

# Forward

THE VIEW FROM THE LEFT

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## IN THIS ISSUE

The Next C. J. ?	—	—	p. 3
G. D. R. Anniversary	—	—	p. 4.5
By-election Round-up	—	—	p. 2
J. V. P's New Antics	—	—	p. 8
Mahaweli Mishaps	—	—	p. 3
Vatican vs. Liberation	—	—	p. 7
Censors	—	—	p. 8

## We Say.....

### By-Elections

The right-wing newspapers have begun to describe the Minneriya and Kundasale by-elections as a "prestige" fight between the SLFP and its breakaway, the SLMP.

By doing so, they hope to divert public attention from the fact that the main aim of these by-elections should be to demonstrate public disapproval of the reactionary and dangerous course on which the present UNP government has embarked.

In deciding to fill only two out of the over 20 seats in Parliament that have been vacant for over a year, the government has in no way demonstrated its commitment to the democratic right of the people to choose their representatives. If, as President Jayawardene claims, this is so, why did he choose to nominate yet another chit M. P. for Ambalangoda, which fell vacant at the same time?

It is clear that by holding token elections in selected constituencies the government is animated by totally different considerations. Its hopes to counteract criticism abroad about its undemocratic ways. But it also hopes at home to blunt the cutting edge of the mounting demand for a general election now.

But however restricted these by-elections are, they do give the voters an opportunity to demonstrate once again that the UNP's claim to have the support of the vast majority of the people is false. They should not fail to use this opportunity to the full.

In this connection the present SLFP leadership may well be asked just what game it hopes to play?

Mrs B. has publicly taken "credit" for flooding the two electorates with a deluge of so-called 'independent' candidates. What good does this serve except to make a mockery of the democratic process, confuse issues, divide the anti-government forces still more, and make things easier for the U.N.P.?

In recent times, Mrs B. has belatedly appealed to the anti-UNP parties to get together to oppose the UNP. But in these two by-elections, all other anti-UNP parties in southern Sri Lanka have, in fact, got together to support the SLMP candidates. Then why does the SLFP insist on setting itself in opposition to this united effort?

At Minneriya, the SLFP's main slogan is 'Save the Sinhalese'. One may ask:- from whom? From the Tamils? Or from Mrs Bandaranaike's acclaimed friend, Mrs Indira Gandhi? At Kundasale, the SLFP hopes to trade on an underground caste backlash to the equally undisguised caste politics of the U.N.P.

The UNP cannot, and should not, be fought with its own weapons of racism and caste. It is only the SLMP candidates, supported by the Left and radical parties, who are conducting a political struggle against the UNP and deserve support.

### Alert

One cannot really blame people who wonder whether President Jayawardene lives in a world of his own.

When he tells his chum Reagan that Sri Lanka under his government is a "five star democracy" and the FINANCIAL TIMES that his government is a democratic and socialist one that has privatised nothing, what else can anyone think?

But he is lucky that, unlike in America, Presidents here do not have to produce regular medical certificates of mental and physical fitness.

Otherwise he could find himself in the same embarrassing position as Reagan, whose doctors have dropped from his latest medical certificate the earlier statement that he is "a mentally alert, robust man who appears younger than his stated age".

# More Local Polls Ahead?

As another counter to the mounting demand that the general elections, due last year but postponed until 1989, must be held without delay, the government hopes to hold island-wide local government polls early next year.

*These elections will be for the new grass-roots elected units that the government hopes to initiate by law in the near future.*

They will be known as Pradeesha Mandalayas and will roughly cover a present A. G. A's division.

About 240 of them will be set up to replace the Village Councils and Town Councils that this government abolished some years ago when the present District Development Councils were set up.

*The re-establishment of grass-roots elected bodies was demanded by the LSSP and CPSL at the All-Parties Conference and became one of its few items of consensus earlier this year.*

As Prime Minister Premadasa has stoutly resisted doing away with his non-elected power base, the Gramodaya Mandalayas, these will be continued to appease him. But their functions are likely to be restricted to shramadana and village self-help activities. They will, however, remain unelected bodies, appointed from above, and a potential rival to the elected local bodies.

### REFORMED

The present D.D.Cs, which have been widely condemned, are likely to be reformed and given new powers and functions.

Government spokesmen have already announced that the new DDCs will also have the right to set up joint co-ordination bodies for prescribed functions, provided that their area of operation does not exceed present provincial boundaries.

As there has been universal opposition to the setting up of an apex Second Chamber on the lines of the former Senate, current government thinking is to shift position and make the chairmen and

vice-chairmen of the new DDCs members of the Second Chamber.

*Elections to the new DDCs will, however, not be held until much later in 1985.*

Elections will be held on the basis of the present system of so-called proportional representation, which has been widely criticised as a perversion of real P.R.

Both UNP and SLFP leaderships are jointly resisting the abolition or substantial reduction of the present high cut-off point of 12 1/2 per cent, which is designed to keep out smaller parties.

## PRESIDENT MEETS C.P.S.L.

President Jayawardene recently met a CPSL delegation, consisting of CPSL President Pieter Keuneman and Sarath Muttetuwegama MP.

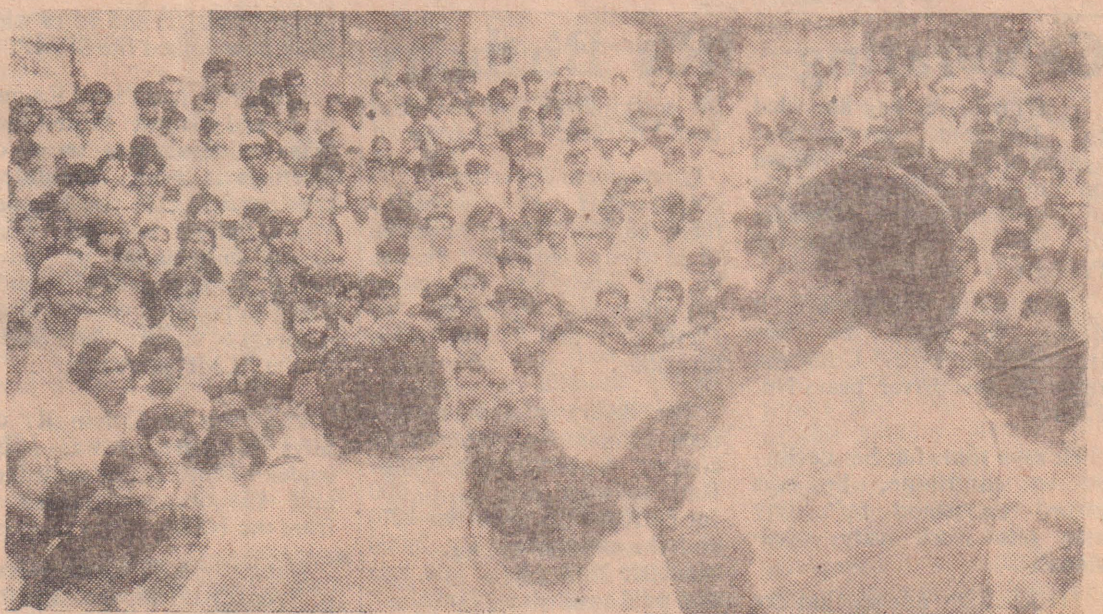
The meeting took place on the President's invitation. Associated with the President were National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali and Foreign Minister A. C. S. Hameed.

Similar meetings had taken place with other recognised political parties.

The President and Ministers outlined to the CPSL delega-

tion the main features of the government's proposed changes in the administrative and state structure to ease ethnic tensions. The delegation said that it would inform its Central Committee of the government's intentions.

The CPSL delegation also raised certain specific matters of the current situation in the north, such as the need to end the disruption of education in Point Pedro caused by the stationing of commandos in the school area, and the position regarding Tamil youth still in detention after mass arrests.



Vijaya Kumaratunga speaks to voters.



# By-election race enters last lap

I have just returned from a weekend (Friday 12th to Sunday 14th) tour of the Minneriya and Kundasale electorates, where the by-election campaign has entered its last lap and begun to warm up.

Paddy farming is the economic base of both constituencies, especially Minneriya which is perhaps the oldest agricultural "colony" in the country. Both have a bucolic charm and rural life goes on undisturbed by the blare of loudspeakers or the invasion of privacy by rival groups of canvassers.

At Minneriya, as is usual in the agricultural "colonies", the irrigation channels, now full as a result of the recent rains, are also full of after-work bathers, male and female, in the afternoon and evening, and knots of them gather at the boutiques and junctions to chat, listen to the radio, or exchange views on the by-election and the country's affairs.

Naturally, problems like the enhanced irrigation rates, the withdrawal of the fertiliser subsidy and the high costs of tractor hire loom large.

Both by-elections have boiled down to three-cornered fights between UNP, SLMP, and SLFP. There is no sign of the 48 "independent" candidates at Minneriya or the 36 of the same ilk at Kundasale—no posters, no canvassers, no meetings. None of the voters talk about them and, when asked whether they know them, usually say "No" or "Must be from Colombo". To judge from what is happening in these two

electorates, the government will have a hard time finding them if it seriously intends to go ahead with its proclaimed intention of changing the law retro-actively to inflict even heavier penalties on independent candidates who fail to poll more than one per cent of the vote.

