

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 14 No. 21 March 1, 1992 Price Rs. 7.50 Registered at GPO, Sri Lanka QD/43/NEWS/92

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 ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

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TRENDS

JVP TO INTERNATIONALISE?

A letter from Somawansa Amerasinghe, current leader of the JVP, and other documents found on a Sri-Lankan picked up by the French police in Paris have revealed that the JVP plans to internationalise their cause and also infiltrate political parties, the Daily News reported.

According to the documents the JVP had already infiltrated some parties and other organisations in Sri Lanka, the report said. Two Sri Lankans were picked up by the French police, one Gamini Vasantha Vanderkoon and his brother (unnamed) "under suspicious circumstances"; the two men "are apparently members of the JVP", the Daily News said.

TULF BACKS THONDA

The TULF has unanimously decided to back minister S. Thondaman's proposal for a federal form of government as a solution to the ethnic issue, the Sunday Times quoting a TULF polit bureau member, said. The TULF had been advocating a federal set up for a long time, the member P. Joseph said.

CHILD ABUSE: NEW LAWS

The Social Services ministry plans to introduce new laws to prevent children under 18 entering tourist hotels unaccompanied by parents or guardians. The Children's Ordinance is to be revised to cope with the widespread drug addiction and prostitution involving children.

Briefly . . .

Great bank crash!

After Prime Minister and Finance Minister D. B. Wijetunga said in parliament that the two state banks were "insolvent" the government rushed in with a statement, the next day, urging the people not to panic. The Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank would continue to be owned by the government and, "further, the full support of the government for the operations of the two banks, past and present, will be guaranteed by the government", a Finance Ministry statement said.

Earlier, President Premadasa had said publicly that "big people" had been given loans totalling six billion rupees and not recovered. The Prime Minister's statement in parliament following the president's disclosures led to a five point drop in the stock market index.

Assuring depositors that there was no need to panic the government announced a re-capitalising and re-structuring program for the two state banks.

"We can bring the banks around", Cabinet spokesman Ranil Wickremasinghe told a press briefing.

China Bay blast: incompetence?

Experts investigating the January 21 China Bay airforce base explosion believe that mishandling of explosives by untrained airmen caused the blow-up that killed 22 and injured a hundred. According to these experts ordinary airmen untrained in the handling of explosives had been filling aircraft bombs when the blast occurred. The damage has been estimated at Rs 300 million.

"Significant" return

Mannar's first batch of returnees from a refuge camp in South India arrived at the Talaimannar pier on February 23. Navy Commander Clancy Fernando on hand to welcome them said that this more than other batches that had arrived in Trincomalee earlier was more significant. Mannar, the Admiral said, was almost 100 per cent Tamil whereas Trinco was half and half and therefore more stable.

The 500 fisherfolk who returned to Mannar are the first of 2300 natives of Mannar who have agreed to return from Mandavan refugee camp. Of 118,000 refugees registered in India about 30,000 have said they wish to return.

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Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.
No. 246, Union Place,
Colombo - 2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 447584

Printed by Ananda Press
82/5, Sri Ratnajothi Saravanamuttu
Mawatha, Colombo 13.
Telephone: 435975

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UNP under stress; Opposition in disarray

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

After the impeachment plot failed, there was a period of confusion. And then slowly but surely the government found itself under attack from many quarters, and these oppositional forces, consciously or not, appeared to advance according to some coordinated plan. No more. The issues remain but the assorted anti-Premadasa groups have fallen by the way or have lost heart. Or worst of all, work at cross-purposes.

So, division rather than unity, confusion rather than coherence, characterise the national political process. The DUNF stood for Democracy, with a Big 'D', deliberately playing to the external "Good Governance Human Rights" community, with the Paris Aid Group meeting as the D-Day. The DUNF duo had the "One-Man Show" as the target, with Democracy as the issue. In selecting this single slogan, the DUNF was extremely internationalist in its orientation. The strong global current will sweep away "the Dictator" and carry DUNF to an early election and polls victory.

The SLFP, the official opposition, shedding its traditional Sinhala-Buddhist dress, had also seized the 'human rights' armour, partly because a radical pressure-group led chiefly by Anuradda Ratwatte and Chandrika Kumaranatunge, had become the ascendant coterie in an increasingly disunited and confused SLFP. As long as Mrs. Bandaranaike was not just the recognised but active leader of the party, the SLFP had a personality which could not be matched by the UNP dissidents (neither Gamini nor Lalith, to be precise) nor by any other personality on the political scene.

The DUNF was trapped in its own logic. The main cause of

the nation's ills was not even President Premadasa; it was the Presidency. But a change from the presidential to the parliamentary needed a constitutional amendment that had to be passed by a two-thirds majority. The SLFP was sympathetic to the advocates of constitutional change...but after a Presidential election. And such an election would be contested by Mrs. Bandaranaike. If the UNP dissidents put forward their own candidate, Mr. Premadasa would win. If the 'Dissidents' did not contest, Mr. Premadasa or Mrs. B. would win after that the DUNF would lose all leverage.

The next turn of events wasn't anticipated by any of the major contenders. Mr. Gamini Jayasuriya, exploiting to the maximum the Thondaman proposals, formed the SINHALA DEFENCE LEAGUE (SAS), to mobilise Sinhala opinion, on a non-party basis. This totally disoriented the two official opposition movements — the S.L.F.P. and the D.U.N.F. The S.A.S. set the pace — a development, which these two parties had to recognise and respect. WE ARE ALL SINHALAS NOW.

The trouble with the S. A. S. though was that it was not just issue-oriented (its source of strength) but event-targeted i.e. the Thondaman visit to Jaffna for talks with the LTTE supremo, Velupillai Prabhakaran. The moment Thondaman, under unexpectedly furious fire, abandoned his trip (not his formula) the S. A. S. lost a clear target. Since then Mr. Jayasuriya has been struggling hard to whip up Sinhala passions over "new" threats but the Sinhala public spares only a weary yawn for such nightmarish scenarios like the plantations of the central highlands becoming part of the North-East "EELAM", if the tea

estates are privatised or the management "commercialised". The Thondaman bogey has quietly dropped dead. Only if "Thonda" announces another trip to Jaffna, will the scary scenario enjoy a re-run.

Without 'Thonda', the Indian Tamil spectre, the S. A. S. is in aimless search of enemies.

But the HELA URUMAYA, the Sinhala *ultras* who formed an SLFP caucus or 'ginger group', have in the meantime run away with Gamini Jayasuriya's platform. The key men are Tilak Karunaratne, ambitious, sophisticated, rich and quite young, Dr. Neville Fernando, Mr. Jinadasa Nyathapala (ex-UNP) and S. L. Gunasekera (lawyer-ideologue). Though the UNP has played "the Sinhala-Buddhist card" for political-electoral purposes, the SLFP is identified by the average Sinhala voter as the more authentic advocate of Sinhala-Buddhist interests. For this reason, the HELA URUMAYA can finish what Gamini Jayasuriya started but it has to wait a while. Besides, its future will be decided also by the internal politics of the SLFP i.e. leadership. Does Mrs. B. retain the leadership? I should think so. But how does she contribute to the SLFP cause by mounting a spirited challenge to the Presidency when she is by no means fit enough to address island-wide rallies. Will she gradually transfer power to Anura, now the National Organiser, and acting Leader of the Opposition? What then of Chandrika who is regarded by the party leader as the most qualified contender for leadership?

The DUNF has a 80 year old President, the much respect-

(Continued on page 9)

Ready for settlement with UN auspices

(Interview with Franklin Raviraj)

At first the Tigers chief sounded annoyed and said: "The LTTE feels like shooting you for your newspaper's disruptive and misleading reporting of the ethnic question".

I said: "Go ahead and shoot me if I am responsible".

Then he smiled and said: "You are also responsible for what goes in your newspaper, as their representative. Tell your Editors and Management that we are angry with their attitude

"Not only Thondaman, anyone who wants peace can come from the South and are welcome. We are not terrorists or racist-war mongers. We don't consider the Sinhalese people as our enemies or even as our opponents. We recognise the separate existence of the Sinhala nation. We respect the separate culture of the Sinhalese. We don't desire to interfere in any way with the national life of the Sinhalese people or their freedom.

"Economic strangulation is the last resort of a weak enemy. By starving our people it is an attempt to weaken their resistance and determination to fight. Our people have an inexhaustible thirst for liberation and will not yield to the pangs of hunger.

