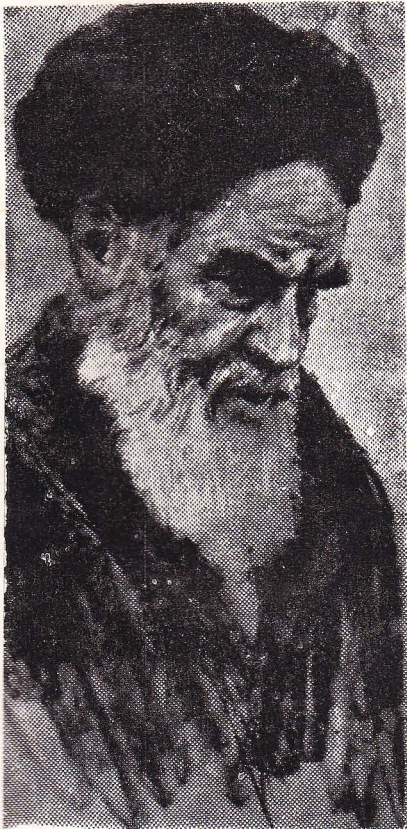


GUARDIAN

Religion and Politics



Women's Lib in Sinhala

Christianity

Yohan Devananda

Monks in revolt

Kumari Jayewardena

Islamic revival

N. M. M. I. Hussein

Our Foreign Service

W. W. Wiswawarnapala

Shakespeare on screen

Reggie Siriwardena

The Left in Iran

Mervyn de Silva

**The
will to
Succeed**

*As a young and enterprising company
we applaud the dignity, courage
and determination of the people
of Sri Lanka
in their search for a better life.*

*Our team of development chemists
is pledged to engage our country's skills
and resources in Sri Lanka's agricultural
and industrial progress.*

*New materials, New ideas,
New technologies and
The will to Succeed
are the tools with which we approach
the future*

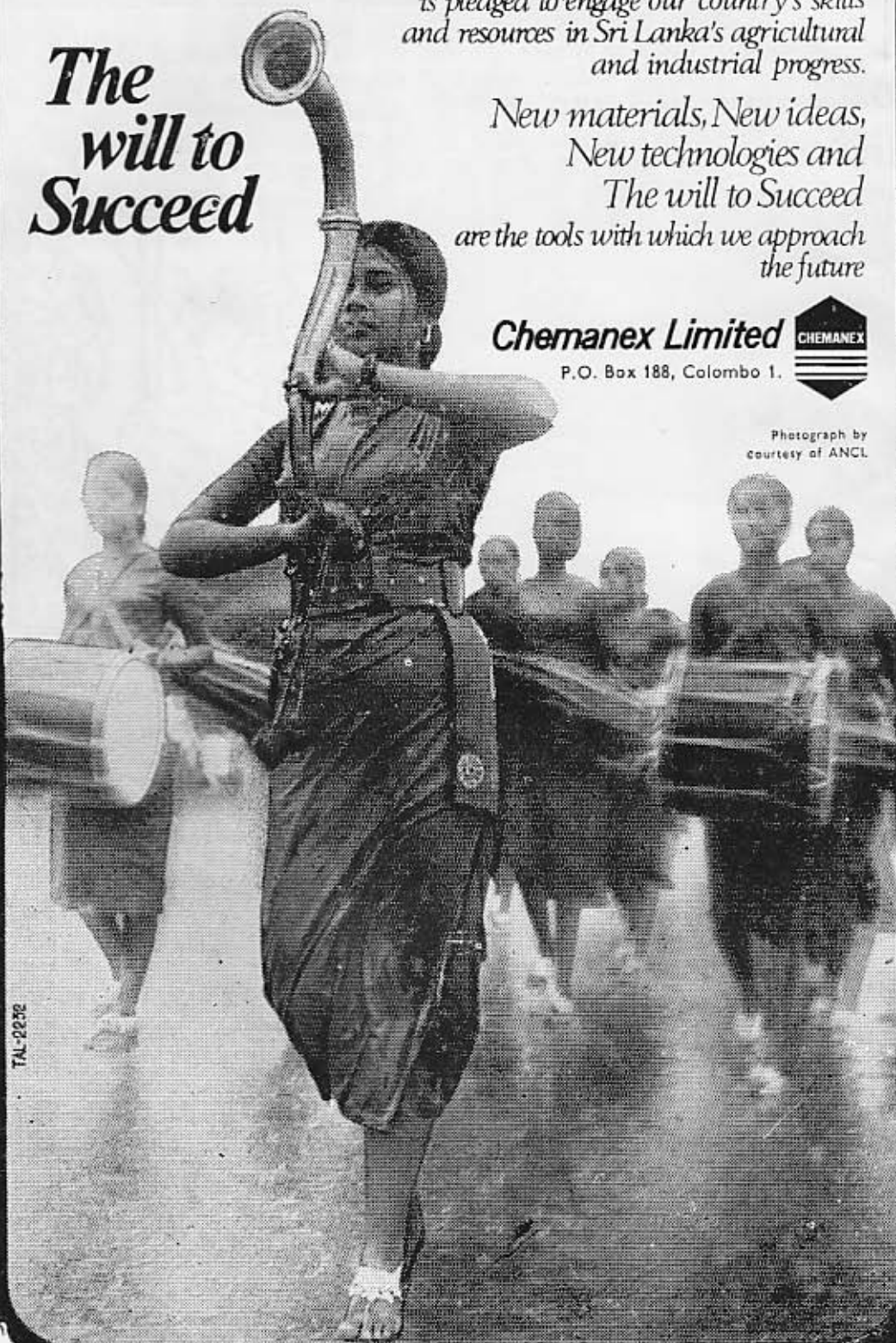
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Photograph by
courtesy of ANCL

TAL-2232



Trends

Exit Lion-el?

"Our Lion-el", as our staff correspondent reported in the last issue of the L. G., is how the people of Jaffna speak of their Government Agent

Is he on his way out? On one matter all the journalists on an officially sponsored tour of the peninsula had no disagreements—the very special

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COVER

A recent front page story in the 'Daily News' raised the controversial issue of priests and politics. Reggie Siriwardena had earlier posed the question "Where are the Radical Buddhists?" (L. G. March 15th) in a response to a report in this journal by Jayantha Somasundaram on the Colombo Conference of Asian Bishops. In this issue we present three views on Religion and Politics. Our cover shows Ayatolla Khomeini, the focal point of the Iranian revolution which has attracted worldwide attention to Islamic fundamentalism. We also commence publication of a study on the historical role of the Sri Lankan Bhikkhu in political protest.

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Letters

Non-exploitative Societies

The USSR and the PRC (et al.) are examples of "non-exploitative societies". They are also examples of societies "where the administrative apparatus is both representative and open to genuine popular participation". Says who? Says Chintaka. Does he really believe this? There is no reason to doubt that he does. There is, of course, allows Chintaka, "an authoritarian character to the administrative apparatus" (which, nevertheless, is "both representative and open to genuine popular participation"). But does not Chintaka know the naked reality of what this diaphanous euphemism "authoritarian character" poorly conceals? There is no reason to doubt that he does. It is a uniquely 20th century phenomenon that people believe, not what they have good reason to think is the truth, but against all evidence, what they would like to be the truth. This is where "the finest available mode of analysis" has brought Chintaka. It is ironically the same infallible mode of analysis" that has kept the USSR and the PCR in eyeball to eyeball confrontation these many years.

Colombo 3.

Costain de Vos

Mid-east Vacancies

Could you kindly let me know whether the "advertisement" entitled "Mid-east vacancies"—Post of Policeman (Regional) was taken from some foreign magazine or was it written by a local writer. If it was from a foreign magazine can you let me know the name of the paper? If it was the work of a Sri Lankan, I must congratulate the writer for his or her wit.

Jaffna **Kumar Namasivayam,**

NOTE:

The 'ad' was the invention of a staff writer — Ed.

affection and esteem in which the G. A. was held.

In Jaffna itself, there are persistent reports that Mr. Lionel Fernando will move to another post after the local polls. As G. A., he is the gazetting officer. The reports are usually followed by two theories. First that it is a routine transfer; second that it is a result of the appointment of a new District Secretary, Mr. Yogendra Duraiswamy.

Some say that Mr. Fernando was given a choice of working with (or under?) the new District Secretary but preferred to move out of a very difficult post he has served with such distinction.

Travel

Once the privilege of politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and C. R. A.-pitalists, travel is more or less free now. The travel agencies sprouting forth at every street corner and travel departments in every bank is a sure sign of the times. But how much does it cost? The Central Bank's current report gives the figures. In 1977, Sri Lankans spent 33 million rupees or 3 million SDR (Special Drawing Rights). In 1978 the sum was Rs. 444 or SDR 23 million, or a little less than 30 million US dollars.

Polls and Prices

Informed cricles are now of the opinion that the price of flour and petrol would shoot up to Rs. 1.80 and Rs. 30/- respectively soon after the Local Government Elections. Though the IMF etc have been pressing for total withdrawal of subsidies, it is understood that the government has persuaded the lending agencies that it would be politically unwise to introduce these measures before the local polls.

Cowardly

I have never written an anonymous letter in my life, nor shall I ever do so. I have always signed my name to any letter or review I have written. Not to do so, is the act of a coward. On certain occasions, I have used the nom-de-plume "Diogenes", when writing articles of a light nature, given to gentle chaff and bandinage.

I also never defend myself against attacks made on me by persons who hide their identity behind a pseudonym, even though I full well know the name of the writer. I am impervious to public opinion and act as I see fit. I never take revenge. Lastly, I do not know Dr. Wallbeoff Jansz and have never met him anywhere.

Colombo 4 Elmer de Haan

'Fowler' and his folly.

The fellow who first called himself Fowier, and who now calls himself Pieris, believes that our previous letters to the 'Lanka Guardian' which criticized him and praised Elmer de Haan, were actually the work of Mr. Haan in disguise. He comes to this conclusion on the basis of what he judges to be 'remarkable affinity' between Haan's own prose style and that of the writer, who he alleges has been masquerading as 'Dr. Wallbeoff Jansz'.

Even if there is some superficial resemblance in style between the two separate writings, does it necessarily follow that they are from the same source? Pieris, alias Fowler, seems to think so. He who wrote under cover of another's name has inferred that the object of his attack has retaliated in like manner pseudonymously.

We wish to reassure Mr. Pieris, if that is indeed his real name, that our letters to the 'Lanka Guardian', including the present one, have not been the work of a ghost writer, but have been our very own composition, in our own handwriting, and handed personally to the Editor himself, who was never in doubt about our identity.

Who is Lakith St. C. Pieris? Has anyone heard of him? Wallbeoff Jansz, on the other hand, has appeared before the public as a practitioner of medicine, as a university professor, as a radio broadcaster, and as a writer who has contributed literary articles under his own name to the 'Ceylon Daily News' and the 'Sunday Times'. At present 'TRIBUNE', is publishing a series of articles by him, and the Editor introduces him as "some-time Associate Professor of Peradeniya Campus."

The writer who had been hiding behind a false name in the past might very well be doing the same thing in the present. Meanwhile FOULER has failed to reply to our previous criticisms of (1) his expression 'take objection', and (2) his assertion that 'Physician heal thyself' is the **correct** text of St. Luke 4, 23. His silence on these two matters is a sufficiently eloquent admission of defeat.

Colombo 4. Wallbeoff Jansz

Piffle

If Mr. Elmer de Haan really thought my letter PIFFLE (in block capitals, yet!) he would scarcely have found it worthwhile to bother to write and call it that. By the same token, the mere fact that Mr. Haan calls it PIFFLE does not necessarily make it so. The truth is, he has no answer to the charge, implicit in my letter, that his purported "satire" is nothing less than a shameless and mindless glorification of the values and mores of the colonial Britisher and a pathetic attempt to show that Royalists could mimic the white man's monkey-tricks better than the hated Thomians could.

Dehiwala Felicity Gonsal

Booze in the USSR

I would like to tell Mohan (L. G. April 1st) that liquor has always been part and parcel of the culture and life style of the Russians; a fact that has been determined partly by the climatic conditions of the country.

