the Referendum of 1982, was an act to save Democracy. This is preposterous in the extreme, unless of course Mr. Jayewardena is yet again indulging in cynicism perhaps in an unbecoming scornful arrogance.

The first question which arises is — Why does he surface to make this defence ten years on? Obviously because he too realises in retrospect the enormity of the horrific consequences of a political decision taken, in the minds of many — for expediency or as others would say in the naked pursuit of power. He obviously seeks to clothe it in morality and patriotism — the last refuge of a certain type of person. He is obviously feeling the heat of History.

In his laboured effort to defend the indefensible, Mr. Jayewardena sadly trips himself many times over. By the sheer transparency of his arguments he exposes his political nakedness. He knows that in no real 'Democracy', has elections ever been postponed on the basis of dubious reasons and by a Referendum.

He obviously is a troubled man. It would be recalled that when he set out in 1977 he wanted to be remembered as a Dharmishta Ruler — but he obviously realises that history will judge him otherwise on his record and hence this defence, in anticipation of the obvious charge, at the bar of public opinion. Within a decade and in his own lifetime, his defence has been and will continue to be laughed out of 'court'

So we know now that it was 'the speeches made during 1982 Presidential Campaign by certain SLFP speakers which were not speeches that were appropriate for a Democratic election' that resulted in Mr. Jayewardena pushing his party and the Government to postpone the election scheduled for August 1983 and deny the people of their right to an election. He also states as another reason that 'there was evidence of plans to kill and cause damage'. If there indeed was such evidence why was no one convicted? Surely convictions could have been obtained and the country saved and those against whom violations were to be perpetrated could also have been saved. To say that, what

he claims, 'rings hollow' is an under-statement. I believe it was Charles De Gaulle who once said 'since a politician never believes what he says he is surprised when others believe him'. In this instance Mr. Jayewardena is certainly not in for such a surprise.

Jayewardena in his geriatric confusion perhaps gives himself away by stating that, 'had elections held it could quite possibly have resulted in a hung-Parliament with 50-50 seats for the Government or have resulted in a majority for the opposition'. This really was the reason and all that talk of naxalites 'planning to take over the army and carry out a campaign of terror' is reduced to hog-wash. How could a motley band of naxalites, even had they won a majority of seats in Parliament, have 'taken over' an army?

Mr. Jayewardena's other arguments are equally shallow. Mr. Jayewardena tries to justify the Referendum by claiming that elections had been postponed at various times before independence. He however is compelled to state that this was during the time of the British, when constitutional changes were taking place. The only instance he cites is also not in support of his argument. He recalls that he opposed Sirimavo Bandaranaike's undemocratic postponement of elections, by correctly resigning his seat in Parliament and re-contesting on the issue and was returned with a thumping majority to prove his point. To say the least, 'pitiful' is the fact that he perpetrated on the people 'the very same crime' which he, very rightly, protested on that occasion.

Mr. Jayewardena also cites instances of postponements in other countries, and, once again insulting the intelligence of his readers, refers to the **postponement of British elections during the second world war**, equating by inference that situation to the one he faced in his own imagination in 1982. He seems to have depended on his imagination for his facts. The palpably transparent and weak case which he endeavours to make out can fool no one. He keeps falling over himself to make use of the few years available to him, to endeavour to ensure that history will remember him kindly. Unfortunately the list of undemocratic actions that almost buried democracy in Sri Lanka does not begin or end with the Referendum. Mr

Jayewardena has much to answer for.

Mr. Jayewardena cannot forget the lock-out of over 50,000 strikers and the use of bicycle chains. The promoting of a junior police officer by Cabinet decision as a reward for violating the fundamental rights of a distinguished citizen, the intimidation of judges and the rigging of elections. What has Mr. Jayewardena to say about the actions of his senior Ministers in Jaffna during the DDC elections? What has Mr. Jayewardena to say on the findings of the Election Commissioner in his Report on the Referendum. (To mention only two instances) — Would not Mr. Jayewardena agree that even on the basis of his rigged Referendum result, he could not have justified the maintenance of his 2/3rd majority in the House. He fooled no one by holding a mock-election in 17 constituencies where the Referendum was lost. The 'charges' against Mr. Jayewardena could be endless.

Would he deny that it was his foreign policy that dissipated the international po-

litical capital that successive Governments from 1948 more particularly from 1956, had accumulated. Would Mr. Jayewardena deny that it was his policies that resulted in the deterioration of Indo-Sri Lanka relations to a point where Indira Gandhi decided to de-stabilise Sri Lanka. Would Mr. Jayewardena agree that it was his economic policies (which was a sell out to the IMF) which resulted in the bottom being removed from the economy of the North particularly, and of the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, through the importation of agricultural products that could have been successfully and economically grown in the country. Would he not accept that he also contributed in a large measure to the worsening of the plight of the Tamils. Would Mr. Jayewardena also accept that rampant corruption which was a feature of his administration, (solely due to his tolerance of it) created not millionaires but "Asia's richest man" overnight and an obscene disparity of wealth in the country.

Last but not least, could he deny that it was the political, economic and social injustices during his period in office, including his 'job-bank', which resulted in the horrible insurgency of the JVP, which almost destroyed Sri Lanka.

There is no doubt that Mr. Jayewardena would be remembered in history not only as the man from whom so much was expected, but was unequal to the task and was able only to offer an uninspiring and mediocre stewardship, but more as the man who destroyed Democracy in Sri Lanka. Certainly not as the man who saved Democracy in Sri Lanka.

Instead of trying to defend the indefensible if he would only admit his mistakes as he did in his now 'confessional interview' in 1987 when he admitted to have lacked foresight, vision etc., he may yet be able to recoup at least some small part of his entirely lost credibility.

Sam Weerasinghe,

Surrey, U.K.

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To Comrade Shan

Lets hurry, Comrade Shan

*Under the great disorder of shattering Suns
(Worlds must explode, we see, for new creation)*

Lets make our Unrepentance clear

The guns, Mao hailed, are sounding near

They aren't, perhaps, as we expected, friendly.

The single shot in the silence of the trees

The crackle, like a distant choir

Of War, borne on the breeze

Down this unbelieving sunlit hillside.

Or the sudden insane stutter in the street

After cocktails consecrating Peace

And Revisionism, that sadly, surely, seems

The inevitable fate of all Revolution?

Or between Reformists and those who deviate

Into the Killing Fields, can we fare Straight

Over the exploded fragments of wasteful fires

With those who are not too smart to disown Stalin

And Oedipus obsessed strike down their Stes

U. Karunatilake

August 1988

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Winners, Losers and Others:

A Post-mortem on the 1993 Poll

Prakshopana

The Provincial Council Elections of May 1993 could very well be viewed as one that transcended the provincial and captured everybody's attention at the national level. The Late President Premadasa personally taking charge of the UNP's campaign and his statement that 'vote for the UNP is a vote for me' transformed it into an informal referendum on the Premadasa Presidency. The fact that both the main 'opposing' parties, viz., the SLFP led People's Alliance (PA) and the UNP breakaway group of the Democratic United National Front (DUNF) made its 'anti-Premadasa stand' the main plank of their respective campaigns further accentuated that rather than any substantive devolution-related issue allied to the Provincial Council system, it was the Premadasa Presidency which was being targeted for a verdict from the national constituency (reduced to the 17 districts outside the Northeast of the country). Obviously, this was going to be the dress rehearsal before the forthcoming Presidential Elections scheduled to take place before the end of 1994.

The hurriedly got-up PA signified that the SLFP (poorly projecting its image as a party capable of mobilizing the protest votes against the incumbent government in power) was opting to play safe with the statistical truism which has revealed that they invariably did better when they were couched within a leftist coalition than when they faced the hustings alone. (The MEP was the only recognized leftist political party with some electoral clout that did not enter the PA on a strictly policy issue since they opposed the Provincial Council system; the MEP, however, lent its moral support to the PA in order to elicit an anti-UNP verdict). Though there were early rumblings that the DUNF might enter the PA, what was finally agreed upon was to go it alone. Apparently, the strategy was for the PA to garner the traditional SLFP cum left electorate (including the wooing of the estranged SLFP-left vote) while the DUNF was to extract and carve out its base from among the dissident UNP constituency. In that way, the identity of the two parties could be kept intact while making a twin assault on the UNP voter base. The campaign understanding was not to attack each other (but the common

enemy, viz., the UNP) at public meetings and to seriously consider supporting each other in forming Provincial Councils so that it could be made into a launching pad for the assault on the Presidency, come December, 1994.

The May poll of 1993 is bound to be unprecedented in the electoral history of Sri Lanka in that it witnessed the assassination of two party leaders of the main contenders almost as soon as the campaign got into its final swing. The impact of the violent deaths of both Mr. Lalith Aluthmudali and President Premadasa will be impossible to quantify except through mere speculation. No attempt towards that will be made herein.

The appearance of the DUNF on the political horizon signalled the entry of a potential third force of a non-leftist kind for the first time. The continued failure of the SLFP to make a successful assault on the UNP's hold on power since 1977 (though six national level polls were held during the 16 intervening years) had imparted a grudging reconciliatory disposition to the electorate (though this period was indelibly marked with blood resulting from two insurgencies, in both the north and south of the country). The DUNF consisting of a breakaway group of the UNP suddenly opened up the possibility that jointly, the PA and DUNF may be able to shake-off the gird lock of the UNP. Both the display of ample 'resourcefulness' as well as the proficient organisational acumen displayed by DUNF appeared somewhat capable of shaking the aura of invincibility of the UNP.

This paper will first present the national and district level standing of the UNP, PA, DUNF and the rest of the 'other (small) parties'. Secondly, it will focus on the more interesting question of who lost, how much to the new comer, the DUNF at the national and district levels. Finally, since this latter analysis points unmistakably towards the declining performance of the PA, this trend will be presented in historical perspective.

