

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 2 No. 17 January 1, 1980

Price Rs. 2/50

- * Athulathmudali
- * Amirthalingam
- * Thondaman
- * Maitripala
- * Muttetuwegama
- * Vasudeva

SRI LANKA IN THE '70'S

ALSO

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GARADS

Planter Raj

A return to the raj? This is the ominous note which veteran trade union organiser C. V. Velupillai strikes in a memo to President J. R. Jayewardene. Writing on behalf of the independent National Union of Workers Velupillai takes up an issue raised by Minister S. Thondaman's CWC earlier.

Workers are being assaulted, harassed and shot at on estates which are managed by State organisations. The NUW wants an immediate inquiry into a widespread grievance which took a tragic turn in mid-November with the death of a young plantation worker, the victim of a shot-gun blast by a man described as a 'security' guard. As the LG reported, several leading trade unions launched a protest poster campaign in Kandy.

With a fall in total tea production and yield per acre, Sri Lanka can ill afford labour unrest in the plantations.

Tea and No Sympathy

"NEGOTIATION.... When it works, both sides win" is the cheerful front-cover announcement of a recent number of HORIZON, a USIA publication. With a lead article by Walt Rostow, the magazine parades the hopeful possibilities of international negotiations on economic matters.

UNCTAD's Secretary-General Dr. Gamani Corea who was home for Christmas would hardly pause to raise a cheer for such rosy claims. To the great delight of fiercely competitive tea producers, the evident surprise of many diplomats in Geneva and the dismay of US and UK, the two biggest consumers, UNCTAD got through a negotiated agreement which covers export quotas coupled with a buffer stock. The aim of course is to stabilise reasonable prices. Though the Labour government in Britain favoured the idea of

export quotas, nothing is known so far of the official Tory view. However the United States is openly opposed to the concept of "remunerative prices". And why? Because it would mean a transfer of resources from consumers to producers. In short, let the poor and exploited remain poor and exploited while the rich inherit the earth. Hallelujah!

Nothing but The Truth

A NLSSP university wit has invented a US-factory fresh slogan from an in-joke. "DEFEND THE LSSP SIX" it runs.

The LSSP Six, evidently, refer to the 'dissident' group within the party's C. C. who resist the resurgent Trotskyist-Titoist line which is not merely anti-Soviet but tilts towards the SLFP. Some weeks ago the LSSP addressed a letter to the Czech authorities on the trial of a Czech dissident.

On the 15th anniversary of the CP Paper **ATHTHA** (Truth) Professor Carlo Fonseka was a bit surprised when he was invited to address the public meeting celebrating the event. In a speech which took only a couple of minutes, he said that he cannot conceal the truth about the 'Truth'. It was the best Leftwing paper in the country. And that included of course the LSSP's own paper. He hoped he would not get into more trouble!

S-T Debate

The Stalin-Trotsky debate is once again forcing the LSSP and CP onto the different sides of the barricades. While leading LSSP members, such as Anil Moonesinghe have been writing tributes in the press to the old idol, the CP's paper 'Aththa' published an editorial on Stalin on the 21st December, the day the Galle election results were announced. December 30th is the Stalin anniversary. The paper also had a front page story and a cente page article on Stalin.

Reader's Review

I have been a close reader of your fecund journal for the past year and wish to make the following "critico-recommendatory" comments in good faith:

LG has taken on too much of the flavour of political jargon e.g. "in terms of Marxist epistemology, this exclusively 'case-by-case' approach renders it impossible to move from purely perceptual level to the conceptual level in the process of cognition." (Chintaka in LG Nov. 15, '79). Good heavens! I am not exactly recommending that your writers read Brooks and Warren's **Fundamentals of Good Writing** but just requesting a prudent use of good sense and consideration for the inner ear of the reader.

The pseudo literary-intellectual exchanges between Dr.

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Published fortnightly by Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd., First Floor, 88, N. H. M. Abdul Cader Road, (Reclamation Road) Colombo 11.

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Printed by Ananda Press
82/5, Wolfendhal Street,
Colombo 13.

Telephone: 35975

Regulating world tea market: US misgivings

Costain de Vos and his buddies (though initially stimulating) have become a sort of literary mutual masturbatory (bad words?) pastime and a bore. This bad habit should be stopped forthwith.

We request that your film reviews and book reviews be more helpful to us by presenting what the film or book is about rather than used as pedestals on which to stand the reviewer's own particular idol.

RS should be able to concede an occasional factual error more gracefully without necessarily compromising his intellectual eminence. We ourselves had Dickens' **Bleak House** in the Peradeniya syllabus over 20 years ago—a long time before the Leavises came out with their book on Dickens.

You need a good regular cartoonist to visually present the current political-social events. I am sure LG can now afford to pay one considering its extensive popularity. Sri Lanka has not had a cartoonist worth a cackle since Collette left.

Patrick Jayasuriya
Peradeniya.

Too Scholastic

I returned to the island after an absence of two years and chanced upon a number of back issues of your journal. It was indeed a pleasure to read them. The style and format as well as the contents were all quite interesting and provocative. There was in addition the sharp and under-cutting unit and satire too!

Yet at the end of the reading, I was overcome by a profound sadness. The cause of this was the so-called debate between David/Jothikumar and Chintaka. It had an all-too familiar ring: the sterile scholasticism albeit of a marxist rather a shamist variety, the week-kneed appeal to the authority of long dead Russians and even forsook the resuscitation of Lenin's death bed wishes and god help us,

his subjectivities! What a spending of spirit and a waste of words!

While a number of queries can be raised about all the contributions I will merely raise two: a) If neither Trotsky nor Stalin had discussed the "national question" and if indeed the Georgian issue had not cropped-up, would your commentators have had nothing to say on the justice or otherwise of the claims made by the Tamils? Or in the alternative, if Stalin had denied the right of the national minorities to self-determination and Trotsky had approved of it, would it mean that automatically the respective adherents of these two Russian leaders would follow the same line here? Surely without either the experience or the wise words of the masters David, Jothikumar and Chintaka can come to independent and original conclusions about the problems in Sri Lanka?

The second issue I want to raise concerns methodology too. Despite the impressive erudition of Chintaka, I think he is in error on the issue of empiricism in Marxist epistemology. Marxism as a method does seek to discover and display the underlying structure of social reality and invariably such structures are found to be uniform irrespective of the particular empirical instance of such a reality. Nevertheless this does not mean that Marxist methodology eschews **evidence** and the systematic examination of concrete instances. Surely any other approach would be tantamount to a search for the great spirit of history!

The finest minds of my generation were driven into the madness of social chauvinism by the utter sterility of the sort of debate that your protagonists have undertaken. It is surely time to move on and contemplate the new social reality that is the world and analyse for example Sri Lankan

history and ideology vis-a-vis the Tamils and Sinhalese.

R. S. Perulianayagam
Manipay.

Not anti-Chinese, nor pro-Albanian.

In Lanka Guardian, VOL. 2, No. 14 of Nov 15, 1979 there are several factually-incorrect references to the newly-formed United Front Nava Janata Peramuna in which Nava Lanka Communist Party is a partner.

In p.5 of the said issue, in the column "A second Left Front" there is a reference to the said Front, as being "opposed to U. S. imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism and the policies of the present Chinese leadership." Though it is a fact that we are opposed to U. S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism it is incorrect to say that we are opposed to the policies of the present Chinese leadership. What we have said in our joint declaration is that we find it difficult to agree with the policies of the present leadership in China.

We must reiterate what we have said in our interview given to L. G. which appeared in L. G. of March 1, 1979.

Then in the same issue in p. 22, in Gamini Yapa's interview, there is a reference to us as 5-pro Albanian Maoist groups. As for the Nava Lanka Communist Party we must categorically state that we are not a pro-Albanian or pro-Chinese Maoist group.

There is another reference in p.23 which is worse. It says, "They have also gradually dropped the term Mao Tsetung thought (For eg. Shan's CCP, Nava Lanka C. P. etc)" Nava Lanka Communist Party has not dropped Mao Tsetung thought. We firmly believe in the truth and correctness of Mao Tsetung thought.

A. Gunsekera
N. L. C. P. President.

(Continued on Page 5)

After Galle, the re-shuffle?

NEWS
BACKGROUND

So J. R. whose critics regard as something of a political calculating machine, and W. Dahanayake, old school master and veteran parliamentarian knew their arithmetic and worked out the sums to near-perfection. Top marks. No need for standardisation. The UNP's 15,000 last time plus Dahanayake's own 10,000 make 25,000. Dahanayake got 22,377 and a majority of 13,000 — a staggering figure considering that the Opposition parties and some UNP'ers too were expecting a strong 'protest' vote, mainly on the day-to-day impact of the UNP's economic policies, rising prices, subsidy cuts etc.

Picking on a non-UNP'er could not have been an easy choice for the party boss. But having silenced his critics, he can now sit back and smile. For the 77 year old bachelor Dahanayake the return to parliament, his real home, is the finest New Year gift he could have wished for.

The 75% poll was quite low, particularly for a by-election. And this makes arithmetical break-down difficult. But there's the temptation to see the 3000 votes lost by the UNP — Dahanayake combine from the 25,000 in 1977 as the increase in the SLFP vote from 6,448 to 9,365. Not much of a swing to please the SLFP. In fact, it's bound to cause some soul-searching in the SLFP over the last-minute switch from Kulatilake to Dias. J. R. himself made much of the SLFP's candidate's political and personal record, as a UNP'er and a police officer in 1971.

Another temptation is to see the LSSP's 4,314 in 1977 now splitting up between the Independent (JVP in fact) Bopage's 3,366 and the LSSP's pitiful 634.

What sort of critical appraisal will the LSSP make? When the oldest party in the country was wiped out of the NSA, with, its one-time giants falling like ninepins, the question was raised whether it had nearly exhausted itself as a significant electoral force.

But it remained the major force in the Left movement — a position vigorously and confidently challenged by the JVP's Wijeweera. Both have lost their deposits but the JVP, contesting the first parliamentary by-election has performed exceedingly well. Does this mean that the LSSP will adjust itself to the idea that it can no longer claim pre-eminence in the Left movement? Or will it be dragged by Euro-communists, Titoists (quondam Trotskyists) and others towards the SLFP?

House - owning meritocracy?

The mail bags carried to the Housing Ministry complex at Chittampalam Gardiner Mawatha last week were unusually heavy. The letters were all addressed to the Chairman of the National Housing Development Authority, a one of several new agencies created by the Prime Minister, who is also the Minister of Housing, in order to face an urgent challenge.

"Foreigners Only", "Suitable for Foreigners" and similar restrictive labels are now a familiar feature in newspaper advertisements. Though it rouses the righteous ire of the national-minded citizen, this recent phenomenon is an inevitable by product of socio-economic change and its impact on urban housing. With the advent of foreign business and the influx of foreign personnel, the middle and upper-middle class are being rapidly driven out of the city. Even those with inherited property find it more profitable to rent out their houses and move away from the quieter, more pleasing areas of Colombo.

For the urban poor, it has always been slums or steady retreat further and further away; southwards or inland. Then it

Commenting on the LSSP's polls strategy, the LG. in its issue of November 15th predicted that "the LSSP stands in danger of repeating its experience of the Colombo municipal polls." In its December 1st issue the LG went on to state that "if the current round of campus polls are anything to go by, then Rohana Wijeweera's claim that his party is the biggest within the Left movement and the third biggest in the country seems to be well founded."

was the turn of the middle class especially the salaried to beat the same retreat into greater suburbia. Finally, even the comparatively high-income "meritocracy" has had to join the exodus. "A house-owning democracy" is a forgotten slogan of more relaxed times.

A hundred grievances of a dozen important social groups fuelled the Iranian revolution. But it was when the educated "westernised" Iranian joined the anti-Shah movement that the Shah's fate was sealed. The Iranian professor, doctor, engineer and civil servant had watched the physical "take-over" of Teheran by "foreigners only". The swollen city became an exploding megalopolis the pattern in Cairo, Djakarta, Manila, Karachi etc. Is Colombo to become part of this pattern? In a pre-emptive strike Premier Premadasa is trying to find decent housing for at least a few thousand middle-upper-middle class Sri Lankans in Colombo while Jayewardenapura is being built. "Castles in the air" snorts the cynic. But senior officials of the Ministry say confidently "The dream will become a reality . . . wait and see".

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

In Colombo

While Human Rights Day this year was marked as usual in the capital city by formal ceremonies, its observance in Jaffna assumed an exceptional character, with active popular participation being a noteworthy feature.

Buddhism and Rights

In his message, the Prime Minister, Mr. R. Premadasa observed: "It is an ironic fact that the importance of this day is left unobserved, or treated casually, both in countries where Human Rights are held to be inviolate as well as in those countries where only lip service is paid to basic, fundamental human rights. In the former, basic human rights are taken so much for granted that no one seriously thinks that it can be lost if the people are not vigilant. In the latter, it goes without saying why those who have denied the people their rights should be reluctant to draw attention to this fact.

"We, in Sri Lanka have been fortunate in this respect. Though not in a modern political sense these human values have been accepted by us for more than two thousand five hundred years."

The local UN Resident Representative issued a message from the Secretary-General in which Dr. Kurt Walheim noted: "Massive violations of human rights are still a painful reality. The dignity and worth of the human person cannot be considered to have attained its due recognition in a world in which racial, ethnic or religious discrimination still persist, the due process of law is ignored or torture practised. Freedom from fear is yet to become a reality throughout the globe."

Disturbing

1979 was both "a disappointing and a disturbing year" said the

Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka in its press statement. The CRM's chairman is Rt. Revd. Lakshman Wickremasinghe, Bishop of Kurunegala, and its Secretary is Mr. Desmond Fernando, attorney-at-law and one-time Bar Council Secretary.

The CRM statement highlights the following facts and trends:

1) Sri Lanka did not sign the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

2) The failure to introduce independent machinery to investigate public allegations against the police. The public must still make such complaints to the police themselves.

3) The much-publicised Ombudsman Bill did not see the light of day.

4) The interpretation (Amendment) Act of 1972 which seriously restricts the rights people formerly enjoyed to obtain redress against abuse of governmental power which the present ruling party strongly criticised in opposition remains unrepealed.

5) The Criminal Procedure (Special Provisions) Law imposes many restrictions on bail.

6) In the International Year of the Child we introduced corporal punishment for juveniles and adults.

7) In the field of freedom of expression, the state-run media continued to be subservient and extremely selective in reporting. The keynote speech of Jose Diokno at the LAWASIA conference was virtually blacked out while copious extracts were published of the other speeches. The Press Council Law, condemned and challenged by the ruling party when in opposition remains unrepealed.

8) The Second Amendment concerning MP's who resign or are

expelled is still an interference with freedom of conscience and the 1979 amendment has an element of political discrimination.

9) The Essential Services Act is the most disturbing measure directed against trade union rights.

10) The extension of the Tiger Law (passed in 1978 as a temporary measure) the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the declaration of emergency all show drastic departures from democratic norms which cannot be justified on the grounds of 'national security' or 'terrorism.'

H. R. O. petition

At its New Town Hall meeting the Human Rights Organisation claimed to be the only body marking Human Rights Day with a public meeting in Colombo. HRO used the occasion to launch a campaign demanding that the Government sign the two Covenants of the United Nations relating to human rights (which would oblige it to bring its own laws and practices into conformity with them) as well as the Optional Protocol to the Covenant of Civil and Political (Rights which would enable a citizen whose rights had been violated to complain to the UN Committee on Human Rights). HRO explained that the object of this campaign was to make clear to the people the gulf between internationally accepted principles of human rights and those embodied in our Constitution.

HRO's Secretary, Sunila Abeyeskera, presented a petition (which was circulated for signature) asking that the practice of stating on birth certificates whether parents were married or unmarried be stopped since it cast a stigma on illegitimate children, and IYC would be a particularly appropriate occasion to call for the ending of this practice.

Other resolutions passed at the meeting demanded the lifting of the state of emergency in Jaffna and the

guaranteeing of full human rights to Tamil-speaking people throughout the country, the repeal of the Anti-Terrorist Act and the Essential Public Services Act, the halting of repression against workers, students and political activists, and the abolition of capital punishment.