Gamini Dissanaiké.

Elmer's Tune

Here's Elmer of the House of Haan:
Beware!

Do not approach for he's a surly bear.

Abusive, carping, loud-mouthed and profane,

He is, besides, self-complacent and vain.

His fawning claue applauds him as a wit.

Though really he's not more than half of it.

(This claue comprises one, **tabula rasa,**

Who, fittingly, is labelled Amara-Dasa,

Which — if you'll grant my exegesis venial —

Means deathless stooge or sempiternal menial.)

Musicianship he flaunts, this Wuthering Height,

But people say his Bach's worse than his bite.

And although, once, a symphony he wrote

No one's ever heard him play a note.

Fond of, and overbearing in, dispute

A half-baked scholar but a full-fledged brute.

Colombo 10. Lakith St. C Pieris

CHUCHCHE AND PING - PONG

In the article headlined 'Chuchche and Ping Pong' which appeared in our last issue, the strap line 'Delhi Letter' was inadvertently omitted. The Conference referred to in the article was held in New Delhi and the writer N. R. is a free-lance Indian journalist.

MAY DAY ROUND - UP

Red all the way...

May Day has always been a trial of the relative strength of the Opposition parties rather than that of the governing party which has all the resources of the state machine. Thus, while the UNP's Galle Face extravaganza drew much the largest crowd, it was obvious that they were drawn mainly by the carnival-like atmosphere and musical entertainment rather than any serious commitment. Political observers, therefore, focused their attention on the Opposition rallies and demonstrations, and in the absence of the S. L. F. P, it was red all round.

J. V. P.

The day was clearly dominated by the JVP. Their demonstration was several times larger than last years 8-10 thousand, and observers agreed with the police estimate which put the strength of the JVP 'demo' at around 40,000. There were other noticeable differences between last year's and this year's proceedings: much less vituperation against the Left (though the ULF and Vasu did come under fire); more slogans against Sirima Bandaranaike and the SLFP; a slightly higher average age (around 25) than that of last year's participants (around 20)—this despite a large number of tiny tots in the forefront of the demonstration; a sizeable sprinkling of young workers mainly from the National Textile Corporation. The JVP's laudable concern with current events in the international arena manifested itself this year too with placards supporting Iran, the Palestinians, East Timor's Fretilin, the Chilean MIR (now located almost exclusively on the Left Bank of the Seine) and denouncing the U. S. military build-up in the Indian Ocean region, Sadat's treachery and the "Yankee-Sino alliance." Economic and social

issues were predominant among the slogans and placards concerning local events.

A significant difference between the JVP proceedings and those of their many rivals in the Left was that the former chose not to stress a possible 'fascist-type' threat as the others did. Observers also noted a conscious attempt to skirt the controversial issue of Tamil self-determination. Though there were quite a few placards in Tamil, the sole though often repeated slogan on this issue written in Sinhala was "Down with narrow chauvinism"—a veritable masterpiece of equivocation and ambiguity—while the odd English language slogan read "Respect the just rights of the Tamil speaking people." Though, the length, smooth precision and colourful nature of the JVP demo was a most impressive spectacle, veteran observers noted that the audio-visual impact was not matched by an emotional one, such as that evolved in the working class and youth ranks by the ULF's May Day demonstration of 1963 and Mr. Sanmugathasan's (Peking Wing) CCP demo of 1964 which was spearheaded by the CTUF in the aftermath of the break with the CPSL.

Not only the heady militancy of these two earlier occasions but also the large scale working class participation was absent from the JVP's demonstration. The overwhelming majority of the marchers were youths and even the working class segments present seemed to be comprised of young workers from the rural or suburban milieu who still have links with small scale ownership. In fact the regimentation and militia-like nature of the JVP demo, did in a subtle sense reveal the social character of the party's main support base. As far as this is

concerned, the post-1971 JVP seems to have succeeded in attracting a sizeable chunk of urban petty bourgeois youth, even though their rural counterparts still comprise the main force. (In fact, the participation of a large number of female youth from the rural areas was a significant feature).

Mr. Wijeweera was in characteristically fine fettle when addressing the massive gathering of around 50,000. A quote from Anatole France, an imitation of Sir Oliver, a few words in Tamil and a denunciation of separatism spiced a speech which was a full-scale onslaught against the SLFP, and the Ratwatte clan and Mrs. B—whom RW dubbed Mrs. IDI AMIN !!

ULF

The length of the LSSP-CP procession (numbering about 10,000 surpassing the size of the J. V. P's demo last year) showed that the Old Left possessed a political longevity which surprises most observers. The marchers were more numerous than in 1977, though the ragged, amply spaced rows were in sharp contrast to the JVP's wellknit formation. A notable feature was that the Communist Party's section of the procession was more impressive than the LSSP's in terms of youth participation and enthusiasm, giving credence to the view currently circulating that the CPSL is de facto the stronger partner of the ULF alliance though they themselves don't seem to have realized either this fact or the potential leverage it gives them vis-a-vis the LSSP. The ULF seemed to have drawn marchers from all over the island (except of course the Tamil areas) and there was no doubt that the bulk of the organised working class is still within the Old Left orbit. The average age of the ULF marchers was 35-40.

Expectations that the ULF rally at Hyde Park would be swelled by pro-SLFP sections who had no

meeting of their own, came to nought as the ULF's own ranks were depleted with thousands crossing over to watch superstar Rohana next door. This resulted in the ULF meeting numbering about half as much as their procession. Mr. Pieter Keuneman made the keynote speech (translated into Tamil) with Dr. Colvin R. de Silva's customary circulation and contortions continued to amuse the faithful. Carlo Fonseka's non-inclusion as a speaker proved quite a disappointment to the crowd.

'New' Left Trade Unions

The New Left, spearheaded by Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara's (new) LSSP, lost on the roundabouts this year what it gained on the swings last year. Last year Mr. Nanayakkara's party succeeded in welding together 9 other radical groups of Maoist, Trotskyist and Stalinist persuasion and staged a 5,000 strong demonstration which evoked much interest as it seemed to signal an in-gathering of the radical left, as distinct from both the Old Left and the sectarian JVP. This year, the trade unions within the JCTUO-AC affiliated to these radical groups proposed a united T. U. May Day which however was stymied by the (old) LSSP and the vacillation of the CP. The fall-back position seemed promising too; namely, the militant (non-SLFP/LSSP/CP) trade unions within the JCTUO-AC would march together incorporating all the smaller TU's outside as well as the New Left political groups. But Mr. Bala Tampoe put paid to this by refusing to allow participation on the platform of any organizations outside those represented within the JCTUO-AC. After much hemming and hawing the Vasu group fell in line with Tampoe, thus sorely disappointing their partners within the 10-party 'New Left' United Front, who in retaliation decided to send only token delegations to the demonstration and rally which finally was staged by 7 militant trade union organisations. Lacking the enthusiasm and political impact of last year this demonstration numbered less (around 4000) than in 1978. Despite the internal friction the 'New Left' Uni-

ted Front remains solidly intact, and political observers wonder whether there will emerge new links between this conglomeration and the 7 Trade Unions which will doubtless function as a pressure group within the JCTUO-AC trying to attract the CP away from the LSSP.

The LSSP (new leadership) scored one important success however, this May Day. This was Mr Nanayakkara's speech at De Mel Park which was almost unanimously acclaimed by political observers and radio listeners alike as by far the best May Day speech this year. Short, sharp, crisp and punchy, Mr. Nanayakkara's speech was a powerful plea for Left unity at both trade union and political levels to combat the UNP gov't's economic policies and anti-democratic measures.

Miscellaneous

Messrs Samarakkody, Merrill Fernando, T. Andradi and Peradeniya don Laksiri Fernando spoke at the May Day meeting staged by their **Revolutionary Workers Party** at Maradana's Civic Centre. The 100 strong audience was warned against attempts by various Maoists (and even the Vasu group) to adopt a soft line vis-avis the SLFP. A notable feature of the meeting was the stress laid upon the right of self-determination of the Tamil people.

The **Ceylon Teachers' Union** also held its meeting in the morning. Attendance was low (a few hundred) in comparison with previous years where around 2000 were present, due largely to the fact that most of the CTU members were at Cotta Park helping the JVP ranks get straightened out. In his keynote speech Mr. H. N. Fernando criticized the new educational reforms as increasing social inequality and underlined the need to combat the repressive measures aimed at the Tamil people, and underlined the need to combat the repressive measures aimed at the Tamil people.

Addressing a sparse gathering of around 200, at Muthiah Park organized by their pro-Chinese Maoist groups, Messrs **G.I.D. Dharmasekera, Gamini Yapa** and

T. Benedict argued for unity of all progressive forces, while denouncing the JVP as well as Tamil secessionism.

The **Healyite Trotskyists** (Kamkaru Mawatha) also held a separate indoor rally at which all others on the Left were excoriated and the Iranian revolution upheld as a model for Sri Lanka.

SLFP's fine show

MAY DAY on May 7th? This was the rude joke played on the SLFP this year. But the SLFP had the last laugh. After the Town Hall meeting, the faces of the SLFP leaders were wreathed in triumphant smiles. "We were denied Pedris Park because of the Apollo Circus. But the Indian performers should have joined the UNP Circus on Galle Face Green", snorted an SLFP Trade Unionist, as he pointed to the massive crowd.

"Did you see the 'Daily News' picture of the ULF Leaders at Hyde Park? Aiyo, they look like inmates from the home for the aged", wise-cracked a young ex-MP nastily. Mr. Alavi Moulana, the Trade Union organizer was heartily patted on the back by Party boss, Mrs. Bandaranaike, sporting the usual blue saree, and her deputy, Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, also in full blue. For Mr. Moulana it was a happy day. Two weeks before that he was relegated to No. 9 place in the Party's polls list.

The SLFP rally saw a full scale barrage on President J. R., led by ex-speaker Mr. Stanley Tillekaratne. At the Kotte meeting J. R. had made many unpleasant references to Stanley and his efforts to be uncontested at the last elections or seek nomination in unexpected ways.

If, as the SLFP Leaders suggested the ULF was looking to the past, the SLFP and the UNP seem to be peering into the distant future—1983 and beyond. J. R.'s public lessons on interpreting the constitution when elections

are held in 1983 and on the powers of the Presidency were in turn converted by SLFP speakers into a clever propagandist argument. Why, they asked should the government debate this issue unless it was already convinced that the SLFP was a certain winner next time.

For the rest, the SLFP speakers hammered the UNP for its poor economic performance—on rising prices and on unemployment.

A point of interest was the conspicuous absence of some SLFP veterans notably Mr. T. B. Ilan-garatne.

Calling Mr. Minister

A few days back, the SLFP daily 'Dinakara' quoting Minister Wijetunge's statement that there were 13,000 telephones in the Colombo Municipality and this number would be increased to 25,000 by July next year, asked: "Which is true?" When the same Minister's Deputy had said at the same conference a little later that the existing number of phones was 32,000 within the city limits and would be increased to 64,000 by July 1980"

An official of the O. T. S. however, told the *Guardian* of yet another, recent 'Mahadenamutha style' act by the OTS higher-ups.

A few months ago a group of OTS and SEC engineers got down to lay the foundation to erect the antenna tower for the new-self dialling service exchange to India. However, many eyebrows were raised at the OTS a few weeks later when they saw the new foundation that was laid for the purpose was demolished with bulldozers and the debris carted away. The Reason: The foundation was not laid for the aerial tower to be set up for maximum reception;!

G. D.

WOMEN ON THE MOVE

KANTHA HANDA (A radical women's journal in Sinhala)

Margaret Thatcher assumes the highest office in Britain almost two decades after Sri Lanka scored her most notable first—a woman prime minister. However as all women militants know, a woman prime minister does not mean that the women of that country make a great leap forward in terms of equal rights and full participation in politics. Real changes occur when women become conscious of their dependance and oppression and start agitating for their rights. Such a change began in many countries around the 1960's and 1970's and with the proclamation of women's year by the UN in 1975, consciousness of the problems of women became a world-wide phenomenon—even if, at the beginning it was confined to the articulate more educated women.