## BIG GUNS

Up to this weekend, the main activities in both electorates have been concentrated on house-to-house canvassing, village meetings and the mini-meetings called "receptions". But last week the big guns of the three political forces in the fray started to fire, and the situation has started to warm up.

President Jayawardene addressed 18 mini-meetings for the UNP at Kundasale. The attendance was uneven, despite the use of the government's machinery to mobilise audiences.

The strategy of his round of meetings seemed to be that of mobilising votes for the UNP candidate, Mr. Wijesiri, outside the areas of Mr. Wijesiri so-called "caste bloc".

The President spent a lot of time explaining that his earlier clashes with Mr. Wijesiri, before the latter re-joined the UNP, were a thing of the past and assuring diehard UNPers that Mr. Wijesiri could be relied upon, despite his record of criss-crosses between government and opposition, including his journeys in and out of the SLFP.

Apart from this, the President mainly concentrated on telling the voters that, as the UNP would govern until 1989, they should return the UNP candidate if they want anything done for the electorate. He will address meetings in Minneriya next week.

Anura Bandaranaike has been the main standard-bearer of the SLFP campaign in both electorates. He was obviously discomfited by the black flag reception he got at Kundasale from "bloc" supporters of Mr. Wijesiri and by the garlands which turned out later to be made of grass and straw. Mr. Wijesiri's campaign to portray the leaders of the SLFP as caste-conscious and arrogant feudal aristocrats has obviously struck root.

By

NANDALAL JAYASENA

At Minneriya, young Mr. Bandaranaike has also proved to be not merely a damp squib but a liability. The main impression he left is that he is hell-bent to see that his brother-in-law, Vijaya Kumaratunge, the SLMP candidate, is not elected. But he has cut a poor figure in comparison.

## DOMINATE

As far as speakers go, the SLMP, supported by the CPSL, LSSP, MEP and NSSP dominated the week-end meetings and rallies.

Mr. T. B. Illangaratne and other SLMP leaders were there, including many former

Even those held in more remote parts of the Minneriya electorate had at least a couple of thousand present, most of whom had walked several miles to attend.

Vijaya Kumaratunge was the centre of attraction and large numbers of women and young people turned out to listen to and cheer him.

*Seeing women trek to the meetings reminded one forcibly of how they did the same to hear Mrs. B. in the 1960s and gave her a landslide victory. Vijaya also campaigned in Kundasale on Sunday the 14th, with a similar effect.*

## HIGH GEAR

The SLMP's election campaign at Minneriya has been in high gear from the day of nomination, and it is remarkable how the tempo is maintained and even accelerated.

Vijaya Kumaratunge is certainly calling the shots here, and both UNP and SLFP are reacting to his initiatives and breakthroughs.

The fight here has narrowed down to one between the SLMP and the UNP, with the SLFP's Ratne Deshapriya Senanayake pushed down to a poor third and relying mainly on loyalist SLFP pockets around Bakamuna and Elahera areas, which the SLMP has started to erode. The betting here is that Vijaya will win, but there are still ten days to go.

Although the UNP has its bloc vote at Minneriya, a good part has, out of disappointment and disgust at its record, deserted to the SLMP and a few to SLFP.

A feature of many of Vijaya's meetings are the numbers of former UNP supporters who have "crossed over" and want to proclaim the fact.

The UNP's choice of candidate is also problem for it. While it could have selected other applicants with more energy and mass acceptance, the candidate it finally chose—a former Cultivation Officer and AGA—lacks both.

On top of this his father, a former Coroner, is a positive liability and has to be restrained from trying to take over the UNP's campaign. UNPers say that votes for it are lost every time the Coroner appears.

There is also dissatisfaction with the final UNP choice among the supporters of the late Mr. C. P. de Silva and his brother, who succeeded him as MP, and the Senanayake loyalists, of whom there are a sizable group among the older UNP supporters here.

This is probably why the government newspapers have suddenly begun to publish articles full of praise for the UNP's forgotten men, D. S. Senanayake and C. P. de Silva.

The SLFP campaign at Minneriya, whose central slogan is that the only the SLFP can "save the Sinhalese", is not making much headway. Meeting-wise, the SLFP has little to offer apart from former Minister K. B. Ratnayake, who is known to be at odds with his party over the RTC and other issues, and an apologetic and crestfallen

Maithripala Senanayake who has to live down his earlier condemnation of Mrs. B's leadership of the SLFP.

At Kundasale, too, the SLFP's campaign is very low-key, with few meetings and infrequent appearances of the candidate.

Here the SLFP is mainly capitalising on an underground backlash among the "non-bloc" voters to the UNP's "bloc" policies. The main political struggle against the UNP is being fought around the candidature of the SLMP's Mahinda Senanayake and received a big lift after the week-end round of meeting.

A notable feature of the SLFP's efforts in both Minneriya and Kundasale is that both the candidates and main election workers are from the SLFP's so-called "China wing". Speculation is that they were selected to offset the radical challenge from the SLMP.

A common remark here is that the more the SLFP leadership moves to the right, the more its "China wing" supports it. In Kundasale, however, several feudal forces have thrown in their lot with the SLFP.

Thuggery, which was expected from the UNP, has not yet manifested itself but may develop in the next ten days if the UNP feels that its situation has become critical and it cannot rely on divisions among its opponents. The fact that it has brought in so many of its MPs to take charge of polling areas, especially at Minneriya, bodes no good. As things stand, its public show is ineffective. This correspondent saw its rally at Hingurakgodā. Minneriya's central town, on the 13th and there were not more than 300 present, despite the fact that two District Ministers were speakers.

However, new developments may be expected in the ten-day run up to polling day on October 25.

## Whose side is he on?

Lech Walesa, the so-called workers' and trade union leader of Poland who is so loved by the imperialists and their media, has come out in his true colours.

In an interview with Britain's SUNDAY MIRROR (29/7) on the British coal miners heroic months-long strike which has evoked a wave of solidarity from trade unionists all over the world, Walesa condemned picket-line "violence"—but by the miners, not the Police.

He said he had 'much respect' for Premier Margaret Thatcher and went on to add that "with such a wise and brave woman, Britain will find a solution to the strike".

So much for Walesa's "solidarity" with workers in action!



It's not only young voters who support Vijaya

## Celebrating JR's Birthday

A CTB driver has appealed to President Jayawardene against a punishment imposed on him because he had declined to contribute part of his wages to a JSS fund to celebrate the President's birthday.

Attached to the Galle CTB depot to which he was transferred from Udugama recently, this driver bears No. 2043.

He says that after he declined to contribute, he was placed on "stand by" duty and gets work very occasionally.

He has also added that the reason why he did not contribute this time was that

his contribution last year had been "misused" by the JSS.

Government departments and corporations also circulated their employees calling upon them to pay amounts of Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 each for newspaper advertisements greeting the President and for other functions.

The Insurance Corporation used funds to sponsor a concert where singer Victor Ratnayake was paid Rs. 10,000 for performing (voucher 236) and the announcer Rs. 2,000 (voucher 237). Rs. 3,000 was also paid towards a "Pinkama" at the Polwatte temple (voucher no. 238).

SLFP Ministers and M.Ps who have now joined the SLMP.

The CPSL had Pieter Keuneman and Sarath Muttetuwegama addressing a series of meetings in both electorates, together with C.P. youth leader Vajira Palpita and their fiery female duo Nanda de Silva and U. Kamalaseeli, who made a big impression on the large numbers of women who flocked to the SLMP meetings.

LSSP leader Colvin R. de Silva was there, as was MEP leader Dinesh Gunewardene and Vasudeva Nanayakkara from the NSSP.

Naturally, with such a galaxy of speaker talent, the SLMP's weekend rallies were large and enthusiastic.



# THE SCENE FROM HULTSDORP HILL

The present Chief Justice, Mr. N. D. M. Samarakoon, is due to relinquish office on October 22. On October 18 he will be facilitated at the Hotel Lanka Oberoi. The Colombo Law Society will felicitate him separately the same afternoon. On October 19 the customary ceremonial sitting to say him farewell will take place.

The retirement of Justice Samarakoon, who has become something of a celebrated if controversial figure, assumes special poignancy in view of the ongoing deliberations of a Select Committee of Parliament which is currently considering a resolution tabled by 51 UNP MPs asking that he should be impeached for a now widely-publicised speech he made at a prize-giving of a commercial tutoring some months ago.

The Select Committee is chaired by the Minister of National Security, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, and consists of 9 members, three of whom—i.e. Messrs Anura Bandaranaike, Sarath Muttetuwegama and Dinesh Gunewardena—are from the Opposition.

Mr. S. Nadesan Q. C. leads a team of lawyers who represent the Chief Justice before the Select Committee.

## EXTENSION

The Select Committee was appointed on September 6 and must report to Parliament within a month or ask Parliament for a further extension of time.

*The fact that the government has tabled a motion in Parliament asking that the Select Committee should be given an extension until October 25 to report indicates that its work is by no means over.*

Indeed, it is learnt that the Committee, by the time the motion was tabled, had not had the time to get down to its inquiry but was concerned mainly with procedural matters such as whether or not every member of the Committee should be present at every sitting as this Committee is more akin to a court conducting a trial than a fact-finding body. Hultsdorp circles say that this will not be the last of the many ticklish points of procedure that the Select Committee will have to sort out.