We have opened the doors for peace. Some countries thought we are drunk by war. So we told them will the Sinhala government put forward a reasonable set of proposals to the Tamil people who have been cheated for generations with many pacts, accords and agreements.

Even after the sacrifice of over 40,000 lives and millions worth in property we find that some opportunistic Sinhala politicians and Buddhist clergy oppose a political solution with-

out putting forward proposals of their own.

"They don't have an alternative solution".

"Sri Lankan military analysts think in the same terms as India did, that we speak from a position weakness and that they can crush us through military force. We warn that unless a political settlement is reached under United Nations auspices any large scale invasion of the Jaffna peninsula will, only lead

us to close the doors to peace. This would motivate us towards permanent separation, as our main objective in the past was Tamil Eelam.

"If we are given no other option by the Sinhala military they will be forced to learn the facts of history which we earlier taught the fourth largest army in the world. Our determination is unshakable".

— Island

Gorbys lament

One Upmanship got him down.
Wasn't his idea really. Each puny clown
Since Kruscher tried his hand
Vying with the Titans. May be of all
Kruscher had it tough to make the breach
Others straggled through. A motley Company
Of traitors] to their past and each to each
A traitor] too. It was a tried technique
Breshner he painted old and out of date.
With stagnancy he coined his media fate.
Mixed Space Programs with Star Wars, Afganistan
He foxed with Nixon's fate in Vietnam
And finished him with the tears he shed
(On a] bridge [Alexander crossed) for their young dead
In a common European way he did him in
Until he too was next done in by Yeltsin.

He ponders now, as scholars will one day
When they are wiser (He is of course just sad,
He couldn't make it), What made him betray
Their sweet World and the hard hands that made it
Their Fathers hands and their Mothers tears and milk
The Steppe, the bounteous harvests and the woods
The fiery forges and the shining steel
That held a New World secure until they sold it
Back to the leprous order.

May be scholars blame
Will turn to those stern Fathers who made them tame
Raegressors to a class that always betrayed
Revolutions they talked of and others made.

U. Karunatilake

Tears rather than tea for Sri Lanka

As violence engulfs Sri Lanka, one Australian woman is fighting for her beliefs.

Stephen Levitt reports

Adele Balasingham, wearing a black shirt, cradles her Chinese-made automatic rifle. "This is my home now I must defend it," she says of the city of Jaffna in the north of war-torn Sri Lanka. Her Australian accent is clipped by years spent abroad.

Balasingham is an Australian-born legend in the making; a heroic and potentially tragic legend. Born Adele Wilby in Warragul, Victoria, she trained as a triple-certificate nurse in Melbourne and Perth before her sense of adventure took her out into the world in 1972. Now, she is on a journey of conscience which has taken her from humanitarian nurse to gun-toting guerilla.

She took her first step along the road to liberation fighter (or terrorist) in England in 1975. While she was studying at the South Bank Polytechnic College, she married her social science tutor, Anton Balasingham — a Tamil and spokesman for the Tamil Tiger (or LTTE—Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), the guerilla group locked in a vicious civil war of secession from the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan government.

The Tamils, descendants of southern Indians, are fighting for a separate state in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Their opponents, the Sinhalese, make up most of the island's 16 million population. Massacres on both sides and hard-fought battles have been the hallmark of Sri Lanka's conflicts in recent months, the government push against the Tigers has taken on a new intensity.

Locating the Balasinghams in the war zone was a challenge.

The Sri Lankan armed forces and 70,000 Indian soldiers had failed to find them, but it turned out to be relatively simple.

The Sri Lankan military supplied me with a three-day permit to visit Jaffna, the island's northern-most city and the headquarters of the Tamil Tigers. The most dangerous part of the trip was crossing the 3km-stretch of no-man's land in north-central Sri Lanka that separates the government checkpoint from the first Tigers' checkpoint. In the north, the shattered, deserted farm buildings and the gaping holes left in the road by mines are in eerie contrast to the tourist paradise of southern Sri Lanka.

I travelled by night to avoid the government helicopters which strafe rebels-held road during the day. My journey ended when a battle-scarred ferry, weighed down to the waterline with people, crossed a wide neck of tidal water and deposited me on the outskirts of the blacked-out city of Jaffna, where nothing moves without the Tigers' knowledge.

Anton was as I expected: a thoughtful-looking, middle-aged academic, bespectacled and with a goatee beard. Adele exuded a shy vitality, her short brown hair and gangling, boyish frame making her appear younger than her 41 years. They would not stand out in a crowd — except Adele carries her rifle as some women carry a handbag and both carry capsules of potassium cyanide (the trade-mark of the Tigers) as insurance against capture.

The Tiger — infamous for their fanaticism — have been implicated in the assassination

of the Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in May. They have also been implicated in the car-bomb death of Ranjan Wijeratne, the former Sri Lankan deputy minister of defence.

Anton denies Tiger involvement in the Gandhi assassination, "although what is one life when so many have been lost?" The deputy minister "was a bona fide military target". Their conviction in their cause is absolute.

Adele and Anton showed up at my hotel in a battered white van, accompanied by their dog and some young fighters. Except for the guns, we could have been a family off on a picnic. Instead, we headed for a guerilla training camp on the outskirts of town. Jaffna rolled by like a painting from the Apocalypse. Buildings tilted at crazy angles, roofs balanced precariously on steel girders bent like ribbons by the heat of the incendiary bombs. Houses, shops, churches and libraries lay shattered, their brickwork bullet riddled and blasted.

"After the Indians left last year, the war started again," Adele says. "The Tigers retook the city and much of the north and east of the island. The Sri Lankan Air Force retaliated by bombing Jaffna, targeting civilians to promote terror in the Tamil community for supporting the Tigers. Two-thirds of the city was reduced to rubble."

Among the broken bones of the city, life goes on. Schoolgirls in white tunics bicycle to class like flock of chattering doves. There is a noticeable absence of boys and young men. They have either fled to the refugee camps in the south, been killed or are fighting with the Tigers. Vehicles are also sparse. It is as though the city has been blown into another century: no electric power, petrol nearly impossible

BLOODSTAINED TEARDROP

Sri Lanka a teardrop-shaped island about the size of Tasmania, is separated from the southern tip of India by 40 km of water.

British colonisers introduced plantations, particularly tea and rubber, and imported Tamil coolies from southern India to work on them in preference to the native Sinhalese.

Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon) gained independence from Britain in 1941 and, in 1956, a left-wing nationalist party, the MEP came to power under the leadership of Solomon Bandaranaike.

The MEP made Sinhalese the official language and Buddhism the state religion. The Tamils, who were mostly Hindu, remained a disenfranchised minority and their resentment at the government grew.

The Tamil problem was contained by emergency laws until, in 1983, a group of

Tamils ambushed an army patrol near Jaffna. The attack sparked a wave of anti-Tamil violence throughout the island as the Sinhalese took revenge, killing and looting for days.

The Liberation Tigers of Eelam, financed and organised from India, established itself soon afterwards as the strongest rebel group took over the Jaffna peninsula in the ensuing civil war.

In an attempt to broker a peace agreement between the Sri Lankan government and Tigers, the Indian government sent the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka in 1987 and a ceasefire was negotiated.

This left the Sri Lankan government free to hunt down the JVP, an ultra-left Sinhalese nationalist movement which had sprung up in the south. Diplomats believe up to 50,000 JVP supporters were killed.

In the north, the relationship between the IPKF and the Tigers deteriorated. The Tigers declared war on the Indians after the suicide of 12 of their cadres being held by the IPKF. It took 15,000 Indian troops to take Jaffna from 2500 defending Tigers.

After the Indians withdrew in 1990, leaving 1200 dead, the civil war began again with the ambush of a Sri Lankan Army patrol in Jaffna. The Tigers retook the city, which was then almost all reduced to rubble by the Sri Lankan Air Force bombing raids.

A major setback for the Tigers came when they were implicated in the assassination of Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in May. That has lost them valuable Indian support and reports that the Tigers are making up the funding shortfall by trading in narcotics have begun to concern international agencies.

to find, limited food stocks at highly inflated prices. Posters and murals of slain fighters are everywhere.

When we arrive, the camp is preparing for an attack. A monument to dead fighters dominates its centre. The Tigers have suffered military setbacks lately and photographs of slain comrades paper the wooden hut which serves as the camp's headquarters.