In Sri Lanka, since 1975 the question of equal status for women has been raised by numerous women's organisations, trade unions and political activists—and since women's literacy is high (70%) many of the writings on women in Sinhala and Tamil in the popular press and journals have reached a fairly wide audience among women. But still, the women's pages and women's journals have tended to fall back on supposedly "women's interests"—fashions, recipes and child rearing. It is therefore heartening to see that a new journal has appeared, *Kantha Handa* which presents a radical view point on women—not for the English-educated who in any case have access to all the women's lib. literature—but for the Sinhala intelligentsia and grass roots workers.

Kantha Handa consists of 28 pages of interesting and provocative reading matter, with the cover story 'Woman is not a commodity' protesting the use of women in advertising—illustrated with some of the worst sexist adverts that have appeared recently. (Protests made earlier by *Kantha*

Handa activists led to the withdrawal of these advertisements).

The major feature stories are on Women and Tradition, Women and the Sinhala Cinema, A day in the Life of Biso Manike, the Struggle of Sri Lanka Women for full Humanity. Spiced in between are topical short articles on Women and Tourism, the 'Export' of women to the Middle East, Women and the Free Trade Zone, Women in the Army, the Dowry System, Women as portrayed in children's comics, Wife Beating, the Child Worker, Beauty Contests, and the exploitation by the media of the film star Rukmani Devi's death. There are several humorous snippets—believe-it-or-not quotation by leading personalities and Members of Parliament (a women's brain does not function after she reaches 45!)—as well as comic marriage advertisements and a picture from the Grade I Tamil reader where all the males in the family are seated on chairs and all the three generations of women are on the floor "(Women's place is on the floor" is the *Kantha Handa* title to this child's first introduction to male supremacy!). Some excellent verses on women by Parakrama Kodituwakku, Monica Ruwanpathirana and others, and a translation of the editorial of a radical Indian journal (*Manushi*)—make stimulating reading. The journal also gives a lot of emphasis to the problems of women workers and has some relevant articles on equal pay, the exploitation of women on the plantations, resolutions on women at a recent meeting of a leading trade union, and an account of Isabella Hamy one of the foremost militant women in A. E. Goonesinha's working-class struggles of the 1920's—but who is now living destitute in Wanathamulla.

The *Kantha Handa*, has photographs of women in new professions (bus conductors, traffic

(Continued on Page 10)

Press opinion

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Bogus capitalism

The Government controlled Media now admits that the so called 'open' economic policy is killing the local textile industry. The 'Daily Mirror' reported that over 10 million metres of even the locally produced polyester remain in the stores unsold due to import of varieties of fancy textiles. This is not the complete picture. The fact is that while the handloom products do not sell at all, the local power-loom products are also doomed. The damage caused by this 'open door' policy has pervaded the other local industries as well. This is nothing but a national crime.

To make matters worse, the present government unlike the advanced capitalist countries like USA, West Germany and Japan is not having any protectionist measures against imports. The law of the jungle prevails here.

What is happening under the UNP policy is that, on the one hand, Sri Lanka is becoming a dumping ground for non-essential goods and on the other a new class of racketeering commission agents is emerging over the local industrial capitalists. That is why we have been saying from the beginning that the UNP economic policy does not even help the development of real capitalism.

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Minister's 'Express' order

The Transport Minister Mr. M. H. Mohammed has ordered the Central Transport Board to stop the Express Bus Services with immediate effect.

We are also told that the Minister has taken the new step as it was found that most of the fatal bus accidents have involved Express buses.

While this has coincided with the highly charged atmosphere of

the recent fatal accident at Hatton it seems that this new order will not solve the problem but will create new problems under any circumstances.

Statistics may say that most fatal accidents have involved Express buses. In fact the majority of the fatal bus accidents have taken on the difficult hill country roads. While these roads need experienced drivers one cannot rule out the relevance of driving experience even on short journeys. Hence it appears that the Minister's hasty directive is based on superficial findings. The Minister may even suspend the entire bus services along these lines.

Even if the recent accident is taken into consideration it is no valid reason to suspend the Express bus services. The bus in question had a load of 128 passengers but the driver was found to be a greenhorn who had undergone a training less than a week. It has been revealed at the subsequent inquiry that the chassis of that bus was welded in three places.

ජනදින

Compensation for CTB accidents

It is reported that the CTB is to pay Rs. 5000 each for those who died and Rs. 1000 each for those who were injured in the recent accident at Hatton. It is also said that the CTB will bear the funeral expenses in respect of those who died in that accident.

Is this gesture of the CTB commensurate with the value of lives that were lost in the accident? How long can the dependents of the deceased live with the Rs. 5000 offered to them?

We do not know of any instance where the CTB has offered generous compensation to dependents of those who lost their lives in accidents. If such parties did not initiate action, payment of compensation would automatically be put into cold storage. How

many know the legal procedure to claim damages in such circumstances?

The passengers are entitled to claim damages in law not only in major accidents but even in a case of falling inside the bus if the driver applies the brakes abruptly.

Band of Brothers

by Roger Woddis

The Joe Loss orchestra played Western dance-music on arriving in China. The Chinese responded with a musical item called 'Busy Sending Grain by Horsecart'.

Busy sending grain by
horsecart,

Chiang Ching now no
longer boss;

As we say to Eric Varley,
China's gain is your Joe
Loss.

More than two-way trade
in textiles,

More than diesel trains
or food,

Sino-British understanding
Comes from being in the
mood.

Now we welcome Western
music,

Goodbye to the Gang of
Four;

Giant leaps towards the
future

Start with one step on
the floor.

Disco hits mean more
than opera,

Culture is a film called
'Grease';

Long live Newton-John-
Travolta,

Bringing harmony and
peace!

Busy sending grain by
horsecart,

Time enough to strike
a gong

When we seal the bonds
of friendship

With a Eurovision song.

After the Treaty - (2)

Sadat's real 'linkage'

by Mervyn de Silva

As Egyptians began voting in a referendum to express their approval of a Treaty which had already been signed, a bomb exploded in Cairo's Central post office, killing a minor official and injuring some others. As the tough-minded Israelis, Egypt's new found friends, are fond of saying 'one parcel bomb does not make a hot summer'. While western observers saw little evidence of public enthusiasm for the referendum, the **Financial Times** correspondent explained that this was "in large part because President Sadat has never failed to secure less than 95% approval".

In fact, the approval nearly reached 100%. This display of solid domestic support was hardly over when Arab state after another severed relations with Egypt in accordance with the Arab League's decision in Baghdad to impose political and economic sanctions. Now an outcast in an Arab league which it helped to establish even before the U. N. came into existence, Egypt has been expelled from O.A.P.E.C. At a not very important meeting in Vienna of European and Arab news agencies, Egypt had to suffer an insult almost exclusively reserved in the recent past to its erstwhile enemy Israel. There was an Arab walk-out en masse.

Cairo's isolation

If we accept the credibility of the referendum and acknowledge that Sadat and the Treaty enjoy near-total backing from the Egyptian people, it is only logical to note at the same time that Egypt's isolation from the Arab world is no less complete.

Politically at least, Egypt has been the gravitational centre of the Arab world. Militarily it has



been (and remains) the strongest Arab state. Again militarily, Egypt was Israel's most formidable foe for 30 years. On account of the immense geo-strategic importance of this area, the isolation of Egypt and the new alignments have wide-ranging implications in terms of both regional and global politics.

Hopes and illusions

Soon after his historic journey to Jerusalem an understandably ecstatic President Sadat compared himself to an astronaut flying high in the heavens and seeing his critics as 'dwarfs on earth'. When the oil-rich, far from radical Kuwait cut off relations with Egypt last month, Mr. Sadat persisted with his haughty image and dismissed Kuwait as a 'dwarf'. But much of the exhilaration in his self-image as a Middle Eastern Gulliver among the Arab Lilliputians seemed to have vanished. The Arab consensus that emerged in Baghdad may not have satisfied the maximal demands of the PLO and 'hardliners' like Libya and Iraq, but it did include those oil rich nations, notably

Saudi Arabia, on whom Sadat (and, in a way, the U. S.) had relied for at least a more ambivalent response, to the Treaty and covert if not open support.

Economic factor

Mr. Sadat's contempt for Kuwait sounds hollow in the ears of those who know the facts about Arab aid to Egypt, and the parlous condition of the Egyptian economy. Always important in the making of foreign policy, the economic imperative is all the more critical to a country which is the most popular nation in the Arab world. Besides the huge 40 million population Egypt is the most socially advanced in the area, and the mass expectations of a comparatively educated and politically conscious society, are high. So is inflation which has ranged between 20 and 40% in the past few years. Despite agreements with the IMF Egypt has continued its policy of hefty budget deficits.

Sometime ago food riots brought the army into the streets. Workers and students who went on a rampage wrecking the tourist complexes outside Cairo was the sharpest reminder that Sadat's "open door" policy had roused popular resentment by its predictable short-term result of making disparities more glaringly offensive, by making the rich richer, and promoting high-level corruption. Scandals touched the highest in the land. Large injections of investment and aid did not make matters easier because Egypt is burdened with serious infrastructural problems and a notoriously ill-paid and inept bureaucracy which is increasingly tempted by the lure of easy money. Basic items, including food, continue to be subsidised and the total subsidy bill now exceeds 1.5 billion dollars. And housing, as even a casual visitor to Cairo realises quickly, is a nightmare.

What linkage?

'Linkage' is now the key word in Egyptian apologetics. It is the

figleaf with which Egypt ostracised by fellow Arabs and denounced by all supporters of the Palestinian cause seeks vainly to cover the nakedness of its betrayal of the Palestinians. With less conviction, Cairo argues that the Treaty has set in motion a "peace process" (the expression is also favoured by the U. S. but is conspicuously absent in Israeli commentaries and official statements) in which Israeli agreements with Egypt are "integrally linked" to Israeli 'pledges' to restore the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians.

The truth however is that another kind of 'linkage' was the foundation of Sadat's strategic plan. In fairness to him (that is, if we are ready to see his motives as well-intentioned vis-a-vis his own people) it should be noted that this plan was seen as perfectly in accord with **pax Americana**, America's grand design for the Middle East.

Mr. Sadat believed that Egypt's basic interests, as he perceived them, and the manifest interests of the United States, were reconcilable and indeed could be reconciled for mutual advantage, if only Israel would also see that such an equation could easily accommodate Israel's fundamental interests too. If Israel was 'incapable of such a perception or only half-perceived her long-term interests, it could be educated into such an awareness and persuaded to act upon it. In short US influence and US pressure.

On this central assumption, Sadat founded his own 'linkage'. He promised his people "peace and prosperity". To phrase it more explicitly Egyptian prosperity through peace with Israel. This is the real linkage. The other linkage (peace with Israel and the restoration, admittedly gradual, of the rights of other Arab states and the Palestinians) is a most tenuous connection based on paper promises, pious and self-gratifying propaganda, legalistic ambiguities and artificial, decorative phraseology and verbal sleight-of-hand. It is a colossal

(Continued on Page 10)

The Left in Iran

The Shah was correct, after a fashion, when he said that 'Islamic-Marxists' were behind the upsurge in Iran. Islam, or more accurately its Shiite variant, was indeed the dominant ideology of that anti-imperialist, anti-monarchical popular revolution, but analysts have underestimated the role played by the Marxist wing of the peoples movement in Iran, both in the anti-Shah struggle as well as the complex political processes underway. On the other hand, leftists abroad have, as is their wont, continued to exaggerate the importance of their respective heroes and affiliates within the Iranian political arena. It is interesting therefore to consider the assessment of serious, if anti-leftist analysts such as the **London Economist** and Dr. Henry Kissinger.

(1) The leftist guerillas "began the serious anti-Shah movement in the 1960's." They were the spark that lit the prairie fire, or to use the Debrayist idiom, the small motor that set the large motor in motion.

(2) These "Marxist guerillas . . . played a leading part in the fighting" which ousted the Shah and subsequently Premier Bakhtiar. Dr. Henry Kissinger in an interview with the **Economist** acknowledged that the leftist radicals played the leading role in organising the strikes (especially in the oilfields), that brought down the regime.

