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Mrs. Gandhi

**LANKA**

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## **JR's SURGICAL STRIKE**

— Mervyn de Silva



'I shall return' ?

**Vikramabahu Karunaratne  
G. G. Ponnambalam (Jnr)**

on **DDCs**

- Chintaka replies to Shantha de Alwis
- Presidency, Parliament and PR
- Role of the Opposition

**Deng on Mao, G 4 and Capitalism**

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## TULF's RETURN

'Any mention of District Councils, language or Tamils, and all you get from the SLFP is knee-jerk reaction "said a prominent LSSP'er visibly dejected. He was commenting on the SLFP's 'senseless opposition' to the Development Councils on the grounds that it would divide the country.

As he pointed out, the measure can be criticised for other reasons but the SLFP's hostility smacks of racialism.

Dissociating himself from the party position, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike did precisely that when he spoke on the DDC's at a recent seminar. Yet official stand remains unaltered. In view of this the relations between the TULF which was moving close to the post May Day 5-party bloc; and the SLFP cooled considerably in August.

But the TULF is now prepared to invite the leaders of SLFP, LSSP etc. to Jaffna where Mr. Amirthalingam will preside over a mass meeting. Will Mrs. B. go to Jaffna?

## GASEOUS

"Whatever happened to that OPEC petition?" guffawed an ex-Minister at a seminar recently and unlike Pontious Pilate, paused long enough for his own answer. "All those stirring speeches, the million signatures, the broadcasts and newspaper articles, those breast-beating editorials and sheik-beating commentaries and cartoons... what a waste of energy..!"

While the politician and the pro-government publicists do seem to have guzzled their own 'gas', this is little comfort to the citizen who understands the realities of international economics and is not bamboozled by puerile propaganda stunts.

The Finance Minister, for example, is now in Washington for the IMF-IBRD annual get together. Sri Lanka has drawn 30 million SDRs out of its 1980 quota of 90 million SDRs. Since negotiations between the government and an IMF mission proved inconclusive, Sri Lanka did not

draw the balance 60 million SDRs. With the budget taking final shape, Mr. de Mel thinks he can now get IMF approval for this 60 million and a further 90 million SDRs next year.

But the IMF itself is facing a new crisis. It has decided not to grant observer status to the PLO — a demand made by the Arab oil producers, led by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. And the latter had backed up their demand by placing an embargo on loans to the IMF.

## SOUTH / SOUTH DIALOGUE

How united is the United National Party? The enterprising WEEKEND had neatly pieced together the Devinuwara clashes, the dismissal of the ADA Vice-Chairman (a party stalwart) and the protracted war between 'two-decade old rivals', a Minister and a very rich and influential personality from neighbouring electorates. No names were mentioned but the clues were laid out with little care for dissembling.

The irony, as the WEEKEND underlined, was that both were in the US arguing Sri Lanka's case for aid and investment. In the West, they are participating in the north-south dialogue but here it's a south-south duel, wisecracked a columnist in a leftwing paper. But the **Weekend's** aside about parliamentary aspirations and party lists in 1983 suggest that the UNP High Command will have to preside over another sort of dialogue if the 'unity' of the United National Party is not to become bazaar gossip.

## A LITTLE BIT OF...

"As far as tendencies go, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene is probably no more totalitarian than I am..."

Take a bow, Mr. President, the speaker is none other than the ardent advocate on a famous occasion of just a little bit of T! In short, FDB.

The discussion is about Development Councils; the venue, the

(Continued on page 2)

## Whither Now?

We are grateful for the coverage given in the L. G. as it keeps those of us who are living abroad informed of the actual situation in our country.

The recent strike, the attitude of the government towards it, and the action taken against the strikers were given good coverage in the foreign and local news media here.

This came at a time when world attention has been focussed on the worsening economic recession and news about strikes in many countries was reaching the headlines. The attitude of the governments in Poland (Communist), Britain (Capitalist), South Africa (Fascist) and Zimbabwe (Socialist) were in marked contrast to Sri Lanka.

Naturally the UNP's handling of the situation came in for

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Editor: **Mervyn de Silva**

Telephone: 21009.

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## Trends . . .

Centre, where the most serious exchanges are enlivened by the good humoured retort, the bon mot and the barb. And, as Mr. Anura Bandaranaike discovered at the same place on the same subject some nice little ironies (L. G. Sept 15).

Anura did not take the SLFP leadership line on the DDCs. There was no attempt to divide the country, no indefensible concessions to the Tamils.

FDB also attacked the measure as representing a centralisation of power. More than a little bit of totalitarianism? Who was he to protest? Well, if there was no totalitarianism in fact in 1970-77, it was not for want of trying. Unlike today when the UNP has 5/6ths in the NSA, parliament in his time had a strong opposition (the UNP, the TULF and later the LSSP) and outside the House, there was always the Centre, the Civil Rights Movement etc to keep those dangerous 'tendencies' in check.

## Letters . . .

much comment, and we found it difficult to handle inquiries as to the political status of our country.

From about the time the strike was called there have also been apparently crude attempts to censor private airmail, something unprecedented, and which brought back memories of World War II.

After 50 years of exercising the franchise, where do we go from here?

Kenya. **Anil Amerasekara**

### UNP's

#### Mid - Term Report

Reading Mr. Athulathmudali's self-assessment of the UNP's performance (L. G. 1 August) one begins to wonder whether the main thing he learnt at Oxford was rhetoric. Consider, for example, the following instantly answerable question he so ponderously poses: "Can any one deny that in the last three years the UNP has created

more jobs than any other government would have created if elected to office?" (Answer: Yes, because it is perfectly easy to conceive of a government which would have been better than the UNP government). The report is replete with statements such as the following, having a nimbus of apparent profundity about them.

(1) "The energy of man is now being productively channeled". Which man Mr. Athulathmudali is thinking of is not clear. Is he thinking of Plato's Universal Man or of the biological species Man or of the Common Man in Ratmalana? Anyhow the claim that "the energy of man is being productively channeled" after the present government was elected to office is impossibly hard to square with reality. One should like to know whether this discovery came to Mr. Athulathmudali in a flash of revelation or whether he pieced it together bit by bit.

(Continued on page 27)

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# JR's surgical strike

by Mervyn de Silva

**D**eferred at the polls, Mrs. Gandhi retained leadership of her party and fought all her battles outside the Lok Sabha to make a triumphal come-back to the premiership after a surprisingly brief break in her parliamentary career.

True believers who feel that a karmic destiny accounts for the strong impression of interwoven political fortunes, argue that the circle of fate is now complete. The Indira-Sirima analogy, they claim, with a quick glance at the respective horoscopes, has run its course.

True-blue SLFP'ers however are even more confident that this is just another turn of the wheel of fortune. Evidently it is a sentiment shared by Mrs. B. herself: "If they want to make a martyr of me, they are welcome to do so....Let's wait and see, what happens....and who'll be deprived of what...." Not only an absolute confidence in the future, but a defiance laced with a thinly disguised threat.

Shades of the Bhuttos and Mrs. Gandhi; observers of sub-continental trends intervene.

Certainly, Indira (and Indira, of course) casts a long shadow over Sri Lankan affairs. This is a commonplace of the Island's politics. But the resultant interplay of light-and-shade creates visual effects which even the most sharp-eyed analyst can find deceptively tricky.

Just as UNP supporters and 'neutral' observers wondered why the government, having appointed the Special Commission, was taking so long, pro-SLFP groups had started to believe that international opinion, diplomatic pressure and internal UNP differences, aggravated by the government's plummeting popularity, would save the day for Mrs. B.

## Delayed Action?

If it had to be done, it should have been done quickly, mused many a UNP'er, echoing Shakespeare. In the first two years only a potty permanent secretary had lost his civic rights. Would there be a steady loss of credibility, and growing public indifference? Mrs. B. is the UNP's most formidable electoral opponent.

If the step now contemplated was inevitable, the UNP's peak popularity provided the most congenial climate for drastic and dramatic moves.

Of course, Sri Kotha's back-room boys do not seem to be too disturbed by reports of well-attended and enthusiastic opposition rallies in the South and Uva nor by the derisive propagandist blasts of the Opposition press about the poor attendance at UNP meetings. "This is a normal mid-term phenomenon" is the favoured explanation.

Only last week some SLFP'ers clung to the hope that "mounting internal conflicts" (see TRENDS South / South dialogue) and "divergent strategies at the top" (both phrases were used at a meeting of the new opposition alliance) would mean a permanent postponement of this decision.

A majority of ministers were against stern action? A faint echo of this was heard in a SUN front page story a day before the fateful Cabinet meeting. A reliable source close to the UNP High Command said: "I can think of only one such sympathiser...."

To this day there is the lingering hope of a pardon and/or a general amnesty sometime in the future.

## Hopeful Brokers

In the late 1978 and throughout 1979, there was a host of honest brokers, mediators and special envoys, all conveying, more

or less, the same message of reassurance and hope. This guessing-game bought time. But for whom? With a Damoclean sword hanging over the leader's head, was the SLFP, the main opposition party, immobilised? If so, the UNP tactics were clever. But if these gains are outweighed by the changes in the political situation and climate of opinion, then the shrewdness of the tactic is open to debate. Timing is the essence of tactics.

What is not open to debate however is the brilliance of the final thrust—the surprise, lighting move.

If Mrs. B. and the SLFP were kept off balance for nearly 2 years and thus 'immobilised', the protective Gandhi connection was "neutralised" in one swift, surgical strike.

Since the President is known to be a keen student of military affairs, an admirer compares his move across the Palk Straits to that of the spectacular canal-crossing of the Egyptians in 1973, and their breaching of the "impregnable" Bar Lev Line.

## External Front

But those who have followed Mrs. B's own moves since May, when she withdrew from the Commission's proceedings and built up her "external" front" may think another comparison more apt. Even more spectacular than General Shazli's crossing of the Suez was General Sharon's counter-punch—hitting the Egyptians in the rear by crossing the canal in the other direction, encircling the Egyptian 2nd army, and cutting off the supply lines.

Those salutations and eulogies in Delhi, were not as the SLFP press gleefully suggested, the obsequious outpourings of a suitably chastened UNP leader, overawed by the Sirima-Indira axis. Nor were those uplifting allusions to Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru and Congress history, the senti-

mental journey of a septuagenarian. It was part of the game-plan and it served the pre-determined end.

The report reached the President just before he left for Delhi on September 2. The WEEKEND's Migara who produced one of his characteristically well-informed exercises in 'investigative journalism-cum-analysis' (this time, though, with a strong injection of special pleading too) made a point of the fact that most people expected the report to be handed over on the President's return rather than before his departure. But the President, added Migara, did not read the report because of the "time factor" and because he wanted "to go to the conference with an open mind."

Having marched out of the courtroom, Mrs. B. went to Belgrade the home of the legendary Tito and nonalignment. Her next stop was Baghdad, the venue of the 7th nonaligned summit. Mrs. B., President Saddam's guest, stayed at 'the palace'. When a UNP stalwart sought an interview with Saddam Hussein, it was politely explained, that the ruling Baath party regarded the SLFP as 'the fraternal party'.

And from Baghdad to Delhi.

### The System

By virtue of the SLFP's activism in foreign affairs since 1956, Mrs. B's prestige abroad is a fact that even her most inveterate critics must concede. MIGARA mentioned the "ambassador of a big power" who had urged the UNP High Command not to take any punitive action because Mrs. B was a democratic and nonaligned personality. In a comment published last year, the LG reported the wellknown views on this question of Prof. Howard Wriggins, then US Ambassador in Colombo. His position was that the SLFP represented the only credible democratic alternative to the UNP and her elimination from active politics would do irreparable damage to the two-party system. The author of a standard work on Sri Lankan politics, Dr. Wriggins understood only too well that if there

had been no SWRD and an SLFP an electorate tired of UNP rule would have had only a Left alternative.

This line of thinking is not confined to "outsiders" or political scientists. It is shared even by sections of the UNP, as the WEEKEND and the SUN (Sept 24) reported. In fact, the WEEKEND commentator's own arguments, despite a somewhat laboured effort to balance "pro" and "contra" and an affected air of neutrality, found inspiration in the self-same concern for the preservation of the system and, as a corollary, a nervous apprehension about an SLFP sans Mrs. B.

This is the conventional view of the two party system which has evolved since the founding of the SLFP in 1951 and the pendulum shifts since 1956. The view finds sanction in what is accepted as the inherent rules of the game which have to be respected in the interests of stability and status quo. but the game is more important than the players.

### Bipartisan Business

The perpetuation of the system beyond individual, sectional or party rivalries, is necessarily a preoccupation of those who have a vested interest in its preservation. This would be particularly true of that business community which grew up and was nourished by an economic strategy whose principal features were import substitution and State patronage — i. e. SLFP socialism, State capitalism or whatever. Often this community is mature enough to transcend party affiliations and personal loyalties in order to protect the system. It is to the credit of the SUN group that despite the fact that it was a notable victim of what it termed 'the dictatorial character of the UF regime', it functioned in this UNP-SLFP dispute as the most articulate spokesman of this school of opinion.

Of course, the more thoughtful and argumentative of UNP supporters point out that it was Mrs. B. FDB etc. who broke the rules of the game by trying to stifle or strangle what the state

chose to describe, interestingly enough, as legitimate political opposition. Equally interesting is the fact that when the Commission began its work, the State's prosecutors trained their heavy calibre guns on 'abuses' and 'excesses' just before and during the 1971 insurrection. It was given the widest publicity at the start, but as time went by, this line of attack was quietly abandoned.