## TIME

But what intrigues Hultsdorp most about the work of

the Select Committee is its time schedule.

Under Parliament's Standing Orders, no motion for the removal of a judge can become effective unless (a) there is a finding of guilt on the allegation of misbehaviour contained in the motion of the 57 MPs and (b) one month has elapsed from the date that the report of the Select Committee is presented to Parliament.

It is now clear that, even if the Select Committee finishes its work and presents an adverse report on October 25, as now asked for by the government, it will be too late to remove the Chief Justice who would have retired from this office on October 22.

It is therefore unclear why the government persists in this exercise which has already earned it so much disfavour and adverse comment, both here and abroad. Has it some *ex-post facto* action up its sleeve? Or does it merely want to intimidate the judges who will remain lest any should think of following Mr. Samarakoon's independent example?

Rumour is also rife that moves may soon be afoot on the government's side to see whether a "patch-up" compromise may be possible, so as to avoid unpleasant confrontations after October 22.

## SUCCESSOR

Meanwhile, tongues in Hultsdorp are wagging over who will succeed Mr. Samarakoon.

Both President Jayawardene and his currently favourite Minister, Mr. Athulathmudali, have publicly announced that the next Chief Justice will be a Tamil.

This has led to the speculation that the present Attorney General, Mr. Siva Pasupathi, may be the next C. J., with a present judge of the Supreme Court taking the place of Attorney General, thereby following an earlier precedent set by the late Mr. Noel Gratiaen.

*But most people on Hultsdorp Hill think that the successor will be another Tamil, Mr. Justice Sharvananda, the next most senior judge, who would have called the Senior Puisne Judge in the old days.*

With so many problems on its plate, the government—

these circles feel—is unlikely to add to them by making an appointment from outside the cadre of the present Supreme Court. But these circles also say that, as the President's conduct in the matter of appointments and other questions has been so erratic and unpredictable

## By "Lex"

in recent times, anything can happen.

## REGRET

Whatever happens, there will be widespread regret among the members of the Bar—as well as among the general public—that Mr. Neville Samarakoon will depart as Chief Justice.

Before he joined the Bench, he was an eminent Q. C. with a lucrative practice. His elevation therefore cost him a considerable financial loss. Although never engaged in

active politics, his political sympathies before he became a judge were with the UNP and with President Jayawardene personally.

But once he took office, Mr. Samarakoon showed great independence, impartiality, courage and integrity. Despite not so secret pressures from the executive, he firmly upheld the independence and dignity of the Supreme Court and underscored its role as a protector of the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of citizens.

Few judges have had to undergo the traumatic experiences that Mr. Samarakoon has had to endure at the hands of the executive, and especially, to use his own phrase, of "one man in the administration".

Not least of these is the experience of a politically-motivated attempt at impeachment and of having to appear before a Parliamentary Select Committee virtually as an accused person.

In addition, he presided over the Supreme Court at a time when it was subjected to calculated public snubs by President Jayawardene and to demonstrations by JSS hooligans against S. C. judges whose judgements the government did not like. As a time when the government led all others in disrespect and violation of the rule of law, Mr. Samarakoon insisted on its observance in letter and spirit.

*By withstanding all this with great dignity and fortitude, Mr. Samarakoon has earned a fund of respect and goodwill that few Sri Lankan judges before him had.*

What he will do in his retirement is still unknown. But he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has earned a permanent place of honour in the history of the Supreme Court and the respect of so many people of diverse views, opinions and allegiances.

# Don't Give Land to Multi-Nationals

A public declaration pledging co-operation and support to the farmers of Moneragala, the Wellasa and Pelawatte, who are fighting to stop nearly 80,000 acres of public and private land in these areas being put at the disposal of three private sugar companies, whose main partners are foreign multinationals, has been signed by a wide stratum of well-known public personalities from different walks of life.

The declaration, which has been printed in three languages as a leaflet, is being distributed throughout the country in tens of thousands of copies.

Among the signatories are more than 37 well-known Buddhist monks, many of them Nayake Theras and including the Chief Sanganyaka of the Siyana and Pitigala Korales.

6 well-known Christian priests, both Catholic and Protestant, are also among the signatories. They include the President of the Sri Lanka Methodist Church. Two Catholic nuns, as well as Hindu and Muslim religious figures, have also signed.

Leaders of the CPSL, the LSSP, the SLMP the MEP and several other smaller parties have also signed. So, too, have the leaders of several youth league federations and women's organisations.

The general secretaries of leading trade union federations are also among the signatories. They include the CFTU, CFL, SLITUF, SLMTUF, GCSU, CTU, and several others. A number of peasant and student organisations have also added their names to the declaration.

So too have 14 university professors and lecturers.

## 3 COMPANIES

The declaration states that the government intends to acquire 12,000 acres of land at Moneragala for Moneragala Sugar Co., whose main shareholder is the Mehta International Co., an Indo-African joint venture.

In addition, peasants who occupy 42,000 acres of surrounding land will be compelled to give up their traditional cultivations and to concentrate solely on sugar production, selling their cane to the transnational company at prices it dictates.

At Pelawatte, too, 12,000 acres will be acquired for the Pelawatte Sugar Company, whose main shareholder is the British multinational, Bookers International Agricultural Co. Here, too, farmers in 12,000 acres of surrounding land will be compelled to cultivate sugar cane only and to sell it the private company at prices it sets.

The Nakkala Sugar Company, whose main share-

holder is the Dutch multinational H. F. A., will also have 6,000 acres acquired for it.

The signatories to the declaration oppose the government's decision to entrust the laudable aim of making Sri Lanka self-sufficient in sugar to foreign multinationals when sugar factories belonging to the government at Kantalai and Hingurana are "deteriorating day by day".

They also state that in the areas to be cleared for cultivation by the foreign companies are several Buddhist temples and ancient forests whose wanton clearing could produce environmental problems.

## Insurance to be Privatised

The government took the first step towards the privatisation of insurance, the latest in its series of privatisation measures, when the Cabinet decided last week to allow private insurance companies to operate once again.

Insurance was nationalised in 1961 due to the heavily exploitative character of a few foreign insurance companies that dominated this field and the shakiness and questionable conduct of a number of local private insurance companies.

The monopoly enjoyed since 1961 by the Insurance Corporation of Sri Lanka was first breached in March 1980 when the present government decided to set up another state corporation, the National Insurance Corporation.

After this came the next step when the Insurance Corporations were permitted to appoint selected private firms as their authorised agents.

The two state corporations have monopolised about two and half billion rupees worth of insurance for 22 years, and made considerable profits.

The biggest share of nationalised insurance has been held by the Insurance Corporation of Sri Lanka which maintains a general fund of Rs. 800

million and an insurance fund of Rs. 1,1334 million. In contrast, the recently formed National Insurance Corporation has a general fund of Rs. 100 million and a life insurance fund of Rs. 5 million.

No explanation has yet been given by the government as to why it has decided to allow the private sector once again to enter the profitable field of insurance in competition with the state corporations, which handle 800,000 policies (ICSL) and about 32,000 policies (NIC) respectively.

The government owned DAILY NEWS has, however, indicated editorially that it was a result of poor service and public relations.

The present decision is seen in political and business circles as an interim measure in the course of the eventual privatisation of insurance.

Such a transitional step has become necessary as few local capitalists or agency houses are at present in a position financially to find the funds to launch viable insurance companies, while the foreign insurance monopoly companies have not yet returned to survey the local insurance scene.

## Government Steps Back

The government took a step back in a matter before the Supreme Court where an adverse decision would have seriously crippled its normal methods of compelling employees of state departments and public corporations to join government-sponsored trade unions under threat of punitive or discriminatory action if they refused.

In this matter, male nurse K. Sarath Peiris, a member of the Public Services United Nurses Union, petitioned the Supreme Court, alleging that his constitutionally-guaranteed fundamental rights had been violated by a punitive transfer order as he had declined to join the UNP-sponsored Health Services Union.

Dr. S. D. M. Fernando, Director of Health Services, the Attorney General, and Hema Wijesinghe of the National Health Services Union were named as defendants in the petition.

Sarath Peiris stated that Hema Wijesinghe of the NHSU has influenced the Director to have him penally transferred as he had refused to join that trade union. He alleged that such pressures and penalties denied him his fundamental right to join any trade union of his choice.

But the Supreme Court could not make an order on the petition as the Director had second thoughts and cancelled the punitive transfer!



# A Socialist State Built

The German Democratic Republic, which celebrated the 35th anniversary of its inauguration on 7. October 1984, was built literally on the ruins of Hitler's fascist Third Reich.

In this short historical period, the GDR has become a modern socialist industrial state with a highly-developed agriculture.

With a population of 16.7 million, a little more than that of Sri Lanka, the GDR occupies the 100th place among world states in size. But it has already become, under its socialist system, among the first ten most important industrial countries in the world.

When the anti-Hitler coalition of states, and first and foremost the Soviet Union, smashed Hitler fascism in 1945, the German people were again given the opportunity to eradicate German imperialism once and for all, to punish those guilty of the Nazi war, and to abolish the historic injustice that had made the owners of the means of production the exploiters of the human labour force, thereby ending the contradiction between the profits of the monopolies and the interests and welfare of the working people.