(3) In today's Iran "the Left led by the Marxist Fedayeen E Khalq guerillas does represent an **alternative centre of strength** that is demanding to be heard and taken into account."

What then is the programme that the radical Left is offering the people of Iran?

First and foremost they recognise that there is still the threat of intervention by the army, which is largely intact. So they refuse to allow the old army to be reconstituted and demand instead

the formation of a genuine Peoples Army, comprising all the groups who actually fought the autocracy. Next they want a multiparty secular democratic republic (as opposed to an Islamic Republic) which could be ensured by linking up the 'revolutionary councils' that have spontaneously come into being at all levels of society in the course of the struggle. Thirdly they seek a voice in government commensurate with their sacrifices and role in the revolutionary process. Their other demand, which has assumed increased significance in the light of present developments, is that of self-determination for the oppressed nations and national minorities.

Just how much support and sympathy does the radical Left have within Iranian society? The rally held at Teheran University a few months back, in defiance of the Ayatollah Khomeiny's edicts, was attended by almost a hundred thousand people. A letter from the Central Committee of the National Front, the main secular opposition to the Shah, to its leader (Foreign Minister) Karim Sanjabi has made these peoples point. It has called for all political groups **including the guerillas** to be represented in the government", reports the **Economist**.

It goes on to note glumly, that at a **1 million strong** rally to commemorate the death anniversary of ex Premier Mossadegh, the speakers included representatives of the radical left, whose armed personnel also provided the security arrangements for the procession and public meeting. The mammoth meeting was sponsored by the National Front and Mossadegh's grand-nephew, while the left-leaning Ayatollah Teleghani (nicknamed the Red Mullah) was a prominent speaker. Noting the significance of the event, the **Economist** sees the spectre of a political alliance of several divergent groups, namely the guerillas the radical soldiers who do not want a reconstitution of the old

army with its hierarchical command structure; the young Islamic clergy and theological students who accept the need to modernize but emphatically reject the Western model; the professional middle classes and women who dislike the puritanical Islamic views of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Such an alliance would be jointly spear-headed by the Mujaheddin E Khalq (Peoples Crusaders) who are non-Marxist leftists inspired by the egalitarian strain-of Shiite Islam (much like the Christian leftists of Latin America) and the secular Marxist Fedayeen E Khalq (Peoples Combatants), whose ideological sustenance, according to both Fred Halliday and Deniz Pieris, derives from a mixed diet of Castro, Guevara, Debray, Carlos Marighella, Ho Chi Minh, General Giap and Mao Ze Dong. In terms of their external orientation, the Fedayeen has been described by Western analysts as pro-Soviet, though not in the least degree under Moscow's control, quite unlike the Tudeh party.

In social terms, the guerilla groups are based on the students and young workers—especially those in the southern Iranian oil fields such as Abadan. (The older generation of workers support the Tudeh party). The Fedayeen which initiated armed struggle in 1965 but has been really active only from the beginning of this decade, is divided into 3 main factions viz the Cherikhaye (Peoples Sacrifice) group, the Bizan Jazani group and the Ahmezadi group. The last two are named after leaders and founding members who died in the struggle. The differences between these factions centre on the relative importance of political activity and armed struggle. The Jazani group accords priority to the former and has its main strength in the oil fields while the Ahmezadi group concentrates on the latter form of action. The Cherikhaye faction is the one closest to Moscow and least hostile to the Tudeh party.

The Mujaheddin E Khalq have also given rise to two off-shoots, namely the Mujaheddin-Marxist, and the Mujaheddin Marxist-Leni-

nist (also called the struggle for Freedom group) both of which advocate a Peoples Democratic Republic, rather than the egalitarian Islamic Republic which the main body stands for.

During the 1970's, both the Mujaheddin and the Fedayeen have had over 3000 men trained by the radical Palestinian groups within the PLO and also by progressive states like Libya. Most of these men have also seen combat in Southern Lebanon. There are at present around 70,000 guns 'floating around' in Iran.

The Fedayeen, which had only a few hundred members before the wave of popular anti-Shah protests, now has around 10,000 members and over 5 times as many supporters. They regard the Mujaheddin as a useful staging post from anti-imperialist Islamic egalitarianism to 'scientific socialism.' The two groups have cooperated closely in the past though they adopted contending postures in the aftermath of the ancient regime's downfall. In a recent issue of NEWSWEEK, Tony Clifton reported that "The Islamic Mujaheddin guerillas—Khomeini's own men—publicly defined themselves as a non-Marxist leftwing group with many of the same goals as the Marxist Peoples Fedayeen. Both groups were critical of Barzagan's conservatism and complained that rightist elements had built a wall around Khomeini."

To meet this threat, Dr. Henry Kissinger and the Economist advocate that the US work to build up a new coalition between the Army, the conservative Islamic hierarchy and the 'moderate' leadership of the National Front. Will such a new 'powerbloc' come into being? Will it prove stable? Or will the dynamics of the popular process which has got underway, lead un-interruptedly to the next stage of the Iranian revolution?

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Deutsche mark's advance raises doubts

by Mohan Ram
(Christian Science Monitor)

New Delhi

West German capital, driving for investments in the third world, is finding India an attractive proposition.

Proposals for some 60 new joint ventures of Indian capital with West German multinationals are before the Indian Government. West German capital is eager about export-oriented investments and third country joint ventures which can use West German technology and cheap Indian raw material and labour.

West Germany has recently emerged an important aid-giver to India. Its aid pledges in the current fiscal year amount to 15 percent of total aid pledged by all countries (excluding the World Bank).

So far West Germans have been concentrating in India on engineering, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, electronics, electrical, and basic metal industries. Their main interest has not been on extractive consumption and luxury industries. This, analysts say, makes the West German offensive in India more significant because it might eventually lead to the capture of a substantial part of India's industrial base itself.

West German Minister for Economics Otto Graf Lambdorff was assured by India that the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act would be applied flexibly to West German private investments. This amounts to favoured treatment.

Of the 60-odd joint ventures now under study, few can be justified on the ground they need sophisticated technology or technology not already available in India, according to an analyst. This has aroused fear among Indian industrialists that existing Indian technology in large areas of Indian industry might be replaced.

At present West Germany ranks third among India's collaborators in terms of agreements reached. Britain accounted for 1,221 agreements between 1957 and 1977 and the United States for 985. West Germany has 895 agreements.

India ranks fourth among Asian countries regarding private West German investment since 1952, after Israel, Iran, and Japan. With the recent modification of Indian policy on foreign investments, a spurt in West German capital export to India now is expected.

Sadat's real . . .

(Continued from Page 8)

con-trick which in the first instance tries to conceal the fact that this is a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and in the second place attempts to convince some of the Arabs that once the "peace process" gets going their interests will also be served. Neither the Arabs nor the Palestinians have been taken in by Sadat's salesmanship for a product which came off the American assembly line.

NEXT: Peace process

Women on . . .

(Continued from Page 5)

wardens), and some good drawings and cartoons. It is well produced and consists of excellent material, simply but intelligently presented so that it can reach women of all classes. (Since Tamil and English versions are planned its appeal will be even greater). Kantha Handa will certainly make an impact on both women and enlightened men—for it raises some basic and vital questions which serve to raise the general consciousness on the status of women in our country, who are—let us not forget—nearly half the voters and most important of all, form about 30% of the labour force.

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Foreign Service — bureaucratic brahmins ?

by W. A. Wiswawarnapala

Though the Civil Service bureaucracy of the island underwent certain changes since the political change of 1956, there was no attempt on the part of the political leadership to reform and reorganise the Sri Lanka Overseas Service. An attempt was made to reorganise the Overseas Service just before the 5th Non-Aligned Summit which was held in Sri Lanka, and this, though it generated a discussion on the need to re-orient the Overseas Service in such a way so as to meet the aspirations of an independent State active in the area of non-alignment, brought no significant changes in the ranks of this set of foreign policy decision-makers of the island.

The lack of a tradition of foreign policy in the pre-independence period contributed to the absence of a group of officials trained in the art of foreign policy decision-making. The constitutional position was that the Prime Minister, in terms of Section 46(6) of the Soulbury Constitution, was to be 'in charge of the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs'.¹ This, though it represented an improvement on the nature and functioning of external affairs under the Donoughmore Constitution, allowed the Prime Ministers to play a leading role in the conduct of foreign policy.² The same was the position in India where the Prime Minister held the portfolio of External Affairs and there was a senior official.

The position of the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs, by virtue of the importance of this Ministry in the government apparatus, assumed the role of a super-Secretary and this, perhaps, influenced him to retain control over both defence and foreign affairs.³ This aspect of the role of the Secretary

to the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs received prominence from the days of Sri Kanthiah Vaithianathan (1948-50) who, according to H. A. J. Hulugalla, 'did much to organise Ceylon's diplomatic service'. He could be compared with Sri Girja Shankar Bajpai who helped in the construction of the foreign service of independent India.⁴ The expansion of the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs and the importance of internal security in the post 1956 period necessitated a division of the Ministry primarily because of two reasons. The leadership in the Ministry both the Minister and the Secretary could not give proper attention to both Defence and Foreign Affairs and it was Foreign Affairs which suffered as a result of the burden of the office of the Prime Minister. Though there was a Deputy Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs during the period of office of the Government of the United Front, his duties were confined to fortnightly press conferences and some protocol engagements. He played a minor ceremonial role plus that of a public relations officer. More important visits abroad and discussions in the area of foreign relations were assigned to Felix Dias Bandaranaike who was Minister of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Local Government and Justice (1970-77). He, by virtue of this role, acted more in the nature of a Minister of Foreign Affairs. All these provide ample testimony to the fact that the political leadership in the arena of foreign policy remained loosely organised.

It was stated that the Prime Minister allocated a day of the week to discuss matters relating to affairs, and this judging from the island's active involvement in foreign relations, specially in those matters pertaining to non-align-

ment, was insufficient. This type of leadership in foreign affairs provided the Sri Lanka Overseas Service with an opportunity to play an active role in the making of foreign policy. This involvement of the Overseas Service in the decision-making process and its direct responsibility to the Prime Minister and its association with the office of the Prime Minister gave the service a privileged position within the island's bureaucracy. It was this character of the Overseas bureaucracy which insulated it against criticism, and is, stifling all attempts at reform, successfully maintained the Brahmanical orientation of the service.⁵

The establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Government of the United National Party in July, 1977, though made in response to the constitutional changes which were taking place, envisaged no transformation of the Overseas Bureaucracy with which the foreign policy of Sri Lanka came to be conducted in the last three decades. The creation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the appointment of a Minister with full responsibility for foreign affairs are certain to facilitate both the working of the missions abroad and the conduct of foreign policy. Above all, it established effective political control over all matters relating to the affairs of the missions abroad and the conduct of foreign policy.

The Department of External Affairs, from the very inception of the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs, did not function as a separate Department; it was a branch of the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs. The missions abroad, except that of the High Commission in London, came under the Department of External Affairs Abroad. The High Commission of Ceylon in London was given the status of a separate

department.⁶ The initial arrangement was to confine island's diplomatic representation to such countries as Britain, India, Burma, Pakistan and Australia. The cost of establishing missions interfered with the expansion of diplomatic representation.⁷ Though the country had diplomatic relations with 21 countries in 1955, there were only nine representatives abroad. The post 1956 period witnessed the expansion of diplomatic relations and Sri Lanka, during the regime of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, established relations with fifteen more sovereign states. The sudden entry of Sri Lanka into the arena of international politics in this form has been attributed to the changes initiated by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in the area of foreign policy.⁸ The regimes, which followed the Government of 1956, came to be inspired by the changes in the island's foreign policy and the diplomatic representation on the eve of the Fifth Non-Aligned Summit was confined to 23 Missions abroad, and they were accredited to thirty nine countries of different parts of the globe.⁹

The 1956 change in the postures of foreign policy necessitated the introduction of specialism into the organisation and S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike announced a scheme of reorganisation, according to which five broad regional, bureaus and one international bureau were established.¹⁰ The Bureaus (1) Two Americas, (2) Europe, (3) Middle East and Africa, (4) Commonwealth, (5) Asia, and (6) United Nations and the Specialised Agencies demonstrated the recognition of considerations of foreign policy and the need to specialise in certain areas of foreign relations. Dr. N. M. Perera, speaking on the Department of External Affairs at the committee stage of the Budget, stated that it needs to be divided not only geographically but also functionally in order to deal expeditiously with matters.¹¹

The functioning of the bureaus came to be affected due to the dearth of trained personnel. The need to coordinate work in the area of foreign aid led to the creation of the Division of Foreign Aid in 1960. The nature of the

available staff and the need for further specialisation led to a rational division of functions in the Foreign Affairs Division. It was split into sub-divisions dealing with regional matters, and the regions included were (1) Africa and East Africa, (2) South Asia and Middle East, (3) West and (4) United Nations and Conferences. Though these divisions demonstrated the recognition of the emergence of certain regions in the arena of international politics, there was no similar awareness in relation to the Communist countries. The absence of a special division dealing with Communist affairs is a weakness in the present organisation and the West Division, which deals with this subject, treats this as an aspect of European affairs. The remainder of the existing organisation consists of the Economic Affairs Division, Legal Division, Overseas Administration Division, Protocol Division and the Publicity Division. The administration of economic relations by both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Employment reduce the importance of the Economic Affairs Division.