### Class Analysis

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, whom Professor Ernest Mandel once described as one of the finest Marxist pamphleteers in Asia, offered us a stimulating theoretical insight into the processes at work. His point was that Mrs. B. not satisfied in playing the role of the UNP's alternative, was making the daring bid for 'sole agency'. In early 1977, he wrote:

"She is systematising and consolidating capitalist class control of the SLFP; with herself and the coterie around her, family and all, as the capitalist agency within the SLFP. At home, she seeks to represent and mobilise the support of the new trading, manufacturing and financiering sections of the capitalist class, that is to say the new capitalists of big and middling business in Sri Lanka, with their more mobile resources, rather than to build up her links with the formerly powerful capitalists of large landed property now broken by the nationalisation of the plantations, on whom the UNP founded itself. Abroad she seeks her allies today in the west, the Eastern centre, amongst the forces of mobile big capital, old and new, including especially those most modern instruments of neocolonialism, the multi-nationals. And let it be clear what she seeks to achieve through this process is not just to



make herself and the SLFP the alternative to the UNP in the arena of parliamentary politics: she seeks thereby nothing less than to make the SLFP the sole political agency of the capitalist forces in Sri Lanka displacing and destroying the UNP in the process. The stakes are indeed high; but her ambitions are no less." (Sirima's Blitzkrieg—Who Won?)

The thesis still holds good. What has changed (besides, of course, LSSP thinking) is that JR, not Mrs. B, is in command.

J. R. has taken his time, measuring it carefully. What is more, he has understood the subtle calculus of risks and taken his decision.

In a comment to the SUN, Mr. B has spoken in tones no less martial. In a MacArthur-like response ("I shall return") Mrs. B. has shown her determination to carry on the political battle. (Earlier she had expressed fears that she may be stripped even of her party office.) At least one Sri Kotha intellectual was prompted by this defiant challenge to lean on Shakespeare to give expression to his innermost anxieties.... "we have scotch'd the snake, not killed it...."

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## No Island is an island

The ever tighter integration of the world economy (some would say, the increasing interdependence of national economies) as well as the communications revolution (itself a product of the scientific and technological revolution) has led to the internationalization of politics. The internationalization of Sri Lanka politics is enhanced paradoxically by the attempts to put Sri Lanka on the global map, firstly as a prominent member of the nonaligned community and more recently (post 1977) as an attempt at image building in keeping with the new economic growth strategy. Thus, Sri Lankan politics can never acquire the introversion of, say, Burma, even if the ruling groups so wish.

The solidarity campaign in the wake of the repression of April 1971 was the first real indication of this phenomenon. The propaganda campaign by Tamil expatriate groups in the work of the 1977 anti-Tamil riots and the killing of Tamil youth during Emergency '79 was further evidence. There has also been a steady stream of information on the wretched living conditions of the Tamil plantation workers.

This was most strikingly demonstrated by the campaign mounted during the UNP government's recent crackdown on the trade unions. President. Jayawardena himself acknowledged the receipt of several protest notes from British trade unionists. In point of fact, protest against the Government's actions, as well as expressions of support for the JTUAC have come from as many as 8 Labour Party Members of Parliament, 4 members of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee (NEC), the Chairman of the Irish Labour Party Administrative Council Mr. Brendick Halligen, and Andy Bevan, the Secretary of the Labour Party's youth organisation Young Socialists. While Britain's all powerful trade union congress the TUC sent a telegram expressing serious concern at the arrest of trade union leaders, protests have also come from Terence

Harry, the General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Unions as well as from the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, the National Union of Railwaymen and the Transport and General Workers Union and the Derbyshire National Miners Union.

This does not come as much of a surprise, since the Sri Lankan Left has had strong links, historically, with the British Left, and the new generation of Lankan radicals (such as the NSSP) continues the 'great tradition'. What is important however is that the protests are not from some Trotskyist grouplets on the fringe of British policies, but from the increasingly influential left-wing of the Labour Party itself which could very well be in office again.

Another new feature is that protests have emanated from the European continent itself, where anti-UNP propaganda was previously the exclusive preserve of Tamil groups. This time, the 'offensive' group of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the 'Vorwärts' group of the Dutch Social Democratic Party have expressed their fullest support for the JTUAC struggle.

While a campaign to Defend Trade Union Rights in Sri Lanka (CDTURSL) has been formed in London, by Sri Lankans living in the UK and members of the British Labour (its convenor Bob Labi, is a member of the Greater London Labour Party Executive), the protests have spilled over and taken on a transatlantic character.

Rex de Silva, editor of the SUN newspaper filed a story from New York on a demonstration of approximately 75 people, outside the Sri Lankan mission to the U.N. This demonstration was sponsored, by the Trotskyist international Spartacist tendency (IST), whose British counterparts demonstrated outside the Ceylon Tea Centre in London on the next day. The SUN published the New York

story on its front page and a few days later, went on to display with equal prominence, photographs of that demonstration. The Spartacists said that the demonstrations were an expression of international labour solidarity.

The Spartacist paper Worker Vanguard went on to comment:—

"In the aftermath the reformist CP and LSSP as well as their hangers-on like the NSSP will blame the strike's defeat on the fierce government repression. But that is just a self-serving rationalization. Their militant rhetoric aside, all these misleaders saw the general strike mainly as a means to forge a political alliance of "all anti-UNP forces" — a catch word for a new popular front with the bloody Mrs. B, whose popular-front government in 1971 massacred thousands of youth. When the JIUAC was first formed, the LSSP and CP understood that mass hatred for the old coalition made open association with the SLFP unwise. But a bloc was made on the trade-union front over the JIUAC's 23 demands. Thus, the JIUAC is a first step toward a new popular-front alliance. It should be recalled how, after the fall of the first popular-front government in 1965, the LSSP, CP and SLFP formed a Joint Committee of Trade Union Organizations based on 15 demands that was the precursor to the open electoral popular-front alliance.

"Already the rotting LSSP has made what its leader Colvin R. de Silva publicly calls "a pact with the devil's grandmother" (guess who). The LSSP, badly demoralized and in total disarray, crawled into the SLFP's last May Day demonstration, marching at the tail of course. And the LSSP and SLFP held a joint anti-UNP rally in Colombo June 24 with an eye already on the 1983 general elections. So far, the CP, NSSP and Tampoe have been more cautious.

"Earlier this year the CP felt compelled to make a public "self-criticism" of its role in the Bandaranaika coalition. but that

didn't stop the Stalinists from encouraging the SLFP to participate in June 5 JIUAC protest. As for the NSSP over the coalition fiasco, it has never drawn a hard line against popular frontism. It tries to fudge the class character of the SLFP, dubbing it both bourgeois and "liberal reformist" "social Democratic" and the NSSP has no qualms about making de facto political blocs with the SLFP such as sharing the some platform with Mrs. B. at a rally against the UNP's new constitution.

"Then there's the thoroughly corrupted, reptilian Tampoe, who'll do business with just about anyone who can further his career as a big bureaucrat on a little, poor island. Suffice it to recall that in 1967 Tampoe accepted a CIA handout to come to the U. S., where he met with then "defence" secretary Robert McNamara at the height of the U. S., bloody war on the Vietnamese workers and peasants (see "The Case of Bala Tampoe," Spartacist No 21 Fall 1972). Recently, Tampoe has the left wondering about his close relations with SLFP union boss Alavi Moulana. As the quite perceptive gadflies of the Lanka Guardian observed, Tampoe's last May Day speech was "unusually subdued" on the SLFP.

"The RWP's role in the general strike only confirmed our characterization of the Samarakkody tendency as "the organic left wing of the old LSSP" ("Toward the the International Trotskyist League," Spartacist No. 27 - 28, Winter 1979-80). For Trotskyists, what was urgently needed in the general strike was a hard, sharp struggle to break the unions from their misleaders and from the bourgeois SLFP. But the RWP's "mass leader" Andradi, acting as president of the Central Bank Employees Union, issued a leaflet in Sinhala dated July 13 that didn't even mention the SLFP! It simply exhorts workers to force the JIUAC to take militant action. Just how is the JIUAC to wage an anti-capitalist struggle when it embraces the union flunkies of Mrs. B?! Not surprisingly, Andradi's leaflet makes no mention of the vital Tamil question."

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# Deng on Mao, G4 and capitalism

FOREIGN  
NEWS

*"Thirty one years ago Mao Tse-tung a triumphant revolutionary supported by his loyal comrades proclaimed a new republic in Peking. Now, almost four years to the day after his death, China has ignored his anniversary and all but shaken off the inheritance of his overwhelming charisma" wrote Colina Macdougall in the Financial Times. In Peking, Tony Walker, who covered the recent National People's Congress, wrote of the dominant role of Deng Xiaoping. Below are excerpts from an interview given by Deng to the internationally reputed Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci.*

**Oriana Fallaci:** Mr. Deng, you recently wrote that China is at a turning-point which can be compared with a second revolution. In fact, the traveller arriving in Peking today has an almost physical feeling of the change. No uniforms, no written slogans and the portraits of Mao Tse-tung are so rare I saw only three of them. Will those rare portraits of Mao remain or not?

**Deng Xiaoping:** Yes, they will certainly be kept for ever. You see, in the past portraits of Chairman Mao were shown in public to such an excess that they looked almost disrespectful, so we removed them. But... Listen, Chairman Mao committed mistakes, it is true. But he also was one of the main founders of the Chinese Communist Party and of the People's Republic of China.

In evaluating his mistakes as well as his merits, we think that his mistakes take a secondary place. The contribution he gave to the Chinese revolution cannot be obliterated and the Chinese people will always cherish his memory.

*Today all the faults are being blamed on the Gang of Four. That is, Mao's widow, Chiang Ching, and the other three who led that Cultural Revolution. But does this correspond to historical truth? I have been told that, when one speaks of the Gang of Four, many Chinese raise their hand with the five fingers opened and they angrily answer: "Yes, yes, four!"*

It's imperative for me to make a clear distinction between the nature of Chairman Mao's mis-

takes and the crimes committed by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. I must remind you that Chairman Mao devoted most of his life to China and saved the party and the revolution in the most critical moments... Without him, at the very least the Chinese would have spent much more time groping their way in darkness.

Unfortunately, in the last part of his life he committed mistakes. Particularly, the Cultural Revolution mistake. And as a result many misfortunes were brought upon the party, the country, the people... in the last part of his life Chairman Mao contradicted himself and the good principles he had formulated. Unhealthy thinking emerged, both in his actions and his style of work. The unhealthiest thinking of all — his ultra leftist ideas.

Well, maybe the victory had made him less prudent, or maybe he had lost contact with reality. You see, because of his great contribution to the revolution, he enjoyed tremendous prestige among the Chinese people and so he received much praise—too much. He thus failed to institutionalise the very good principles he had established for years, such as democratic centralism and the mass line. This was one of his shortcomings, though other revolutionaries shared the responsibility, I myself included. His behaviour began to be patriarchal..

*Here is the point, Mr. Deng. I understand very well that your leaders of the new China are living*

*a terrible drama: reshaping Mao's myth without destroying it... In other words, the dilemma of defining what to accept of the past and what to reject. But unless you rewrite history and burn the libraries, how will you do it? Wasn't Mao's wife the one who led the Gang? Wasn't it Mao himself who chose Lin Biao as his successor, just as an emperor proclaims the heir to the throne? Would you call that another "mistake"?*

I call it a mistake and I put it among the other mistakes... Of course, choosing his own successor is a feudal practice for a leader. But you must also consider that democratic centralism did not exist any more—that we failed to create a system to prevent such things.

*The trial of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four — this will take place?*

Definitely. We are preparing it, and it should take place at the end of the year.

*I asked because it is more than three years since you announced that trial.*

We'll hold it, I promise you that we'll hold it. All this time has been necessary to prepare it: their crimes are so numerous. And we now act in socialist legality.

*And the four are alive, are they? Chiang Ching is alive?*

She eats very well. She sleeps—in jail, of course. And this shows that she is alive. They are all alive.

*Good? And since they are alive, they will talk. They will say many things about Mao. What if their trial ends with a moral condemnation of Mao. I mean a verdict very different from the one on which you have already decided?*

I promise you that the trial of the Gang of Four will not besmirch Chairman Mao's memory at all. Of course, it will help to

demonstrate some of his responsibility, for instance, that he used the Gang of Four, but nothing more. The crimes committed by them are so many and so evident that we do not need to implicate Chairman Mao to prove them.

*I'm really surprised, Mr. Deng. On one hand you accuse him, on the other you defend him. You defend him even when you accuse him. Yet twice you were deposed with Mao's approval.*

Not twice, three times. And not with Chairman Mao's approval. (He laughs) Yes, I had three deaths and three resurrections. Do you know the name of Wang Ming, the one who led the Chinese Communist Party and its ultra-leftist faction in 1932? Well, my first fall took place in 1932, thanks to Wang Ming. He accused me of raising the Mao Tse-tung group against him, and knocked me down.

I had to wait three years before being resurrected in 1935, during the Long March, at the Zunyi congress of the party. In fact, at Zunyi the ultra-leftist opportunists of Wang Ming were defeated, Mao's leadership was re-established and I was reinstated in the post of secretary-general.

The second fall took place at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when I was still secretary-general and a member of the standing committee of the Central Committee as well as vice-premier. Well, this time, too, Chairman Mao tried to protect me. Without success, though, because Lin Biao and the Gang of Four hated me too much. Not as much as they hated Liu Shaoci, yet enough to send me to Jiangxi province to do manual work. And when in 1978, Chairman Mao called me back to Peking—

*Mao or Chou En-lai?*

Chairman Mao. Some believe I was called back by Premier Chou En-lai, I know, but it was Chairman Mao. Chou En-lai was seriously ill at that time and, as the government depended almost exclusively on him, Chairman

Mao called me back and put me back in government as vice-premier. He said my mistakes were only 30 per cent, my merits 70 per cent, and he resurrected me with 30/70. Yet he, too, was already very ill and unable to meet anybody of the political bureau. He only saw the people around him. That is, the people belonging to the Gang of Four.