Adele points to a large painting of a handsome young man dressed in the Tigers' striped camouflage. He nurses a child on his shoulders.

"He was a commander and he died in a recent battle," she says. "His wife is also a fighter — a commander. She has just given birth to his second

child. I'm afraid she's finding it hard to cope. When you're outnumbered; as we are, you have to have a victory-or-death mentality. These people are highly motivated. Yesterday, I was with a girl who lost her leg while attacking the government stronghold at Elephant Pass. She's learning how to work on a wooden leg so she can get back into the fight."

The Balasinghams are shy when it comes to talking about themselves. Anton looks on as Adele speaks of the early days of their relationship. We were two human beings who, on the surface, seemed to be different when we looked at the cultures we came from," she says. "But looking deeper into our souls, we found we had similar sensibilities, feelings, approaches

and outlook... We were open to the needs of the world, together."

Anton picks up the thread: "London in the post-Vietnam early '70s was a place for liberation groups. When we were a young couple, we spent a lot of time with exiled revolutionaries, attending meetings and protest marches. We supported the African National Congress and the Palestinians. Slowly, we found we had developed a mental attitude to use our knowledge for oppressed people. Because I'm a Tamil, we became involved with the problems in Sri Lanka. This was an adventure we saw we could share together.

Adele expresses her sympathy with the Tamil people. "When your work with people, you

build trust and with the trust comes responsibility. Because I feel so strongly for these people, I came to terms with armed struggle early in 1978 after the anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka. At that stage, we had begun to visit India regularly where we trained in Tiger-run military camps in Tamil Nadu.

"Then in the July of 1983, after a massacre of Tamils in Sri Lanka by rioting Sinhalese (sparked by an attack on a Sri Lankan Army patrol in Jaffna by the Tigers), the leader of the Tigers, Phrabkaran, asked us to become full-time cadres and we moved to Jaffna. Here, we're involved in the political training of the fighters, among others things.

"The more emotionally involved I become with the people, the more empathy I feel for their oppression. First it was the Sinhalese, then it was the Indians."

In an attempt to broker a peace agreement between the Tigers and the Sri Lankan government, the Indian government under Gandhi sent a peace-keeping force to Sri Lanka in 1987. For a while the ceasefire held. But relations between the Indian Army and the Tigers soon deteriorated. The Tigers declared war on the Indian troops which, rather bloodied, withdrew in 1990.

Adele recalls those dangerous times which cemented her resolve: "When the war broke out between the Tigers and the Indians, the Indians fired into a crowded marketplace. All the casualties came to the hospital where I was staying. Dozens of civilians came in with injuries from mortar fire as well as bullets from the Indian helicopters. There were rows of injured people.

"As I worked, I became aware of a noise like a tap dripping and I look down to see it was the sound of people bleeding to death. I remember all the young people torn apart, old people coming in with no legs,

bodies cut in half, people bleeding to death, brain injuries... it was a massacre. I was furious, I thought, how dare they come here and do this to innocent people?"

Anton explains the argument from the Tamil point of view: "When genocide is forced upon you, if you don't fight back you will be wiped out. Adele and I had a liberal Western education and, although we are spiritually opposed to violence, we can justify it morally to defend freedom and our existence."

Adele continues: "The Indian Army singled out the area where it knew the leaders were. It came to know we were in the area and saturated it with soldiers looking for us. Everyone was asked, 'Have you seen a white lady in the area?' But the people all supported us: no one gave us away. I used to travel around covered from head to foot.

"We would lie low during the day. Then, at night, we would move from house to house. Sometimes, we would not have a house to stay in. More often than not, we would sleep in the paddy fields. We often went without food for days.

"Several times we escaped death by sheer luck. One night our house was surrounded by the army and we climbed the fence and hid in a field. We lay there, holding our breath, as the torches of the searchers swept by us. I don't know how they missed us but they did.

"On another occasion we were in a house which had been surrounded. I was lying under a blanket because we had been sleeping in a field and had just come in. We could hear the soldiers outside the window, searching. I put the blanket over my head and told Anton: 'Tell me when they come.' I was expecting them to enter and shoot us dead.

"Fortunately, the village people — who are intelligent and strong supporters — yelled to the army captain that they had seen us running down the path. The soldiers left and we ran into a rice field to hide. It was raining and we had to lie in the water with rats and snakes. Later, the army returned and surrounded the area. We took a risk and left the field before dawn because we knew the helicopter would spot us in the light. We made it back to the house and were just drifting off to sleep when the people started calling, 'It's the army.'

"The village women covered me in clothing and then called us into an alley. They had staged themselves every 50 metres or so and called us on when the way was clear. In that way, we escaped the three circles of soldiers who had surrounded the area."

The Balasinghams escaped death by a whisker several times as they slipped through military nets. Then Adele asked for a gun and cyanide. As she preaches sacrifice to others, she cannot be sparing on herself: "We can't think about ourselves; we only think about what we can do for the people. When death comes, we're prepared for it. In a revolutionary situation, you have to think like that; otherwise you will always be worrying, panicking and mentally unstable. The stresses we've been through have brought us closer together. You can't erase those bonds."

The future for Adele and Anton can only be described as bleak. Even if Adele finds her way back to Australia, she runs the risk of facing charges under the Foreign Incursions (and Recruitment) Act 1978, which prohibits Australian citizens being involved in the hostile activities of other nations. She has not communicated with her family in nearly two years, a deliberate cutting off from the things she has loved most — in preparation, perhaps, for the ultimate sacrifice.

The Media and Development

Rajiva Wijesinha

Recently, uncharacteristically as it appeared, the Japanese Ambassador found himself at the centre of a controversy for suggesting that our Media is not as free as it could be. It was notable that, polite and accommodating as the Japanese are, he did not in effect withdraw from that position, despite the storm that the more aggressive elements in the media sought to rouse.

His position is particularly pertinent, given that occasionally the claim is heard that freedom of expression is a Western luxury that countries like ours, trying desperately to emerge from under-development, can afford. Human Rights, it is claimed, are subordinate to economic rights, and people must put up with all sorts of oppression in the interests of the master plan that the State is implementing.

Though never really tenable, such an argument may have seemed just about coherent in the days that State Socialism held sway as the dominant ideology of the Third World. Now, when the ill effects of paternalistic forms of government and centralized controls have become patent, the argument is an absurdity. In any case, the Asian experience itself has for decades made clear the opposite. While China for instance goes through regular periods of self-stultification, Japan developed apace precisely because, with a free economy, it twinned freedom of information too.

It was therefore in order to assist, not criticize, that the Japanese Ambassador suggested the need for change, if all the tools at are at our disposal are to be productively used for development. Japan has after all financed Rupavahini for ever a decade now, and during that period has had to see its cov-

erage of public events grow steadily more absurd. We do not need foreign diplomats to characterize it as a one-man show. Even more significantly, it is a one-man show that takes in no one — not its subject, who is aware that he is the victim rather than the hero of those who put such material together, not the administrators, who claim that their hands are tied, certainly not the viewers, whose response is apparent from the fact that the claims on behalf of the State have progressively got more shrill.

As with most horrors in this country, the principle of total subordination of the **national** media (and indeed the **nation**) to the powers of **state** (which became identified indiscriminately with an individual) began with President Jayawardene. It was he who decreed that whatever he did was news, regardless of what it was. Unfortunately — and this is the one obvious area in which things are very much worse than they were before — the same principle has been applied even more rigidly under President Premadasa. Many reasons have been adduced for this, ranging from the greater sense of insecurity Mr. Premadasa suffers from (which has been exacerbated by the recent infighting in his party) to the singular personality of Information, "Supremo" who holds a record perhaps for having made a joke of every post he has occupied while rising in the regard of his superiors.

Whatever be the particular reasons, the general principles behind state abuse of the media are clear enough. In a context in which appointments are made not on objectively assessable criteria, but on what is termed loyalty alone, those who are appointed to make media policy

(which has alone continued to be unashamedly subjects to that principle) have nothing to commend them but their capacity to publicly sing the praises of their leader. The wider interests of the nation — and indeed of that leader himself — are lost sight of in comparison with their desire to win and retain favour. The result is more and more sycophantic coverage, and greater and greater denigration of anything assumed to be hostile — for it is always easier to win attention by negative aggression than by productive analysis. No attempt is made in the process to enshrine objectivity and the public interest as primary motivation.