In Jaffna

It was appropriate — and significant — that the most active observance of Human Rights Day this year should have been in emergency-ruled Jaffna. It was also significant that the day should have been the occasion for the first North-South collaboration on human rights issues in many years. The call to observe the day by fasting and prayer, followed by a public meeting, came from the Jaffna branch of the recently-formed Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, whose President, Fr. Paul Caspersz headed a contingent of delegates including many Sinhalese from MIRJE (pronounced 'Merge') and its constituent organisations in the South who travelled up to Jaffna for the day.

At the Nallur temple sacred to Goddess Kali, Mrs. Amirthalingam led a group of female devotees (ranging from old ladies to little girls) in singing devotional songs during the fast, followed by a complaint to the Goddess, sung to a traditional melody, about the events of the last few months. Having heard Mrs. Amirthalingam singing in her rich and powerful voice for four hours (without even a sip of water), an observer from the South remarked that as an emotional and musical experience, that alone was worth the visit to Jaffna.

There was a much smaller congregation at the ecumenical service at the Roman Catholic Cathedral, and Fr. Caspersz, in his sermon, raised the question: What can the tiny Christian minority (whose leaders were conspicuous by their absence) do to safeguard human rights? His answer was to recall the story of David and Goliath. He also quoted "the programmatic manifesto" delivered by Jesus, the young Jewish carpenter, at the synagogue in Nazareth. That, he said, was the result of being

filled with the Spirit: anger against unlawful arrest, imprisonment and torture, and a passion for equality and justice for one's people.

MIRJE's organisers regarded it as an achievement that a small group of Muslims — including an MMC — also participated in the fast and prayer at their mosque.

At the afternoon's public meeting there were speeches in three languages from MIRJE delegates from the South and representatives of trade unions and social and political organisations in Jaffna. Bala Tampoe, who made a speech free of political sloganising and exactly pitched to the occasion and the consciousness of the audience, congratulated the people of Jaffna on what he

called "a good beginning". M. Sivasithamparam, while expressing satisfaction at the presence of visitors from the South, pointedly reminded them that for many years the Tamil-speaking people had fought their struggles for their rights with hardly any voices being raised in the South to support them. Glancing at MIRJE's banner, he said the fundamental "justice and equality" the Tamil-speaking people wanted was the right to determine their future.

Resolutions adopted at the meeting called for the lifting of the state of emergency, the repeal of the Anti-Terrorist Act and the implementation of the Social Disabilities Act, protested against acts of torture in violation of the Constitution and demanded action against those responsible.

Letters . . .

(Continued from Page 2)

CMU etc

My own vanity as an individual would have prompted me to be complacently silent on being mentioned simultaneously on two different matters by two somewhat well-known gentlemen, Mr. Bala Tampoe and Mr. Reggie Siriwardena, in one and the same issue of the 'Lanka Guardian' (volume 2 No. 14, November 15, 1979) if not for the utter necessity and the inherent duty to put the record straight I write this reply.

As regards Mr. Tampoe, General Secretary, C. M. U.: What has really induced him to state that I was "the editor of the C. M. U. Sinhala bulletin 'Arambhaya'" and at no time his "t-u organiser" a statement made by your columnist in an article that appeared in a previous issue. He wrote that Mr. Tampoe's own position viz-a-viz a call for left unity has been "somewhat undermined" by my resignation from the C. M. U. Whilst admitting that your columnist is entitled to his opinion, I must say that in the final analysis what really matters in politics is the programme and the capacity of organisations and not so much the individual. I must also say that I was never a "t.u.

organiser" of Mr. Tampoe although I had been at one time in charge of the state corporation sector of the union and at all times a union spokesman who had addressed hundreds of branch meetings and almost all the public meetings of the union, during my tenure of office as Assitant Secretary elected at each delegates conference of the union from 1972, besides being "the editor of the C. M. U. Sinhala bulletin 'Arambhaya'". I resigned from the union in May 1978, having resigned five months earlier from the Revolutionary Marxist Party of which Mr. Tampoe is again the Secretary.

In regard to Mr. Reggie Siriwardena's further comment about my views on the film 'Hansa Vilak' I am sorry to say that he has ignored — if he has not misunderstood again — the fact that I have given the reader an opportunity to judge for himself as to which of the two divergent views is correct, or as to whether both views are incorrect. This, the reader can do dispassionately only after seeing the film. I have to reiterate that I am reserving further comments until then, so that the whole issue will not be confined to Mr. Siriwardena and myself.

Colombo 5. H. A. Seneviratne

NGO's and Lanka's image

The government's announced intention to control voluntary social service organisations may prove counter-productive in ways that the Minister of Social Services and his advisers may not have guessed.

"It is an ill-advised attempt" said Dr. Sejf Theunis, Secretary-General of the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation at a press conference here. He was commenting on a draft law by which the government could impose bureaucratic control of local social service organisations many of whom receive funds from foreign Non-governmental organisations (NGO's). His organisation spends 50 million rupees here, a tenth of its total budget. Other NGO's from Holland spend another 50 million rupees.

Dr. Theunis said: "Our organisation is of the opinion that, if this law is passed, Sri Lanka will be the only country in the developing world with such a piece of legislation. We would be very dissatisfied with such

a situation. As it is our principle to co-operate exclusively with private non-governmental organisations, under the new law such non-governmental organisations could be considered as government-ruled bodies. Under those circumstances we would feel compelled to withdraw aid and consequently to accept the fact that many development projects would face severe setbacks. We will inform the Netherlands Government about such eventual development".

Both in a radio interview and at his press conference, Dr. Theunis indicated strongly that NGO's keep contact with each other. NGO's are very active in western Europe, Canada, UK, Australia, with the smaller European countries spending a great deal of money in the Third World.

While Sri Lanka stands to lose this, there is another angle which appears to have escaped the government's advisers. The NGO's not only get money from the public and international organisations (the Netherlands group

gets money from the EEC) but they are also powerful public-opinion makers. Most NGO's consist of eminent men drawn from politicians, educators, professionals, church leaders etc. Already worried about its foreign image over publicity done by expatriate Sri Lankan groups, this issue may open the government to a wider propaganda front.

Dutch aid for Third World

PTC-Reuter

THE HAGUE

The Netherlands will allocate a total of 927 million Guilders (485 million dollars) next year in aid to 13 third world countries, it was announced yesterday.

The 1980 aid allocations are (in millions of Guilders): India 234, Indonesia 158, Tanzania 105, Bangladesh 94, Kenya 53, Pakistan 58, Sri Lanka 46, Suran 44, Upper Volta 42, North Yemen 31, Egypt 28, Zambia 15, Colombia 14, (One dollar 1.97 Guilders).

Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zambia, Egypt and India are to receive a mixture of loans and grants. The loans will be repayable over 30 years at 2.5 per cent interest with an eight-year grace period.

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India : The system disintegrates

by Hector Abhayavardhana

FOREIGN
NEWS

Every indication points to the breakdown and proceeding disintegration of the political system that came to be established in India with Independence in 1947. Nearly 4,500 candidates will contest the elections of early January for the 529 seats in the Lok Sabha for which polling will take place. The highest number of candidates until now was in 1971 when 2,784 entered the lists. An average of 8 candidates per seat testifies to the weakness of the hold of parties and the strength of the personal factor in the outcome of the contest in each constituency.

Four main political organisations appear to be contesting the elections on a countrywide scale, viz. Congress (Indira), Janata, Lok Dal and Congress (Urs). Two of these organisations, viz. Lok Dal and Congress (U), continue to be the main partners in the caretaker Government of Prime Minister Charan Singh. The bloc which they constituted for the purpose of fighting the election has broken down over the division of seats. The bulk of contestants in all four organisations do not see much difference between themselves. The election manifestoes of all of them have little relevance and were published only a few days before the closing of nominations of candidates. Until the very last there were desertions of important personalities, including leaders, from one organisation to another, based on nothing more than individual assessments of the prospects of their respective tickets.

Of even greater significance is that each of these organisations has some understanding and collaboration with each of the others in some part of the country. Thus the Congress (I) keeps the Janata Party in power in Bihar; the CFD of Bahuguna, having joined the Congress (I), keeps the Lok Dal in power in Uttar

Pradesh; Janata and Congress (U) form a bloc in Maharashtra; Lok Dal and Cong (U) have an electoral agreement in five States etc. The main difference between the four organisations appears to centre round who should be Prime Minister: Indira Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram or Charan Singh (Congress (U) does not have its claimant). This is not an overwhelming difference, seeing that all three claimants and the greater part of their followings really constitute what are no more than factions of the former Congress party.

We have referred to the irrelevance of the election manifestoes and the small importance attached to them by their authors. There is one exception, however. The Lok Dal manifesto appears to differ in one basic respect from those of the other three: it blames the country's current difficulties on the "wrong policies" of previous Congress Governments, especially their pampering of industrial capitalists and establishment of large state-owned industries at the cost of agriculture and the agriculturists and village craftsmen. Charan Singh's sharp attack on Jawaharlal Nehru and Nehru's incomprehension of the problems of the rural areas, in the original draft of the Lok Dal manifesto, on top of his scornful rejection of the Congress (U) demand for 20 seats in Uttar Pradesh, made his break with the Congress (U) inevitable.

Charan Singh has throughout his career as a frontline politician been an angular personality. But there have been many angular personalities that the U.P. has pushed into national prominence with its large bloc of about 85 members (more than double that of other States, with the exception of Bihar which has had a little above 50) in each Lok Sabha. Charan Singh's angularity has combined with his championship of the Jats—a caste of 10 millions

spread over the four States of U.P., Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab, which has provided the base of the new class of rich farmer-capitalists in post-Independence India. Not belonging to the upper castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Bania or the outcaste Harijans, the Jats have lined up with the other so-called "backward" castes of Ahirs, Yadavas and Kurmis, said to number about 40 millions in the country. While the Congress hierarchy, drawn largely from the upper castes and backed by the power of monopoly capital, had firm control of the power in New Delhi, Charan Singh could be held in check. But with the virtual stagnation of the industrial economy that commenced in the middle-sixties, the rapid growth of the kulak class, which Charan Singh represented, stepped up the political challenge of the agrarian bourgeoisie to monopoly capital domination.

The Congress party, whether under the liberal leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru or the more authoritarian leadership of Indira Gandhi, has always received the unqualified support of monopoly capital in India. Its base in the countryside was provided by the upper castes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas (Rajputs) and other landlords. The power of these upper castes dragged the Harijans and the minorities behind them and thus ensured the victory of Congress nominees at elections to the Lok Sabha and State legislatures. The rise of an agrarian bourgeoisie (kulaks), based as it was on the intermediate castes labelled "backward" by their place in the caste hierarchy, challenged both the power of the monopoly bourgeoisie as well as the political domination of the upper castes. Quoting the precedent of reservation of educational and job opportunities for Scheduled Castes (Harijans) and Tribes under the Constitution, the "Backward" caste politicians used their political

authority to extend similar, and sometimes larger, privileges to their caste following. A powerful caste lobby was thereby consolidated behind Charan Singh and his lieutenants.

The break-up of the Congress party into several factions based on caste and the break down of the Congress monopoly of state power were principally the product of this process. Indira Gandhi's declaration of an Emergency in 1975 and the establishment of her short-lived dictatorship constituted an attempt to circumvent this process and re-organise the Congress party as a well-knit instrument under the discipline of a party bureaucracy that derived its authority exclusively from herself as sole leader. Unfortunately, this was not compatible with the institution of parliamentary democracy, especially with the election of a Lok Sabha and State legislatures by universal vote. The General Election of 1977 released once more all the antagonistic forces within the Congress party and outside that had been driven underground under the Emergency and dealt a severe blow to the re-organised Congress party itself.

The Janata party that came to power in 1977 was nothing more than a hasty piecing together of diverse, ill-fitting and even mutually antagonistic political groups on the assumption that the opportunistic self-interest of professional politicians would provide an adequate cement for the purpose. Just as it had been in the Congress party, however, in the Janata party too, the angular personality of Charan Singh proved impossible to contain. Representative of too narrow an interest to propel him into leadership of the party, he was at the same time too powerful to be relegated to second or third place. With his non-cooperation and, then, his revolt against the Prime Minister and the Party President, the entire structure of Janata came apart and the Government collapsed. The way was opened once more for somebody with the necessary credentials who would be audacious enough to seize the reins of power.

The question that arises is whether this seizure of power can be achieved through the elections that are to take place shortly after this article appears in print. There can be no doubt that a personality exists in the Indian political arena with the background and qualities demanded of an authoritarian ruler who can fill the vacancy produced by the shambles of India's parliamentary system. This personality is Indira Gandhi. She does not attempt to hide her perception of her task and of her opportunity. She has openly proclaimed "Call Indira and Save the Country" as her main campaign slogan. She has the unqualified backing of the monopoly bourgeoisie in this bid for power. Large and significant sections of the Congress (U) and even Janata have deserted to the Congress (I) in recent weeks. In Andhra Pradesh, for instance, the Congress (I) party in the Legislative Assembly, which had 173 members originally, now has 230 members out of a House of 296; and according to the Congress (I) Chief Minister, Dr. Chenna Reddy, "they are still coming!" This, perhaps, explains, why Indira Gandhi has decided to be a candidate from two constituencies, one in U. P. and the other in Andhra Pradesh. Though U. P. has the largest bloc of MP's in the Lok Sabha, the possibility is real that she can win a majority of the 42 seats in Andhra Pradesh.

Whether Indira Gandhi can seize the reins of power through parliament depends on the bloc of caste forces she can bring under her wing. In the past, the Brahmins and Rajputs and Baniyas supported her, along with the Muslims and the Harijans and the Scheduled Tribes. Today the Janata Party also commands a following among the upper castes, thanks to the strong Jan Sangh wing within it. The Harijans, numbering 85 million, have the only chance they ever had or are ever likely to have of providing a Prime Minister from their ranks, through the Janata Party which has made Jagjivan Ram their leader. As for the 80 million Muslims, will



Indira Gandhi

the reconciliation with CFD leader Bahuguna and the Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid suffice to dispel the bitter memories of persecution under the Emergency?

It is basically a caste struggle that is being waged through these elections. All participant organisations and individuals are aware of this. For this reason it is unlikely that each caste will rally wholly behind a single party or individual. Local factors, the alignments and antagonisms between different castes peculiar to constituencies and districts, are likely to be decisive in many places. It is difficult to predict the outcome in such a struggle. What seems very probable is that all four main contenders will have substantial support: Congress (I) and Janata on a countrywide scale; Lok Dal in Haryana, U. P. and Bihar; and Congress (U) in Karnataka and, Maharashtra primarily.

In this scramble for power, Indira Gandhi will probably have the advantage of the backing of monopoly capital and of those sections of the people all over the country who think in larger terms than caste and language, but are not radical enough in their thinking to support the Marxist parties. As against this, it must be remembered that Indira Gandhi has, in the past, always commanded the support of the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India, whose influence has never been inconsiderable. At these elections, she appears benefit of Left-wing support and, it should be said, without Left-wing pretensions. Indira Gandhi's new image is that of the Iron Lady an Indian version of Maggie Thatcher, promising to save the country from charlatans and discontents. How much more voter appeal will such an image have in the disillusionment and drought-wrought mood of self-pity that appears to grip India today?

Stalin: The man who built and defended socialism

by N. Sanmugathan

On the 21st of December we celebrated the centenary of the birth of one of the greatest figures of modern times - Joseph Stalin, the man who succeeded Lenin and who headed the Soviet State and Party for nearly 30 years. An outstanding Marxist-Leninist and close friend and disciple of the great Lenin, Stalin's name will, for all times, be associated with the Bolshevik Party which he helped to found, under the leadership of Lenin, and which successfully carried out the great October Revolution. He was the man who carried out the building of Socialism in the first Soviet State, the Soviet Union, and, thereafter, successfully defended it against the most furious barbaric attack from Hitler fascism.

Perhaps, no politician in recent times has been so grossly maligned and unfairly attacked from the right (imperialists and all reactionaries) and the so-called left (Trotskyite and social democrats) as Stalin has been. This brief article will try to answer some of these slanders because a proper assessment of the life and work of Stalin is essential for our fight against modern revisionism and Trotskyism, the two most counter-revolutionary trends in the working class movement today.