As for the third fall, it was in April 1976, three months after the death of Chou En-lai and five months before the death of Chairman Mao. Then in October the Gang of Four was arrested and one shouldn't marvel at my third resurrection.

*Three times! Mr. Deng, what's the secret of dying and being resurrected three times?*

No secret! (He laughs happily.) At a certain moment they thought I could be useful again and they took me out of the grave. That's all.

*But during those purges weren't you afraid of being killed?*

Of course. All through the Cultural Revolution, Lin Biao and the Gang of Four wanted to murder me. They didn't do it because Chairman Mao protected me. Even when I was sent to Jiangxi province to do manual work, Chairman Mao had someone watching over my security.

Foreign friends often ask me how it was possible for me to survive all those trials and tribulations, and I usually answer: "Because I am the sort of person who doesn't get discouraged easily. I am an optimist and I know what politics is like." But this is not the real answer, the complete answer. I could survive because deep in my heart I always had faith in Chairman Mao. And I had faith in him because I knew that he knew me.

*I always heard that he could not stand you, that he always complained about you: "He is deaf but he sits far from me, as far as he can" "He treats me as if I were dead, he never asks my advice." "He doesn't want to know what I think, he acts his own way."*

It's true, though he didn't say those things only about me. He always complained about everybody. He protested that they didn't listen to him, they did not consult him, they did not inform him. Well, it wasn't true about the others, it was true about me. And I did that because I did not like his patriarchal behaviour. He acted like a patriarch. He never wanted to know the ideas of others, no matter how right they might be. He never wanted to hear opinions different from his. He really behaved in an unhealthy feudal way.

*It seems to me that the Chiang Ching story is also a feudal story. Isn't one reason why nobody dared to oppose Chiang Ching that she was the wife of Mao?*

Well...yes. One of the reasons was that.

*Was Mao so blinded by her, so dominated by her?*

Listen, when I say that Chairman Mao made mistakes, I also think of the mistake named Chiang Ching. She is a very, very evil woman. She is so evil that any evil thing you say about her isn't evil enough and, if you ask me to judge her according to degrees as we do in China, I answer that this is impossible...Chiang Ching is a thousand times a thousand below zero.

Yet Chairman Mao let her usurp power, form her faction, use his name as her personal banner for her personal interests, use young ignorant people on which to build her private political base.. Even later when he was separated from her—yes, separated. Didn't you know that for years Chairman Mao and Chiang Ching lived apart? Yet even after the separation he did not intervene to stop her and to prevent her from using his name.

*And to arrest her, to arrest the other three, it was necessary to wait till the death of Mao.*

*Let's talk about your opening up to the capitalist West. I mean the economic opening you need to realise your Four Modernisations programme As it will bring foreign*

*(Continued on page 10)*

# INDIA IN TURMOIL

by Gail Omvedt

**S**olid monsoon rains slashing the fields of India for the last two months have brought an end to fears of drought and possible famine in the coming year. But they have not been able to douse the fires of inflation or still the popular turmoil arising from the ongoing economic and political crisis.

Riots over rising prices of food and other essentials, bloody Hindu-Muslim clashes, continuing exposures and protests against police brutality, and the ongoing anti-government upsurge in India's strategic northeast region have been features of the political scene in the last few months.

Indira Gandhi's government is attempting to meet these challenges with a combination of repression and concessions. Though she is faced with internal party conflicts that have worsened following the death of Sanjay Gandhi, still Mrs. Gandhi is moving ahead to consolidate greater state power in her hands by calling for constitutional changes to give greater powers to the parliament in which she controls a two-thirds majority.

## Anti-Price Rise Riots

Demonstrations, marches, strikes, road-closings, **bandhs** (shut-downs of entire cities or regions), riots and deaths in police firing, in short the entire round of Indian protest agitations are on again, this time focusing mainly against inflation, which is now at a rate of nearly 40%, the highest in the country's history.

Heavy price-rises in 1974-75 had preceded the declaration of Emergency. Tight controls then had brought inflation rates down

(Gail Omvedt, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of California, and the author of several books, has been teaching in India since last year. Recently she visited some of the troubled States. This article was written exclusively for the L. G.)

somewhat as well as clamping down on nearly all the resulting protest. The first two years of Janata rule were also relatively favorable, but the return of soaring prices in 1979 coincided with a new wave of social turmoil and heralded the end of the Charan Singh's weak regime. Mrs. Gandhi's slogan of a "stable government" was identified in the popular mind with the idea that such a government could do something about prices—but now, ominously, they are rampaging worse than ever before.

What is unique about the current unrest—and also an indication of the centrality of the market at all levels of rural as well as urban economy—is the way eruptions have been occurring even in small towns and villages. The most universal complaint now heard among the rural poor is not about landlord exploitation, debts to money lenders or caste oppression (though all may be present) but about rising prices; the most common response to any question comparing today's situation with that of twenty years ago is again to speak of prices; and "how can we continue to survive"? Is the universal theme. As a result, not only are **bandhs** occurring in major cities, but even villagers are marching on to national highways to shut down traffic in protest, and riots have occurred on village market days in a number of cases.

The most violent explosion occurred at the end of June in Karnataka state when a farmers' agitation sparked off anti-price rise riots in nearby districts leading to police firings resulting in dozens of deaths.

## Police Atrocities

A growing Indian women's movement has focused attention on the frequency of atrocities against women and in particular on rapes committed by the police. The protest began with the "Mathura case" which involved a

15-year old tribal girl raped by policemen who were later declared innocent by the Supreme Court on the grounds that no marks were found on her body to indicate resistance. A storm of protest centering on nation-wide demonstrations on March 8 succeeded in getting the verdict reversed, but since then hardly a day has gone by without revelations of fresh police atrocities.

The most notorious recent case was in the town of Baghat in northern India where three travellers were shot dead by local policemen after they had got into a fistfight with a plainclothesman, and Naya Tyagi, the wife of one, was grabbed stripped of her clothes dragged through the streets, beaten brutally with a police baton thrust into her vagina, and then raped inside the police station. With the Congress (I) government unwilling to take action, the entire opposition has been holding continuous agitation on this and other incidents.

The Indian police have a bad reputation for brutality, and torture and beating of common prisoners (let alone political suspects) in order to obtain confessions is common in many areas. Occasionally an enraged public takes affairs into its own hands as happened in a small town near Nagpur recently. After a badly beaten accused man collapsed and died in the road after being released from police custody, the furious crowd which gathered burned down the police station. Two months later the man was declared innocent—posthumously.

Under public pressure the government is beginning to take action to discipline police charged with rape and has tightened up anti-rape laws to provide a seven-year sentence at hard labour. But no widespread police reforms seem to be in the offing.

## Hindu-Muslim Riots

India's independence day celebrations on August 15, which nearly coincided with the Muslim Id festival, were marred by a wave of Hindu-Muslim clashes in numerous towns and cities of north and central India. The worst riot, in Moradabad, was



sparked off when a pig wandered (or was pushed) into a crowd observing Id prayers and led to a confrontation of Muslims with the police, with firing on both sides resulting in over 120 dead. The government was quick afterwards to publicize legal and illegal arms caches in the area and to make charges of "conspiracy" by Muslim Extremist groups hinting at Pakistani involvement.

In fact there has been a growth of organized religious fundamentalism among both Hindus and Muslims, particularly among petty bourgeois youth now heavily affected by unemployment and the failures of India's "secular socialist democracy." Among the Hindus this takes the form of movements such as the Hindu Ekta Andolan (Unity Movement) with its slogan of "no class differences, no caste differences, Hindus Unite!" Among Muslims the wave of fundamentalist antagonism has been affected by developments in Iran and Afghanistan ("Neither East nor West, only Islam").

Where this development may really become threats to the

Indian state is in Kashmir, where there have been strong separatist national sentiments ever since 1947 when the state was claimed by both India and Pakistan. Now these sentiments are being voiced by a fundamentalist Muslim youth group, the Jamaat-e-Tulaba, and severe riots have occurred here also. The government has been quick to arrest their leaders, but a statement of the Kashmiri Chief Minister, Sheik Abdullah, that "neither Pakistanis nor Indians" but only Kashmiris themselves can decide their future, has almost equally unnerved the government.

Here again there are charges of Pakistani involvement and fears of the attractions of the Islamic regime of Zia Ul-Haq, but the dynamic of Kashmiri nationalists—if present developments accelerate—could well become a threat as well to Pakistan which is already facing issues of national self-determination raised in various ways by Baluchis, Sindhis and Pathans as well as discontent in the section of Kashmir ("Azad Kashmir") controlled by it. ●

**Deng on . . .**

*(Continued from page 8)*

*capital to China, isn't it legitimate to suspect that it will provoke a certain growth of private property—the dawn of some small-scale capitalism?*

Let's start by pointing out that, in the final analysis, the principles of our national construction are the same as those formulated by Chairman Mao. While taking international assistance, we'll mainly rely on our own efforts. That is, no matter how we open to the West, no matter how we use foreign capital, and whatever the proportion of private investment will be, this will cover only a small percentage of the Chinese economy. It will in no way affect the socialist public ownership of the means of production. Even the fact that foreigners might build factories in China will play only a subsidiary role.

Of course, some decadent capitalist influences will be brought into China. We are aware of this, but I think that is not so terrible and we are not afraid of it...



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# Development Councils Act

by G. G. Ponnambalam (Jnr)

(General Secretary All Ceylon Tamil Congress.)

Any scheme or legislation that will provide for greater economic development of the various areas of this country must be heartily welcomed. But, will the Development Councils, as envisaged in this Act, which are being set up for the purposes of accelerating economic development activity in a District through its Executive Committee and its District Minister, achieve its purposes? Are these Councils so autonomous and independent as to be able to indulge in planning and coordination for economic development of those areas? Are the Development Councils local bodies? Do these Councils permit of decentralisation of administration? Will these Councils help the Tamil speaking people and their traditional areas, or is there a possibility that these Councils can act to their detriment? These are important questions that come up for consideration on an analysis of the Development Councils Act.

To my mind, the most important and illuminating provisions in the whole Act are contained in Sections 16 & 34. That the Councils have absolutely no initiative in formulating schemes for development, let alone 'accelerated development', of their districts, that the council is not the focus of development planning is amply shown up by these sections. For, amongst the functions of the Councils is the approval of the annual development plan submitted to it by the Executive Committee (Section 16 (1) (a)). The word 'approval' shows that the drawing up of the annual development plan is the business of somebody outside the Council and its Committee, as only the implementation of the plan is by the Committee

(The main political parties have had their say on the District Development Councils Bill which was passed unanimously in the NSA on August 22. The TULF voted with the UNP, while the SLFP staged a walk-out.

We now offer two views which have not been presented to the public: one from the leftist Nava Samasamaja party, and the other from the oldest, nationally known Tamil political organisation, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam's Tamil Congress. The second part of the article by Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam Jr. will appear in our next issue)

(Sections 16 (1) (b) and 34 (d)). Section 34 (a) says that the Committee can consider the draft development proposals prepared by the 'appropriate Minister' (a person outside the Council) in respect of all or any of the subjects specified in the First Schedule to the Act. What is more, such proposals, together with other proposals that might be formulated by the Committee in consultation with the 'appropriate Minister' are embodied in what is called the annual development plan which is then sent to the Minister of Local Government, who, thereafter, sends it to the Council for its approval (Sections 34 (a) and 38 (1)).

Surely, these provisions put paid to the arguments that the Councils are able, as independent and autonomous bodies, to address their minds to the development of their districts. On the contrary, the Council and its Committee will be acting, in this respect, somewhat as a rubber stamp. It would seem that a Council can draft a development scheme in respect of any subject not included in the schedule. But this must be submitted for the approval of both the Minister

of Local Government and the appropriate Minister (Section 16 (1) (e)). Even if approved, which is purely discretionary, it will be subject to certain terms and conditions (Section 16 (2)). But if this scheme is one which does not meet with the approval of the Ministers or is contrary to the governmental policy, there is no chance of it being approved and the scheme would therefore have to fall by the wayside.

Nowhere in the Act does one find the definition of 'annual development plan'. It would seem that this 'plan' is an amalgam of bits and pieces of 'plans' submitted by various Ministers under whom the subjects in the First Schedule come. Even though there is an impressive list of subjects in the First Schedule, one does not know whether the annual development plan for a District will embrace many projects concerning the subjects in the First Schedule or just a few. In this respect there is every chance that some areas might be discriminated against in that political considerations may distort the choice of projects and resource allocations. Furthermore, nowhere in the Act is there provision for the Councils to indicate as of right their preference to the authorities regarding the schemes or works they wish to have to develop their areas. Ofcourse, there is section 42 which says that it is in the discretion of the Council to approve with amendments or modifications, all or any of the items in the annual development plan or to add any item to it. If there is any form of alteration to the plan sent to the Council by the Minister of Local Government after it has been approved by the Committee, it would seem that it will have to

be sent again to the authorities for consideration. There is no provision in the Law to say that the authorities will necessarily accept the alterations at that stage.

That the Ministers would forward to the Councils various national development programmes and projects and allocate funds and expect them to be executed is therefore amply shown by Sections 16 and 34. Under this Act, planning and preparation of projects, and the determination of local and district priorities will lie with the 'appropriate Minister'. It is they who will determine employment oriented projects. The Council will be impotent in making a survey of the resources and development potential of the areas and prepare a plan of development for the District. The Councils are not the centre piece for planning and project formulation. This Act does not give the Councils any form of planning exercise. They cannot initiate capital works of a local nature. This Act will not enable the people to participate in the discussion of policy. The Councils will not be able to steer their own destiny or to exercise their own will. In short, it would seem that the Councils are devoid of any initiative or power.