This is the sadder in that the present socio-political dispensation cries out for openness. As noted before, in a context in which everything was centrally controlled, it was understandable that criticism had to be muted, because to criticize would have been to challenge a monolithic ruling ethos. Now however that the management of many things, and in particular the economy, has been and is being developed, and that competition is an essential part of the prescription, criticism becomes essential. Without open discussion and analysis, the background against which decisions can be taken is incomplete, and hence contributes to less efficiency. When instead; the media is treated primarily as a vehicle for reinforcing the public image of state personnel, an opportunity is wasted. More alarmingly, it contributes to the assumption that no criticism can be made of anything that might remotely embarrass anyone connected with the establishment. Proceedings the President would probably condemn are woefully indulged, on the assumption that he might have sanctioned them.

There were those who got away with murder or with millions (or both) under the last regime, for this reason, and with the media still shackled the same latitude seems to be available now. Thus, while rumours proliferate, and confidence is correspondingly reduced, corruption and inefficiency too can flourish.

This perhaps is what the Japanese Ambassador was trying to tell us. The tremendous economic and social successes his country has experienced, it cannot be sufficiently stressed, have to do not only with its encouragement of free enterprise, but also with its liberal democratic political system, and the freedom its media enjoys. It presents in this respect a healthy contrast to China, where the drawbacks of an open economic system without greater freedoms are increasingly apparent: the possibilities for exploitation while individuals make a quick buck, the restrictions on initiative and unorthodox talents, the inefficiency of communications and information systems. The contrast with those countries in the Third World where control of the media has gone hand in hand with increasing social and economic disarray, without even the excuse of an idealistic if impractical ideology, is even more startling.

One of the saddest aspects indeed of our situation over the last decade has been the increasing inadequacy of the media as compared with other countries we once shone against. Time was when Sri Lankan newspapermen took over vital managerial positions elsewhere in Asia. Now, while individuals who still excel might find jobs, a cursory glance at newspapers elsewhere indicates the degeneration that has set in here. To take the English language press, with regard to which comparisons are easy to make, our papers have to a great extent lost sight of the principles that news should be about facts that have been investigated and assessed, and comment

should be balanced and constructive; whereas in Thailand for example, which was not even a country where English was a common second language, the writing in the expanding English language press is assured and elegant, the substance critical, creative and alive. That is a country under military control. In India, despite political uncertainties, the newspapers have been in the forefront of keeping free democratic traditions alive, and their role in keeping the powers of the state under review has proved vital. The electronic media of course is not in the same league; for a state-controlled entity however it is certainly much less ham-fisted than our own.

What can be done to improve matters? The manner in which the government first amended out of all recognition and then abandoned the Media Commission Bill the All Party Conference had suggested indicates some insincerity about wishing to divest itself of partisan controls. Yet, even if the abortive impeachment motion rattled the President, and drove him more thoroughly into the hands of yes-men, it is only a matter of time before he realizes such a bunker mentality can only be self-destructive. If his regime is not to be excoriated, as his predecessor's now is, once it has come to a conclusion, reform is essential; and, if only to keep the instruments through which he must work on their toes, reform of the media.

The proposed private channels are clearly a step in the right direction. So too one hopes are the plans to set up a UNP press, which might indicate an awareness that the state-controlled press must be concerned with the interests of the nation, not of the particular political party in government. Legislation to set up publicly accountable bodies is long overdue; in particular Rupavahini and the SLBC must be freed to compete productively, both in terms of producing high quality docu-

mentary material and analysis, as also in bringing alive the developmental process through participation rather than preaching. They, and what might be termed the press that belongs to the public, have a vital role to play if the opening up that is happening in other areas is to be adequately monitored. In such a context, to keep the media fettered rather than opening it up too, is both illogical and potentially disastrous.

UNP under. . .

(Continued from page 3)

ted lawyer, Mr. A. C. Gooneratne, and has now made Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake "senior Vice-Presidents" of the party. (It already has 7 Vice-Presidents). The move reveals, rather than conceals, the strains and stresses..... again, like so much of party politics in Sri Lanka, personal rather than ideological-political.

In such a national situation, the kind of above-party coordination of oppositional forces, we witnessed during the impeachment crisis has collapsed. The presidency is under attack, but it is issue-oriented (Banks, Tea Estates, Air Lanka, etc) rather than a well-planned concerted attack. It hurts the Presidency but the damage is 'acceptable', not serious or lasting. What these issue oriented "crises" expose is a structural weakness in the decision-making set up. There is not enough professional-technical back-up or not sufficiently close coordination.

Political and Extrajudicial Killings

Political killing by the Government's security forces, the LTTE and other militant groups, and vigilantes continued on a reduced but still large scale. According to government statistics, the press, and non-governmental observers, there were roughly 710 noncombatant deaths caused by both government and antigovernment forces in 1991, compared to 2,600 for 1990. Of the 710, more than 650 occurred in the war-torn northeast and bordering areas. More than 90 of the deaths in the northeast were attributable to deliberate attacks by government forces, most in retaliation for LTTE attacks, and 182 to deliberate attacks by the LTTE, usually on Sinhalese and Muslim villagers. Roughly 380 of the fatalities in the northeast were apparently accidental deaths due to military action. In the south (i.e., all of the country except for the northeast province and bordering areas also affected by the separatist war), an estimated 55 civilians were killed in political violence. Two LTTE car bombings in Colombo accounted for 37 of these civilian deaths (as well as 17 deaths of security force personnel). The two bombings were directed against military targets (the State Defence Minister and the military's headquarters) and were carried out in busy residential and commercial areas of the city. In the south there were also at least three instances of vigilante-style killings, characterized by mutilated or burned bodies left in public areas. Six burned and bullet-ridden bodies were found in May and another in September. These bodies were not identified, and responsibility was not established. In a third incident, three JVP suspects released from an army camp in October were taken from their homes a week later, and their burnt bodies were

found the next day. A police officer arrested in the case was subsequently reinstated in his job. The investigation is continuing, according to police officials.

In the past, when such killings were far more common, strong circumstantial evidence and the opinion of a wide range of observers, including some members of the security forces themselves, linked individual security force members to some vigilante groups. It is likely that vigilantes operated with the knowledge and acquiescence of government officials. In 1991 government sources claim these extrajudicial killings in the south were frequently due to the private settling of scores, especially against JVP members and supporters, rather than continued officially condoned vigilante group actions. Charges have been brought against security force members in at least two vigilante cases, and legal proceedings initiated in eight other human rights-related murder cases. These cases date from 1988 to 1991. Only one of the cases had been resolved by the end of 1991 (see Section I.c.), owing partly to killings and intimidation of witnesses and partly to a large backlog in the judicial system and the fact that such cases are not given special priority. Those responsible for killing and intimidating witnesses in such cases are almost never brought to justice.

There were no new developments during 1991 in the murder case of human rights activist Richard de Zoysa. In August 1990, the Attorney General cited insufficient evidence to indict the police officers implicated in the case; there is no evidence of vigorous investigation since then. In February an opposition parliamentary motion to create an

independent commission to investigate the de Zoysa case was defeated. In August a JVP suspect leading police to an arms cache in the south reportedly escaped from a police vehicle and his body was later found under a bridge. There were no arrests in the case. Four policemen who allegedly beat to death a suspect in custody in June were charged with murder and remained in custody at year's end.

In the east, there were at least two vigilante-style killings of civilians in April. In one incident, the headless body was left in a public area with a poster claiming that the "Black Cobras" had killed the person for helping the LTTE. The preponderance of evidence indicates that security force personnel, or people closely allied with the security forces and probably working with their knowledge, were responsible. Credible sources claim that Muslim Home Guards were responsible for some killings of civilians in 1991, such as the attack on a bus in the east in which six were killed in February. Other observers claim that a Muslim mob, seeking revenge for an LTTE attack on Muslims, was responsible. A limited number of deaths in the northeast in 1991 were attributable to similar violence between ethnic groups, often sparked by LTTE attacks on civilians. See Section I.g. for a discussion of deaths resulting from internal conflict.

Disappearance

Disappearances of both Tamils and Sinhalese, usually young men, continued in 1991 on a very large scale, though reduced from levels over the past 5 years, during which time it is estimated that as many as 10,000 persons disappeared.

