

Forward

THE VIEW FROM THE LEFT

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—We Say.....

New Year

One doesn't need to be a prophet to say that the New Year that starts to-day will be a hard and difficult one.

After 38 years without a world war—the longest period in this century—the Reagan administration's deployment of new nuclear missiles in Western Europe has started a process that can relentlessly push mankind to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. Unless this is stopped in time, no continent or ocean will be spared.

The fight to stop a nuclear war is the paramount task for all peoples, including our own, in 1984. The relentless militarisation and nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean by the US government has brought the danger of nuclear war to our doorstep. US intrigues to obtain a military presence and naval facilities in Sri Lanka are already far advanced.

Let us therefore resolve to make a still more active and broad mobilisation for a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean and against the US preparations for nuclear war a major feature of all our activities in the new year.

1984 also begins with Sri Lanka in the depths of an all-pervading domestic crisis, the worst we have ever known. The crisis of the "open economy" has spread to a crisis of Sri Lanka's established political institutions and of the state itself. The crisis in ethnic relations threatens the unity of the country. The "rule of law" has become a mockery. Even the moral fabric of our society is threatened.

While all this happens, we are governed by a Parliament of "chit MPs" who no longer represent the people. Local government has virtually withered away.

Already, dangerous trends have begun to emerge. For the first time, powerful voices have been raised to demand the abolition of the party system and "party" government. If these trends are not thwarted, we can find ourselves saddled with a military government as happened in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

1984 must therefore see the further development of a united movement to halt and reverse these dangerous developments. The joint platform of action that the trade unions have evolved is a welcome step in this direction. It should be followed by unity between the Left parties which, in turn, can rally the broader democratic forces.

Let us therefore resolve to make 1984 a year where national harmony will be restored and where the Left and democratic forces make united advances in the fight for peace and social progress.



Cuba – 25 Years

Greetings to Cuba, the 25th year of whose revolution we celebrate to-day.

25 years ago Cuba was a small and obscure Caribbean island, a virtual American colony, a base for the US navy, a playground for American tourists, a happy hunting ground for the Mafia, the gambling and crime syndicates, the flesh-peddlers and the vice-kings.

To-day Cuba is a flourishing socialist country, known to and respected by all who value peace, freedom and social justice. Its shining example has inspired anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world. Its international prestige and authority is immense, as witnessed by the high respect for Cuba in the non-aligned movement which it brilliantly led for several years. Small in size but large in heart, Cuba helps Angola, Ethiopia and other African countries to defend and develop the independence they recently won.

Situated on the doorstep of the USA, Cuba has for 25 years withstood the invasions, blockades, plots and threats of its powerful neighbour. The USSR, the rest of the socialist community, and progressive mankind everywhere have helped it to do so. But the main credit still goes to the wise and principled leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba and its outstanding and charismatic leader, Fidel Castro.

On this historic jubilee, we salute Cuba's achievements, wish it even more brilliant successes, and express our firm solidarity with its government and people.

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World Bank Wants Big Budget Cuts

Although Parliament, after nearly two months of debate, has passed the budget for 1984, the World Bank insists that it should be chopped and changed in several major ways even before it starts to be implemented.

And the government's abject dependence on the World Bank is such that it is ready to agree to this crude infringement on our national sovereignty

The 1984 budget has an unfinanced deficit of Rs 23 billion. But even what is technically "financed" depends heavily on continuing World Bank aid.

The government had asked the World Bank for a standby loan of 100 million SDR.

But the World Bank agreed to advance only 50 million SDR. The second 50 million SDR depends on a favourable report from a special World Bank mission led by Mr. Paul Chabrier.

World Bank chief Mr. Tom Clausen made it clear to Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel that no further money would be forthcoming unless the Chabrier mission reported that the government was in fact implementing the conditions on which World Bank insisted.

Now the Chabrier mission has gone back to present its report. And the government's own SUNDAY OBSERVER (25/12) admits that the "IMF Mission is not Satisfied" and regards "Lanka's performance under accord".

The World Bank mission is still critical of the "excessive"

expenditure on social welfare. Although the de facto devaluation of the rupee has broken the Rs. 25 barrier vis-a-vis the dollar, the Bank still does not consider this "realistic" enough. It wants borrowing and expenditure by state corporations cut to the bone, with those which are unprofitable closed down, and those making profits handed over to the private sector. Even the heavily curtailed development program is "too large".

As the SUNDAY OBSERVER says, the World Bank has made it clear that "if no corrective action is taken immediately to achieve these targets it is likely that the current standby agreements between the government and the IMF will be suspended."

This will mean that government will not get the second tranche of SDR 50 million. It will also mean that the World Bank will turn down the government's application for a further SDR 210 million as a "structural adjustment loan". Thus a further Rs. 6.5 billion will be immediately added to the already unfinanced budget deficit of Rs. 23 billion.

What is more, thumbs-down treatment by the World Bank will also mean that it will be even more difficult to raise loans from the foreign commercial banks and the "Aid Sri Lanka Club".

"Instead of wasting our and the public's time on spending six months in framing a budget and six weeks in debating and passing it, it would be simpler to hand the whole exercise over to the World Bank and rubber-stamp what it gives us", an MP said.

WISE WORDS FROM LENIN

In his thesis on the national question to the Second Congress of the Comintern, V. I. Lenin had wise words to say that all participants of the All-Parties Conference should ponder on.

While insisting that the complete abolition of national oppression is possible only under socialism, Lenin also added:

"Radical democratic reforms can establish national peace in capitalist states."

One cannot advance without the other.

STAR STRUCK!



No Basic Rights for Worker Victims

Another blatant misuse of the Police to deny fundamental rights to workers, who were victims of attacks on their workplaces during the racist violence of July 1983, took place on December 15, when Police riot squads, led by Superintendent Gaffoor, were ordered to prevent members of the Ceylon Mercantile Union proceeding from their headquarters at 22nd Lane, Kollupitiya, to Galle Face Green to meet Ministers and other officials whom they had invited to meet them there so as to be informed of their plight.

For over 3 hours the riot squads, armed with batons, tear gas shells and automatic rifles, prevented the unionists, mostly women, from moving out of either end of 22nd Lane in order to get to Galle Face.

This was also the first occasion when the specially trained women riot squads of the Police were deployed on an operation.

The incident was triggered off when the CMU sought redress for 1824 of its members who has lost their jobs when the seven industrial establishments where they worked were wholly or partially destroyed during the racist violence of July 1983.

1,107 of the 1824 worker victims were women, and 1,675 Sinhalese.

The CMU had written to President Jayawardene on August 27, drawing attention to the plight of these workers who had lost their employment through no fault of their own.

Only 317 of the affected workers had been offered alternative employment.

As no redress was forthcoming to the rest, the CMU again wrote to the President on December 9. Its letter said that, apart from the 317 who had been offered alternative employment, "the remaining 1507 members of ours, who have still not been provided with work, have been paid no wages nor received any financial assistance from the government, in lieu of wages, since July".

ASSURANCES

The union drew attention to two assurances given by the Prime Minister in Parliament.

On September 27, the P. M. had said that a list of affected workers had been compiled, and that "the first issue of a special food ration has been given to several affected workers".

He had added that the Commissioner General of Essential Services had been entrusted with the task of implementing "a scheme of providing relief to all displaced workers in industries which were destroyed during the disturbances". This had been sanctioned by the Cabinet, which had also "under consideration a scheme for the payment of monthly allowances to such workers until such time as they secure employment again".

On November 28, the Prime Minister said that "plentiful aid was forthcoming from our friends abroad" for relief for the victims of the racist violence.

The CMU told President Jayawardene that their affected members had not received any of the reliefs referred to by the Prime Minister.

Only M/s Beree Ltd. had paid half a month's wages

every month to its 32 affected employees.

INVITATIONS

As they had received neither reply nor redress from the President, the Commissioner General of Essential Services, or the Chairman of REPIA, the affected workers decided to issue invitations to the authorities concerned to meet them on Galle Face Green between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on December 15 to inform them why they had not received the relief they been assured.

The first list of invitees were President Jayawardene, all Cabinet members, and the leaders of the Opposition parties in Parliament.