If the Councils have no initiative in drawing up development schemes, how are these councils different from the District Coordinating Committees? These Committees, that have the Government Agent as its head, include all Members of Parliament in that District and all local heads of Government Departments. These Committees coordinate and review the implementation of Government programmes in the District. This being so, is this Law only a ruse to substitute 'elected members' for the local heads of departments? Perhaps, this is the democratization the advocates of this Act are seeking. Perhaps this is what they mean by 'peoples participation'. They want to ensure pressure not merely of members of Parliament but also of the 'elected members'. Or, is this Law being brought only

to give a constitutional and legal standing to the concept of District Political Authority or District Minister, as were said by the President to the delegation of bhikkhus and laymen who met him on the 20th of August 1980?

Does this Act make provision for the Government to give sufficient funds, expertise and equipment to these Councils? Any development will be subject to these being available. A large proportion of the monies going into the Development Fund will in turn depend on the largesse of Parliament (Section 18 (2) (e)), the Cabinet (Section 25), the grants by the 'appropriate Minister' in consultation with the Minister of Local Government (Section 18 (2) (f)). Even the loans which the Council wishes to raise to implement the annual development plan and for the other purposes must first win the approval of the Ministers of Local Government and Finance (Section 18 (2) (g), 26, 29, and 35 (h)). If there is no approval, some portion of the plan will have to be abandoned. Even the rates, taxes, duties, fees and other charges which a Council has power to levy and which augment the Fund, will in turn have to be approved by the Ministers of Local Government and Finance and confirmed by Parliament, (Section 24). Even so insignificant a matter as the choice of a Bank to lodge the money of the Fund will depend on the Ministers of Local Government and Finance: (Section 19). Investments of monies from the fund will have to be approved by the Ministers of Local Governments and Finance (Section 20). If the Minister of Local Government has to sanction in writing even expenditure below Rs. 2000/- for a public ceremony (Section 21 (1) (g)), one can imagine to what extent the Council is free to spend money on any venture which it decides on! There does not seem to be that degree of freedom in the exercise of discretion in regard to expenditure. There is no financial independence. Even the monies payable to officers who work for the Council will have to be determined by the

Minister of Local Government (Sections 21 (1) (i) and 35 (b)). Indeed, it is for this reason that the President says that Municipal Council has the power to spend the money they collect, but the Development Councils do not even have this power! What is more, at each meeting of the Council, its Chairman will have to submit a statement of receipts and expenditure for the previous month which has to be promptly despatched to the Auditor-General. Further, the Council has, diligently, to report to the Minister of Local Government at the end of each year about its administration and the state of its finances (Section 49). These provisions remind me of societies in schools, which, I dare say, work with greater freedom and are not treated so childlike! The Minister of Local Government has some hold on the Council, again, through the Auditor (Section 52 (1)). An amendment in Parliament to Section 18 (h) says that into Fund could go any donations or other assistance made generally or for any specified project with the approval of the Minister. This means that individuals or organisations are open to donate. This provision will surely open the flood gates to a lot of corruptions. Section 45 shows that the Councils will have to spend within the budget even in the case of necessity.

This means that if in a year a project is found to need more money than was allotted to it, then monies voted for other projects will have to be utilised for this project. Therefore, there will be no money for those other projects.

Do the Councils have an option to reject the annual development plan if it does not meet with their requirement? Section 40 seems to say that, everything said and done, come what may the Councils **must finally** approve the plan. Does this provision ensure, therefore the independence of the Council?

That the Development Councils are only a further extension of the Presidential Executive is borne out by part 12 of the



Act which has a specific Chapter on 'General Controls'. This emphasizes further that the Councils and the Committee are subject to the President and the Minister of Local Government and to governmental policies. If the Committee disagrees with the District Minister regarding the implementation of governmental policy, the Committee is promptly 'reported' by the District Minister to the President, who has the power to dissolve the Committee if he feels that their differences are irreconcilable (Section 59 (1) and (2)). The President can, without dissolving the entire committee, dismiss any member of the Committee for incompetence or mismanagement of the duties entrusted to him (Section 60 (1)). The President, in answering the delegation of bhikkhus and laymen, has said that the Councils have no power to do anything without his consent, which he will exercise through the District Minister and the Committee. He goes on to say that he can dismiss or change the entire Council, the District Minister or the

Committee if these institutions do not obey the government.

The Minister of Local Government, in turn, is empowered to dissolve the Council, and to remove the Chairman or any 'elected member' for certain specified reasons mentioned in Section 61 (1). This shows that under no circumstances will the Members of Parliament be removed by the Minister even if the Minister is satisfied that the Member of Parliament is guilty of those matters stated in Section 61 (1) (a) to (e).

Why this preferential treatment of the Members of Parliament? No doubt the Minister of Local Government must cause an inquiry to be held by a retired Judicial Officer before he dissolves the Council for the matters stated in Section 61 (1). But before the report is handed to him, the Minister has the power to suspend the Council, its Chairman, or Members (Section 61 (3)). This means that 'elected members' are at the mercy of the Minister of Local Government, as is further

borne out by Section 61 (4) which states that if the Chairman is removed from office, he also ceases to be a member of that Council. This shows that even if a Council has persons who are of a different political complexion to the Government in power, they are still completely at the mercy of the Minister of Local Government, who can hold the sword of Damocles over their heads. Section 61 (5) says that where a Council ceases to function, the District Minister shall discharge the functions of the Council and that the Minister only may at any time direct that an election be held to choose the elected members of the Council. The new Council, therefore, will include all the 'ex officio members' (The Members of Parliament), which goes to show that the main purpose of this legislation seems to be an endeavour to perpetuate the present parliamentary hegemony. Indeed, it seems as though this Act is a Charter for the Members of Parliament:

**Next: Controlled Councils.**

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# District Councils or Presidential Councils?

by Vikramabahu Karunaratne

The District Development Council Bill posed a complex problem for the Tamil speaking people. The Government propaganda machinery maintained vehemently that it is a step towards devolution of power, a real step towards bringing the administration to the people and satisfying the aspirations of the Tamil speaking people. On the other hand when Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist leaders met the President, he was anxious to stress that the power of the President is absolute and the independence and autonomy of D. D. Cs are only on paper. In addition he has agreed to remove any remaining loopholes that may give any additional powers to these regional councils.

Clearly, as far as the Tamil speaking people are concerned it is a "concession" that has come far too late with far too little. In 1958 the Tamil nationalist leaders came to an agreement with the avowed leader of Sinhala-Buddhist populism, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. Even at that time regional autonomy was an integral part of the agreement. At that stage the right of self determination was not raised by any of the Tamil bourgeois leaders. At least it was not the central theme of the campaign. Still, Regional administration with substantial powers, including administrative, police and judicial powers, was included in the agreement. Today, after a lapse of a quarter

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Dr. Karunaratne, a senior lecturer in Engineering Mathematics at the University of Peradeniya, is General Secretary of the Nava Samasamaja Party. He was interdicted for hoisting black flags on February 4 1980. He was taken into custody on August 8 during the Satyagraha organised by the JTUAC, and is in the Magazine Prison.

century and the further development of nationalist aspirations among the Tamil speaking people, the Tamil leaders have agreed to vote for a regional council bill which appears to be a 'presidential council bill' rather than a district development council bill.

What surprises some is the stand taken by the leadership of the TULF. It has no logic, except the logic of submission. Mr. Amirthalingam in his speech to the TULF General Council seems to have said "this is a general scheme of decentralization of the administration of the country. Whether we accept it or not, it will be implemented. If we accept it and help in its implementation we can work for the economic development of the Tamil speaking districts. If we decide to oppose it we would only further the economic neglect which our areas were subject to since independence."

(Daily News 18 August.)

## No Argument

Now, if the DDC Bill will be implemented whether the TULF accepts it or not, then the benefits of these are going to the Tamil speaking people anyway. (That is if there are any real benefits from these development councils. However that is no argument for endorsing these councils which fall far short of anything that the Tamil leaders have asked for. The TULF could easily have refrained from accepting and voting for the bill, yet participate in the elections to see what can be done through these councils. Take the case of a Trade Union whose members were demanding, a Rs. 300. increment. If the government increases wages by Rs. 50/- and if this is done in spite of the views of the TU., then the TU need not agree and endorse it. Still the workers will be paid 50/- more and they will not reject the money.

Obviously, the TULF had voted for the DDC Bill not because

there was any danger of it getting defeated in the house. No, it was not an act of defense against the racialists and Sinhala chauvinists who may want to withhold even this kind of pseudo concession. The TULF has deliberately and consciously endorsed and sanctioned a step taken by the UNP. It has done that to strengthen the constitutional bonapartism of J. R. Jayawardena. Very clearly the TULF is moving away from the camp of the opposition to a position of tacit support to the present reactionary government. This can only mean a direct sellout of the democratic rights of the Tamil speaking people.

## Unashamedly

However the question of DDCs cannot be closed with this criticism of the TULF. The DDCs have brought foes of the working class into active participation in racialist politics. Various gangs of Sinhala chauvinists who were only yesterday a part of the lunatic fringe of politics have come into the front pages of the national press. They are going all out to wipe out the DDCs, or any kind of regional council for that matter, from the Tamil speaking areas. Apparently, the DDCs as proposed do not give enough democratic powers to the people in the rest of the country while it gives "dangerous hidden powers" to the Tamil speaking people.

In the meantime the position of the SLFP leadership is dubious to say the least. The reason that they have given for opposing the bill is that these councils do not have enough powers to implement a regional development program, while the elimination of VCs and TCs destroys the participation of rural tribunes in politics. In addition, they maintain that not enough time is given for discussion. However, under this veil of concern for democratic rights one cannot help observing the defence of Sinhala chauvinism. **The Dinakara**

(Continued on page 27)

# PR yes; but which method ?

by Dr. C. R. de Silva and S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe

The problem then is to adopt a method of PR which will remove at least some of the more serious shortcomings enumerated above while preserving a reasonable chance of producing a stable Government. For this purpose we propose three major sets of amendments to the electoral system in the 1978 Constitution, viz:

(1) the adoption of the Jefferson method of PR as an alternative to the modified Hamilton method in the distribution of seats among parties within electoral districts;

(2) alterations to the size of Parliament; and

(3) changes to the list system.

The Jefferson method was named after Thomas Jefferson who is credited with having first mooted this idea in 1792. It is currently in use in a number of countries — including Belgium, Finland, Israel, Liechtenstein and the Netherlands and it works as follows: First the total vote polled by each party in the electoral district is determined. The first seat is allocated to the party with the highest number of votes. Further seats are allocated to each party by dividing its total vote by the number of seats currently held by that party plus one. Thus, for example, if parties A, B & C were to poll 7000, 5000 and 3000 votes each in an electoral district Party A will get the first Seat. The second will be won by Party B because  $5000/1$  is greater than  $7000/2$  or  $3000/1$ . The third seat will be gained by Party A and so on until all seats are filled. The final party position will be 2 seats each for Parties A & B and one seat for C.

The Jefferson method, besides being free of the 'Alabama Paradox', also supplies two properties which are particularly valuable in the context of Sri Lanka's Politics.

In the first place the Jefferson method does not shut out the smaller parties from the Legislature to the same degree that the method adopted in the 1978 Constitution would do. Nevertheless it still confers some advantage on the larger political parties. Thus the Jefferson method has the merit of preserving greater proportionality while not jeopardizing the prospects of stable government. Second, the Jefferson method has the added advantage of providing incentives to coalesce (see Table V). Therefore even if it is felt necessary to retain a cut-off point this tendency to coalesce will permit the cut-off point to be fixed at a lower level than under the method accepted in the 1978 Constitution. This will help to ensure a fairer representation of smaller parties and minority groups.

It has been shown that the magnitude of the electoral district is even more important than the particular method of PR adopted in ensuring proportionality of representation. The smaller the number of representatives from the electoral district the lesser will be the chance of a small party securing a seat. This means that generally in small electoral districts votes polled by the smaller parties are more likely to go unrepresented. The provision in the 1978 Constitution which places a lower limit of twenty electoral districts for a House of 196 is a strong contributory factor to the creation of small electoral districts. It is likely that ten of the twenty-two electoral districts in Sri Lanka will have 6 seats or less each. Even in a 6 member district a party has to obtain at least 16.7 per cent of the votes to be assured of a seat and this percentage is still higher for those districts with fewer members. It seems doubly unfortunate that some of these districts are those in which ethnic minorities are found in

sizeable number (e.g. Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya.)

The solution we suggest is to increase the representation per electoral district. Two methods could be suggested. One is to re-constitute electoral districts. The other is to increase the number of seats in Parliament. Given the present distribution of population it is difficult to reconstitute electoral districts so as to give a minimum of at least 6 to 8 members each without making these electoral districts extremely unwieldy. Thus it seems the only practicable way to avoid having electoral districts with a small number of representatives is to raise the total number of members in Parliament. It is proposed that the present size of Parliament be raised by 50 per cent. This should ensure that the smallest electoral district will have about 5 representatives and will be better placed to enjoy the benefits of PR. However, if this proposal is accepted three of the largest districts, namely Colombo, Gampaha and Kurunegala will have to be each divided into two electoral districts each to avoid technical difficulties in the conduct of elections.