The most current slander against Stalin is that he was an upstart and had usurped the rightful place of Lenin's successor which belonged to Trotsky. This view is based mostly on ignorance of the history of the Bolshevik Party. Trotskyites conveniently forgot that Trotsky joined the Bolshevik Party, the organiser of the October Revolution, only two months before it happened, while Stalin was a founder member of the Bolshevik Party and had been elected, along with Lenin, to its central committee at the Prague conference held in 1912, when the Bolsheviks separated themselves as a party from the Mensheviks. The same con-

ference set up a practical centre, called the Russian Bureau of the central committee, in order to direct the revolutionary work inside Russia. Stalin was appointed head of this bureau. The same year was to see Trotsky gather together all anti-Leninist forces and groups in what came to be called the August Bloc.

Stalin's role in the Revolution

After the February revolution, when Stalin had returned from Siberia and supported Lenin's famous April Thesis, he was elected to the Political Bureau of the party at the conference held from May 7th to 12th, 1917. He was also elected one of the three secretaries of the Central Committee and appointed as one of the editors of the party newspaper Pravda. When Lenin had to go underground and flee to Finland to evade arrest, it was Stalin who directed the activities of the Congress of the Bolshevik Party held in August 1917 and which took the decision to prepare for coming revolution. Incidentally, it was only at this Congress that Trotsky was admitted as a member of the Bolshevik Party after he had recanted his earlier views. The proposal was made by Stalin, with the approval of Lenin.

The historic meeting of the central committee of the Bolshevik Party that decided to launch the armed uprising took place on October 10th 1917. Lenin had secretly arrived in Petrograd on October 7th. The enlarged meeting of the central committee which took place on October 16th elected a party centre, headed by Stalin, to direct the uprising. Thus it was Stalin not Trotsky who played a role second only to that of Lenin during and prior to the October Revolution. That was why, when Lenin fell ill as a result of a bullet wound, Stalin was elected general secretary of the party in 1922 - during the life

time of Lenin. That was also why, despite certain post-dated criticism of Stalin by Lenin, he was again elected, with only Trotsky's dissenting vote, to that post at the first Congress held after Lenin's death.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky feuded with Stalin exactly as he had earlier done with Lenin. There are some bourgeoisie and Trotskyite writers who have fostered the story that Stalin was an absolute bureaucrat and despot who did not afford Trotsky a fair chance to debate inside the Bolshevik Party. This is completely false. There has never been any instance in the history of the international communist movement where a leader, who had so much power in his hand, nevertheless, showed so much patience to his opponent as Stalin did to Trotsky.

The discussions went on endlessly for years in the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International. Repeatedly, Trotsky was defeated. The final crushing blow fell when, just preceding the 15th congress of the Bolshevik Party in October 1927, a referendum of the whole party was taken to ascertain each member's individual stand. 724,000 members voted for the policy of the Central Committees headed by Stalin. 4000 or less than one percent voted for the bloc of Trotskyites and Zinovites.

Since Trotsky refused to give up his anti-party and anti-state activities, he was finally exiled from the Soviet Union. His activities in exile, how he was received in the capitalist countries like a visiting potentate; how he became the centre of international anti-Soviet activity; who spent large sums of money for his grandiose activities; how he settled down finally in Mexico in a heavily guarded fortress and was murdered by his female secretary's lover in a fit of jealousy - all that is another story.

The ideological debate

Let us now, consider briefly the ideological conflict that raged between the Bolshevik Party, headed by Stalin, and Trotsky. This centered mainly around Trotsky's concept of Permanent Revolution which Lenin designated as "absurdly left", and was summed up by its formulator in the following words, "The complete victory in the revolution in Russia is inconceivable otherwise than in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will inescapably place on the order of the day not only democratic but also socialist tasks, will at the same time provide a mighty impulse to the International Socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West will shield Russia from bourgeois restoration and secure for her the possibility of bringing the Socialist construction to its conclusion."

Trotsky had no faith in the peasantry and saw it as an anti-working class force. Therefore, according to him the Russian proletarian revolution, isolated from the peasantry which formed the majority of the population of Russia, could only succeed if it obtained the support of the proletariat of other countries of the world i.e. if the world revolution came about.

But what was to happen if the world revolution was fated to arrive with some delay? According to Trotsky, there was then no hope for the Russian Revolution. But Lenin saw in the poor peasants of Russia, who formed the overwhelming section of peasantry, a firm ally of the proletariat. According to his view, the dictatorship of proletariat, based on the alliance between the proletariat and the toiling masses of the peasantry

(Continued on Page 18)

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Human Rights: advances and retreats

by a Special Correspondent

The election manifesto of the United Front, which came to power in 1970, included promises to repeal repressive legislation and to reorganise the armed services and police 'so as to identify them with the national and progressive aspirations of the people and to reflect their interests.' In fact, the UF Government's term will be remembered as one in which emergency rule came to be regarded as the norm. Invoked three weeks before the insurrection of April 1971, the emergency was not only sustained till a few months before the General Election of 1977 but was also used for a variety of purposes which had nothing to do with the circumstances which provoked its declaration. As for the reorganisation of the armed services and police, this did take place—but in the direction of the considerable enlargement of their powers over the lives and liberties of the citizen.

For over one year after the insurrection there were 16,000 people in detention. Throughout the period of the 1971-77 emergency, regulations suspending the normal limitations on keeping persons in police custody in effect permitted the police to keep arrested persons in police stations indefinitely. Further, special legislation—the Criminal Justice Commission Act and the Exchange Control (Amendment) Act—made it possible to detain suspects in places outside prisons and under conditions where the normal safeguards against ill-treatment, harassment or torture provided by the prison rules did not obtain.

The Criminal Justice Commissions Act and the Exchange Control (Amendment) Act were repealed by the UNP Government after the 1977 General

Election. As the decade ends, however, the power to detain suspects in places other than regular prisons and under conditions determined by the detaining authority has been written again into the law—through the Anti-Terrorist Act. A similar back-tracking has taken place in respect of the widely criticised provisions of the Criminal Justice Commissions Act making confessions to police officers admissible in evidence. The Anti-Terrorist Act not only includes a similar provision but goes further in imposing deterrents to recantation of such confessions during a trial. Where the CJC Act only empowered the Commission to ignore the contradiction and act on the original confession, under the Anti-Terrorist Act a person who withdraws his original statement will *ipso facto* be open to a charge of perjury, without any need to prove which statement was true.

Emergency regulations during the 1971-77 emergency made strikes in 'essential services' illegal. These restrictions ended with the emergency, but have now been restored to the statute book in another form through the Essential Public Services Act.

Press censorship imposed in 1971 was maintained long after the crisis of the insurrection and used to restrict criticism and reporting of news on matters unconnected with the original causes of the declaration of emergency. Direct State control of the press came with the take-over of the Lake House Press in 1973 and the enforced closure of Independent Newspapers Ltd. through the use of emergency powers. The latter group was able to function again with the end of the emergency, but State control of the press was not only sustained but also extended after the change of government

with the take-over of the Times group in 1977. Press censorship has accompanied the declaration of the state of emergency in the Jaffna district in 1979.

The Interpretation (Amendment) Act, passed in 1972, took away from the citizen several legal remedies against the arbitrary exercise of authority by Ministers and officials, and continues to be on the statute book.

Both the 1972 and the 1978 Constitutions contained chapters on fundamental rights. The statement in the 1972 Constitution left out certain important rights recognised by UN covenants (e. g. freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment), permitted the limitation of all rights on grounds such as public security and welfare, and made it possible to enact legislation contrary to fundamental rights by a two-thirds majority of Parliament. The 1978 Constitution included some rights that had not been recognised in 1972 (e. g. torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment were outlawed, but this was not to apply to existing forms of punishment). The 1978 Constitution also provided for recourse to the Supreme Court to obtain redress against infringement of the rights stated. However, the 1978 Constitution also legalised limitations on many rights which were in excess of those limitations legitimised by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and it also gave Parliament the power to override most fundamental rights by a two-thirds majority. As the decade ends, Sri Lanka remains one of the member-states of the United Nations which has not signed the two Covenants relation to human rights—the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



THE SEVENTIES

The Seventies flutter to the ground
Not withered, torn.
Torn leaves, torn newspapers
The leaves green, the headlines blood spattered.

The green leaves of '71
Tender as the glades that had known only shot guns
Ripped suddenly by automatic fire,
Branches tossed by the rasping wind of helicopters
Spotlights searching like the eyes of death in the
night

Those helicopters, were they the same toys,
That recent boyhood craved hopeless on city pavements.

May '70 saw them
Planting red banners in Independence Square
Red for the years of struggle and despair
Banners flying
In the light of mercury lamps
In the light of gram sellers kerosene flares
Eyes flickering with hunger and hope

In May '70, in that Square
While they waited for well known voices
To articulate their own triumph
You gave them amplified local pop
Instead of the International,
Do not blame them,
Do not say,
Why did they superimpose
The sharp outlines of ascetic faces
Lenin. Stalin. Ho-chi-Minh
On your smug parliamentary masks.

They were tired of election speeches
But all you gave them,
Was the same jargon once again,
Insensitive you went on and on.
These youngsters they had known so many chants
Fail in the darkness of their lives.

The sick did not revive to the Sutras,
Nor to the desperate incantations of a more remote
past
So disillusion was inherent
In their response to your slogans and chants,
They sensed the tongue in your cheek,
They saw soon enough
You did not want them around
While you made your smug parliamentary decisions
Taking over their revolution
With C.T.B buses and massed alcoholic parades
on City streets.

More fearful than the guilt
Of the blood of those who helped you
Was their rejection, these eager youngsters,
You killed them, when you turned them down
In favour of contact men, band wagon mudalalies
And the suave brown sahibs
Who furtively pulled out their Union Jack hankies
When the tide turned in '77
Burying towards the end of the decade, the living
The same way in the beginning
The decade buried it's dead.

U. K

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70's

UNP resurgence and political change

by Lalith Athulathmudali, M. P.

(Minister of Trade & Shipping)

In the 1970s Sri Lanka has probably seen more changes than in any decade since independence was achieved in 1948. The decade began with a rout of the UNP in the election of May 1970 and the decade ends with the UNP more powerful than ever before. The story of the 70s is how this came about

When one recalls public reaction to the defeat of the UNP in 1970, there are very few who believed that the UNP will ever hold political power again or even remain as a viable political party. The election of 1970 also represents the high water mark of the combination of all anti-UNP forces. Never were anti-UNP forces stronger than in the early years of this decade. This election also represents, perhaps the last election in Sri Lanka, where simple slogans, fine concepts, accepted old theories were thought of being capable of delivering the goods to the electorate. Thus it was thought that the adoption of socialism and the election of a professedly socialist Government would produce mass satisfaction rapidly.

Ten years later the scene is very different. The UNP is no longer a party without a future; rather it is the party with the future-electoral consensus portrays that. The anti-UNP parties on the other hand are hopelessly disunited and even worse utterly discredited. The electorate too has changed. No longer do mere slogans satisfy. Concepts such as the "class struggle", "dictatorship of the proletariat", "socialist democracy", "democratic socialism", are no longer the most important things in the minds of the electorate. The vital issues



to them are—how are jobs found? how are incomes raised? how are more goods made available? how are more houses built?

An overview of the 70s must necessarily review these three factors:-

- (a) How did the UNP change?
- (b) How did the fortunes of the Anti-UNP forces change?
- (c) How did the electorate change?

The UNP's loss in 1970 was not as bad as in 1956; yet its victorious opponent of 1970 was far more powerful than when S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike defeated them. The defeat of 1970 created a crisis of confidence and soul-searching within the UNP unknown in 1956.

After 1956 Dudley Senanayake was brought back to the Party and the more traditional order was re-established. No new policies were needed, no new organisations were needed to create it. On the other hand, the defeat of 1970 created a crisis of leadership,

a soul-searching in the attitude towards the new Government and a dispute about goals and methods within the party. Those years were marked by the untimely death of Dudley Senanayake and other stalwarts such as, M. D. Banda, I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla and V. A. Sugathadasa. This paved the way for the accession of J. R. Jayewardene to the Party leadership. Even his most uncharitable opponent must concede that he brought about a revolutionary change. He was quick to perceive that the UNP had the constant support of around 40% of the electorate but needed much more if it was to win. It had to change its image in theory and in practice. It had to stand on the side of the underprivileged, it had to provide answers to their problems. The reforms came one by one. The Party lost its reputation of being apart from the masses when it took to the streets to boycott the Lake House Group of Newspapers. Leadership and rank and file came closer together in their defiance of authoritarian rule by mass satyagrahas. The one rupee membership campaign not only changed the money sources of the Party but also helped to democratise its internal politics. The various quasi-fascist harassments by the United Front Government of many members and Party leaders, where they had their property taken, their houses smashed, their jobs lost, their persons injured and the imprisonment of many of their leaders calculated to humiliate them; not only served to strengthen the resolve of the party and its members, but also served to bring the party closer to the people who were also suffering in a similar way.

A New policy and programme proposed by a Committee headed by R. Premadasa was adopted. Youth leagues were reorganised, classes were re-introduced and doctrines were formulated. To be an UNPer then was to wear the badge of sacrifice. No group wore that badge more stoutly than the UNP Trade Unions which, *mirabile dictu*, grew in strength and became a rallying point for worker-discontent with the Government. Young people with new ideas and the place for merit became more common in the UNP than any other Party. Family power and privileged-group power were dethroned and the fact that these very monstrosities were being strengthened in the other Parties only served to consolidate the UNP. Some thought of it as a new Party, others that an old Party had learnt a new stance. It was no longer time worn but rather biding its time to set this country's course in a new direction. People flocked to the Party every day in ever increasing numbers. The disgusted, the frustrated and rejected of other parties came too. But, many more came for more worthwhile reasons. They began to believe that the Party was their Party, that it gave hope, that it had strong and clean leadership. In the popular mind the UNP often thought of as being concerned with the few, came to be considered as the Party of the masses. The UNP had built itself a new political base.

One cannot see a change in the UNP in isolation, one has to see it in relation to the misfortunes and misdeeds of those opposed to it. It would be perhaps true to say that the most popular day of the Government of 1970 was the day it was elected. For every succeeding day saw a decline of its fortunes. Every day in office it made goods scarce, goods more dear, yet earnings hardly increased; opportunities of employment declined, the country entered a period of inflation and stagnation. Everyday unemployment got worse. The rich became poor and the poor became poorer, except for the politically privileged who improved their lot. Socialism was being

preached ever more vigorously but its practice was in inverse proportion to the speeches.

The JVP group who supported the United Front in 1970 were no longer in sympathy with the Government in 1971. The LSSP was expelled in 1975 and the Communist Party shuffled its way out in 1977. The so called Worker's Government lived by Emergency Rule and had to resort to strike breaking. No New Constitution such as the one introduced in 1972, no extension of the life of Parliament by two years to 1977, not even the take over of the lands by the Land Reform Laws, not even the muzzling of the Press, not even the various acts of fascism helped the Government to hide the nakedness of the divergence between theory and practice. The United Front and especially the SLFP came to be considered the party of the Privileged few and its abuse of power only helped to cement the hatred of the people towards it. It did not require a fortune teller to predict its demise. Nevertheless, astrologers were used to avoid the fateful day, although unsuccessfully.

The third factor is a change in the attitude of the electorate. In 1970 "socialism" was a quick passport to prosperity. There was belief that theories and concepts could literarily do wonders. It required only a one-day revolution to put right the major inequities in our Society. The Insurgency of 1971 marked the high point of this approach to Government. But there were others who believed that a New Constitution although it denied fundamental rights, devalued the judiciary and postponed elections, would, because of its profession of socialist democracy, lead to a better life for the masses.

There were others who believed that the take over of private property would immediately and necessarily transfer riches to the Government and the poor. There was a belief that good thoughts and fine slogans paved the path to prosperity. Such views carried with it the inference that hard

work, good management and efficient organisation were not really important. One recalls that when the Land Reform Law was being implemented, there were many who expected to be given allotments out of land taken over. Others believed that wealth made under private control would flow into the Government coffers. All these hopes and assumption were belied some tragically.