The preparations for the Non-Aligned Summit Conference in 1976 needed the establishment of the Non-Aligned Conference Division. Yet another innovation in 1976 was the establishment of a Research and Policy Planning Division. A senior official, designated Director, was in charge of each division, and the immediate subordinates of the Director were designated Deputy Director and Assistant Director. These changes in the internal organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated the growing impact of island's role in world affairs and the need to absorb specialism in the area of diplomacy.

1. Jennings, Ivor. *Constitution of Ceylon*. Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1949, p. 213.
2. Kodikara, S. U. Major Trends in Sri Lanka's Non-Alignment Policy After 1956', in *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIII, No. 12, p. 1121.
3. The appointment of an Additional Secretary—Tissa Wijeratne with special responsibility for Foreign Affairs within which fell the conduct of foreign Policy and the administration of the missions abroad, represented

intrinsically an attempt to establish a separate Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- 3A. Hulugalla, H. A. J. *Life and Times of Don Stephen Senanayake*.
4. Appadorai, A. op. cit. P, 119.
5. See Indhumati. Tissa Wijeratne's Exit from Foreign Office'. in *Foreign Affairs A Journal of International Affairs of Sri Lanka*. No. 2, 1976, pp. 25-29.
6. *Hansard. House of Representatives*. Vol. 8, 1950-51, Column 1748.
7. *Hansard. House of Representatives*. Vol. 4, 1948-49 Column 145.
8. Nissanka, H. S. *Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka under S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike*, Colombo, 1976, p.33.
9. In 1978 the diplomatic representation was confined to 26 missions. Sri Lanka maintained three offices in India, two in Pakistan and two in Australia. The missions are accredited to 38 countries. See *Directory of the Overseas Missions of the Republic of Sri Lanka*, Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, Colombo.
10. *Hansard. H of R*. Vol. 32, 1958-59, Column 327.
11. *Hansard. H of R*. Vol. 29, 1957-58, Column 149.

(To be continued)

QUOTEWORTHY

Gang of one?

When he addressed a Moslem Majlis meeting in Kandy, an Arab envoy was told "You say that the Arab people don't support this treaty but out of 100 million Arabs, 40 millions are Egyptians"

"Yes" answered the diplomat completely unruffled "there are 100 million Arabs of which about 40 million are Egyptians and of this 40 million there is one Sadat..."

Masterpiece

The Jerusalem Post's excellent resident cartoonist, Ya'akov Krischen ('dry bones') was asked by the editors to delay publication of the following minor masterpiece until after Carter found his feet:

'Moshe, we've got it we've got it!!'

'What do we have Menahem?'

'A mutual defence treaty with the United States of America!!'

'How long do you think it'll take to work out the details?'

'No time at all. Jimmy brought the papers with him. All we have to do is fill in "Israel" wherever it says "Taiwan."— Ian Black.

Nationhood : myths and realities

by Chintaka

Myth I. Lanka is a Nation State.

On the contrary, it is a multi-national or more correctly a bi-national bourgeois state, containing a (dominant) Sinhala nation, Tamil nation and several national minorities, who do not constitute a nation—such as the plantation Tamils, Muslims etc.

2. The Tamil people in the North and East do not constitute a nation, chiefly because they lack a 'separate economy, which is a vital prerequisite of nationhood.

This is a classic sleight-of-hand resorted to by most leftists. The scientific socialist definition of a nation does not refer to a **Separate** (වෙනම) economy'. What it does speak of is a '**common** (සමාජ) economic life'. There is obviously a vast difference.

"A nation," says Stalin, in his celebrated and universally accepted definition, "is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make up, manifested in a common culture." Speaking of the economic factor, Stalin points to his native Georgia, and says that although the Georgians inhabited a common territory and spoke a common language, they did not strictly speaking, constitute one nation before the 2nd half of the 19th century because they lacked a common economic life, being split up into a number of economically disconnected principalities. For centuries the Georgians waged war against each other and pillaged each other, each inciting the Persians and Turks against the other. The ephemeral and casual union of the principalities which some successful king sometimes managed to bring about, embraced

(Confronted by the disconcerting intricacies of the 'Tamil question', the pressures of racial prejudice of both kinds, and the demands of parliamentary politics and electoral opinion, Leftists and progressives, both Sinhala and Tamil adopt different positions. But each position is justified as the correct 'socialist' view. What is the correct Marxist standpoint on the national question? CHINTAKA offers some answers vis-a-vis the Tamil question)

at best a superficial administrative sphere, and rapidly disintegrated owing to the caprices of the princes and the indifference of the peasants. Nor could be otherwise in economically disunited Georgia. Georgia came on the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the 19th century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country, the development of the means of communications and the rise of capitalism introduced division of labour completely shattered the economic isolation of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole. "The same" concludes Stalin, must be said of the other nations which have passed through the stage of feudalism and have developed capitalism. Thus a **common economic life, economic cohesion**, is one of the characteristic features of a nation."

So, it is extremely clear that common economic life means **nothing other** than the replacement of feudalism (with its isolated, 'selfsufficient' village communities by capitalist market relations and division of labour which provides an internal economic bond for a roughly contiguous region. Obviously it is basically **this** situation, with its common economic life, that prevails in the North, rather than a state of feudal isolation. Therefore the Tamil people do possess 'the economic factor, which taken together with the other socio-historical characteristics, necessitates their definition as a

nation as distinct and separate from the Sinhala nation.

3. The Tamils may be discriminated against and maybe 'second-class citizens', but they are not an oppressed nation.

"What is national oppression?" According to the scientific socialist view, 'National oppression is the system of exploitation and robbery of oppressed peoples, the measures of forcible restriction of rights of oppressed nationalities... these, taken together, represent the policy generally known as a policy of national oppression."

(JV Stalin - Report on the National Question—delivered to the 7th congress of the Bolshevik Party—)

If one applies this definition, then clearly the Tamils suffer the burden of a policy of national oppression as practised by successive Sinhala bourgeois governments since 1948. Sinhala is the sole official language while Buddhism is accorded a pre-eminent place in the constitution. The same in true of the national flag. The requirement of passing Sinhala proficiency exams has not been done away with. The device of settler-colonialism, used by the Zionists and white racists in Southern Africa, is deployed to alter the population balance and seize the traditional homelands of the Tamil people. Preference is accorded to Sinhalese in the realm of employment, even in the case of recruitment to state enterprises in the Tamil areas. The Tamil

areas are neglected in respect of resource-allocation for economic development, and therefore these areas remain underdeveloped in agriculture, irrigation and industry. The North is ruled by a predominantly Sinhala bureaucracy of the Sinhala bourgeois state and therefore it is an alien administration. There is a heavy military presence with a Brigadier as its co-ordinator. Standardization and district quotas deny equality of educational opportunity and thus access to employment. The running down of Tamil 'streams' in the schools of the Sinhala areas acts as a device to stifle the "mother tongue" of Tamil children (which is naturally the medium in which a child performs best) and amounts to forcible cultural assimilation.

4. The Tamils are oppressed by Sinhala imperialism.

This figures commonly in the rhetoric of nationalist Tamil politicians including those of the younger generation. In the strict scientific i. e., Leninist sense however, imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Lanka's capitalist economy is enmeshed inextricably in a dependent relationship with the imperialist (neo-colonialist) economies of the metropolitan centres (viz. USA, Western Europe & Japan) and functions as a peripheral unit of the world capitalist system. It is impossible therefore, for the dependent underdeveloped capitalism of this country to be characterized as imperialist—which implies the highest stage of capitalist development. Thus, the dependent Sinhala bourgeoisie cannot be termed imperialist, in the Leninist sense of the word.

The Tamil people are oppressed nationally by the ruling Sinhala bourgeoisie and its (bourgeois) state apparatus. They are also oppressed and exploited by Western neo-colonialism, as are the Sinhala people, who are socially oppressed and exploited by "their own" (i. e. Sinhala) bourgeoisie. The Sinhala people however are not nationally oppressed by this bourgeoisie. In other words the Sinhala worker and peasant are exploited as workers and pea-

sants rather than as Sinhalese, while their Tamils counterparts are oppressed as Tamils and as workers. Of course, the Tamil masses are exploited by "their own" bourgeois elements as well, but the fundamental contradiction is not with them, at this stage of their struggle. Rather, the main enemy of the Tamil people is their external foe, the Sinhala bourgeoisie and state machine, which must not be characterized either as 'Sinhala imperialism' or confused with the Sinhala people. The example of Vietnamese is salutary, as is that of the Cubans—They have never, in the course of their struggle, confused the American people with U. S. imperialism. This fundamental distinction is necessary to neutralize and even forge vital alliances with the working masses of the dominant (in this case, Sinhala) nation.

5. The national question can be solved by granting concessions to the Tamils.

The use of the word concession itself reveals a stark misperception of the problem. The question is not one of granting concessions, but rather of the legitimate rights, national and democratic, of the Tamil people.

6. The National Question can be solved by constitutional amendments.

This is a view held by, among others, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka which has proposed several constitutional amendments incorporating regional autonomy and linguistic-cultural-educational rights. But, as far as scientific socialists are concerned "Clearly whoever regards the national question as a component part of the general question of the proletarian revolution cannot reduce it to a constitutional issue.... and vice versa, only one who separates the national question from the general question of proletarian revolution can reduce it to a constitutional issue." (STALIN)

7. The national question can be solved by granting equal right to the Tamil in the fields of language, culture and education.

This was the original standpoint adopted by the LSSP (pre '64)

and approximates roughly to the view held by the J. V. P. and also many liberals. But the national question cannot be separated from the problem of political power and confined to cultural, linguistic and educational issues. "The obtuseness of the Austrian Social Democrats of the type of Baner and Renner consists in the fact that they have not understood the inseparable connection between the national question and the question of power, that they tried to separate the national question from politics and to confine it to cultural and educational questions" (J. V. Stalin)

Contrary to the slogan of the second International, which was for the "National equality of rights," Lenin stressed that "the question of self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to the sphere of political democracy i. e., to the realm of political secession and the establishment of independent national states." Lenin and Stalin pointed out that to put forward 'cultural autonomy' as a solution to the national question ensures that all political and economic power remains concentrated in the hands of the dominant nation.

The Leninist approach to the national question puts 'politics in command', unlike the economic perspective of Rosa Luxemburg and the reformist position of Renner, Otto Bauer etc. "The proletariat of Russia is faced with a two-fold or rather a two sided task:....to recognise not only fully equal rights for all nations in general, but also of equality of rights as regards polity, i. e. the right of nations to self-determination, to secession." (The Right of Nations to Self-Determination.) Indeed this twofold task faces our progressives today.

8. The Left Movement should recognise the right of the Tamils to self-determination, but should oppose separation and propose regional autonomy instead.