In order to overcome the disadvantages of the present party list system, one possibility is to adopt the single transferable vote (STV). Under this the voter is expected to indicate his preference for candidates by marking '1' for his first preference and so on. A quota is computed by dividing the total number of valid votes polled either by the number of seats (the Hare Quota) or by the number of seats plus one and adding one to the resulting quotient (the Droop Quota). Today, in countries such as the Republic of Ireland where the STV is in use, the Droop Quota is preferred because it assures greater proportionality of representation



than the Hare Quota. Those candidates who have polled a sufficient number of first votes to satisfy the quota are declared elected. (A little reflection should make it clear that the number satisfying the quota on first preference votes can never exceed the number of seats available.) If there are surplus votes of candidates who have already secured a seat, and if there are seats still to be filled, such votes are transferred to the remaining candidates according to the second preference indicated by the voters. If this still does not raise the vote of any candidate to satisfy the quota, the candidate at the bottom of the poll is eliminated and his votes are transferred to other unelected candidates on the basis of second preference. This process continues until all the remaining vacancies are filled.

Despite the attraction of STV as a method that gives the voter maximum choice in electing his representative serious objections can be raised against adopting STV in Sri Lanka on political grounds. First, and perhaps the most important from the national point of view, is that STV might encourage voting on narrow sectarian lines—ethnic, caste, and so forth—which should be discouraged for the sake of national unity. Second STV is likely to be less effective than the present list system in securing representation for the ethnic minorities. For example,

consider an electoral district where such a minority accounts for, say 15 per cent of the voters. Even if the minority were to vote en bloc for their own candidates it will not be possible for such a candidate to get elected in an electoral district with six seats or less without some support from voters outside that group. The third objection is a partisan one which could be raised by the UNP and its supporters. Past experience in Sri Lanka suggests that except where ethnic consideration are crucial, votes tend to be cast generally along party and ideological lines. The voting for the SLFP—LSSP—CP coalition in the 1960 July General Election (in comparison with voting in the Election in March of that year) is an outstanding example. This means that under STV votes cast for the left parties would be transferred generally to the SLFP and vice versa. Thus, this would, in effect, be a permanent constitutionally—sanctioned anti—UNP which does not have such “natural” allies except perhaps an ethnic minority party such as the Ceylon Workers Congress.

Finally, STV might give rise to practical difficulties even in the relatively small electoral district. The STV also calls for voters to indicate their preferences or as in the preferential system adopted by the 1978 Constitution for Presidential Elections. However, the scale of the exercise implied

by the two are entirely different. In Presidential elections it is unlikely that we would have more than a handful of candidates. This will not be so in Parliamentary elections. As pointed out earlier, in order to preserve the advantages of PR it is necessary to have electoral districts electing at least five members if not more. If twenty-five candidates were to contest, a voter exercising his full electoral rights would be required to number his preferences from one to twenty-five. This is a task which may be beyond the ability of a substantial number of voters.

The holding of primary elections is one of the suggestions that is being actively considered in order to remove the power given to the party to determine the list of candidates. In a primary election the electorate could consist of either the total number of registered voters or only the paid-up members of the respective parties. In either case a primary election will have the advantage of enabling each party to settle its internal differences at the primary stage and to unite behind an accepted party list at the general election. Moreover, either alternative would also have the advantage of promoting decentralisation and democratisation of party structures which at present are centralised and very much subject to the dictates of the party leadership if the full electorate is involved

TABLE V

Incentives to Merger: A Comparison

Parties	Votes Polled		1978 Constitution		Jefferson Method	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
A ...	40,000 (40.0)	40,000 (40.0)	8 (44.4)	8 (44.4)	8 (44.4)	8 (44.4)
B ...	28,100 (28.1)	28,100 (28.1)	5 (27.8)	5 (27.8)	6 (33.3)	5 (27.8)
C ...	14,000 (14.0)	...	3 (16.7)	...	2 (11.1)	...
		27,000 (27.0)		5 (27.8)		5 (27.8)
D ...	13,000 (13.0)	...	2 (11.1)	...	2 (11.1)	...
E ...	4,900 (4.9)	4,900 (4.9)	0 (—)	0 (—)	0 (—)	0 (—)
	<u>100,000 (100.0)</u>	<u>100,000 (100.0)</u>	<u>18 (100.0)</u>	<u>18 (100.0)</u>	<u>18 (100.0)</u>	<u>18 (100.0)</u>

(1) Parties C & D contest separately.

(2) Parties C & D contest under common list.

each party will in addition be able to gauge the relative popularity of its individual candidates. However, there are several objections which could be raised against this type of primary. The first is the cost involved. Indeed, in Sri Lanka, it is unlikely that any party would be able to fund the organisation of such a primary without State support. Second, even if such a primary were to be adequately funded it would lengthen the election process and may cause the average elector to tire of and lose interest in elections. Most important is the third objection that is, if the entire electorate is involved in the election of party lists it is difficult to prevent supporters of one Party being manipulated to influence the selection of candidates of another party. The smaller political parties are bound to be particularly vulnerable to this kind of manipulation.

This last objection will be removed if voting for party lists at the primaries is restricted to the members of the respective parties. As the total party membership in Sri Lanka is relatively limited this is bound to be a cheaper method as well. However, this type of primary will be of limited use in gauging the acceptability of candidates. There is also no guarantee that such a limited primary would be more democratic than the compilation of a list by some alternative cheaper method.

In some quarters it has been suggested that one possible way to reduce the power of the party leadership to determine the list of candidates is to permit the voter to cast his vote not for a list but for an individual candidate of his choice. This proposal however, has some major drawbacks. First and foremost, it could lead to much infighting among candidates belonging to the same party or list because there could be situations where it is bound to be more rewarding for an individual candidate to devote more time and money to persuading the probable supporters of one's own party to vote for himself and less on persuading voters sympathetic to other parties to switch sides. Secondly, if the voter

is asked to vote for just one candidate, it could upset the internal balance of political parties. Political parties are bound to have internal divisions. For the sake of party unity the particular interests of such factions will normally be taken into account when preparing list of candidates. If votes are to be cast for individual candidates, it is possible that a charismatic candidate belonging to a particular faction could unwittingly deprive others belonging to the same faction from getting elected by attracting the bulk of the votes cast for that faction to himself. Clearly, the chances of a faction within a party maximising its representation will be improved if such popular candidates are excluded from nomination in favour of mediocre ones.

It is evident from the above discussion that there is no perfect solution to the problems created by the present list system. However, the remedies proposed so far as reported in the media are bound to create as many problems as they would solve. As a possible alternative we wish to suggest a system where the voter is permitted to vote either for the party list as it stands or for one candidate on the list, the system currently in use in Belgium. For example, suppose the poll for a particular party was as follows:

List .. ..	.. 5,800
Preferential vote for candidate A ..	.. 600
Preferential vote for candidate B ..	.. 400
Preferential vote for candidate C ..	.. 3,200
Total .. ..	.. 10,000

Assume that the electoral quotient is 4,000. The party will thus be allocated two seats. Candidate A who has first claim on the list vote of 5,800 will draw 3,400 from it and will get elected. The remaining, 2,400 votes will go to candidate B whose total vote will now be 2,800 which is less than the number C has polled. Thus C will win the second seat over B. Of course this method does not guarantee that party infighting—a major weakness of STV—will be totally eliminated. However, it is almost certain to be less than under

the STV. It will also reasonably protect the chances of minority candidates, especially if they secure nomination high enough on the lists. Indeed, unless voters opt to vote for individual candidates in sufficiently large number this system may not alter the order of the party list significantly. Thus it will allow the party leadership to retain some degree of control over the list of candidates while giving the voter a chance to register his preference for an individual candidate.

In conclusion three principal changes that we would like to see effected in the electoral system embodied in the 1978 Constitution are recapitulated as follows:—

- (1) The following amendments are proposed with respect to the computation of the quota to allocate seats:
  - (a) The introduction of the Jefferson method to compute the quota and allocate seats.
  - (b) The abolition of the practice of giving the party which tops the poll a seat before the quota is computed.
  - (c) The reduction of the 12.5 per cent cut-off point to, say, 8 per cent.

These changes, if accepted, will improve the electoral prospects of the smaller parties while preserving to some degree the advantages conferred on the major parties by the present system.

- (2) The size of the House should be increased by, say, 50 per cent so that the number of members elected by any given electoral district is raised to a minimum of five in order to ensure greater proportionality. (This will also require the number of electoral districts to be raised beyond the maximum of 24 permitted by the present Constitution so that the larger electoral districts could be reduced to a more manageable size.)
- (3) Voting for the list alone should be replaced by voting for either the party list or for an individual candidate on the list.

**(Concluded)**

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# Coalition politics

by Dr. W. A. Wiswa Warnapala

**A**t this stage we need to divert our attention to the office of the Leader of the Opposition. The recognition of the office of the Leader of Opposition became an issue integrally associated with the status of the Opposition in the Parliamentary system of Sri Lanka. The lack of homogeneity within the ranks of the Opposition in the first Parliament (1947-52) interfered with the election of a Leader of the Opposition and Speaker Francis Molamure, who was keen to emulate the parliamentary conventions established at Westminster—reminded the Opposition of the need to elect a Leader of the Opposition. The failure on the part of the Government to recognise officially the Opposition, according to Francis Molemure, was due to 'the inability of the Opposition to elect a leader. The attitude of the Government was that there were three Leaders in the Opposition—the reference was to the existence of three Marxist groups with their respective leaders. The absence of a single party in the Opposition, therefore, demanded the groups within the Opposition to elect a person as the Leader of the Opposition who, according to G. G. Ponnambalam, was the Chief Whip of the Opposition. Dr. N. M. Perera's election as the Leader of the Opposition in June, 1950 was considered a wise step, and the Government immediately responded with the pledge that it was prepared to provide the Leader of the Opposition with a salary. Though the Leader of the Opposition was elected by the groups in the Opposition, the question arose whether the Leader of the Opposition could speak on behalf of the entire Opposition. He, though the Leader of the Opposition spoke on behalf of the party. There were also occasions when he spoke on behalf of the entire Opposition.

The Opposition, in this context, agreed to work together as a single group because of the fact that they were members of the Opposition. The parties in the Opposition adopted different attitudes on the same issue and voted in different ways on various subjects. The Opposition, therefore, took the form of 'a conglomerate whole which in fact is the Opposition merely because they are seated on the Opposition benches'. This character of the Opposition gave a different status to the Leader of the Opposition who, though chosen by the parties in the Opposition, was not expected to represent the views and policies of the parties in the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition was chosen for the primary purpose of facilitating the efficient conduct of the business of the House. Though he acted in the name of the Opposition, he did so in consultation with the members of the Opposition. The heterogeneous nature of the Opposition, for instance, prevented the exercise of discipline in the selection of speakers. Certain members of the Opposition who belonged to no political party, were not prepared to accept the decision of the Leader of the Opposition in regard to such matters as the selection of speakers. The situation changed in 1956 largely as a result of the attitude of the Government, and the extension of official recognition of the Leader of the Opposition brought about a change in the role of the Whip, which was originally accorded to the office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Though the composition of the Opposition determined the nature of the election of the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the party which commanded the highest number of seats in the Opposition, was chosen Leader of the Opposition. The LSSP,

which was able to win 14 seats at the election, manoeuvred in such a way as to see that its leader was elected the Leader of the Opposition. Though the other parties in the Opposition could have combined against the LSSP, no such attempt was made. In fact, Dr. Colvin R de Silva of the LSSP was unofficially recognised as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The most significant change was the attitude of the Opposition to the new Government and the different parties, which constituted the heterogeneous group in the Opposition, adopted different attitudes. This, apart from increasing the effectiveness of the Opposition, created a peculiar situation in which the LSSP, as the largest single party in the Opposition, 'developed sufficient self-confidence to regard itself as an alternative to the Government'. Study of this attitude by the LSSP needs to be prefaced by a discussion on the nature of the functioning of the main groups in the Opposition. These groups from the very inception of parliamentary government in the Island, have displayed independence in the exercise of their duties as members of the Opposition. Although this attitude was associated with controversial issues, it disturbed both consensus and the effectiveness of the Opposition. The LSSP and the Communist Party extended 'responsive' cooperation to the Government of 1956 while the UNP, FP and the TC adopted a hostile attitude. The passage of the Paddy Lands Bill saw the absence of a united Opposition and the members of the Opposition, as stated by P. Kandiah, a Communist Member of Parliament, felt that 'they have to vote differently from others in the House'. Explaining further, he said, 'the only thing that they have done as Opposition was to elect a Leader of the Opposition'. Such an explanation was necessary to justify the position of the Communist Party vis-à-vis the Government. The Communist Party was accused of sitting in the Opposition and occasionally voting with the

Government. There was yet another issue on which the Communist Party disagreed with the official position of the Leader of the Opposition. It refused to support the vote of no-confidence moved by the Leader of the Opposition on the issue of the dissolution of the Colombo Municipal Council. The reason was that the Communist Party functioned inside the Opposition in the form of an independent group. Pieter Keuneman, explaining its role within the Opposition, said 'We do not attend the meetings of the Opposition nor do we attend the meetings of the Government' and they, in his view, were a set of outsiders. In addition to this kind of attitude adopted by certain groups within the Opposition, there were individual members of Parliament who, while remaining within the Opposition, voted with the Government on major issues. This invited criticism from the Leader of the Opposition but could not be prevented because of the fluid nature of the Opposition. Above all, it was due to the absence of homogeneity.