Even the land, when allotted, went to the politically privileged not to the needy. New forms of ownership without good management and dedicated work led to great losses. As this kind of theoretical Socialism advanced, the sufferings of the people, almost always of the poor, increased sharply. The bitterness of this experience gave rise to more realistic goals, more realistic methods and a demand by the electorate to turn slogans into practice. No longer would slogans satisfy the people; for to them having seen the pudding so often—the proof of the pudding was in its eating.

As this decade closes, there is great public understanding of the need for hard work, for less holidays, for punctuality, for the reduction of waste, for competition in trade, for having a house rather than a political manthram. The harsh experiences of the early part of the decade has enhanced the commitment to democracy. No longer can elections be postponed to suit the governing group. No longer can the judiciary be tampered with. No longer can the press be muzzled. Freedom is to our electorate as important as higher incomes, better jobs and more goods. As the UNP Manifesto says, "democracy and socialism must go hand in hand. Democracy without socialism is a democracy of exploitation and socialism without democracy is a socialism of oppression." This the majority of the electorate continues to endorse as we end this decade. The fruits of the new direction are already to be seen. We believe what is seen today is only the tip of the iceberg and 9/10th of the good things that are to come will surface in the 1980s.

70's

Estate Labour: Decade of Despair

by S. Thondaman MP.

*(Minister of Rural Industrial Development, &
President, Ceylon Workers Congress.)*

If one were to traverse down memory lane the plantation workers have trudged this past decade, one cannot fail to notice that these were the most traumatic, tearful, and turbulent years of their chequered history. The birth of this decade also ushered in a new government for the country, which sought to use every weapon in its arsenal to wreak vengeance against innocent plantation workers, whom it thought had played a negative role at the hustings.

These years at least the first seven in the seventies were years, when the plantation workers took a severe beating from the government as did the plantation economy and the national exchequer. From the time the government took office in 1970, it had unleashed an unparalleled reign of tyranny and terror. Even during the worst depressions the plantation people did not suffer as much as they did during these seven years.

The Land Reform law used to decimate large and viable plantations into miniscule estates served on a platter to political poltroons as prizes. In this thousands of plantation workers who were already stateless, became jobless and homeless. Government and its members of parliament used every conceivable and inconceivable measure to coerce the workers to leave their line rooms and flee the plantations. Thugs ruled the roost and hooligans had a field day. They entered the estates with impunity, in state owned vehicles, assaulted and maimed workers, looted their belongings, set fire to their



property and damaged their line rooms. The government would do nought about it.

In the year 1973 this country experienced the worst food shortage in living memory created not by natural disaster or elements, but by man—the government. The most effected people were the plantation people who, while having their rations slashed by half had even their working days cut back.

When there was already legislation in the statute books that plantation workers should be offered six days work in a week or paid wages in lieu of, the then government under the guise of providing protection to the workers by guaranteeing the minimum number of working days introduced legislation reducing it to 108 days in six months.

Unlike the villager, the estate workers had no plot of land to cultivate his own food crops and as a result, deaths from starvation multiplied during this period. Workers had to fight with dogs

in towns to get what they could from the refuse bins to appease their hunger.

Even this was too much for the government which called itself the "workers and people's government". In places like Badulla, workers who came to the town to beg were bundled off in lorries and transported to the jungles of the Eastern province and left to the tender mercies of nature and wild animals.

While our rulers lived in isolated splendour, the world at large could not be shrouded off from the sordid situation that was prevailing in the plantations. The Granada Television from Britain spotlighted the appalling conditions of the plantation workers. This nudged the conscience of the world especially that of the British and many organisations including "War on Want" took up the cause of the poor plantation workers. The gravamen of their complaint, was that the British estate owners, who have been earning millions of pounds over the years from the toil of the workers had not spent even a negligible percentage of their profits for the benefit of the workers.

While the British housewife, wept at what she saw in her tea cup, as the blood of the withering workers, following this expose, those who ruled the destinies of the country felt otherwise. A leader, ironically, a leader of the working class, who was among those who got a berth in the cabinet caravan accused the Ceylon Workers Congress of having conspired

with an international television network to discredit the country.

A British parliamentary team, which visited Sri Lanka to personally verify the validity of the charges levelled by the C. W. C., the Granada Television and the British Press against such planting multi-national giants like Brooke Bonds, Liptons and Carsons, after extensive investigations, recommended far reaching changes and urged that the British planting interests must plough back some of their monies earned from here to improve the quality of life of the plantation workers. It was conservatively estimated that it would cost around thousand million pounds to effect initial improvements to living quarters of the workers.

Shortly after this, I was in London myself and met the Secretary of Trade Mr. Peter Shore, who very candidly admitted that the British had a moral obligation to improve the quality of life of the plantation workers who have spent their whole life enriching the economy of the country and increasing the profits of their British masters. But this was not to materialise. British tea interests, were not to spend one farthing to improve conditions here.

When the first phase of the Land Reform Law was implemented in 1972, estates were severely left alone as the government felt it inadvisable to nationalise them. However, when these developments took place and the British estate owners were being forced to plough back some of their profits into the tea gardens, the government offered to nationalise the estates and pay them compensation. They very readily accepted this offer, for this would not only save them from repatriating any of their wealth to Sri Lanka but they stood to gain substantially by way of compensation.

The estates were nationalised and a new tribe of plantocrats took over. Many of them had neither seen a tea bush nor a rubber tree in all their lives. The only qualification that was

insisted upon was that they must be in the party cadre of the ruling triumvirate.

These men began to rule the estates like petty kings with utter disregard for the industrial legislation or conciliation machinery. Even this machinery oiled generously with political grease very often ground to a halt when things seemed to be in favour of the plantation workers. No right, no privilege was extended to them through negotiations. We were always called upon to draw the last arrow from our quiver to win our demands. Our struggles, as in the case of working hours were historic and protracted. They cost the workers many a day of their precious pay. But otherwise, we could not get the government to see reason. We were invited, during the Working Hour struggle by the then Minister of Labour, the late Mr. M. P. de Z. Siriwardena, who worked out a formula of compromise, but the Cabinet met and prevented the implementation of that agreement.

Another struggle of the plantation workers during this decade which will find a place in the annals of plantation industry was the struggle for the Monthly Wage. The entire plantation industry came to a standstill. The Ceylon Estate Employers Federation sensing the seriousness of the strike, started negotiations. But the government would not let them enter into an agreement with us, maintaining that it had already appointed a sub-committee to go into this question and therefore any agreement had to await the findings of this Committee. At that time another Minister of the then Cabinet, also a labour leader made a statement that in no part of the world were agricultural workers paid a monthly wage.

There were Ministers to whom the C. W. C. and its leadership were nightmares and the plantation workers anathema. Some of them even threatened to bounce me across the Palk Straits. But it is they who have been bounced out of the political arena by their own electorates.

It was in this context that democracy faced a definite threat. Though the C. W. C. was not in parliament then, the sagacious leader of the United National Party Mr. J. R. Jayewardene invited us for all Opposition party meetings and we participated in the Satyagraha, organised through out the Island including the one at Attanagalla, the Constituency of Mrs. Bandaranaike, the then Prime Minister.

When due to popular pressure, parliament was dissolved, another attempt was made to alter the composition of the voters in the up country electorates by shifting the plantation workers from their home estates. In the Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya electorate, 7,000 acres of estate land was to be alienated and the workers displaced. Here again, the workers had to struggle to prevent this and in the process a worker in the prime of youth fell to a policeman's bullet.

The 1977 general elections were a turning point in the life of the plantation workers. For, it was in that election that after 30 years they were able to elect a representative from their own community; of their own choice. The mantle fell on my shoulders, thus removing an embargo cast on my community for political reasons, immediately after the country became independent.

This tide also began to sweep many other elements that stood in the way of plantation workers. In the framing of the new Constitution we were able to play a prominent role and obtain many rights entrenched, like the affording of national status to Tamil language; the removal of the dubious distinction of dual category of citizenship by descent and by registration, the right to correspond with the government in Tamil and get replies in the same language in any part of the Island; the right to litigate in the language of the litigant and so on. For the first time the Constitution also took cognizance of the stateless category of persons to whom certain fundamental rights have been extended

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70's

Sri Lanka in the 1970's

by A. Amirthalingum MP.

(Leader of the Opposition)

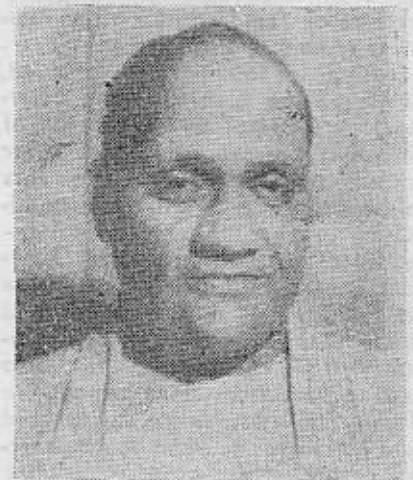
The Seventies of the 20th Century have seen three major developments in Ceylon. The first of these and one pregnant with far-reaching consequences for the future of the country is the emergence of the New Left and the first attempt at a violent overthrow of the established order with the object of installing a socialist economic system. What is even more significant about this rising is that it was against a United Front Socialist Government of which the two major Left parties of the country were component members that it took place. The cruelty of the armed forces in suppressing this revolt has left a bitter taste in the mouth and caused grave disillusionment among the younger generation. This has made the future of the fragmented and bitterly antagonistic Left a big question mark. Perhaps the mounting hardships of the masses may galvanise these warring groups into united action and thereby lead to the emergence of a new leadership for the entire socialist movement in the eighties.

The second development is the unceremonial scrapping of the Soulbury Constitution with its built in checks and balances and safeguards for racial, religious and economic minorities. The British handed over power to the local bourgeoisie in 1948 under a replica of the Westminster Constitution. The safeguards for minorities, meagre and ineffective though they were, also were thrown overboard. The procedure followed in drafting and adopting the new constitution in 1972 has set a precedent for political parties for including clauses regarding constitutional changes in their election manifestos and proceeding to replace the constitution of the country if they come to power. Judging by pronouncements by the leaders of the S.L.F.P. on the present cons-

titution, the present constitution of 1972 may be only one in a series.

Before I deal with the impact of the constitutional change of 1972 on Tamil politics in this country it may be easier to refer to the fundamental change in the character of the structure of government ushered in by the Jayewardene constitution of 1978. The centre of political power has shifted from parliament to President's House and the country was overnight transformed from a parliamentary democracy to a Presidential Government. Though some of the vestiges of parliamentary tradition yet linger on there is no doubt with the passage of time the Presidency will become the supreme seat of power. In a Parliament elected under Proportional Representation where no single party may have an absolute majority Prime Ministers and cabinets may change but the President will go on for the full term, wielding the stick of dissolution if parliament does not toe the desired line.

The third and from my point of view vital development is the unification of Tamil political leadership and the surfacing of the demand for self-determination and for the establishment of a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam. There were earlier hints at the possibility of the Tamils putting forward a demand of this nature. As early as 1924 Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in his bitterness at being let down over the Colombo Tamil seat formed the Ceylon Tamil League and spoke of the possibility of the Tamils ruling themselves in their homeland. Mr. G.G. Ponnambalam in 1947 in the frustration at the failure of the demand for balanced representation and the subsequent elation at the victory at the polls demanded the right of self-determination for the Tamils from the



Colonial rulers. Again in 1956, reduced to tears at the betrayal by the Sinhalese leaders whom he had trusted and in a mood of penitance for having brought his community to a sorry pass by his cooperation with those leaders, Mr. C. Suntharalingam demanded the right to separate the state, after the Sinhala only Act was passed. But separation was never accepted by the Tamil masses as the objective till the seventies.

On the eve of adoption of the Republican Constitution in May, 1972 a very significant development took place among the Tamil political parties and leaders. On the 14th of May the Tamil United Front was formed at Trincomalee and leaders like Mr. S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, Mr. G.G. Ponnambalam, Mr. C. Suntharalingam, Mr. S. Thondaman and even Mr. K.W. Devanayagam of the U.N.P. got together to put forward the demand for the inclusion of certain fundamental language and other rights in the Constitution. The callous disregard with which this six point demand was treated by the government led to Mr. Chelvanayakam resigning his seat in Parliament challenging the Government to contest him and vindicate its position that the Tamil people

had accepted the constitution. The by-election was not held for two years and in the meantime other developments took place which accelerated the change in Tamil political thinking.

The Police and the Army in the Tamil areas started acting as an army of occupation. Frequent arrests of Tamil youth on the flimsiest ground and torture and incarceration for long periods followed. Some youths arrested for distributing leaflets on the eve of Republic day were locked up for months without trial. These acts of violence by the Police culminated in the massacre of the Innocents at the International Association of Tamil Research Conference in Jaffna and nine people lost their lives on the 10th of January 1974. These events also led to another development in Tamil politics. Some frustrated and embittered Tamil youth started resorting to violence against Tamil politicians who were co-operating with the Regime and Policemen who were torturing and killing their colleagues. This was inspired partly by the example of the rising of the radical Sinhalese youth in 1971. In this background of hardening Tamil opinion in the face of the government intransigence and violence and counter violence the Kankasantural by-election was held and in it almost spontaneously arose the demand for the restoration of the lost sovereignty of the Tamil Nation. When Mr. Chelvanayakam was elected by a preponderant majority he hailed it "as a mandate that the Ealam Tamil Nation should exercise the sovereignty already vested in the Tamil people and become free". The subsequent adoption of this as the policy of the Tamil United Front and the transformation of the United Front into a United Liberation Front was a matter of course. The trial at-bar of some members of the T.U.L.F. in 1976 only helped to further cement the unity among the Tamil people and strengthen their resolve to win their freedom. The General Election in 1977 July demonstrated this resolve in an unprecedented way. Of the 24 seats the T.U.L.F. contested on this ticket they won

eighteen and of the nineteen Tamil electorates in the Northern and Eastern Provinces eighteen returned T.U.L.F. members with preponderant majorities. The racial violence let loose on the Tamil people in August 1977 only confirmed the worst fears they entertained and showed that the division between the two nations in this Island was complete in spirit though not in law.

A hopeful and heartening development in the last two years is the realisation by sections of the bold Marxist leadership among the Sinhalese that the right of the oppressed Tamil Nation to self-determination should be recognised and that the struggle of the "oppressed Tamil Nation" for their liberation was progressive in content and had to be supported by all genuine Marxist-Leninists in this country. But unfortunately the major Sinhala political parties have not made any progress in their thinking. The U.N.P. which had identified the "grievances of the Tamil people in such fields as (1) Education (2) Colonisation (3) Use of Tamil Language (4) Employment in the public and semi-public Corporations" as having made them "support even a movement for a separate state" has done nothing to work out a solution. The grievances on the score of employment have been aggravated by an unprecedentedly discriminatory policy of recruitment. Tamil Language rights granted by the constitution have not been implemented. The problems in Education and Colonisation yet remain unsolved. While dangling the carrot of decentralisation, the Government is continuing to use the stick of emergency and Army rule not only in the Jaffna District but all over the North and East even without emergency. The developments which started in 1972 and culminated in mandate for Tamil Ealam in the 1977 elections and reached a peak in the communal violence of August 1977 and the tensions, emergencies, arrests, tortures, and killings of the last six months have left the resolve of the Tamil nation to be free untouched. As to what the eighties hold for the Tamil people and the country is in the lap of fate.

Stalin . . .

(Continued from Page 10)

could overthrow capitalism in Russia and build Socialism - even if the world revolution is fated to arrive late.

Referring to this difference, Trotsky has written, "I accused Lenin of overestimating the independent role of the peasantry. Lenin accused me of underestimating the revolutionary role of the peasantry." Lenin had envisaged this possibility as far back as 1915 when he wrote, "Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence the victory of Socialism is possible **first** in several or even in **one** Capitalist country".