Perhaps the only clear winner of the '93 Poll is democracy itself. With hardly a whimper heard from the opposition parties on there being 'foul play' (usually the hallmark of the eighties decade!) and nearly three quarters of the registered

voters (74.0 percent) turning out to cast their ballot, the country appears to have regained its usual post-independence pattern of voting and recovered from the body blows it received during 1988 (54.4 percent) and 1989 (63.4 percent) when the ballot was under siege from extra-democratic forces. As revealed in Table 1, the best voter turnout at the district level was registered in Ratnapura (79.4 percent) while the most populous and urban Colombo was the worst offender (67.8 percent) followed by the southern districts of Matara and Hambantota (see column i).

The same bill of health is not forthcoming in respect of the mechanisms used in expressing one's choice (vote) of party. Nearly one half-million of voters (496,121 or 7.2 percent of all those) who cast their ballot did not have their vote counted due to the functioning of an apartheid system uncommonly known as 'voter illiteracy' vis-a-vis the use of the ballot paper (see column ii). The '93 performance though slightly better than the appallingly high 9.4 percent in '91 is still well beyond the rational tolerance limits of a vibrant democracy. Already, a couple of editorials have highlighted this debility within our democracy and no less a person than the Commissioner of Elections has stated that his choice of remedy is to restrict the voter to a single vote and a single preference; within the confines of the Proportional Representation System. The pros and cons of this is a matter for discussion in a different paper.

The worst affected district in disenfranchisement of the voter is Nuwara Eliya (11.9 percent) and the least affected is Gampaha (5.3 percent) indicating that there is a close correspondence between functional illiteracy and voter illiteracy. The worst electorate in this regard appears to be Hapuranketa (13.0 percent) and the least is Maharagama (5.0 percent). Even the latter appears well above a rational tolerance limit of between one to two percent.

In the 17 districts which in this paper proxies for Sri Lanka, the 46.9 percent of the national mandate received by UNP stands as the lowest which was received by the party since the early 1980s (see column iv). During the last three elections

TABLE 1

Percent polled at the Provincial Councils Elections of 1993, average percent polled at the '88, '89 and '91 elections, percentage point gain of DUNF from other parties and the decline of percentage point advantage of PA over UNP monitored over 23 years at selected elections

Electoral District	Percentage Polled	Percentage Rejected Votes	Percent Polled at 1993 Election by				Average Percent Votes Polled in '88, '89 & '91 Elections by			Percentage Points of Votes gained by DUNF from			PA'S Percentage Point advantage over UNP						
			DUNF	UNP	PA	OTHER PARTIES	UNP	PA	OTHER PARTIES	UNP	PA	OTHER PARTIES	at the Election of				1993 without DUNF	between 1970 & 1993 without DUNF	
													1970	1982 Pres.	1988 Pres.	1993			
Anuradhapura	76.9	8.1	10.5	51.3	35.1	2.5	51.4	44.2	4.6	+0.5	-8.1	-2.1	22.2	-6.3	12.3	-16.8	-18.9	-41.0	
Polonnaruwa	74.4	8.7	12.5	52.3	33.4	1.8	57.1	38.6	3.3	-4.8	-6.2	-1.5	7.0	-21.9	-13.0	-18.9	-21.5	-28.5	
Monaragala	78.2	9.1	8.8	55.7	34.9	0.6	57.3	38.1	3.6	-1.6	-4.2	-3.0	20.1	-6.9	-29.0	-20.8	-22.8	-42.8	
Badulla	79.2	11.7	13.3	57.9	25.5	3.3	60.9	34.7	4.4	-3.0	-9.2	-1.1	13.0	-21.9	-22.7	-32.4	-47.8	-60.8	
Ratnapura	78.4	8.8	8.6	52.2	36.5	2.8	52.8	43.3	3.9	-0.6	-6.8	-1.1	26.1	-6.8	-6.0	-15.7	-17.2	-43.3	
Kegalle	73.9	6.9	17.0	49.3	32.6	1.1	57.6	33.7	8.7	-8.3	-1.1	-7.6	13.3	-20.1	-16.6	-16.7	-20.3	-33.6	
Kandy	76.8	8.0	17.8	49.8	30.6	1.9	58.0	37.1	4.9	-8.2	-6.5	-3.0	7.0	-22.9	-11.2	-19.2	-23.4	-30.4	
Matale	77.2	10.0	17.6	53.2	26.1	3.1	58.9	36.2	4.9	-6.7	-9.1	-1.8	12.4	-21.5	-17.5	-27.1	-32.9	-45.3	
Nuwara Eliya	78.9	11.9	11.4	58.2	18.7	10.6	61.8	31.7	6.5	-2.6	-13.0	+4.1	11.5	-30.1	-26.2	-40.5	-45.6	-57.1	
Kurunegala	77.2	6.7	19.1	43.8	35.9	1.5	53.9	40.3	5.8	-10.3	-4.4	-4.3	11.4	-15.7	-4.2	-7.7	-9.6	-21.0	
Puttalam	70.2	6.3	10.8	50.2	36.4	2.6	57.7	38.4	3.9	-7.5	-2.0	-1.3	7.9	-22.4	-13.6	-13.8	-15.5	-22.6	
Gampaha	73.2	5.3	11.4	41.3	45.7	1.8	50.9	45.4	3.7	-9.6	+0.3	-2.1	18.5	-9.2	0.7	4.4	-4.8	-13.7	
Colombo	67.8	5.5	21.9	37.6	38.1	2.4	48.6	38.1	11.3	-12.0	-1.0	-8.9	-0.2	-21.1	-2.9	0.5	0.7	0.9	
Kalutara	73.0	6.7	13.8	44.2	39.4	2.7	47.8	43.9	8.3	-3.6	-4.5	-5.6	19.7	-6.1	2.9	-4.8	-5.5	-25.2	
Galle	73.6	6.1	9.1	44.3	44.0	2.8	47.8	45.1	7.1	-3.5	-1.1	-4.5	18.7	-7.2	8.5	-0.3	-0.4	-19.1	
Matara	69.9	6.7	13.9	45.0	40.2	0.9	50.5	45.1	4.4	-5.5	-4.9	-3.5	19.3	-6.0	11.4	-4.8	-6.8	-25.9	
Hambantota	69.2	7.9	15.9	49.9	31.0	3.2	51.3	44.4	4.3	-1.4	-13.4	-1.1	14.7	-7.2	-2.2	-18.9	-22.4	-37.1	
Sri Lanka 17 Districts	74.0	7.2	14.5	46.9	36.1	2.5	52.9	40.6	6.5	-6.0	-4.5	-4.0	12.5	-14.4	-4.8	-10.8	-12.7	-25.2	
No. of Votes	(6,880,656)	(496,121)	(928,590)	(2,994,253)	(2,304,495)	(157,097)													
Column No	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix	x	xi	xii	xiii	xiv	xv	xvi	xvii	xviii	

of '88, '89 and '91, the UNP obtained national mandates of 50.1, 56.3 and 52.2 percent, respectively. In that respect, the UNP has received a set back in being depressed beyond the psychologically important barrier of 50 percent of the national mandate. However, in 8 districts mainly in the North Central, Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa and North Western provinces, the UNP received over 50 percent of the cast, valid votes. In the districts of Kegalle, Kandy and Hambantota it received more than 49 percent of the vote. It fared least well in the Southern and Western provinces, the worst being the District of Colombo (37.6 percent).

This, however, does not mean that the People's Alliance (PA) made massive gains in Colombo. They eked out a mere 0.5 percentage points more than the UNP (see column v); the outstanding gains went to the DUNF which received a whopping 21.9 percent of the mandate in Colombo, a testimony to the popularity and the proficient campaign launched by the late leader of the DUNF, possibly aided to some extent by the fallout of his assassination. The PA obtained slightly over one third of the national mandate (36.1 percent). In only three districts did it receive just over 40 percent of the vote (i.e., Gampaha, Galle and Matara). Co-

nversely, it received well under 30 percent of the vote in Nuwara Eliya (18.7), Badulla (25.5) and Matale (26.1) effectively abdicating its moral claim as the 'second force' in the district by obtaining less than half the number of votes than the UNP. In the remaining 11 districts the PA obtained a district mandate in the 30s (percentage points).

On a comparative level, the UNP gained an outright advantage in 15 out of the 17 districts. The PA's advantage was in Colombo and Gampaha districts.

The new comer, DUNF, did very creditably by obtaining 14.5 percent of the national mandate (see column iii). Such a feat has been performed any better in only one instance of the political history of Sri Lanka when Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike broke away from the UNP (the parallel is compellingly revealing!), formed the SLFP and obtained 15 percent of the national mandate (this time in respect of the whole of Sri Lanka) at the 1952 poll. Except in the districts of Ratnapura (8.6), Monaragala (8.8) and Galle (9.1), the DUNF obtained more than 10 percent of the votes in all other districts, receiving the highest proportion of 21.9 percent in Colombo. The other notable high scorers are Kurunegala (19.1), Kandy (17.8), Matale (17.6) and Kegalle (17.0), a testimony to

the organisational prowess of the three front-runners of the party.

The fact that the DUNF appeared literally from 'no-where' on the political horizon in between the elections of '91 and '93 demands answers to the vital twin questions of "from whom did it extract votes?" and "how many votes did it extract from each party?"

In order to provide answers to these two questions we have to determine what the party position was prior to the appearance of the DUNF. An obvious point of departure will be the proportionate votes received at the last (i.e., '91) elections. We, however, shall take the average votes received at the '88, '89 and '91 elections since it gives a more robust feel of the voter mood during the Premadasa Era. The difference between the distributions of this average and that of '91 are also negligible (for instance, the national mandate received by UNP and the SLFP and its coalition partners at '91 was, 52.2 and 40.5 percent, respectively; corresponding averaged figures are 52.9 and 40.6 percent).