This is completely contrary to the Leninist position. Lenin repeatedly stated with utmost clarity that it would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as having any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence and

the right of formation and existence as a separate national state (The Right of Nations to self-determination). In fact, Lenin proposed that the slogan of national self-determination is unclear and should be replaced by the well defined, concrete slogan of 'the right of nations to political secession'. It is meaningless for the left parties and groups to speak of the Tamils right to self-determination (the right to determine their own political destiny) and then determine themselves, that the Tamil peoples struggle should not go beyond a demand for regional autonomy! It is particularly ridiculous in a context when (going by the General Election figures) 57% of the populace in the North and East and 70% in the North alone have gone beyond the limits of **partial, reformist** demands such as federalism and regional autonomy to the radical demand for **total national liberation**.

9. The Tamil people suffer from the same problem as the Sinhala people viz that of economic stagnation, so they should not perceive in national terms and ask for a separate state.

True enough, the Sinhala and Tamil peoples both suffer the burden of economic underdevelopment generated by imperialism and accentuated by the global economic crisis. However just as the industrialized west transfer the burden of the crisis onto the dependent countries such as Sri Lanka, the ruling bourgeoisie of this country (ie. the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation) transfers the burden of the crisis onto 'their own' masses as well on to the oppressed Tamil people. Due among their things, to the imperatives of electoral politics however, a **disproportionate share of this burden is transferred to the latter**. As the capitalist economic crisis deepens on global, regional and local levels—in other words as the crisis of surplus accumulation deepens—the Tamil people are increasingly marginalised. In his study on 'Rural Poverty in Sri Lanka' the Malaysian scholar S. H. Lee points out that in the decade 1963–1973, the per

capita real income of the Ceylon Tamils fell by 28%!

10. The Tamil people can win their national rights within the existing socio-economic system. Their struggle is not and should not be aimed at toppling the present socio-economic setup and therefore should come into minimal contact with Marxist ideology and the Sinhala radical left.

This is the view held by those Tamil politicians, not to mention business and professional strata, who are wedded to the capitalist system and are hostile towards the political radicalization of the Tamil Youth. They seek therefore an ongoing dialogue with the Sinhala bourgeois parties as opposed to the Left movement and advocate parliamentary paths of struggle. They do not realize however that where bourgeois politics reigns and where the states are based on private property, the very basis of the state fosters national conflicts and struggle. Bourgeois democrats have been striving for decades to eliminate national contradictions by attempting to combine the granting of national rights with the system of exploitation, but "the tragedy of the multinational bourgeois state lies in that it cannot resolve these contradictions, that every attempt on its part to equalize the nations and to protect the national minorities while preserving private property and class inequality usually ends in another failure, in a further aggravation of national conflicts." (Stalin)

Thus, since bourgeois society has proved to be utterly incapable of solving the national question, (and indeed, the very existence of capitalism without national oppression is inconceivable) the only way out is to abolish capitalism, to establish collective ownership of the means and instruments of production. Hence, there is an organised connection between the National question and the questions of the rule of capital, of overthrowing capitalism, of rupturing with imperialism and transferring power to the labouring masses by the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship.

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Bhikkhus in revolt

by Kumari Jayewardena

The question has recently been raised about the prevalence or otherwise of a radical tradition of political protest in Buddhism in the recent history of Sri Lanka. In this article an attempt is made to discuss the role that Buddhist monks played in anti-imperialist peasant struggles of the 19th century, and their participation in nationalist and working class protest movements in the 20th century. This historical background will enable us to assess the role of the bhikkhu today in the political life of the country.

Just as priests like John Ball and Thomas Munzer were among the leaders of peasant uprising in 14th century England and 16th century Germany respectively, in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist monks took a prominent part in the revolts and rebellions that occurred in the 19th century in resistance to British imperialism.

The authority of the bhikkhus was derived from two, sources. First they were the guardians of the religious ideology of feudal society, which in Sri Lanka took the form of Buddhism. Since the foreign rulers of the country were a threat to the survival of the Buddhist religion, it was inevitable that an articulate section of the bhikkhus should take a hostile attitude to British rule. Second, the role of the bhikkhus in relation to other classes in Sri Lanka was an important factor in the resistance struggles. The bhikkhus had a strategic advantage in that they had close links with the various groups in society—royalty, nobility and peasantry—giving them a vertical flexibility of manoeuvre and movement, and opportunities to influence and rouse all these sections.

The fact that the bhikkhus moved closely with the peasantry is

significant in discussing the leadership of the bhikkhus in popular revolts. Many of the bhikkhus in the lower hierarchy of the Sangha were of peasant origin and they came into daily contact with the people. Those bhikkhus who were *gamavasi* (dwelling in towns and villages) as opposed to *vanavasi* (the forest dwellers), had an important social influence, and as Malalgoda has pointed out "living in society, they became... a part of society... a class of professional 'intellectuals'". The bhikkhu often combined the roles of spiritual adviser, teacher in the village monastery school, landlord, medical practitioner and even astrologer. He had thus a spiritual and secular role of importance in a village. His religious role gave him a dominant position in a society of devout believers; his role gave him a powerful economic hold and his social role in administering to the health, educational and ritualistic needs of the people made the bhikkhu an indispensable part of village life. The temple was the religious and social centre of the village and there was a two-way interaction between the temple and the people. The villagers would congregate at the temple on religious occasions and the bhikkhus would visit the homes of the people for ceremonies in connection with the commemoration of the dead, blessings for various mundane secular activities, even dabbling in pre-Buddhistic practices such as casting of horoscopes, and the determination of auspicious times. The mendicant bhikkhus were also close to the people in that they went from house to house for their daily food requirements and were dependant on charity.

Bhikkhus thus had access to persons of all classes, from the royal family to the Veddahs in the remotest parts of the island.

Not being geographically tied to any place and not being burdened with family ties, they had the mobility to travel where ever they please for ostensible religious purposes. As Governor Brownrigg, remarking on Buddhist missions to Burma wrote, "They have always the ready pretence of sending for Religious Books to that great seat of Bhuddoo learning, they also possessed the skills of memorising, carrying messages and using sermons to get across 'seditious' ideas." On this aspect of the Sangha too Brownrigg commented "their own Councils are secret, their emissaries numerous and their access and means great. It is hard to fathom their true sentiments being by habit and education deep and artful dissemblers."

From the point of view of actively planning and participating in rebellion, the bhikkhus thus had a distinct advantage. They were in one sense a part of society, yet they were outside it. They belonged to a monastic system which was a reversal of the usual social pattern, renouncing the householder's life and leading an opposite form of existence where theoretically there could be no dependents, ancestral rights or caste taboos and where special rules of dress and eating habits prevailed. Such a "counter culture" produced a greater degree of independence from traditional society, and in times of political upheaval this could prove to be of vital importance. Thus the Sangha, while being an essential part of society, was also able to constitute a kind of parallel society. According to Romila Thapar, the setting up of monasteries, where control was exercised through the Sangha rather than through secular authority, enabled the monasteries from early times (both in India and Sri Lanka), to take up independent political positions and to give political asylum to dissidents during periods of crisis,

19th Century Rebellions

One of the most striking facts about the 19th century peasant revolts in Sri Lanka has been the active participation of Buddhist monks in these uprisings. All sources agree that the advent of imperialism had been a major blow to the Buddhist religion, which further fell into decay and disarray under British occupation.

The militancy of the bhikkhus during popular revolts is of significance, for traditionally monks were supposed to lead a life of renunciation and meditation and were not supposed to engage in political discussions. But even during Dutch occupation, bhikkhus were active in fomenting rebellion. For example, in the 1760 revolt in the maritime regions against the Dutch, two bhikkhus from Kandy who were accused of being agents of the King tried to organise a rebellion among the Chalias (cinnamon peelers) in the region of Valitara and were arrested by the Dutch. But after the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, many monks started to be politically active and they used their mobility and access to the people to promote hostility to British rule.

In the revolts and conspiracies between 1816 and 1848, had bhikkhus playing a key role in the leadership as organisers, pretenders, couriers and even fighters. As Emerson Tennent commented, in every important rebellion "the priests have been its active agents." In the 1816 plan for rebellion and the 1818 rebellion itself, a major part was played by several bhikkhus including **Ihagama Ratnapala Unanse**. He was the inspirer of the 1816 'conspiracy', travelling widely and gathering support from important groups including the Chalia Mudliars and the Malay Muhandiram in Colombo and the feudal nobility in the Kandyan regions. The plot failed but in the major rebellion of 1817-1818 that followed, Ihagama Unanse reappeared as one of the important leaders of the revolt, even being in the vanguard of the fighting. As

Governor Brownrigg reported, "Ihagama the priest had during the present insurrection been an active partisan, **having thrown off his robes and headed large bodies of the rebels in arms**".

Ihagama Unanse was considered to be a key rebel leader and was tried along with the others Madugalle, Kappitipola and Pilima Talawa. All were sentenced to death, but Ihagama Unanse and Pilima Talawa were banished to Mauritius. An account by an European traveller in Mauritius who met the twenty four state prisoners from Sri Lanka, gives a vivid account of the talents of Ihagama. He was described as the "higher-gifted Ihagama.. the most intelligent person among the prisoners" who was not only politically astute but was also a skilful medical practitioner. According to this account, he was born in 1793 in the Seven Korales. He became a bhikkhu at the Malwatte Vihare at the age of seven and at the age of twenty-one he was "sent out to different parts of the kingdom" where he came into contact with chiefs who "gauged his qualities of cunning and tact" and joined him in the 1816 plot against the British.

In 1818, among other bhikkhus arrested was **Ambagolla Unanse**, alleged to have not only been a "constant attendant" of the pretender to the throne but also to have been active in "dissuading people from submission to the British Government". A British official recommending his execution gave the following warning, "unless some capital examples are made, without regard to the pretended sanctity of the yellow robe, we can expect nothing also from them in future but that **every pansala (temple) in the interior will continue to be hotbeds of conspiracy and treason**".

In many subsequent revolts in the Kandyan regions the pretender was either a bhikkhu, or a person who appeared in the guise of a monk or had bhikkhus as chief supporters and organisers. For example in an 1820 disturbance in

Bintenne the pretender **Kumarasvami** had travelled around the country as a bhikkhu and in a subsequent revolt in 1820 in Matale the chief **Kobbekaduwa**, had a bhikkhu as one of his main followers. In 1823 there were violent disturbances in Nuvarakalaviya led by a bhikkhu, **Ratmale Unanse**, and the same year there was another attempt at insurrection in Matale organised by three monks led by **Kahawatta Unanse** who was executed by the British. Again in 1824, another uprising in Matale was led by a bhikkhu also known as **Galleye Wanigasekera Mudalihamy** and several others. The involvement of bhikkhus in rebellion continued and the 1834 "treasonable conspiracy" to "re-establish the independence of Kandy" included three bhikkhus, **Dombawe Unanse**, **Tibetuwewa Unanse** and **Kattakumbura Unanse**. The rebel of 1818, **Ihagama Unanse**, who had returned from exile in Mauritius, was also said to have been part of the 1834 plot which included a plan to send Ihagama to France to canvas French support for overthrowing the British. It is interesting to note that in the subsequent trial for conspiracy a bhikkhu named **Ratnapala Unanse** who gave evidence stated that the 'conspirators' had knowledge of the social and political reform movement of the 1830's in India led by **Raja Ramohun Roy**, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj which was the forerunner of the Indian nationalist movement.

The widespread unrest that simmered in the Kandyan regions in 1842 and 1843 (prior to the 1848 upheaval) was led by the versatile pretender — bhikkhu Chandrajoti Seelawansa Saranankara popularly known as **Bentota Unanse**, a low country person who was born Don Floris de Silva Goonaratne. He was a man of many parts and numerous guises who travelled all over the country mobilising support along with **Moragolle Unanse**, who seems to have been the organiser

of the plan of attack. It was during the 1843 unrest that a British official commented on the way 'sedition' was being spread through preaching at temples by politicised bhikkhus. "It is to their unceasing exertions that the people are brought together and excited and the facilities afforded them of collecting large crowds together by means of bana meetings, which they can hold at will in any part of the country, gives them opportunities of disseminating their seditious intentions."

