

YOUNG

SOCIALIST

EDITORIALS on Mrs. Bandaranaike takes the Indira Road;
Give us back our Ration Books; June 5th

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Peasantry
by **N. M. Perera**

A New Era, with New Problems and New Tasks
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June 1980

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Editorial Notes

Mrs Bandaranaike takes the Indira Road

Mrs Bandaranaike has, by her withdrawal from the proceedings of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry against her, set herself on course for a political collision with the President himself. In the setting of the kept press of Sri Lanka, even the immediate consequences of this highly charged political step cannot be properly assessed; or even properly known for quite a time. How the Government is going to take it, however, has been already made clear; for posters which went up in Colombo on the very day of Mrs Bandaranaike's walk-out were promptly torn down by the police. Their excuse was said to be that the posters were in contempt of the Presidential Commission. The Commission itself is not known to have taken notice of the alleged contempt. Indeed, although there has been much speculation whether Mrs Bandaranaike is in contempt of the Commission, the Commission has given no signs of having concerned itself with the question. The Commission has simply proceeded to hear the Deputy Solicitor General's well publicised submissions. As for the police, nothing need surprise us in a

country where, for the first time in history including colonial times, the amateur dramas which had gained wide acceptance as part of our Wesak celebrations, have been bottled up and virtually cut out by the police demand to vet scripts in advance of issuing loud-speaker permits, in order to prevent the plays having an anti - government character. Doesn't the President himself insist that we are the most free and democratic country in Asia? Manifestly we are—so long as you support the Government.

Government is obviously concerned whether the political consequences of the course of action Mrs Bandaranaike has set out upon will follow in Sri Lanka the course that events took in relation to Mrs Gandhi in India. Mrs Gandhi came to her triumph through the parliamentary democratic process and not through the juridical process. Manifestly, the President, the Government and the United National Party forces generally are widely apprehensive of a parallel course of events and a parallel outcome in Sri Lanka. The situation is not without such potential.

The democratic political process, no less than the juridical process, has its own logic. Among other things, the political process may actually catch up into itself and give new form and significance to the outcome of the juridical or judicial process in a particular case or matter. This was what

happened in the case of Mrs Gandhi. And of course, it can also happen in the case of Mrs Bandaranaike.

There is an old saying that man proposes but God disposes. In the same way the outcome of a judicial process may be disposed of by the political process – as we ourselves have seen in respect of another judicial matter in which both Mrs Bandaranaike and the Presidential Commission were involved

On that occasion, Mrs Bandaranaike came to the Court of Appeal with an

application for a writ against the Commission. The court gave judgement in her favour. Although the court thereafter gave leave to the Attorney General to appeal to the Supreme Court, the Government hastily intervened with two laws. One took away from the Court of Appeal the effective jurisdiction on the subject of writ against the Presidential Commission and vested it in the Supreme Court. The other which was retroactive in character, wiped out the Court of Appeal judgement and replaced it with a judgement of the Legislature's own, principally by the device of "deeming" what was not the fact to be the fact. It was a sternly stunning instance of the political process catching up into itself a result of the judicial process and transforming it.

In one view, such a catching up and transforming is almost pre-determined in the case of Mrs Bandaranaike because of the procedures involved when it comes to the stage of depriving her of her civic rights in the event of the Commission so recommending to the President. The recommendation would of course flow from a prior finding against Mrs Bandaranaike by the Commission. Even then, such recommendation would not be automatic. Conceivably, it is possible to find against her on some things without the Commission finding it necessary to recommend that she be deprived of her civic rights. If however, in pursuance of an adverse finding a recommendation to deprive Mrs. Bandaranaike of her civic rights is made, then, from the point of the presentation of the report with its findings and recommendations to the President, the question passes out of the judicial sphere into the political sphere. For the decision the President has to take, say what you will, is a political decision. That decision will be whether he and his Government will or will not recommend to Parliament, by bringing an appropriate bill, that Mrs Bandaranaike should be

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deprived of her civic rights. Parliament no doubt is the final arbiter; but as at present it is not irrelevant to remind ourselves that the President and his Government have an inbuilt overwhelming majority (143 out of 168) in this Parliament. What the President says, goes.

In respect of a political decision - and of the nature that is involved here at that - it is natural, inevitable and a part of the political process that every effort will be made by interested parties to exert pressure on the President with a view to a desired decision. It is also inevitable that, in the nature of the issue involved, all sides will seek to bring the masses into the issue. As is clear, the very purpose of Mrs. Bandaranaike's present course of conduct is to bring the masses into the issue. In that situation, the Commission's judgement itself and its recommendation will become the subject of public controversy. Politics will take command.

What is more, the issue will not and cannot be confined to Parliament and parliamentary debate - if for no other reason, because of the miniscule (8 out of 168) and impotent position of the SLFP in Parliament. Besides, Mrs Bandaranaike's course of action is not primarily directed at Parliament - that would be pointless. It is primarily, nay wholly, directed at the masses outside in preparation for the next Parliamentary General Election and the next Presidential Election to follow. Let us look briefly at some of the possibilities.

The Presidential Commission can broadly come to one of two decisions in Mrs Bandaranaike's matter. (We cannot here pursue possible intermediate variations.) They may hold that she is "guilty" or "not guilty". Further, upon holding her "guilty", they can go on to recommending that she lose her 'civic' rights, or refrain from doing so. Each and all of such possible decisions

will undoubtedly carry political consequences (which, of course, are no concern of the Commission, whose decision will be judicial.)

For instance, an acquittal will surely bring her a surge of public sympathy and enable her to stand before the public as one whom the President and Government sought unsuccessfully to martyr. The political potential of such an outcome is beyond calculation in advance. To Mrs Bandaranaike it would be dazzling. To the President and the Government it would be fraught with danger.

Take the other two possible outcomes. Mrs Bandaranaike is convicted and recommended for deprivation of civic rights. Mrs Bandaranaike and the SLFP would probably mount a campaign immediately (a) against the Commission's decision and (b) against the recommendation. Regarding the recommendation, the campaign is most likely to be aimed principally at bringing national and international pressure to bear on the President not to give effect to the recommendation. Shades of Bhutto and Zia! Will President Jayawardena quail before the risk or model himself on Zia? While one of these courses may bring the President the accolade of "generosity" and the other the reputation of being "hard" either course cannot help but advance the image of "martyrdom" which Mrs Bandaranaike seeks to project. Besides unlike in the case of Bhutto, the martyr will be a living figure capable of conducting a political fight. Imagine the power in a General Election or at a Presidential Election of the slogan, "End the martyrdom of Mrs Bandaranaike - Restore to her her civic rights". Imaginatively directed, handled and implemented, such a campaign can have the sweep of the slogan, "Restore to the People the Ration Book taken away by the UNP Government."

The political consequences of the third outcome, namely, finding of "guilt" without a recommendation to deprive Mrs Bandaranaike of her civic rights, will be more complicated. Martyrdom will then rest much more on the issue of the correctness of the Commission's decision. The important fact will be that Mrs Bandaranaike will be there to fight it out herself.

Whatever be the outcome of the Commission's deliberations, the subsequent political battle that looms is, as we have already pointed out, likely to be outside Parliament than inside - although a skilled opposition could find ways and means of utilising the parliamentary arena to feed and strengthen a campaign in the country. The SLFP would do well to study the literally classic manner in which the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, back in the late nineteen thirties, combined the mass struggle in the country over the celebrated Bracegirdle issue, namely, the attempt of the British Governor to deport Bracegirdle, with the utilisation of the parliamentary arena to strengthen and support the mass struggle outside. It is appropriate also to recall how, through this correct tactical use of Parliament (then, the State Council), the LSSP, on a later occasion actually brought about the resignation of the Board of Ministers of the day, which was led by that most orthodox of politicians, namely Sir D. B. Jayatilake. The issue then too involved the report of a Commission of Inquiry, consisting of three Supreme Court Judges, including the Chief Justice of the day, appointed by the British Governor of Ceylon.

The Commission was concerned with a dispute between, and the respective truthfulness of Sir D. B. Jayatilleke, Chairman of the Board of Ministers and Home Minister at the time on the one side and on the other the Inspector General of Police, P. N. Banks. The matter linked itself up

with the earlier Bracegirdle issue, but the essential point was whether the State Council should prevail over the Commission in respect of a difference of opinion regarding the Commission's decision upholding I. G. P. Banks against his Minister. The State Council declined to accept the decision. The LSSP presented the issue to the country and in the State Council as essentially an anti-imperialist issue. As we have observed above, politics has its own logic and decisions of Commissions can precipitate high political issues, and mass political action. No doubt this is what Mrs Bandaranaike and the SLFP hope for and anticipate. We might emphasize that the LSSP achieved all this with only two members in the State Council, the redoubtable "Sama Samaja twins" Philip Gunawardena and N. M. Perera.

As the significance of Mrs Bandaranaike's action percolates into the public consciousness, the outcome of the Presidential Commission's proceedings in respect of Mrs Bandaranaike's case may well be awaited, with heightened interest. It is the Commission's decision that will determine how much fat will be in the fire of Mrs Bandaranaike's kindling

Give us Back our Ration Books

The manner in which the price of sugar was suddenly and sharply jacked up from Rs. 4.50 to Rs. 6/- per lb is an intriguing, though tragic story. It also serves to pose sharply the question of the contrasting modes of distribution of essential commodities which are associated in the minds and memories of the people with the names respectively of the late Dr. N. M. Perera and of our present ruler, President J. R. Jayawardene.

It was known well beforehand to the traders and the hoarders who are the props of the thriving black market in Sri Lanka, that a hike in the price of sugar was coming. Government itself signalled this prospect

at a certain stage by filling the media with harrowing stories of a spectacular - and, by the Government apparently unexpected - rocketing of sugar prices in the world market. Sugar, they claimed, had shot up in a fatefully brief period from £.220 per tonne to £.330 per tonne. Those who have come to understand the manner in which the Government has repeatedly prepared the country for the frequent and sharp price-rises we have been painfully experiencing under the free market policies of this Government realized what was in the offing. The general populace of course realized it in another and most painfully frustrating way when sugar disappeared suddenly without warning from the open market. They knew from previous such frustrating experiences what the disappearance meant. The sugar price was about to go up.

However, initially, an unexpected thing occurred this time. Government, with a fanfare of trumpets and a loud beating of its propaganda drums announced a ration scheme for sugar which was to defeat the profiteers and hoarders with its simple ingenuity. There was to be no price rise. Every householder was to get a ration of 2 lbs each through the co-operative. And everything would be for the best in a most difficult situation for which of course the Government was as usual not responsible, but only those awful Russians who insisted on buying sugar on the world market when their beet sugar crop had failed.

Then, something happened. While the the well-orchestrated official media were playing the ordained tune, the "Sun" newspaper came out with the news that the President had, in consequence of representations made to him, directed the cancellation of the announced ration scheme and the substitution therefore of a price increase which was about to be announced. The newspaper broadly hinted that the rise

would be Rs. 1.50 per lb. Obviously the "Sun" knew but refrained from anticipating in express terms, the coming official announcement.

The question arises: how did this political contretemps come about? Here was a Government committed (a) to the removal of all subsidies and (b) to the sale of imported goods at least at the price of purchase abroad. It had also abolished the rationing system. The Government had pursued this policy systematically over two years, seeking only to accord the pace of removal of subsidies to the needs and constraints of the political climate. And now, here was the Government reverting to the rationing of sugar and also subsidising it to the tune of nearly 25%, by selling at Rs. 4.50 what it bought abroad at Rs. 6/- It is as if Government had been forced to change course on a basic question.

It is idle to suggest, as some quarters are doing, that the President had no hand in the subsidised ration decision. Such an important decision could not have been taken at any level below Cabinet level. And the President presides over Cabinet. So the President must have had a hand in the decision. Indeed, in accordance with the Cabinet rule of decision by consensus, the President must have agreed. The intriguing question is: how came the President to change the decision so quickly - in a matter of 24 hours of the announcement? Was it that having succumbed to pressure in the Cabinet he decided to over ride the Cabinet? If so, whom was he over-riding? It was obviously some strong figure or factional group in the Cabinet that he was over-riding after he had succumbed in Cabinet. Or was it that the real policy makers of this Cabinet the IMF-IBRD monitors in the Treasury intervened and compelled the change? All these questions arise; for all we have been Vouchsafed is that "representations" were made to President after the announcement

and he changed his mind and got back to approved course.

The new official announcement was of course accompanied by a new barrage of propaganda, no less deafening than the barrage which accompanied the announcement of the ration scheme. But the essential point in each case was that Government was seeking ways and means of urgently and sharply limiting the consumption of sugar so that Government could conserve the foreign exchange involved. The formula is simple. Less sugar consumed - less sugar imported - less foreign exchange expended. All in the interests of development, of course.

However, it is also here precisely that the point about modes of distribution of essentials arises for consideration anew. What we are facing is a question of conflicting policies flowing from contrasting modes of distribution of an essential commodity in short supply. Incidentally, this question is complicated by another question, namely whether the short supply is artificially induced by a Government coming newly to expenditure consciousness. Till recently, Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel and Prime Minister Premadasa were boasting that the Government had all the money in the world and the only problem was how to spend it. Today, certainly Finance Minister de Mel is moaning that his finances stand sharply constricted and that he has no alternative but to axe the expenditure side of his budget to match his dwindling income.

The essential object of the ration scheme and of the price hike is a reduction in the consumption of sugar which would enable Government to reduce its import of sugar thereby cutting down its foreign exchange expenditure. The question is how to **distribute** this reduction of consumption

among the various income-strata of the people of Sri Lanka. In other words, who shall bear the burden of the reduction of consumption?

President Jayawardene's answer is loud and clear. The lower the income, the greater the burden; with the poorest of the the poor having to go without sugar altogether. That is the meaning of the sugar price hike (Incidentally let us not be lulled, soothed and diverted by talk about turning from foreign sugar to local treacle and jaggery. That simply is not the object of the sugar price hike. The fact is that with every price hike in sugar there is, often a disproportionate, increase in the price of treacle and jaggery.)

Price increases are a form of rationing of a commodity in a society which has a range of incomes stretching from the very high to the very low, as in Sri Lanka. A heavy price rise, in the present case 33% does not affect the very rich or even the rich generally. They continue to buy as much sugar as before. At the other end the very poor simply cannot buy because they cannot find the money to buy at the new price. In between these two ends or strata, the price rise induces a whole range of cutting down in purchases to match the slimness of the purse. This is the mode of distribution the President has chosen.

The way of quantity-rationing is the way of social equality. The aim is to divide the available supply reasonably equally among the population, regard being had to special needs, such as of children. The system inevitably involves the price question also, since there is no point in arranging for equal distribution if the price is beyond the capacity of the persons intended to be benefited. This is why there is often an income ceiling imposed below which only special prices operate. There are no doubt other frills, modifications and qualifications possible; but the essential aim is that all

who need the commodity get it. Incidentally that precisely was Dr N. M. Perera's aim, when he as Finance Minister of the SLFP-LSSP-CP Government, upon being faced with a far steeper and higher rise than now in the price of sugar in the international market, while raising the general price of sugar to Rs 5.00 per lb, also provided to every ration book holder a ration of 3/4 lb per person per week at 72 cents per lb.