Columns vii, viii and ix in Table 1 provide the averaged figures of voter strength during the '88 through '91 period. When the corresponding figures in columns iv, v and vi are subtracted, the resulting loss or gain appearing columns x, xi and xii

represent what the UNP, the PA and the 'other parties' sacrificed to the newly emergent DUNF, respectively. Thus, at the national level, the UNP lost 6.0 percentage points from its pre-93 voter strength while the relative loss of the PA was 4.5 percentage points. The worst relative debacle was faced jointly by the 'other (small) parties' dwindling from an already minuscule 6.5 percent to the depths of 2.5, a loss of 4.0 percentage points to the DUNF.

One is aware of objections being raised against this analysis claiming that it may be the unknown quantity, i.e., the new voters who may have voted for the DUNF. In the first instance a two year crop of new voters is not sufficient to propel the DUNF to the heights it reached. Furthermore, the initial orientation of the new voter is invariably forged within his/her family and since families usually procreate randomly without specific party biases, a steeply bias young DUNF vote of significance has to be ruled out. It is not to say that there will be no deviants from among the young voters who counter-vote their family tradition; these, by and large are a statistically insignificant minority in the general reckoning.

More devastating revelations emerge at the district level analysis. There are only three instances (that too very insignificantly minuscule) where the UNP, PA and 'other parties' gained on their pre-93 situation; the UNP gained 0.5 percentage points in Anuradhapura, the PA 0.3 percentage points in Gampaha and the 'other parties', a substantial 4.1 percentage points in Nuwara Eliya District due mainly to the emergence of Mr. Chandrasekaran's party. Substantial erosions in the UNP support base were sustained in the districts Colombo (12.0) and Kurunegala (10.3) while an even more drastic fate befell the PA in Hambantota (13.4) and Nuwara Eliya (13.0).

The most devastating indictment on the PA's performance is revealed when the comparative erosions in the support bases of the two main parties are pursued at the district level. In ten out of the 17 districts, the percentage loss of PA votes to the DUNF was higher than that of the UNP. These higher comparative losses were sustained by the PA in the districts of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Monaragala, Badulla, Ratnapura, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Kalutara, Matara and Hambantota. In an electoral agreement which spelt out that the DUNF and the PA were not going to attack each other, there should have been no inroads made by the DUNF on the support base of the PA. If in fact this happened — as

indeed is demonstrated — it shows that the PA had already disenchanted and alienated a section of its own supporters on its own volition. A natural process of unaided gravitation towards the DUNF appears to have taken place among the disaffected supporters of PA. In the business of politics which by nature places a high premium on enhancing one's support base continuously by making inroads into other's terrain, sustaining involuntary losses tantamount to committing political HARA-KIRI.

Since there was a bona fide case of an erosion of the PA's popular base we attempted to chart this trend in historical perspective. The electoral results of the 1970 elections was taken as the peak performance (following through from 1956 to 1965) of the antecedents of the current PA, viz., the SLFP and its leftist coalition partners. Column xii displays the relative advantage the PA had over the UNP in 1970. Nationally, the PA had a 12.5 percentage point lead over the UNP. It was only in Colombo District that the UNP was ahead by a meagre 0.2 percentage points. At the other extreme, in Ratnapura, the PA had a massive 26.1 percentage point advantage over the UNP.

The SLFP and its coalition partners after governing the country for over six years lost its preeminence to the UNP at the 1977 elections. To avoid giving an undue advantage to the UNP, we perused the 1982 Presidential Elections (rather than the 1977 elections) results, allowing the UNP to rule the country for six years and giving them an equal chance to accumulate the displeasure of the constituency. However, the differential advantage had reversed itself from 12.5 percentage points in favour of the PA to a 14.4 percentage point advantage for the UNP in 1982 (see column xiv). The advantage had been captured in all 17 districts by the UNP. Yet another six years into UNP rule and one witnesses the loss of initiative by the UNP with its national advantage reduced to 4.8 percentage points in an unusually depressed electoral turnout due to threats by the southern militancy. The PA captured the advantage in Anuradhapura (12.3), Matara (11.4), Galle (8.5), Kalutara (2.9) and Gampaha (0.7) districts.

At the 1993 poll, the UNP increased its national advantage to 10.8 percentage points (see column xvi). The PA was only capable of maintaining an advantage in the districts of Gampaha (4.4) and Colombo (0.5). The districts of Nuwara Eliya (40.5) and Badulla (32.4) yielded the highest percentage point advantage to the UNP. The 1993 poll is strictly not compara-

ble to the other polls since a formidable 'third force' of the DUNF kind was non-existent in 1970, 1982 and 1988. In order to place the comparisons on an equitable basis, the DUNF vote was subtracted from the total valid vote and fresh percentage distributions worked out in respect of the UNP and PA, the differences between which appear in column xvii. All differences without exception are enlarged when the presence of the DUNF is blotted out of the '93 poll.

What transpires from comparing the relative electoral advantages wielded by the PA and the UNP during a near quarter century is that the 12.5 percentage point advantage which was held by the PA in 1970 at the national level (17 districts) has now evolved into a 12.7 advantage for the UNP. The PA's slide has been a conspicuous withdrawal to the tune of 25.2 percentage points (see column xviii). This slide is repeated in 16 of the 17 districts, the only exception being that of Colombo which has yielded an insignificant 0.9 percentage point advantage to the PA. The highest gains by the UNP are registered in Nuwara Eliya (57.1) followed by Matara (45.3), Ratnapura (43.3), Monaragala (42.8) and Anuradhapura (41.0).

Thus, the political horizon of late May 1993 appears overcast and hazy by any standard except for the overwhelming vote of confidence in democracy. The UNP is psychologically disturbed after having been pushed beneath the magical 50 percent mandate mark for the first time its recent tenure of power for the past 16 years. The PA is a loosely held coalition with its dominant partner plagued by internal squabbles which threaten to burst the party asunder. Its continuing inability to project a winning image to the constituency is reflected in its precipitously downward slide. The meteoric rise of the DUNF was primarily propelled by two potent fuels; anti-Promadasalism and the charismatic appeal of Mr. Lalith Atulathudali. Both have evaporated and it is hard to envisage anything other than an equally phenomenal nose-dive for the DUNF. In the wings were over a million or so voters who were effectively disenfranchised due to the breakdown of social order; ironically, it was precisely for bringing this northeastern constituency into the mainstream of political life that the kiss of life was planted on the Provincial Councils. But this was not to be, come May 1993. The twin assassinations have darkened the political horizon further. The fact that terror and militancy haunts the land adds a sinister to an already grim landscape.

After the Assassinations —

The Need of the Hour: Prudent Politics

Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai (*University of Colombo*)

Violence in Sri Lanka has become endemic and intense. Two assassinations, namely of the Head of the State and Government and of a leading political figure, Head of an oppositional party in the forthcoming provincial council elections and one time Minister of National Security, within the space of a week have left the people shocked and numb with fear. In addition, there is no promise of a respite from violence because a responsible supporter of the DUNF and one time Secretary to a key Ministry and later High Commissioner in a Commonwealth country has spoken publicly but clearly quite apprehensively of more killings being likely. The atmosphere is shrouded in insecurity and threat, and the people wonder what tomorrow will mean.

The people look for calm and order but at the moment they remain in a state where they have doubts about security and safety being sure in Sri Lanka. Announcements about death squads, bombs, and assassins and assassinations have been regularly repeated, but the people have not noticed any means being evident among these who are responsible for maintaining order or harmony to combat or avert such disasters. The murderers and perpetrators of mayhem and violence strike successfully and unerringly at their targets. Prevention of crime seems to be a practice of the past. So many crimes remain undetected and criminals go unapprehended since successful detection also appears to be a practice of the past. To whom are the people to look for law and order?

Public statements are issued loudly and confidently of arrests, and promises of quick solutions to crimes are common. But successful follow-up is not so noticeable, and crime marches on. Naturally, crime flourishes, criminals thrive, and the people

look on helplessly and hopelessly.

The immediate and imperative need of the hour is a creation of confidence and credibility among the public in the law and order machinery of the state. For this to be done, prevention of crime and detection of crime successfully and swiftly are needed. Keeping suspects in custody indefinitely and without any worthwhile returns as noticed from recent reports thereby make the public question the efficiency of the law and order machinery. Hasty conclusions, so quickly announced and mutely retracted equally speedily, in regard to crime adds to the doubts that people have of late begun to entertain of the public security service. To exacerbate matters, allegations of partisanship, partiality and even predilection to yield to political pressure have been publicly proclaimed, and this was so evident soon after the murder of Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali. Such allegations can only increase the public doubts in the capacity and capability of the law and order machinery to tackle the baffling crime around. Any government now coming to power should as a step of high priority take measures to restore confidence among the people by ushering in law and order. At present, even emergency regulations have failed to create such confidence or security and safety and the public wonder whether the emergency itself is being perverted for dubious purposes, as alleged in debates. Criminals elude the emergency.

Second, today's politic in the nation appears to be tainted and tarnished as known from allegations and counter-allegations in public. Corruption in high places is often hinted at, preferment and patronage of sycophants is complained of, and indifference to merit and ability is alleged. Maintenance of too many officials who have passed the age of superannuation in responsible and high

positions appear to the public glare as a visible demonstration of examples of rewarding pliant "yes men" who it's feared by the people lead the leaders on a march to folly, and even down the slope of catastrophe. The Public service needs to be cleansed, frustration and despair among legitimate aspirants to promotion and office need to be eradicated so that they may not remain indifferent "on Lookers" on the margin. Instead of favourites those who are rightly due to attain positions should be chosen. Merit must be noticeably recognised, and public confidence in the impartiality of the public services must be rebuilt.