The development of coalition politics, which lasted for nearly a decade, brought about a change in the parliamentary arena and the emergence of 'a measure of agreement over a fairly wide range of fundamentals' allowed the parliamentary system to develop its own version of the Westminster model. The parties which formed themselves into a coalition in 1964 retained their individual party identity. Programmatic unity was only a parliamentary strategy. The Opposition saw the 1964 Coalition as a move in the direction of a dictatorship and this attitude guided the parliamentary strategies of the Opposition led primarily by the UNP. The political parties which assisted the UNP to cause the fall of the Coalition Government became partners in the 1965 Coalition. The Government of 1965, which was a 'heterogeneous collection' was confronted with an Opposition, which was united in terms of its basic perspectives. The Opposition view of the UNP Government of 1965 was

that it represented a threat to the progress that the people had made since the victory of the MEP in 1956.

The Common Programme of 1968 formed the basis of the solidarity of the United Front and its victory at the General Election of 1970 represented the election of an alternative government. The new Opposition, which consisted of the UNP (17) FP (12) and TC (3), confronted the UF Coalition, which commanded a two-third majority in a House of 157 members. Though the three parties in the Opposition consisted of only 33 members, they were able to agree on fundamentals. This perhaps helped the Opposition to function as a united body. J. R. Jayewardene, then Leader of the Opposition, expressed a desire to extend cooperation to the Government. This view, though guided by economic considerations and a political strategy, immediately provoked a crisis within the ranks of the UNP. J. R. Jayewardene, in his **'Parliamentary Democracy — the role of the Opposition in a Developing Country**, advocated cooperation between the Government and the Opposition and his view, though guided by the need to maintain economic stability, was that 'the opposition parties were only pressure groups or lobbies but not forces which could take over the Government'. The defects of a multi-party-system-based Opposition influenced him to arrive at this conclusion. The UNP, displaying its ability to form an alternative government, used all the available opportunities in Parliament to emerge as a powerful Opposition. Controversial issues and similar legislation were utilised for the purpose. The break-up of the Coalition in 1975 and the subsequent collapse of the United Front in February 1977 created a situation where no parliamentary conventions relating to the Opposition were respected. The parliamentary majority, with which the constitutional, economic and social changes in the period 1970-75 were implemented, came to be dubbed as 'the tyranny of the

two-third majority'. Extension of the life of Parliament — the total life of Parliament was for a period of seven years — was considered undemocratic, and the Opposition made it an important issue both within and outside Parliament. The attempt to postpone the General Election of 1977 and the move to prevent Members of Parliament who voluntarily resign their seats from recontesting the same seat represented an attempt to weaken the parliamentary Opposition. The real erosion of the powers and opportunities of the parliamentary Opposition took place during the last phase of the Government of the United Front. The Opposition, in the context of the situation consequent to the Railway Strike of December, 1976, sought a meeting with the Prime Minister. Failure to grant this request of the official Opposition to meet the Prime Minister to discuss a national issue came to be described as an attempt to disregard the role of the Opposition in Parliament.

Two issues exposed the attitude of the Government towards the Opposition. There were two motions of no-confidence pending against the Government. The first was in connection with the Government's conduct in the December-January Strike and the second was in respect of the killing of a University student of the Peradeniya Campus. A parliamentary strategy was devised to avoid a confrontation with the Opposition on these issues and Parliament was prorogued on 10th February, 1977. The prorogation was to remain in force till 19th May, 1977, two days before the expiry of the life of the National State Assembly. This formula was followed to prevent the Opposition from staging a 'parliamentary drama' on the two issues.

Yet another development which interfered with the relationship between the Government and the Opposition was the defection of a group of Members of Parliament and the breakaway of the Communist Party from the government. The next resignation to follow was that of the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs,

T. B. Subasinghe. These developments, though it strengthened the Opposition, accelerated the prorogation of Parliament and the Opposition saw the whole exercise as an attempt to undermine its role. The prorogation, in effect, meant that the Ministers and Members of Parliament, who broke away from the Government, were prevented from making their customary explanations inside the House. All these amply demonstrated the utter disrespect with which the Government treated the Parliamentary Opposition. The prorogation of Parliament and the subsequent dissolution on 19th May, 1977 created an anomalous situation in terms of parliamentary conventions because the country was to be ruled for nearly six months without the functioning of the elected Parliament. This, in the eyes of the Opposition, was undemocratic because it afforded opportunities for the Caretaker Government to rule the country without the supervision of an elected Parliament.

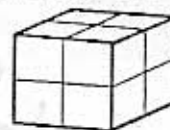
Though 'the Opposition was regularly ignored or steam-rolled by the Government's majority' — by respective Governments — the need to establish the convention of consulting the Opposition came to be recognised. Recognition of this convention came largely as a result of the repeated requests by members of the Opposition, including those of Dr. N. M. Perera as far back as 1950 for consultation to take place between the Government and the Opposition on measures of a fundamental nature. A matter affecting the Constitution provoked Dr. Perera to voice his views on the need for consultation and the Government responded stating that it was prepared to consult the Opposition if it was willing to be consulted. D. S. Senanayake, in fact, pledge to establish this convention in respect of consultation with the Opposition. The emergence of the SLFP as an important segment of the Opposition helped in the further recognition of this convention and the Leader of the Opposition was included in the official team which went to India for discussions

with that Government in January 1954. Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike once claimed that she had discussions with the Leader of the Opposition — Dudley Senanayake — on the Indo-Ceylon problem and this was possible because there was some measure of agreement between them on this important question. In the period 1952-60, the issue of adhering to this convention assumed importance, and the Opposition charged the Government with failure to consult the Opposition on matters relating to the Emergency of 1958. Dr. N. M. Perera, the then Leader of the Opposition, reiterating his view that the Leader of the Opposition needs to be kept fully informed of the situation, said that 'so far as this emergency is concerned the Opposition does not exist'. It was perhaps this attitude of the Government which compelled the Opposition to establish an unofficial committee in order to keep the members of the Opposition informed of the actions of the Government during the period of the emergency. The Government was later compelled to establish a special committee and it was considered an attempt to accommodate the request of the Opposition. The arrest of seven members of Parliament of the Federal Party in June 1958 provoked the Leader of the Opposition to write a letter to the Prime Minister suggesting that a special meeting of Parliament be summoned for the purpose of informing Parliament. The matters pertaining to the arrangement of parliamentary business invited the attention of the Opposition, which from the very inception of the Westminster model, played an effective role.

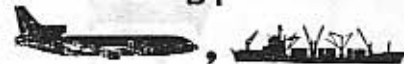
Since 1974 the need to establish such a convention in relation to the election of the Speaker invited the attention of the Opposition. Dr. N. M. Perera emphasised that the Leader of the House must make an effort to obtain a consensus by consulting the leading members of the Opposition. The Government explained its attitude by stating that the Opposition was not a homogeneous group.

(Next: Opposition's Decline)

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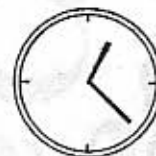
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## THE NSSP AND THE LSSP

# Chintaka replies to Shanta de Alwis

“Three hundred years of democracy and what have the Swiss produced? The cuckoo clock!” was Orson Welles’ sardonic comment in Grahame Greene’s “The Third Man.” Much the same can be asked about Trotskyism. It was Gramsci, (with whose writings Prof. de Alwis has occasionally displayed a passing acquaintance, though not much comprehension) who correctly characterized the “General theory of Permanent Revolution” as “nothing but a generic forecast presented as a dogma (and) which demolishes itself by not in fact coming true.” (*State and Civil Society*). A few decades after Gramsci, Louis Althusser told us in similar vein that Trotskyism is unworthy of our attention since it has no historic victories to its credit.

If this is true of Trotskyism, how much truer it is of a representative of that anachronistic ideology as Prof. de Alwis? I permitted myself a protracted polemic with yet another Trotskyist academic, Dr. Kumar David (Prof. de Alwis’ erstwhile comrade in the NSSP) not only because the topic under discussion was of considerable import (the National Question) but also because Dr. David showed at least at the outset, a certain wit and literary grace. Prof. de Alwis’ literary effort on the other hand is reduced to such a near-hysterical whine that I am reluctant to engage in polemics with him for fear of upsetting the man over much. Debray was right in his digression on Trotskyism (which he termed ‘the ideological construct of an uneasy conscience’) when he said that a Trotskyist is instantly recognizable by his shrill, grating tone, which in turn mirrors a certain attitude to the world, a certain structuring of experience. We must all give serious thought to the idea

that all victorious revolutions hitherto, have seen fit without exception, to incarcerate and/or liquidate Trotskyists precisely because of the infernal nuisance the makey of themselves by their incessant nagging, in the same tone and choice of vocabulary that seems to be the most prominent characteristic of Prof. de Alwis’ verbal interventions.

### The Vama tendency and the SLFP

But no matter. Let us examine, the content of Prof. de Alwis’ article. Let us begin, as Alice was advised, at the beginning. Consider de Alwis’ opening sentence: “The principled stand that the NSSP has taken on the formation of programmatic blocs with bourgeois parties (popular frontism) ever since its inception as a tiny tendency (Vama Sama Samajaya) within the LSSP, is one of its outstanding features”. Now this is very probably the line that the NSSP sells its Trot colleagues from London to Geneva, and those (in the long run) inconsequential gentleman probably buy the line wholesale, but the credibility gap becomes a chasm when the same spurious product is auctioned off in the domestic market. I don’t know what Prof. de Alwis was doing and where, at the time, but those of us who are familiar with ‘Vama’ literature and activity from the early ‘70’s onwards cannot help but chuckle at the good Professor’s ingenuous claim. The fact of the matter is that from the very inception the Vama group had no clear conceptual grasp of the nature of the SLFP and consequently did not articulate a clear position on the question of relations with that party. The famous Second Resolution put before the LSSP conference in July 1972 for instance, failed to

pose the central question concerning the 1964 decision to enter an alliance with the SLFP. The task of the day, namely, to expose, denounce and break with the SLFP was not even placed on the agenda. It must be remembered that in 1971 people like Oswin Fernando and Reggie Mendis who were later touted as Vama’s working class leaders, actually helped organise the ‘Hansa Regiment’ to guard police stations at a time when the armed Forces were butchering youth in their thousands.

Furthermore, ‘Vama’ did not take a clear stand on the Emergency and the Public Security Ordinance then in force, looking upon it as a counter to an alleged fascist threat from a resurgent UNP in 1973/74. Perhaps most glaring of all, there was no clear denunciation of the CJC Bill at a time when the Left-wing of the CPSL had broken with the Government. Incidentally, those CP’ers, even after their reunification, possessed a clearer understanding of the SLFP than did the ‘Vama’ group, which is why after several years of theoretical effort, the CPSL’s militants have been able to push their party to adopt a much more correct position on the SLFP, than the NSSP. (A comparison of the CPSL’s 11th Congress documents and the NSSP’s Second Congress documents readily bear this out, as would a reading of Jayatilaka Silva and P. Wimalaratne’s contributions in the CP press.)

Then again, nobody heard very much of or from, ‘Vama’ during the 108-day Bank strike which the LSSP leadership crushed, using the most disgusting and reactionary tactics.

Prof. de Alwis’ claim that ‘Vama’ began and developed fighting the

opportunistic policies of the leaders of the LSSP is revealed for the arrant nonsense it is when we engage in a little "remembrance of things past" and pause to consider 'Vama' politics circa 1974. At the time, the profound theoreticians of the Vama group, diagnosed the problem in much the same way as the old leadership: Sirima, poor dear, was in the clutches of the reactionaries! The 'Vama' newsheet made so bold as to identify these beastly cads by name—Felix, Maithri, R. S. Perera and Michael Siriwardena. The **Vama Sama Samaja** editorial of December 1974 contained the following formulation which may impress the reader with its theoretical rigour and profundity!

"Whatever were their shortcomings (Minister) Hector Kobekaduwa and the T. B. trio (T.B. Subasinghe, T.B. Tennekoon and T.B. Illangaratne) stood up to the rightist challenge of Felix-Mathripala in the Cabinet. They appeared as irreconcilable enemies of the UNP...Therefore the Hectors, the TB's and Jayaratne's must make a decision today. They must make a promise on the issue of a real socialist programme."

This is but one example of what Prof. de Alwis asserts as his (party's history of "total opposition to making programmatic concessions of any kind to any bourgeois party!" Vama's analysis (or what passes for one), of the SLFP was, and is not based on objective **structural** considerations but on personalities and on the fluctuating fortunes of this or that clique, coterie of cabal. Far from being "born in the struggle against class collaboration", and "having as its *raison d'être* a consistent struggle for the independent programme of the working class party," Vama's stated project was the formation of 'a left leadership within the United Front.' One had to wait until late 1975-'76 to hear from the Vama group, a clear denunciation of the 1964 betrayal. It was only in the **Vama Sama Samaja** issues of August/September 1975 (End of the stage of Coalition Politics)

and April 1976 ("United Front and our tactics") that a semblance of a stand was taken on the crucial question of the 1964 coalition.

A 1977 press release (April 6th) summed up the Vama tendency's history thus:

"From even before 1972, we sought to develop struggle through the '**United Front Alliance**' to build a real class united front.. to develop struggle outside parliament. We had differences with the leadership. **We sought to make the Front the arena of class struggle**, while criticising the leadership, **for the manner in which they functioned within the coalition**, that is, subordinating itself to the liberal bourgeoisie, getting imprisoned within the parliament, and supporting repression." (My emphasis).

#### LSSP versus NSSP

So, by their own admission, Vama's criticism of the LSSP leadership was concerned primarily with **the manner in which the latter functioned** within the coalition. Counterposed to this was the 'Vama' project of developing the struggle through the UF, of making the UF the arena of class struggle, of kicking out the Gang of Four reactionary Ministers (thereby presumably rescuing the fair Sirima and her still fairer female offspring from the wicked clutches of Satan) and the finally of building a left leadership within the coalition.