The second list of invitees were the Commissioner General of Essential Services, the Chairman of REPIA and the Commissioner of Labour, who were asked to explain why the affected workers had not been given any relief.

The third list of invitees were the heads of the armed services and the IGP, who were asked to explain to the affected workers why the security services were unable to protect their workplaces from destruction and looting.

Some of those invited sent letters of excuse. The Secretary of Defence, General D. S. Attygalle, regretted on December 11 that it would not be possible for him to be present. Rear Admiral A. W. H. Perera, Chairman of REPIA, wrote on December 14 to say that "prior official engagements do not permit me to participate in your meeting..." but added that he, anyhow, considered his participation "unnecessary".

DECISION

The only Minister who replied before December 15 was Mr. Anandatissa de Alwis, who told the CMU by letter of December 12 that "as this is a matter for government there will be a policy decision all Ministers will follow".

What this decision was made clear by the IGP in his letter dated December 14 which informed the union that "no meeting nor assembly of persons on Galle Face Green as sought by you on the 15th December 1983, will be permitted".

This was followed up by the government declaring an "all-island alert" on December 15, and calling out all armed forces and police volunteers to assist the regulars.

On the meeting of December 15th, 1,135 workers, 90 per cent of whom were women, turned up at the CMU headquarters.

When they tried to proceed to Galle Face in batches of five, moving along the pavement, they found themselves blocked at both ends of the lane by serried ranks of armed riot police, both male and female.

When CMU officials inquired why the police were forcibly preventing the affected workers from exercising their constitutionally-guaranteed fundamental rights of peaceful assembly and procession, the only reply they received was that they had received orders from "the Presidential Secretariat" via the Defence Ministry and the IGP to do so.

Attempts to reach President Jayawardene or any of his secretaries produced no response.

From Hiroshima to Pershing-II

Ever since World War II ended, a central aim of US imperialism's policy has been to secure a position of superiority in nuclear weaponry so as to dictate world developments from a position of strength.

The US was the first country to develop nuclear weapons. Up to now, it is the only country to actually use them.

The atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 killed 30,000 people. They were dropped when Japan was suing for peace and with the intention of frightening the USSR, then America's ally. As the then US President, Harry S. Truman, said: "This will surely give us a stick to use against the Russians".

Based on its monopoly of the atom bomb, the US elaborated several plans to obliterate Soviet cities. Plan 149/2 of 1945 envisaged knocking out 20 Soviet cities in a first strike. A 1948 plan envisaged using 133 atom bombs to obliterate 70 Soviet cities. The 1949 plan, code-named "Dropshot", planned to use 300 bombs which it said would be "adequate" to force the USSR to its knees.

A Soviet proposal to the UN in 1946 to ban the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons intended for mass destruction, to destroy stockpiles, and to declare any violation of this a crime against humanity was rudely rejected. The Soviet Union was therefore compelled to develop its own atomic weapons and broke the US monopoly in 1949.

Bombers

As early as 1953, the US had already started on a new stage in its nuclear build-up. Its first strategic bombers, carrying atomic weapons, were deployed on the Soviet borders.

When the USSR evened the score four years later, the US started a huge scare campaign about a "bomber gap" to justify to American voters its decision to develop the B-52 bomber at enormous cost.

After hundreds of these "flying fortresses" were operational, the US admitted that it had deliberately inflated

When the hulking Superintendent Gaffoor tried to persuade the women to disperse, he was pointedly asked why he had not used a similar show of force to disperse the hooligan crowds outside Kanatte Cemetery, just before they went on a rampage of rioting, arson and looting.

Unable to answer, the Superintendent returned to his official car and left an ASP to deal with the situation.

For three hours, until 1 p.m., a face to face confrontation took place on 22nd Lane between the women and the riot squads.

The women workers used this period to make speeches to the police who surrounded and blocked them, explaining their plight and what they wanted to do.

Several members of the riot squads were visible moved by what the women workers said, and told them that they sympathised with their plight but had to "carry out orders" or else lose their jobs.

The riot squads kept the worker victims bottled up until 1 p.m., thereby preventing them from meeting even the Opposition leaders who turned up at Galle Face to hear their grievances. Only when the appointed times were long over did the riot police withdraw.

This latest misuse of the Police to deny fundamental rights may, it is learnt, also end up before the Supreme Court like the Pavaði Handa and Vivienne Goonewardene incidents.

the Soviet bomber potential four times in order to get the B-52s accepted.

By 1956, the US launched its first nuclear submarine. By 1960 it had three such submarines operational, carrying a total of 48 single-warhead ballistic missiles and cruising all round the Soviet Union.

Ever since, the US had enormously expanded its nuclear submarine fleet. Today 70 per cent of US strategic missiles are deployed on its nuclear submarines.

By Stanley Ranasinghe

When the USSR produced its first nuclear-powered submarine around 1960, it repeatedly proposed that existing systems should be limited and new ones prohibited. The US response was to introduce a new OHIO class submarine, armed with Trident missiles two and a half times more powerful than any used earlier. The aim of these submarines was declared to be "to strike at any target in the Soviet Union, including her missile silos".

Floating Fortresses

In the early 1960s, the US also started its programme of building nuclear-powered aircraft carriers to augment its nuclear submarine fleet.

It has now 20 such aircraft carriers. They can attack the Soviet Union or other socialist countries from forward bases in the Mediterranean, the North Atlantic or other oceans. They have also been used to promote aggressive US aims in Grenada, Lebanon, and other Third World countries.

Orders have been placed for two more Nimitz class carriers which an US Senator, John G. Tower, described as having "greater political value than anything else in the American armoury. It is a high-precision instrument of diplomacy".

The USSR has no aircraft carriers, but only two air-capable ships for anti-submarine operations.

MIRV: 'TRUMP CARD'

In the late 1960s the US introduced a new weapon

which it called the "ultimate trump card".

This was the MIRV—the multiple independently retargetable re-entry vehicles.

But the USSR was able to counter this. It was able to preserve the strategic balance. This led to SALT-II and other accords of the mid-1970s.

The US answer was the neutron bomb. In 1977, the Pentagon gave the green light for its manufacture. But President Jimmy Carter was forced to halt this move by a world-wide storm of protest.

However, on 6 August 1981, the anniversary of Hiroshima, President Reagan reversed this and ordered the manufacture of the neutron bomb to go ahead.

The USSR has no neutron bombs and opposes this monstrous terror weapon that kills people but spares property.

Cruise and Pershings

Work on the Cruise and Pershing II missiles, which are unabashedly first-strike weapons, began in 1974. The Pershing II, in particular, is a missile of high accuracy, great range, low altitude and capable of reaching targets in the USSR within 4 to 6 minutes from West European sites.

Although the USA discovered that the USSR had developed comparable systems by the 1980s, it has gone ahead with its decision to deploy these missiles in Britain, the FRG, and Italy.

It has simultaneously announced a mind-boggling military budget of 253 billion dollars to manufacture new inter-continental ballistic missiles and space-based weapons.

Thus the whole history from Hiroshima to the Pershing II shows that it is the USA which initiated new spirals in the nuclear arms race at every turn, while the Soviet union was compelled to respond in order that the strategic balance, the main restraint on the hawks of the Pentagon and their political masters, was not upset.

Platform for Joint T. U. Action

20 leading trade union federations and significant individual trade unions issued, on December 23, a platform for "joint trade union activity in relation for the present situation."

This statement sets out the basic principles that will guide their joint work and struggle.

The trade unions will soon follow this up with concretised demands giving effect to the agreed principles.

Their joint communique reads as follows:—

"The undermentioned trade union organisations have agreed upon a program of joint activity in relation to the current situation.

"Special note has been taken of the following matters:

- Growth of state terrorism and of thuggery by organised gangs acting in

open contempt of or with the connivance of the so-called security forces of the State, as manifested in the most brutal manner in attacks on Tamil people and people of Indian origin and their homes and possessions, in July 1983.

- The moves of the US Government to convert the Indian Ocean into a military zone of theirs, and to establish a base in Sri Lanka for that purpose, which constitute a grave threat to our people.

- The attempts of the Government to divide the masses on a racist basis and to divert their attention from economic issues, whilst heaping fresh economic burdens on them and subjecting them to increasing repression.