(Continued on page 13)

The Kandyans and the Plantations

Ariya Abeysinghe

The Kandyans evoke today the liveliest interest as a area of study politically, economically and sociologically. The Kanda Uda-Rata or the five countries on the hill instils a sense of pride in Sinhalese who live in the hill country because that is their homeland. The Portuguese shortened the Sinhala name to Candea, using the name for both the Kingdom and its Capital, Senkadagala nuwara. The Dutch and the British followed the same practice. Among the Sinhalese, the Kingdom continued to be called Kanda Uda Pas Rata or Udarata, and in the eighteenth century the capital was referred to as Mahanuwara, the great city, a name which it still bears. The Sinhalese people originating and living in the hill country are Kandyan Sinhalese.¹

The last independent kingship of the Sinhalese to survive in the Island, Kandy finds its origins almost in the beginnings of Sinhalese civilization, in a tradition which links it to the hydraulic civilization, of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. From its rise to prominence in the sixteenth century to its final destruction in the nineteenth, the Kandyan Kingdom was forced to withstand a sustained period of aggression from European invaders, Portuguese, Dutch and the British. Its power of survival and, indeed, of growth and adaptation are a mark of the strength and dynamism of its indigenous people and institutions. Its subsequent fate, following the dethronement of its monarchy in 1815, is everywhere evident in contemporary Sri Lanka. Its art, architecture, dance and drama, folk tales and festivals and in many other fields, the traditions which derive from Kandyans are alive and vigorous. Robert Knox, Rev. James

Cordiner, John Davy, John Pybus, Hugh Boyd, Robert Andrews, General Hay MacDowell record life in the Kingdom and of its people.

After the annexation of the Kandyan provinces by the British in 1815, a Board of Commissioners were appointed at Kandy. The native organs of administration were preserved but they were to exercise authority under the superintendence of the Board. The British were the heirs to the Kandyan administrative and social structure and maintained it until 1834, merely superimposing a residency.

The British rule brought with it a remarkable transformation of Sri Lankan economy in the middle of the 19th century. The key feature was the introduction of coffee as a plantation crop in the mid-1830's. That move resulted in the destruction of the self sustained Kandyan economy and dislodging of the Kandyans in their own homeland. The introduction of tea in 1890's and rubber 1870's brought in indentured Indian labour as it was done in Fiji by the British when they established cotton and sugar plantations. The indigenous Kandyans were conered and immigrant indentured labour found work in road, railway, construction and in estates. Waste lands Ordinance Temple Lands Ordinance and the Grains were used to plunder their customary lands in the concept of Crown Lands became firmly established about 800,000 acres of Viharagama and Devalagama lands were confiscated by the British.² Since, "the national consciousness of the Kandyans was the most formidable problem that confronted the British in Ceylon in the three decades following the cession of the Kandyan Kingdom",³ the British rulers formulated the colonial policy

which finally received legal recognition through the Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance of 1840. The terms of sale of Crown Lands increased. From 1835 to 1838 the average annual sale of Crown Land was 6412 acres, in 1840 alone, 78,635 acres were sold. The Kandyans rebelled in 1842 and 1848 against this.⁴ J. R. Jayewardene speaking in the Parliament on 10.08.1943 summarised it as:

"The government of the day aimed with the Land Ordinance of 1840, adopted the role of the highway robber and took away, chiefly from the Kandyan peasants, the land they loved so much. . . today when we see the mountain ranges covered with plantations, we feel that they stand as an immovable monument, not only to the enterprise of the British planter, but also to the dumb sufferings of the people whose homesteads they once were. . ."

The harsh enforcement of the commutation systems (the fixed annual land tax) in the 1880's, led to social distress and even led to the deaths of poor Kandyan Sinhalese by starvation as reported by the Mersieur — It also led to the sale of some 9.1% of the lots and 5.3% of the lands listed for the Island as a whole.⁵

Available historical data suggests that between 1833 — 1930 some two and half million acres of Crown Lands were sold to private individuals. The impact of this large scale transfer of Crown Lands to private parties,⁶ was particularly evident in certain Districts such as Kegalle and Nuwara-Eliya. In the Kegalle District with 836.6 sq. km. only 2430 ha. were available for village expansion by 1943 where

as the land needs was 2833 ha. of Crown Lands. By 1946, the highest percentage of landless agricultural families were reported from Nuwara-Eliya (41.8%), Matale (38.3%) and Ratnapura (32.2%).⁸ The Kandyan Peasantry Commission (1951) reported that in Kotmale for example 2723 out of 7504 peasant families (or 36%) were completely landless.⁹ In the villages surrounded by plantations, joint ownership patterns such as tathumaru became entrenched due to pressure of population on available land and whilst conceding that plantation agriculture developed on the terra-firma of colonial land policy having its own inherent merits, yet its many consequences were socially, politically adverse to the Kandyan people.¹⁰ It was John Davy who commented¹¹ that —

“the history of British rule in Sri Lanka after the 1818 rebellion cannot be related without shame. None of the members of the leading families in the Kandyan country have survived. Small-pox and privations have destroyed those spared by the gun and the sword. The descendents of the lower social classes became apathetic and lethargic”.

This is why some British Governors like Sir Henry Ward even under guilt feeling wrote as far back as 1856.

“It is only by extending to native interests, the same attention and encouragement that we pay to those of our countrymen that we shall ever realise the benefits that ought to be derived from British rule.”¹²

The plights of the Kandyans were voiced in the National State Assembly by Messrs. R. Premadasa, M. P., Sunderalingam,¹³ M. P., A. C. M. Kaleel, M. P., C. A. L. Marikkar,¹⁴ M. P., and Dinesh Gunawardene.¹⁵ It was then Minister of Agriculture and Lands Hon. Hector Kobbekaduwa¹⁶ who voiced that;

“Let us examine, Mr. Speaker, the social impact of these

plantation raj in this country. To the peasant the presence of the white sahib in his neighbourhood was an earthquake in his life. It was an era of living horrors and buried hopes. The estates in the heart of the village became bits of many England. Secured with gates and fences, armed with guns and bullets and with bases and whips, the white sahib became a king and acted on the maxim that the king can do no wrong. He denied access to the villager, and anyone who trespassed was inflicted the most brutal punishment. Government servants were at his beck and call and they trembled in his presence.”

So after nearly 140 years land reform law vested in the Sri Lanka government the Kandyan homeland and they were given to the Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation and the J. E. D. B. to manage, in spite of a Plan for Management formulated by late Dr. Colvin R. de Silva,¹⁷ as the Minister of Plantation Industries using the then existing Agency House and Management to have a state owned but privately managed plantation sector. Due to high overheads and partly management inefficiencies of state plantations management organizations.

A number of local companies foreign corporate management agencies is reported to have submitted pre-qualification applications for management of 22 new plantation companies to be established under the new plantation re-structuring¹⁸ policy of the government. Pre-qualifications have been called for 449 estates currently managed by the JEDB and SLSPC. The total cultivation acreage of these estates is about 300,000 hectares. These estates are to be divided and vested with 22 government owned companies and the management of these companies are to be handed over to the private sector. Several Indian, British, Malaysian and Hongkong companies are bidding for these estates. 10% of the

ownership of these companies are to be given to workers free of charge, The actual customary owners of the land in their own homeland — the Kandyan peasantry has no stake in these companies. Others who gained citizenship the other day will benefit from their lands. Although it is claimed that an investment of Rs. 6460 Million (from 1878-1939) was made in plantations, not much benefits was reaped because of mismanagement and state intervention machinery. Marginal decrease in production in estates have occurred despite separate State Ministers for crops like coconut. JEDB and SLSPC have massive debts and owes state Banks over Rs. 5.5 Million. None of these investments have benefited Kandyans in whose homeland lies these plantations. The high incidence of landlessness in the Kandyan areas has not been resolved even under the Land Task Force.¹⁹ The Kandyans have not only lost their lands, their distinct social grouping is no longer continued in census enumerations and in the registration of births.²⁰ Now, even the chances they had to expand their villages and get land which belonged to their traditional homeland is prevented by the proposed plantation privatization schemes. No politician who claim to be a Kandyan Sinhalese representing Kandyan areas fighting for the Kandyan Sinhalese cause spoke about the poor up-country peasantry, whereas Tamils are fighting for their homeland against Sinhalese. All parties including Sinhalese are trying to find a solution to Tamil issue forgetting that the poor Sinhalese peasantry who account for a majority base for power in the country have been treated unjustifiably historically and economically.