The German working people also gained a great opportunity to defend and develop all the great humanist, democratic and cultural traditions that they had developed in centuries past, to carry forward and build on the impressive revolutionary legacy of the German workers' movement that the Hitlerites had temporarily cut short, and to make sure that another world war would never again start from German soil as it had twice before done in this century.

While the socialist Soviet Union stood ever ready to help such a process, the British, American and French leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition had different ideas. They wanted to restore capitalism in Germany, albeit in a secondary position, and to turn the whole of Germany into a spring-board for fresh adventures against the Soviet Union.

The result of these manoeuvres was that, after the three western powers had brought together for this purpose the three sectors of Germany that they occupied militarily, it was left to the German forces who had fought the Nazis in the underground resistance struggle to take the initiative to set up the GDR, the first socialist state of workers and farmers in the homeland of the great pioneers and teachers of scientific socialism, Marx and Engels.

The western powers and the revanchist circles in what became the Federal Republic of Germany did all they could to smash the G.D.R. Initially, they prophesied that the GDR could not last more than a few weeks, arguing that an economy destroyed by war and managed by workers could never work. When they found that their prophesies were going wrong, they started to destabilise and destroy the GDR in every way they could.

They began to provoke counter-revolutionary demonstrations and provocations, but these were soon defeated. Their attempts at economic blockade and at using West Berlin, situated in the midst of the GDR, as an advance base for economic sabotage were also nipped in the bud by the erection of the anti-fascist wall.

In blazing fury, the FRG revanchists, supported by their western patrons, proclaimed the so-called 'Hallstein doctrine' under which all diplomatic and economic contacts would be cut off with any state that recognised the GDR. Sri Lanka too was a victim of this pernicious and insolent doctrine. But in the end, this manoeuvre failed as well. The GDR became a member of the United Nations and is now recognised by around 131 states, in sharp contrast to the mere 23 or so that did so at the time Sri Lanka first did. In 1972, the FRG itself was compelled to sign a Basic Treaty with the GDR based on respect for the sovereignty of the two German states and the regulation of their mutual relations on the basis of peaceful co-existence

between states with different social systems.

With the help of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and using to the full the immense innate advantages of the socialist system and of co-operation and division of labour between socialist states, the G.D.R. has forged ahead into the future.

● Industrial production in the GDR is to-day thirteen times bigger than in 1949.

● The gross domestic product has increased from 24,000 million marks in 1949 to 210,000 million marks today.

● Foreign trade turnover has, in the same period, grown from 2,700 million marks to 145,000 million marks, or seventy times.

● In agriculture, although the acreage available is not big, grain production has increased by 90 per cent; the production of meat by 290 per cent; milk by 170 per cent; and eggs by 380 per cent.

Despite the fact that fertile soils are relatively few and natural conditions not the best, the GDR's agriculture and forestry have provided over 50 per cent of the primary raw materials of the entire economy for a number of years.

One has also to remember that many flourishing branches of industry today such as iron and steel, heavy engineering, agricultural engineering and ship-building did not exist when the GDR was first formed.

Branches which increase the output of the whole economy drastically—such as micro-electronics, robot engineering, automation, and cybernetics—are also forging ahead. Through these means, a position has been reached where 85 per cent of economic growth in recent years is due to increased labour productivity, where there have been big savings in the consumption of raw materials and power, where risks, hazards and drudgery in the industrial process have been reduced, and where rationalisation of work has been achieved without unemployment.

The GDR's co-operative farmers, firm allies of the workers in building its socialist state, have also increased agricultural productivity.

In 1982 and 1983, record harvests of ten million tons of grain each year were achieved, and production targets in relation to meat, milk and eggs over-fulfilled.

Agricultural price reforms have made it more profitable for the farmers to increase output, decrease material inputs, and achieve higher results.

At the same time, the socialist state takes care to see that retail prices of basic foodstuffs are not adversely affected.

The main target of the co-operative farmers under the current plan is to make imports of grain and fodder almost superfluous, both as a measure of economy and in response to the imperialist policies of high prices for imports and interest-rates, as well as embargoes.

## Welfare

The striking increase in all branches of national production has made it possible for the socialist GDR to establish an extensive system of social services and public welfare which have received favourable comment throughout the world.

One of these is the truly remarkable advances made in public housing.

When the GDR was formed, Germany was in ruins, devastated in World War Two, and the first task was to see that everyone had a roof over their heads. A special construction law was passed by the GDR's Parliament in 1950, one year after the formation of the new state, which laid down the basic guidelines of housing policy.

Between 1950 and 1970, 1.1 million houses or flats were built or modernised. In 1970 the GDR adopted a new housing programme which aimed at abolishing the housing problem as a social problem by 1990.

Between 1971 and 1983, a further two million dwellings have been built or refurbished. This means that a further six million of the GDR's 16.7 million inhabitants have received up to date housing. The GDR is confident that it will fulfil its target by 1990.

From the inception of the GDR, rents have been fixed by law. They vary from between 3 to 5 per cent of monthly income. Two thirds of all modern dwellings are allotted to working class families and one out of every five new dwellings to young couples. Families that want to build houses for themselves get interest-free housing loans.

## Turning Point in History

"The 35 years of the G.D.R.'s existence and the almost 40 years which have elapsed since the liberation from fascism have confirmed in a most emphatic and graphic manner that the founding of our state was indeed a turning point in the history of our nation and in the history of Europe".

This is said by H. E. DIETER PHILIPP, Ambassador of the German Democratic Republic in Sri Lanka, in a message on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the G.D.R.'s foundation.

The G.D.R., he said, "was created under the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) and with the fraternal help and solidarity of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries".

"This state", he added, "is characterised by political stability, dynamic economic development, social welfare and a high standard of living, a rich national culture and a widely acclaimed education system, a state that fights actively for peace and which occupies a respected position in the world".

"The fundamental lesson which the anti-fascist and democratic forces learned then still determines today the policy of the first German workers' and farmers' state: never again must a war start on German soil! In the 35 years of its existence the GDR has remained true to this legacy."

Mr Philipp added that the slogan "Struggle for peace—now more than ever", which "encapsulates our determination to protect what we have achieved in the past 35 years", also includes "our readiness to continue the political dialogue with all those forces endowed with a sense of responsibility and willingness to

reach understanding, which are honestly and constructively working for the preservation of peace".

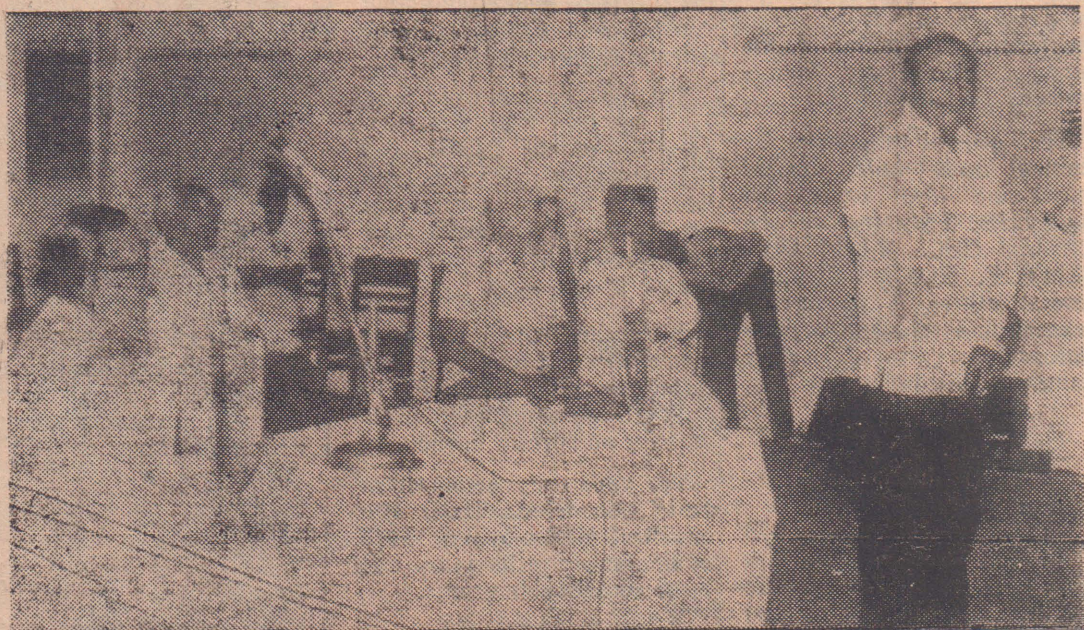
## Common Sense

The GDR's aim, he declared, is to bring about a "coalition of common sense", regardless of differences on other matters, "in order to avert the danger of nuclear inferno".

He expressed satisfaction that Sri Lanka and the GDR continue to "maintain long-standing mutual ties of friendship which show steady progress".

In this connection, Mr Philipp mentioned the cultural exchanges under the 1971 Agreement on Cultural Co-operation and the various protocols signed thereunder, the Agreements of Co-operation on Merchant Shipping and Avoidance of Double Taxation signed in 1983, and the mutual economic co-operation especially in the field of trade.

He mentioned also that the GDR, as a Vice-Chairman of the U.N. Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean has "alongside the other socialist states made efforts for the aim of peace in the Indian Ocean area, and has been supporting Sri Lanka's efforts for the convening of a conference on the Indian Ocean in Colombo".