Bentota Unanse was arrested and the planned rebellion fizzled out. He was tried, sentenced to 14 years hard labour and imprisoned in Colombo. Among the long list of varied charges were conspiracy to levy war, subvert the government and restore the Kandyan monarchy, looking to France and other foreign countries for aid, trying to seduce the military from their allegiance, holding pinkamas, seditious meetings, administering treasonable oaths, and designing to seize the tooth relic, attack Matale, and Kandy and raise insurrection.

In the 1848 rebellion too, bhikkhus played a prominent part, officiating at the coronation of the pretender in Dambulla (as did **Ambalame Unanse** and **Giranagama Unanse** who were tried for high treason and acquitted. Among other most sensational cases was that of **Kadahapola Unanse** who was tried in Kandy under courts martial for administering treasonable oaths in favour of the pretender and being in contact with the rebels. At the trial since no lawyer would appear for the bhikkhu, he conducted his own defence and admitted to conversations with the pretender and to administering oaths on a bana book. The bhikkhu who was described an "influential priest" was condemned to death and in spite of efforts by senior government officials to get the sentence commuted, Governor Torrington was adamant and on 26th August 1848, Kadahapola Unanse was shot in his robes, an event which had serious repercussions for the Government. (To be continued)

Priests and politics — (2)

Church and liberation struggle

by Yohan Devananda

Liberation theology does not uncritically accept all Marxist movements, though it may sometimes appear that some of its exponents come close to doing so. Basically, there is a clear recognition that the rights and wrongs, the successes and failures of various communist regimes must be evaluated through self-criticism and mutual criticism. Also, there will have to be varied applications of the basic principles of the liberation struggle in accordance with different cultural situations in different countries.

Here it must be remembered that the undoubted corruptions of various Christian regimes in history have not invalidated Christ and Christianity itself. Christ and Christianity still remain valid and still have a vital message for the present historical situation. So, similarly, certain failures—no doubt, even certain serious failures—in the application of Marxism in various communist regimes does not necessarily invalidate Marxism. Without doubt, Marxism still remains a powerful creative factor—some would say the most influential factor—in modern history.

In fact, the re-awakening of the Christian Church during the past century may well be said to have taken place in response to the challenge of Marxism (and also Darwin, Freud, Einstein, etc.) The great papal Encyclicals of the past century were essentially a response to the challenge of Marxism. And here we see a progress "from anathema to dialogue". This is the title of a book by the French Marxist Roger Garaudy, who attempted to achieve to a synthesis between Marxism and Christianity.

A question often asked is how Christian belief in God can be reconciled with the Marxist doctrine of materialism. Some Christians distinguish between the philosophical aspects of Marxism and its practical programme to

change society. The latter, they say, is a scientific method and so can be accepted by them, while the former cannot.

Other Christians go even further and attempt to reconcile the philosophical bases as well, through a common praxis (action-reflection).

What seems impossible in theory is in fact realised in practice. Christians who draw on the deepest resources of their faith have, in the process of struggle together with Marxist brethren, found a deep comradeship with them, based on common understanding, common motivation, common humanity.

This because there is firstly, a common attitude to reality. The Christian concept of God is basically an attempt to explore the fullness of reality—to get beyond appearances to the full length and breadth and depth and height, to the "beyond in the midst", "ever further beyond and deeper within". Similarly, the Marxist concept of dialectical materialism (which is to be distinguished from various forms of crude materialism) is a radical attempt to explore the heart of reality—to get beyond the superstitions and corruptions of religion that held sway at the time to the real condition of people in society. The journey from (false) spiritualism to materialism is, for the Marxists, a journey.

It is interesting, in this connection, to recall that it was Charles Kingsley, a Christian clergyman, who first spoke of religion as the opium of the people, though it was Karl Marx's dictum that became famous. The "Death of God" theology in the sixties of this century was the culmination—in a rather extreme form—of the attempt of Christian theologians to eliminate the accretions and corruptions that have gathered round the Christian concept of God. Apart from accretions and corruptions there are certain aspects

of religion — particularly in regard to rites and ceremonies, codes and precepts — that are not of the essence of religion. While the "Death of God" theologians tended to concentrate on exposing the corruptions and non-essentials of Christianity, the "Liberation" theologian, who followed them in the seventies, tended to focus attention on the essentials of Christianity — on the imperative of living in practice.

Secondly, there is a common attitude to love and peace. Love involves solidarity with the oppressed, recognition of the realities of conflict, and engagement in struggle on behalf of the oppressed against the oppressors. Thus peace is not mere absence of conflict but the resolution of conflict on the basis of justice.

So Christians have found their understanding and experience enriched by the Marxist insights into the facts of society. For instance, they read the Bible with new eyes — this is sometimes called a "materialistic or class reading of the Bible". Marxists in turn may be expected to see through the corruptions of Christianity into the deep reservoirs of spiritual experience of such matters of the spiritual life as Meister Eckhardt, St. Francis of Assisi and St. John of the Cross and, in modern times, Teilhard de Chardin, Charles de Foucauld and Dag Hammarskjöld. It must be remembered that Marx's findings were based on a deep study and appreciation of history. He owed much to a creative use of the thinking of Hegel and the English political economists. He used to read Aeschylus in the original Greek every year and his whole family knew large chunks of Shakespeare by heart. And Lenin is credited with the saying that if he had 12 St. Francis' of Assisi he could transform Russia!

Citadel of Capitalism

Even in North America, the very citadel of Capitalism, there have been radical Christian voices raised and radical action taken for example, against the Vietnam war and in the arena of student and civil rights problems.

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Some aspects of Islamic fundamentalism

by N. M. M. I. Hussein

It is reported that consequent to developments in Iran last year and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, more books on Islam have been selling in the West than ever before. There is apparently a need to understand the world of Islam as atavistic fears have been stirred about the resurgence of militant Islam, which can threaten the West once again as it did centuries ago.

Islamic fundamentalism is normally seen as a profoundly reactionary movement, nothing more than an attempt to take Islamic societies back to the Seventh century. The purpose of this article is to suggest that it might be better understood as part of a revolutionary process, a movement expressing progressive aspirations in societies, with a particular historical background. It involves much more than the cutting off of hands for theft and stoning to death for adultery.

The widespread misconception about Islamic fundamentalism is to be explained partly by its ambivalent character. Fundamentalism means a going back to the sources of a religion in its pristine form in the attempt to bring about total transformation of a society, including a resolution of all its problems, social, economic, and political, through the application of religious principles in their unadulterated purity. Obviously a revolutionary transformation is intended, however unrealistic and idealistic it may be, which looks forward to the good life for a society in the future, but there is the aspect of a going back and only this is seen by those who misconceive fundamentalism as nostalgia for the golden age, as retrogression and reaction.

The misconception is also partly to be explained by the popularity of Marx's dictum, usually quoted

out of context, that religion is the opium of the people. Religion is seen as reaction, and the function of religion in society is seen as ensuring that the things that are Caesar's are rendered unto Caesar, and also that Caesar is supported in his worst excesses. It is not sufficiently known that Max Weber, after his pioneering work on the relationship between puritanism and the rise of capitalism, wrote a series of papers which were put together as far back as 1862 as 'The Sociology of Religion', in which he analysed religion as a source of the dynamics of social change, not as a force supporting the political establishment. But the popular notion of religion as reaction persists, and hence partly the dismissal of Islamic fundamentalism as the worst type of political reaction.

Even where there is a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between religion and society, the very different historical development of Islam and Christianity leads to simplistic notions about Islamic fundamentalism. The serious schismatic movements of the early century of Islam were contained after the establishment of Sunni orthodoxy in the greater part of the Islamic world in the eleventh century. The Christian world continued to explode with schismatic movement right down the centuries, causing social and political ferment. The period between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, witnessed several millenarian movements of a revolutionary character. Religion was a primary factor in bringing about political changes in the puritan revolution of Cromwell, in the Great Rebellion of 1688 in England, and the Dutch overthrow of Spanish power. While religion in the Christian world was proving itself a force for change, Sunni orthodoxy was a force for immobility, profound resistance to change, and political

quietism. Against this historical background, it is perhaps understandable that Islamic fundamentalism should be seen as reaction, and nothing else.

Actually, as a consequence of interest in developments in Iran, there is an improved understanding today about the Islamic world, with its great schism between the Sunni and Shia sects. Shiism is seen as basically hostile to worldly power, inherently revolutionary in character, while the orthodox Sunni sect is seen as characterised by traditionalism and political quietism. In trying to make sense of Islamic fundamentalism we have to situate it in its proper Islamic context, and for this purpose it is necessary to outline some of the important differences between the Shia and Sunni sects.

Shiism is regarded as having an in-built propensity to challenge political power because it had its origin in a quarrel over the succession to the Caliphate. The denial of supreme office to the decedents of the prophet meant that the Shias regarded the Omayyad Caliphs as usurpers and consequently the Shias became active as a turbulent and sometimes revolutionary minority in the Islamic world. The tragic dimension of Shiism deriving from the central importance given to the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet, makes Shiism a 'religion of lament' in the term used by Elias Canetti. This is significant as the ennobling of suffering gives value to self-sacrifice, very useful for promoting challenges to power and revolutionary activity.

Shiism became the State religion of Iran under the Safavid Dynasty at the beginning of the sixteenth century. During the time of that Dynasty which ended in 1722 the ulemas - the priestly group - became identified with the political establishment. The ulems subsequently asserted their independent role and got together with reformists and revolutionary groups in the struggle against the concessions given to the West by the Kadjar Dynasty, a struggle culminating in the Constitutional Revolution of the period 1905 - 1911. It now

appears that the ulemas suffered only a temporary eclipse under the Pahlevi Dynasty which began in 1925. The typical relationship between the Royal power and the ulemas is accurately reflected in the following from the picaresque novel, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* by James Morier, first published in 1824: 'His policy had always been to keep in good odour with the priesthood of his country for he knew that their influence, which was considerable over the minds of the people, was the only bar between him and unlimited power.'

It is relevant to note at this point that after the reassertion of independence by the ulemas, they could get together with the reformists and revolutionaries who were inspired not by religious principles but by the secular ideology of nationalism. It is relevant also to note that almost all the important revolts of the oppressed in the Islamic world in the past have been involved with Shiism: the Zanj slave revolt, the revolt of Babek, the revolt of Ismail, and most notable the movement of the Qarmatians who have been called the 'Bolsheviks of Islam'. It is possible to infer from the facts about the political role of religion in Shiism that Islamic fundamentalism in Shia societies could be expected to develop a revolutionary character.

Sunnism has had an entirely different evolution. The Koran is the word of God and the orthodox path of the Sunna is formed by the Koran and the Hadith, traditional sayings and actions of the Prophet. On this basis, the Sacred Law, or the Sharia was elaborated by the jurists of the Islamic world, an elaboration which was finalised in the tenth century. The orthodox view is that the Koran, the Hadith, and the Sharia constitute Islam, which cannot allow for any modifications or further elaboration. In reality, systems of law have evolved in the Islamic world quite independently of the Sharia, but the latter is regarded as an ideal, a position which encourages a conservative habit of mind.

The attitude to political power has been influenced in the Sunni world by the theoretical identification of religious and worldly power, deriving from the fact that the early Caliphs exercised both. Even though religious and political institutions later became separated, the notion of the identity between Islam as a religion and as a polity is regarded as having enduring consequences in leading to a confusion between political and moral obligations, and leading also to political quietism. The traditional notion was that religion had to be defended by the ruler and therefore it was a religious obligation to obey him. The traditional attitude was best expressed by the greatest theologian of orthodox Islam, Ghazali, who said that a leader is not qualified to rule by virtue and ability should be deposed only on the two conditions that the successor will be adequately qualified to rule and that the removal of the ruler can be effected without dissension or violence. The conditions are such that it is obvious that the removal of a ruler should be regarded as practically unthinkable.

This brief analysis of the differences between the Shia and the Sunni sects leads to the question whether any progressive character is possible for a political movement basing itself on Islam in a Sunni society. In the eighteenth century the extreme puritanical movement, Wahabism, captured power in a part of Arabia under the Saudi Dynasty. It lost power subsequently but regained it in this century in the whole of Saudi Arabia. Islamic fundamentalism in the form of Wahabism cannot be used to show that fundamentalism cannot possibly have any progressive character. Conditions in the world today are entirely different from what they were in a relatively isolated part of the world in the eighteenth century, and what this means is that the fundamentalists of today have inevitably to try to come to terms with the pressures of the modern world.