First, under Lenin, and then under Stalin, the Bolsheviks set out to construct Socialism in the only country where revolution had been successfully defended. In constructing Socialism in a single country surrounded by the sea of imperialism and capitalism, Stalin and the Bolsheviks did something that had never been done before. There was no example to go by, no experience to emulate. It was being done for the first time in history. The wonder is not that Stalin committed some mistakes, but that he succeeded so well in constructing Socialism in the Soviet Union, and, thereafter, defending it against Hitler fascism. Had he not done his job well, the history of the world would have been different. Fascism could well have triumphed. He also cleared out a large number of counter-revolutionary representatives of the bourgeoisie who had sneaked into the party, including Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Bukharin and the like. Had he not done so, the gates would have been opened for Hitler from within.

70's

An open door to tycoons

by Maitripala Senanayake, MP.

(Deputy Leader, Sri Lanka Freedom Party)

A decade is certainly not a short period in the life of a nation and the seventies in my view, represented an important stage in the evolution of Sri Lanka as a modern nation which, in many a field, broke away from the heritage of colonialism. Last four decades—thirties, forties, fifties, and the sixties—represented vital stages in the political modernisation of the country and it was during this phase that certain attempts were made to achieve an equally important economic advancement. These changes in the last four decades, in their cumulative effect, invited commitment on the part of political leadership and it was manifested in the leaders who guided the destinies of the Sri Lankan nation in the early seventies led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The emergence of the political and social climate for the introduction of the changes of the early seventies was largely due to the national awakening and the social consciousness for which the SLFP mainly and the Left, provided leadership.

Changes in the seventies, though brought about a complete transformation of the political and social system of the island, need to be confined to the areas where the impact was both national and international. One can catalogue these changes broadly under the titles—political and economic. In my view, this decade witnessed the collapse of two Governments or the formation of two Governments, the April 1971 insurrection, the far-reaching constitutional changes culminating in the introduction of two Constitutions, Sri Lanka's dynamic role in the international field with the 5th summit which was held in Colombo and the important economic reforms introduced

with a view to freeing the colonial stranglehold on our underdeveloped economy. The aim of this brief essay is to examine the importance of those far-reaching reforms and changes and their relevance in the present context of a creed of politics which calls itself 'Dharmista'. In the same context, one has to probe into the glaring efforts on the part of the present regime to reverse the process of economic and political independence for which we of the SLFP laid the foundation in the mid-fifties, maintained in the sixties, and strengthened dynamically in the seventies. Domestically, the Peasantry Workers Government of mid seventies changed drastically into a Businessmen's Government, at the late seventies.

Since the Constitutional developments of the late seventies have brought about a considerable change in the style of Government and this transformation, in my view, has eroded the confidence of the people in the system of Government. Any framework of a Government—which a Constitution establishes with or without the popular consent of the people—must be acceptable to the people and to the institutions incorporated into the Constitution must be able to command the confidence of the masses. The manipulation of a constitution, with the introduction of a variety of devices to suit the advantages of the party in power, is certainly not in the interest of good government. The enactment of the Constitutions of 1972 and 1978 represented two vital stages in the political development of the country; the 1972 Constitution, which incorporated political and social ideas of a generation of leaders whose roots in the mass politics of the coun-



try, brought about the concept of the 'home made' constitution to the focus. Though this brief article cannot be used to examine the basic features of the 1972 Constitution, some of its characteristics need to be recounted in retrospect in order to elaborate on the view that the 1978 Constitution was totally a political invention of a party in power without associating the people in process of constitution-making.

The question of the mandate has been used to justify all types of undemocratic constitutional inventions—invented largely in the name of the need for continuous political stability for economic development with foreign participation—and the visible defect in the process of constitution-making was largely the failure to subject it to a Constituent Assembly which our Government established in the early seventies. It debated all aspects of the draft Constitution and the opinion in the country was an opportunity to examine the pros and cons of the Constitution which we enacted in 1972. The 1978 Constitution, which interests people like Zia Ul Huq of Pakistan and sev-

ral leaders of similiar background, witnessed several stages before it suddenly took the shape of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; for instance, the Second Amendment inaugurated a powerful Presidency and the Select Committee, though it gave the impression that the 1972 Constitution is being revised, gave birth to a completely new Constitution. People of this country, in addition to what is called a constitutional heresy which has been imposed, have been asked to accept some pieces of legislation which remained in the realm of ordinary law as a part and parcel of the new Constitution. In addition, all in support of the introduction of such as the Presidential Commission Law, Criminal Procedure (special provisions) Law, Tiger Law, Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Essential Public Services Act 'do not stand to reason, and they, in my view violate and go against the fundamental rights and basic freedoms about which the leaders of the present Government pontificate from their platforms. One must not hesitate to accept the fact that the State apparatus has been strengthened with these draconian laws in such a way that even genuine democratic opposition could be stifled. The leaders who opposed the enactment of laws to combat foreign exchange offences and the insurgency have now taken refuge in a series of laws which are more draconian than those they wanted repealed. Another feature of the constitutional system is proliferation of Ministries and Ministers, and this, along with the arrival of a new kind of appointed members of Parliament who are accountable to a core of unknown party leaders (including the leadership which is more elite based), has bought the whole Government into ridicule. This, in my view, was the greatest constitutional blunder which the late seventies witnessed in the name 'Dharmista' stability, and it is also the greatest constitutional achievement of the present Government. What an achievement in a country which has

had an acceptable parliamentary tradition?

1971 April insurgency and its impact on the political and social life of the country could not be ignored because of the magnitude of 1971 crisis and the affects of its aftermath. It has been analysed by various politicians and intellectuals from different points of view and I do not want to indulge in a similar exercise. Our Government, which confronted this situation, had to divert our attention to a series of acts, and they, to a great extent, disrupted the programme of the Government and at the same time it generated certain radicalism within the Government. The youths, who plotted a revolutionary-armed struggle road to political power in 1971, have now accepted our method of rule—the parliamentary road to power, and this ideological shift is the greatest paradox of the seventies.

Yet another significant event in the seventies was the 5th Non-Aligned Nations Summit which was held in Colombo and this great international event became a vindication of the country's foreign policy and the role Sri Lanka played in the arena of non-alignment in particular. The movement of non-aligned nations became a vital international force during the last two decades and it was the SLFP Government which made the important contribution in making non-alignment an accepted formula for the newly emergent nations. Our role during the seventies culminated in the decision to hold the 5th Summit in Colombo and it, irrespective of other factors, demonstrated the power which a small nation like that of Sri Lanka can wield in the arena of global politics. The present day rulers are striving hard to find and locate parallels and they refer to minor conferences and meetings and speeches with the sole aim of identifying them with the process of non-alignment. These feeble attempts to show that the foreign policy postures of the late seventies are deriving inspiration from the standpoints which were acceptable in the late forties and the

early fifties. Foreign policies should be partly if not totally guided by economic determinants and this aspect has been given very top priority and in the process the whole concept of non-alignment has been forgotten. This is certainly a dangerous trend which needs to be arrested in the eighties and we as representatives of the masses must be prepared to protect the name of Sri Lanka as a pioneer in the non-aligned movement.

Though the world inflationary trends and the constraints imposed by the energy crisis affected the economic development programme to which we gave leadership till the mid-seventies, it was our regime which laid the foundation for the transformation of the economy which hitherto remained primarily colonial-oriented. The large number of structural changes, which came to be introduced during the period 1970-77 changes the economic map of Sri Lanka, and these very changes have now been reversed with a view to making them part and parcel of neo-colonialism and the multi national economic imperialism. In the context of our dedicated programme for change, people faced hardships and they were utilised politically and under multi national investment colonialism people are sure to face more hardships. Economic prosperity is now judged on the basis of the availability of a great assortment of imported luxury goods which the poor man does not need. The Land Reform Law, the nationalisation of company owned estates, the ceiling on the ownership of houses, the restructuring of the country's financial institutions and the establishment of Corporations such as the Gem Corporation and numerous such structures brought about a significant transformation in the nature of the economic organisation of the country. Some of these measures, though important in themselves as economic reforms of far-reaching significance, were not properly implemented due to both economic and political constraints—including those of the

bureaucracy-interfered with the proper realisation of the objectives. In this context, it needs to be emphasised that our regime worked according to the programme for which we got the mandate and it was not manipulated to suit the interests of foreign business tycoons who now seek an oasis for very profitable foreign investment. Our mandate was not for the purpose of investment colonialism and in the coming decade we need to lead the masses to fight this new enemy of ours—investment colonialism.

The River Valley Projects, which constitute a form of economic transformation, were given a new life in the early seventies and we laid the foundation on the basis of correct forecasts and assessments for the Mahavelli Development Programme. 'GREAT LEAP' of this Government is the Mahavelli Project and we have already expressed our views on this national venture. Electoral needs and politics guide the destinies of this project and thirty year programme suddenly became a six year programme. The achievement of this great task will be the most important test of the eighties, and we need to watch this because we are committed to the welfare of the people of this country. Parliamentary Complex at Kotte, Free Trade Zone and the Colombo Development Programme are the major economic programmes, and they are not integrated into a development programme. Central Planning has now been given up and instead regional development programmes in selected districts have been chosen. These programmes, if successful will introduce a phenomenon lop sided, and we cannot understand these techniques which are largely foreign organisations oriented.

During our period of office, we always took enough care to improve the ancient systems of irrigation, which was part of our agricultural heritage, and also took precautions to avoid any disruption of the rural setting,

particularly of the Purana villages, and it was not our view to impose a 'bull-dozer' culture on the traditional villages of Sri Lanka. The whole of this decade and the part of the previous decade have been utilised to develop a comparatively viable infra-structure for industrial development projects which Sri Lanka can successfully sustain. Aid from the West and the Socialist countries has been utilised for this purpose and the industrial programme was implemented in close association with the incentive-oriented private sector industries. The characteristics of a mixed economy were allowed to emerge and the industries, apart from their import substitution orientation, generated certain amount of employment and it became an incentive for further economic development.

The foreign exchange restrictions and the import policy which we followed in the last two decades—though it created certain shortages—provided an incentive to the development of industries. I cannot name the many industries which developed during this period. The liberalisation programmes of the present Government—the so called open door policy—has allowed all kinds of wasteful and useless products to enter the country, and this open market theory of pro-Government economic pundits has virtually brought the local industries to a complete halt, and they expect them to be active once the market forces adjust themselves. The foreign investment policies of the last seventies—they have constitutional safeguards in the 1978 Constitution—have allowed the multinationals—the exploiting agencies of the world—to force on Sri Lanka independence a form of investment imperialism and this aspect, along with the combined and cumulative effect of the authoritarian constitutional trends which we witnessed in the last two years, is certain to make Sri Lanka a place for the very rich—not the ordinary worker and peasant who toil for his land and it is the man in whom we have confidence and for whom we will fight in the eighties.

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Theatre: the talking decade

by A. J. Gunewardene

The Seventies will be remembered as the Talking Decade in Sinhala theatrical history, in contrast to the Sixties which formed a kind of Singing Decade. To look back on the Seventies is to recall (and indeed to recoil from) a relentlessly thrusting verbal energy. Those who went on the stage — many did — talked and talked; they talked to us, at us over us ..

What did they say? Well, not much, if one is honest about it. Yet the talk wasn't all sound and fury, either. It did signify a number of things, and these I believe merit a second look.

What the torrent of words that engulfed the theatregoer in the Seventies collectively represented was, in the first place, a prolonged reaction to the musical idiom which had been dominating Sinhala theatre since the mid-Fifties. The reaction was wholly unfavourable: the resurgence of the speaking voice has to be construed as a sign of dissatisfaction with developments in the so-called stylised theatre — theatre which employs song and rhythmic gesture as integral elements.

Owing to varied artistic and sociological causes, the stylised theatre had failed to keep its many promises. Launched in the first flush of a triumphant cultural nationalism, stylised theatre had originally given intimations of enormous possibilities. It was said, and many agreed, that stylised theatre had returned us to the true expressive sources of the art which were indigenous to our culture. It was further said that an authentic, uniquely identifiable modern theatre would ultimately emerge from this newly discovered artistic capital. New and old blending into the modern, etc., etc.

These grand dreams and predictions did not, however, materialize into a substantial body of achieved art. True enough, the best works in the stylised form magnificently validated the genuine potential of song, music, and dance for serious artistic purposes. But such works amounted to less than a mere handful; the great majority were imitative exercises that hardly advanced beyond the status of variety entertainment. Moreover, a National Theatrical Form was not getting established and codified as expected in the beginning. This fact became all the more apparent after the Founding Father himself abandoned the *nadagama* which had been the foundation of his two major achievements.

Stylised theatre had travelled in two basic directions — either into an ambitiously artful, self-consciously 'poetic' inward glancing domain or towards folksy, light-weight entertainment. These tendencies not only created the impression that stylised theatre's concerns were remote from the pressing actualities of quotidian existence, but also raised a big question as to the ability of the form to grapple with themes generated by contemporary social and political issues. Such doubts and reservations were particularly damaging in the context of a growing belief that theatre has important political uses — a belief that came to be more intensely felt as the ironies and contradictions of the socio-economic order became more evident. Rightly or wrongly, by the beginning of the Seventies, the Sinhala theatrical climate was becoming quite inhospitable to the mode of stylisation.

Did these favourable circumstances induce a flowering of realism in the Seventies, as one might have expected? Sorry, that wasn't the way it worked out.

To be sure, the thrust of the musical idiom was reversed, and reversed with a vengeance. But what ensued was an orgy of word-play. The *mot* (not always *bon*) came to reign supreme.

The plays that tell us most about the state of the art in the Seventies are **Rankanda**, **Subha Saha Yasa** (both in unlamented abeyance) and **Eka Adhipathi** (still alive but beginning to peter out.) All three, phenomenally successful at the box office, suggest the flavour of the Seventies and indicate the different levels at which playwrights met the demands of a mixed and enlarging constituency.

Rankanda, the least pretentious of the three, was broad farce and music-hall comedy. **Subha Saha Yasa** aspired to a more elevated level of discourse, but treated its presumptively serious subject matter (political revolution viewed in the perspective of individual behaviour) in a grand theatrical manner where witty turn of phrase took precedence over analytical coherence. A third level — that of political satire — was crystallised in **Eka Adhipathi**, a piece of theatrical carpentry which combined the worst features of **Rankanda** and **Subha Saha Yasa** and thereby became an instant hit.

What these plays and their less successful imitators offered, in abundant doses, was the salty joke and the anaesthesia of the easy laugh. They excelled in what could be called 'political quippery.' The political arena always presents tempting targets for the verbal thrust; the Seventies were particularly rich in this regard. And our playwrights proved to be highly adept at this game, despite (or perhaps because of) the violent political traumas of the age. Once in a while they achieved palpable

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Cinema: a hopeful decade

by Reggie Siriwardena

The seventies were the decade in which Sri Lanka became, in terms of sheer quantity, one of the major film-producing countries of the world. The ready availability of finance for film-making was partly a result of the blocking of many traditional avenues of investment under the United Front government and partly, perhaps, a means of legitimising black money. The boom in film production was also helped in the latter part of the decade by the State Film Corporation's loan schemes and the expansion of outlets for the screening of Sinhala films with the drop in film imports. After the cutting-off of American films, prestigious cinemas in Colombo also became open for the first time to the national product.

How far did these changes have an impact on the growth of the cinema in terms of quality? If the boom in film-making created the problem of the lengthening queue of films awaiting release — a problem that remains unsolved at the end of the decade — it also provided opportunities to a number of young film-makers to enter the industry. Dharmasena Pathiraja, Vasantha Obeysekera, Vijaya Dharmasiri and Sunil Ariyaratne belong to the new generation of directors whose emergence was the major cinematic development of the decade, and if one is to take account of films completed and awaiting release one would have to add the names of Dharmasiri Bandaranayake (**Hansa Vilak**) and Sanghadasa (**Kanchana**).