Minister Montague Jayawickreme addresses the GDR's 35th anniversary meeting in Colombo. Others are (Left to Right) Mr. Jaya Pathirana (Chair), Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and Messrs Pieter Keuneman and K. P. Silva.



# uilt on Fascism's Ruins

Low fixed rents and a socially just system of allocation in state housing has meant that all dwellings in the GDR are occupied, unlike in the neighbouring FRG, where nearly a million dwellings remain unoccupied because people cannot afford to pay the rent, while thousands continue to live in slums and shanties.

## Education & Health

With the establishment of the GDR began a drastic and democratic reform of the educational system which Hitler's Nazis had fashioned to produce compliant stooges for their policies of racism, war preparations, and aggression. Unswerving anti-fascism, love of peace, and international understanding and solidarity formed the intellectual foundations of the GDR's school system.

Over the past 35 years, the GDR's educational system has expanded extremely rapidly. All children receive ten years free and compulsory schooling. When they leave school, they either learn a trade or continue to study for college or university. When they complete their education, a job is guaranteed to all of them.

Alongside formal education exists an elaborate system of vocational guidance and training, apprenticeship, and poly-technical facilities. In addition to education at all levels being free, students also receive stipends and, in the case of worker-students following correspondence courses, paid days off for their studies.

In addition to German, all students learn one compulsory

foreign language while another foreign language is optional. The system of compulsory physical education and of sports is one of the main reasons for the GDR's remarkable achievements at the Olympics and other international sports festivals.

Health services and health protection are also highly advanced in the GDR. An elaborate network of free health facilities is available through the republic, with one doctor to every 460 inhabitants and one dentist to every 1,522.

550 specialised hospitals are the apex of the health system. Treatment here is also free, irrespective of the sophistication of the medical appliances required. For instance, each year these hospitals conduct over 1,000 complicated heart operations; plant more than 7,000 heart pace-makers; carry out around 15,000 blood cleansings at dialysis centres; and do over 150 kidney transplants.

The ambulance services and rapid medical aid services also play a major role in saving life, particularly in the case of serious accidents and acute diseases. By next year, the GDR will set up emergency stations and intensive-therapy departments in all parts of the republic.

A discernible result of these health services and the system of on-the-job health care is the fact that, in the 35 years of the GDR, life expectancy has gone up by five years in the case of males and by seven years in the case of females.

Infant mortality has been reduced from 72.2 per 1,000 live births in 1942 to 11 in 1983, and maternal mortality from 15.5 per 10,000 births in 1949 to 1.2 in 1943.

## Peace & Anti-Colonialism

As a socialist state, the GDR is also a peaceful and anti-colonial one.

From its inception, the GDR's guiding principle is to ensure that never again will a world war start from German soil, where two world wars in this century began.

It has supported all the major peace initiatives of the Soviet Union, the socialist community and the Warsaw Pact, of which it is an important member.

It has also made many initiatives and proposals of its own for peace, disarmament and detente. Among these is its offer to join with other states, both east and west, to make Central Europe a nuclear free zone.

The GDR has also worked to normalise relations with the FRG, based on respect for the frontiers established after World War II, on mutual adherence to the Basic Treaty that the two German states signed in 1972 to regulate their relations, and on non-interference in each others' internal affairs. It has exposed and opposed all attempts by revanchist and neo-fascist circles in the FRG to destroy these basic principles.

On the GDR's 35th anniversary, celebrated at a time when the danger of a nuclear war unleashed by the USA and its NATO allies is extremely great and when the Reagan administration has sought to alter the strategic balance by stationing Pershing II and Cruise missiles in western Europe, it is a source of great satisfaction and inspiration for the world forces fighting to maintain peace that there is a stable and peaceful government like the GDR in the centre of Europe.

Anti-imperialist solidarity with the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, who are fighting for national liberation or for protecting and developing the independence they have won, has all along been a keystone of both state policy and of social and political life in the GDR.

The GDR has given moral, political and material aid to these fighters, and assisted the newly-free countries to overcome the economic backwardness they inherited from colonialism. Sri Lanka, too, has been a beneficiary of such aid, as witnessed in the textile

complexes at Thulhiriya and Mattegama and other projects.

All the great traditions of the German people are being continued and fostered in the GDR, after their temporary suppression by German imperialism and nazism. These include its strong humanist traditions, its internationally respected traditions in the fields of science, philosophy and culture, and the great revolutionary traditions of the German working class.

The architect of all the advances and successes of the GDR and its people has been its Marxist-Leninist Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) which leads its state and public policies. This has made the SED a highly respected force in the socialist community and the international communist and workers movement.

On its 35th anniversary, the G.D.R. has stood the test and, in the words of its party and state leader, Erich Honecker, "lived up to its responsibility as a pillar of peace and socialism in Europe".

## GDR Prices Remain Stable

In the socialist GDR, as in other socialist countries, the prices of most basic goods, tariffs and charges have remained stable.

This has been achieved even though the GDR's economy has been exposed to the increased prices of raw materials and finished goods imported from the capitalist countries, where inflation is rampant.

The GDR has refused to compensate for this by reducing the level of its food and social subsidies.

Instead, it has concentrated on pushing up labour productivity by basing itself on high technology and the rationalisation of production. As a result, labour productivity has increased at an annual average rate of 4.2 per cent between 1970 and 1982.

But, unlike in the capitalist countries where rationalisation results in large-scale unemployment, socialist rationalisation in the GDR has caused neither dismissals nor short-time labour.

Unemployment not only continues to be unknown, but the right to work is legally guaranteed. Workers made redundant by rationalisation are transferred, by mutual agreement, to other useful work without any loss of earnings. Often, they earn more than they did earlier.

The socialist system of the GDR and its economic integration in the world socialist community are another reason why the cost of goods and services remains stable in the GDR over a long period.

For instance, between 1960 and 1983, the prices of such basic consumption goods as bread, butter, potatoes, meat and liver sausage have remained the same. So, too has the price of electricity and gas.

Rents have remained stable for decades, and have been reduced in certain categories of older buildings. Rent as a percentage of a family's net income has been declining as earned incomes rise.

Workers to-day pay 2.8 per cent of their net monthly family incomes on rent, while cooperative farmers pay 1.1 per cent. This process continues alongside an intensified housing programme where 6 million of the GDR's 16.7 million inhabitants have received new or upgraded flats and houses between 1971 and 1983, and the GDR aims to solve the social problem of housing by 1990.

Telephone and postal rates have also remained the same over the past 23 years. The cost of tickets for theatre, cinema and other forms of entertainment and sport remain stable. Education at all levels and health care remain free of charge.

At the same time, the wages and monetary incomes of the population have been rising steadily year by year.

## Sri Lanka Celebrates 35th Anniversary

Extensive celebrations have been held in Sri Lanka to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic.

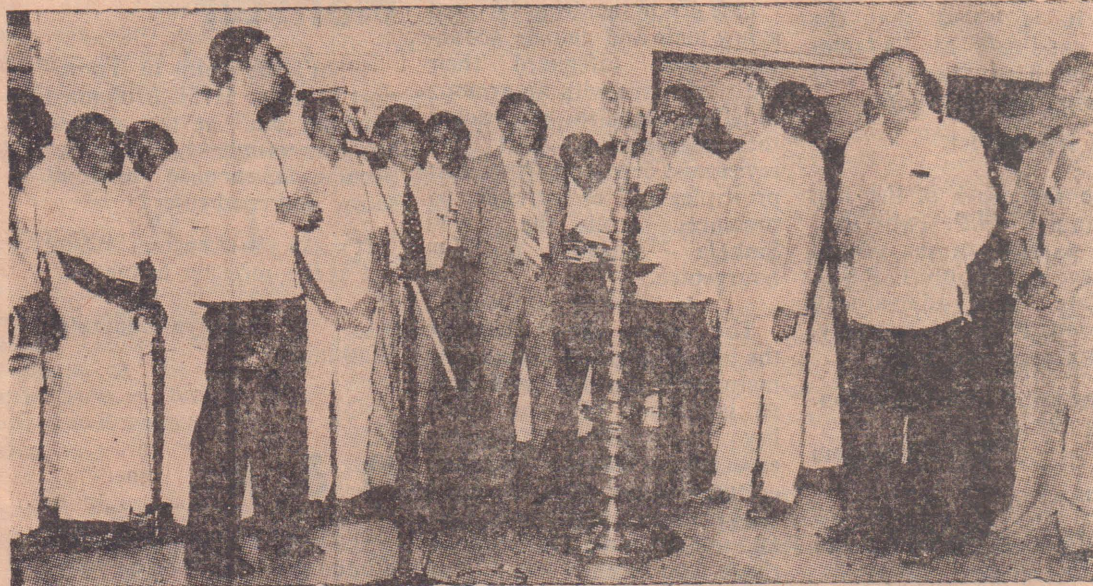
On October 7, leading participants of the many Sri Lanka-GDR Friendship societies throughout the country met in Colombo to celebrate the event.

The meeting was addressed by Minister Montague Jayawickreme, the GDR Ambassador Mr. Dieter Phillip, Dr. Colvin R de Silva, Messrs Maitripala Senanayake MP, T. B. Illangaratne, Pieter Keuneman and Gunasena Vitharne.

It was followed by a concert organised by Premasiri

The exhibition was organised by the Sri Lanka-GDR Friendship Association, the GDR Embassy, and the Sri Lanka National Library Services Board.