Divisive politics taking on uncompromising and irreconcilable attitudes appear to disillusion the people. Confidence must be engendered among the public by political leaders placing public and national interests above the need satiate their own narrow, and sometimes mean selfish ends. Violence as an integral part of politics, which apparently it is now, has to be totally eschewed by all. Politicians need not be guncarrying leaders. After all, if they are the leaders of the people, derive their authority from the people, and are engaged in public life for the people why should they fear the people? It is unbridled political rivalry, unchecked greed for power, and the pursuit of pomp which seem to have driven political competitors to become political ruthless rivals who fight their electoral battles like gladiators instead of doing so as democratic contenders. The country has put up with enough violence ridden politics for long, and for a country that had exercised the franchise since 1931 and prides itself in its high rates of education and literacy, quality of life, and in its religions that emphasise tolerance so much, it is time to call a halt to murder and mayhem in national affairs. The gun must give way to good governance in the national

interest.

Political leaders should now put their heads together and chart out a course of orderly, smooth and clean public life for the people to look up to them as leaders. Priority should be given to a politic and just settlement of the ethnic strife that has sundered the country for so long. The ethnic conflict has taken enough of a toll of lives from the diverse communities in this multiethnic nation. It has drained the national finances and retarded economic growth. It has alienated a minority which had contributed, and can contribute so much to national advancement. It has fostered militarization and a gun culture and made the nation deploy scarce resources in a militia and arms and left us with an apprehension of all other attendant evils appertaining to the cultivation of a high security society becoming manifest. Moreover, it has given the chance and room to foist all crime on an invisible foe who strikes suddenly and from some unknown point, remains undetected, and affords a plausible excuse to rush to conclusions about assailants as was seen in recent times, once too often. There is a convenient peg to hang anything on.

Then there are other areas of equal priority that should occupy the concern of all political leaders in Sri Lanka. A solution to the problems of the youth (and the youth have violently rebelled twice so openly and many lives were sacrificed and losses were incurred as a result) should be sorted out on a consensual basis which has to be reached between the leadership of all political parties. To be lulled into complacency thinking that the rebellion of youth has been overcome by suppression alone will be a dismal error of judgment. As the late President had reminded often a neglected and disgruntled group in a society can shatter the dreams of those who do not like to live in reality but in a make believe set up.

Unemployment is yet another pressing problem that needs to be solved rapidly. An increasing entity of the unemployed where some privileged live in ostentatious opulence and consume conspicuously and others impoverished languish in want will always be a threat to stability in

society. The disadvantaged and deprived will not passively reconcile themselves to their poorer state when a few others flaunt their wealth and display their luxurious possessions. An unconscionable acquisition and use of wealth can only invite the wrath of those ignored by the "get rich quickly" few.

Steps taken to alleviate poverty, relieve unemployment, and to give to the growing group of youth a meaningful role in society need to be accelerated if peace and order is to prevail among peoples. The need of the hour is a leadership that will not look for immediate personal political gain and petty privilege. The country which has faced so much trauma that has culminated in making the nation's leader lay down his life in such a gruesome and ghastly manner now needs a leadership that will abandon futile bickerings and place national and public good as the principal goal to be realized. There is still a change to pull the country out of the present sad state, and for sagacious statesmanlike leaders to do it.

DAY DREAM

*Cold Dread how this funny hand
Flights feckless over the land
So casual its lethal pose
As Claws singly close
One in far off Kayts
The other within our sights
On glady Galle Face Green
And cosy Havelock Town*

*Claw shadow and silhouette
Then flit forgotten
As torn flesh turns rotten
Returns neutral to the painted
Earth
Brey dust or scentless Ash
While crimson turns brown in
the Sun
Then run
In one showers Splash*

U. Karunatilake

Letter

Greetings from Japan

Congratulations for completing 15 years of non-stop publication of LG, in such turbulent times. The LG issue of May 1 carried quite a number of congratulatory messages from celebrities in the political, journalistic and academic disciplines. I have no doubt that most of these folks are older than me. So, will you kindly accept a message from an ordinary reader who turned to the LG in 1978 for another important reason, not mentioned by the celebrities?

In 1978, I was just a temporary assistant lecturer in Biochemistry at the University of Peradeniya, with a measly monthly salary of Rupees 800. I couldn't afford to subscribe or purchase the standard international magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*, *Economist*, *Readers Digest* and *National Geographic*) to improve my English skills. I could afford to buy only the LG. And it carried the name of Mervyn de Silva (whose by-line I had seen in some of the international magazines), as the editor. The motto of the LG, "The Other News and Other Views" also attracted me. Though I do not agree completely with the views published in the LG, I have remained a loyal reader of the LG for the past 15 years, and I believe I was able to improve my English by reading it as well. Carry on your good work.

My only quandary about the LG is that I have not been introduced to the other personnel who assist the editor in producing the journal at fortnightly intervals. The mast head carries one name. Aren't there any assistant editors, proof-readers, archivists, and even stamp-lickers to the LG? Is the LG, really a "one-man show" of Mervyn de Silva? If it is so, doesn't this guy take any vacation? or doesn't he fall sick at all? Though it is impolite to raise this question, I am also curious to know what will happen to the LG after Mervyn de Silva? Will the editor make an attempt to answer my doubts?

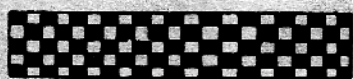
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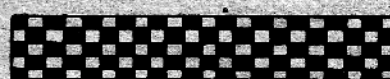
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The War: Main Issue

Shantha K. Hennayake

Ethno-Nationalist Crisis

The dominant issue in Sri Lanka in 1992 was undoubtedly the ethnonationalist crisis and this article will concentrate exclusively on it. Known internationally in very simplistic terms as the war between the minority Tamils and the majority Sinhalese, I shall try here to shed light on some of the complexities by identifying the major facets of the crisis as it has unfolded over the last twelve months.

First, the Sri Lankan army conducted several successful operations against the LTTE, causing it to suffer severe setbacks both in terms of manpower and territorial loss. All other Tamil guerrilla movements have either been destroyed by the LTTE or are fighting against it alongside government forces. The LTTE was extremely concerned about the army's advance into Jaffna and the heavy loss of LTTE cadre. Since the civil war started more than a decade ago, more than 5000 of its cadre have been killed by the armed forces. LTTE leaders reacted to this new situation by saying that the army can get only the land but they will "not be able to control LTTE or destroy its objectives."

But the armed forces also faced problems during the year. There were constant changes in the command structure due to personality differences as well as battlefield dynamics. The forces had difficulty holding the newly captured territory as it required spreading resources too thinly, making them vulnerable to LTTE ambush. An increasing number of army deserters — about 8,000 since the civil war started — has become a serious problem, and at the same time, the number seeking to enlist in the armed forces has declined dramatically. Most of these

problems are blamed on the lack of a clear military program to defeat the LTTE and the consequent heavy casualties. Several ruling politicians in December attributed these problems and the inability of the armed forces to win the civil war to the "lack of political leadership."

Second, the LTTE launched several attacks on army camps during the year and inflicted heavy casualties. In January alone, more than 70 soldiers were killed, and in July almost 90 were killed in Trincomalee and Batticaloa and in an attack on an army camp in Anuradapura. Altogether over 400 soldiers have been killed during the year. The most damaging LTTE attack was the ambush on Kayts Island off the Jaffna Peninsula in August in which Northern commander Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa, Jaffna commander Brigadier Wijaya Wimalaratne, and Navy Commodore Mohan Jayamaha were among the military officers killed. The LTTE strengthened its offensive capabilities during 1992 by obtaining weapons and ammunition from abroad, producing some locally, and capturing some from the armed forces. The guerrillas are alleged to have acquired SAM or Stinger missiles from Afghanistan, and they are building a navy called the Sea Tigers for which they have manufactured a rudimentary "submarine" using local raw materials. The LTTE also has established anthrax units, but the most alarming news was that it is experimenting with chemical weapons.

Third, LTTE terrorism is being exported from Jaffna to other parts of the island. The LTTE's reprisal killings included members of rival Tamil groups and political leaders, such as the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader for his strong criticism of LTTE and military service commanders for inflicting heavy damages on the guerrillas. Most of the LTTE attacks on other Tamil groups took place in Colombo, where the most serious act was the assassination by a suicide bomber of the commander of the Sri Lankan Navy, the

highest armed service person to be killed by the LTTE. The government engaged in a massive search operation to locate LTTE members and their supporters in Colombo, and the city was placed on maximum alert on LTTE leader Prabhakaran's birthday (November 28) as there were rumors that more assassinations were planned. In these operations, the government was able to arrest only many LTTEers but also several well established Colombo businessmen who had been assisting the LTTE in various ways. The search operations during the last three months of 1992 were quite successful and the government reported that it was able to prevent many costly LTTE attacks as a result.

Fourth, rivalries within the LTTE have intensified. As a guerrilla organization, the power structure is primarily personal and centers around its leader, Prabhakaran; any dissent is put down quickly and decisively. In July fighting broke out between the factions of Prabhakaran and deputy leader Mahattaya in which 39 people died. On another occasion, Prabhakaran had 18 of his closest aides killed for praising Mahattaya. The LTTE now has a new deputy, and Mahattaya and Yogi, another prominent leader, were not seen at the Mawera (Heroes) Day observance — a clear symbolic indication of their demise. In other incidents, a bomb exploded inside an LTTE camp in Jaffna and LTTE death squads killed over 20 Tamils in retaliation; two close friends of Prabhakaran were killed by a hand grenade and the guerrillas, in a fury, killed over 40 Tamils and tortured some 300 civilians who lived on the road where the incident took place in an effort to get information. The suspected Jaffna leader Balarajan has since disappeared. What these incidents indicate is that Prabhakaran's position is threatened. There were also reports speculating on conspiracies within the LTTE ranks, and Prabhakaran has ordered increased vigilance to uncover internal dissent as well as anti-

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LTTE activities in Jaffna.

Fifth, the LTTE continues its policy of ethnic cleansing. It claims the Northern and Eastern provinces as an exclusive Tamil homeland, and since about 1988, has tried to clear it of non-Tamils. The gruesome massacring of innocent civilians living in the border areas or inside the LTTE's declared homeland shocked the country several times during the year, and life in these villages has become difficult to say nothing of insecure. While the people live in their own houses during the day, they all gather into a common building such as a temple or school that is guarded by the armed forces during the night. On a few occasions these premises were attacked by the LTTE as warnings to others to vacate Tamil "homeland." The LTTE has succeeded in scaring away a large number of people from the North and East, and over 100,000 people who fled these areas now live in refugee camps elsewhere in the country.