In this situation the trade unions will engage in joint activity especially in relation to:

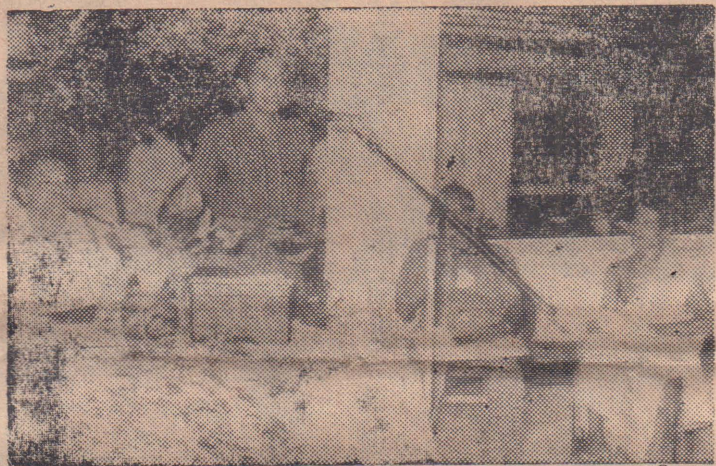
- Restoration of democratic rights by the ending of the State of Emergency.
- Revocation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.
- Lifting of the ban on the proscribed parties.
- Release of all political prisoners and withdrawal of orders for the arrest of members of banned political parties.
- Putting forward and supporting demands and struggles for adequate wage increases.
- Mobilisation of opposition to the Rehabilitation Levy and various additional taxes and increases in transport fares.
- Reinstatement of dismissed July 1980 strikers who have not yet been taken back and restoration of Trade Union rights of their Unions.
- Provision of work and pay for the period of non-employment of workers whose workplaces were damaged or destroyed by the July 1983 violence.

- Security against racist violence for Tamil people and people of Indian origin and especially for workers in the plantation areas.

The statement is signed by:—

1. Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions. (L. W. Panditha);
2. Sri Lanka Independent Trade Union Federation. (Alavi Moulana);
3. Ceylon Mercantile Union. (Bala Tampoe);
4. Public Service Trade Union Federation. (J. A. K. Perera);
5. Sri Lanka Independent Government Trade Union Federation. (D. D. Wettasinghe);
6. United Federation of Labour. (Ronnie Perera);
7. Ceylon Trade Union Federation. (J. K. Wilson);
8. All Ceylon Trade Union Federation. (T. A. Siripala);

9. Samastha Lanka Rajaya Lipikaru Sangamaya. (H. A. Wilbert);
10. Central Council of Ceylon Trade Unions. (W. D. D. Wickramasinghe);
11. Democratic Workers' Congress. (C. Ramanathan);
12. United Government Workers' Federation. (J. D. Silva);
13. Post & Telecommunication Clerical Service Union. (G. Waduge);
14. Ceylon Estate Staffs' Union. (Keerthi Seneviratne);
15. Desa Vimukthi Workers' Centre. (P. L. Podiappuhamy);
16. United Corporation & Mercantile Union. (Percy Wickramasekera);
17. Ceylon Plantation Workers' Union. (A. Ramaiah);
18. Local Government Clerical Union. (Sudharman de Silva);
19. Sri Lanka Postal & Telecommunications Service Union. (R. Batuwantudawa);
20. Ceylon General Workers' Union. (J. Maliyagoda.)



AGAINST N-ARMS

A public meeting to support the international demand for a freeze and a phased reduction of nuclear weapons, as well as the prohibition of any further manufacture or deployment of these weapons of mass destruction, was held at Kuda Butgama, Angoda, last week.

The meeting was organised by the Sri Lanka Association for Safeguarding World Peace, and was presided over by Rev. Godfrey Fernando, its Vice-President.

Others who spoke were Professor Osmund Jayaratne, Mr. Chandrasena Daluwatte, Attorney-at-law, and Rev. Kandaketiya Devananda.

Did President J. R. Jayawardene, while in New Delhi for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November 1983, discuss with Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher the reactivation of the Defence Agreement of 1947?

The question has cropped up as a result of a news-item in the confidential "Foreign Report" sent out by the well-informed ECONOMIST Newspaper Ltd. to its subscribers on the eve of the CHOGM.

The news item reads:

"President Junius Jayawardene of Sri Lanka will raise

the issue of possible British military aid for his country when he confers with Mrs. Margaret Thatcher at the meeting of Commonwealth heads of state in New Delhi on November 20.

"Jayawardene will provide the prime minister with a dossier on Tamil terrorists in Sri Lanka and their alleged links with terrorists known to have links with Soviet-bloc countries and North Korea.

"He will also seek assurances that the two countries' defence agreement of 1947, in which Britain undertook to help defend Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) from attack when it was in the mutual interests of the two countries, is still in force.

"Britain was offered access to military bases on the island.

"Jayawardene is thinking of reviving the agreement because he fears that the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, plans to interfere or intervene in Sri Lanka's troubles over its Tamil minority."

The confidential circular is dated 10 November 1983 and issued to its subscribers from the Economist newspaper's offices at 25, St. James's Street, London.

Survey Shows High Jobless Rate

Sri Lanka's unemployment rate (15.3 per cent) is the fifth highest in the world.

This is revealed in a survey published in a recent issue of the London "Economist".

The survey also shows that, although Sri Lanka's literacy rate is among the highest in the world, up to 10 per cent of those classified as "literate" are in fact functionally illiterate.

Enrolment in primary schools is the seventh highest in the world. But Sri Lanka's educational drop-out rate is also the fourth highest in the world.

Too Timid to Ask

Why is the Auditor General's Department too timid to query the way in which funds voted for other activities of the Prime Minister's departments and statutory organisations are used in an irregular manner to finance the GAM UDAWA tamashas?

A letter prepared and signed to be sent out on 4.10.1983 is still locked up in a high-up's office drawer.

The letter asks explanations why funds which Parliament voted for other activities have been irregularly used for GAM UDAWA rallies in July, August and September 1982.

According to the unsent letter, in July 1982 the following amounts from other funds were used for GAM UDAWA tamashas:— (1) Rs. 77,810 for travelling, (2) Rs. 13,401 for

petrol and oil, (3) Rs. 28,784 for overtime, and (4) Rs. 31,836 for miscellaneous expenses.

In August, 1982, Rs. 93,216 was also mis-spent on GAM UDAWA activities from other voted expenditure.

In September, 1982, two further amounts of Rs. 250,000 and Rs. 60,000 are similarly queried.

A number of cases where there are no vouchers to support payments and where payment has been made even before the vouchers are approved have also been brought to light.

The way in which funds voted by Parliament for one purpose are used for other purposes—mostly those which have personal propaganda value for the Prime Minister—is a regular feature of the criticism of the misapplication

of funds in the departments and institutions under the PM's various Ministries.

A notorious offender in this respect is the Building Materials Corporation.

A recent World Bank report, which drew attention to the flagrant way in which financial discipline is being flouted, commented that certain "powerful Ministers" seem to have sufficient political clout to get away with anything.

It is learnt that Opposition MPs intend to ask the Public Accounts Committee to find out what the Auditor General's department is doing about all this.

They say that if voted funds are misapplied in such propaganda exercises it is no wonder that the roads are in such disrepair and civic amenities woefully lacking.

Anti-Nuke Rally at Galle

The Sri Lanka Peace Council followed up its anti-nuclear exhibition and rally in Colombo on December 20 (see page 5) with a similar exhibition and rally at Galle.

Speakers at the rally, which was held on December 29 at the Town Hall premises, included Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero, Ganagama Saranankara Thero, Pallathara Sumanajothi Thero, Galle Gnana-basa Thero, Rev. Father K. Reuben Perera, Dr. W. Dahanayake, M. P. for Galle and former Prime Minister, Mr. Mansoor Marikkar, Richard Pathirane MP, Professor Bandusena Gunasekera, A. H. M. Anwer and SLPC Chairman, T. B. Subasinghe.

Further rallies will be held in other towns in January.



Leaders of recognised political parties start their discussions.

ALL-PARTIES TALKS ON JANUARY 10

The All-Parties Conference to work out a settlement in regard to ethnic problems within the framework of a united country will start work on January 10th 1984 and continue daily on a two-sessions basis until January 20th, exclusive of Sundays and public holidays. If necessary, its work will be extended.