On October 10, a ceremony took place where Minister of Educational Services, Lionel Jayatileke, distributed diplomas to Sri Lankan children



Ministers Ranil Wickremasinghe and Montague Jayawickreme, with GDR Ambassador Dieter Phillip, at the opening of the exhibition of children's books from the GDR.

On October 8, a celebratory public meeting, organised by the Sri Lanka-GDR Friendship Association, was held at the Public Library Hall, Colombo, and presided over by former judge of the Supreme Court, Mr. Jaya Pathirane.

Khemadasa and Nanda Balasooriya.

On the same day, an exhibition of children's books and paintings from the GDR was opened by Minister of Education Ranil Wickremasinghe.

who had won prizes at the children's art exhibition in the GDR.

Outstation branches of the Sri Lanka-GDR Friendship Association also organised celebrations in many towns throughout the country in this connection.



# A TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED BAN

The blanket censorship that the government has imposed on news and comment other than official handouts on the proceedings of what is left of the Round Table Conference is totally unjustified.

The views of the political parties, the public organisations, the newspapers, and private citizens on the various proposals and suggestions made will be unknown. The people will therefore have no way of making an informed judgement on them.

Only the views of the government and what the government wants known will be communicated.

This may suit President Jayawardene and the government who have been trying to pretend that there is a "consensus" at the R.T.C. or among the main political parties when, in fact, none exists.

For example, President Jayawardene has all along insisted that there is a "consensus" of approval of his Second Chamber proposal. But all other political parties, whether in the conference or not, have categorically rejected this proposal, as have the Buddhist and Hindu organisations.

Now the government is committed to producing a draft law which outlines its views, in the light of the R.T.C. proceedings. Will this also be presented to the country and Parliament as a "consensus", even if none exists?

Even when the draft law is debated-presumably-in Parliament, only the parties represented there will be able to have their views known if the government doesn't censor that, too. The views of the other parties and organisations, including the Tamil parties which are excluded from Parliament, will be unknown, except perhaps to the few who read foreign newspapers or listen to foreign broadcasts.

Important members of the government like the President and the Prime Minister have all along said that no ethnic settlement can be lasting unless the majority in the main ethnic communities accept it as just and reasonable. How can this happen when the same government uses emergency powers to prevent the people from getting to know what is happening and what the different views and positions are?

H. S. Samarasinghe  
Colombo 9.

## Which War?

We don't hear much in our media about the Minister of Educational Services, Mr. Lionel Jayatileke, but he said a mouthful when he pointed out that Sri Lanka's real war is against poverty, rather than terrorism.

He should convince his Ministerial colleagues of this vital truth before they go ahead with the extra Rs. 5

billion that they plan to spend on arms in next year's budget, while cutting down on social services, public welfare, and development.

Let him tell his colleagues that less poverty will also mean less cause for terrorism.

Matilda Gomez  
Colombo-13.

## Roads

Some time back Prime Minister Premadasa made an announcement that he intended to improve the condition of our roads, which had degenerated badly, by "decentralising" their maintenance.

The job was handed over to District Ministers and government M.P.s who were given a free hand in selecting contractors to do the job.

Many photographs were published of these worthy gentlemen of the UNP doing shramadana work on the roads and filling up the potholes.

But all that is past history.



I don't know whether or by how much those responsible for road maintenance nowadays are up on the "decentralised" deal, but the condition of the roads has become even worse.

No wonder the "Round about" Premadasa of 1977 has become known as the "Pothole" Premadasa of to-day!

T. G. Gunasiri  
Battaramulla.

## Muslims

The problems that are now coming to the surface in the All-Ceylon Muslim League are entirely due to the opportunist conduct of the UNP's Muslim M. Ps, and even such leaders as Dr. M. C. M. Kaleel.

When the UNP government chose to allow Israel to open an "interests section" in Sri Lanka and induct Mossad and Shin Beth, these leaders were forced to choose between the UNP and the mass of Muslims in whose name they were wont to speak.

They chose the UNP rather than the mass of Muslims who strongly condemned and opposed this outrageous step. When President Jayawardene cracked the whip and openly threatened them at the UNP's Executive Committee meeting to toe the line or get out, these leaders preferred to keep their positions by keeping their mouths shut.

Now the day of reckoning has dawned. The Central Committee of the All-Ceylon Muslim League has endorsed unanimously the earlier decision of the League's Working Committee condemning the opening of the interests section.

All the pleas of UNP Muslim M.P.s like Mr. M. I. Udduma Lebbe or the assurances of Dr. Kaleel that he had explained the views of the Muslims on this matter to President Jayawardene, who "appreciated" their position, failed to make any impression.

Feeling is growing within the Muslim League that it should sever its links with the UNP. More and more Muslims have come to realise from experience that the UNP is unable and unwilling to espouse their viewpoint or look after their interests.

This is the reason why the rank and file of the Muslim League are now pressing that it should de-link from the UNP and apply for recognition as an independent political party.

A resolution to this effect has been referred to the Working Committee. It is being strongly opposed by

The Maldives has been Sri Lanka's one and only dependency. But President Jayoom is now the head of an independent republic and friendly neighbour of Sri Lanka to boot.

Could it be ignorance or a "colonial mentality", to use Minister Athulathmudali's frequent phrase, that prompted such disrespect on our official T. V.?

A. M. Fareed  
Dematagoda

## Symbols

Reference Gamini's last page comment in your last issue that many of the new symbols that the Elections Commission had hurriedly to gazette in order to cope with the rush of last-minute independent candidates at Minneriya and Kundasale would be unfamiliar to the voters of these rural constituencies, ATHTHA'S irrepressible cartoonist YOONOOS has suggested some others more familiar in our "five star democracy" such as the bicycle chain, the heroin needle, and so on.

What about others like a devalued rupee, a pothole, a disappearing ballot box, a gag, a burnt-out library, two half-coconuts, a five-star hotel, a shanty, a malnourished child, a broken promise, a pair of handcuffs, or a 8 lb bag of free cereals.

R. C. Premaratne  
Balangoda.

## "Crippled Minds"

The mainstream left movement in our country has been subjected in the Sinhala press to a double-edged attack from two separate groups, each claiming to uphold Marxism in its pristine glory.

One group, centring around a few male and female academics who safeguard their political virtue with an armour of left-sectarianism, reproaches the mainstream Left for revisionist departure from first principles and of surrender to pressures from the new Sinhala - educated petit-bourgeoisie.

The other, while jibing at the first group, also attacks the mainstream Left for its supposed ignorance of, and hostility to, national culture, especially Sinhala Buddhist culture. Their most eloquent spokesman are mathematicians and soil chemists, not to speak those who recently fell foul of of Buddhist opinion for misuse of the Buddha image.

One welcomes attempts to use the tools of Marxist analysis to examine and interpret Sri Lanka's past and current political and cultural situation. But one must be wary when some of these neo-Marxists have chips on their shoulders because the Left parties did not take them or their parents

seriously, and when one at least has dubious UNP connections.

Sri Lanka - and maybe the traditional Left - may gain from such an exercise if those who preach from the side lines made a serious study of the constantly developing science of Marxism-Leninism rather than relying on shibboleths served up in "concise summaries" by its opponents, not to speak of taking an active part in the struggles of the workers and allied forces.

Karl Marx, when confronted with what some others were saying in his name, exclaimed: "Save me from these Marxists"! If he were alive and in Sri Lanka to-day, he may well have repeated this remark. Or perhaps he would have preferred to repeat a comment from another internationally known social scientist that "these childish conspiracies and vituperation come from crippled minds which reflect the sickness of our society".

S. Abeyratne  
Mt. Lavinia.

## Phone

The news that the Department of Telecommunications intends to sue the Colombo Municipality for several millions rupees to defray the cost of repair of damaged underground telephone cables made necessary by the laying of water pipes and mains is tragically comic.

Apart from the hundreds of telephones that have gone - and remain - "dead" and the dust and other inconveniences to which residents and commuters in the city of Colombo are subjected, why can't there be even minimum co-ordination between various state and semi-state institutions?

Lawsuits are no substitute for service.

Dilani Jayawickreme  
Colombo 3.

## Monster

What's the point in Transport Minister M. H. Mohamed "lashing out" at the private bus owners whose buses have become a menace to road safety and road rules?

It's like Frankenstein lashing out at the monster he created!

Daya Guneratne  
Wadduwa.

## Q & A

Q. Why are Minneriya and Kundasale by-elections historic?

A. Because they are the first public polls, since the 1977 general elections for which Opposition Leader Anura Bandaranaike has chosen to remain in the country for any length of time.

Shanthi Parakrama  
Kandy.

## Correction

In the "Letter from Jaffna" published in your last issue (1/10) it is stated that the CPSL candidate at Vadamarachy has been "executed" by "terrorist" youth groups.

This is incorrect.

Since the death of the late P. Kandiah M.P. (who died from natural causes several years ago), the only C.P.S.L. candidate at Vadamarachy has been P. Kumaraswamy, who is very much alive.

Please publish the correction.

A. Vaidialingam

Jaffna;

(The error in our contributed article is regretted.-Ed.)

## Background

I could not believe my eyes and ears when, on TV interviewer Dayananda de Silva asked visiting President Gayoom of the Maldives to tell viewers "something about your background".