The Kandyan villagers should also get a minimum of 30% of shares in the proposed companies free of charge like the way of 10% is to be given to workers in plantations. If not, not so long, a radical movement might erupt in the plan-

tation areas and create a new situation in the late eighties. All uneconomic estates should be alienated amongst workers and Sinhala villagers with investors owning bought leaf/later factories. New crops and outgrower models could be introduced using private firms to develop such lands. Over the next decade the plantations model will have to radically change to meet the aspirations of the people who live around them; if ignored, adverse repercussions would be seen. Therefore, it is time that the plight of Kandyans are seriously examined and issues solved without much delay.

(The views expressed are personal of the author of the paper)

Notes

- 1 P. B. Sannasgala — Sinhala Sahitya Wansaya p. 309-311.
- 2 Presidential Land Commission — S.P. 1990 p. 4.
- 3 K. M. de Silva — History of Ceylon 1981.
- 4 J. R. Jayewardene — (1943) Speech on the Appropriation Bill (10.4.43).
- 5 D. Wesumperuma — (1969) Land sales under Paddy tax in Ceylon Vidyodaya Journal Vol. II.
- 6 G. H. Peiris (1981) Agrarian Transformations in British Sri Lanka. S.L.J.A.S.
- 7 M. P. Moore (1985) State and Peasant Politics of Sri Lanka. Cambridge University Press.
- 8 J. R. Jayewardene (1943) op. cit.
- 9 B. H. Farmer (1957) Pioneer Peasant Colonization in Ceylon.
- 10 A. Abeysinghe — from Ancient Land Tenure to Modern Land Reform Vol. II 1979.
- 11 John Davy. (1821) — An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, London. Longman.
- 12 Sir Henry Ward (1858) The Second Minute on the Eastern Province.
- 13 Hansard — 17. 8. 72 Colum 2168.
- 14 Hansard — 4. 3. 54 Ibid.
- 15 Hansard Parliament Column 1049-1053. 4 December 1991.
- 16 National State Assembly — Land Reform official report Vol. 15 No. 10 Part I. 10. 10. 75 p. 1455.
- 17 A. Abeysinghe (1979) — Land Tenure to Land Reform. CSR. Colombo. Vol. II.
- 18 The Sunday Observer, Jan. 12, 1992, Page 24.
- 19 Proceeding of the Parliament debate, 4 December, 1991.
- 20 Report of the Land Commissioner — 1987 p. 159 (para 8.20).

Political. . .

(Continued from page 10)

Although exact numbers are not known, knowledgeable sources estimate that 114 persons disappeared in the south (18 in the last 5 months) and approximately 785 in the northeast (90 in the last 5 months), although one knowledgeable source believes there may have been as many as 1,000 disappearances in one of three eastern districts alone. Disappearances in the south were attributed to security forces, vigilantes who may be tied to security forces, and insurgent elements, but the degree of responsibility for each group was not clear. In the northeast, government forces were judged responsible for the majority of 785 disappearances in 1991. An additional 300 persons believed captured by the LTTE in 1991 also remained unaccounted for. There were reports of the LTTE abducting persons in the northeast and holding them for ransom. In a few cases, families have testified that JVP detainees known to have been released never returned home, presumably be-

cause they were killed by unknown persons or forces after their release.

In the east, there was a notable improvement in the ability of humanitarian organisations to visit detainees. By December, the army had begun to implement in some cases the Amnesty International recommendation for rapid notification of family members when arrest) are made, according to non-governmental organization (NGO-sources. In the north, guidelines established between NGO's and the military have almost eliminated disappearances of detainees from camps for displaced persons there.

As of October, Sri Lankan attorneys had brought 20 lawsuits (far fewer than in 1990), asking the Government to produce missing persons. Government authorities are required to respond within days to such suits in normal circumstances but the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) permits a 12-month

delay. The Government continues to claim that false names given to conceal identity and the possible departure from the country of many detainees complicate the process of accounting for disappeared persons.

In January the President appointed a commission to inquire into allegations of abductions and disappearances occurring after January 11, 1991, the identity of those responsible, and the whereabouts of the missing people. The commission was also empowered to report on legal measures to be taken against perpetrators and to assess current law relating to the problem and remedial measures necessary to deter future incidents. According to government sources, as of October the commission had 195 cases before it, and in the course of its work had located 26 persons whom family members had reported missing.

(Annual State Dept Report)

New World Order

Narasimha Rao*

The Summit Meeting of the Security Council which I attended two days ago enabled leaders from all parts of the world to take stock of the breath-taking changes that are taking place in the world around us. While we may have had differing perceptions about these changes and different ideas on what the new structure of international relations should be, we were united in our conviction that the challenges we face require much closer international cooperation than has been the case so far. We also agreed that the United Nations will have to play an enhanced role in the maintenance of international peace and security, which is another way of saying that there must be greater international cooperation.

The theme of this plenary meeting is "Global Cooperation and Mega Competition". I understand this to mean that in the world today there is greater economic competition but also the need for greater cooperation amongst nations.

In answer to the relevant issues raised by Prof. Klaus Schwab, I will try and structure my presentation to firstly look at the evolving international situation in both its positive and negative aspects and then try and project to you how India sees its own role in this changing scenario. I will also deal with the economic reform process that India is currently engaged in and also consider the outlook for the future.

(1) International Situation:

There are both negative and positive aspects to these changes: On the positive side:

(a) The acute threat of a nuclear holocaust as a result of mounting confrontation between two rival military alliances has receded.

(b) End of the Cold War has changed the situation wherein regional issues are no longer overlaid by compulsions of East-West rivalry.

(c) The massive upsurge of popular will across the globe has brought democracy and representative governments to the vast majority of peoples of the world. Democracy has thus attained compulsive and almost universal validity. Looking back over the decades, one can note that this has happened after a long time.

(d) A new and historic opportunity is now available to nations of the world to bring about a new structure of international relation, in a free and uninhibited atmosphere. They can now usher in a structure which is equitable, democratic and responsive to the needs of humanity as they are actually found on the ground. There is now an opportunity to put into place a genuine system of collective security based on a more active role of the United Nations.

On the negative side :

(a) Despite the end of the Cold War and of the confrontation between rival military alliances, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction still remain in substantial numbers. There is an attempt to perpetuate these arsenals in the hands of a few countries who justify this on the basis of the need for "policing". The concept of policing is not quite failsafe and may become counter-productive in the long run. Besides, one must guard against East-West confrontation being transformed into a new type of North-South confrontation.

(b) The break-up of the erstwhile Soviet Union has led to the resurgence of nationalistic and sub-nationalistic trends in several parts of the world. This has happened mostly in areas

where the safety valve of democracy was not so far available. This would perhaps indicate one aspect of the efficacy of Democracy in diffusing tensions arising out of plurality. What the world has scrupulously avoided is the temptation to encourage tendencies that can lead to chaos and confusion, political instability and economic crisis.

(c) There is a danger of a new ideological orthodoxy replacing the old, imposing on our minds and prescribing rigid pre-determined models for vastly different situations. We accept the need for a much wider role for the "market" principle; and there should be a congenial environment for entrepreneurship; and there should be fewer controls on economic activity. Nevertheless, for countries where poverty and destitution are pervasive, the state cannot absolve itself of the responsibility to involve itself in economic decision making. It has to accept the responsibility to ensure a minimal degree of social welfare to its people. There are also cultural differences among nations. In our society, for example, an individual is important, but at the same time there is a strong sense of community interest as well. In India, the cohesion of the family, the community and the village is an important value. This is often regarded as characteristic of a backward kind of country, but this is not really so. The conditions are so different. It is, therefore, necessary to allow nations and societies to determine their own specific socio-political and economic system even while asserting the universal values of democracy and humanism and acknowledging the greater efficiency of the market principle in most forms of economic activity.

(d) We are concerned that the new wave of democracy that

* (Prime Minister Rao's speech at the World Economic Forum, Davos)

has triumphed in many parts of the world and the lessening of international tensions, will not be sustained if sufficient attention is not paid to development. Authoritarianism feeds on economic discontent; the foot soldiers of fascism are drawn from the ranks of the desperate and dispossessed. The democratic spirit is an universal value and aspiration, but strong and enduring political institutions are required to nurture and sustain this spirit. Economic crisis and social tension cannot provide the environment needed for such institution building. Development, therefore, becomes a precondition for sustaining democracy. It is in our own interest as democracies to keep development at the very centre of international concern and cooperation. It is not safe to assume that development will automatically follow democracy. This combination has to be consciously worked for and brought about.