The Muslims in the East became the target of several LTTE attacks during the year — in Polonnaruwa over 100 were killed in one attack in October — and some Muslim political leaders have warned that if the policy of ethnic cleansing continues, they will have to declare a *jihad* (holy war) against the LTTE. The SLMC demanded that a Muslim regiment should be established in the Sri Lankan armed forces to protect Muslims. There were also rumors of a link between a Palestine guerrilla organization and the Muslims in the East to obtain weapons for a local Muslims guerrilla organization. Peripheral to the ethnonationalist conflict in the past, Muslims have come center stage of the crisis as result of the increased violence against them.

Sixth, the LTTE conducts international activities to discredit the Sri Lankan government. The Global Organization for People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), sympathizing with the LTTE, presented a memorandum to the United Nations requesting a commission be set up to look into atrocities in the North and East by the armed forces. There was also some speculation that the LTTE was considering a unilateral declaration of independence, and while this never materialized, the organization did state in December that it would be able

to achieve the separate state of Eelam by the year 2000. There were reports of LTTE efforts to establish links with Pakistan, a calculated move to take advantage of Indo-Pakistani rivalry. *The Pioneer* (Lucknow) reported that an important LTTE leader was shopping for arms in Pakistan and meeting with Pakistani Intelligence officers. In a similar attempt to procure new weapons, the LTTE has visited arms exhibits in both Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. It also has continued its involvement in the international drug traffic to finance its war; as a result of several of its traffickers getting caught in the West, the LTTE has begun getting non-Sri Lankan passports to fake identities. Another program collects money from Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates living in Western capitals. Toronto, which has become a favorite destination of recent Tamil emigrants, has turned into a center of LTTE activity. A newspaper sympathetic to the guerrillas and published in Toronto reported that it costs the LTTE Rs.80 million a month to fight the war (SR Rs.43 to US\$1).

Seventh, the civil war has virtually isolated Jaffna from the rest of the country; travel and trade have become increasingly difficult and the people face numerous hardships. Ironically, the war has proven that in spite of the LTTE's exclusivist claims, the society and economy of Jaffna, the major port city in the North, is intricately linked to the rest of the Island. Civil administration has completely collapsed in the city and democracy has disappeared as the LTTE's hold is now almost complete. Any criticism of the guerrillas is ruthlessly suppressed and over 1,000 people were killed by the LTTE in 1992. Apparently the guerrillas maintain torture chambers in their camps, mainly to punish their opponents in Jaffna, and they have established their own police to strengthen their hold over Jaffna society, which has become quite passive as a prisoner of the LTTE. There were reports that the LTTE has collected Rs.10,000 from each family in Jaffna and extorted large sums, sometimes over Rs.10,000 from those who are migrating. It frequently expropriates the property of its critics and taxes Jaffna people both directly and indirectly to finance its war. Recently, it was revealed that a number of Tamil businessmen in Colombo have been paying *kappam* (prote-

ction) to the LTTE.

The LTTE is also directly influencing education in Jaffna. For example, it has insisted that schools should be opened on the weekend to teach LTTE policy, history, and the reasons for its struggle, and every classroom should display a map of Eelam. It has introduced a textbook that greatly distorts the history of the island, legitimating a Tamil Eelam. Most recently, the LTTE has introduced its own General Certificate Examination/Ordinary Level (school diploma) and demanded that only those who pass this examination will be recruited into LTTE administrative posts. In mid-December it prohibited employed or retired teachers from moving out of Jaffna for fear of losing qualified personnel; Heroes Day was celebrated at Jaffna University, which also has come under heavy LTTE influence.

The organization's hold on Jaffna became most vivid when it demanded that every family send its young men to the LTTE war. Conscription has increased over the years and the recruits have become younger. There were reports of children in LTTE ranks earning the nickname "baby brigade." Equally alarming was the demand that every family should donate blood for the LTTE. As a consequence of the general deterioration of life in Jaffna, over 65,000 Tamils fled the city in 1992. But emigration has become increasingly difficult. Besides having to pay a handsome sum to the LTTE, it is very difficult for young males to leave as they are potential cadre. There even were reports of the LTTE holding parents of young males hostage until their sons returned. Furthermore, most European countries have imposed strict visa requirements and it has become very difficult for Tamils to depart Sri Lanka legally.

Eighth, India has made a concerted effort to discredit the LTTE and curb its activities there. With the disappearance of Cold War geopolitics and Indians tilt toward the West, Delhi no longer finds it necessary to use the LTTE as a check on Sri Lankan foreign policy. The LTTE's pan-Tamil interests have made it a common enemy of both countries. An Indian court found the LTTE responsible for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, and Sri Lankan newspapers published the court

order. The Tamil Nadu state government in India headed by Jayalalitha, a strong critic of the LTTE, demanded that the organization be banned from India or she would withdraw her support for the coalition central government, which in any case was unhappy over growing LTTE activities in Tamil Nadu. In May India banned the LTTE and the home minister, accusing it of fuelling secessionism in Tamil Nadu, said that "we are of the view that the larger objective of LTTE goes beyond establishment of Tamil Eelam in the North-Eastern parts of Sri Lanka and poses a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country."¹ India's high commissioner in Colombo pointed out that "the ban is a symbolic gesture with international ramifications." India continued to arrest LTTE cadre to curb their activities on Indian soil, and by late September 4,046 LTTE separatists had been arrested in Tamil Nadu.

Ninth, the return of the Tamil refugees from Tamil Nadu was one of the most interesting developments in the ethnonationalist crisis in 1992. Over 300,000 Tamils had fled Jaffna since 1983 to avoid the war and the LTTE's authoritarian rule. Before Rajiv Gandhi's death, when the LTTE enjoyed Indian patronage, India used these refugees as a means to influence Sri Lanka. Since then, India has allowed willing refugees to return home. The LTTE resented this as it would dispel the line they had worked hard to create — that Sri Lanka is an unsafe place for Tamils. Despite LTTE efforts to destabilize the East to prevent refugees from returning to Sri Lanka, they still began to come back. Tamil emigres in the West also had some difficulties in 1992, as various Western countries began to rethink their earlier open policy toward Tamils claiming "political refugee" status. Many had simply used the crisis in Sri Lanka in order to emigrate and they have carried their local political rivalries with them. The tightening of entry requirements has led to the emergence of a new business of illegally sending Tamils to Western countries.

The tenth development is the increased interest in peace efforts. A number of proposals were presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee appointed in 1991 to seek a solution to the crisis, and

in 1992 the government reiterated its commitment to implement the plan the committee finally approves. One of the earliest proposals presented came from S. Thondaman, a cabinet minister who is also the leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, an Indian Tamil trade union. He offered a four-point plan: the permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, a meaningful devolution that signifies autonomy, institutional arrangements to safeguard the rights of the Muslims in the North and East, and arrangements to ensure that the Sinhala minority in the North and East enjoy the same rights as the minorities in Sinhala majority provinces. Seven political parties agreed to this proposal, but the two major Sinhalese political parties — the governing UNP and the opposition SLFP — and most of the Sinhalese organizations rejected it. The major disagreement was over the first and last points, which most Sinhalese argued would inevitably lead to Eelam and eventually reduce the Sinhala race to a minority.

The Tamil United Liberation Front presented a proposal based on federalism, with a Tamil state comprising the Northern and Eastern provinces. Except for the Tamil Congress and Thondaman, Tamil groups (TELO, EPRLF, PLOTE) have consented to it, but once again the two major parties along with the Sinhalese majority disagreed. The last major proposal came from a Jaffna District MP, Sinnivasan. His nine-point plan included creating a federal Sri Lanka, with Northern and Eastern provinces treated as separate units of devolution. There were rumors that all major parties would agree to the Sinnivasan proposal, but they eventually declared their opposition. While Muslim MPs supported it, TELO and PLOTE were against the separation of the Northern and Eastern provinces. By mid-December, it appeared that the Select Committee had failed to provide a viable solution.

In the meantime, Premadasa emphasized that the government has no intention to pursue a military solution, and laid down three conditions for peace negotiations with the LTTE: stop the use of arms; join the democratic process; and recognize the right of other Tamil political parties to contest elections. Two conditions were

laid down for holding elections in the North and East: complete restoration of peace and resettlement of all displaced residents in their original homes. The LTTE dismissed these proposals. Instead, Prabhakaran has said that only through the sacrifice of more blood can Eelam be achieved.

The failure of the Select Committee to present a viable solution is due to several reasons. First is the deadlock on the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces. Tamils demand it and the government and the Sinhalese reject it. Another reason is the inability to transcend the British-drawn provincial boundaries in identifying the unit of devolution. It appears that the fundamental problem now is not the type and level of political autonomy but the exact extent of the Tamil devolutionary unit. Unless and until this is resolved, it is difficult to foresee how the present crisis will end. Perhaps equally important is the lack of communication between the Select Committee and the LTTE. (In fact, the committee decided against visiting Jaffna). Seeking solutions without the involvement of the major contenders in the crisis almost guarantees failure as was amply proven by the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord signed in 1987. As one party leader said, "all Tamil political parties involved in the ethnic problem are irrelevant except for the LTTE. Any settlement that does not have support of the LTTE would be an exercise in futility."² But LTTE extremism and its unwillingness to share power with the Colombo government and even with other Tamil political organizations have prevented any negotiated settlement. Sinhalese and Tamils are still unwilling to compromise their extremist positions, and politicians are still engaging in short-term expedient politics with no concern for the long-term welfare of the citizens of Sri Lanka. The crisis became more complex during 1992, pushing a viable solution into the indefinite future. Sri Lanka has wasted another year, and 1992 will go down in history as an opportunity missed.