The Shias and the Sunnis inhabit the Islamic world and they

(Continued on Page 22)

Kozintsev's Shakespeare

by Reggie Siriwardena

At the Shakespere Film Festival sponsored by the State Film Corporation last month, I renewed my acquaintance with Grigory Kozintsev's two masterpieces — *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. There has been no other cinematic interpreter of Shakespeare to compare with this Russian. Kozintsev's superiority is all the more manifest when we set his two films against the British film versions of the same plays — Olivier's *Hamlet* and Peter Brook's *Lear* (both screened in Colombo in previous years), the first, a traditional romantic view of *Hamlet* ('the tragedy of a man who couldn't make up his mind'), the second, a modish assimilation of *Lear* to the Theatre of Cruelty and the Theatre of the Absurd.

In contrast, Kozintsev never lets us forget in his renderings of Shakespearean tragedy that with the fortunes of the hero is bound up the fate of a community. Early in his *Hamlet* Claudius's first lines from the play are read by a herald as a proclamation to the assembled people, while his *Lear* begins with a sequence of the poor in their best shoes trudging towards the palace where the ceremony of the division of the kingdom is to take place — a sequence that recalls the images of pre-revolutionary peasant life in 19th-century Russian literature. Neither scene in the literal sense is to be found in Shakespeare: yet both are Shakespearean in spirit — the first, in its emphasis on the public and political significance of the action; the second, in foreshadowing the awakening of Lear's moral awareness to the suffering of 'poor naked wretches' in the storm. Here Kozintsev's social insight reaches across the centuries to touch Shakespeare's vision more closely than the more individualistic or alienated Western European artist of today is able to do.

Kozintsev is also the film-maker who has most completely translated

Shakespeare in to the medium of cinema. He stages his scenes to achieve the greatest mobility, and although he has the advantage of using Pasternak's superb translation (itself a triumph of creative transposition into another language), he is as economical as he can be with words. Where Olivier, both in *Henry V* and in *Hamlet*, lets Shakespearean poetry duplicate screen images (Ophelia's drowning is an obvious example), Kozintsev often offers instead a visual equivalent that stands alone without words. We don't, for instance, hear the great passage describing the mad Lear among 'the idle weeds that grow in our sustaining corn'; what we do have is a shot of Lear's head emerging from a field, in which his tufts of grey hair seem at first indistinguishable from the downy grasses — an unforgettable image that is truly a transformation of Shakespearean poetry into the language of cinema.

Olivier's *Hamlet*, in keeping with his romantic approach, had set his hero not only spiritually but also physically alone; Olivier's castle, was a constructed set in which Hamlet was artificially isola-



Yuri Yarvet in Kozintsev's 'King Lear'

ted for the soliloquies. Kozintsev's castle, on the other hand, is a real habitation, the centre of a court and a kingdom, where life goes on all the time and where lackeys or spies may be encountered at every turn. With startling effect he has Innokenti Smoktunovsky render Hamlet's first soliloquy as unspoken thought while edging his way through a crowd of courtiers, giving a sharper edge to 'How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world.' The king's questioning of Hamlet after Polonius's death is made a formal interrogation before the assembled council, and Hamlet's riddling wit-becomes more manifestly a rebellious defiance of authority ('a certain convocation of politic worms'). And when Hamlet has fulfilled his act of purification of the State, he walks out of the castle with its gloomy and claustrophobic corridors to die in open air and the sunlight.

Kozintsev's *Lear* is the greater of the two films, just as the original *Lear* is the profounder play, and Kozintsev's imagination rises fully to the challenge. Peter Brook's screen version equated the Shakespeare

tragedy with the negative vision of a Beckett (Brook seems to have been greatly influenced by the brilliant but perverse essay of the Polish-born, now emigre, critic Jan Kott, titled *King Lear, or Endgame*.) That Brook has to distort Shakespeare in order to make the equation evident from what he cuts: the servant who intervenes at the price of his life in an attempt to prevent the blinding of Gloucester, Edmund's repentance on the verge of death, 'some good I mean to do, despite of mine own nature'. These things clearly had to go because they would have been inconsistent with Brook's (and Kott's) reading of *Lear* as a Beckett-like dehumanisation of man. Appropriately for him, he sets *Lear* in the final scene, with the dead Cordelia in his arms, isolated in the film-frame against a blank, featureless landscape — the visual symbol of man alone in an empty and meaningless universe.

How different Kozintsev's ending is — how much richer in its humanity, how truly Shakespearean in spirit, though original in invention! His Fool doesn't disappear after the mad scenes, as Shakespeare's does; he reappears (an inspired touch) to play on a wooden flute the simple melody that wakes *Lear* from his restoring sleep to his reunion with Cordelia. And the Fool is there at the end, weeping as the dead bodies of *Lear* and Cordelia are borne away by the soldiers; one of the soldiers edges him out of the way with his foot as the funeral procession passes. The Fool continues to weep; then picks up his flute as if for comfort, and begins to play the same melody with which he had woken *Lear*. And with this music continuing, the camera pans to peasant-folk returning to their houses ravaged by the battle, putting out the fires and beginning to rebuild. Tragedy has run its course; the time of regeneration has come. It is an ending that reminds us that Kozintsev was a fellow-countryman of Tolstoy (*War and Peace* doesn't end with the burning of Moscow, nor *Anna Karenina* with Anna's suicide). And a Tolstoyan humanism is closer to Shakespeare than a Beckettian alienation.

Some aspects of . . .

(Continued from page 20)

are obliged to interact with each other as there are considerable Shia minorities in several Islamic countries. In the past there has been virtual symbiosis between the Shias and the Sunnis for several centuries and it is impossible to imagine that in the present inter-dependant world the Sunni societies can remain intact. In other words, Sunni orthodoxy will be subject to the pressures of modernization and this necessarily has to have an effect on the nature of the Islamic fundamentalist movements in the Sunni world.

In considering the progressive or revolutionary role that religion might play even in an orthodox Sunni Society, it is useful to refer to a significant controversy in the field of sociological theory. In the structural model of society, according to the account given by Wertheim in *Evolution and Revolution*, a state of equilibrium is seen as typical of any society and the importance of disharmony and conflict is minimised, while in the alternative conflict model of society, social conflict is seen as a basic element within any society. All societies are organized around dominant values accepted by the majority, but there are always counter-values the importance of which are emphasized in the conflict model. These may be theoretically accepted as part of the total value-system of a society, while being kept dormant or rendered innocuous. In either case they have the potential for transforming society. Wertheim points out that in several religious systems the hierarchy of the accepted social order is counter-balanced by the concept of the intrinsic equality of all human beings before God. "Most religious systems endorsed the official hierarchy. Yet the seed of egalitarianism had been sown and would tend, in the course of history, to reassert itself."

These observations are very relevant to Islamic societies as Islam places so notable an empha-

sis on the creaturely equality of all humanity before God, an emphasis which is perhaps greater than in any other religion. In this period of history, when socialist ideologies have gained so wide a prevalence, it is hardly to be expected that Islamic fundamentalism can immure itself from one of the fundamentals of Islam and of socialism, even in a Sunni Society.

(NEXT: Religion and Nationalism)

Church and . . .

(Continued from Page 19)

Then, recently, when there was an attempt by conservative theologians close to the Vatican to reverse the Medellin stand at the recent Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla (1978), a profound Message was addressed by 61 theologians and church leaders from leading universities, theological seminaries, organisations, journals, etc. in North America to their Christian brethren in Latin America affirming the need for a radical stand in the present situation and expressing their solidarity with Latin American Christians in holding on to the new vision of the Church put forward at the previous Conference at Medellin.

This Message was signed by such distinguished people as Robert McAfee Brown (Union Theological Seminary, NYC), Harvey Cox (Harvard Divinity School), Robert Drinan (U. S. House of Representatives) Jean Eckstein (President, National Council of Catholic Laity), John Tracy Ellis (Catholic University of America), Kathleen Keating, S. S. J. (National Assembly of Women Religions), Alan Mc Coy, O. F. M. (Conference of Major Superiors of Men), Henri Nouwen (Yale Divinity School), Richard Shaull (Princeton Theological Seminary), Eugene L. Stockwell (National Council of Churches).

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What do elections mean?

by N. Sanmugathan

During the coming few weeks the people of our country will be heavily dosed with the opium of bourgeois Local Government elections. Their attention will be detracted from the urgent problems that face the people and instead, would be asked to choose between four or five political parties or groupings—some from the right and some from the so-called left—as to which of them is best fitted to administer the major institutions of local government. Of course, there are political differences between these groupings. But, fundamentally, they are all committed to work within the existing neo-colonialist economic and political framework. We do not have to add that no elections anywhere has, at any time brought about a revolutionary change in society. We have had adult franchise from 1931 and any number of elections under it. But there has not been any fundamental change in the form of exploitation that has remained unchanged.

The bourgeoisie and all the reactionaries invented the farce of bourgeois elections to distract people's attention from the real seats of power which are the armed forces and the rest of the state machinery and to turn their activities into the harmless channels of bourgeois parliamentary opportunism and reformism. It was meant to dampen and blunt the class consciousness of the working class and the rest of the toiling people and to turn them away from revolutionary class struggle. It was an attempt to substitute the struggle by words for the struggle by arms.

Bourgeois apologists claim that elections are a great boon and that their verdicts are a real expression of people's true feelings. But this is a myth. Under conditions of neo-colonialist and capitalist slavery, can there be real

equality between different sections of the people, between the rich and the poor, between the exploiters and the exploited, between the master and the servant? Besides, the ruling classes control all the media of publicity, the press, radio etc, which they unreservedly make use of in support of their candidates. What is more they have on their side the power of money and its power to corrupt through bribery, impersonation etc.

As if this were not enough, the ruling classes change the rules of this "democratic" game when ever they need. In Sri Lanka after it came to power, the UNP has changed the election laws to suit its purposes. Afraid that the laws that existed could lead to greater representation to the forces opposed to it, it has introduced a form of proportional representation which is totally undemocratic and which will serve to eliminate all small political parties and establish the ascendancy of two big parties. It achieves this by including a condition that no party that does not poll at least 12% of the total polled could gain even a single seat. This effectively shuts out all small parties, particularly of the "Left." This system also divorces the voters from the candidate. In future the voter will directly vote for the party and not for the candidate. This increases the power of the bureaucratic leadership of all political parties because it is they who will nominate the list of candidates. The voter will lose even the semblance of the right to choose the candidate.

Under these conditions, to call these elections a free and fair expression of the will of the people is nothing but a fraud. That is why the Ceylon Communist Party has neither contested any elections nor supported others who seek elections, as far back as 1970.

We have refused to be a party to the deception of the people and have called upon them to reject the farce of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and, instead, to choose the alternative path taught by Marxism—Leninism. Revolutionaries, in particular, must remember that elections are an invitation by the bourgeoisie to the revolutionaries to declare openly who their leaders and cadres are as well as their aims and intentions. Elections are the most open form of political activity. Such activity is directly opposed to the Marxist—Leninist concept of building a fundamentally secret party which engages in limited form of legal and open work, depending on the circumstances.

Our Party also does not support the theory of the "lesser" evil, i.e. to support one party because it is allegedly more progressive than the other. All parliamentary parties are a fraud. It is sometimes argued that to take up this line is to support the UNP. We reply that it is those who play the parliamentary game that are supporting the UNP, and are helping it to save itself from revolutionary defeat at the hands of the people. It is they who are helping the UNP and all other reactionaries to distract people's attention from the revolutionary path towards the reformist and parliamentary path.

Nevertheless, it is true that there exists a great deal of parliamentary illusion among our people. Therefore, it is essential that we do not cut ourselves from the people at a time when they are politically receptive and just confine ourselves to abstaining from all forms of election activity. We must be with the people and explain to them both individually and through meetings, big and small, what a fraud these elections are. We must use this opportunity to explain to them the truths of Marxism—Leninism and organise them on the revolutionary path.

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