How does India view these changes in the world and what does it see as its own role in a changing international situation?

India is a self-confident democracy. The Indian mind is democratically oriented through and through. It has a combination of individualism and collective wisdom in action, which has been demonstrated for thousands of years. Whether it was a monarch or an Emperor at the top, the Indian society did not allow its democracy and harmony down the centuries. Social life was anonymous, at the same time autonomous. That has given us the assurance manifested in our repeated demonstration of an ability to absorb shocks and crisis and emerge with our political institutions and commitment to democracy ever stronger. Ours is an evolving and dynamic society. Conflict and tensions are inevitable in process of social and economic development. They are also the prime movers of change and adaptation. What is important is that our democratic institutions have been able

to contain such conflicts and provide the means for their resolution through the political process.

India is also an economic success story which is not perhaps generally realised. In the forty years of planned development, India has been able to develop its agriculture to the extent that it is not only self-sufficient in food for its fast growing population, but has a modest surplus in most years. When you consider that India has a population of 840 million people, that is no mean achievement, although highbrow economists may not acknowledge it and in any event, success does not attract as much attention as failure. Planned development has also brought into existence a highly diversified industrial sector. The country now has an impressive corps of highly skilled and experienced scientific and technical manpower, some of whom are doing a fine job for many of the companies represented here. Today the Indian economy has attained a degree of maturity and sophistication, which naturally makes it ready, willing and even eager to accept the challenge of the international market place.

The economic reform process in India must be seen against this background. The economic liberalization process is the logical continuation of the strategy of development adopted by India. It is a process necessary to take India to a new and higher level of growth. The decisions we took were well considered. The process will continue and is irreversible precisely because of the background I have explained. It is an evolution. The people of India have accepted these changes as necessary and the results of the Parliamentary by-elections in November last year, removed all doubts on that score.

An India which is a successful democracy as well as a truly dynamic and outward look-

ing economy can play a significant role in this new and changing world order. With its vast and growing market India can become a powerful engine for the growth of the Asian as well as the global economy. This is of great significance at a time when growth in several developed economies appears to be deceleration and access to their markets is becoming more difficult. An economically dynamic and politically stable India, by itself, is an important message to the contemporary world.

What do I foresee as the challenges ahead for India and there are many. I have deep faith in the wisdom of our people and their passionate attachment to the unity of India as well as to democracy. The Indian polity does face challenges from terrorism, religious fundamentalism and separatist tendencies. However, these challenges have not overwhelmed the country and our political institutions have demonstrated sufficient flexibility and capacity for innovation to meet these challenges.

The economic reform programme will continue and in fact should accelerate. In the short run, of course, there will be constraints on account of an inadequate infrastructure, the continuing high rate of growth of population and slow progress in eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease. The Government will undoubtedly shift its focus from direct economic activity to removing these major constraints on our growth. We are confident of success because India is politically stable, has rich resources and managerial and entrepreneurial skills comparable to the best in the world. I believe that your partnership with India in its march towards development would be mutually rewarding.

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Buddhaputra and Bhumiputra?

Sarath Amunugama

New commercial banks, hotels for tourists, newspaper advertisements and TV commercials depict a new economic orientation. The Consumerism that has been established goes beyond meeting day to day needs and tries to enslave the mind... Due to this strategy the cities will prosper while villages suffer. This new mentality being entrenched in our society is foreign to us. Short cuts, profit motive, entrepreneurship, selfishness, cunning and instant gratification are its characteristics.¹⁵

Many of the monks who were later to form the MSV attempted to protest against this growing consumerism. The government broke up many of these meetings.

With the spread ethnic violence monks were drawn more forcefully into the arena of political agitation. From the beginning they were reckoned by government as actors in the drama. Parathasarathy, foreign policy advisor to Indira Gandhi, was requested to discuss his proposals for ethnic peace with senior monks. 'They are my Parathasarathy's said Jayewardene, thereby legitimizing the monks' role as advisors on the ethnic issue. Monks were in the forefront of demonstrations against Indian intervention, often in collusion with government authorities.

However, once they perceived the Jayewardene government as 'unreliable', they began to follow a more independent course, particularly by establishing the MSV. While both the UNP and SLFP were prepared to use the monks, it was the JVP — the Sinhala based revolutionary party that raised their social role to new intensity. In the case of JVP there was no ambiguity

regarding the monks' role. Unlike senior monks recognized the need for both self-realization and the discharging of social responsibilities, JVP monks place a premium on their political role. The JVP sangha organization was the first grouping of monks to participate in a May day parade. About a thousand young monks clad in their distinctive saffron red robes walked under the banner of the Socialist Bhikku Front. Recognizing their special role monks were positioned in the parade immediately behind the JVP top leadership. Later monks participated *en mass* in all JVP sponsored demonstrations.

After the signing of the Accord and the launching of the JVP insurrection the slogan 'Motherland above all' became the battle cry. University students adopted 'Motherland first, degree second' as their battle cry and began to boycott classes. Secondary school children amended the slogan to 'Motherland first, school second'. While young monks presented their version: 'Motherland first Pirivena second'.

The 1980s then see the rapid politicization of Sinhala sangha. What started as a trickle in the 1940s had now become a flood. All Sinhala-based political parties have established support organizations among the sangha. They compete for monks' favours by offering material benefits — official residences, Mercedes Benz cars, trips abroad, state appointments and construction of temples. Pirivenas and universities became recruitment centres of monks for different political parties. The ethnic conflict provided an opportunity for the monks to openly engage in social and political activity since it was presented as a problem of national concern. Army doubts regarding their proper role had

to be suppressed in a time of crisis. This approach was taken to its logical extreme, as we shall see later in this essay, by the JVP which began to view the monk as another foot soldier in the revolutionary struggle.

Monks Against 'Catholic Action'

Another source of insecurity for modern monk is the growth of rival religions. The SLFP is usually identified as a defender of Buddhism against the intrusions of other religions. It checked 'Catholic action' in the 1950s, took over denominational schools evicted catholic nursing nuns, provided Buddhist preachers more time over national radio and secured employment in the higher echelons of the administration and armed services for more Buddhists. It also singled out Buddhism for special status in its 1972 constitution.

The UNP, on the other hand, drawing more support from minorities, including a Roman Catholic block vote, is more suspect. The dragging out of the ethnic war led to the suspicion that the government was unwilling to go all out militarily against the Tamil guerrillas. These fears were compounded when publicity was given in Sinhala media to the involvement of the Catholic Church which provided shelter to the guerrillas, operating in Catholic-dominated areas like Mannar. The trial of a Tamil priest Father Singaraiya and other priests accused of aiding the guerrillas, the statements of Rev. Deogupillai, Bishop of Jaffna and the number of Catholics among the guerrillas were closely monitored by Buddhist monks.¹⁶

International conspirators have urged the Catholic Church to enter remote villages of

15 *Vinivada* 18, November 1988, p. 25.

16 *Vinivada* 18, November 1988, p. 11

the very poor. A dangerous leopard has donned the white cassock to convert impoverished Buddhist villages to Catholicism. This is only first step on the road to Eelam. Those lay Buddhists who used to visit the temple to attend to needs of monks have now fallen before the church and make the sign of the cross.¹⁷

Unlike the 1950s when Buddhist leaders complained of the influence of 'Catholic action' in the higher strata of government, the present threat is perceived from young Catholic priests who are adherents of 'Liberation Theology'. They live with the poor and in the pursuit of their congregational tasks become a direct rival of the socially oriented monk. What amounts to a case study of such an encounter is found in a article by Tiranagama Ratnasara, a well known Buddhist monk. Ratnasara describes his experiences with a 'liberated Catholic priest in the *Angunukoawlewa* village in the deep south. The priest lives in a poor man's house and rides a bicycle. He teaches in the village school 'where when he arrives the children welcome him with joy' He brings clothes, milk foods, medicine, and chicken coops to the village. Once a week a meeting of Christian youth are held.¹⁸ When a Buddhist temple is built the 'father is the first to offer flowers. The article ends on a pessimistic note.

Today, with Angunukolawewa as its headquarters about twenty villages in the area are being 'developed' by Catholics. This is a 'religious hunt' for poor rural people. Can all this lead to peace in the country?