Notes:

1. Sunday Observer, May 7, 1992.
2. Deputy leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC), quoted in Sunday Times, June 21, 1992.

(Islam Survey)

Fundamentalism Discourses: Images of the Enemy

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

Since the eighties fundamentalism has become a catchword in popular and social science use. An 'odd job word' it has caught on so well that what comes to mind is the question of Foucault: whom does discourse serve?

Three constituencies qualify: Those with investments in the western security apparatus who have been looking for a 'new enemy'. Adherents of the project of modernity to whom fundamentalism represents 'the other'. Feminists because what fundamentalists of various religions appear to have in common is a patriarchal outlook. These three discourses of fundamentalism are diverse but interdependent.

The security discourse is focused on 'Islamic fundamentalism' and largely responsible for the popularization of the concept — in the train of the 'Islamic threat', 'Khomeiny', terrorism. In the modernity discourse fundamentalism functions as the 'other' of the Enlightenment: 'the other dialectic of Enlightenment'. The feminist discourse of fundamentalism overlaps with the modernity discourse and reflects the ambivalent relationship between feminism and modernity.

The key questions to ask are whether 'fundamentalism' is a good analytical tool and a good political tool.

Fundamentalism is a polemical concept — originally a proud self-advertising label, advertising anti-modernism; next it served as a popular pejorative category, representing an essentialized anti-modernism; and now it is being widely used for general target practice.

A major user of the concept has been the Fundamentalism Project headed by Professor Martin Marty of the University of Chicago, a large comparative research project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences which started in 1988 with a large grant from the MacArthur Foundation. Strategic considerations at times come close to the surface. In an opening statement to the project Marty refers to 'the threat to Mideast oil delivery' and calls on military sciences, side by side with economists and social psychologists, to study the problem (Marty 1988: 27).

In all three discourses fundamentalism is an *attack* concept and a form of 'othering'. Because the populist imaginary ca-

not be scrubbed off the concept remains polemical, it follows a binary logic to a polarizing effect that eliminates the middle ground.

Thus in the West Islam nowadays tends to be popularly equated with fundamentalism, little distinction is made among Islamic traditionalists, neo-traditionalists, radical and militant Islamists, while modernizing and liberal currents within Islam are ignored. Jurgen Link calls this imaginary in effect a form of 'subjective war preparation through the media' (1991:42).

Enemy images like 'Khomeini' function simultaneously on several levels. Most fundamentally, they are coded by our system of collective symbols as part of the chaos lacking subject status, that is, as unpredictable, a black flood, and regressive. Second, this symbolism takes on more concrete form with elements like desert, fire, and insanity. Third, this symbolism is overdetermined by a negative cultural typology (the Orient as sphere of antireason and insanity, of deranged fanaticism). On the basis of this complex symbolic structure, such diverse politicians as Khomeini, Khaddafi, and Saddam Hussein can be symbolically fused. (1991:44)

We can further differentiate between popular and social uses of the concept. In fact, the term is in double use in popular media and in social science. As a popular notion it is rich in resonance and imagery. In social science use of it is usually first carefully stripped of popular prejudices (Marty 1992: fundamentalism is not...), but while the populist associations are screened out, they slip back in through the back door, for the imaginary cannot be wholly neutralized; or in fact it is reinvoked — as on the cover of *Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective* (Kaplan 1992), featuring the bearded faces of Khomeiny and Lubavitch next to Pat Robertson.

One oddity is that the concept is used cross-culturally even though *within* Christianity it is *not* used across faiths or denominations: fundamentalism refers to Protestants; conservative tendencies in Catholicism are grouped with the Church, not generically named (as with Marianism, integralism, Opus Dei or Comunione e Liberazione), or grouped with the Charismatics.¹ One reason why is that Catholi-

cism is not scripturalist — which is the hallmark of Protestant Fundamentalism.

By the same token, if it is not applied to Catholicism, how can the term apply to other religions which are not scripturalist such as Hinduism, Buddhism, shintoism, Confucianism, Taoism?²

But, even with regard to Protestant Christianity, fundamentalism is in most cases a misnomer. Most religious movements so labeled are not Fundamentalist but Pentecostalist — virtually all the familiar names of TV preachers are Pentecostalist ministers: e.g. Billy Graham, Jim Swaggart, Pat Robertson, Oral Roberts, Rev Schuler, Jim Bakker, while only two among the wellknown names are Fundamentalist, viz. Jerry Falwell and Tim LaHaye. When some time ago I edited a book on *Christianity and Hegemony* I asked contributors to avoid the term fundamentalism. The proper term to use is *evangelicalism* and evangelical movements, with Pentecostals as the majority wing and Fundamentalists as a much smaller and quite different minority current. In brief, Fundamentalists are a Southern middle class version of Puritanism — doctrinaire, rigid and strict in style; whereas Pentecostals are an originally lower class religious movement characterized by emotive expressive forms of worship, praying with arms raised in the air, faith healing, speaking in tongues — the 'charismata'. Also several among the Pentecostals are leftwing — such as the Sojourner group and the Peace Council Churches in the World Council of Churches, and Rev Frank Chicane in South Africa.

Let's consider each of the main fundamentalism discourses — modernity, feminism, security.

The relationship to modernity is complex. Protestant Fundamentalism arose in the 1920s as a reaction to theological modernism in defense of 'the fundamentals' — biblical inerrancy, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and literal second coming. It was a reaction to developments within western culture. In the case of Islam, modernism was an import from the West and resistance to modernism also carries anti-imperialist overtones, associated with nationalism, cultural autonomy — associations which do not apply at all to the Protestant current, which makes the comparison

alien, forced and inappropriate to begin with.

The modernity discourse of fundamentalism is the widest constituency of the concept embracing secularists, liberals, and crosscutting right and left, North and South. In the West, the imagery of fundamentalism resonates with deeply embedded chords. Aversion to fanaticism goes back to Voltaire who dramatized the 'fanatical character' in his play *'Fanatisme ou le Profit Mohammed'* (Link 1991: 36). Reflections on religious fundamentalism are often structured along the lines of the Enlightenment and its enemies — in which the Enlightenment is variously identified with rationality, science, modernity, progress, democracy, the open society. Thus Thomas Meyer, of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, devotes a volume to fundamentalism as 'the new international of unreason', is one of the functions of fundamentalism that it delegitimizes modernity and in the process legitimizes the project of 'modern' intellectuals by way of negative example?

In standard modernity discourse fundamentalism is usually represented as the 'antithesis to science and reason' (e.g. Amin 1988), or as 'the new international of unreason' (Meyer 1989). But matters are much more complex. It has been pointed out that 'fundamentalism is suffused with the spirit of modernity'.

Fundamentalism does, no doubt, revolt against parts of modernity, but it does so with modernist weapons, in a modernist spirit and in the interests of a modernist view of religion. It is at bottom an illegitimate child of modernity and inconceivable outside of it. (Parekh 1992:31)

This follows a classic argument of James Barr (1981) on the modernity of religious fundamentalist currents, a view that is echoed by others as well. Thus fundamentalism is characterized by one author as both 'quintessentially modernist' and anti-modernist (Lechner 1989). With regard to Islam, it has been pointed out that the adherents of Islamic resurgence are often among the best-educated and — like new religious movements in the West — use the latest technologies of communication.

The most forceful manifestations of the Islamic resurgence have occurred in the more advanced and 'modernized' (seemingly secular) countries of the Muslim world such as Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Tunisia. (Esposito 1992:10)

It has been argued that 'rationalism is a crucial characteristic of fundamentalism' (Caplan 1987:13) and that, for minorities confronted with the threat of absorption or annihilation, it may well constitute a

rational response. Thus religious radicalism may be more adequately understood, rather than as blind fanaticism, in terms of political strategy (Hage 1992).

Islamic revivalist movements are in many ways a response to 'westoxification' and a cultural form of delinking, dissociation from the West — similar in fact to what has been advocated as an economic policy by Samir Amin.

'Fundamentalism' blinds us to recognizing the newness of religious movements, marginalizes it because of the alleged association with the past, the assimilation with 'tradition' and 'fundamentals'. According to one definition,

fundamentalism can be described as a world view that highlights specific essential 'truths' of traditional faiths and applies them with earnestness and fervor to twentieth-century realities (Kaplan 1992:5).

But what defines most movements termed fundamentalist is precisely their departure from tradition — from hadith, from halacha; their unorthodoxy and rejection of tradition is what sets them apart from traditionalist, orthodox and mostly moderate religious organizations, such as al-Ahzar in Egypt, the citadel of sunni Islam. The dichotomic view of modernity/tradition is misleading.

The more subtle argument is that no essential difference between fundamentalism and modernism can be demonstrated: both are 'ethnographically variable' (Caplan 1987: 13). In a word, 'boundaries are permeable'. At this point binarism breaks down and as fundamentalism ceases to serve as a discriminating, 'othering' concept, it loses its polemical edge. If we question modernity — in poststructuralism, postmodernism, deconstruction — then why should we accept it, by implication, in 'fundamentalism'?

Without modernism 'there would have been no fundamentalism' (Caplan 1987: 9). The two are twins and interdependent. Given the stretch in the use of the term — as in Marxist fundamentalism, agricultural fundamentalism (Shepard 1987) — and given the arrogance of the modernist project, should we turn the tables and refer to the modernists as fundamentalists, and to fundamentalists as modernizers?

The feminist argument is in the first instance obvious: patriarchy appears to be a feature common to conservative religious movements in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism. The woman question is often central to radical religious movements, symbolically and materially. In the 'classic belt of patriarchy' (Kandiyoti 1988) it reaffirms and reinforces patriarchal mores and gives them a new inflection, in Islam, Judaism and Hinduism.

while in the West conservative religious movements advocate a social agenda of patriarchal values, anti-abortion and constraints on women's rights. In the defence of 'family values' the patriarchal family is equated with the family as such.