Political radicalisation was the dominant trend in other arts during the period — notably in theatre, fiction and poetry. The cinema did not go so far, (though the idea of commitment was much promoted by younger critics), and could not have been expected to under conditions of com-

mercial production and tight censorship. However the best, cinema of the seventies did show an extension in the range of subject-matter and social awareness. **Ahas Gawwa**, **Bambaru Avith** and **Palangetiyo** broadened the scope of the cinema in respect of the treatment of class relationships, **Duhulu Malak**, in spite of its romanticism, made a beginning in the exploration of extra-martial relationships beyond the traditional moral taboos, while **Sarungale** was a bold and honest endeavour in focussing attention on the previously forbidden subject of racial conflict. The decade's most original film — in its handling of the medium as well as its psychological depth — **Hansa Vilak**, has yet to be seen by popular audiences. **Ponmani** brought to the indigenous Tamil cinema a critical view of marriage and the position of women in the North that was too advanced, both cinematically and content-wise, for the mass audience. It remains, however, the pioneering film on which a serious Tamil cinema of the future can build, just as **Rekava** pioneered the new Sinhala cinema in the fifties.

Lester James Peries opened the decade with **Nidahanaya** — his most important film, in its interrelationships between the personal and social, since **Gamperaliya**, and the most assured cinematic creation of his entire career. In his other films of the decade he tended to waste his directorial talents on material which was of too little significance, and his two excursions into

historical film showed how uncongenial this genre was to his own interests. At the end of the decade, audiences and critics await the completion of **Beddegama** in the hope that it will mark a re-discovery of the cinematic mode with which he enriched our cinema in the 'fifties and 'sixties.

All in all, the 'seventies have been the most hopeful period of our cinema. Whether these hopes will survive, in the 'eighties, the challenge from commercialised TV, with its inevitable vulgarisation of audience tastes, and the movement of capital away from film-making to reopened fields of investment, is another matter. A great deal will depend on whether the State Film Corporation keeps the artistic development of cinema as steadily in mind as the motive of profit-making.

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The decade's last year

by Vasudeva Nanayakkara

(Former MP, is President of NSSP)

This year opened up with the revolution in Iran, in the middle of the year the Nicaraguan revolution expelled Somoza and the year has ended with an uneasy and uncertain truce in Rhodesia. While giant strides have been made the future is still uncertain. The masses of Iran are seething on the streets, leaderless in and in danger of dissipating their magnificent achievements, thirsting for a Lenin to give them resolute direction. In Nicaragua the complex interplay of post-revolutionary power politics, of mass mobilisation class dissension and imperialist manoeuvre continues. The revolution is still unfinished, socialist transformation or new bourgeois democratic illusions, "that is the question". Rhodesia is on a knife edge.

Our big neighbour India is in revolutionary turmoil and parliamentary upheaval. The stupid sectarianism of the right-wing Janatha party has paved the way for Indira's come back to power. One wonders to what extent the similar stupid sectarianism of the left-wing JVP and LSSP is playing into Sirima's hands?

Not only internationally; but also nationally, 1979 has been a year of significant gains complicated by continuing uncertainties. We will single out three areas for comment; the Trade Union sector, the 5-party campaign and the Tamil peoples struggle in the North and East.

The JCTUO has been expanded to include the United Federation of Labour and the Government United Federation of Labour - two Federations affiliated to our party. The JCTUO has finally agreed to summon a massive all trade union delegates conference to map out a common strategy against the pro-imperialist out and out capitalist UNP. Good.

But the question of militant leadership still troubles the JCTUO. The UNP government has slashed public servants leave down from 45 to 21 days per annum. Overtime limits are to be severely brought down. It is certain that the leave curbs will be extended to the corporation and private sectors. Through all this the JCTUO's principal leaders have slept. They have merely allocated the matter to this or that sectoral committee.

The price of kerosene has tripled, food prices are rocketing up, according to an informal estimate by our party, average working class real wages have declined by about one fourth since the UNP came to power. What is missing in this situation is propaganda, agitation and perspectives of struggle from the traditional trade union leaders. Hence 1980 opens with the urgent task of emboldening the leaders squarely on the agenda. Side by side with this arises the need for taking unity down to the factory floor and workplace level.

The united front tactic that our party has been urging for the last two years has also had some partial successes this year. The sheer pressure of mass left opinion and the state of revolt among party cadres finally forced the CP, and JVP and even the LSSP on to a common platform with us and the RMP on the question of opposing the Anti-Terrorist Law, the EP's Act and the Emergency in Jaffna. The united action, briefly at least, placed before the masses the perspective of a common, strong and co-ordinated attack on the UNP. It forebodes well for future prospects of left unity and resolute action.

Gaile and parliamentary greed has forced a temporary set back. The JVP, seized by illusions of

grandeur and day-dreams of beating the SLFP all on their own, boycotted united left discussions and our pleas for a single left candidate. Their grand illusions now lie shattered in ruins.

The LSSP followed suit. Perhaps at the instigation of the Anil Moonesinghe wing which is hoping to make the question of a left alternative at Galle into a big joke so that it will lubricate the proposed alliance with the SLFP. The LSSP went so far as even to disrupt the United Left Front that they have had with the CP for the last 2 years.

The lessons of 1979 will have to be learnt if 1980 is to build on these experiences. The UNP has entered a crucial phase. Its anti-working class, anti-peasant anti-middle class and openly pro-capitalist face has clearly come to the surface. Burdens on the underprivileged, new opportunities for the rich. The November 1979 Budget can be called the Company and Capitalist Speculator - Investors Budget. The UNP is barefaced about its capitalist policies.

However the picketing, the action of Tamil militants, the University strike, the spurning of the so-called petition to OPEC by the masses etc. all show how the mass mood is passing from disillusionment and grumbling to open expression of discontent. Events will move rapidly in the coming year or two. The perspective of a General Strike and a Hartal will open up before us sooner than we expect. The process will be accelerated by the world capitalist recession that has started in the USA and is spreading rapidly. Even the "best" bourgeois economists now predict a big world recession

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Prelude to confrontation

by Sarath Muttetuwegama

It is always difficult to telescope the events of a decade into a single short article. A decade like the seventies makes such an attempt a near impossibility. I need no excuses therefore to look at the seventies, from a political position only—and that too, only to point out one or two of the major trends of this somewhat tumultuous period.

It is unnecessary to chronicle a diary of the events that occurred in the seventies. The victory of the United Front in '70, the disillusionment of the masses with the government of the United Front; the uprising of 1971, its nature, and its causes and effects; the break up of the United Front, and the electoral victory of the U. N. P. in '77 have all been analysed in depth from differing points of view—making such an analysis here redundant.

Capitalist crisis

What were the main developments of the seventies. The presence of the crisis of capitalism and its effects on our country provided the backdrop for the most consistent feature of our politics in the seventies. The seventies could be characterised as a decade in which the bourgeoisie, confronted with the pressures of the crisis of capitalism, realised that they could no longer afford the luxury of liberal democracy. It was a decade when the democratic process was continuously under fire and when the country was pushed further and further along the path of authoritarianism towards dictatorial power.

An examination of the facts will show that this trend cut through party barriers and was common to the entire capitalist class of Sri Lanka. As a class they came to the realisation that there was no way to retain power for themselves, short of more and more authoritarian rule.

In spite of an expansion of the public sector we had a basically colonial economy. Managed along capitalist lines it was what economists described as a stagnant economy. Continued borrowing had brought us right into the centre of what Cheryl Payer, so succinctly called "The Debt Trap". Repeated devaluations carried out at the behest of international capital were the order of the day. Inflation was rising.

The new intelligentsia was knocking at the doors of political, cultural and social enclaves aspiring for admission. Thousands of educated youth were unemployed, frustrated and totally devoid of hope. The rising cost of living was causing havoc with the lives of people.

We had an articulate and active left movement together with a militant, highly organised Trade Union movement. Together they had wrested many concessions from the rulers. When the seventies began, we had free education, free medical services, subsidised food, cheap transport services and a complex, highly developed system of labour legislation. All this existed in a country with a literate population that enjoyed universal franchise.

Status quo

The bourgeoisie of Sri Lanka was divided into two major parties the UNP and the SLFP both having a vested interest in the preservation of the capitalist system. Although traditional rivalries had divided them into parties, the dilemma facing the capitalist class was common to them both. How could the status quo be preserved? How could life be injected into the stagnant economy without breaking up the capitalist structure?

These then were questions facing the bourgeoisie of Sri Lanka in the seventies. An examination of the

period shows that politically, they began to curtail democracy and started to move towards dictatorship. This was the chief feature of the seventies when the bourgeoisie began to rationalise the celebrated remark that "a little bit of totalitarianism is not a bad thing."

Economically, bourgeois politicians and economists decided the only way to regenerate our economy was foreign investment on a massive scale. Foreign investment meant that a necessary climate to attract it had to be provided. The proposal for a foreign investment law in 1975 and the Free Trade Zone proposal of '77 showed that both major parties thought along identical lines and the difference, if any, was in emphasis.

Foreign capital

The foreign investor, is however, a cagey person. Sri Lanka, with a politically mature mass movement, an organised and militant trade union movement, and an ever growing and socially responsible intelligentsia, was not an inviting prospect to investors.

The principal political trend of the seventies—the move towards authoritarianism was largely due to the bourgeois preoccupation with foreign investment. True that different events were made the excuse for this or that anti-democratic action. True also that different personalities were in control when one or the other authoritarian measure was adopted, but the pattern was clear and continuous.

The events of '71 were used to justify some of the curbs that were imposed. An emergency was extensively used. The Trade Unions were cajoled or curbed into inactivity. Intellectuals—especially the organised student movement—was dealt with harshly. Goondas were used to beat up picketing workers. Demonstrations were banned. This was the seventies.

The decade's . . .

(Continued from Page 24)

in 1980. The impact of the political crisis of imperialism (Iran, the Middle East, South East Asia) also remains a formidable factor. To measure up to these tasks however the left must learn to act unitedly and militantly. Let us hope that 1980 consolidates the positive side of 1979's achievements.

Events in the North have moved with great speed. JR showed his viper's fangs in the way in which he imposed an emergency in Jaffna. Repression, torture and murder have been committed in the name of, and by the guardians of, the law. The TULF has kept silent through all this, except perhaps for muted protests into JR's confidential ear, and has continued to negotiate shamelessly with the oppressors of the Tamil people. In fact the TULF is quite happy about the taming of the youth. While we do not agree with methods of individual terrorism, nevertheless complicity with organs of repression is really a shame.

The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, of which our party is a constituent founder member and a committed activist, has shown great courage in the face of UNP and military-police oppression of the Tamil people. MIRJE alone has boldly come out and done something about the violation of human rights and democratic rights in the North. Bravo MIRJE!

The present negotiations between the UNP and the TULF opportunists may produce some kind of a new arrangement which includes concessions to the Tamils. In this case we can expect various Sinhala chauvinists (including sections of the SLFP and the UNP like Cyril Mathew) to go all out on an anti-Tamil campaign. We will resolutely repulse this campaign and protect the concessions however meagre they may be.

However we know that very soon deep disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the TULF will set in among the Tamil people

and the Tamil youth especially. A UNP-TULF coalition, even if it be a concealed (indirect) coalition or administrative alliance, can in no way solve the Tamil peoples' problems. The radicalisation of Tamil militants will accelerate and our party will be there to unite and work with Tamil revolutionaries against the UNP and its Tamil allies too.

Our party has taken a clear Marxist position on the National Question. Even before we split from the old LSSP, in fact from the early 1970's, we firmly stood by the right of the Tamil people to self-determination and a separate state if they so wished. However we have never for a moment abdicated our Marxist duty of explaining patiently to them the short-sightedness and errors of secession. We have at all times placed before them a Marxist program for real unity and struggle in contrast with the TULF or other radical petty-bourgeois programmes. The result is that we have won the confidence of a considerable section of Tamil opinion. 1980 is a most promising year for us in the North. We hope to multiply our party strength and membership several fold.

Let 1980 be the year of the United Front. The united front of workers, peasants, minorities and middle classes. The united front for a fight with JR. 1979 was THE YEAR OF THE CHILD and some left parties certainly lived up to it by their infantile sectarianism, we hope that 1980 at least will be THE YEAR OF MATURITY. ●

Estate Labour . . .

(Continued from Page 16)

for ten years by which time, hopefully the stigma will be removed for all time.

An amendment was also introduced to the Local Bodies Election Ordinance which removed an obnoxious clause that prevented estate workers participating in Local Body elections, even if they did so in general parliamentary elections. The immediate impact

of this change could be felt from the fact that an estate worker, S. Raju was elected Vice Chairman of a premier local body—the Hatton - Dickoya Urban Council. Another nominee of the C. W. C. has been returned to the Talawakelle - Lindula Urban Council. This is the first time that the C. W. C. has fielded candidates for local body elections, the reactions have been more than encouraging.

Another watershed was the invitation extended to me by the President to join his Cabinet. The Executive Council of the C. W. C. which met to consider this invitation viewed this as a singular honour, and a concrete step in bringing the plantation worker into the mainstream of national life. This has helped to bring us closer to the rest of the people of the country as never before and has hastened the process of integration.

The present government and the President have been very responsive to our problems, succinctly summed up the position of his government towards the plantation people, when he addressed the 26th Convention of the C. W. C. in Badulla in March 1979. Said Mr. Jayewardene "You are no more aliens in a strange land. You are one of us. We want you also to share fruits of freedom. We want your girls and boys to become lawyers, engineers professionals, professors, doctors and accountants and not to remain as workers". For the first time the plantation workers have been treated on an equal footing with the rest of the working population in this country in the matter of wage rises. Recently when the government decided to increase the wages of workers by Rs. 55/- a month, this right was extended to the plantation workers as well.

Despair and despondency have given way to confidence and certitude. We have no doubt that this trend will continue and soon the estate worker will be able to achieve the fullness of life as the rest of the communities in this country.

Peradeniya's vanished supremacies

by Arjuna

While the blue-eyed disciple of Peradeniya's halcyon days, Prof. Wimal Dissanayake has beaten his delicate wings in the direction of Hawaii, the high priest, Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra has returned from that exotic academic haven full of gloomy thoughts about TV, Tower Hall and the intellectual charlatanism. The "brain drain," it would appear, is not entirely in a westerly direction.

One detects a peculiar symbiosis in Prof. Sarachchandra's current thinking. Unlike *bete noire*, Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekera, Sarachchandra has not entirely lost faith in the Sinhala-speaking younger-generation. After all they still come to see his "Maname" and "Sinhabahu". But being the high priest he feels obliged to defend the Peradeniya literature which was so fiercely attacked by this same young in the sixties.

Their rejection of the Peradeniya way of thinking Prof. Sarachchandra sees as an aberration peculiar to a younger generation besieged by economic problems. They wanted "revolution," he says, not literature. But literature is still the god to be worshipped. Revolution is only a god with clay feet.

April 1971 was certainly no revolution but how correct is Prof. Sarachchandra when he dismisses the thinking of the Sinhala-educated young as a mere aberration rooted in economic circumstances? Is it ever possible to go back in the name of intellectual dialogue to the rosy days of the fifties when a few precious spirits sat on the banks of the Mahaveli in ecstatic communion with Lawrence, Schopenhauer and the French Imagists?

Prof. Sarachchandra is correct when he says that today's youth are not culturally uprooted. If at all anything will alienate them it is the way of life emanating from what seems to be our latest spiritual motherland—Singapore—rather than "imported doctrines of

revolution" which earn the righteous wrath of the political Right. But once again how realistic will it be to expect the contemporary Sinhala audience (whether uprooted or not) to relate to a play like "Vessantara" which Prof. Sarachchandra is planning to offer them?

Prof. Sarachchandra himself thinks it is futile to go back to the day of the Tower Hall and he is right. It is also correct that his stylised plays like "Sinhabahu" and "Maname" are qualitatively far superior to the crude Tower Hall offerings. But his partiality for the stylised genre (which after all, is basically the same as Tower Hall drama as far as the larger audience is concerned) once again shows his dissonance with the taste and thinking of the contemporary theatre-goer and dramatist.

For Prof. Sarachchandra stylised drama along with Peradeniya fiction and Siri Gunasinghe's poetry is part of that idyll of the fifties which was exploded by the socially-conscious generation that came after. Bewildered by the pricking of the bubble Prof. Sarachchandra can only mutter about "revolution" "economic problems" and "unemployment."