Manifestly, despite all the chatter about queues and the like, the quantity ration is the means of social equality which is further insured by a special price for the lower income brackets. That precisely was the purpose which the ration book served in our country.

With us the ration book served not only the purpose of equal availability of a commodity in short supply but also the purpose of protecting the lower income bracket citizen against the price rises induced by shortages or any other causes. The essence of our ration book system was that a certain quantity of a given essential commodity was made available to the holder at a special price which was independent of the price fluctuations of the given commodity in the open market. It was thus, as will now be realized, also a protection against price inflation. It is that protection that our people have been denied by the Government taking away the people's ration book in conditions of extreme inflation. It is a heavy blow at the lower income groups.

It is surely time to advance the demand that the Government do restore the ration book to fulfil the tremendous social function the ration book in fact performed. Let the people demand - GIVE US BACK OUR RATION BOOKS !

June 5th

June 5th will mark the beginning of the process of erosion of the UNP Government's

power base, on the sufficient narrowing of which depends its ultimate downfall.

The Government itself contributed considerably to giving that day an importance and significance which it might not have otherwise had. The source of that contribution was the President's public and repeated call to the cohorts of the UNP to confront everywhere, in every place, in every way, those who should respond to the Joint Trade Union Action Committee's call for mass demonstration on June 5th against the UNP Government's anti-democratic, oppressive and inflationary policies. As it turned out, this call to confrontation stirred whole sections of trade union militants to a stiff response. The militants took up the President's challenge.

As was anticipated, the most wide-spread response was in the private sector; specifically, the Employers' Federation Sector. But what surprised the Government side was the extent of the response in the public sector; that is to say the Government and Government Corporation sectors. For instance, the Ratmalana Railway workshop, the Milk Board, the Government Printing establishment and the Government Factory at Kolonnawa came out in demonstration almost totally or in a major way. Even the "untouchable" CTB had its picketeers, though few and far between.

Government's counter - demonstration was a flop, except at two general concentration points; namely the Colombo Municipal Council grounds and the Port Commission premises; we should perhaps add the Co-operative Wholesale Establishment premises at Union Place.

The frustrated Government side turned, as was anticipated and prophesied, to extra-legal violence exercised by the UNP's known strong-arm squads. This led not only to broken heads but to the death of the

worker-leader, trade unionist Somapala. He fell in the Colombo Fort, thirty-three years to the very day (June 5th) after the government clerk, Kandasamy, fell victim to a police bullet during a strike demonstration at Kolonnawa in 1947. It was the UNP directed police then; it was the UNP controlled and directed thugs on this occasion.

Somapala's martyrdom - for martyrdom it was from any point of view - was what gave the difference, the significance and the place to June 5th. The very context of the death, whatever be the precise circumstances of its occurrence, signalled to the world beyond any possibility of a cover-up, the direct responsibility of the President and the UNP Government for the privately organized gang thuggery which has characterised all Government's anti-working class activity since the return of the UNP to governmental power. Even those who would not see, could not see or did not see previously, now saw and began to see clearly. There is reason to think that even President J. R. Jayawardena has begun to doubt the wisdom of the steps he took in respect of June 5th. It is perhaps his first really major political mistake; and may well be one from which he cannot effectively and completely recover. There is reason to think that even the Police are unhappy, not to say resentful in some cases, about the way in which they were over-ridden by certain politicians on this day. The police are confident that if they had been left free of such interference in certain places, the day would probably have passed without serious or major incident.

One other feature of June 5th requires to be recorded; namely, that in certain places members of the UNP's Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya got drawn into the demonstration. The most striking example was at the Ratmalana Railway workshop, where 800 JSS members walked out with the others when they struck

in the afternoon, defying the JSS leadership. It showed that the great mass of workers in the JSS, though the UNP boasts that they are the large majority of the organised workers, are not in the UNP trade union for political reasons.

What do the events of June 5th add up to? They add up to the important fact that the class peace which has prevailed in the political arena since the 1977 General Election has been recognizably broken and that the class struggle has thrust through the suffocating integument of class peace, breaking to the surface of political events. The task posed for the mass movement is to widen the breach, thereby ensuring the freer flow of the class struggle.

The happiest augury of the future is that there are signs that the task will be undertaken in direct continuation of the June 5th confrontation. Of these the most important is that the three parties which came together on May Day in demonstration against the UNP Government's policies have been able to expand their number to five for the purpose of preparing the masses for struggle against the Government on specific concrete issues. This is a development which can ensure to the masses the political leadership on a national scale which is necessary, indeed essential, for success in the anti UNP struggle. The thought is quite widespread among the militants of June 5th, that a wider and more powerful struggle would certainly have been possible on that day if the May Day platform had more unitedly been utilised by the opposition political parties. That is a correct thought. The pity of it is that political lessons have to be learnt the hard way; but learnt they have to be and will be.

THE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY AND THE PEASANTRY

By N. M. PERERA

(This article was written by Late Dr. N. M. Perera, in 1976, in his 40th year as the representative of a rural constituency, Yatiyantota, in the National State Assembly)

Although the Party is correctly designated as a working-class Party and its main base is in the working-class, it will be wrong to assume that the peasantry did not receive the due concentration and the importance that it deserved. In a country where over 75 per cent of the people live in rural areas it will be both wrong and meaningless for an all island Party to neglect the specific weight of the cultivator and the rural worker in the economic life of the country. Therefore from the outset, the programme of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party provided a prominent place for the demands of the villager in Sri Lanka.

Quite naturally, logically, the most important demand of the villager was for land. Land for the landless was one of the main slogans of the party. Land in adequate extent to ensure a decent living was a cry that rang from every platform that we addressed. Although we had no big landlords in this country such as we get in India, where there is a big Zamindari class that exploits rural India, we have the phenomenon of big capitalist estates owned mainly by foreign companies and individuals. These company estates had been village land owned by the villagers in various extents. They have been virtually expropriated under the waste Lands Ordinance. Some were bought for a song or a mere

pittance by foreigners or foreign companies employing feudal chieftains as convenient brokers. Villagers were thus squeezed into narrow strips of lands hemmed in by powerful estate companies. Very often, the accessibility to the village was cut off, except with the goodwill of the estate owner. A few acres accommodated hundreds of families. Small dilapidated huts stood cheek by jowl with hardly or little land to cultivate for the bare necessities required for existence. Often, there was not sufficient land available to bury the dead. Land for the landless therefore became a powerful appeal in the rural areas.

Understandably, the imperialist Government and the foreign companies were not happy about distributing land in adequate quantities for the villagers because the less land they had, the greater the chance of inducing the villager to work as a labourer in the estates. The shortage of labour was met by indenturing Indians for work on these plantations. The bigger the surplus of available labour, the greater the opportunity to exploit them and enhance their own profits. It was, therefore, an uphill task to realize this demand. After 40 years the hunger for land still persists. With an expanding population, this is not easily satiated.

Since we started agitating for land to the needy cultivator, considerable extents of land have been distributed. Most of these distributed lands have been Government lands allocated largely in the dry zone.

Beginning particularly in 1935, there was a systematic attempt to colonize irrigated land in the North Central Province and Eastern Province and the North Western Province, in addition in certain selected areas where land hunger has been acute. Strip acquisition has taken place for village expansion purposes, and most recently since the Land Reform Law was passed, the settlement of villagers in lands which passed into the hands of the Land Commission has been continued to some extent. This process is also going on with the amended law on land reform in the company estates that have been nationalised. The neglected portions of these estates are being earmarked for village expansion purposes and for distribution to the peasants. The cry, therefore, begun 40 years ago has fructified and substantial strides have been taken towards satisfying the land hunger of the cultivator.

Animal husbandry is an important aspect of rural life. Cattle perform more than one useful function in the life of the peasant. They are required for ploughing; they are required for draught purposes; neat cattle are required for milking; and they are also a source of valuable manure. One of the earliest demands, therefore, put forward by the party was for the provision of grazing land for cattle. This was a very deeply felt need because of the tendency on the part of estate owners to destroy cattle that strayed into their estates and presumably damaged their crops. Most estates were unfenced and cattle could not be kept away from straying into these estates in view of the absence of adequate grazing land. This cry was coupled with the demand to prohibit the shooting of cattle until either the estates were fenced or the Government provided grazing land for the villagers. Cattle problem is not very acute at the present moment unlike during the 30's and early 1940's. Some effort has been made by the Government to provide grazing lands in suitable areas and of course

the cattle population has substantially dwindled as a result of the introduction of mechanization into paddy and other cultivations.

Coupled with the demand for land for the landless went our demand for fair prices for the cultivators' products. That included a fair price for both paddy as well as the other short crops. With the importance attached to paddy in the life of the country, there was a guaranteed price for this product. Gradually, as a result of consistent agitation, this price had been increased to Rs. 14/- prior to 1970. After I became the Minister of Finance, this figure was gradually increased and the present figure stands at Rs. 33/- per bushel as the guaranteed price for all the paddy that is handed over to the Government. Fair guaranteed prices to other articles have not been forthcoming so readily, but gradually over the years our propaganda has had a good effect, and after the Sama Samaja Party joined the Government in 1964, and most specifically after 1970 guaranteed prices have been broadened out to cover almost all products which the cultivator was prepared to sell to the Government through the Co-operatives or the Department of Agriculture. These guaranteed prices covered such cash crops as Kurakkan, Maize, Onions, Sorghum, Chillies, Ginger, etc.

There were a number of other interesting demands put forward on behalf of the working population in rural areas. The provision of seed paddy at reasonable rates, compensation for damaged crops by unseasonable weather, the removal of oppressive irrigation rates, the availability of agricultural implements at cheap rates, the implementation of these demands were urged in Parliament and suitable propaganda followed in the countryside. Most of these have been realized over the years, some fully, some partially. The most persistent demand was the elimination of rural indebtedness. The inextricable

nexus between the local Mudalalis and the cultivator had to be broken if the full fruits of the cultivator's endeavours are to be enjoyed by him. Owing to various factors beyond his control, the peasant can never extricate himself from the clutches of the Mudalalis. He was perpetually in debt and the accumulation terminated in his being deprived of his own land. There was no real relief for them forthcoming notwithstanding our fight on their behalf. Some relief was afforded with the Paddy Lands Act sponsored by Philip Gunawardena. The genuine and lasting relief came with the establishment of banking facilities in rural areas. Through the Rural Banks attached to Co-operatives and through the Bank of Ceylon branches attached to the Productivity Centres, the peasant can now get easy and cheap loans on the basis of his own produce. Loans can even be obtained for the standing crop of paddy. This has gone a long way to ease the burdens of indebtedness though it has not been completely eliminated.

Perhaps more important than all of this is the long struggle that we waged to release the villager from the oppression of Government officials of various types. The average peasant in the 1930's was a timid, cowed-down person. He shivered before a Policeman. Every Government official was a dread to him. The most vicious was the Headman system. That was a perpetual nightmare that convulsed his whole existence. He could not escape the viciousness, the venom and the cruelties that the Rate Mahattayas, Korales and the Arachehis rained upon him at every turn of his life. The Party carried out a bitter campaign against the iniquitous Headman System and succeeded under the Bandaranaike Government of 1956 to remove the Rate Mahattayas and their henchmen, replacing them by D. R. O.'s and Grama Sevakas. This was a signal achievement and the Party can be justly proud of the major transformation that took place in rural Ceylon as a

result. This was one of the remnants of feudalism that still prevailed right up to the Bandaranaike Government of 1956-1959 and with its overthrow a major stride was taken to increase the stature and self-respect of the Goviyas.

So during these 40 years of our existence, we have wrought many changes in the life of rural Ceylon. In the 1930's and in the 1940's, many struggles were conducted in the Hewagam Korale in particular against the oppressive measures of the Government. The Party must recall with pride the intrepid contribution made by one who is dubbed the lion of Ruhuna. I refer to Mr. D. M. Rajapakse. He worked with us in the State Council and was a powerful factor in mobilising the cultivator to the cause of Samasamajism. In these early years indeed we drew more support from the rural areas than from the city, partly because of our record of selfless service during the disastrous Malaria epidemic.

A radical re-orientation of rural life in Sri Lanka has yet to be achieved. Remnants of feudalism that still linger have to be washed away. The exploitation by middlemen and powerful Mudalalis has not been eliminated. The mental approach to modernism with all its implications has yet to be fostered and developed. This is the task of the Party in the coming years. This can be furthered by the build up of organizations ideologically attuned to the goal of socialism.

A NEW ROAD IS NEEDED

By Leslie Goonawardena

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... So during these 30 years of our existence we have seen many changes in the rural sector. In the 1830's and in the 1910's many struggles were conducted in the Hewanagama Kotte in particular against the oppressive measures of the Government. The Party must recall with pride the untiring contribution made by one who is dubbed the 'Hon. of Hewanagama' Mr. D. M. Hapapasa. He worked with us in the State Council and was a powerful factor in mobilising the cultivator to the cause of Samasamajam. In these early years indeed we drew more support from the rural areas than from the city, partly because of our record of selfless service during the disastrous malaria epidemic.

A radical re-orientation of rural life in Sri Lanka has yet to be achieved. Hewanagama feudalism that still lingers have to be washed away. The exploitation by middlemen and powerful Madhalas has not been eliminated. The mental approach to modernism with all its implications has yet to be fostered and developed. This is the task of the Party in the coming years. This can be furthered by the build up of organizations ideologically attached to the

... the cultivator had to be broken if the full fruits of the cultivator's endeavours are to be enjoyed by him. Owing to various factors beyond his control, the peasant can never extricate himself from the clutches of the Madhalas. He was perpetually in debt and the accumulation terminated in his being deprived of his own land. Some relief was afforded with the Paddy Lands Act sponsored by Philip Gunawardena. The main and lasting relief came with the establishment of banking facilities in rural areas. Through the Rural Banks attached to Co-operatives and through the Bank of Ceylon branches attached to the Productivity Centre, the peasant can now get easy and cheap loans on the basis of his own produce. Some can even be obtained for the standing crop of paddy. This has gone a long way to ease the burdens of indebtedness though it has not been completely eliminated.

Perhaps more important than all of this is the long struggle that we waged to release the village from the oppression of Government officials of various types. The average peasant in the 1830's was a timid, cowed-down person. He shivered before a Policeman, a Government official was a dread to him. The most vicious was the Headman. That was a perpetual nightmare that convulsed the whole existence. He could not escape the violence, the terror and the cruelty that the State

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A NEW ROAD IS NEEDED
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A NEW ERA, WITH NEW PROBLEMS AND NEW TASKS

By LESLIE GOONEWARDENE

Marxism is not a sterile dogma. It is above all a method which, applied correctly, helps us to understand the past as well as the present and also helps us to delineate the path of historical development towards the future. The important thing, of course, is to apply the method correctly to the concrete reality as it exists, and this is quite often not an easy task.

In this regard, in contemporary Sri Lanka it is of vital importance to grasp the significant changes that have taken place in the country and among its people in the recent past. The General Election of July 1977 and its results are a pointer to these changes as well as mark the beginning of a new era with new problems and new tasks.

Of course, the immediate impact of the 1977 elections result was, and still perhaps continues to be, the creation of the feeling that it was not only a mighty victory for the Right but also a catastrophic defeat for the Left, particularly because neither the Lanka Sama Samaja Party nor the Communist Party of Sri Lanka were able to win a single seat in Parliament.