This was unanimously decided by 8 recognised political parties which met on December 21st, 1983 at the Cabinet Office, Colombo, on the invitation of President J. R. Jayawardene.

It was also unanimously decided that the TULF should be invited to take part in this conference.

In reply to a request by the CPSL and several other parties that the JVP and NSSP should also be deproscribed and invited to attend, President Jayawardene said that he would consider doing so after he had consulted the security authorities.

It was also decided that the conference should be confined to recognised political parties. Other organisations that may wish to make representations could do so directly to President Jayawardene.

After a long discussion on the agenda, it was agreed that President Jayawardene would

send the participating parties an account of the discussions that had taken place in Colombo and New Delhi, together with his proposals, by the end of December 1983. These proposals, together with the observations and proposals of the other parties thereon, would form the subject matter for discussion at the conference.

It was further agreed that the conference would be held at the BMICH, Colombo.

Attendance

The preliminary discussion on December 22 was presided over by President Jayawardene.

The parties that took part were the United National Party, the SLFP, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the LSSP, the MEP, the Ceylon Workers Congress (Political Wing) the Democratic Workers Congress, and the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress.

Ministers Lalith Athulathmudali and M. H. Mohamed also attended as observers on behalf of the Cabinet of Ministers.

The CPSL delegation consisted of K. P. Silva, Pieter Keuneman, and Sarath Muttetuwegama.

Prime Minister Premadasa led the UNP delegation; Minister S Thondaman the

CWC delegation; Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena the MEP delegation; Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress delegation; and Mr. A. Aziz the DWC delegation.

The SLFP delegation consisted of Mr. K. B. Ratnayake,

Vice-President, and Mr. Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, General Secretary. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and Bernard Soysa represented the LSSP.

The preliminary meeting also agreed that all parties present would avoid any statements or activities that would be un-

helpful to restoring ethnic harmony in the present situation, and appealed to all other organisations and persons to do the same.

Party Leaders entering the conference hall.



A GOOD START, SAYS PIETER

The outcome of the preliminary discussion between the majority of the recognised political parties has provided a good start for the All-Parties Conference, which will take place between 10 and 20 January, 1984, said PIETER KEUNEMAN in the course of a public lecture at Kurunegala last week, under the auspices of the Kurunegala District Committee of the CPSL.

The CPSL, which had advocated the summoning of an All-Parties Conference as far back as May, 1983, was, Pieter Keuneman said, happy that this proposal had now been accepted by all parties as correct. If it had been accepted at the time it was made, much of what happened last July might have been avoided.

Mr. Keuneman said that the most important thing about the decision to summon an All-Parties Conference was that it marked a decisive shift away

from the hitherto ruling policy of the government to try to "solve" the ethnic problem through repression, coercion and military force and towards an attempt to work out a settlement of existing differences through the processes of dialogue and negotiation.

POSITIVE

There were four positive decisions taken by this preliminary meeting, he said.

The first was the unanimous agreement to invite the TULF to take part in the talks without any preconditions.

The second was the decision to confine the talks to recognised political parties and not make the proposed conference unworkable by including a host of heterogeneous organisations and persons, whose presence could only complicate and confuse issues.

Thirdly, the agreed agenda would enable the conference to concentrate on concrete

issues and problems rather than on general theoretical and programmatic positions.

And fourthly, the time frame decided upon showed that all parties realised that the need to reach decisions was urgent and should not be prolonged or delayed.

Regarding the matter of deproscribing the JVP and NSSP and inviting them to attend the conference as well, Pieter Keuneman said that he was glad that President Jayawardene had agreed to consider doing so, after consulting the security authorities. In his view, however, the decision was more a political than a security one, and he hoped President Jayawardene would act accordingly.

WATERSHED

Mr. Keuneman said that the traumatic racist violence of July had been a watershed event in political developments in this country.

There had been other such watershed events in the recent past.

Some of them, like the 1947 general strike, the 1953 Hartal and the electoral defeat of the UNP in 1956 had a positive and progressive content.

Others, like the attempted coup d'état of the early 1960s or the ultra-left and adventurist uprising of 1971, had had a different content.

But they all had one thing in common—namely, that, after them, political developments in this country were never the same as before.

The horrors of July 1983 had made all sober-minded and patriotic people realise that there could be no progress for Sri Lanka as a whole unless the ethnic problem was settled. He hoped that this fundamental realisation would guide the deliberations of the All-Parties talks in January.

All those who want a just settlement of the ethnic

problem should now speak out, he said. They should realise that, although thrown on the defensive, the racist forces were by no means defeated.

The crisis in ethnic relations, Pieter Keuneman said, was one aspect of an all-pervading crisis in Sri Lanka at the present time. Other acute fields in which this crisis manifested itself were the economy, political policies and institutions, foreign policy, law and order, the functioning of democratic processes, and the nature of the Sri Lanka state itself.

All these crises are inter-related and inter-acted on each other. They are all expressions of the general crisis of the policy of trying to develop Sri Lanka on capitalist lines at a time when capitalism as a world system was in the most prolonged and bitter crisis it had ever experienced and had begun to pass out of world history.

STOP N-ARMS SPREAD, SAYS COLOMBO RALLY

The development, stockpiling and deployment of nuclear weapons has added a new dimension to the dangers of war. To-day there are enough nuclear arsenals to kill every living person and thing on this earth several times over and wipe out the accumulated achievements of humanity.

Said Mr. T. W. RAJARATNAM, former judge of the Supreme Court, addressing a meeting at the Colombo Town Hall in support of the world-wide demand for the freezing, reduction and eventual banning of all nuclear weapons and in opposition to starting a new spiral in the nuclear arms race by the deployment of new Euromissiles by the US government.

US attempts to deploy new Euromissiles in Western Europe. While in Europe earlier in the year, she had herself taken part in some of these demonstrations and had watched others.

The tens of millions of people who marched in these demonstrations, she said, knew that the outbreak of a nuclear war would instantly wipe out a

the Kotte Maha Vihare, appealed to Buddhists and especially Buddhist monks to take an active part in the fight for peace, especially the fight to stop nuclear missiles being manufactured and deployed and to see that existing stockpiles were destroyed.

The horrors of the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II are still remembered and some of its deformed victims, who were lucky to escape annihilation, are still with us. But to-day's nuclear warheads and missiles carry many times more explosive

the fight to outlaw nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction should be actively pursued by people in every country of the world.

He said that doctors in the US and the USSR had formed an association to fight for a ban on nuclear weapons. To-day there were doctors from 32 countries represented in this organisation, whose last conference was attended by over 3,000 doctors throughout the world. Medical practitioners in Sri Lanka, who were concerned with preserving life and keeping people healthy, should be in the forefront of the fight against nuclear weapons and nuclear war.

increasing, as witnessed in the current budget.

All the world's great religions make peace one of the fundamental items of their teachings. Therefore, the followers of these religions should get together to support the world-wide fight for peace and against nuclear war. People in Sri Lanka, too, should follow the example set by people in other countries and conduct the fight for peace in keeping with the non-aligned status of the country.

Mr. L. ARIYAWANSA, General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Peace Council, said that, although the world had many fundamental and important problems to solve, the fight for peace and to stop a nuclear war had become the paramount issue of international affairs to-day.

Mr. T. B. SUBASINGHE, President of the Sri Lanka Peace Council, speaking from the chair, said that the US government's decision to go ahead with the deployment of its new Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe was a major danger to mankind.

The decision of the Reagan administration to intensify its deployment of nuclear weapons abroad was not confined to Europe. Asia, and especially the region of the Indian Ocean, could easily be next on the list.

The numerous and consistent initiatives taken by the Soviet Union to freeze, reduce and ban nuclear weapons had won the respect and support of all peace-loving peoples. But these initiatives had been rejected out of hand by the US government, which seemed to imagine that it could limit and win a nuclear war and wanted extensive deployment of nuclear



Buddhist priests at the anti-nuke rally.

The meeting was organised by the Sri Lanka Peace Council, with its President, Mr. T. B. SUBASINGHE, in the chair. An anti-nuclear missile exhibition was also organised at the venue of the meeting.

A notable feature of the meeting was the large numbers of Buddhist monks and women who attended it.