# The Vatican versus Liberation

The publication on September 3 of a Vatican document entitled "An Instruction of Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" has been the most undistinguished move to date by the present head of the Roman Catholic Church to drag its members into opposing or trying to reverse the course of social progress.

The document demands that priests and other workers for the Church cease their participation in or support for the mass movements for genuine social changes.

Over the past two decades one of the most positive and encouraging trends in the colonial or semi-colonial countries of Latin America and parts of Africa and Asia has been the emergence of groupings in both Catholic and Protestant churches that have aligned themselves militantly with the struggles of the poor and oppressed for national liberation and social emancipation.

The phenomenon of the "revolutionary priests" has become an inspiration to many peasants and workers, in trade unions, in political movements, and even in armed struggle.

For many, this gave new content and meaning to their religious beliefs and to the Church in which they were enrolled, a Catholic Church that had been part and parcel of the social structure that

oppressed them and that most often preached acceptance of their lot in an oppressive social system.

On the other hand, for a good many of the priests and theologians who argued for such an active social role for themselves and the Church (formulating an increasingly specific "theology of liberation,") a failure to adopt such a position could mean a discrediting of, and even a mass turning away of believers from, the Church as revolutionary upheavals became irresistible.

## ALARMED

From his inception as Pope, John Paul II has manoeuvred to halt this trend, alarmed by its tendency to accept the logic of the struggle against poverty and oppression—that these can be ended only by getting rid of imperialist domination and ruthless capitalist exploitation.

Logically, such acceptance led to alliances, united fronts common programs with others who had the same aims, including Communists and others influenced by Marxist analysis and solutions.

On August 10 the Pope's Vatican channels called for the three priests who are Ministers in the Nicaraguan government to quit their posts and withdraw from political life.

On August 22 the Pope himself sent a message to an African Catholic bishop's conference meeting in Zimbabwe, in which he said: "The solidarity of the Church with the poor, with the victims of unjust laws or unjust social and economic structures, goes without saying."

Unfortunately, the Church has gone without saying anything about such injustice in the cases of innumerable brutal and tyrannical structures and regimes.

## A Poet of Revolt

The fourth death anniversary of Palestine's greatest poet, ABU SALMA, was celebrated on October 11.

Internationally celebrated, he introduced resistance poetry into Palestinian literature. His flaming poems were a great source of inspiration and moral strength to the Palestinians in their just fight to regain the homeland that was taken from them by Zionist aggressors and their imperialist champions, and to establish their own state.

ABU SALMA was also a distinguished and leading personality in the World Peace Council and the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, which awarded him its prestigious Lotus Prize in 1978.

He was 75 years old when he died.

Abu Salma's home will be converted into a culture centre and become Palestine's first museum. PLO leader Yassir Arafat honoured Abu Salma with the emblem of the Palestinian Revolution.

It is precisely why the concept of "liberation theology" had to be developed, to achieve solidarity with the poor.

But, the Pope went on: "The forms in which this solidarity is realized cannot be dictated by an analysis based on class distinctions and class struggle."

## COMMUNISTS

In the statements emanating from the Vatican it is clear that the Pope is not against political activity for the Church and its priests, but only activity in common cause with Communists.

It is not surprising that one of the key areas selected by the Pope for enunciating his doctrine is Nicaragua, or that the position he has taken

concerning the role of some priests in that country should coincide with the position of the Reagan Administration in seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan government.

Nor is it remarkable that the anti-Communism of the Pope, professedly for moral reasons, and the attempt by Reagan to give a moral hue to his own anti-Communism, should similarly coincide.

In the upshot, the beneficiaries of the Pope's attack on "liberation theology" can only be the imperialists and the neo-colonial or semi-feudal ruling groups.

By disrupting or undermining the broad democratic movements and the popular alliances that are essential for

removing these exploiters from the backs of the people, the Pope serves the interests of the Reagans and their anti-liberation policies.

Enforcing the new doctrine on the Church radicals and revolutionaries who have already committed themselves to liberation struggles in Latin America, the Philippines, southern Africa and elsewhere will not be easy. Most important, the liberation struggles will go on, and if the Church forces its militant adherents, through doctrinal discipline, to turn away from the peoples' cause, the people in growing numbers will turn to those who truly point the way out of poverty and oppression—the Communists. ("Daily World").

# A VISIT TO THE G.D.R.

I visited the GDR in June 1984, a few months before it celebrated its 35th anniversary. It was my first visit. I had read a lot about its achievements. But being there made me realise, as no book or film had done, the new quality of life of people who have built a socialist society and who devote themselves constantly to improve on what they have achieved.

Our hosts had arranged a very comprehensive programme for two of us from Sri Lanka, a Tamil comrade and myself, and for visitors from Bangladesh, Canada, Argentina and the Philippines. We were able to see for ourselves a cross-section of GDR life, visiting cities, factories, city councils, state and collective farms, schools and health institutions.

I found Berlin, the capital city of the GDR, dazzling. It is truly remarkable that such a magnificent modern city should have been built in a mere 35 years out of the ruins and rubble that was all that was left of Berlin when World War II ended.

West Berlin, which the imperialists tried to build up as a "showpiece" for capitalism has, been completely eclipsed.

While the western press makes much of the occasional GDR citizen who tries to "escape to the West", it never reports the hundreds of West German citizens and even West Berliners with valid papers who enter Berlin every day to buy food, which is much cheaper than in the west, or to visit the theatres where one can see remarkable performances at minimal prices.

## FARMS

Apart from Berlin, we spent a fair amount of time in an agricultural area of Karl Marx Stadt county.

The GDR today is not merely the tenth industrially developed state in the world but boasts of a flourishing and modern agriculture.

The state and co-operative farmers work hard but they also lead a very good life, in no way second to that of the workers.

In the farms we visited most families lived in well-appointed, often multi-storied,

houses and, in addition to what they earned, could have an additional income from plots of land for their personal use.

Many had their own cars, motor cycles and other vehicles, including tractors. Almost every house had television, radio, a refrigerator, washing machine, electricity and piped hot & cold water.

The farmers talked freely to us, telling us how things were earlier, how they had improved under the socialist regime, and what were their problems and tasks at the moment.

by  
**Cyril B. Warsakoon**

Each farm had a cinema, recreation halls, community centres, and other public facilities. I could not help thinking how different all this was to the life of our farmers in Sri Lanka, who work hard with little reward!

## HOUSING

Like so many other visitors, I was struck by the immense strides made in public housing.

In our country, the official target of one million new houses by 1989 is still in the realms of propaganda, while the former target of 100,000 houses during the 1977-1983 period has not yet been fulfilled.

But the GDR, with a population that is only a little larger than our own, is really solving its housing problem.

Over two million new houses and apartments have been built since 1971, and the GDR is confident that the housing problem will be solved by 1990.

The houses and flats I visited were well-constructed and comfortable. Their maximum rents amounted to no more than 3 to 5 per cent of a tenant's monthly income. Electricity cost less than one pfennig per kilowatt and gas 16 pfennings per cubic metre. All houses had hot water and central heating.

## STABLE PRICES

I was also impressed at the way in which the GDR had been able to keep the price

levels of basic foodstuffs and services low and stable over many years, extending for more than a decade.

Prices are also the same everywhere in the GDR.

A telephone call can be made and a letter sent for a mere 20 pfennings, and tickets for the opera and the theatres a mere 2.05 marks. The prices of bread, butter, meat, eggs, sausages, potatoes and other foodstuffs in daily use were amazingly low.

## EDUCATION

Children and young people receive special attention and care.

Education is free and comprehensive from kindergarten to university. We visited a school in Flewn, where we had long talks with the students and staff, and learnt at first hand how the education system works in practice.

This school had classes up to Grade 12 and the teaching methods were most advanced—very different from what exists in even our best schools. Incidentally, there are no "privileged schools" in the GDR—the facilities available in all schools are the same.

In addition to academic education, great attention is paid to physical fitness and sport. This is probably one of the main reasons why the GDR does so brilliantly at the Olympics.

Space does not permit me to record all the glowing impressions I formed on my visit. But I was also struck by the attention paid to elder citizens and the physically handicapped, as well as the elaborate system of holiday homes and recreation centres available for those who work. And no one can visit the GDR without being deeply impressed at the sincere desire of its people for peace and their determination to do everything to preserve and defend it.

Affection for and solidarity with the USSR and a deep sense of internationalism are seen everywhere. When one thinks that two world wars in this century started from German soil and when one remembers the horrors that Hitlerism inflicted on other peoples in the name of a so-called "superior" race, these signs are most inspiring.

## Genocide in Israel

Since Israel became a state in 1948, as many as 471 out of the 755 Arab villages that existed in the territory of Palestine have been fully eliminated.

Zionist terror and repression have forced the remaining Arabs to leave their native land.

These facts were revealed by Palestinian Professor of Geography WALID MUSTAFA in an interview with the Danish newspaper INFORMATION.

Professor Mustafa said that eight townships that had a combined Arab population of 47,000 in 1948 do not have a single Arab inhabitant to-day.

He named the towns as Beersheba, Ashkelon, Hadera, Beit Shean, Tiberia, Safed, Kiryat Shemona and West Jerusalem. Prior to 1948, he said, there was no Jewish population at all in four of these townships.

Most of the Israeli Jewish settlements set up between 1948 and 1955, the Professor added, were located in places where Arab villages existed or very close to such places. The Zionists gave these settlements Jewish names so as to erase from human memory the fact that Palestinian Arabs used to live there.