As is not unusual in such situations, some supporters of the Left have searched for scapegoats to explain the defeat. Others have attributed it to the policy of forming a United Front Government with the SLFP. Yet others, in search of easy solutions, prescribe a unity of all Left Forces, little realising - apart from the fact that this is

not achievable - that even if achieved this alone would not result in any significant advantage to the Left from the point of view of gaining additional mass support. Many others have dropped out of the Left movement, some drifting to the SLFP, and some dropping out of politics altogether.

In such a situation it may provide only a cold comfort to recall the statement of Leon Trotsky, made in the latter portion of his life, that we must not substitute our own impatience as a measuring rod for the tempo of an epoch. However it may be worth remembering that political evolution in Sri Lanka over the past half century or so though often erratic, and nearly always slow, has continued in a forward direction.

The Development from 1931 to 1977

This is perhaps best illustrated if we consider the development that has taken place since the introduction of universal franchise in 1931. Elections to the first State Council in 1931 took place on an individual and not a party basis. Indeed, if one does not take into account the boycott of the elections by the Tamils of the North as a protest against the majoritarian Donoughmore Constitution which assured the Sinhalese of a majority of seats, one can go so far as to say that political issues played no part at all in the elections. The 1936 elections to the State Council represented an advance when the newly formed Lanka Sama Samaja Party for the first time introduced politics into the scene.

The war period marked a set back to the forward development. But the 1947 election results demonstrated a Leap forward in the political consciousness of the masses. The attitude of the bourgeois leadership to the question of national independence and indeed their entire role during the war had its repercussions among the masses. Not only did they return 15 Sama Samajists (and 3 Communists) to the legislature, but of a total of 95 seats in the legislature, the United National Party, the newly formed party of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie, was able to win only 42 seats and was able to form a Government with a majority only with difficulty.

The 1952 election results represented a step backwards, with the UNP comfortably winning an absolute majority of seats. But the 1956 elections witnessed a resounding defeat for the UNP along with a victory for the SLFP led coalition of Mr S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. What was significant about this result was not only that it represented a defeat for the openly pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist policies of the UNP as against more progressive policies, and a new awakening of the Sinhala majority, but that it had also its negative side, The policy of giving Sinhala the status of being the sole official language led to an increased estrangement between the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority and a threat to national unity.

The questions of religion and language continued for several years to play a dominant role in the politics of the Sinhala majority, and the importance of these questions diminished only gradually. Even in the 1970 elections, where the UNP was opposed by a United Front of the SLFP, LSSP and CP on an agreed common programme, and where economic issues did come to the fore, nevertheless the revelation of the secret pact of Mr Dudley Senanayake with Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam, the leader of

the Federal Party, played a not unimportant part in securing the defeat of the UNP.

However, the result of the 1977 General Election showed clearly that the above mentioned issues had receded into the background and that economic issues had, for the first time in Sri Lanka, come to occupy the centre of the political stage. We shall have occasion to go deeper into this question later. For the moment it is sufficient to note that this new development with the possibilities it offers of future advance, prevents us from characterising the election result of 1977 as an unmitigated disaster. On the contrary, we are reminded that Hegel, and Marx after him, have taught us that development does not take place in a straight line but assumes rather the form of an ascending spiral. Political development in Sri Lanka from 1931 to 1977 has certainly assumed this form. The very defeat of July 1977 contains within it the germs of the future advance.

Economic changes since 1970

What are the principal features of the changed situation? Firstly and most importantly these are the changes in the economic structure that have taken place since the formation of the United Front Government in 1970. Apart from the development of state banking institutions, the establishment of greater control over foreign commercial banks, further state incursions into the import and export trade and shipping nationalisation of several enterprises, the commencement of a number of state corporations and the nationalisation of land holdings of individuals and private companies which were over 50 acres in extent, above all there took place the nationalisation of the public company estates (including the British owned sterling company estates), traditionally recognised in Sri Lanka as the commanding heights of the economy.

It may not be out of place to mention that the last named nationalisation took place in the latter part of 1975 as a result of the pressure of the organised working class. The Government was compelled to concede this demand in the face of the threat to take strike action on January 31st of that year by the LSSP led Ceylon Federation of Labour, the SLFP led Sri Lanka Independent Federation of Trade Unions and the CP led Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions. Further pressure in June of that year resulted in the preparation of the required legislation on a Cabinet decision of July 1975 and its presentation to Parliament later that year. It would not be incorrect to say that the prime mover in this operation was the Ceylon Federation of Labour. In the opinion of the writer, this nationalisation of the principal means of production in Sri Lanka, which would never have taken place unless the LSSP had followed the tactic of forming a United Front Government along with the SLFP and the CP, is alone sufficient to vindicate the basic correctness of the coalition tactic followed by the LSSP.

Although significant structural changes as mentioned above, have taken place in the economy, it cannot be claimed that the nationalised sector of the economy has been functioning satisfactorily. While Rightists declare that nationalisation has been a failure, even Leftists are compelled to grant that it has not been the success that they had expected.

Performance in the state sector has generally been poor. This has been due both to failure in management and to the lack of cooperation from employees generally. But it is necessary to understand the reasons for this. In the socialist countries for example, the nationalisation of the principal means of production followed the seizure of power by the masses with the workers at their head. In Sri Lanka the nationalisation of the principal means

of production has preceded the seizure of power. This has created its own special problems for us. The consciousness of the workers in nationalised concerns has undergone little change. They do not consider these enterprises as theirs and show no enthusiasm in protecting them and developing them.

It is of the utmost importance to find a solution to this question, both from the point of view of moving forward to socialism and of tackling the burning problems of the day. Poor performance in the state sector becomes a serious matter when one considers that two-thirds of the country's total production is produced by the state sector. (The President himself has admitted that the figure is as high as sixty per cent.) This is so because, if the principal problem facing the masses today, namely the rising prices of essential commodities is to be lowered and the cost of living reduced, then increased production in this sector is essential.

It is true that the economic policies of the UNP Government, particularly the devaluation of the rupee, unrestricted imports and uneconomic spending on unproductive schemes, must be castigated for opening the road to the uncontrolled inflation of today. But it is also true that a mere return to the old policies followed by the Government set up in 1970 is quite insufficient to solve the problems we face today. History does not stand still. World inflation has grown in the meantime. And above all there is the herculean task of getting the country out of the pit into which it has fallen during the present UNP regime. It will be a cruel deception of the people to pretend that all this can be done and the cost of living stabilised at a reasonable level - which will involve the subsidising especially of essential commodities that are imported - other than through a very significant increase in production. And first and foremost,

this increase in production must take place in the major sector of the economy, namely the state sector.

Self Management is the solution

The only way in which this result can be achieved is through the introduction of the system of self management in this sector. Self management in the first place means that the governing bodies (or boards of directors) of enterprises will consist not of nominees appointed by a Minister, but of individuals periodically elected by secret ballot by the different sections of the employees from among themselves. The power and responsibility of running these enterprises will thus be transferred to the producers themselves.

But self management has a second and equally important aspect which is often forgotten. The devolution of power and responsibility, however important this may be in itself, will be insufficient to guarantee the use of this power and responsibility to maximise productivity and efficiency, unless the producers can see that they themselves directly benefit as a result of the newly introduced system. Under the system of self management this is secured by providing that the profits, after the payment of income tax to the state and local tax to the relevant territorial authority, is placed at the disposal of the elected council or board of directors of the producers.

Such body, no doubt after due consultation with its electors, will decide whether to spend the profits by distribution among the employees as bonuses, or to divert them to social welfare schemes, or to divert them for re-investment in the enterprise (thereby increasing the profits in the future), or whether to resort to a combination of all the three above mentioned purposes.

In the situation as it exists in Sri Lanka today, it is only such a system as is directly related to collective self-interest, that is capable of producing a significant - and even perhaps a very remarkable - improvement in the performance of state sector enterprises.

There are many problems and aspects relating to the system of self management which it is not possible to deal with in the space of a short article. However, there is one matter the writer would wish to draw attention to, and that is the ethical aspect of the system of self management. It seems to him that it is eminently just and in keeping with the best tradition of socialism that the decision to what extent the surplus produced should be used for current consumption, and to what extent current consumption needs should be sacrificed for the sake of the future, should be made not by some distant state body but by the producers themselves. And this is what is provided for under the system of self management.

The introduction of the system of self management occupies a central position in the new programme of action, proposed by the LSSP for the government the people should set up in place of the UNP government. The attempt has also been made to extend the principles of the system of self management to the maximum extent possible through the devolution of power and responsibility territorially on elected bodies called "praja sabhas".

The increased production resulting from the application of the principle of self management will be capable of reducing the cost of living as well as providing needed capital for future development. The subsidising of essential commodities (especially of imported commodities over whose prices we have no control) can be financed by the increased production.

The stress that we have placed on the management of nationalised concerns as distinct from a mere demand for more and more nationalisations, is sometimes criticised as a step backwards and evidence of a reluctance to proceed on the socialist path. Nothing can be further from the truth. For example, the position of the LSSP on self management has nothing to do with the position taken by the Prime Minister of the last Government, Mrs Bandaranaike on her return from West Germany in the autumn of 1974, to the effect that sufficient nationalisations had taken place and that what was now required was the proper running of the enterprises already nationalised. We recall that this was what probably provoked the sharp remark by Dr N. M. Perera in his Budget Speech of November 1974, that there were no "Ambalamas" (resting places) on the road to Socialism.

Apart from everything else, let it not be forgotten that in 1974 the company owned estates had not yet been nationalised. Also, the position of the LSSP has been and continues to be that nationalisations must be carried out as and when necessary. Otherwise we shall never get to socialism. The so-called mixed economy in which private enterprise still continues to exist is not an aim, but only a stage - even if it turns out to be a more lengthy one than we supposed at the start - on the road to the classless society where ultimately all the means of production will be collectively owned and worked.

Just as the demand for Independence, which helped to mobilise the masses in the period of colonialism, has progressively lost its relevance in the post-war period, so also the slogan of Nationalisation for the building of Socialism has progressively lost its attractiveness for the masses. Those who do not see these and other similar changes that have taken place and who repeat old shibboleths, refusing to recognise

that we are in a new situation calling for a fresh approach, remind us of April 1917 in Russia, when Lenin said that members of his own party who do not realise the changed situation were only fit to be put in a museum of old Bolsheviks.

Changes in Mass Attitudes

Not only has the economic structure undergone significant changes, but there is a very noticeable change in mass attitudes on certain questions in the new period that we have entered. In the first place, the results of the 1977 election showed a marked decline of divisive racial, religious and linguistic sentiments among the Sinhala people who constitute a majority of the nation. As pointed out earlier these sentiments had dominated the political scene in 1956 and had continued to exert an influence even in the 1970 elections.

The 1977 elections also revealed that the centre of the political stage had now come to be occupied by economic issues. There is little doubt that the defeat of the SLFP Government and the resounding victory of the UNP in that election was due principally to the rise in the cost of living and shortages in the preceding years. The explicit promise of the UNP, that if elected to power they would lower the prices not only of locally manufactured goods but also of imported goods, was believed by the people.

Connected with this turning to economic issues, it should even now be recognised that there has emerged in our society a fairly broad stratum of people - including sections of the workers who yearn for non-essential commodities which can be classified as semi-luxuries. There are some in the Left Movement, trained in the traditions of austerity, who have tended to regard this phenomenon as a petty bourgeois development among the working class. The writer does not share this view. Primitive Communism

was an effort to have a just distribution of scarcity. But under the Socialism we aim at there will be a just distribution, not of scarcity but of plenty. A yearning for the better things of life, we should know to utilise as a lever to help the ushering in of Socialism.

In some countries, at least in the initial stages of development towards socialism, it may be possible to have a period where a uniform austerity is shared by all. But in Sri Lanka, a small country with so many windows opening out on the world and so many of its people travelling abroad and acquiring new tastes, this is simply not possible. On the other hand it is also clearly not possible in conditions of scarcity of foreign exchange to import semi-luxuries in sufficient quantities to satisfy the desires of all who would like to have them. However instead of the Government deciding which are the foreign commodities of such a nature which should be imported and which are those semi-luxuries on the import of which a ban should be placed, as was generally done by the United Front Government, it would appear to be wiser to leave an element of choice to the consumer. While devoting only a limited share of foreign exchange for the import of such products the pricing of such articles could be used to limit their use to those who would be prepared to pay a higher price, perhaps depriving themselves of the use of some other commodity or commodities which may be more readily available. This is perhaps a lesson that we may profitably learn from our past experience.

At all events with economic issues becoming the principal concern of the masses in the political arena, it is our duty to place before the people the real socialist solution which alone can fulfil their aspirations. It may well be that this new importance attached by the masses to economic questions provides Sri Lanka with the first real opportu-

nity in its history of moving forward to Socialism.

Such a conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the capitalist world has entered a period of crisis for a solution of which no visible sign has as yet appeared on the horizon. And when one considers that it is only to be expected that the stronger and industrially developed capitalist countries will attempt to place the burdens of the crisis as much as possible on the backs of the weaker and less developed countries like ours, socialism ceases for us to be a distant perspective but appears as a concrete solution within our reach.

In any case it is our duty to prepare ourselves and the masses not to miss such an opportunity. This means first of all that a programme has to be evolved to meet the situation. That is what the LSSP has attempted to do. For the time being, what may be termed as "front politics" will have to be relegated to the background. The precise organisational composition of any "front" that will bid to replace the UNP Government is not something that can be foretold in advance. We are not living in a vacuum, but in a period when blow after blow is being struck at the masses, and changes in the relationship of forces are the order of the day. The width and depth of the mass struggles to come will decide many questions, including the question of the composition of the Government that will ultimately replace the UNP.

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES

By Rosa Luxemburg

Rs. 4-00

THE HARTAL OF AUGUST 1953

By SYDNEY WANASINGHE

The Hartal of 12th August 1953 was a mass protest of the people in Sri Lanka against the Government of the day. It was a vote of no confidence against a Government which had violated the election promises given at the General Election of May 1952. It was a democratic act, a show of protest by the people, who found this form of extra-parliamentary direct action the most efficient means of registering their disapproval.

Emphasising the need to cut down welfare measures to enable it to concentrate on development projects, the United National Party Government had removed the subsidy on rice. This removal of the subsidy increased the price of a measure of rice from 25 cts to 70 cts. This was a clear violation of the promise made by the UNP at the elections, that as long as their Government lasts, the price of a measure of rice will remain at 25 cts. The people did not accept the explanation of the Government, given one year after the Elections, that these sacrifices were necessary for the sake of national development. They understood it as a crisis measure of a capitalist government, an attempt to place further burdens on the masses, while refusing to tax those who had enriched themselves during the boom period. The magnitude of the burden thrust on the common man by the removal of the subsidy on rice is seen from the admission made by official sources, that even at the prevailing price of rice at 25 cts a measure, there were a number of ration book holders who did not buy their rations, and that some of them pawned their ration books because they could not make use of the coupons themselves.

This news item appeared two days before the decision to increase the price of rice was announced.¹ On 12th August the people rose against the government in a one day's show of protest, and forced the Prime Minister out of office. This was the first successful mass protest in the Island.