Prof. de Alwis' attempt at the falsification of contemporary history notwithstanding (these nasty Stalinist habits seem contagious), what this reveals is that the NSSP's differences with the old LSSP leadership have always been of a **tactical** rather than a **strategic** nature. Both organisations function within essentially the same problematique; they operate on the same conceptual terrain. The main difference is that the NSSP adopts a more **activist** (not revolutionary) posture and seeks to use extra-parliamentary agitation as a pressure tactic to maximize its advantage within an alliance with the SLFP. This explains why the 'Vama' group

did not take a clear stand on SLFP and break with the coalition after 1971 when there was no real need to 'expose' the SLFP further from within the UF since that party had signalled, in the bloodiest fashion, its transition 'from reformism to counterrevolution'. It was a generational conflict and a clash of egos (not intellects), that is to say, a problem of blocked upward mobility, that was the major contradiction within the LSSP. Credit must be given where credit is due, and we must appreciate the unerring accuracy in the choice of nomenclature in the (sometimes baffling) process of the metamorphosis of the 'Vama' tendency into the Nava Sama Samaja Party. The LSSP being a Social Democratic party, these revolutionary gentlemen are actually the 'Vama' (Left) version of it. That is to say, they are 'Left Social Democrats'. (Trotsky once said somewhere that Left Social Democrats can be the more dangerous of the two!) '**Nava Sama Samaja Party**' is similarly appropriate, since the NSSP is nothing but a 'nava' (new) version of the old LSSP. This is why the NSSP will enter the SLFP orbit as well, **though the approach route will differ, as well as the degree of its rapprochement**. This is also why a drawing together and eventual reunification of the LSSP and the NSSP cannot be ruled out altogether, once the dialectics of nature have effected certain personality changes in the old party.

The answer to Prof. de Alwis' plaintive query "why, oh why would an alliance with the SLFP come about?" is clear. Any phenomenon must be studied in its genesis, development and decay. Firstly the genesis and development of the NSSP lends itself to the thesis that such an alliance is well within the realm of possibility. Secondly the NSSP ideologues' literary efforts ranging from 'An Important Question within the Party' right upto the 2nd Congress documents reveal such an **ambiguous and thoroughly confused** characterization of the SLFP's class nature, which is little different from the LSSP's 1964 analysis, that the issue of an



alliance moves from the realm of possibility into that of probability. The NSSP conduct in the course of the present strike where it has seen fit to consider the CPSL to be more of an antagonist than the SLFP-LSSP, only serves to buttress this contention. Prof. de Alwis unblushingly states that the NSSP is "totally opposed to the forming of parliamentarist alliances with any bourgeois party." I undertake solemnly to remind him of this in 1983, in the pages of this same Journal.

Apart from his potted history of the NSSP, Prof. de Alwis' other argument to 'disprove' the possibility of an alliance with the SLFP, is that the party would disintegrate in such an event, since the party cut its teeth on the struggle against coalition politics. This latter, we have seen, upon closer examination, is false. In any case the possibility of a spilt is no cast-iron guarantee against Right opportunism, as the 1964 'turn' of LSSP has demonstrated. It may also be mentioned that in contest to the clarity of thought and expression manifested in the pamphleteering of the LSSP leaders (such as Colvin, Leslie, Hector and Karalasingham) in their heyday, the theoretical writings of the NSSP leaders seem positively Neanderthal. If the LSSP could deviate sharply to the right despite all the scintillating polemics against class collaborationism and following upon the heels of the formation of the ULF, then it is perfectly feasible for the NSSP, with its illdefined and confused theoretical positions, to do the same, albeit in a different manner. Being a quintessentially parliamentarist party, which, despite a degree of agitational extra-parliamentary activism, is by no stretch of the imagination, wedded to an **armed struggle strategy** (witness its attitude to the armed actions in the North), the NSSP, we may safely predict, is bound to enter at least a parliamentary alliance with the SLFP as elections under the PR system loom ahead.

#### SLFP and the LEFT

Prof. de Alwis sets forth the NSSP tactic of united actions with the SLFP, a tactic which he says,

accords with the classic Leninist position. Though he makes a fairly accurate summation of this Leninist tactic, Prof. de Alwis conveniently **abstracts** it from the context in which it was meant to be applied. This tactic is permissible in the following scenarios:

(i) a bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie against an openly counterrevolutionary threat (the bloc with Kerensky against Kornilov)

(ii) United actions with Social Democratic parties in the face of the reactionary offensive (United Working Class Front)

(iii) An alliance with bourgeois democracy (or more correctly revolutionary democracy) in the anti-colonial struggle.

There are no Leninist antecedents for the NSSP 'tactic' vis-a-vis the SLFP, since it is clear that the SLFP does not fit any of the categories mentioned above. This should be obvious to anyone except a political imbecile (Prof. de Alwis' choice of words)! The national bourgeoisie has undergone a process of compredorification and has evolved into a dependent big bourgeoisie. Both the UNP and the SLFP represent, in the main, the riven fractions of the same dependent bourgeois ruling class. This is why no 'united actions' embracing the SLFP leadership can be justified by the recourse to Lenin. This is also why the struggle today has to be waged against both UNP and the SLFP. In the period following the SLFP's electoral defeat in 1977, the Left Forces should have united and concentrated fire on the SLFP thereby inflicting the maximum possible damage on it. To use an old Maoist saying, the Left should have "beaten the dog while it was in the water." This was and is the only way to present the masses with a clear cut socialist alternative in the midst of the current crisis. Only Rohana Wijeweera (and sections of the CPSL) seem to have realized this, but Wijeweera's sectarianism towards other forces of the **Left** has, paradoxically, worked to the

SLFP's advantage. The NSSP slogan of the "united actions of all anti-government political parties" inclusive of the SLFP, does not expose the SLFP one whit. To the contrary, it helps the SLFP pose off as an anti-UNP oppositional force, when in class terms it is its substitute; its twin! The NSSP's tactic is one which seeks to fend off the wolf at the front door while permitting the tiger to re-enter through the rear window (another Maoist aphorism of which I am especially fond). Whatever its other (monumental) misperceptions concerning the General Strike, the JVP is correct when it states on the front page of the August 1980 issue of 'Niyamuwa', that in the course of present strike struggle a united front with the SLFP is in the process of being subtly formed. The NSSP is party to this treacherous process, says the JVP, and thinking is shared, though not voiced, by the CPSL's militants as well. Does Prof. de Alwis characterize these organisations as 'group-scules', 'sects' or 'one-man parties'? It would be interesting to know.

There has been a lot of talk in the recent past, about the errors allegedly made by the German C. P. during the 'Third Period', errors which are said to have led to the victory of Fascism. It is said that those who refuse to "call for the support of the bourgeois opposition parties" (Prof de Alwis' recommendation) are guilty of the same error as the German Communists. This is neither the time nor place to examine the validity of this criticism of the German Communists, but it is important and pertinent to note that the parallel simply does not hold. The German C. P.'s error, if at all, concerned its attitude to the Social Democrats. The parallel would be the JVPs refusal to enter into united actions **with other parties of the Left** (including the LSSP). Such united actions, leading to unity on the basis of a minimum programme and thence to a united Left front presenting the socialist alternative in the form of a governmental programme, is something

that must be fought tenaciously. On the other hand, the JVP (and CPSL radicals) attitude to the SLFP is quite correct and praiseworthy, bearing no relationship to the German CP's alleged error.

### TULF

There is only one bourgeois opposition party whose support it is tactically correct to call upon in the context of anti-UNP actions, and that is the TULF. This is because the TULF represents in the main, the non-ruling or non-monopoly fractions of the bourgeoisie, unlike the UNP and SLFP. The Leninist attitude to 'liberal bourgeois' or 'national bourgeois' formations applies, in the contemporary Sri Lanka context, only to the TULF. Prof. de Alwis' whole argument concerning united actions' holds true only in this case. **Lumping together as he does, the SLFP and the TULF as 'bourgeois opposition parties' Prof. de Alwis fails to draw the fundamental Leninist distinction between the bourgeoisie of an oppressor nation and the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation.** He thereby fails to understand the progressive aspect of the bourgeois nationalism of an oppressed nation. The TULF has now leaned towards the UNP, thereby displaying the classic dual nature and vacillatory character of the national bourgeois (in this case, middle bourgeoisie aspiring to be a national bourgeoisie). It is extremely difficult to draw them into anti-UNP actions at the present time. But it is unthinkable that the SLFP, representing fractions of the ruling dependent bourgeoisie, and being a chauvinist party to boot, should be drawn into the ranks of anti-UNP struggle. In this period, the only real anti-UNP option is the Left option and the only

anti-UNP alternative, is the socialist alternative. These can only emerge in the course of an anti-capitalist struggle.

### Analysis of the SLFP

There are flashes of unintentional humour in Prof. de Alwis' deadly polemic, and for these, we must be thankful. The most amusing is his assertion that Stalinists and neo-Stalinist groups 'simply' define the SLFP as 'the alternate party of the bourgeoisie' and stop at that instead of engaging in further analysis. The good Professor then proceeds obligingly to present us with a brief resume of his own analysis.

As I had occasion to say earlier, I don't know where Prof. de Alwis was at the time, but anyone who was around throughout the 1970's would be able to inform the Prof. that a fair degree of theorizing took place on the allied problems of the national bourgeoisie and the SLFP, all of which took place **outside** the ranks of the Trotskyist movement, in precisely those Stalinist and neo-Stalinist organizations that de Alwis contemptuously refers to. It was the JVP (then a semi Stalinist/semi Maoist organization **by its own reckoning**) which first identified correctly, around 1970, the present stage of the Sri Lankan revolution as anticapitalist, while recognised, equally, the historical validity and applicability of the concept of 'revolution by stages' (eg. in the case of China and Vietnam). This understanding concerning the changed role of the national bourgeoisie in the **neo colonial** context, was intuitive and nebulous. Instead of being deepened by analysis, empirical study and rigorous conceptualization, it was tragically dissipated in the jails, to be replaced under unacknowledged Mandeliste influence by a veiled version of Permanent Revolution. Meanwhile, breakaway groupings from the CPSL (the 'Mitipahara' group) and the CP-ML (the 'Nirdhanaya' group) had gathered up the conceptual thread. The decomposition of these groups resulted in a fusion

which took the form of the '**Lanka Social Studies Circle**' (neo-Stalinist group-uscule par excellence) took the process forward, critically assimilating the insights provided by the development of neo-Marxist analysis in the field of political economy (dependency theory) with the rigorous theoretical tradition of Lenin, Stalin, the Comintern and Cominform. The news sheets, theoretical bulletins and booklets published by these groups in the post 1971 period reveal a much more thorough analysis of the SLFP than does the '**Vama Samasamaja**' of that period, which was too busy calling for "Hector and the T. B. trio" not to mention the 'Ellawalas, Jinadasas and Rupasinghes' to "make a promise on the issue of a real socialist programme" and kick out the "four reactionary Ministers."

Even internationally, creative analysis on the questions of the national bourgeoisie and neocolonialism has emanated from people like Guevara and Le Duan, Debray and Cabral. (In the realm of political economy, enormous strides have been made by intellectuals such as Baran, Sweezy, Samir Amin, Dos Santos, Sunkel, Cardoso, Emmanuel and of course A. G. Frank.) If Prof. de Alwis is unaware that all these personalities share a common attitude of hostility and/or bemused contempt towards Trotskyism, then he should find a platform other than the **Lanka Guardian** to make a ludicrous exhibition of himself, flaunting his theoretical illiteracy.

Finally, **apropos** Prof. de Alwis criticism of the location of 'neo Stalinist journalists' on 'the fringe of the workers movement'. I personally think that the primary concern ought to be with **what** is said rather than from **where** it is said, be it from the 'fringe of the workers movement', or from Geneva or Trieste or for that matter, the Swimming Club! But if Prof. de Alwis wishes to press the point, I am forced to admit self critically, that I cannot approximate the **truly internationalist revolutionary praxis** of the good professor.

## District Councils . . .

(Continued from page 14)

unashamedly carried all the statements of the Sinhala Mahajana Peramuna. What they cannot do directly due to certain tactical reasons, they seem to be doing indirectly through the Sinhala Mahajana Peramuna.

### Contain Disaffection

The position of the TULF is becoming still more embarrassing with the President going out of his way to please various individuals who claim to represent the interests of Sinhala Buddhists. He seems to have agreed that these District Councils are really a camouflage for the dictatorship of the district minister appointed by him—self! However with all these assurances these chauvinistic extremists are not going to be satisfied and J. R. will naturally be compelled to remove even the semblance of devolution of power contained in the DDC Bill. Finally it will develop into the institute that it is really intended to be. It will act as an auxiliary apparatus for containing dissatisfaction among the Tamil speaking people. Amirthalangam and Sivasiththamparam will play the role of policeman for the President in aiding and abetting the repressive apparatus for hunting down the radical Tamil youth. **The DDCs will turn out to be a hangman's noose around the neck of Tamil militancy.**

Thus it is the duty of the left parties and working class organisations, to expose the real nature of the DDC fraud to the Tamil speaking people while defending the nominal devolution of power indicated in it. This is the first time the concept of regional councils is contained in a bill passed by Parliament. In 1958 the Banda-Chelva pact went some way towards satisfying the Tamil national democratic movement. At that stage the conflict between the national movements in Sinhala and Tamil areas, had not gone through the monstrous experiences of 58 and 77. The hegemony of the Sinhala bourgeois over the Tamil speaking people was not so sharply enforced.

In those circumstances, naturally, the Banda-Chelva pact was a considerable step towards solving the national problem in Sri Lanka.