Women's emancipation has taken place in the context of modernity and all the same time women have been excluded from the 'universal subject' of the Enlightenment. Women are both beneficiaries of modernity and among its most outspoken critics. The ambivalent relationship between feminism and modernity is an unfinished tale which is reproduced, for instance, in the ambivalent relationship between feminism and 'development' (Moghadam 1992).

'What is it that Muslim society needs to mask so badly?' asks Fatima Mernissi (1988: 10). Islam suffers from boundary problems, invasions by the West, trespassing, changing authority threshold, and the insecurities of identity are taken out on women.

Women participating in conservative and radical Islamist movements strike a new 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti 1988) in uncertain times. This involves the dilemma of 'double jeopardy' — of being victimized by Orientalism on the one hand and by neopatriarchy (Sharabi 1988) on the other. In the range of feminist responses, western feminism is but one (followed by e.g. Nawal el Sadaawi). An organic response may be Islamic feminism, or a double engagement such as taken up by Fatima Mernissi, Rana Kabbani, Rifaat Hassan.

To reject patriarchy or masculinism also in religious guise is entirely appropriate, but to do so using the label of 'fundamentalism' is unwise. This stereotypical and indiscriminating term tends to alienate all those, women included, who take part in new religious movements. Fundamentalism is so wide a category that it has to be defined and delimited in every situation in terms of which movements belong and which don't — an interminable affair in which it would be difficult to be consistent. In addition, feminists using the term fundamentalism risk repudiating religion altogether. It doesn't require great knowledge of the work of Gramsci to understand that this is bad politics everywhere. In the words of Mohammed Sid Ahmed (1982) about Egypt: 'The masses speak the language of religion to express themselves politically'.

It's easy to dismiss the security discourse as propaganda, but it should not be underestimated because it is due to security concerns that fundamentalism ends up on the front pages. In relation to security, it's danger and threat that count. Fundamentalism is considered to be do-

stabilizing. Western security interests may parallel those of governments in the South that feel threatened, as in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Turkey, India.

To an extent this perspective overlaps with the modernity account — on the point of secularism, the separation of church and state or the privatization of religion. Except that the definition of secularism is unstable and contingent upon the definition of religion (Hamzawy 1991). Besides, the standards of 'secularism' are not consistently applied:

The American government does not equate the actions of Jewish or Christian extremist leaders or groups with Judaism and Christianity as a whole. Similarly, the American government does not condemn the mixing of religion and politics in Israel, Poland, Eastern Europe, or Latin America. A comparable level of discrimination is absent when dealing with Islam. (Esposito 1992: 208)

The security discourse unfolds along the lines of a familiar argument: the Cold War is over, the axis of global conflict has been shifting from East-West to North-South. Dangers to the New World Order lurking in the South, according to this account, include nationalism, ethnic conflict, poverty and migration, terrorism and drug trafficking. One of the main challenges to the West and to western interests in regional stability and oil delivery, is militant Islam. Of course this perception builds on historical patterns of Islam as Europe's traditional 'other' and opponent, and of western media coverage of Islam which has been traditionally hostile (Said 1981).

Concern with 'Islamic fundamentalism' became virulent since the Revolution in Iran in 1978-79 and its ramifications in the region, in Iraq, Lebanon, the Emirates and Saudi Arabia. It has resurfaced on the frontpages because of developments in Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, Sudan and Turkey. It has also been an issue in Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Malaysia, and Kashmir. With Sikhs and Hindus in India and Buddhist chauvinism in Sri Lanka, 'fundamentalism' ranks as a security issue also beyond Islam.

Since the 1980s reorientations of strategy in Western Europe, in particular in relation to NATO's southern flank in the Mediterranean, refer to militant Islam as a threat. North Africa has become the European Community's Mexico. In the mid-eighties NATO analyses referred to the area 'the Second Front'³; now, since the break-up of the East bloc in 1989, it may well become the 'First Front'.

One of the problems of the security discourse of fundamentalism is inconsi-

stency. Christian evangelical movements have often been aggressively interventionist in the South, often in cahoots with America security agencies, often destabilizing postrevolutionary governments — as an anticommunist fifth column, part of Pro-insurgency efforts, particularly during the Reagan era when foreign policy along with the tide of 'deregulation' was privatized, as an ally of free world politics, with an Outreach and World Vision penetrating beyond ordinary security reach. The Summer Institute of Linguistics in Latin America and Pat Robertson blessing the contras fit this pattern (Diamond 1989, Nenderveen Pieterse 1992).

Thus, Christian fundamentalism is okay, but Islamic fundamentalism is not. More precisely, fundamentalism is welcome when it matches western interests, unwelcome when it doesn't. The US supporting the mujahideen in Afghanistan along with Saudi Arabia, Israel and Pakistan is a case in point. Khomeiny's Iran was an arch enemy of the West, but Islamist Pakistan under Zia ul-Haq a staunch US ally. In other words, there is 'our' fundamentalism and 'their' fundamentalism — and sometimes they also change places. (Afghani Mujahideen may change places once they are in power).

Also governments in the South have been performing tightrope acts, at times promoting militant religious movements as part of divide and rule policies. In Egypt Anwar Sadat evoked Islamic symbols in his 'holy war' against Israel in 1973. Saudi Arabia supports both the Egyptian government, especially since the Gulf war, and the Muslim Brotherhood, possibly according to the argument that Egypt can be more easily controlled as long as it remains off balance. Israel promoted Hamas in Gaza as a counterweight to the PLO, until Hamas became an acute threat. In India the Congress I played the Hindu card in insecure constituencies — until the BJP and other rightwing Hinduist movements walked away with it, generating a 'moral panic' of national identity.

The security discourse of fundamentalism recycles Cold War imagery. As the axis of global conflict shifts, the same profile — totalitarianism, absolutism, dogmatism — is transferred unto other 'others'.

Charles Krauthammer warns of a 'new arc of crisis', a 'global intifada'.⁴ Patrick Buchanan predicts impending conflict between Christianity and Islam in the 21st century. In a 1990 address vice president Dan Quayle linked Nazism, communism and radical Islamic fundamentalism. Bernard Lewis contributed to the debate in his 1990 Jefferson Lecture on 'Islamic Fundamentalism', which was published under the title 'The roots of Muslim rage'

(Esposito 1992: 173, 175, 208).

The transfer of enemy images is noticeable in the shifting foreign policy discourse of Israel. First Israel sought western support against communism and Arab nationalism. Next the enemy discourse settled on terrorism. Since recently the discourse is focused on 'Islamic fundamentalism' — as a threat to Israel's security, to regional stability, and to western interests. Again attention is diverted from Israel's occupation, human rights violations, domestic ethnocracy, and from western double standards.

The interdependence of fundamentalism discourses is politically significant. New alignments are in the making. The feminist perspective of fundamentalists as women haters may have contributed to Meretz ministers in the Israeli cabinet endorsing the expulsion of Islamic Palestinians in December 1992.

In the wake of the bomb attack on the World Trade Center in New York in March 1993 the Islamic fundamentalism scare has spread to the United States. USA Today features headlines such as 'Fundamentalist Cry: "Death to America"' and comments by Israeli security experts:

'The West seems to be ignoring the implications of fundamentalism', says Tel Aviv University terrorism expert Anat Kurz. 'They don't seem to understand the dangers' (USA Today, 5 March 1993)

Terrorism experts, underemployed since the PLO's shift of position, can now carry on as fundamentalism expert.⁵ The "P" and "I" words, "fundamentalism" and "terrorism", have become linked in the minds of many' (Esposito 1992: 173)

Ironically the lines criss-cross. Saudis, to win friends and close the door to Iran, have been funding Islamist groups throughout the Arab world and Asia, mostly moderates, but with a dynamic of their own. Thus the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt opposed the alliance in the Gulf war. In 1989 Kuwait paid \$ 60 million to Hamas in the Occupied Territories (Black et al 1992). In other words, the 'Islamic fundamentalism' which according to Israel destabilizes the region and threatens western interests, has to a significant degree been sponsored by the West's own regional allies.

The agenda of security interests is power. The fundamentalism scare is a propaganda ploy and in reality religious movements are promoted, used or dumped according to the varying security interests.

My argument is that fundamentalism means bad analysis and bad politics. Why would an essentializing conceptual

approach that is widely considered absolutely unacceptable in relation to ethnicity or gender, be acceptable when it comes to religion?

Fundamentalism 'lumps', ignores multiple currents, internal divisions, changes over time. Fundamentalism demonizes, creates an enemy image, makes phenomena opaque, and blinds us with the illusion of clairvoyance. Fundamentalism is a bad predictor. Because as a concept it homogenizes, demonizes and polarizes, it is not sensitive to the differences and flux within movements so-called.

As homogenizing concept fundamentalism papers over distinctions among and within religious movements, suggests a commonality and consistency among highly diverse movements, even across cultures. This, of course, is the point of using it: it focuses energies, but what is the price tag?

The dimensions of the agendas of religious movements — political, social, cultural, economic, local — range widely. 'fundamentalism' suggests that these line up, sufficiently for a meaningful profile. Once we break down 'fundamentalism' the divergencies become visible. And politically, it's the divergencies that matter.

Thus the conservative coalition of rightwing Evangelicals and the New Right that brought Reagan to power and backed Bush in 1988 has fallen apart. In 1992 the American Enterprise Institute identified them as a 'critical voting group': in 1988 'born-again white Christians were 15 percent of the electorate', 'that's more than blacks or Jews' (San Francisco Chronicle, 19 Oct 1992). The Republican strategy with Dan Quayle and Pat Buchanan harping on 'family values' was tailored to this group.

But the group had dissipated — one, because they achieved none of their goals: school prayer, outlawing abortion, tax breaks for private schools; two, because the movement had been disparate all along, united on a social agenda, but not on economic issues. Here, according to recent, 'evangelical-fundamentalists are nearly as likely as others to advocate increased (government) expenditures' (Marshall 1992). Hence many went with Clinton, a Southern Baptist.