Rationing and subsidising the principal food items like rice, flour and sugar had been introduced during the early years of the 2nd World War. These measures were introduced to ensure equitable distribution of these imported food items during that period of acute crisis. These measures also enabled the Government to control inflation and also keep the wages low. The supply situation did not improve sufficiently to do away with these wartime measures, and rationing and subsidies were continued with price variations and other modifications.

Everytime the Government effected price variations and modifications of the rationing scheme, it did so at the behest of the funding agencies of the developed countries, whose assistance had been sought by Sri Lanka to meet its capital requirements of the development projects. On the eve of the presentation of the budget of 1953, the Government had sought and obtained a loan of Rupees Eighty Million from the World Bank to finance the stage 11 of the Hydro Electric Scheme.² On 7th July 1953 the Governor General delivering his Throne Speech in Parliament at the commencement of the new session stated, "The decision to relieve Government expenditure of the heavy burden of the subsidy on food has been brought on by circumstances that make it necessary for the Government to

concentrate mainly on projects of development to increase national income." ³ The other highlights of the Throne Speech - a substantial increase in the ration of rice, the transfer of the management of the State industrial undertakings to independent statutory Corporations, setting up of the National Housing Corporation, accelerating the introduction of the national language into public administration, reorganising the scheme of provincial administration, and clearing of slums were not sufficient to take the sting off the announcement that rationed rice will be sold at 70 cts a measure from July 20th.

Further announcements followed which added fuel to the rising discontent. The end of the free midday meal to school children was announced on July 10th. Increase in postal rates was announced on July 11th. The news item in the daily press stated that the last free midday meal will be served at the end of the current school year (i. e. end of September). The rupees eighteen million that was spent annually for the free midday meal would now be spent on development. It was estimated that 750,000 school children had benefitted from this free midday meal. The ordinary letter rate went up from 6 cts to 10 cts. The parcel rate and the rate for telegrams also went up.

In March 1952 Mr. D. S. Senanayake passed away, and was succeeded by his son, Mr Dudley Senanayake as Prime Minister. This appointment of Mr Dudley Senanayake to the post of Prime Minister, overlooking the claims of Sir John Kotelawala was the subject of a controversy within the ruling United National Party. Therefore Mr Dudley Senanayake went to the polls just two months later, in May 1952, five months before the expiry of the scheduled period of five years, to obtain a vote of confidence for his own appointment. In order to ensure his success at the polls he made

certain promises to the electorate. His main election platform was that he would maintain the subsidies and other welfare measures throughout the period of office of the new government. It was this promise that enabled the UNP to obtain a two third majority at the polls. The fact that the opposition to the UNP was sharply divided also contributed in no small measure to the UNP victory.

The country was literally stunned by the General Election results of May 1952. That the country did not endorse the election verdict was clear from the massive turnout at the post election rally held at Galle Face, Colombo. This rally was presided over by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. Serious doubts were openly expressed on the authenticity of the verdict at the polls. The demand that all anti UNP forces must get together to defeat the UNP also found expression for the first time in a significant way at this meeting.

In September 1952 the Government increased the price of sugar by 15 cts a pound and also reduced the rice ration to one measure. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party organised the collection of signatures for a petition condemning these measures. In this manner the ground was patiently prepared for the events in August 1953.

By July 13th, the opposition to the enforcement of these additional burdens began to mount in the country, both in the trade union front as well as the political front. The opposition political parties, the Left parties in particular, began to mobilise the masses on these issues. They directed their members in Local Government Institutions to move resolutions demanding that the Government withdraw these burdens placed on the masses. The Municipal Councils of Galle and Jaffna, the Urban Councils of Moratuwa, Panadura and Beruwala and the Village Committee of

Andiambalama were among the first to protest in this manner. Protest public meetings were organized in Colombo, Paiyagala, Kalutara, Kandy, Seeduwa, Kopay, Chunnakam, Ruwanwella by the Left parties. A joint opposition rally was held in the Galle Face Green, Colombo on July 24th, the day on which the budget containing the proposed measures listed earlier was presented to Parliament by the Finance Minister, Mr J. R. Jayawardene. This meeting was presided over by Mr S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the leader of the opposition in Parliament, and also the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The decision that Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike should preside at this meeting was taken at the instance of the Ceylon Communist Party. Dr N. M. Perera (Lanka Sama Samaja Party), Mr Pieter Keuneman (Communist Party of Ceylon) Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam (Federal Party) and Mr K. Ramalingam (Ceylon Indian Congress) also addressed this meeting on behalf of their respective organizations. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike concluded his address from the chair with the following statement. "I promise you that within one year, I will form a people's Government". However, it took three more years for this prophecy to materialise. But the foundation for its realisation was laid in the mass protest for which mobilisation was now well under way.

The mobilisation of this mass protest took different forms. Public meetings and processions were organised throughout the country. At these meetings the people were called upon to put up black flags as a show of protest and also to send post cards to the Prime Minister requesting him to withdraw the newly enforced burdens, Dr N. M. Perera, presented to the Prime Minister in Parliament as a first instalment, a petition of 50,000 signatures collected by the LSSP and its Youth Organizations.⁴ The three hour token strike by the total work force of about 12,000 in the Port of

Colombo, at that time a key work place in the city, was the forerunner of the preparations for a general strike. On the same day the womenfolk in Randombe, a village on the main road between Balapitiya and Ambalangoda, squatted on the road and arranged to prepare their meals obstructing all vehicular traffic. Police were unable to disperse them with threats. On the following day, 22nd July, this protest spread to the adjoining villages of Madampe, Akurala, Thotagamuwa and on the 23rd to Balapitiya and on the 24th to Karadeniya, Uragama and Ahungalla. This is a cluster of villages in the Southern Province which has been traditionally left in their political affiliations. On 23rd July the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mill workers in the city of Colombo staged a protest token strike of half a day. This work place was one of the first to come under the influence of the Samasamajists as far back as 1932, three years before the Party was founded.

The Government was unable to realise that mass discontent had by now turned to mass hostility. They believed that even if the situation deteriorated still further, it could be brought under control by the police. It used this state machinery to control the situation in the Ambalangoda Balapitiya area in the Southern Province and in Colombo. These were the two major trouble spots that the Government had to contend with. They baton charged the crowds that had gathered to show their protest and used tear gas to disperse them. But the unique feature of these incidents was the spirit displayed by the masses when confronted by the police. When the police attacked, the people did not retreat as was expected of them. They met force with force and fought back the armed forces with whatever they could get hold of. This should have served as a warning to the Government. But they were completely blind to the situation. They could not realise that the steps they

were taking were only aggravating the situation.

The struggle against the removal of the rice subsidy and the UNP Government that had heaped these burdens on the masses, was taking shape steadily. All the Trade Union centres and Political Parties opposed to these measures of the Government were summoned for a discussion on the proposal to hold a one day General Strike and Hartal. The country had witnessed trade union action of a formidable nature long before 1953. The strike wave of 1939-1940 had paralysed the plantation sector. The General Strikes of 1946 and 1947 had paralysed the Government and the urban industrial sectors. But only unionised workers had taken part in these struggles. The Left Political Parties now felt that a much broader framework was necessary to contain the rural and urban masses who had already come out against the Government on the rice issue.

In this connection history had its lessons to offer. The struggles of August 1942 in India had shown that the Hartal was a mass weapon capable of being developed into a revolutionary situation. The leadership of the two Trotskyist parties, the LSSP and the VLSSP had witnessed these struggles and learnt from this experience when they were in hiding in India during this period. It was they who gave the name Hartal to the struggle in Ceylon in August 1953, which proved far more effective than the General Strikes of Trade Unions referred to earlier. The SLFP took up the position that it was not opposed to the idea of a hartal in principle but was not convinced that the people of Ceylon had come to a stage when they could stage one. The Ceylon Indian Congress was prepared to go as far as the holding of meetings on that day, but not to engage in strike action. Under these circumstances the call for the General Strike and Hartal on 12th August 1953 was issued by the

three Left Parties - the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party of Ceylon and the Viplavakari Sama Samaja Party and the five Trade Union Centres, the Ceylon Federation of Labour (LSSP), Ceylon Trade Union Federation (CP), Ceylon Labour Union (led by Mr A. E. Goonesinghe of the Ceylon Labour Party), Ceylon Mercantile Union (led by Mr P. B. Tampoe of the LSSP) and the Harbour and Dock Workers' Union (VLSSP).

The Government mobilised the forces to meet this situation. Its main weapon was to intimidate the people. It resorted to false propaganda and reporting to play down the mass build up. Unionised workers were threatened with dismissal if they were to take part in the strike. Traders were threatened with cancellation of their licences if they failed to keep their trade outlets open on the day of the proposed Hartal. Units of the armed forces were made to march up and down the public thoroughfares to intimidate the people. These efforts had some measure of success. Several branches of the Government Clerical Service Union decided against participation in the general strike. A few branches of the Ceylon Mercantile Union also took the same decision. But the membership of both these Unions was divided on this issue. Large sections of both these white collar trade unions decided to express their solidarity with the rest of the masses by wearing black arm bands when they come to work on August 12th.

Unprecedented mass support was displayed by the unusually large attendance at protest meetings and the sales of newspapers and pamphlets put out by the three left parties. This enabled the Left to meet to some extent, the false propaganda of the daily press. Their propaganda line was to show that there was no mass support for the protest,

and that the people by and large accepted the Government's explanation for these fresh burdens, that they were essential and were for the good of the country. According to the daily press the situation was completely normal and there was no cause for alarm. Just five days before the Hartal, on August 7th, the Lake House group of newspapers gave full publicity to the Robert's Cup day events. Right up to August 12th they played down the rapidly deteriorating local situation and gave full publicity to the international events - what was taking place in Korea, Vietnam and East Germany. They were completely oblivious to the impending explosion in Sri Lanka. Their attitude is best seen from the headlines of the Ceylon Daily News of August 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th reproduced below.

August 11th:- Transport as usual tomorrow.

No transport difficulties or untoward incidents expected. CGR will run as on any normal day. Tramwaymen will work tomorrow.

August 12th:- Work goes on today.

Business as usual. All precautions taken to maintain order. All Government Departments and Mercantile firms have refused to join the Left sponsored strike. Transport services operate as usual. Mercantile establishments stand firm. Buses run as usual. Police patrol the Island.

August 13th:- Emergency declared.

Proclamation issued. Curfew ordered in Southern and Western Provinces. These regulations are in force now. Transport dislocated. Police are stoned in Colombo. Trains held up. Three fires.

August 14th:- Emergency and curfew continue. Intermittent violence in Colombo. Communications still dislocated. Traffic stoned. Fire

brigade busy. No bail for offences in emergency.

These headlines, particularly those of August 12th, are often cited as examples of partisan reporting of the Press in Sri Lanka. On August 14th a joint statement issued by Dr N. M. Perera, Mr Pieter Keneuman and Mr D. P. R. Gunawardena on behalf of their respective political parties, declaring that the 24 hour hartal ended the previous morning and calling upon everyone to resume work and carry on his normal avocation was given front page publicity. The statement read, - "We congratulate the masses of Ceylon on their splendid response for the call for the Hartal on August 12th 1953. we have achieved the purpose of demonstrating the strength and solidarity of the people in their opposition to the removal of the food subsidy and to the other burdens heaped on them by the Government."

The University students who had been shifted to the salubrious climate of the hills and the comforts of the Peradeniya Campus came out in protest on the 11th, a day earlier than scheduled. The show of force by army units that paraded up and down in the University campus, in the immediate vicinity of the lecture rooms, roused the resentment of the students who thereafter decided to implement the tentative decision taken on the 10th evening by the LSSP leaders of the four men's halls, to stage a protest march in Kandy town. More than 250 male students, over 50% of the total number in the campus, participated in this demonstration. They went to Kandy by the 3.15 Train from "Sarasavi Uyana" Station, demonstrated down Ward Street, Trincomalee Street, Colombo Street and were turning to Peradeniya Road to return to the Campus, when they were baton charged by the Police. The students were loaded into buses thereafter and brought to the University Campus. The Police who followed the

students in their vans clashed with the students again inside the Campus towards night fall. In this clash the Police suffered the worst at the hands of the students who attacked them with anything and everything they could lay their hands on stones, bottles, broken concrete slabs and even a javelin. Sergeant Morley of the Kandy police suffered severe head injuries at the hands of a student. Sergeant Morley was chasing this student up a narrow side staircase in Jayatilake Hall, when the student turned back and attacked him with the only weapon he had, a piece of broken concrete slab. The entire student population in the Campus was on strike on the 12th protesting the entry of the Police to the Campus the previous evening. The students had also by their first participation in mass activity, woken up the traditionally easy going Kandyan Peasantry from their deep slumber. The Hartal was a success in Kandy due to their intervention. The shops and work places in Kandy, Peradeniya and surrounding areas were closed on the 12th. The University students succeeded in achieving their objective.

On the 11th evening the South Western Bus Co workers decided to come out on strike. The Chairman of the Company, Mr Cyril Zoysa when informed of this decision by the representatives of the workers told them to do as they pleased. At midnight on the 11th the Maradana railway running shed workers came out on strike. These two work places paralysed public transport. The Hartal organisers were out in the field very early on the 12th morning. They went from work place to work place trying to persuade those who were coming to report to work to stay out. The general strike soon spread to the Colombo Harbour, Railway factory at Ratmalana, Government Factory at Kolonnawa, Spinning and weaving Mills at Wellawatte, Walker & Co Ltd, the Match Factories, Tucker & Co and a number of other work places. All retail outlets

from Pettah to Ratmalana, Pettah to Grandpass, Grandpass to Borella and Borella to Pamankade were closed. By 10 a. m. there was hardly a single bus on the roads. Not even 10% of the usual number of cars were to be seen. Even the carts and the rickshaws had disappeared. All municipal workers except those in the health department were out on strike. The Moratuwa Urban Council participated fully in the Hartal. The Members of the Buddhist Sangha were staging a fast in the Colombo Town Hall premises. But there were hardly any incidents in the morning. The Police, strangely enough, did not show any hostility. Even the army was not very much in evidence.

But after noon the mood began to change. A crowd gathered at Gas Works street junction, Pettah and the Police resorted to a baton charge to disperse this crowd. They responded with a hail of stones and the Police thereupon opened fire. It was here that a pavement hawker, one who is referred to as "Edwin" was killed. He fell under a hail of police bullets, all directed at his chest. Volkart Brothers, Manning Market and Marine Engineering Section of Walkers were on fire. About eighty policemen faced a large crowd of demonstrators across the barricades at the Kirillapone junction. The telecommunication system had been completely disrupted.

The situation in the outstations was not very different. Train and Bus services were completely disrupted. Not a single lorry was on the roads. The Hartal was a complete success on the sea coast in the Western and Southern Provinces, on the Kelani Valley route from Colombo through Avissawella to Ratnapura and in the Northern Province. The UNP Government had faced an unprecedented defeat. The Government had made arrangements to face a general strike, and had been compelled to face a Hartal. The Government was in a panic. The Cabinet met that day on

board the British war ship, "H.M.S. Newfoundland", in the Colombo Harbour.⁵

The Police had opened fire at a number of places, in Dompe, Modera, Kirillapone, Pettah, Uragaha, Rathgama.⁶ - A train was stopped at Egoda Uyana. Two railway carriages were set on fire at the Panadura Station. A bus was set on fire at Boralgamuwa. At Dompe a police van was completely destroyed. The masses were in control of several areas, Maharagama, Homagama, Kirillapone, Waskaduwa and Borakanda. As the Police and the Army were both not in evidence the Hartal was completely peaceful in Balapitiya, Akurala and Rathgama.