Mr. Rajaratnam said that it was a crime that more than one million US dollars was being spent every minute on augmenting nuclear stockpiles, when millions of people throughout the world still lived in poverty, ignorance and sickness, without proper shelter or access to clean water, and with hunger and squalor as a permanent feature of their lives.

In the United States, Mr. Rajaratnam said, nuclear weapons were being produced by private companies, whose sole aim is to make maximum profits. There was no other industry so profitable as the arms industry.

No such thing happened in the Soviet Union or other socialist countries, as there was no one there to benefit from war preparations or war. These countries, who had been in the forefront of the fight to reduce and abolish both nuclear and conventional weapons, were forced to rearm when they were threatened militarily by those who did not like their social system and wanted to replace it.

Ms. ROHINI WEERASINGHE, editress of "Kantha Handa" and a leader of the women's organisation called "Shakthi", said that the development and deployment of nuclear weapons had brought the world to the crossroads, where the continuation of human civilisation itself was in grave danger.

She described vividly the immense popular demonstrations in Europe against the

large section of humanity in the matter of a few hours, condemn the rest to slower death from radiation sickness, leukemia and other diseases, and poison drinking water and the atmosphere itself.

Women

Ms. Weerasinghe stressed the important part that women played in the contemporary peace struggles. She described the courage and determination of the women who picketed the nuclear base at Greenham Common in the UK, where Euromissiles would be stationed.

Women, she said, had several reasons to be against war, especially nuclear war. As mothers, they were concerned about their children and future generations. Most of the workers in the factories producing nuclear weapons were also women, who were increasingly subjected to radiation and other sicknesses. She called on the women of Sri Lanka to play an even more active part in the fight for peace and against nuclear war preparations.

Concluding a speech which drew rounds of applause from the audience, Ms. Weerasinghe said that the arms race was one of the greatest impediments to any social progress in the Third World. The cost of a single Trident submarine was enough to provide schools for over one million people.

Stressing that the nuclear danger in the Indian Ocean was increasing and already affecting Sri Lanka, Ms. Weerasinghe said that there should be no complacency that Sri Lanka could opt out of or escape the consequences of a nuclear holocaust if one is allowed to happen.

Monks

MADDOLUWANNE SObITHA THERO, incumbent of

power than the bombs dropped on these two Japanese cities and their power to kill, maim and destroy was terrible to contemplate.

If a nuclear war is allowed to break out, the whole world would be transformed into a giant funeral house and desert.

Doctors

PROFESSOR CARLO FONSEKA quoted a medical report published in 1982 to the effect that the world's stockpile

Workers

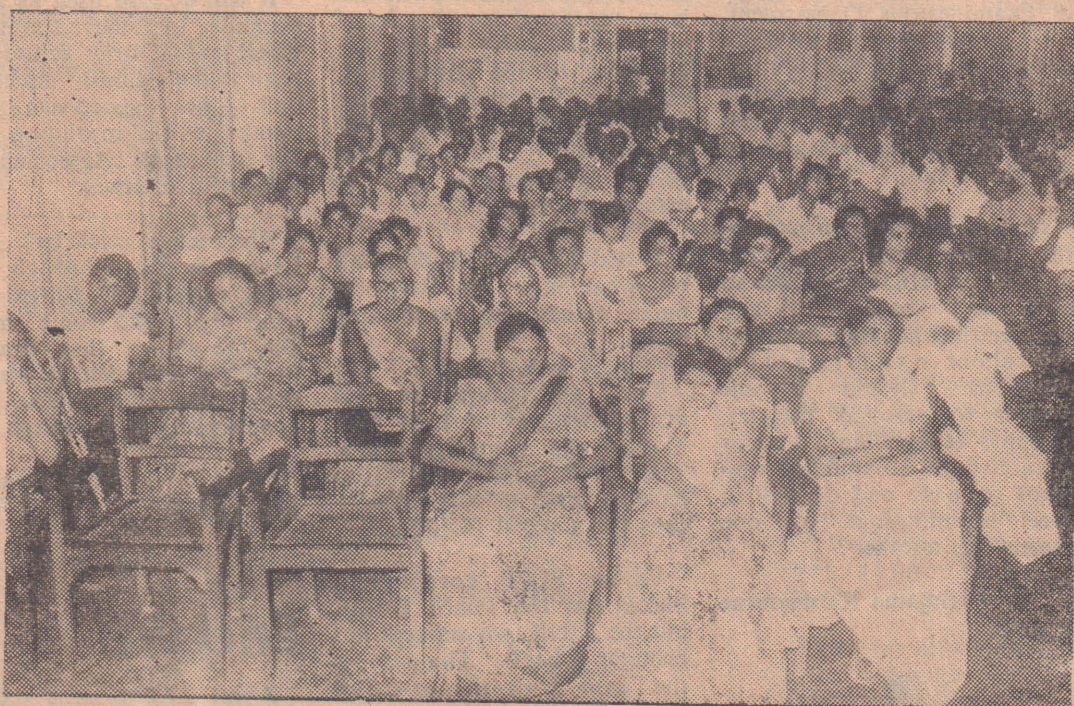
Dr. M. C. M. KALEEL, former Minister of Labour, President of the Muslim League and Vice-President of the UNP, said that the production, stockpiling and deployment of nuclear weapons were a crime against humanity.

He called on the trade unions, irrespective of their political allegiances, to refuse to service in any way any warship or plane carrying nuclear weapons that may call at any of Sri Lanka's harbours or airports.

Christians

Rev. Fr. TISSA BALASOORIYA O.M.I. said that Catholic priests and laymen throughout the world were active in the fight against nuclear weapons and for nuclear disarmament, together with co-religionists of other faiths.

He said that the big arms manufacturers in the capitalist countries, who found that the production of more and more deadly and sophisticated means of exterminating humanity



Women support the rally.

of nuclear weapons was to-day more than 50,000, with an average explosive capacity of three tons of TNT each.

No one could contemplate the destruction that could be caused if this stockpile was used. But the US government wanted to add to the stockpile and deploy new nuclear weapons all over the world. These efforts should be resisted and

was a very profitable business, were the main force behind the drive for nuclear war in these countries. They also wanted to involve Third World countries in these efforts, so that they could sell them more and more arms.

He drew attention to the fact that, even in Sri Lanka, expenditure on purchasing new arms and on the armed forces was

missiles so that it could intimidate other countries and force them to bow to its dictates.

The responsibility for the aggravation of the international situation and the sharpening of the danger of a nuclear holocaust lay with the aggressive circles of the US and the Reagan administration that promoted their interests.

WHY EXAM PAPERS LEAK OUT

The DAILY NEWS of December 23 carried a front-page lead story that a survey showed that students preferred to be taught at private tutorials rather than the state schools because the teaching at the tutorials was "better" and more likely to help them to pass their exams.

Significantly enough, all newspapers of the same date (other than the DAILY NEWS) reported that the O/L examination question paper in mathematics had leaked out and children attending certain private tutorials had been made aware of its contents in advance.

Is this the reason why students find the tutorials a better bet in passing examinations than the state schools?

The malpractices in the Department of Examination have often been spotlighted. This is not the first time that examination papers have "leaked out" to private tutorials, which use this advance information to equip their paying students with the necessary information to answer the questions.

The frantic competition for heavily restricted places in higher education (especially in scientific and technical subjects which offer the best prospects of lucrative employment afterwards) has helped to turn education into a business.

The private tutorials are taking full advantage of this, often employing on a after-hours basis teachers from the state schools who reserve their best efforts for the tutorials. Many of these teachers have become recruiting agents for the tutorials they teach in. Others help to set and correct examination papers.

Things have now come to such a sorry pass that officials of Examinations Department, on retirement, become principals or other high officials in private tutorials. A glaring recent case concerns a former head of the Department of Examinations.

When the connection between the Examinations Department and the private tutorials are so close and cosy, is it any wonder that advance information about examination questions should become known to selected tutorials, thereby enhancing their attractiveness to students who want to pass and do well in their examinations by one means or another?

Sujatha Karunaratne
Kandy.

Plea

As a Sinhalese who is proud to be one, I object most strongly to a false plea that is being increasingly used by racists to justify discrimination against the minorities.