I regard 'fundamentalism' as too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes, as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist; more fitting general terms are 'Islamic revivalism' or 'Islamic activism', which are less value-laden and have roots within the Islamic tradition. Islam possesses a long tradition of revival (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*) which includes notions of political and social activism

dating from the early Islamic centuries to the present day. (Esposito 1992: 8)

Other authors prefer 'radical neo-traditionalism' as a general label and 'Islamic radicalism' for militant groups in Islam (Shepard 1987). Generally, if we avoid the term fundamentalism, then what terms do we use?

- 1) Use differentiated or culturally specific terms, such as Protestant Fundamentalism, radical Islamism, Hinduism, Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism.
- 2) Differentiate among movements. Avoid lumping. Thus, currents within Judaism include reform, conservative, orthodox, ultra-orthodox Judaism, as well as specific groups such as Lubavitchers, Hasidim, Israeli religious political parties, Gush Emunim, Temple Mount Foundation, Jewish Defence League. The variation among these currents on various counts is extreme. Which ones are the 'fundamentalists'?
- 3) Differentiate within movements according to dimensions — political, economic, cultural, social, regional, gender.
- 4) Monitor change over time. First register the newness of 'fundamentalist' movements. Then, matters are in flux. Thus, at one stage the Muslim Brotherhood was the major voice of Islamic militancy but it is now considered a moderate group in Egypt, while Takfir wal-Hijra (Excommunication and Fight, or the Society of Muslims) and al-Jihad are now the radical currents (Zubaida 1987, Esposito 1992).
- 5) Problematize your own perspective, discourse. Avoid rhetoric. Secularism is rhetoric when it's not thought through.

What this adds up to is viewing religious movements as social movements — indeed, not all new social movements are progressive — and religion as part of politics. Doing so creates the space that makes political solutions thinkable and, possibly, feasible.

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Notes

1. An exception is Coleman (1982)
2. For applications of fundamentalism to Hinduism see Chittazini (1988) and Kapur (1989/93), and to Shi'ism Kamata (1991)
3. See e.g. NATO's *Sixteen Nations* (1989/92), Kaplan, Clawson and Luragh, eds (1985), and European security and the Middle East, Document 1073 Assembly of the Western European Union, October 14 1993.
4. Charles Krauthammer, *This Islamic 'Arc of Crisis'*, *Times*, 17/18 February 1990. An odd image because the *hijab* is a Palestinian, not an Islamic garment.
5. E.g. compare the petitions of Lawrence Kaplan (et al) 1985 and 1992.

Parliamentary Privilege

Arden

The concept of parliamentary privilege originated in England and its purpose was to protect the Commons against intrusions into its powers by the king and the lords.

"In the early days, the maintenance of its privileges was of vital importance to the House of Commons. They were necessary to preserve its independence of the king and the lords and, indeed, to its very existence. It could not therefore admit the right of any other authority in the state to decide what its privileges were. To concede this right to the courts meant that in the last resort the Commons' privileges were at the mercy of the House of Lords". (Erskine May)

In Sri Lanka there were no lords and king against whom parliament had to protect itself. Any protection it felt it needed would be from the sovereign people whose creature it was! When the new parliament was elected in July 1977, there already existed a well-established law protecting the privileges of parliament and safeguarding the independence of its members. This law enacted in 1953 by the House of Representatives and the Senate was comprehensive. Under it, the power to punish offences against parliament was deliberately and explicitly entrusted by the two Houses to the courts. The law had worked efficiently for 25 years without once leaving parliament in a position of defencelessness against those who would trespass on its powers and privileges.

The new prime minister, however, not merely wanted to change this law and give punitive powers to parliament, but he wanted to do it at once. The constitution required that a bill should be published in the government gazette at least 7 days before it was placed on the agenda of the House. Parliament could certainly have contrived to survive under its existing

protection for the seven days the constitution demanded. But the P.M. could not wait. The cabinet decided that it was "urgent in the national interest" (sic) that the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) bill should be taken up at once under section 55, which was a provision to meet the exigencies of some unexpected crisis. The bill was rushed through and became law on 1 February.

The Case of the Curious Caption

"For maximum irritation, remember, the tone of voice must be 'plonking' What is plonking? If you have nothing to say, or rather, something extremely stupid ... say it, but in a plonking tone of voice i.e. roundly, but hollowly and dogmatically".

(Stephen Potter: Lifemanship)

By a coincidence, on 30 January 1978, the very day the Privileges bill was tabled in the House, 949 copies of the Ceylon Observer (a government-controlled paper) were printed with a picture bearing a curious caption. The picture showed a young couple (man and woman) in a boat and the caption said: "The President of one of the leading industrial complexes in South Korea showing the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mr. A.C.S. Hameed around the show-room of the industrial complex". The presses were then stopped and the balance copies were printed with the correct caption: "Two in a boat. By the look of things Susan St. James has found a new boy friend". The next day the paper carried an apology for the mistake.

There is very little doubt that what followed was orchestrated by the prime minister. Mr. Hameed, who is not an imbecile, solemnly got up on the floor of the House and complained that the picture and its caption were defamatory of his conduct as a member of the House as they gave the impression that the minister was a playboy.

The editor and the associate editor of the offending newspaper were then summoned before the House which constituted itself into a Committee and proceeded to inquire into Mr. Hameed's complaint. The two editors were both found guilty, though no one seemed to know of what. They were fined. It was ordered that the proceeds be paid to the School for the Deaf and the Blind.

The prime minister then took the floor and was at his plonking best. *Inten alia*, he said: "We do not know exactly what crime the two suspects have committed because we did not go into the details of it and the merits of the defence.... The reasons why we have decided to impose a fine are that, firstly, we want to give a donation to the Deaf and Blind School; secondly, we want to show that this bill is now law with teeth in it, and in future anybody who comes before this House may not escape with a fine; thirdly, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, of which I am a shareholder, is not an indigent organisation. It has enough money to pay the fines of these two editors. If they were to pay the fines, I would certainly have agreed that we should not fine them. But as a shareholder, not as prime minister, I will see that the organisation pays the fine". It is worth noting here that Jayewardene's status as a shareholder of the A.N.C.L. had not been of avail to him when he was attacked and ridiculed by the A.N.C.L. papers while he was in the opposition.

On the very first occasion the parliament had exercised its new powers it had demonstrated that it was unfit to have such powers; and the era of plonking as an instrument of high government policy had arrived. Jayewardene was to develop it into a crushing weapon to render his opponents speechless.

(To be continued)



ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

Why there's sound of laughter in this rustic tobacco barn....

There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

Here, with careful nurturing, tobacco grows as a lucrative cash crop and the green leaves turn to gold... to the value of over Rs. 250 million or more annually, for perhaps 143,000 rural folk.

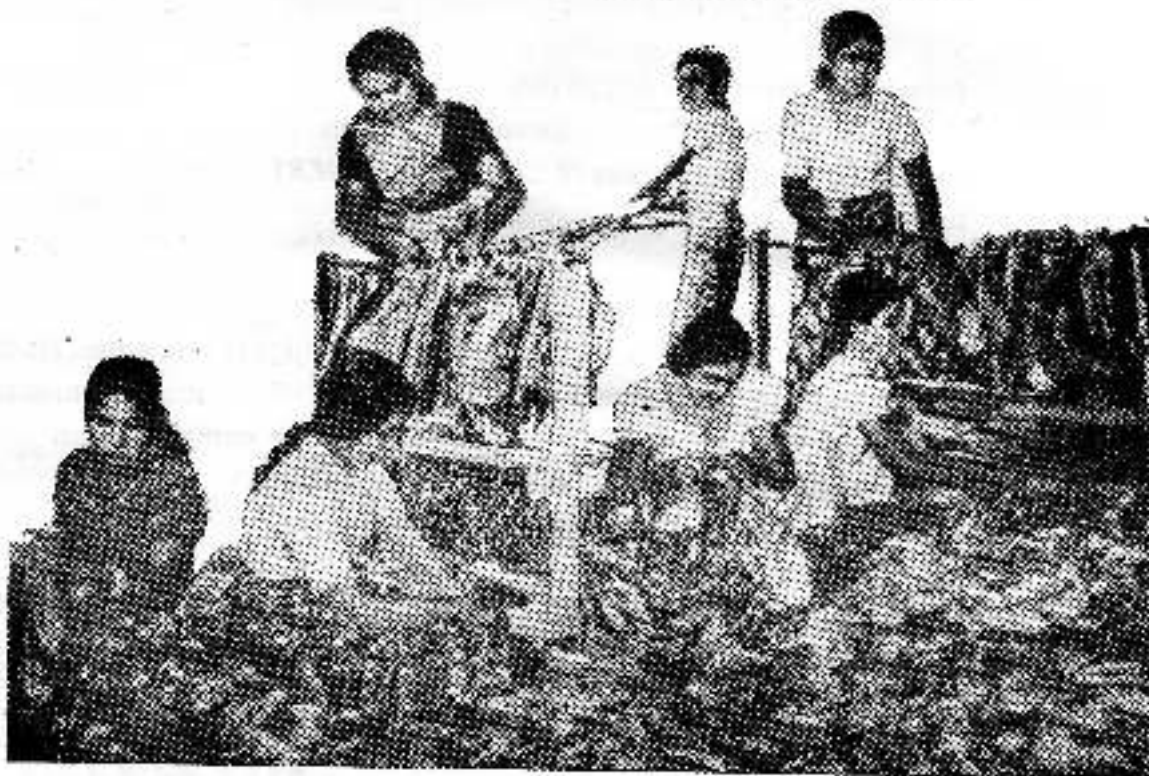
Tobacco is the industry that brings employment to the second highest number of people. And these people are the tobacco barn owners, the tobacco growers and those who work for them, on the land and in the barns.

For them, the tobacco leaf means meaningful work, a comfortable life and a secure future. A good enough reason for laughter.



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