The radicalisation of the young which manifested itself in the seventies had necessarily to be reflected in the theatre. This was a time when radical thinking was, in however distorted a form, part of the mainstream with two of the left parties included in the Government. Moreover Government bodies like the Cultural Affairs Department actively encouraged a radical efflorescence in the theatre, the supreme example being, of course, the National Drama Festival of 1976. With the General Election of 1977 the theatre lost its political momentum but it has yet not shown any signs of turning away from the radical values which were its central tenets during the seventies.

This is what Prof. Sarachchandra still finds it difficult to grasp. The radicalisation in the theatre (with all its attendant infirmities) was no aberration but the product of social forces with deeper-going roots. This same inability to grasp the current dominant values of the theatre is also evident in his recent review of "Pokuru Vessa" done more in terms of acting, techniques and make-up than in terms of the play's content.

What we see here is an intellectual gulf between two generations. To Prof. Sarachchandra—the Sinhala and Pali Scholar, pioneer of modern drama, aesthete and intellectual—a generation that does not worship the great tradition of the novel and the liberal intellectual tradition is no more than intellectual. But to the contemporary—cut away from the liberal tradition by their monolingual education and steeped in economic privations which make the preoccupations of the older intellectuals appear comically trivial—Prof. Sarachchandra waving his bedraggled banner of aestheticism is a creature from another planet.

The theatre of the young does not appear likely to abdicate (at least in the short run) its basic position of portraying the circumambient reality and seeking solutions for our ills which turn out ultimately to be rather apocalyptic. Ideological imperfections and technical frailties one can easily find in their works. But they have something to offer which the cloistered intellectuals of Peradeniya's golden days, now deprived of their crown and sceptre, grasp only imperfectly. The young theatre has a long way to go but if its social commitment is fertilised with the technical refinement which the older dramatists can offer its future will be far from bleak. But such a situation can come about only as the result of an exchange of views between the two generations, free from suspicion on the part of one and patronising attitudes on the part of the other.

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MASTERS

Farewell to Agrarian Radicalism

by M. P. Moore

Agricultural tenancy legislation in Sri Lanka has had an unhappy history. The foundation stone, the 1958 Paddy Lands Act, was originally conceived as a radical measure to break the power of the village landlord. Despite a string of amending laws making it more effective, it is widely recognised that it has failed in its central goal. Instead there have been large numbers of tenant evictions and the stipulation of a maximum rent of a quarter of the harvest is widely ignored. The tenant continues to pay a half share in most rural areas.¹

Some observers talk of 'failures of implementation'. A more fundamental cause of failure is the weakness of the political support mobilised behind the Act. The Act originated in the committed radicalism of a small group of politicians, intellectuals and public servants. It neither arose from nor gave birth to any mass movement, and certainly not a rural mass movement. Faced with the opposition of most of the political establishment, the original intentions of the promoters were much emasculated before the legislation became law.

It was largely chance that the Act was not strangled at birth. The wonder is not that it became a sickly child, but that it lived at all. Yet it did take on a life of its own. In the Agrarian Services Department established to administer it was institutionalised a genuine commitment to the interests of the tenant and rural poor. In areas where the power of rural property was not totally dominant tenants did try to take advantage of the Act. Thus the payment of only the legal rent of one quarter of the yield seems to be the rule in

most of the relatively radicalised Southern Province, and in many parts of the Western Province. Even in the Kandyan areas, where property still reigns, there have been stirrings of tenant assertiveness.

Amended in the 1960s, the Paddy Lands Act was replaced, although not substantially amended, by the Agricultural Lands Law, No. 42 of 1973. The main difference was that the Cultivation Committees originally set up to police the Paddy Lands Act at local level were henceforth to be politically-appointed rather than elected. This was a sequel to the Agricultural Productivity Law No. 2 of 1972, which laid a strong obligation on cultivators to cultivate 'efficiently' and established politically-appointed Agricultural Productivity Committees to supervise Cultivation Committees and politically-appointed Agricultural Tribunals to settle disputes.

Disliked for their political partiality and dismal performance, Cultivation Committees, Agricultural Productivity Committees and Agricultural Tribunals were suspended by the UNP government elected in July 1977. The duties of the Cultivation Committee were assumed by the new Cultivation Officers, mainly local UNP cadres assimilated into the public service. The new Agrarian Services Act, No. 58 of 1979 gives statutory recognition to Cultivation Officers and establishes Agrarian Services Committees, with a majority of official members, to replace the Agricultural Productivity Committees. The Act does many other things as well. It ostensibly replaces the Agricultural Productivity Law of 1972 and the Agricultural Lands Law of 1973, tidies up their provisions, and provides a legal basis for the new structure of rural institutions. To a large extent the wording replicates that of the two acts it replaces. However,

there are a number of small changes in terms and phraseology which indicate a very different intention: a deliberate shift of legal power away from the paddy land tenant and in favour of the landlord, with the evident ultimate aim of allowing the latter to resume control of as much tenanted land as possible. Not surprisingly, no mention of this aim is made in the preamble to the Act.

There is one change likely to come rapidly to the notice of the tenant population: an increase in the maximum allowable rent. The Agricultural Lands Law of 1973, section 20, subsection 2, (ie. ALL: 20, 3), specified that this maximum should be the **lowest** of three possibilities: fifteen bushels of paddy per acre; a quarter of the yield; or the 'customary rent'. The new legislation omits to mention 'customary rent', and specifies that the maximum rent payable shall be the **greater** of the other two possibilities.

The other changes affecting tenancy are more insidious. They have greater long term implications, but are so deeply buried in the minutiae of legal provision and procedure that they are unlikely to come to the awareness of the tenant until the moment of truth: when they deprive him of his land. For the connecting thread which runs through them all is the provision of more opportunities for the landlord to resume personal control of tenanted land:-

(1) For the first time a ceiling has been placed on the acreage which a tenant can legally cultivate. A tenant cultivating more than five acres must surrender the excess to the landlord (ASA: 4.)

(2) Sub-tenants have formerly been granted the same rights as tenants. Not only will this legal protection henceforth apply only where the landlord consents in

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writing and where the local Agrarian Services Committee is notified, but failure to comply gives the landlord the right to resume personal control of the land, thus evicting both direct tenant and sub-tenant (ASA: 5, 9).

(3) A set of related changes make the inheritance of tenancies less likely in future. Under the Paddy Lands Act (PLA: 6, 1) and the Agricultural Lands Law (ALL: 6, 1) a tenant could nominate any citizen of Sri Lanka as successor. Henceforth only "a member of his family" is eligible (ASA: 7, 1). Probably more importantly, the procedure for nominating a successor has been made much more troublesome. Formerly this was possible either (a) through a document both witnessed before a public or judicial official and registered with the Registrar of Lands or, (b) in a last will (PLA: 6, 3 and 6; ALL: 6, 3 and 6). This last option is no longer available (ASA: 7, 3). The tenant must now go through the more expensive and difficult procedure. It is certain that more tenants will die without nominating a successor, including, one suspects, many not aware of the implications of the new Act. Formerly a relative would inherit the tenancy, while the local Cultivation Committee could have a say in excluding persons "not accustomed to cultivate paddy" (PLA: 7, 1 and 2; ALL: 7, 1 and 2). The Agrarian Services Act allows only the spouse, children, parents, brothers and sisters of the deceased to inherit, and then only if the successor "is a person whose main occupation is cultivation and whose only source of income is derived from such extent of land" i.e. the piece of land in question (ASA: 8, 1). Foreseeing the possibility of there being no legal successors to many tenancies, the new act allows the landlord to resume control of the land (ASA: 13, 1).

(4) Whereas a tenant wishing to cease cultivating could formerly transfer his right to his spouse or any relative (or the local Cultivation Committee) (ALL: 10, 1), the new arrangement permits transfer only to the spouse or

children (ASA: 11, 1). The Cultivation Committee formerly stepped in where legal transfers had not been effected; in future the landlord can resume control (ASA: 11, 3).

(5) Under the Agricultural Lands Law the only recourse for non-payment of rent by the tenant was civil proceedings for debt (ALL: 28). The new legislation does not even provide for this procedure, but specifies eviction, allowing the landlord the right to resume control (ASA: 18.)

(6) Under the Agricultural Productivity Law, No. 2 of 1972, the landlord and the cultivator of tenanted land were jointly obligated to cultivate well (APL: 2 and 3), and both faced the threat of dispossession if they failed to do so (APL: 7). However, certain clauses clearly specified the landlord's obligation to provide the capital and equipment necessary to good farming practice (APL: 2, 2 and 3 and APL: 5). The new legislation places no obligations on the landlord either to take responsibility for cultivation standards or to provide the necessary capital and equipment. Efficiency obligations are laid only on the cultivator, whether owner-cultivator or tenant (ASA: 33 and 34, 2 and 3). Thus the Act allows for the possibility of the dispossession of the tenant but not the landlord (ASA: 36). Under the Agricultural Productivity Law land so acquired could not be returned to the landlord but only let to another tenant by the Agricultural Productivity Committee (APL 7, 3). The new law makes return to the owner possible (ASA: 37, 2).

There are a few other incidental points to be made about the new legislation. For example, in 1973 the penalty for violation of the section on security of tenure and eviction, i.e. landlord crimes, was a fine of up to five hundred rupees or up to a month's imprisonment in default of payment (ALL: 3, 13). In 1979, after years of inflation, the maximum cash fine is unchanged, and no mention made of imprisonment for default (ASA: 5, 13). Such incidental points however threaten to de-

tract attention from the main point the opening up of large legal loopholes through which landlords can regain control of tenanted land. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this was consciously done. The central element appears to be the attempt to make legal transfers of tenancies so difficult that the land will return to the landlords by default. The apparent long run aim is to solve the 'tenancy problem' by eliminating the tenant, but without the embarrassments of forced evictions which are, it should be said, very firmly and clearly prohibited in the new Act.

The family of agrarian legislation to which the Agrarian Services Act is the latest addition has many hybrid characteristics. The individual acts each cover a wide variety of subjects: tenancy legislation, rural institutions, land consolidation, agricultural credit, standards of cultivation, irrigation regulations, wages of agricultural labourers, hire charges for tractors and buffaloes, and the constitution of the Agrarian Services Department. The reasons behind this tradition of tackling such a wide range of subjects in a single agrarian law are to be found in the circumstances of the passing of the original Paddy Lands Act. Apart from the immediate conflicts and compromises, a major factor was the ideology of the act's promoters. To them the oppression and exploitation of the rural poor—labourers and debtors as well as tenants—was both cause and consequence of the stagnation of agricultural production. 'Feudal exploitation' was one of the bonds holding down the productive forces in agriculture. Measures to uplift the tenant, the labourer and the debtor were but one necessary aspect of agricultural progress in the widest sense of the term. But the bonds on the productive forces, like those on the poor, could only be broken if the poor themselves were to take a hand. Cultivation Committees were to be the institutional expression of the resurgence of the rural poor. Rural democracy, the breaking of the bonds of exploitation, and the unleashing of the productive forces of agriculture were all of a piece.

The hindsight of history tells us just how naive such hopes were. Rural society has followed a path very different from that foreseen. The legislation relating to rural institutions has remained on the statute books, but the institutions have been forced to adapt to society. The unreality of the democratic idealism behind Cultivation Committees has been evident from the beginning, when the Agrarian Services Department had to intervene to sustain weak Cultivation Committees and attempt to free them from the grip of the rural propertied. In the ensuing two decades the state has become more and more involved in the performance of duties originally allocated to local democracy. The local institutions have not only been undemocratic, but have too often not functioned at all. They have been loaded with more and more duties related to agricultural development: construction and maintenance of

local irrigation and drainage structures; collection of acreage levies and crop insurance premia; issue of farmer identity cards; issue of seed, fertiliser and agrochemicals; cooperation in agricultural demonstrations and experiments; preparation and up-dating of land records; hiring out of agricultural equipment; preparation of annual paddy production plans; and organisation of voluntary labour campaigns. Aside from weaknesses in the original democratic idealism, such extra duties have been inappropriate to voluntary elective bodies. The state has been almost obliged to become more deeply involved. The democratic element has been downplayed, and the Cultivation Committees have increasingly become the local agents of higher-level institutional structures, the Agricultural Productivity Committees and the Agrarian Services Department.

In many senses the new Agrarian Services Act is the logical

outcome of the unrealism of the expectations of the Paddy Lands Act. The creation of an official bureaucratic structure to service agriculture at all levels, and the relegation of farmer representatives to a minor role are the culmination of well-established trends. The problem of local democratic institutions raised by the Paddy Lands Act has been abolished. In these ways the new legislation is quite understandable. Far less defensible is the use of the opportunity provided by the need for new legislation to launch an attack on tenant's rights. The defence of the tenant is one element in the original Paddy Lands Act which history has not made redundant.

1. See I. K. Weerawardena, "Lessons of an Experiment: The Paddy Lands Act of 1958", Evaluation Studies No. 3, Division of Rural Institutions and Agricultural Productivity Laws, Colombo, 1975.

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"Injecting an element of mystery into the growing explosive political drama playing within the confines of the UN, Mr. Hameed was last seen speeding towards New York's Kennedy International Airport dodging newspapermen and heading for a late night flight to London... "Remember" said one diplomat "anyone who pulls this off may even end up grabbing the Nobel Prize."

(T. M. Deen - CDN Dec 4)

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner Ernest Corea was summoned and personally thanked by Canadian premier Joe Clark for his country's peacemaking efforts. The news had apparently reached even the man in the street literally. When three Sri Lankan diplomats were accosted by a street bum stretching out his hand for a cigarette, they responded to his request favourably. As he parted company with a word of thanks he asked them rather curiously from what country they were. When told they were from Sri Lanka the man shot back knowledgeably "oh, isn't that the country which is trying to help us in Iran?" The three diplomats were wildly thrilled by the brief encounter."

(T. M. Deen - CDN Dec 12)

While the proletarian boys in the basement of our newspaper offices were busy attending a week long IPI seminar on the new print technology, their colleagues at the typewriters upstairs, the much-maligned tribe of journalists, were giving us another demonstration on the perfect adequacy of the old techniques. Why teach old dogs new tricks?

Though the press may be state-controlled, sheer professionalism shone through brightly. By reaching the man-in-the-street, by getting to the gist of the story, by rigorous questioning and tireless questing, through in-depth analysis and investigative reporting, by opinion poll and between-the-lines subtleties, by working every angle and some unknown to geometry, by the supreme craftsmanship in short of Development journalism, they were giving us, their bemused and benighted audience, the news-behind-the news, the REAL story.

For instance. Did you think it was our massive OPEC petition which scared the Indonesians, an OPEC member, to give us oil? Or was it the cordiality of the Suharto-Jayewardene talks? Did you think, perhaps, that the Spirit of Bandung moved the man who ousted Soekarno and threw his Foreign Minister into jail?

Along the grape-vine (or pipe-line) came the true story, and the CDN's diplomatic correspondent (Indonesia Desk Only) Joe Segera was there at the receiving end. The real hero was our ex-putt shot champ (now Ambassador) T. D. S. A (Jungle Jr.) Dissanayake.

But to each journalist his own ambassadorial favourite. In his Austrian arrogance, Kurt Waldheim fancies himself as the most admired animal in the glass menagerie. Conducting a straw poll among the UN's lounge lizards, the CDN's Premil Ratnayake gives him the Retort Kurteous. Running a very close second in popularity to Waldheim is our own man, B J. Fernando, and by the time the next local newspaperman sends his despatch from the UN, Waldheim may have conceded defeat.

After his UN stint, correspondent Ratnayake, according to our own far-flung news network, was last seen speeding towards Washington's Dulles Airport, dodging early morning traffic and sundry Sri Lankans armed with hefty gift parcels for their country cousins back home. Unlike T. M. Deen, ex-Observerman, university wrestler, Moslem muscleman and macho **muchan**, Ratnayake has no taste for unaccompanied baggage. But before he took that dawn flight to London Ratnayake squeezed in

a sentence in another despatch that Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, we trust, read and carefully digested.