### Contemptible

However, the Banda-Chelva agreement did not last long, proving once again that in the modern world the bourgeoisie is incapable of arriving at a meaningful solution to the national problem. To a lesser extent the same can be said about the District Councils proposed in the Dudley-Chelva pact. In both these cases the left failed to launch an active defence against the Sinhala chauvinists who were opposing devolution of power. In 1958 though they advocated parity their attitude towards the Banda-Chelva pact was not clear. Their attitude in 1966 was treacherous and contemptible.

Today the national problem is an acute one. The wound has become gangrenous. The DDCs cannot be compared with the regional councils proposed in 1958 or in 1966 for that matter. Gangrene cannot be cured by a piece of antiseptic plaster. However, there are gangs of unscrupulous chauvinists who would stop at nothing to prevent the implementation of even this minute remedial measure. We of the Left are duty bound unconditionally to defeat the thrust of this menace in every way possible. ●

## Letters . . .

(Continued from page 2)

(2) "Our people deserve more than just birth, work and death and we must create as well as meet the challenge in order to ensure that inasmuch as past threats are beginning to recede from our memory, our people will also not go backward in time and that all their new found gains would not be irretrievably lost".

To me this sounds alarmingly like gibberish. It brings to mind a Confucian maxim: "If language is incorrect then what is said is not meant. If what is said is

not meant, then what ought to be done remains undone".

Mr. Atulathmudali is a politician whose self-regard is widely shared. But in the lugubrious role of mortician of the UNP government he is rapidly devaluing himself. His gift for hyperbole seems to prevent him from perceiving the post-1977 reality which mocks his rhetoric: the ever-increasing cost of living; the uncontrollable inflation; the meretricious affluence of a small trading class; the precarious position of the national economy; the almost total abandonment of the principle of self reliance in the task of social reconstruction; the unprecedented labour and industrial unrest; the unplanned development; the gradual deterioration of the physical quality of life of the mass of ordinary people. And—perhaps most disgusting of all the shameless attempt to use the "dhamma" to promote "thanha".

Carlo Fonseka

Colombo.

## The July Strikers

I have read your article titled "Anatomy of a Strike" in the August 15 issue of Lanka Guardian'.

The strikes did not take place but spread spontaneously as your article suggests. They took place in response to a joint strike call on 14th July 1980, which was deliberately made by twelve organisations in the Joint Trade Union Action Committee (JTUAC), within two days of the partially effective Railway strike. Apart from a partially effective strike in the Government Clerical Service, and short-lived strikes of manual workers in several establishments in the private sector in Colombo, the strike call produced no response at all, or a completely ineffective response in the Public sector, even from the memberships of the organisations that called the strike in that sector.



# SCHOLAR HONoured

“A common interest in scholarship brought him in touch with E. W. Perera one of Sri Lanka's distinguished scholars—statesmen of this century. He helped the latter in his critical essay on ‘The Jury system in Ceylon’ published in 1933. The friendship lasted till Perera's death. When the contents of E. W. Perera's personal library were scattered through random sales after his death a substantial portion of it passed into Rutnam's hands.

“This however was far from being James Rutnam's most notable acquisition of papers. That honour would go to the packet of two hundred of Horace Walpole's letters which he bought during one of his numerous travels in Europe. The bulk of Walpole's papers were in the library of Yale University and Wilmarth S. Lewis a trustee of that University was engaged in a systematic search for material to complete their collection. The letters in the hands of James Rutnam were essential to fill a huge gap in the publication of the collected letters of Walpole which Yale University press was bringing out in some fifty sumptuously produced volumes. When Yale offered to buy the letters from him James Rutnam responded by gifting them to the library of that University because he felt it was the natural home for those letters. This was in the mid — 1950' s.

“By this time Rutnam had published his brief sketch of his life and times of Sri Ponnambalam Arunachalam. This short study was a sympathetic but critical assessment of this remarkable man's contribution to the life of the country, superior in insight and analysis to the weightier biographical studies on other members of this distinguished family, produced so far.

“Two recent scholarly essays by him rank among the best works in their fields. I refer to his papers on **The Polonnaruwa Colossus** (Jaffna 1979) and on ‘The Revd.

When the University of Jaffna decided to confer an honorary doctorate at its very first convocation on Mr. James T. Rutnam now 75, the news was warmly welcomed by all those who have followed his distinguished and colourful career. As a teacher, radical activist and politician, journalist, businessman and scholar, he won the affection and admiration of everybody who had the good fortune to work with him. We publish excerpts from a tribute written by Prof: Kingsley M. de. Silva, member of the University Grants Commission.

A. G. Fraser end the Riots of 1915.’ The first of these despite the critical skills demonstrated in it, the easy familiarity with sources and the facile demolition of airy theories, is clearly overshadowed by the second. There after several decades of interrupted research one gets as near as one possibly can be to a rehabilitation of Fraser from the charges levelled against him by E. W. Perera and D. S. Jayatilake that he had in his own way contributed to the hardening of official attitudes to the Sinhalese in the aftermath of the riots of 1915.

“James Rutnam is fond of describing himself as a successful failure. He was thinking of course, of his failure to win election to the national legislature. He could hardly have been thinking of his contribution to scholarship.”

## Letters . . .

(Continued from page 17)

The Government's declaration of a State of Emergency on 17th July, and its drastic anti-strike measures under the Emergency, undoubtedly inhibited a larger response to the strike call of 14th July. The manner in which the strikes were called doomed them to total disaster in the public sector, and a serious defeat in the private sector, in the circumstances.

**P. B. Tampoe**  
General Secretary, C. M. U.

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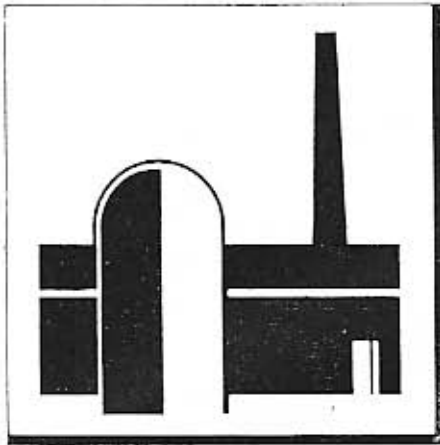
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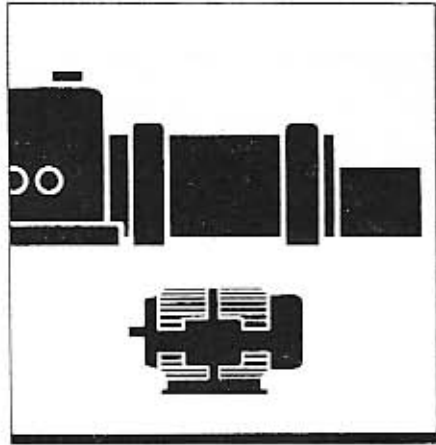
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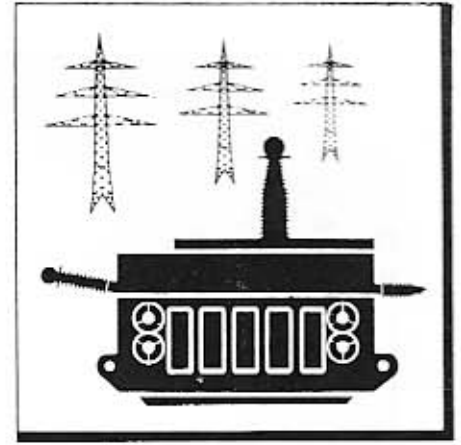
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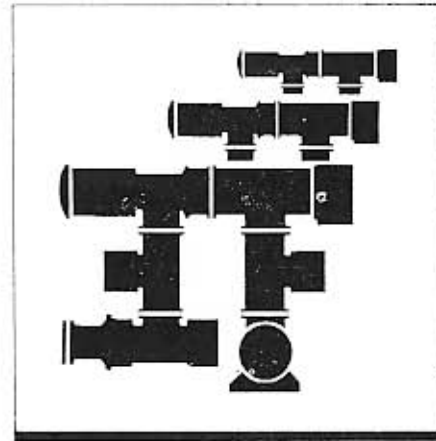
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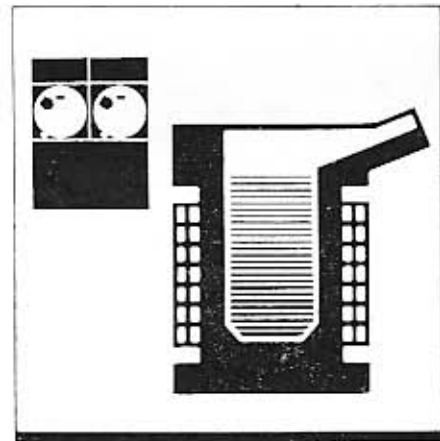
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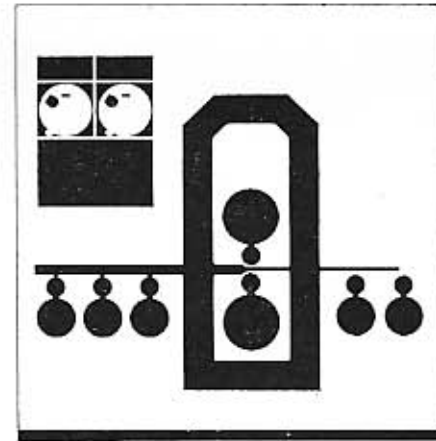
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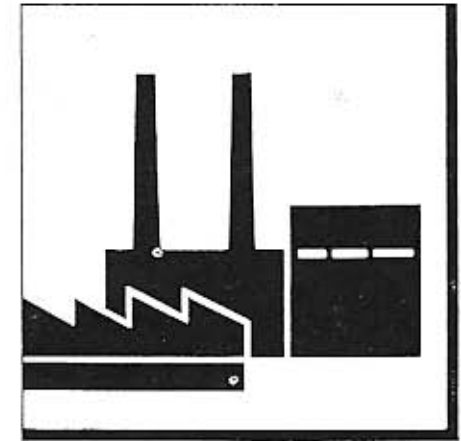
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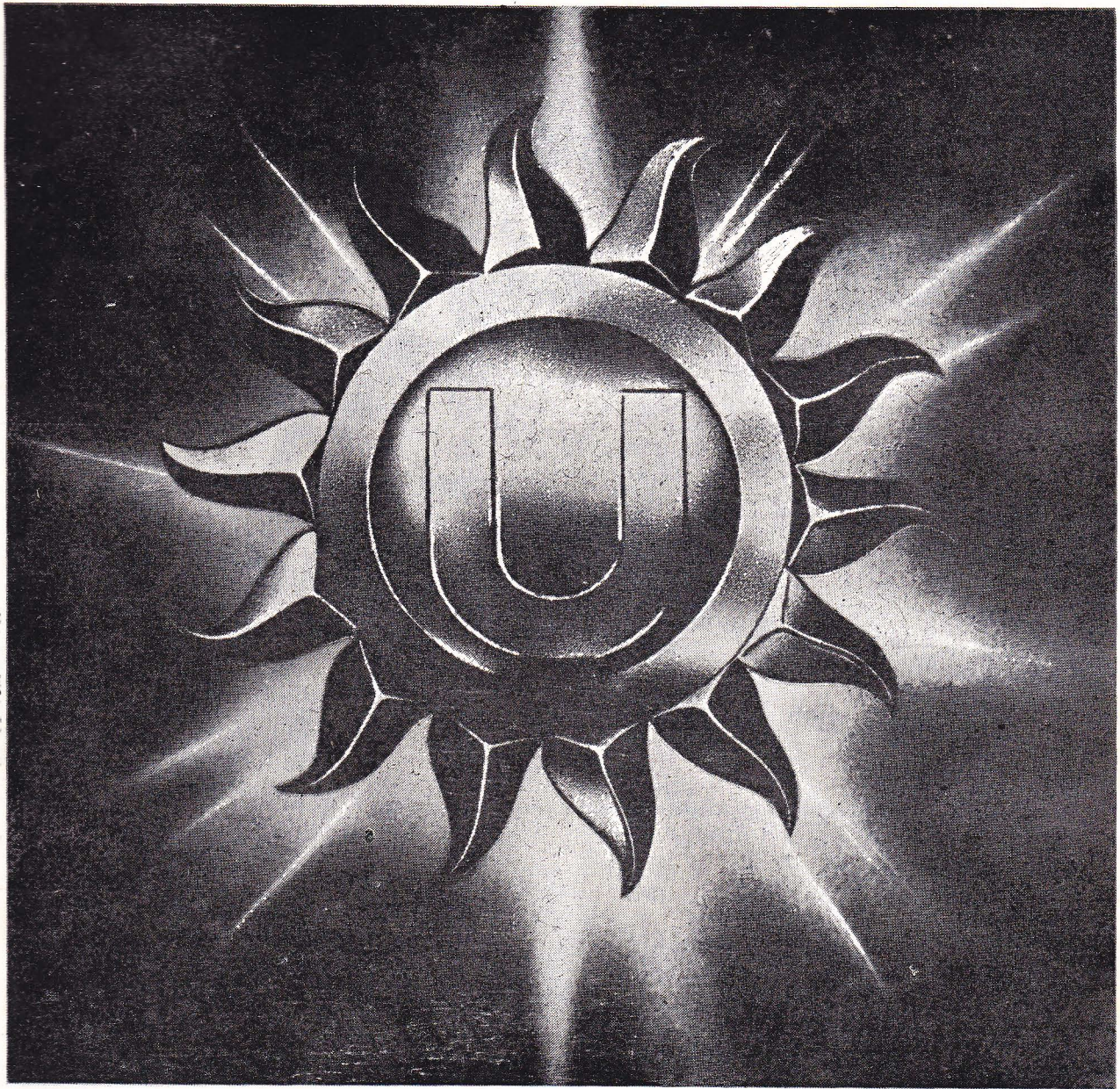
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