Minister Cyril Mathew put this plea in the following way in a recent public speech. He said that, while the Tamils can go to India, the Muslims

to the Middle East, the Malays to Indonesia, and the Burghers to Holland, the Sinhalese have nowhere but Sri Lanka to go to.

I was most distressed to read in the newspapers that Mr. Anura Bandaranaike of the SLFP had repeated such sentiments at a public meeting.

When it comes to going to other countries to settle down, the rich Sinhalese are in no way second to the rich of any other community in this country.

This is especially so in regard to those with professional and scientific qualifications, often acquired at public expense through the system of free education.

It is also nonsense to believe that the minority communities can just pack up and depart en masse to their countries of origin in the past.

Most of these countries don't allow a free flow of immigrants, whatever their origin. India, too, is included in this category.

I also can't help noticing that the rich who emigrate do so to affluent capitalist countries and not to their countries of origin.

This realisation must make us learn to live and work together in peace and equality and jointly develop this beloved country which is now the common home of us all.

Palitha Illangatileke
Colombo 8.

Whose Policy?

The DAILY NEWS reports Anura Bandaranaike, who has been appointed as "Leader of the Opposition" with the blessings of the government, as telling Parliament that the foreign policy of the UNP government and previous SLFP governments are in essence the same.

I really cannot understand on what basis Mr. Bandaranaike makes this astonishing claim.

The government of his distinguished father took over Trincomalee from the British. The UNP government tries hard to lease it to the Americans for a naval facility.

Earlier SLFP governments kicked out the Peace Corps, but the UNP government has brought it back. The same is the case with the so-called "Asia Foundation".

The foreign policy of earlier governments of Anura's father and mother was not perfect. But they proceeded basically from the principles of the non-aligned movement of which Sri Lanka was a respected member at that time. But the UNP government, although paying lip service to non-alignment, has moved steadily away from these principles towards alignment with US imperialism

and its allies. In the non-aligned movement, Sri Lanka is now viewed with suspicion as a Trojan horse of imperialism within the movement and a supporter of such wreckers of non-alignment as Singapore.

Maybe Mr. Anura Bandaranaike's foreign (and domestic) policies are essentially similar to those of the UNP government. But he should not defame the good name of his late father by such self-serving and false assertions.

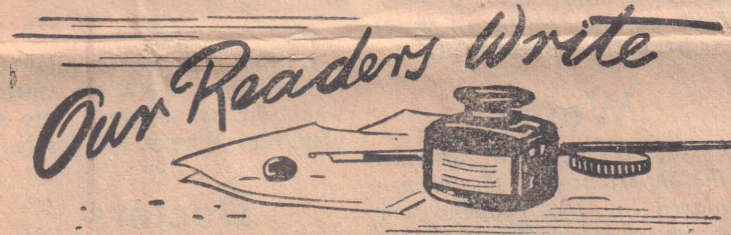
A. D. Liyanage
47, Huludagoda Road,
Mount Lavinia.

Cricket Ban

Maybe the prolonged ban that the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka imposed on the Sri Lankan cricketers who let the side (and the country) down by accepting (for pay) an invitation to play as a team in racist South Africa is somewhat extreme.

But I would nevertheless urge the Board and the Minister of Sports not to heed the present attempts in certain circles (including in Parliament) to get the ban removed or substantially reduced.

Tough action against the errant cricketers was necessary to stop any repetition of this shameful conduct. If it is



changed within a year, the whole desirable effect will be negated.

It will be also used as an example in other countries, where similar strict action has been taken against cricketers and other sportsmen who break the US resolution and the Gleneagles Agreement for a handful of silver.

The errant cricketers may have now run through the black money they earned and want to make some more. But the shame they brought on this country and its sportsmen still continues. This should never be forgotten.

Rex Fernando
Mt. Lavinia.

Enclave

Apart from the other details of his scathing exposure of the major "education business" run by the so-called "Colombo International School" management, Sarath Muttetuwegama pertinently raised in Parliament the question why the government wants to "nationalise" this select snob school, which has apparently been started in defiance of the educational and tax laws of this country.

He was quite right in asking why, instead of putting a stop

to all malpractices and irregularities of the "fast-food" merchant, now turned educationalist, the government wants instead to take over and run what Sarath called an "enclave" in our educational system.

Maybe the fees charged (Rs. 6,600 a term per pupil) have become a bit more than even our VIPs can afford. So by "nationalising" the school and letting it continue as a privileged enclave for the children of the wealthy, it may be possible to reduce fees to a level that the rich will consider "reasonable".

One also hears that a VVIP, whose daughter studies in the UK and who finds it difficult to pay the enhanced fees that Mrs. Thatcher's government now charges from non-British students, is waiting till the school is "nationalised" to bring his daughter back home.

Mabel Gunasekera
Colombo 13.

Poverty Line

I agree fully with Mr. Lakshman Jayakoddy MP who said in Parliament on December 22 that the official poverty line, now Rs. 300 a month, should be made Rs. 750.

Yet the fact remains that 65 per cent of our population

still live BELOW the poverty line of Rs. 300 per month as family income.

I earn Rs. 1000 a month and my wife, who also works, earns Rs. 600. But we find this combined family income insufficient to run our family of five.

Looking through our family budget, I find that most of what we earn goes on food, bus transport, medicines, school equipment and other bare necessities. We cannot afford luxuries or semi-luxuries. In the interests of economy, I have stopped smoking, and the family has almost stopped going to the cinema. I read other people's newspapers, and my wife and I have stopped buying any new clothes for ourselves. I borrow money from friends and relatives to pay for the children's private tuition, but, as my circle of loan-givers is limited and I cannot repay them on time as I grow deeper and deeper in debt, even this may soon have to be stopped.

If this is the plight of a middle-class man, the tale that can be told by those families who get less than Rs. 750 a month, let alone Rs. 300, must be agonising.

However, the problem is not one of changing the official poverty line to bring it into line with reality. Wages and incomes must be increased and the value of our devalued

money improved. And for this we need a change of government.

Asoka de Mel
Moratuwa.

Air Lanka

Congratulations to Sarath Muttetuwegama MP for his courageous exposure of the horrible state of affairs at Air Lanka.

After Air Ceylon was wound up, AIR LANKA was introduced with Singaporean collaboration, and held up as a model of how things would prosper if we went the Singapore way.

Rakkitha Wickramanayake, a deserter from Air Ceylon who had abandoned his plane, crew and passengers in Bangkok and disappeared to join Singapore Airlines, was brought back to head AIR LANKA on a monthly salary that far exceeded that of President Jayawardene, the head of state, himself. His only qualification, apart from the fact that he could fly a plane, seems to have been that he is a close kinsman of the President.

Rakkitha Wickremnayake has kept Air Lanka flying on the basis of huge foreign borrowing, underwritten by the government of Sri Lanka.

None of these loans have been repaid out of Air Lanka's earnings, because the whole operation has gone on at a big loss.

As a result, the Treasury has to foot the bill.

Air Lanka also advertises extensively in prestigious Western magazines. This many have put Mr. Wickremnayake "on the map" but it has hardly added to the passengers Air Lanka carries.

Sarath Muttetuwegama's needling of the Minister of Finance on this question compelled the latter to disclose that (1) owing to the foreign loans taken by Air Lanka and the Shipping Corporation, Sri Lanka's debt service rate, which he had informed Parliament was between 13 to 14 per cent, is really 24 per cent; and (2) even that staunch defender of private enterprise, the World Bank, thought that the goings-on at Air Lanka are a bit of too much. The extravagant salaries paid to selected and favourite employees of Air Lanka was another point raised.

Mr. Wickremnayake seems to have made a speciality out of deserting ships (especially airships) he has helped to sink. He publicly denied Sarath Muttetuwegama's charge that he was making an attempt to vamoose to the USA, only to find our indomitable Sarath tabling photostats of the applications made in this regard by Mr. Wickremnayake, on behalf of himself and his family.

It is high time that an end was put to this farce, which is causing big losses to this country. If we can't subsidise rice or public transport for the poor, why should we continue to subsidise (to the extent of lakhs of rupees) a person merely because he is a relative of President Jayawardene?

Ranjit Atukorale
Colombo 5.

Soviet Students Study Sinhala

The study of the Sinhala Language in the USSR started nearly 20 years ago.