Professor Mustafa said that he was preparing a map of Palestine on which the earlier Arab villages will be marked. He wants thus to refute the lying claims of Israeli extremists that Zionist settlers had occupied unpopulated lands and thus had a right to continue to possess them.



# Real Aims of the By-elections

Without, apparently, any change in his usual dour and poker-faced expression, President J. R. Jayawardene (according to the *Sunday Observer* of October 14) told audiences at his "18 whistle-stop meetings" at Kundasale last weekend that the decision to declare by-elections there and at Minneriya were "in keeping with the healthy democratic traditions followed by the (UNP) party".

Even the women who, according to the same government-owned newspaper "rushed up to him, fell prostrate, and greeted him" must have been as surprised by this bland falsehood as were those who read, in the President's interview with the *FINANCIAL TIMES*, his statement that his government remained democratic and socialist and, (wonder of wonders!) had not denationalised or privatised anything!

After all, what sort of "healthy democratic tradition" is it to decide to call a mere two by-elections to fill over 20 seats in Parliament that have been vacant for over a year; to do so after originally announcing four by-elections and then stepping back; and to have made a simultaneous nomination of yet another "chit MP" to the Ambalangoda seat which fell vacant during this very period?

Surely, it ill befits a man and a party, which thought nothing of misusing the referendum process to put off until 1989 the general election due last year, to boast about its "democratic traditions" of giving the voters the "opportunity to elect their representatives"?



## Forced

In point of fact, President Jayawardene was compelled to hold even these two by-elections rather than voluntarily deciding to declare them.

Domestically, the demand that the postponed general election should be held was growing towards crescendo. Every non-government party, despite their other differences, had begun to campaign for this demand. Externally, the government's cavalier attitude towards holding elections had antagonised mass feeling in many western countries and made it more difficult for their governments to justify continued financial and economic assistance to the Jayawardene government.

Holding token by-elections in a mere two constituencies, where the UNP hopes to cash in on divisions among opponents, is J. R.'s answer. He not merely hopes to pull wool over people's eyes, especially abroad, about his democratic intentions, but also to use these two by-elections as a safety valve for suppressed anti-UNP feelings and yet another diversion of public attention from his government's tremendous failures in the fields of the economy and ethnic relations.

What the government did in Kundasale, where the President made this astonishing claim,

is also no advertisement for its democratic intentions. Unable to find another candidate with a winning chance, the UNP made Mr. Wijesiri resign from the seat he already held, promising to keep it vacant so that he can be re-appointed if not elected at Kundasale, and put him forward hoping that he could mobilise his "caste bloc", which consists of around 40 per cent of the voters, and combine it with the UNP's political bloc to ensure victory.

Just how exploitation of the caste issue is consistent with "democratic traditions" is not explained either by the President or the UNP. All this has produced so far is an underground backlash among people of other castes, of which the feudal elements in the SLFP have taken full advantage.



## J. V. P.

In the 14 months since it was proscribed, the JVP seems to have lost none of the political duplicity that characterised its earlier work.

Its political losses have been great. Several prominent leaders, including their General Secretary Lionel

cription on it, it has nothing to say against the SLFP leadership that has never even raised this demand! Perhaps this would be inconvenient for the Wijeweera leadership, which once declared that the Left and progressive movement of Sri Lanka could only advance over the ruins and ashes of the SLFP, but which now seems to be the only party responsive to Mrs. B's appeal for the Left to accept the leadership of the SLFP and operate under it!

In the matter of the by-elections, however, the JVP takes both the SLFP and the four-party alliance to task for fielding candidates. Perhaps the JVP leaders would have preferred the UNP to have gone uncontested? And strident talk about boycotting the by-elections comes ill from the JVP which was the only Opposition party outside the north and east to contest the elections to the fraudulent DDCs, despite the boycott by all other opposition parties.

And what are we to make of the JVP's last minute recommendation that the SLMP and SLFP should come to an agreement to field a single candidate. This comes ill from a party that helped the UNP in no small way to

win the mini-elections to Parliament last year by fielding candidates against the agreed candidates of the then united SLFP, the Left parties, and the MEP.

It looks as though the JVP, instead of learning from its earlier wrong-doing, seems determined to continue along the same lines.



## Censors

So the government has at last learnt from bitter experience that its blanket censorship of the press was not only undemocratic but effete and counter-productive as well.

Withdrawing the censorship—except in the case of the RTC where President Jayawardene doesn't want anyone to know the truth or what recognised parties and others think of his proposed legislation—the government has admitted that its censors had only antagonised the newspapers and foreign correspondents, made everybody doubt the credibility of anything the government said, and become both an irritant and a joke.

But it isn't enough for the government to withdraw the

censorship. It should examine why its censors became such petty tyrants and made such a mess that the common joke in press circles was that the censors had done more to discredit and damage the government than the terrorists did!

With the exception of the UNP's notorious apologist, Dr Tilak Ratnakara, most of the other censors were senior officials of the Ministry of State and the Information Department, appointed and brought up in the imperious traditions of former Secretary Douglas Liyanage, and with the females of the species being more deadly than the males.

Their built-in preference to play safe, to dodge decisions, and to pass the buck was accompanied, when clearance could not be obtained in time from all high, by a propensity to use their blue pencils and scissors rather than their brains.

If the government is seriously interested in restoring Sri Lanka's credibility, it should follow up the withdrawal of the censorship with sending the former censors out of the Ministry of State and the Information Department.



## Israelis

The Israelis seem to be pouring in, despite the government's airy claims that they have gone home.

According to passport statistics, there should be around 40 here at the moment and more on their way.

Douglas Liyanage, who blew the operation by talking out of turn in Tel Aviv, still maintains his close contacts with the Israelis in his agro-business firm to which he has now returned until things blow over and he can resume high positions which he had temporarily to quit.

Incidentally, one hears that another Zionist chum of Duggie is a managerial high-up in the Hotel Lanka Oberoi. His term was extended by two years despite a Tourist Board recommendation that no expatriate should get an extension of over one year. A Muslim Minister, one learns, wants the relevant authorities to check on this gentleman's frequent visits abroad during the period that Duggie reigned supreme and who paid for them. More anon.



## Mahaweli

You can't keep cats from jumping out of bags!

Ivan Samarawickreme, Secretary to the Mahaweli Ministry, is the latest high official to reveal inconvenient facts that disprove the government's rosy pictures.

For instance, the government and Minister Gamini Dissanayake made the bid to complete the Mahaweli Development Project in five, later six, years its main development activity. But speaking last week to the Association of Construction Contractors, (Island, 14/10) after six years were over, Mr Samarawickreme confessed that only "one-third of this great project has been completed".

He also revealed that Rs 40 billion has been spent on the project so far, and that future expenditure would be in the region of six to seven billion rupees a year for a period that he did not disclose.

Questioned by the Sri Lanka contractors, Mr Samarawickreme also admitted that the bulk of the contracts for this project had gone to foreign firms. This was because local contractors did not, in the government's opinion, have the "capacities" needed.



## Island

This column congratulates ISLAND, which celebrated its third anniversary of publication a few days ago. It has not only survived, but earned respect for playing an independent role in a situation where the English-medium daily press is muffled by the near-monopoly of the government-owned newspapers and the SUN-DAWASA group.

Whatever other faults the late tycoon Upali Wijewardene had (and they were certainly not few), he allowed the ISLAND considerable freedom in reporting Opposition news and activities and re-printing criticisms of the government. Its team of journalists—and especially its columnists like Mervyn de Silva, Ajith Samaranayake, D. B. S. Jeyraj, Amita Amerasekera, and Lucien Rajakarunanayake—are the best in the business, ably led by Editor Yapa.

One does not know what the exact position is regarding the rival claims between the "Sunday Island" and the "Sunday Observer" about having the biggest circulation, but the *Island* certainly knocks the *Observer* into a cocked hat when it comes to readability.

A major flaw of the ISLAND, as mentioned by this column some time ago, is the prominence given to its *eminence grise*, Gamini Weerakoon, whose sole claim to fame is that he is a pipeline for the U. S. Information Services to the Sri Lankan reader.

When he was on a "refresher course" in the U. S. recently, the improvement of the ISLAND's foreign news commentaries was noticeable. But now that Gamini Weerakoon is back, we have been treated to one anti-soviet and anti-communist (not to mention anti-Indian) story after another.



Bopage, have left them. A big chunk of its young supporters have deserted them for the SLMP. And within the JVP, the confrontation between the supporters and opponents of the Wijeweera-Gamanayake leadership is sharper than ever.

Recent JVP documents, including letters circulated over the signature of the new Secretary Gamanayake, provide interesting reading. None of its hostility to the CPSL or LSSP seems to have abated, and its hostility to the alliance of four left and radical parties is the same.

What is really amazing is its upbraiding of the 4-party alliance for its alleged failure, in its interview with the President, to raise the question of the removal of the proscription of the JVP.

As is clearly stated in the joint communique about that meeting, the four parties made the demand for lifting the proscription of BOTH the JVP and NSSP a major item of these talks. It is hardly their fault if the President decided to remove the ban on the NSSP alone, while continuing the quite unjustified ban on the JVP.

While the JVP attacks the parties that have campaigned for the removal of the pros-