On 12th evening state of emergency was declared under the Public Security Act and a dusk to dawn curfew was enforced. Mass arrests of militants and activists who had associated with the Hartal took place under these regulations. The UNP supporters actively collaborated with the police in making these arrests. Incidents continued in certain areas on the 13th and Uragaha, Borakanda, Ambalangoda, Kirillapone and Gangodawila were the principal centres. These incidents with the police were directed at obtaining the release of those who had been taken into custody. The printing establishments of the Left parties were sealed, and police search parties ran amok in Boralgoda, Uragaha and Karandeniya. There were several instances where the police set fire to houses and destroyed property belonging to suspected activists.

The Colombo Municipal Council and the Moratuwa Urban Council which had participated fully in the Hartal were dissolved and Special Commissioners were appointed to administer these two local bodies. Public meetings were banned. Freedom of movement was curtailed. All Party and Trade Union offices of the Left political parties were searched over and over again. The Star Press belonging to the LSSP and the Printing press of the Ceylon Communist Party were sealed and the publication of

their newspapers was banned. Mass arrests were made. Curfew breakers were taken into custody. There were plenty of instances of police excesses and undue harassment. Over 970 cases were filed in courts in different parts of the Island related to incidents arising out of the Hartal. A team of lawyers led by Dr Colvin R de Silva gave legal assistance in these cases.

Emergency rule and the enforcement of the curfew affected the day to day life of the people. Trade in particular was badly affected. Police terror was discrediting the Government. Even the pro-government Times group of newspapers began to indicate that the time had come to lift emergency rule. The Government gave ear to this and lifted the curfew. Emergency rule was lifted except in respect of the 24 areas that were badly affected. Curfew violators were released from custody. The Military was removed from the streets. Gradually the situation returned to normal.

The battle now shifted to the Parliamentary arena. A motion of No Confidence given under the names of Messers S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, (SLFP - Attanagalla), N. M. Perera (LSSP - Ruwanwella) and Pieter Keuneman (CP - Colombo Central) came up for discussion in the House of Representatives on 1st September 1953. The motion read:-

"That in as much as the Government.

1. has signally failed to solve any of the major problems of the country and has reduced it to the verge of bankruptcy by the failure of the so called Six Year Plan, by financial ineptitude and by administrative inefficiency and corruption.
2. has paid no heed to the universal opposition of the people as expressed through their various organisations and elected bodies, to the withdrawal of the subsidy on rice and to the other attacks on their standard of living,

3. has refused to afford the people an opportunity for a democratic decision on this matter through a general election; and
4. has sought to meet the mass demonstration of 12th August 1953 of the people's dissatisfaction by inciting employers and their organisations to intimidate the people as a whole, invoking the Public Security Ordinance to declare a state of emergency, introducing harsh and repressive regulations there under, imposing a curfew, engaging in mass arrests and searches of persons and premises, calling out the armed forces, using unnecessary and unwarrented force which resulted in death to a large number of persons - actions directed not towards maintaining public order but towards terrorizing the people and suppressing all opposition to the the Party in power.

This House declares that the Government has demonstrated its total unfitness to continue to be responsible for the management of affairs of this country and has forfeited the confidence of the House."7

This motion was moved by Mr S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike but the task of presenting the case against the Government on this issue had to be undertaken by the other principal speakers of the opposition Messers N. M. Perera, Pieter Keuneman and C. Suntheralingam. Dr N. M. Perera had in fact to defend the right of Mr S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike to sponsor this motion from the attacks made by the frontliners of the Government, who alleged that he had no right to do so as he and his party did not participate in the Hartal. Mismanagement, tolerance of corruption and financial ineptitude of the Government which led to the financial crisis facing the Government came in for sharp criticism by Dr N. M. Perera. He also criticised the Finance Minister Mr. J. R. Jayawardena's

contention that the Opposition had no right to demand that the Government should seek a fresh mandate from the people before the expiry of its legal term of office. Mr. C. Suntheralingam came out with facts and figures to prove that the country's fortunes were dwindling and its debt was increasing under the stewardship of Mr J. R. Jayawardena whom he introduced to the House as a financial rake.

The motion of No Confidence was put to the House and was defeated, 26 voting for and 59 against.

After the debate on the vote of no confidence Mr Dudley Senanayake absented himself from the sittings of the House. In fact that was the last debate he participated as Prime Minister in the Second Parliament. The House was informed that he was ill and was not in a position to attend the sittings, But the nature of his illness was not disclosed to the Members of the House. In October Mr. Dudley Senanayake resigned from his post in the Cabinet and a new Cabinet was sworn in under the Premiership of Sir John Kotelawala. Mr Dudley Senanayake was given leave of absence from the sittings of the House. Though he returned to the House later, he did not take an active part in its deliberations. In the 1956 General Elections he did not contest his seat, Dedigama, and this traditional pocket borough of the UNP was won by a newcomer by a majority of over 15,000 votes. This was the only time when the United National Party lost this seat. Mr Dudley Senanayake returned to the fray only after Sir John Kotelawala had bowed out of politics, to lead his party to a narrow victory in March 1960.

The events of August 12th 1953 added a new element to the politics of our country. When they could not get redress to their just grievances through the Parliamentary

process, the people entered enmasse into the political arena, in a massive show of extra parliamentary strength. This is a fundamental characteristic of a revolutionary situation. But the Hartal of August 1953 was of a limited nature. As the statement issued by the three left parties on the morrow of the Hartal states, it was "for the purpose of demonstrating the strength and solidarity of the people in their opposition to the removal of the food subsidy and to the other burdens heaped on them by the Government". It was not an armed insurrection aimed at overthrowing a Government. Its duration was from the start to be confined to 24 hours—11th midnight to 12th midnight. It was widespread but not Islandwide, even though it shook the Government and the state apparatus. It was only a dress rehearsal for a future showdown that will take place if and when the electoral process fails to show a way forward.

Annexure

- (a) 61 persons are known to have received injuries.
- (b) The incidents involving these persons occurred at the places listed below.
 1. One person at Ovakanda, Boossa
 2. One person at Wellaboda, Hikkaduwa
 3. One person at Pilana, Habaraduwa
 4. One person at Wellawatte, Hikkaduwa
 5. Six persons at University Campus, Peradeniya
 6. Six persons at Kirillapone
 7. Eight persons at Katubadde, Moratuwa
 8. One person at Korawalawella, Moratuwa
 9. One person at Moratuwa Railway station.
 10. Twenty one persons at Norris Rd Pettah, Colombo.
 11. Two persons at 2nd Cross Street, Pettah,
 12. One person at Main Street, Pettah
 13. Three persons at Urugasmanhandiya, Urugaha.

14. One person at Lunukade Junction Negombo.
15. One person at Katunayake, Negombo.
16. One person at Avissawella.
17. Two persons at Gas Works Street, Pettah
18. One person at Aluthmawatha Rd - St Andrews St Junction, Kotahena
19. One person at Egoda Uyana, Railway Station.
20. One person at the junction of Driebergs Ave and Ingram Rd, in Maligakanda, Colombo.⁸
 1. Edwin of Pettah
 2. S. H. Rubel of Urugaha
 3. Albadurage Almis of Rathgama
 4. T. H. Panagoda of Dodanduwa
 5. S. K. A. Piyasena of Dompe
 6. K. A. Sadiris of Dompe
 7. S. K. Wickremasinghe Perera of Dompe
 8. Douglas Nicholas of Modera
 9. T. Sirisena of Kirillapone⁹

NOTES

1. Ceylon Daily News of 6th July 1953
2. Ceylon Daily News of 7th July 1953
3. Ceylon Daily News of 8th July 1953
4. "A Short History of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party" by Leslie Goonawardene
5. "The Hartal" by Dr. Colvin R. de Silva
6. Particulars of those who were injured and those who laid down their lives are given in the annexure.
7. Hansard. Parliamentary debates, House of Representatives, Vol. 15 No. 14. 1st September 1953
8. Hansard. Parliamentary debates, House of Representatives, Vol. 16, 3rd Volume, 2nd session of the 2nd Parliament of Ceylon. Sir John Kotelawala replying on behalf of Mr. Dudley Senanayake to a question raised by Mr. C. A. S. Marikkar (S.L.F.P.-Kadugannawa)
9. Those who laid down their lives in this struggle as given in "The Hartal" by Dr. Colvin R. de Silva.

THE JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA ON THE BASIS OF EVIDENCE

By R. WEERAKOON

PART I

The Insurgency Judgement - Effects of Isolation

The insurgency of the 5th of April 1971 came like a bolt from the blues. It continued in certain parts of the country for a few weeks and failed to draw into it the general mass of the people. It had no relation whatsoever to the mass situation. It was only the Police and the insurgents themselves that had known anything about any preparations for it. It was like a game of cops and robbers. What ever information that had been available to the UNP Government of Mr. Dudley Senanayake was not made available to the Government of the United Front formed in May 1970. In fact it was as though the capitalist class of this country welcomed the insurgent attack as one that would seriously hinder the progress of the United Front Government. And hinder progress it did. The masses were pushed back to their houses by the operation of a prolonged state of emergency. The political right surfaced in the state machine, and within the S. L. F. P. The backlash of reaction had its small beginnings there and with time brought about the break up of the United Front Government and the electoral rout in 1977 of all the parties that constituted that Government. The ultra-left could not therefore have done a greater service to the capitalist class of this country than the triggering off of insurgency of 1971.

The 1971 insurgency was wholly a military operation far removed from the mass movement of this country. It was so

because its politics apparently came into direct conflict with the political mood of the masses as regards the new government. This isolation of the insurgency had its effects on those who led it, or rather on those who constituted the leadership of the **Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna** and this was clear to all who followed the course of the insurgency trial conducted by the Criminal Justice Commission. Leaders fell out, formed themselves into little groups or cliques, cross-examined one another, blamed one another, and had on themselves the backlash of their followers to the extent they were represented in the dock. These effects of political isolation one was able to observe during the course of the inquiry; but that inquiry was long drawn out, often compelled to run at length into incidental matters so that even the keenest observer found himself somewhat lost. However, the judgement of the Commission (Inquiry No 1) running into 400 closely printed quarto size pages, has been available in English as a Government publication since 1976 and to its reader it unfolds once more in brief what was enacted before the Commission. It is a pity it has up to now been published only in English.

The Commission caused the 39 suspects to appear before it on the basis of Statements made by them "in the course of investigations conducted by the police and by other public officers authorised for the purpose

under Emergency Regulations". Of these statements the Commission states thus:

"These statements led at least to a prima facie suspicion that the persons interrogated as also other named persons, had committed one or more of the offences specified in the Warrant."

The Warrant referred to is what was issued to the Commission by the Head of State to investigate specified charges in respect of the April 1971 insurgency. When the Attorney General closed the case for the prosecution he did so with these statements and other evidence. This other evidence on the charges was also the evidence of the suspects themselves.

All the accused had made signed statements to the investigators. Rohana Wijeweera's was a tape - recorded statement. Almost all of them, when before the Commission wished to go back on these statements on the ground either that they were fabricated or that police brutality forced them to falsely implicate themselves as well as others in these statements. The Commission did not discount the possibility of third-degree methods by the Police but it came to the conclusion that the statements were authentic. In this it depended largely on internal evidence adduced from the statements. The statements had incidental details which the police were unaware of and which the accused accepted as correct; they to a great extent corroborated each other and, taken as a body, the Commission had been able to see in them a very high degree of coherence which fabricated statements would not possess. These statements were not necessarily self-incriminating. Wijeweera for instance, was able to deny in his statement S13 his own responsibility for the events of April 1971.

This is what the judgement states on that matter:-

It is important to note that at a later stage in the statement (S13) Wijeweera made the accusation that people like Loku Athula and Sanath had been responsible independently of the general body of the J. V. P. for the events of April 1971.

And on the collection of arms Wijeweera stated thus in his statement S13 :

Only well motivated colleagues like, Siriwardena, Podi Athula and the crowd who indulged in this. If a repression came we would have to face it. If the U. N. P. had not ceded power at the elections we would have met with our doom that day. It was under such circumstances that we collected them.

Under such circumstances, some of our brother colleagues, though not every one, collected a few items such as weapons.

And again:-

Then those who had an idea of this, started collecting weapons. After that even after the present Government came into power they continued with this collection. Since it was said, "let us be armed", I had left out this idea. I had stopped it. It was quite later that I knew that Athula and them were carrying on experiments.

Amongst the other matters which Wijeweera had denied in his statement S13 were the following:-

1. that he knew in December, 1970, that Podi Athula had been seriously injured in consequence of experiments with explosives.
2. that JVP members had been instructed long before February, 1971, to collect and manufacture arms and explosives.

3. that he had in October or November, 1970 requested Viraj Fernando to explore the possibility of obtaining arms from abroad for the JVP.

4. that in March, 1971, he sent messages through persons released from the prison in Jaffna that the JVP should launch its "attack" if the prevailing repression of the JVP. was becoming intolerable, and that in this event 500 JVP personnel should be sent to Jaffna in order to rescue him from the prison.

From these denials in S13 the Commission concludes: "These and other incriminatory matters had been admitted (whether truly or falsely) in statements of other suspects with which the interrogators were armed when they questioned Wijeweera at Jaffna. If then (as Wijeweera claims), the interrogators did by deceit or pressure induce him to say what they wished it is surprising that Wijeweera's recorded statement contains denials of several important matters, especially the request for arms from abroad and the messages sent from the Jaffna Prison. Why did the skilled CID team record on tape a statement in which Wijeweera was allowed to contradict incriminatory facts admitted in other statements?"

Wijeweera's statement was put to these tests and from these the Commission concluded:-

"to anyone who reads Wijeweera's recorded statement S13 and his evidence at the inquiry it should be easily apparent that he spoke in Jaffna as freely and as voluntarily as he did before us. On both occasions, with minor exceptions, he admitted only what he wished to admit, he denied what he wished to deny; he accused those whom he wished to accuse; he took on each occasion the opportunity to advertise his views and his knowledge of politics and economics and his purpose of social and economic reform."

This statement proved to be so satisfactory that the Commission admitted using it for further purposes too:-

"We are convinced also that it is perfectly safe and just, when necessary, to utilise admissions and incriminatory references in S13A(The transcript in Sinhala of Wijeweera's tape recorded statement) in testing the authenticity of the recorded statement of other suspects."

Wijeweera's statement was recorded in July 1971. By then the statements of several others had been recorded and amongst them are those which have a bearing on Wijeweera's denial that he sent messages from the Jaffna prison urging the attack if circumstances forced the JVP to that point.