Groups of students for the study of Sinhala have been enrolled approximately every five years beginning from 1964 in one of the country's colleges—the Asia and Africa Institute of Moscow State University.

At present seven students of this Institute are undergoing a five-year course of training in the Sinhala Language.

The travels of I. P. Minayev, an outstanding Russian orientalist, to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in 1874 marked the beginning of Sri Lanka studies in Russia. It was Sri Lanka's ancient culture and original art that aroused interest.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Sri Lanka in 1957 opened new opportunities for the promotion of bilateral economic and trade relations and the expansion of cultural exchanges. It became necessary to train Soviet specialists in Sri Lanka studies with the knowledge of the Sinhala language.

LESSONS

Lessons in Sinhala are conducted at the Institute's lecture-halls, the language laboratory and the library. At

the lecture-rooms, students study grammar, style, phonetics and morphology of the language, analyse texts, read and translate newspaper articles and speak Sinhala. In the Language laboratory the oral skills and pronunciation are practised. In the library and at home students work with a dictionary and enrich their vocabulary.

At the end of the studies, students can read in the original the works of well-known Sinhalese writers like Martin Wickramasinghe, Gunadasa Amarasekera and others.

Soviet students maintain friendly relations with the fellowship of students from Sri Lanka, studying in the Colleges of Moscow, and this also helps them learn Sinhala.

At the Institute the students are provided with a good linguistic training. But one can gain a complete command of the language only by talking to native speakers. Groups of students and trainees are therefore regularly exchanged between the USSR and Sri Lanka under the agreement between the Ministries.

This year a group of Soviet students was sent to get linguistic training at the University of Peradeniya. Back home, they recall with gratitude the Sri Lankan teachers who helped them get to know the Sinhala Language in its minutest details.

On completing the course of studies at the Institute, gradu-

ating students are assigned to work in various institutions, including publishing houses and research institutes.

At the Asia and Africa Institute, research is being done in language phonetics, typology of its words, and the works of Sinhalese writers are being translated into Russian. Teacher A. Poshebvakin is translating the "Guttilla Kavya," and teacher B. Volkensky, is translating Sinhalese folk tales. (APN)

20 Years of Soviet Journals in Sri Lanka

Two monthly magazines, *Soviet Deshaya* (in Sinhala) and *Soviet Nadu* (in Tamil), which are published by the Information Department of the USSR Embassy in Sri Lanka, celebrated the 20th anniversary of their continuous publication last week.

The two magazines have a joint circulation of over 50,000 copies, but more than five times that number read them. A number of readers' circles, whose members discuss the magazines' contents and make suggestions, exist all over Sri Lanka.

Profusely illustrated and attractively produced, the magazines sell out within days of their publication.

The chief guest at the celebration meeting, which was held at the Soviet Cultural House, Colombo, was Minister Vincent Perera.

The Minister said that, through his many visits to the USSR, he had got to know the great achievements of that country and its outlook on vital issues facing the world. He was a regular reader of *Soviet Deshaya* and was happy to have been associated over several years with various organisations promoting Sri Lanka-Soviet Friendship.

"SOVIET DESHAYA" and "SOVIET NADU", the Minister added, "have contributed considerably to the Sri Lanka people's understanding of the USSR and strengthened the bonds of friendship between the two peoples".

Soviet Ambassador Boris Kirnasovsky congratulated the two journals on having won the diploma "For promoting the noble cause of peace and friendship" awarded by the

Union of Friendship Societies with Foreign Countries in the USSR.

He said that the preservation of world peace was the most important and vital problem before all peoples, warned against the attempts of powerful forces in some countries to use the proliferation of nuclear missiles and gunboat diplomacy to promote their aims, and assured that "the Soviet Union will exert every effort for the attainment of the lofty aims of peace". He was glad that the Soviet Union and Sri Lanka shared similar views on many vital questions of securing world peace.

A meeting of representatives of the various readers' circles, which was held earlier, was addressed by Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, President of the Sri Lanka-Soviet Friendship League, Professor A. V. Suraweera of the University of Sri Jayawardenepura, Rev. Pallekande Ratnasara, lecturer of the University of Kalaniya, and Mr. Gunasena Vitharane, General Secretary of the Peoples' Writers Front.



The "Mtatsminda" dancers in action.

Soviet Georgian Ensemble is a Big Hit

"Mtatsminda" (Holy Mountain) dance and song ensemble from Soviet Georgia, which has just completed a tour of Sri Lanka, took the country by storm.

It played to large and enthusiastic crowds of several hundreds in Colombo and a number of other leading provincial towns. An hour-long telecast of their performance will also be shown over Rupavahini on January 1st.

The "Mtatsminda" group is mainly amateur. Most of them are students of the Tbilisi (Georgia's capital) State University. The ensemble consists of 15 (three of whom are girls). 12 of them are dancers and 3 are singers.

Joining the ensemble are the only two professionals, Alla and Robert Zalinashvili,

whose original and witty puppetry had their audiences in stitches of laughter and won them loud ovations.

Although an amateur ensemble, "Mtatsminda" is well-known in the USSR and abroad. It has performed in many European countries like the FRG, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Czechoslovakia and Norway. As in Sri Lanka, the reviews of their performances in the press of these countries have been warm and favourable.

Sri Lankan audiences were captivated by the Georgian dances, which combined highly energetic male dancing with the gliding grace of the female dancers, accompanied by a music that has many familiarities with that of Sri Lanka.

Their songs, including one sung in Sinhala and accompanied by a dance by two Sinhala girls, also drew loud applause.

The ensemble is one of many in Soviet Georgia, a Republic of around 5 million people but with more than 170,000 young people taking part in similar cultural ensembles. Many of the most talented ones later go on to the professional stage.

"Mtatsminda" visited Sri Lanka on the invitation of the Sri Lanka Soviet-Friendship Association. Its visit, in the opinion of most commentators, has further strengthened the cultural ties between Sri Lanka and the USSR.

A Painter from G.D.R.

The exhibition of oilpastels, water colours, and drawings by the GDR artist, Karl Erich Muller, which was held recently at the Art Gallery, Colombo, attracted much attention among art circles in Sri Lanka.

The exhibition was opened Prime Minister R. Premadasa, who commended the excellence, humanity and realism of the pictures on display. He expressed his appreciation of the fact that the artist had produced so many fine pictures of working people in Sri Lanka, as well as of the country's scenic splendours.

The Prime Minister recalled the vivid impressions he had formed on his recent visit to the GDR and requested the GDR's Ambassador in Sri Lanka, Mr. Dieter Phillip, who also spoke at the opening ceremony, to convey his greetings and good wishes to his counterpart, the Prime Minister of the GDR. He hoped that the exhibition would serve to strengthen the friendly relations that exist between Sri Lanka and the GDR.

A large number of Sri Lanka's well-known painters and outstanding cultural personalities were present at the opening ceremony.

The painter, Karl Erich Muller, who was also present, is a distinguished member of the GDR's Academy of Arts. Since 1966, he has specialised in painting people and scenes from the countries of the Indian sub-continent, especially India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan. He had made extensive visits to these countries on previous occasions, and this is his third working visit to Sri Lanka.

Particular striking were his paintings of Sri Lanka fishermen and their families, of Buddhist monks and temples, and of people at work in the fields and construction sites.

A notable part of the exhibition was his brilliant and dramatic sketches of Sri Lanka dancers and drummers in the course of their performances. Together with these were a striking oilpastel portrait of Sri Lanka's famous dancer, Vajira, and litho sketches of her dancing.

Prospects for All-Parties Talks

The eight recognised political parties that met on December 20 settled what President Jayawardene called the "modalities" of the proposed All-Parties Conference with an impressive show of realism and unanimity.

Indeed, insiders say that the only serious difference of opinion that arose on December 20 was between President Jayawardene and Prime Minister Premadasa, who led the UNP delegation, over the question whether the President should, *ab initio*, make his own proposals to the conference. But it did not take long, and was firmly settled by the President who announced that he would make proposals for the consideration of the parties.

It would, however, be naive to expect that there will be such smooth sailing when the parties begin their substantive work on January 10.