Ronnie regales us every week that it is international confidence in our newly achieved economic stability (not to mention his own global exertions), has prompted foreign banks to queue up with applications. Indo-Suez, BCCI, CITIBANK, American Express etc. But why is Chase Manhattan shy, in spite of Ronnie pow-wows with the Rockefeller boys themselves? Plainly, Ronnie went to the wrong guy. According to Ratnayake, Ed Kerner, our own boy from Bambalapitiya (now in the UNDP) has more pals in New York than David Rockefeller. Well, Ronnie, why not tackle our own feller?

Not to be upstaged on diplomatic intricacies and insights by the sister CDN, the Observer presented its Associate Editor, Phillip Coorey, better known as the leading western theater-cum-film critic of the mainstream media. Making an easy transition from theatre to what Deen might call the great secret drama going on in Sri Lankan chanceries abroad, Phillip Coorey, produced an inspired essay on the Importance of Being Ernest Corea, our man in Ottawa. Gamini Dissanayake, Ronnie de Mel and Shaul Hameed, the poor man's Henry Kissinger, may claim that they did it, but a foreign office man with a "finger on the aid-pulse" whispered into editor Cooray's ear that the really important 'factor' was none other than ex-editor, now High Commissioner Ernest Corea.

However, an air of mystery and international intrigue still hangs over recent events involving our top diplomats. Minister Hameed had hardly commenced his confidential conversation with his counterpart Bani-Sadr when the poor chap was sacked. High Commissioner Corea had hardly left Prime Minister Clark's office

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when poor old Joe's government fell. What is Sri Lanka up to? Does it matter, the sceptic may well ask. Yet, the intelligent, essentially inquisitive Sri Lankan reader, will want to know the answers.

What were those three Sri Lankan diplomats doing when they were accosted by a street bum? Were they studying the problems of urban housing or on a secret mission for Minister Shaul Hameed? What time of the night was this so-called brief encounter which left them so wildly thrilled? Was it on Lexington Avenue or in the Village? An African diplomat (unidentified) told a Sri Lankan journalist (un-named) "It's no secret that next to Andy Young your Minister is the most popular man with the Harlem Globetrotters" (A basketball team, not a travel Club-Ed).

In the adventurous tradition of Henry Kissinger and Mighty Mouse, we continue then the saga of Shaul. When he last appeared in this column Mr. Hameed, making his grand entrance into T. M. Deen's New York flat, gave us that scintillating opening line which Neil Simon may have envied: "Sprats before international affairs" he said, digging hungrily into Anne Almeida's bowl of **haalmesso badun**. Ex-Observerman Kirthie Abeysekera was on the spot to file the exclusive story.

(The sight of the Statue of Liberty seems to fill our reporters in-transit with a liberating sense of press freedom, if not poetic licence). On the same occasion, Minister Hameed, offering just a glimpse of that Wildean wit for which he is famed from Akurana to Acapulco, crushed Anne Almeida, the pugnacious women's liberationist, with an unanswerable

riposte: "Why then is it His-tory and not Her-story?"

To continue the story (His more than Hers) we turn you to our foreign correspondents:

TEHERAN:

As he entered Foreign Minister Bani-Sadr's office Mr. Hameed switched on his most machiavellian smile, often mistaken for a cherubic grin, and said "Ah, the famous Khomeinist..!" This was misheard as "the famous Communist" by a cleaning woman in black chaddor (actually a secret agent of the Islamic Fedayeen) who reported it to the Revolutionary Council. Bani-Sadr was last seen disappearing through a back-door, chased by several judges of the Islamic Revolutionary Court.

Said a Teheran taxi-driver knowledgeably: "A joke is a serious thing....Hameed's sinister purpose was to de-stabilise Bani-Sadr, a hardline fundamentalist, in the first move in the game-plan he had already worked out with Waldheim, Brzezinski and Gromyko and put in his place the softline Shiite, Sadek Godthzadeh".

QOM:

Hameed was next seen speeding away in a battered Cadillac, the abandoned personal property of a former SAVAK agent, dodging reporters and bullets fired by trigger-happy fedayeen who mistook him for Peter Fonda, the American actor. Qom the holy city is the capital of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. "Hameed who?" said A. R. K. in the briefest of non-encounters. A professor of Islamic studies who happened to be passing by told me "The cryptic question of the Ayatollah is being studied by several Koranic scholars to discover whether it bore a hidden message to Jimmy You-Know-Who".

LONDON:

Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister flew into fog and a strike-bound Heathrow airport early this morning for talks with Lord Carrington.

He was rushed to Lancaster House where he was unfortunately mistaken for a delegate from ZIPRA, the guerrilla organisation of ZAPU of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front. "A bit of a snafu, what?" observed a Foreign Office chap, his finger firmly on the excited pulse of his blue-eyed secretary.

COLOMBO:

Outside the Oberoi, the Outsider was accosted by a friendly native stretching out his palm for 2 rupees, the bus fare he said to Malay Street to collect his free textbooks. The Outsider, as is his wont, considered the request dispassionately, weighing pros and cons, seasonal generosity and inflationary spirals, and then parted with 25 cts. Before he left, the local yokel, a disgustingly inquisitive bloke, asked the Outsider who he was. When he told the man he was a journalist, the fellow shot back knowledgeably: "You are not, I trust, the cretin Chanakya or the moron Muditha...?" I denied the charge angrily, threatening to sue him for libel. "Okay, okay" he concluded sagely "Hameed may not grab the Nobel prize but there are still many an unsolved riddle in the Hameed mission....if one of you journalists pulls it off, you may even grab the Pull-itzer prize."

FLASH

HAMBURG:

A Sri Lankan official on a secret aid-mission to the FRG was spotted by a local journalist as the former was accosted by a friendly frau. Asked about the brief encounter, the official said: "She wanted a light for her cheroot....when I responded to her other gentle inquiries favourably she asked me from which country I came. When I said 'Sri Lanka' she replied sweetly "Your delegation made such a fine contribution to the Disarmament debate, I would like you to come up and see my old Nazi medals..."

Anyway, that's His-story.

April Insurgency 1971 -
by Podi Athula (5)

JVP and political sado - masochism

RESEARCH

by J. Uyangoda

Related to splittism, sectarianism had also been an explicit feature of the JVP. In all fairness to the JVP, it must be said that, sectarianism has become the rule rather than an exception within the Lankan Left. It is somewhat ironic that the atomization of the left is characterized by an unexplicable and irrational mutual antagonism. When one discusses the attitude of the JVP to other left parties and vice versa, one may notice that this had assumed the nature of a cannibalistic kind of mutual animosity. The recent events that led to the disintegration of the proposed "unity for action" among some of the left parties only bear witness to this sorry state of affairs. As Podi Athula's book reveals the suspicious and hostile attitude of the JVP towards the other left parties is not something new. Quoting Loku Athula's evidence before the CJC (a bad source, anyway) he states that Wijeweera wanted to destroy the leaders of the left parties physically before the revolution (p. 45). On the other hand, the record of the traditional left, in its attitude towards the JVP, is not so good either. We have the statement issued by the Secretaries of the constituent parties of the then United Front, whereby they appealed to their members and supporters to fight mercilessly and without hesitation against, what they called, the agency of reaction. (p 81 and 82). Now, both the JVP and the traditional left parties operated without making the slightest accommodation with each other. Bitter hostility ruled out any possibility of even a critical recognition of at least the legitimacy for existence of either party. In this sense, the showdown of April 1971 can also be viewed as the climax of this ever-deepening animosity between the JVP and the two principal parties of the old left.

Now we identify two mutually related characteristics of the JVP. They are (i) splittism internally and (ii) secretarianism externally; Then, how can one explain this 'political sado-masochism', if I may borrow a phrase from psychology. As far as most of the other left parties are concerned, both splittism and secretarianism emanates either from one's theoretical superiority complex or a considered and delated disagreement over a concrete issue or issues. But in the JVP, both in its internal disputes or in its attitude towards others, no such thought-out reason was visible. Moreover, the JVP failed to make any political or theoretical analysis of any party or group of the left. What it had were conclusions accompanied with hostile statements, simple equations and gross generalizations. In other words, emotion prevailed over reason. **It may be this emotional subjectivism which prevented the JVP from having any kind of acknowledgement of the part played by the old left, especially in the formative stages of the Lankan Socialist movement.**

Parallel to this was the obstinate refusal of the old left to accept the fact that it was their own abandonment of revolutionary politics that had necessitated and facilitated the emergence and growth of a hostile New left movement. Co-opted by bourgeois parliamentary politics, the leadership of the old left identified themselves with the establishment and any challenge or threat to the established order, they considered, was aimed at themselves too. Suffice to recall how they over-reacted, with vengeance, ever since the JVP started open political activities in the middle of 1970.

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Prelude to . . .

(Continued from Page 25)

That was not all. Anti-democratic features became part of bourgeois legislation. The new government promulgated a constitution designed to bring about a comfortable two party parliamentary system. In the teeth of opposition an Essential Services law was passed.

Public sector

Moreover the entire public sector is being dismantled and being handed over lock, stock and barrel to private businessmen. Price controls have been removed and extensive tax concessions are being granted to the capitalist class.

Meanwhile in the highest quarters, Singapore is being held out as a model. The green light for investment, consumerism and corruption of the worst sort has come on.

The seventies were therefore first and foremost a decade of crisis for the capitalist system. The bourgeois parties reacted by imposing more and more curbs on democracy. As the seventies draws to a close—the movement towards further and further authoritarian rule is clearly under way. Notwithstanding the repeated reassurances regarding the so-called restoration of democracy and the sanctimonious statements about a 'dharmista' society—the **inexorable move towards dictatorship was the predominant feature of the decade.**

Paralleled with this development is the situation within the left movement. True that the first half of the decade saw the major parties of the left in the coalition with the SLFP. **Inside the Communist Party, there has been a self-critical analysis of this period.** This shows that the customary vigilance and defence of peoples rights were not in the forefront of the left's activities at this time. Corrective measures are however being taken.

In spite of the seeming confusion that exists—there are signs that the much-lamented disunity in the left is being overcome. The slogan of "unity in action"—is being understood and supported by more and more left thinking people.

Common platform

The most significant feature of the end of the seventies is that for the first time in history—the older left parties and the new parties—represented mainly by the JVP, were able to appear on a common platform. The fact that this was a platform in defence of peoples rights—added to the importance of the occasion.

It is also significant that the left parties which had in fact over emphasised the parliamentary road to power, have come to rely more and more on extra-parliamentary forms of struggle. Not even the reformist T.U's can stand aside in the face of a genuine new upsurge that is evident among the leading Trade Unions.

We thus see a new situation that is emerging as we move into the eighties. The bourgeoisie on the one hand trying to retain power by dictatorial methods—and the left moving towards a polarisation which will enable it to confront the former. In the face of inflation, unemployment, cut-backs in real wages and attempts to take away rights of the people—the seventies that are concluding, have been a mere prelude to a period of new struggles in which the mass movement will move into gigantic new battles. **The stage is therefore set for struggles in which the whole question of power will be resolved in ways other than we have been used to in the past.**

Theatre . . .

(Continued from Page 22)

hits, but most commonly it was just cheap political innuendo. Some apologists mistakenly read profound significance into such verbal sniping and triggered off a lively debate which rewarded us with one unforgettable epithet, 'pappadam natya.'

The Seventies gave us, not mature and intelligent political theatre, but our own version of boulevard drama which traded upon, or vented prevailing public frustrations and encouraged a mood of cynicism through the politically-loaded double-entendre. This drama, as formulaic as anything that had gone before, wasn't by any means a measured response to the real and imagined shortcomings of the stylised mode which formed its target. In fact, the Seventies failed to bring forth an artistically realized refutation of the musical idiom. But the decade did demonstrate a widely felt concern about the social uses of theatre.

This primary cognition of the social dimension of theatre is, to my mind, the most positive and hopeful aspect of Sinhala theatre in the Seventies. Admittedly, it did not find inspired expression on the stage and this perhaps was why critical interest in drama waned during the late Seventies. Incidentally, it is worth noting that it was the cinema which enticed critical attention away from the stage. Today, it is the cinema that is taken to be the more promising medium, an exact reversal of the Sixties situation.

But theatre is too resilient and immediate an art to remain in the background for too long. If in the Sixties, we had Playwright as Aesthete, and in the Seventies, Playwright as Entertainer, in the Eighties we shall need Playwright as Thinker. I suspect he is hiding somewhere in the wings—we scarcely gave him a chance in the Seventies.

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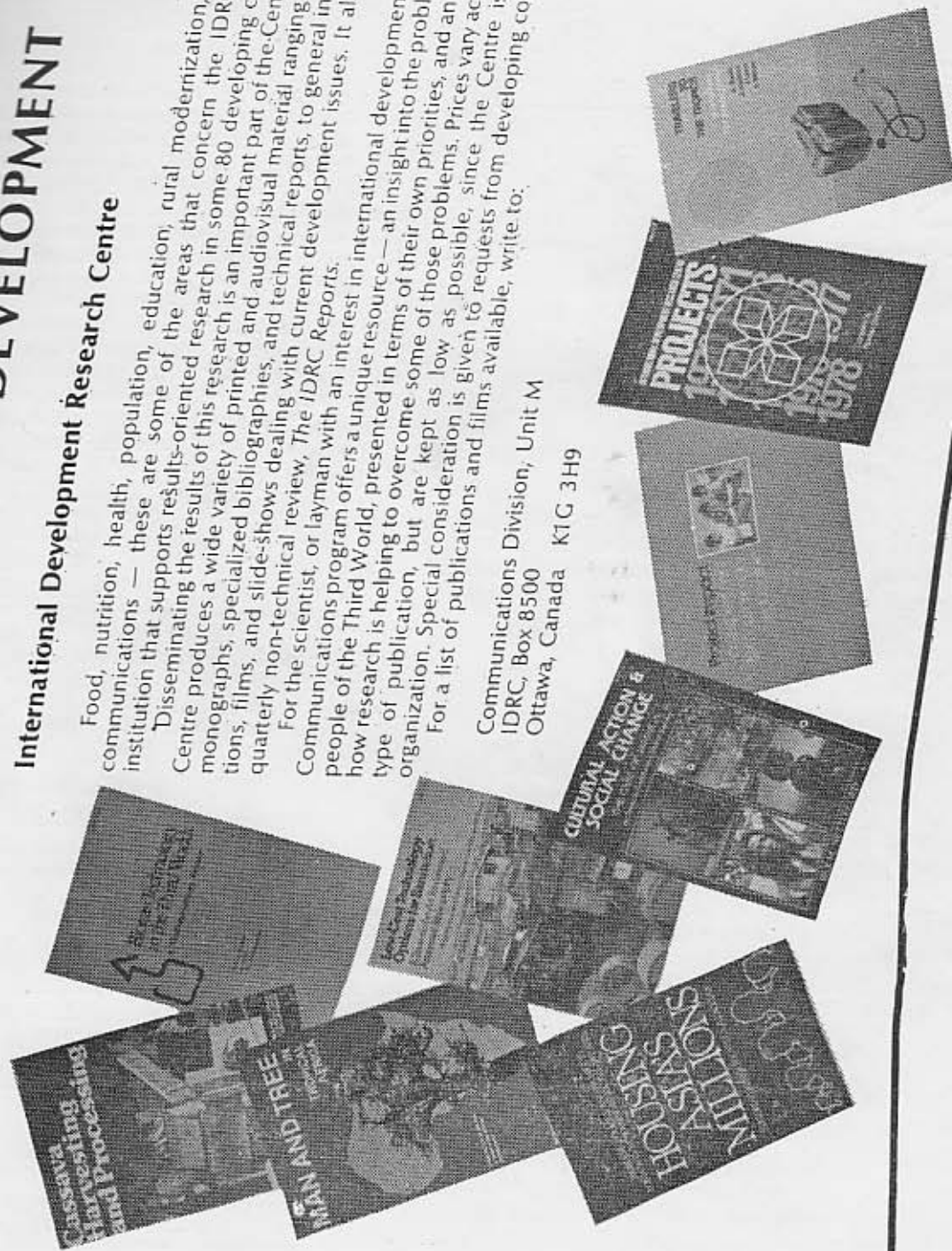
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