Lal Somasiri was a member of the JVP arrested alongwith Wijeweera, one Premaratne and others in Amparai on the 13th of March 1971. He was subsequently taken along with Premaratne to the Kalmunai courts from the Jaffna Prison. Lal Somasiri in his statement to the investigators and later before the Commission recalled Wijeweera sending through him and Premaratne a message to Sanath and Piyatilleke. The message was to the effect that if the police repression was intense to order the attack and that in the event of an attack to send 500 persons to Jaffna to release him from jail.

The 3rd suspect Uyangoda (Mr. Oo, in Wijeweera's statement) in his statement S. 3 admitted that Piyatilleke did about the end of March 1971, inform him of such a message from Wijeweera. The 2nd suspect Bopage, in his Statement S2 stated that Premaratne (Somasiri's fellow detenu in Jaffna) had in his presence conveyed this message to Piyatilleke. Having pointed out this matter the Commission's Judgement goes on to state -

We add in passing that the 1st suspect Piyatilleke in his statement S1 fully admitted that he did receive the message; Piyatilleke did not in his dock statement deny either the correctness of the admission which he had earlier made concerning the receipt of this message from Wijeweera, or the truth of his admission that he himself left Colombo in charge of a group who were to rescue Wijeweera on the 5th April. On the contrary, in cross-examining Wijeweera, Piyatilleke made the confident suggestion that Wijeweera had sent the message from Jaffna through Lal Somasiri and also through Premaratne.

It is the **Commission's** finding that at the crucial meeting of the JVP leadership on the 2nd of April in the Sangaramaya of Vidyodaya it was this message of Wijeweera that was discussed and acted upon. "It is inconceivable", says the judgement, "that the most important decision (of 2nd April) was taken without the certainty that Wijeweera approved it. We are convinced that Wijeweera approved that decision in advance in the messages referred to in the evidence of Somasiri, Piyasiri and Loku Athula, and in the statements of Piyatilleke, Bopage and Uyangoda."

The Judgement states that the first person who has referred to this crucial meeting in his statement to the police was the 4th suspect Anura Ranjith Kurukulusooriya. In his own hand-written statement made at the Kandy Police station between the 12th and 17th of May he had mentioned the same details Loku Athula mentioned in the witness box. Piyatilleke who presided at the April 2nd meeting was arrested on the 20th June and he too in his statement confirmed these details. Nor had they denied in their statements from the dock the truth of what had been recorded in their police statements about this crucial meeting. The judgement concludes:-

The truth of Loku Athula's evidence as to this crucial meeting is confirmed by the fact that every one of the nine persons who are alleged to have participated at this meeting (save the two who were never arrested) made statements admitting the material facts related by Loku Athula.

The nine persons who attended that meeting were Piyatilleke, Bopage, Uyangoda, Aruna Ranjit, Sunanda Deshapriya, Loku Athula, Susil Wickrema, Sanath and Karunaratne. Of them only Piyatilleke, Bopage and Susil Wickrema were not members of the politbureau of the JVP.

Others too had made damaging statements to the Police. Amongst them was Podi Athula, described in the Judgement as the most colourful character of all the suspects at the inquiry. His was a self-incriminatory statement. It incriminated others too - Wijepala, Sonny, Ananda Perera, Aladin and one Sanath in the making of bombs; Janaka, Ranjith, Raja Munidasa, Piyatilleke, Nimal Maharage and Kalu Lucky in the purchase of arms and dynamite; and Bopage, Siripala Abeygunewardene, Piyatilleke and Uyangoda about the attack itself. The Judgement notes that in his dock statement Podi Athula did not dispute the truth of the contents of his statement. Loku Athula and Wijeweera too figured prominently in it, Nimal Maharage, Kumanayake, Wasantha Kanakaratne, D.A. Gunasekera, T.D. Silva, Cecil Chandra, Kularatne Banda, Sunil Ratnasiri de Silva, Viraj Fernando, Susil Siriwardene, Wijepala Silva, Ananda Perera, Osmund de Silva, Dhanapala, Mahaduwaige, Kelly Senanayake, Batapola Athula, Aladin Subasinghe, Kalu Lucky, Podi Lucky, Meril Jayasiri, Chukkie Premaratne, Karunaratne, Premapala, Wijekulatilleke and Wimalagane are the rest of the suspects who had made to the Police statements both in respect of themselves as well as of others.

Why did these persons ranging from the early 20s to the early 40s in age compete with each other in this manner to betray themselves as well as their colleagues? These were not men lacking in personal courage as we ordinarily understand the term. Police brutality therefore does not explain every thing. Wijeweera's statement tape-recorded was a chat with Ian Wickremanayake. The Commission was of the view that in this Wijeweera spoke of his own accord.

In looking for an explanation for this one cannot forget the complete political isolation in which they found themselves. In the given mass situation the 1971 insurrection was not an acceptable act, nor was there the possibility of hiding it.

Justice Alles, a member of the Commission, in his "Insurgency 1971" recalls what the 16th accused Sunil Ratnasiri de Silva, aged 23, a Vidyodaya student and close associate of Mahinda Wijesekera had stated.

When Sunil concluded his statement he stated that he voluntarily disclosed all matters within his knowledge because he was convinced, that our leaders have misled us to engage in activities which were detrimental to the country, in the name of revolution.

Justice Alles recalls that Piyasiri too adopted the same attitude when he gave evidence before the Commission. Is this surprising when about this time Wijeweera himself was theoretically placing himself at a point as far away as possible from the April insurgency? In his statement to the investigators he had blamed the insurgency on Loku Athula and Sanath. In his address to the Commission he clearly dissociated himself from the April events. "In April 1971 the revolutionary preconditions for the seizure of power by the proletariat and for an armed revolutionary struggle were absent. That is my view. In the absence

of a revolutionary situation - i. e. both objective and subjective conditions - an armed uprising was not possible." And he concluded, "I reject the position that it was a JVP decision to seize state power on 5th April 1971. I do not admit that. But as I discovered later, and something I do not deny is that there have been instances when certain comrades of the JVP who in the face of unbearable repression, resorted to a struggle against such repression". (Why deny if you **discovered** it only later?)

The Russian Revolution of 1905 has been described as the dress rehearsal of 1917. April 1971 in Sri Lanka was a piffling event compared to Russia's great 1905. To that extent the two events and their protagonists cannot even be compared. But a recollection of how the leaders of 1905 behaved in the Czarist dock on the failure of that revolution, would show what Wijeweera and his men lacked - a Marxist grasp of events and the conception of the revolution as an intensely developed point of the mass movement itself as opposed to a mechanically contrived manoeuvre of an organisation. Leon Trotsky defending the Soviets, the outcome of the 1905 Revolution, and his fellow revolutionaries in the dock explained in his speech before the Court—

"But what was the Soviet's own interpretation of these decisions? Did it believe that armed insurrection is an enterprise that can be prepared underground and then brought out, ready made, into the street? Did it think that insurrection can be acted out in accordance with a preconceived plan? Did the Executive Committee elaborate a technique of street fighting?"

It is as though Trotsky, across 70 years of history, was addressing in vain our insurgents of '71. "To prepare for an

inevitable insurrection" explained Trotsky "meant to us, first and foremost, enlightening the people, explaining to them that open conflict was inevitable, that all that had been given to them would be taken away again, that only might can defend right, that the enemy had to be met head on, that there was no other way." Trotsky as the leader of a great mass movement that had reached the point when the masses themselves would through their direct struggle push politically and economically beyond that point of established order is a far cry from Wijeweera and his friends who conspired behind the back of the mass movement. It is as though Trotsky in his speech has caricatured the events of April 1971 when he said:

"An insurrection of the masses, gentlemen of the bench, is not made: it accomplishes itself. It is the result of social relations, not the product of a plan. It cannot be created; it can be foreseen. For reasons which depended on us as little as they did on Tsardom an open conflict became inevitable. It drew closer day by day. To prepare for it meant, for us, doing everything possible to minimize the casualties of this inevitable conflict. Did we think that for this purpose we had first of all to lay in stocks of arms, prepare a plan of military operation, assign the participants of the rising to particular places, divide the town up into sectors - in other words do all the things which the military authorities do in anticipation of disorders, when they divide Petersburg up into sectors, appoint colonels in charge of each sector and equip them with a certain number of machine guns and ammunition? No, that is not how we integrated our role."

Here then is very succinctly given the reasons for the complete political isolation of Wijeweera and his colleagues. To them insurrection was a mere military affair un-

related to a revolutionary situation or process. They did not understand the dynamics of the mass movement. That was the reason for the failure of their actions and the political isolation with which they were faced. That was the reason why far from affecting public opinion through their behaviour in the dock they drew unto themselves the reproach of irresponsibility, criminal in degree.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

of

The New Constitution

of

The Sri Lanka Government Promulgated on 31. 8. 1978

by

Dr. N. M. Perera

Rs. 15.00

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PART II

The J. V. P. from the Inside - Conclusions from Podi Athula's book "Insurrection: April, 1971"

Victor Ivan of Akmeemana, Galle, followed his JVP leader, Wijeweera Patabandige Don Nandasiri, in taking for himself a name from romantic Sinhala fiction. He chose the name Athula but in that he had to share it with another member of his movement he came to be known as Podi Athula. In the first part of his work on the 1971 April insurrection (published in Sinhala by Lake House Investments) what emerges of him is a trusting nature, the absence of any political sophistication and a reckless attitude of mind which may even be described as daring. It was perhaps these qualities which prompted the **Criminal Justice Commission** to the comment that he was the most colourful of those who stood in the dock in the aftermath of April 1971.

It is not surprising that these combined qualities in him should make him withdraw with revulsion from his heroes when their questionable and true qualities are discovered. The part of his book just published is principally devoted to a sharp exposure of his one time unquestioned leader Rohana Wijeweera of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. He shows up Wijeweera as an intriguer and a sham through an assessment that ranges from Wijeweera's belated but romantic liaisons to his political acts which include his role as police informer when he readily betrayed his comrades then past and present, in order to get over the inconvenience of police interrogation. These, and especially the latter, are well documented.

The meanings of the April 1971 insurrection in Sri Lanka still confound even its most sympathetic researchers. Why should a large body of youth be propelled into attacking, through insurrection, the United Front Government in its first year of governmental power? This government after all came to power through a united front that had decisively defeated the United National Party which had been described by the JVP too as a party clearly tied to world imperialism. Why was the attack launched at a time the masses in their overwhelmingly large number stood behind the United Front Government of their creation and were hopeful that it would deliver the goods in that it had got on to a good start? What did the JVP expect to get out of this attack when to any realistic assessment it should have been as clear as daylight that the JVP had not the slightest chance of success either in terms of mass action or of military operation? These are some of the questions that have remained unanswered by the JVP's leadership upto this day.

Wijeweera has for himself adopted the deft device of avoiding these questions by officially denying that he had any responsibility for the attack. To the Criminal Justice Commission he denounced this insurrection and proffered what he claimed to be his firm conviction that it should never have taken place. He has attempted to palm off responsibility for this action on his critics within the JVP and on those youth who were restive in the face of allegedly mounting repression.

Most of the facts relevant to an assessment of April 1971 that are brought out by Podi Athula are not new. Those who have followed the proceedings of the Criminal Justice Commission which went into this question would have come across these facts in the statements of the accused as put in evidence by the prosecution, in the cross-examination of Wijeweera by his co-accused, and in the sworn testimony of these co-accused. What is new here is that for the first time a person who had been a closely trusted lieutenant of Wijeweera at the time of the insurrection has sat down to offer to the public an assessment of the movement in which he had participated with devotion and unquestioned commitment.

In this review of Podi Athula's book what is attempted is to set down some of the factual positions as brought out by him and to draw from them the inevitable political conclusions that go beyond and outside the confines that Podi Athula had set for himself. For instance, the facts brought out by Podi Athula make it all the more necessary that for a proper assessment of April 1971 an attempt be made to answer the questions raised earlier in this article. Podi Athula makes not this attempt. This perhaps is for the reason that he has set as his area of investigation the JVP machinery from Wijeweera downwards? With whom else, apart from the circle characterised by the Athulas, the Piyatillekes and the Bopages was Wijeweera in touch? These factual positions of Podi Athula are as follows:-

1. Wijeweera had started the movement he headed, in the final years of Dudley Senanayake's UNP government as one intended to intervene with force in the event of the UNP not holding the general election that was due in 1970, or in the event of the armed forces of the State not permitting the United Front to assume governmental power after its election victory. Yet till well after the election of May 1970 Wijeweera had not made the slightest attempt to arm his movement for this avowed purpose.
2. When after the May 1970 elections Wijeweera's assessment as stated above was proved wrong large sections of the youth started gravitating from him to the United Front. Wijeweera found it difficult as yet to describe the United Front Government as anything but progressive and he therefore adopted the ruse of mobilising his sections to armed action by adopting the propaganda line that the United Front Government was in danger of being attacked by reactionary forces (from within the armed forces), that the United Front was incapable of successfully defending itself, and that reaction will complete its task by liquidating all progressive forces as had happened in Indonesia. A public statement of this position was made in the July 1970 publication of the JVP infiltrated Socialist Union on the Peradeniya campus.
3. On the 10th of August 1970 the JVP had its first public rally in Colombo (Hyde Park). That same morning the United Front had issued a statement denouncing the JVP as serving the ends of reaction and linking it with the CIA. At the meeting Wijeweera who was its star speaker had stated that the JVP would fully support the United Front Government if it worked towards socialism and that it would oppose the government only if it failed to do so.
4. From August 1970 the bomb manufacturing activity of the JVP started in earnest. Wijeweera who had earlier not paid attention to Podi Athula's

predilection for bomb manufacture now wanted him to manufacture 100,000 handgrenade type shells made of pewter and had promised to meet the bill. By 16th December 1970 Podi Athula had manufactured 2,649 of these shells and of them 500 had been sent to Badulla, 1,000 to Anuradhapura and the rest were retained for use in Colombo. The materials Podi Athula had handed over to Wijeweera's assistants at this stage was sufficient to fill 30,000 shells.

5. On 4th of January 1971 Wijeweera announced in Elpitiya to a meeting of his District Secretaries, that the Government was intending to suppress the movement about March 1971 and that it was therefore necessary for them to stop all other activities and get on with the task of manufacturing arms. He had said (not quite truthfully) that they had 1,000 hand bombs and 1,000 petrol bombs for each police station. He had also said that he would inspect each of the districts in order to satisfy himself that the necessary preparations were properly attended to. In fact Wijeweera had thereafter done these rounds and had impressed on the members the need to be ready with uniforms etc for an immediate attack.

6. The only known resources the JVP had upto the time of the attack in April were (i) public aid collected at meetings which were comparatively negligible (Hyde Park - money and trinkets Rs. 3500/-) and, (ii) from robberies which too, had not given the movement that level of resources that were necessary for an operation of the magnitude as was contemplated. All that the 7 robberies had brought in upto March 1971 was Rs. 1,76,000/-

7. On the 27th of February 1971 the JVP held its 2nd public meeting in Colombo. Wijeweera made it known this would be the last public meeting of the JVP. He told the meeting that that he has been reliably informed that in March 1971 the Government will suppress the JVP. He warned the Government that on such day as the government proceeds to suppress them the revolution itself will take place.