Apart from the fact that, as may be expected, some parties are wary of others and anxious not to make a false step that can be held against them afterwards, the sharp polarisations outside will undoubtedly impinge on the deliberations.

Hard core opinion among the Sinhalese has begun to challenge even the areas of agreement reached in the talks in India.

This is being done through articles in a section of the Sinhala newspapers, pamphlets, and speeches at what are paraded as routine Buddhist functions.

Of late, the hard core of various hues have gathered round a letter sent by certain leading Buddhist monks to the various parties. Several of these monks took part in the meeting with the President prior to the December 20 talks, but their letter implies that, while expressing confidence in the President, they are less impressed with proposals he has apparently outlined to them.

These hard core pressures have gained strength from the fact that they obviously receive support and assistance from a section of the UNP and the Cabinet. They hope to panic President Jayawardene into inaction through raising the bogey of inner-UNP and inner-government fissures, including moves against the President himself.

However, the President's position within the government seems to have been strengthened by several Ministers, apart from those from minority communities, who keep emphasising in public speeches that the economic problems have now become so critical that failure to work out an ethnic settlement can lead to the collapse of the government's entire economic strategy and seriously under-

mine the "stability" of the government itself.

Tamils

Another unknown factor is the role that the TULF will play at the talks.

It is fairly clear, from the statements of TULF leaders, that this party will accept the invitation to take part in the talks that start on January 10. Its leaders have also announced their intention to hold bilateral talks with other parties before the January 10 talks start, in order to acquaint them with what the TULF wishes to urge.

But exactly what this is—and whether the TULF leaders themselves have finally clarified their thinking on this matter—is still unknown. The TULF is obviously "walking on eggs", as the saying goes, in agreeing to set aside its cry for Eelam if an acceptable compromise is worked out which will permit the Tamils to live in dignity and safety in a united Sri Lanka.

The radical youth groups, which became a bug-bear of the TULF leaders during their prolonged but abortive talks with President Jayawardene in the past two years, have maintained a ringing silence.



And reports have it that the TULF's other bug-bear, the now released leadership of the TULF, has gone on record against any participation in the conference.

What haunts the TULF leadership is its growing inability to evolve a viable counter-strategy if no settlement is reached. The talk about "mass non-violent non-cooperation" smacks more of bravado than reality. Dependence on political support abroad has also reached its pinnacle, and is now being gradually eroded by the government's counter-campaign. The TULF leaders are also sensitive to the keen desire of India's leaders, including many in Tamilnad, for an ethnic settlement in Sri Lanka—a sentiment that is shared by the broad mass of Tamil opinion in this country.

However, despite the hard-liners on both sides and the discordant trends that still persist, the main thing that the all-parties conference has going for it is the desire of the vast mass of ordinary people of goodwill and reason, whatever their community, to see that even a temporary settlement is reached which will prevent the horrors and crimes of July 1983 from being repeated.

If the participants keep this firmly in the front of their minds, a positive outcome can emerge from the conference that starts on January 10.

S. L. F. P.

To judge by her public statement after her return from Yugoslavia, Mrs. B. has come back fighting fit. "I come to face the challenges", she proclaimed, after thanking the Yugoslav doctors for curing her. Her supporters within the party laid on a big reception for her.

The "challenges" that Mrs B. will have to face are not small ones. The inner-SLFP struggle has not subsided, even after she succeeded in getting the upper hand in its controlling bodies by taking advantage of certain subjective and tactical errors made by the radical elements within the party.

Mrs B's public stature had also increased by her deft and mature approach to the problems of restoring national harmony through the processes of political dialogue, from which the TULF should not be excluded.

But much of what she had gained on the eve of her departure was dissipated while

she was away. The major factor in this was the last-minute nomination of son Anura as Leader of the Opposition, a move which not only had the undisguised blessing, sponsorship and support of President Jayawardene but added weight to the charges of critics that family bandyism, more than democracy, counts for advance within the SLFP. Anura's unabashed pro-UNP orientation and his advocacy of co-operation with, more than opposition to, the government only made things worse.

In particular, Anura had publicly threatened the SLFP radicals with disciplinary action once his mother returned. This added grist to their mill for, as everyone knew, President Jayawardene had personally announced in public that he would actively help the "moderates" to gain ascendancy in the SLFP and see that the "Naxalites" are driven out.

The reply of the radicals was a series of meetings commemorating Hector Kobbekadduwa, in which the cavalier manner in which Mr. Kobbekadduwa had been treated by the SLFP leadership and which brought on his

resignation from the party just before his death were highlighted.

A notable feature of Mrs B's public statement after her return was the appeal for inner-party unity. But this seems to have come too late. All the news on the political grapevine indicates that something dramatic may happen this month, with either the radicals being expelled or with their pre-empting this by setting up a party of their own. If this happens, it will be the second major split in the SLFP in recent times and a setback to its political fortunes.

Program

The radicals have used the series of Kobbekadduwa meetings to mobilise the forces that support them.

They appear to have a strong base among the party cadre, the SLFP youth, and the radical lower middle class supporters of the party in the urban and rural areas. They also control the daily newspaper "Dinakara", which is now operating in new premises and under their direct management.

The main weakness of the radicals is their inability, up to now, to produce a clear and credible program which will distinguish their political stance from that of the SLFP right-wing.

This, in turn, has led to some eyebrow-raising in political circles over the overtures that the radicals have made both to the Maithripala faction and the MEP. It is however possible that these overtures are dictated more by a desire to find a short-cut to Parliamentary representation and an approved symbol than by political affinity.

The radicals have made it clear that they oppose the process of collaboration with the UNP espoused by Anura and the anti-Left stances to which both Anura and Mrs B. gave expression in recent times.

But as they have not gone further than this and produced a program, they have enabled the SLFP right wing and the monopoly press to dismiss their activities as motivated by purely subjective considerations or by squabbles within the Bandaranaike family.

Together with her appeal for party unity, Mrs B. has also called for unity against the UNP. The cutting edge of her statement, which highlights the all-pervading crisis that the country experiences after 6 years of UNP rule, seems directed towards those sections of the upper strata who are becoming increasingly critical of the present government's mismanagement of political and economic affairs, and especially the marked breakdown in law and order which threatens the sanctity of private property.

But the seriousness of her call for anti-UNP unity will be judged by whether she takes steps to put an end to

the pro-UNP orientation that son Anura has started to give the SLFP and to discontinue the anti-left and anti-communist stances she adopted before she left for Yugoslavia.

Trinco

Government, one learns, is poised to lease the "oil tank farm" at Trincomalee to an international consortium called OROLEUM/TRADINAF OIL TANKING, a West German, Swiss and Singapore combine.

The argument is that this combine is not, like former favourite the COASTAL CORPORATION, a major client of the US navy.

But apart from the fact that the West Germans and Singapore are far from neutral, COASTAL controls a big slice of OROLEUM through Coastal's Managing Director, Douglas Miller, who is also the big boss at Oroleum.

So its six of one and half a dozen of the other!

One of the big problems of the government and the Oil Corporation is how to get round the highly competitive bid made by the Indian Oil Corporation.

S. L. B. C.

From what one hears, the long drawn out campaign of the Premadasaites to remove JR-loyalist Eamon Kariyakarawana from chairmanship of the SLBC has made progress, and the latter is soon to be "promoted" as press secretary to the President.

Prime Minister Premadasa's top propaganda man, Evans Cooray, has already started his campaign to fill the vacancy. But a powerful contender is Tilak Ratnakara, who is backed by the JR-loyalists.

Their competition has already started a minor civil war within the SLBC. And the result may well be that Mr. Kariyakarawana will be the eventual victor and be asked to continue.

Roads

The UNP MP for Colombo Central, Jabir A. Cader, who took a major beating from Prime Minister Premadasa in Parliament some weeks back for allegedly diverting Duplication Road to preserve his Liberty Cinema, may soon have another chance to hit back.

The grapevine has it that the proposed 100-foot road between Stace Road and Polhengoda Bridge, has run into snags.

It will have to cut into a house that Mr. Premadasa built recently between Borella Junction and Kanatte Cemetery, and which he sold later to Aloysius Mudalali.

Efforts to shift the cut to the opposite side had to be abandoned.

So, one hears, the problem is solved by reducing the breadth of the proposed road between these points from 100 to 70 feet.