8. Wijeweera moved personally to take over control of commanding positions. In January-February 1971 he proceeded to take over from Sanath (who had had the number 2 position in the organization and who in November 1970 had been entrusted with the administration of the organization in the whole island) the task of organizational supervision. This would naturally have given him complete control of the organization. In March 1971 Wijeweera got Podi Athula to disarm the following of Loku Athula and to hand over the arms to the student section within which Wijeweera expected support for himself. Wijeweera thus contrived to place himself in control of the arms too and was in a position to pull the trigger without having to show deference to men like Sanath or Loku Athula.

9. In March 1971 Wijeweera instructed his close confidants like Piyatilleke, Podi Athula, Uyangoda and Bopage on how the attack should take place. He told them that on one single day the attack had to be done on all police stations and armouries and that the arms should be seized. If this failed they should retreat and get set for a prolonged attack. He said that the Prime Minister, certain important Ministers and Permanent

Secretaries to Ministries should be taken into custody. He also said that any body likely to weaken the attack by the nature of his orders had to be weeded out. In fact Wijeweera gave detailed instructions on the broad aspects of the intended insurrection.

10. Every member of the JVP knew that attack was to be made soon and the bomb manufacture proceeded with intensity in the months of February and March. Podi Athula states that this country had turned into one large bomb-making factory.

11. As to the repression which Wijeweera had predicted for March 1971 there was no sign of it till the 10th of March 1971, on which day five youths were killed in Kegalle by an accidental explosion which had occurred when these youth were engaged in the making of bombs.

These facts as stated by Podi Athula compel one to the following conclusions:

(a) The JVP movement commenced as a terrorist or insurrectionary force just at the time when it was becoming increasingly clear that in the next parliamentary elections the UNP would inevitably be replaced by the forces which formed the shortlived coalition government of 1964.

(b) Wijeweera whipped up youth enthusiasm for this movement by adopting gestures indicating support for the forces of the coalition government of 1964. He did not assume a position openly opposed to these forces or even parties. At the same time Wijeweera did nothing that could even be distantly taken as an act in support of the agitation carried out by these forces against the UNP. In fact Wijeweera's actions at the time were calculated to deflect attention from

the election fight that was in progress from about 1967. This position is supported by the fact that on the eve of the elections the coalition forces denounced the JVP (then known in sections of the press as the Che Guevara Movement) as one that was attempting to disrupt the elections.

(c) Soon after the elections Wijeweera commenced mobilising his forces to act against the newly set up United Front Government in the guise of defending it from an attack on it by reactionary forces from outside the government. Wijeweera started on this line as early as July 1970 and earnestly made secretive preparation for an attack (on the government) from about August 1970.

These are in fact Podi Athula's conclusions too though only implied. Yet he stops here and proceeds to interpret these positions of Wijeweera as proceeding from Wijeweera's needs in an internal power struggle within the JVP. From the facts as stated by Podi Athula (which facts were known even earlier) it certainly is clear that there was a power struggle. But was the cause for this struggle traceable to what Podi Athula reveals as Wijeweera's newly acquired role of a Don Juan or was it due to certain political motivations to analyse which Podi Athula perhaps has not the necessary political equipment? The facts as stated by Podi Athula make it clear that the line of springing an attack on the United Front Government was Wijeweera's own and that it did not originate or even find consonance in any section of the discoverable political circle around him. Was not his attempt to displace in fact from their commanding positions both Sanath and Loku Athula part of an attempt to be assured that he will not be opposed in the execution of this line? If all these are granted (as they have to be on the basis of Podi Athula's

exposition) there arises the further question as to the persons or interests with whom or with which Wijeweera was in fact communing when he arrived on this political line. It is here that the limitation which Podi Athula has imposed on himself has its most telling result. Podi Athula, I have stated above, examines only that part of the JVP organization as stood between people like himself and Wijeweera and that he does not even attempt to examine the area that might have existed above and beyond Wijeweera. What for instance were the other local connections Wijeweera could have had, and what were the foreign connections? How for instance did a man like Susil Siriwardene who was a person quite acceptable to the United States Information Service (he lectured there and is presently a commissioner in a department under the Prime Minister, Mr. Premadasa) suddenly find himself with Wijeweera? This is not to cast any aspersions on Mr Siriwardena but to say that a lot has still to be explained after Podi Athula's book - and one might even say, especially after that book.

The factual data that Podi Athula has gathered and presented in this book gives the lie to Wijeweera's assertion to the Criminal Justice Commission that he had no responsibility for the attack of April 5th. On this matter Podi Athula stops at this point. In addition to what the Criminal Justice Commission has found on this question Podi Athula shows that under the pressure of police action consequent on the accidental bomb explosions, the Badulla-Moneragala area sections of the JVP had decided to commence the attack on the 25th of March and that it had been finally postponed for the 31st of that month; that Loku Athula, now more or less estranged from Wijeweera had planned the attack for the 8th of April, and that Wijeweera's friends - who include Podi Athula - had planned it for the 7th. A badly splintered JVP had thereafter got together on the 2nd

of April and fixed the attack for the 5th of April. Viewed this way it is both correct and incorrect to say that Wijeweera knew of the attack on the 5th of April and that as accepted by the Criminal Justice Commission it is his message to Piyatilleke from the Jaffna remand that had been decisive on this matter.

But the question that matters politically - and that is relevant to a correct political understanding of the JVP - is not merely the attack of the 5th of April but the entire course of Wijeweera's conduct which was directed from as early as December 1970 (if not earlier) to an attack on the United Front Government in March or April 1971. It is also significant that to the youth that followed him Wijeweera did not disclose his intended operation as an attack on the Government but as an attack on the police stations and the armouries of the armed forces - apparently an attack intended to disarm the forces that were to attack the United Front Government!

Here it is that one must pay heed to the immediate political background to this attack. This is an aspect to which Podi Athula pays no attention and has thereby weakened his analysis, or rather has rendered his analysis bereft of significant political content. He reproduces in full the exposure of the JVP by the parties constituting the United Front Government on the eve of the JVP's public meeting of the 10th August 1970 but he fails to probe the positions in this statement in the light of what he has experienced of the JVP. That Podi Athula is still not quite free from left-extremist posturing may be the reason for this. But one cannot discount the possibility that a highly class conscious capitalist publisher like Lake House Investments would not have approved of such an analysis. Could it therefore be that Podi Athula himself intended his readers to do a lot of reading between the lines.

A PRIVATE ARMY BASED ON THE MARGINALISED

BY HECTOR ABHAYAVARDHANA

(This note was written before the events of June 5th and the strike wave of July that revealed the anti-working class character of the JVP and its alignment with the UNP)

The JVP was one of the more important by-products in Sri Lanka of the breakdown of Stalinism on the international scale. The Sino-Soviet split, coming after the Khrushchev revelations at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the campaign to exorcise the ghost of Stalin from Soviet Russian society, had a disorienting impact on the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Maoist groups that were to spring out of it as offshoots. It affected the attitudes and inclinations of numerous young people in and around the CP who, unable to understand what had shattered the imposing monolith of their international movement, found themselves unable to choose between the contenders for their allegiance. It, most of all, had an unnerving effect on the mind of an inordinately ambitious young man who, as the son of a prominent though poor supporter of the C.P. in its principal stronghold in Matara District, was sent to Moscow for higher studies and had to be sent back in his fourth year as a deviator.

Nandasiri Wijeweera, whose deviant behaviour in Moscow had led to his abrupt despatch home, was taught the basic principles of Marxism in Lumumba University as part of the grounding in political economy that is provided to every university entrant in the USSR. But one

of the basic teachings of Marxism is that the reading of Marx does not suffice to make a man a Marxist. Marxism is a process of socio-political conditioning of the individual brought about by applying himself to the solution of political problems using the technique of class struggle and under the guidance of a revolutionary party based on the working class. There is nothing to indicate that Wijeweera understood this simple fact. Every step taken by him indicates his rejection of class struggle as any kind of practical strategy in the revolution he proclaimed he was seeking to make. He saw revolution, much rather, as the seizure of state power by armed force and revolutionary politics as the preparation of armed conspiracy.

When the CP in Sri Lanka split in two at the end of 1963, Wijeweera had already stiffened himself with cynicism towards Moscow's politics. Serving with the Moscow wing of the CP had to mean the prospect of a long apprenticeship, which was hardly attractive to a young man in a hurry. Pekingese politics was both more fashionable among young people and offered them more immediate fulfilment of leadership ambitions seeing that it was of recent growth. For Wijeweera, who had raised the standard of revolt in the very fortress of the enemy in Moscow, there was also plenty of admiration among the Peking-wingers. But testimony at his trial revealed that Wijeweera had no great enthusiasm for the Peking line. He joined the Peking wing of the Communist Party in order to capture

it. He lost no time after joining the party in commencing an intrigue with N. Sanmugathan to drive Premalal Kumarasiri, then General Secretary, out of the party. And while he was still pretending to be one of Sanmugathan's chief lieutenants he was secretly building his own personal faction in the party. Once Kumarasiri had been driven out, Wijeweera accused Sanmugathan of favouring Tamils within the organisation and on this Sinhala - chauvinist platform sought to capture the Peking-wing CP for himself.

The truth seems to be that Wijeweera never had much confidence in either the Moscow wing or the Peking wing of the Communist Party. He never had any intention of serving either party loyally and graduating from within the party into a position of leadership. Where his own functioning was concerned, "democratic centralism" as a basic principle of party organisation had no relevance whatsoever. For instance, he was a member of the Pekingese CP when the SLFP, LSSP and CP called for a general strike on 8th January, 1966 against the Tamil Language Regulations Bill. His party severely condemned the general strike, but Wijeweera supported and participated in the demonstration that was fired on by the police on that day.

He went even further. On the following day he summoned a meeting of his personal faction in Gampaha and told them that the police action made it clear that the UNP Government was moving towards a dictatorship. Only the organisation of a "Red Army" could meet this situation, and he regarded this as an urgent necessity. He was from then onward going to devote himself to under-cover activity, in pursuance of which he was dropping the name "Wijeweera" and adopting the name "Rohana" in all his dealings. It was in this period that he made his early contacts with Navy personnel. It seems he had also some contacts among the armed forces personnel who were

implicated by the UNP Government in the alleged coup attempt of 1966.

Wijeweera's idea of building a revolutionary party was nothing more or less than that of getting together a private army. He considered that his basic task was to recruit people for this army. He had a term for this recruitment: "koku danawa" or "hooking". The term "hooking" hardly suggests any high moral or historical purpose. It indicates much rather the kind of crude expediency and unconcern for the fate of those whom he "hooked" that invariably guided Wijeweera's activities. The purpose of "hooking" innocent young people was to collect striking power and machine-gun fodder for the so-called revolutionary army that would seize power for Wijeweera. The emphasis on armed force eliminated the need for careful evaluation of the strategic roles of classes in society and their inter-relationships. All that was needed was a general call to arms.

Revolutions, however, even mock revolutions, have to be prepared in the name of some ideology or programme. Thirty years of Marxist propaganda and agitation had, by the time of the middle sixties, taught the people of Sri Lanka that Marxism was the doctrine of revolution and that a Marxist party was closely connected with the working class. Whether Wijeweera liked it or not, he had to recognise this fact. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna had to be introduced as a marxist party, although the ten people who formed the original secret faction within the Peking wing Communist Party did not adopt a programme, but signed with their blood a pledge to work together until they made their revolution. The JVP had also to be introduced as the party of the working class, though an unusual twist had to be given to the meaning of "working class". Said Wijeweera "the entire working class" falls into three categories, namely the Rural, the Urban and the Plantation sectors. . . . We could not establish ourselves in the

Urban sector because of the influence of the old traditional Left movement. Likewise we could not establish in the Plantation sector because of the racial divisions and the lack of cadres". Thus only the "Rural sector", i. e. the rural poor, was left to him. It is their poverty that he paraded as the hallmark of the proletariat.

Belonging to the rural poor himself, Wijeweera had a keen awareness of the oppression and exploitation to which the rural poor were subject. Owning virtually no land and compelled to sell their labour from day to day, more often than not outside the village, they lived on the margin of rural society and were little able to participate in its life or influence its decisions. Quite often poverty was complicated by caste prejudices and then the process of marginalisation of the rural poor was further intensified. Free education had appeared to them once to be a route of escape from poverty and social oppression. But what had once led to the gate of middle-class urban living was now too crowded with wayfarers to permit much movement. Education only raised expectations among both children and parents and forced them into long years of waiting before even a lowly clerk's job could be realised. Shut out of acceptance within a rural society that was based on land-owning, money and the status of birth, the rural poor could not be equipped for placement in the parliamentary political system by education alone. Only direct action outside the parliamentary system offered any prospect to the rural poor of asserting their rights.

In the pre-Independence period, the LSSP kept up a consistent appeal to the rural poor to assert their democratic and property rights against the forces of foreign imperialism and native feudalism and capitalism by which they were oppressed. But the emphasis of Marxist agitation in the post-Independence period tended to be on the patronage and assistance that could

be extracted from the bourgeois state. The Paddy Lands Act was the sole item of radical agrarian reform that was executed or meaningfully agitated during this period. The nationalisation of the plantations was left out of the Election Manifesto of the United Front in 1970 and became part of the UF Government's commitment only after the April 1971 insurgency. In marked contrast, the plantation system was boldly blamed by the JVP as the principal cause of the woes of the people in the rural areas. The demand for the uprooting of plantation crops and the full afforestation of all hillslopes above an elevation of 5,000 feet and partial afforestation of elevations between 3,000 and 5,000 feet was not merely wild demagoguery but economic absurdity. But it was the most direct appeal so far made to the poor and oppressed in the rural areas and it had an underlying historicity for youth with secondary-school education.

Unlike the generation of the rural intelligentsia that reached out for political power under S. W. R. D. Bandaranayake's leadership in 1956, Wijeweera's generation of educated village youth did not assert traditional values or focus their aims on property and respectability. They had little confidence in the ability of the village economy to accommodate them and could only repose hope in a future that was linked with the expansion of the urban economy. Wijeweera did not, therefore, concern himself with the problems of reorganising the property system in the village, so much as with the securing of state power for the expansion of the economy as a whole by liberating it from imperialist domination. He thereby limited his appeal to the most oppressed elements at the margin of rural existence and isolated himself from the bulk of the rural population which based itself on small property. As a result, the JVP's summons to revolt found response on any considerable scale only among the educated youth and, more generally, in marginalised villages inhabited by certain oppressed castes.

Unable to bid for leadership of the majority in the rural areas, Wijeweera found the road to the masses in the urban areas blocked by the Marxist parties with their firm hold on the working class. That constituted enough provocation for the bitter rivalry with which he has always regarded the LSSP and CPSL. But a further cause for resentment was that the LSSP and CP had attracted the cream of the bourgeois intelligentsia quite early in their existence and were, therefore, at a considerable advantage in the propagation of Marxist ideas in an urban environment. His own limitations and those of his youthful rural following prevented any real attempt at ideological development within Wijeweera's own organisation and clamped a veritable personal dictatorship on the JVP from the date of its formal inauguration. What might have been mere rivalry with the LSSP and CPSL had to turn into deep and implacable hatred of the leadership of these parties and of all those who followed them.

If the JVP had, like any genuine Marxist party, engaged in organising the broad masses for partial struggles against oppression and exploitation, its hatred of the Marxist parties might have been contained by its activity against the ruling class and its Government. But the JVP has never involved itself in any mass struggles, not even in strikes, and has made it a rule not to involve itself in any kind of struggle except the final struggle i. e. the so-called revolution. Even this final struggle, it has always visualised will be fought out, not by the masses, but by its own private army. One of the accused at the first CJC trial declared that the sole activity of the JVP was holding classes and putting up posters, and that the putting up of posters was a gimmick to enlist and sustain the support of its members. The real obligation of JVP members was to submit to military training and wait for the call to arms. Wijeweera never concerned himself with the building of any kind of mass movement.

For this reason hatred of the LSSP and CPSL soon became an obsession with Wijeweera and the JVP. To turn even some part of their propaganda against the UNP and the capitalist class without organising the masses for struggle against them would ultimately have strengthened the LSSP and CPSL. Sooner rather than later, the Marxist parties became virtually the sole target of JVP propaganda and activity. When the United Front Government was formed with the LSSP and CPSL as part of it, Wijeweera had the chance of his lifetime. Accusing the Government of failure to redeem its promises, he was able to launch an offensive against it from the Left and outflank the two Marxist parties. He was overplaying his hand, however. His private army was considerable in numbers but it was pitifully armed seeing that it intended to fight without the assistance of the masses. The April 1971 uprising was so foolhardy a venture that Wijeweera, its grand strategist and supreme organiser, disowned it as the work of disobedient subordinates.

Though Wijeweera launched his April 1971 uprising against the United Front Government from the Left, there were powerful forces on the Right of that Government which could not but welcome the uprising. It seems certain that he received assistance in various forms, including participation in the uprising of former members of the disbanded Land Army. In the course of attacking the UF Government for its use of allegedly excessive repressive force against the uprising, there is also no doubt that the UNP was able to win the sympathy of JVP elements and move closer to its leadership. There were contacts between the JVP leaders, including Wijeweera and the UNP before the general election of July 1977 and the JVP threw its full support behind the UNP at the election itself. Following the formation of the UNP Government, the CJC Act was annulled and JVP leaders imprisoned under it were

released alongside the smugglers of foreign exchange, most of whom were supporters of the UNP. From then until now Wijeweera and his party have concentrated their fire on the LSSP and CPSL and the SLFP, while occasionally going through the ritual of inoffensive criticism of the UNP Government.

The April 1971 uprising laid bare the weaknesses, follies and even asinine conceit on which it had been constructed by its principal leaders. The revolutionary pretensions of Wijeweera were unmasked before his colleagues, almost all of whom turned away from him in contempt during the course of the ordeal. But thanks to the backing of the UNP Government, the Government controlled press and incredibly generous financial assistance from sources that are undisclosed, Wijeweera has been able to establish his claim to the myth of the 1971 uprising and the name of the JVP. The position of the rural poor is even more difficult today than it was at the time of 1971 and the educated youth have at least as much reason for hopelessness about the future. If these marginalised elements had any expectations that the UNP Government would be able to relieve their difficulties, they must have shed them long ago. In them Wijeweera has retained his constituency and he continues to represent their desperation and articulate their aspirations.

Even if the JVP was capable of staging an armed assault on the UNP Government at some stage, Wijeweera has made it clear beyond all doubt that it has no intention of doing so. He has repeatedly declared that the JVP is committed to the path of winning power through parliamentary elections. Its aim is to win a majority in parliament at the general election due in 1983 and, if that is not possible, at the general election that will follow. Wijeweera has not been remarkable for truthfulness or even consistency. He continues in his old habits of conspiratorial organisation. Study classes and putting up posters still constitute the sum-total of JVP activity. There are perhaps more public

meetings and lectures today than previously and a new item of musical entertainment. But how will this win the masses to his side or help to set up mass organisations that can raise the level of general mass consciousness? Can the JVP win a general election by mere propaganda?

The question may legitimately be asked whether Wijeweera seriously believes that he can win a majority in parliament in 1983 or 1989 or even ten years after that? It seems much more probable that, after the disastrous experience of 1971, he has toned down his ambitions considerably. The JVP may not aspire once more to capture state power by armed force and set up its version of a proletarian dictatorship based on the rural poor of Sri Lanka. History, after all, does not easily repeat itself.

If he is realistic, Wijeweera will recognise that the JVP, under his leadership, has been remarkably successful in the pursuit of its campaign against the Marxist movement in Sri Lanka. It was able to derail the United Front Government that was set up in May 1970 and force it into dependence on the repressive machinery of the state in place of the masses whom it was pledged to serve. It was able to mislead an entire generation of youth to practise a cult of violence for its own sake and cut across the line of advance of the mass movement. It was able to collaborate in the establishment in power of the most reactionary Government that the people of Sri Lanka have had ever since the universal franchise was made available to the masses in 1931. It continues to act as a Trojan horse within the Left movement in Sri Lanka so that at any critical moment the Left parties can be stabbed in the back. In that sense, the JVP is already an important instrument of the capitalist class, even if in an unofficial capacity. Its graduation to official status will depend on the need for mercenary assistance that the capitalist class may experience in relation to the mass movement.

THE DEVELOPING ENERGY CRISIS

by TILAK A GUNAWARDHANA

The crisis we are facing today in the energy supply situation is the direct result of haphazard decision making that is characteristic of economies where planning is seen as a 'bete noire'. I remember Dr Wickreme Weerasooriya making a remark in public soon after the present Government came into office, that there would be "no further extension of the state sector", that the "Government was not interested in planning", and that it was expecting "the private sector to play its accustomed vital role". With this kind of attitude towards resources and their utilisation, we would be not only in danger of experiencing economically damaging, increasingly haphazard and prolonged power cuts, but in actually retarding the growth of the economy. The loss suffered during the last two weeks (end of May and beginning of June) due to interruption of work in factories both in the private and public sectors would run into millions of rupees. The vagaries of monsoonal weather, (and the delay in arrival of rain) the favourite 'cause' for the present crisis among apologists for the government, has also become the principal excuse for avoiding responsibility. Nature is being blamed for our own lack of foresight. Foresight entails the use of not Dharmishta wisdom but science and technology which are both very indifferently treated even at the best of times by the Government. Acquisition of foresight is followed by planning, under normal circumstances, and that involves not only collection of relevant data, but also conscious and planned direction of economic activity. When the private entrepreneur has been reinstated on the

economic throne, it is naive to expect 'conscious direction' from any quarter. Profit then is the guiding principle and motive.

The question of power generation and utilisation is crucial because of the impending exhaustion of conventional sources of energy like oil and coal, and the increasing costs of power generation. Experts are of the opinion that known oil reserves will last only another 40 years and coal another 200 years the most. Even if they prove to be incorrect by small margins, what is important to bear in mind is the very limited nature of fossil fuels available for mankind as a whole. On the consumption side of the account, we have to contend with an increasing world population, and rapidly increasing consumption patterns in the developed world. For instance the U. S. and Canada use 20.18 million barrels a day, while Asia, on the average uses only 2.0 million barrels a day. The per capita consumption works out at fifty times for the North American as for an Asian.

Let us now look at the oil situation a little more closely as it is the only fuel that Sri Lanka imports in quantity.

World Oil Reserves	In Billion barrels
United States and Canada	156.4
Latin America	81.5
Western Europe	28.2
USSR and Eastern Europe	134.6
North Africa	53.5
Central and South Africa	32.1
The Middle East	453.6
China	23.0
Rest	29.9
Total Reserves on 1.1.76	992.8

Total Reserves by 1978 638.8

(Source: International Petroleum
Encyclopaedia)

Consumption	In Million barrels	
	Per day	Per Year
U S and Canada	20.18	7,365.70
Latin America	4.19	1,529.35
Western Europe	14.60	5,329.00
USSR	8.30	3,029.50
Eastern Europe	2.07	755.55
Africa	1.24	452.60
Middle East	1.65	602.25
China	1.70	620.50
Japan	5.42	1,978.30
Rest of Asia	2.00	730.00
Australasia	.80	292.00
	<u>62.15</u>	<u>22,634.75</u>

(Source "World Oil Outlook" - Paper read at the SLAS Seminar on Energy by Mr. S. Sivasunderam)

In different countries, due to their different rates of development, growth of consumption would naturally follow different patterns over the years to come. Sri Lanka being neither a producer nor a big consumer should follow the average pattern for a non-oil producer of the third world. However, rising prices recently have acted as a brake, and we seem to have come to a peak in 1980 long before exhaustion of reserves are supposed to occur. In 1962 we paid \$ 1.62 per barrel of crude. By 1979 January we were paying \$ 14.06 per barrel and since then prices have moved up even more sharply than in the preceding decade, with minor and insignificant decreases, for some months.

1979 January	—	14.06
February	—	14.86
March	—	14.44
April	—	15.29
May	—	14.63
June	—	18.26
July	—	19.34
August	—	20.68

September	—	21.57
October	—	21.94
November	—	20.17
December	—	24.82
1980 May	—	26.00

(Source: "World Oil Outlook" - Paper read at the SLAS Seminar on Energy by Mr S. Sivasunderam)

With the kind of economy Sri Lanka has, further increases would definitely mean a decline in imports. The consumption of petrol has already started declining since prices were raised sometime ago, and the Government is finding unsold stocks of fuel accumulating. For Sri Lanka price is the biggest constraining factor in the greater use of oil, and the search for alternative sources of power has become an absolute necessity.

Hydro - electricity is the only cheap readily available source of power, but the total installed capacity of 331 Mega-watts has not changed for the last four years. And this year the entire output is being utilised. The present crisis is partly due to the tight production-consumption equation that developed with such dramatic suddenness with the liberalisation of imports of electrical machinery and equipment as part of the liberal trade policy package.

The table below indicates the way consumption increased in the last few years.

	72	73	74	75	76	77	78
Domestic	71	82	83	86	95	105	121
Commercial	99	107	117	120	134	150	162
Industrial,,	447	466	477	522	516	519	590
TOTAL	<u>617</u>	<u>655</u>	<u>677</u>	<u>728</u>	<u>745</u>	<u>774</u>	<u>873</u>

(In Million Kilo-watt hours)

(Source: Central Bank Report).

It is interesting to note that industrial consumption is well over four times domestic consumption, and commercial consumption is also well above domestic use. Figures for

1979 and 1980 (first half year) are not available, but for 1980 consumption figures in the respective sectors would be approximately 150, 200 and 600 Million Kilo-watt hours.

The increase after 1977 is conspicuously sharp, and this is underlined by the import figures for electrical equipment.

Imports of Electrical Machinery & Equipment

1977	Rs 106	Millions
1978	Rs 554	„
1979	Rs 903	„

(Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Report for the year 1979)

With the liberalisation of trade this rise was almost inevitable, even if this was not envisaged by the Government in either 1977 or 1978. If at that stage, using a little common sense, if either imports were adjusted or consumption or production of electricity adjusted, we would not be facing the crisis we are facing today. It is unlikely that the liberal policies followed so far would even be changed even if we have to be in partial darkness. That would be against the interests of big business in the lucrative import trade. Also any restrictions on imports would have adverse repercussions on the generous aid we are supposed to be obtaining from the West.

The power that would have sufficed till 1984, as was envisaged in 1976, was found to be inadequate in 1980 as a result of the actions of the Minister of Trade, who perhaps never discussed the matter with the Minister of Power. What one arm of the Government implements affects the rest of the Government but since no reliance is placed on planning or co-ordination, crisis must inevitably ensue. The crisis situation is now built in to the entire economy. If the present expansion continues, the power that would be coming on stream in 1984 (if promises are fulfilled) from Victoria and Kotmale and perhaps Canyon, would be barely sufficient till 1990. However it is hoped that Samanala with 180 Mega-watts would be completed after

1984, and Moragahakande and Randenigala too would add another 80 Mega-watts around that time. The major part of Mahaweli development would then have come to an end, and engineers hope that further development of Mahaweli, and new developments of the remaining main rivers in the South Western sector would bring another 800 Mega-watts. Yet Hydro electricity like oil and coal has its limits and after 2000, further development of the country would be at stake if steps are not taken within the next ten years or so, to plan the development of all available sources of energy.

According to present estimates based on USA figures the comparative costs of different types of power are as follows.

In US \$ per barrel equivalent

Coal	3	—	5
Gas from Coal	7	—	11
Oil Sands	15	—	25
Oil Shale	15	—	35
Biomass liquids (large scale)	30	—	60
Solar Hot water (large scale)	50	—	60

(Source: "World Oil Outlook" - Paper read at the SLAS seminar on Energy by Mr S. Sivasunderam)

To obtain energy from solar radiation in a usable form could be tackled in two ways. There is the piecemeal, simple unit method that is already being used for heating homes and apartments in the West. Then there is the large scale conversion of solar heat, which is a major proposition, and would be highly capital intensive. In the near future generation of say electricity to be fed into the national grid from solar radiation would not be practical because of high costs. Also it must not be forgotten that already solar heat conversion has become big business in the West, and energy deficient developing countries especially, would become their marketing targets. Instead

of encouraging the development of solar radiation conversion units on a small scale the multinational engineering firms would be there to coax the poor third world to buy their ready made outfits at enormous cost. For a country like Sri Lanka, solar radiation energy conversion to electricity or use of solar energy for refrigeration or heating are of major importance. Since this is a form of energy, that due to our location we are endowed with, it is imperative that a definite programme be launched for developing suitable devices to enable us to use this energy. How much of this energy could be made available in 2000, it is difficult to estimate without even having made a start, but it would have to form a significant portion of our energy supply from that year onwards, if not before.

Biomass or wood and plant residues for generation of combustible gas has been

much discussed and a few trial gas generation units have been put into operation already. This too, like solar radiation would have to be developed piecemeal, to start with. With rising costs of transmission of electricity independent Biogas units in rural areas would be viable, as has been amply demonstrated in China and even parts of India.

The crisis we are faced with for the next 20 years would get worse with time, unless there is not only radical thinking on power generation and use, but also determination on the part of the Government to translate theory and plans to action. The way things are being handled at present, without co-ordination, vision and determination the country could be dragging its feet from one crisis to another. Serious inroads would be made into overall development of the country as a result, and living standards instead of steadily rising, would be unfortunately declining.

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A FILM REVIEW

Dandu
Monara

the Flying chariot

This is a story of a working - class family in Sri Lanka. It represents an unusual triangle - a factory - worker, his wife, and his bicycle. This new acquisition of the husband, and his absorption in it, create strains and misunderstandings between him and his wife, through which the relationship is severely tested before a final resolution is reached,

Through a series of simple and everyday, yet moving and dramatic situations, the film explores the relationships of the family and the realities of working-class life with the economic pressures to which it is subjected. It is a film of great sensitivity, warmth and human understanding

The Flying Chariot is one of the finest achievements of the new Sri Lankan Sinhala - language cinema - the cinema of a small Asian country in which the realities of a third-world society are finding original cinematic expression.

One of the notable features of the film is the sustained and flawless quality of the performances the director has secured from his principal players - three of them experienced actors of the Sinhala cinema, and the fourth a child.

"The Flying Chariot" is a motif from Sri Lankan legend a mythological chariot of gods and heroes drawn through the air by peacocks. In the film the motif is used as a symbol of the pride the factory-worker feels in his bicycle.

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