On the Use of Violence

Though Buddhist doctrine prescribes *ahimsa* and Buddhist social practice bears its influence we see numerous instances of dilemmas created by this

teaching. The tension between the needs of the Buddhist societies.¹⁹ The classic instance is the dilemma of Dutugemunu.²⁰

The decision of Tamil youth to take to violence in their struggle for a separate state, the induction of Indian troops to the island, and the decision of the JVP to use 'revolutionary violence' created dilemmas of varying degree — for Sinhala monks. Let us examine their responses in each of these instances. In the case of the Sri Lankan, in effect Sinhala, army killing Tamil guerrillas the majority of monks supported it without serious reservation. (There were exceptions — (a) those who lived on the border lands between Sinhala and Tamil areas organized as the *Saama Bkishu Padanama*, (b) those who supported the Marxist oriented parties and (c) those associated with the Sarvodaya movement. But they were small both in number and in influence.) Unlike the monk from Pulingurata who, according to *Mahawamsa* attempted to salve the conscience of Dutugemunu by refusing to grant 'human' status to the slain Damilas, Sinhala, monks attempted to resolve the dilemma by making a distinction between nonviolent Tamil people and violent Tamil rebels. The Tamil argument that the Sinhalese are 'racist' is turned against them by highlighting the racial basis of Eelam. As Peter Schalk, analysing the MSV manifests puts it, 'Militancy is evident not only in the language (murdering Eelamism) and in its aggressive suspicion (conspiracies), but above all in the text consciously turns the argument of being racist against the "conspirators" who are credited wanting to divide the country on a racial basis'.

This approach is given a Buddhist perspective in the *Vinivida* which contrasts racism engendered by colonialism with the experience of Asoka.

19 S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 47.

20 Gananath Obeyesekere, *Meditations on Conscience*, Colombo, Social Scientists Association, 1988.

History has cursed us with colonialism which changed our historic path. Today our people are paying for this diversion in blood and bullets. Those who fight for barren earth are nothing but savages. Arhat Mahinda's father, the King Asoka chose Dharma Vijaya because he realized the futility of fighting for land. It being so, we are compelled to characterize those who do not live together but quibble about historic homelands and thereby break up their motherland, as well as those who encourage them, as savages.²¹

The epithet 'savage' (*mlecca*) resonates with anti-Buddhist connotations in the Pali chronicles. For the monks there were immediate reasons for such a usage. They had special reason to fear Tamil attacks. Tamil guerrillas appear to have singled monks out for punishment. The temple at Nagadipa was attacked and Buddhist monks out for punishment. The temple at Nagadipa was attacked and Buddhist monks were evicted. Others fled from temples in the North and East. Even those in the border areas were in danger. Tamil guerrillas injured and killed over a hundred worshippers at the Sacred Bo tree in Anuradhapura. An attack on the Temple of the Tooth was anticipated. A busload of monks, returning from a pilgrimage, were brutally murdered at *Arantalawa*, leading to a joint appeal to government by the Mahahana-yakes seeking military protection for the sangha. Maduluwawe Sobhita writes of the insecurities of the sangha.

Today, the Buddhist monk is assailed from every side. In the North and East Tamil terrorists have flattened Buddhist temples. A few days ago terrorists attacked the Trikonamadu forest hermitage, killed the monk there and offered his flesh as alms to the Buddha. The massacre of Bhikkus at *Asantalawa* is unprecedented in history... The heart of Sinhala Buddhism is the Sacred

21 *Vinivida* 14, June 1988 p. 1

17 *Vinivida* 18, November 1988, p. 12.

18 *Vinivida* 18, November 1988, p. 26.

Bo tree. The massacre at this site, hallowed for thousands of years, is an attack on all Buddhists. The sacred site which is usually bathed in incense and water was bathed in blood.²²

The characterization of Tamil rebels as '*mleccas*' helped the monks to extend their patronage to the armed services. Military commanders, after assuming office, worshipped at the Temple of the Tooth and met the Mahanayakes of Asgiriya and Malvata to obtain their blessings. Bodhi Pujas were held in leading temples to seek the blessing of gods in ensuring the safety and success of military personnel. Monks officiated at military function and the central army cantonment at Panagoda saw the erection of an impressive '*chaitya*' (pagoda).

Though the induction of Indian troops (IPKF) helped Sinhalese troops first by enforcing a ceasefire, and later taking over the fight with the Tamil guerillas, Buddhist monks were reluctant to recognize this development as they strongly opposed the Indo-Lanka Accord. Also the terror tactics of the JVP prevented any favourable, or even objective, assessment of the Indian contribution. Thus the focus was placed on the misdemeanours of the Indians and their alleged continuing links with the guerillas. Maduluwewa Sobhita takes such an approach:

Ten months ago Indian troops were inducted here saying peace would come in seventy-two hours. We know that the Sinhalese of Trincomalee stayed on in their lands even amidst great difficulties and threats from terrorists. The IPKF came to disarm the Tamil terrorists. But in addition to gifting fifty lakhs of rupees (to the Tamil administration) the joined hands with the Tigers and have now began to exterminate the remaining Sinhalese and their monks in places like Trincomalee.²³

The violence which was unleashed in the South by the JVP security forces and vigilante groups on the other hand, created major problems for the Sangha. While the monks could find a broad consensus in their views regarding Tamil separatists and the IPKF, the extension of violence to the South was traumatic.

We can examine the dilemma in terms of (a) the monks and the JVP, (b) the monks and the UNP regime, (c) differences in perception of violence in the Sangha hierarchy and (d) the monks and the vigilantes or 'death squads'.

The Monks and the JVP

The JVP is a revolutionary party which draws its membership from rural Sinhala youth. It has launched armed attacks on the state twice (1971 and 1987-89) without success. Obeyesekere's observations regarding the social composition of the JVP in 1971 still holds good.

In the first place the movement is unequivocally a revolt of the youth of the country, and those who actively participated in it were predominantly males... the statistical information also reveals that the overwhelming majority of suspected insurgents were Sinhala Buddhists.

He concludes that one simply has to view the insurgency as a Sinhala Buddhist movement spearheaded by the youth of the country.

Of all the Sri Lankan political parties, it was the JVP that set out deliberately to mobilize the monks as a vital support group. This decision reflected the party's emphasis on youth, as opposed to the working class, as the motor of the Sri Lankan revolution. They looked upon universities as centres of recruitment. For a variety of reasons, young Buddhist monks had come to constitute a significant proportion of the university population. The egalitarian,

'Sinhala Buddhist' ideology of the JVP appealed to the young monks. Referring to the 1971 insurgency, A. C. Alles states that Buddhist temples were used for concealment of arms and ammunition, as hiding places for members of the movement, and as outposts of the JVP. Members were posted to abandoned Buddhist temples to do propaganda work among villagers. The decision to launch an attack on the government forces in 1971 was taken in a Bhikku hostel of a university.

Though the monks did play an important role in 1971, it was in the late 1980s that they became crucial to the JVP. The JVP was proscribed by the government following the anti-Tamil riots of 1983. While the top leadership went 'underground' they maintained their strength through 'front' organizations. Three key 'fronts' of the JVP were (a) university and senior college students, (b) Buddhist monks and (c) women. Each of these 'fronts' had its distinctive constitution, office bearers, budget and publications.

Organization-wise the JVP had three departments. (a) *Zonal organizations* — the country was divided into five zones, i.e. (1) Western and Sabaragamuwa; (2) Central; (3) Rajarata; (4) Uva and Eastern; (5) South. Each of these 'zones' were subdivided into districts and subdistricts. Central committee members were in charge of each district, while each zone had two high level party leaders as political and military secretaries respectively, (b) *National Committees* on education, finance, military organization and propaganda, (c) *front organizations*, i.e. the three mentioned earlier as well as 'fronts' for workers and youth.

If we take the monks organization for detailed scrutiny we find that each of the territorial divisions — zone, district and sub-district, had a branch of the JVP Bhikku organization. Thus it could be called the most comprehensive 'nonformal' Sangha grouping outside the traditional Sangha hierarchy, based on *Ni-*

22 *Vinivida* 13 May 1988, p. 15

23 *Vinivida* 13, May 1988 p. 15

kaya. The JVP organization was radical in that it cross cut *Nikaya* differences by establishing itself as a *Tri-Nikayika* (3 sect) organization throughout the country. Monks from all sects were free to join.

The importance attached by the JVP to its monks organization can be gauged by the fact that it was placed in charge of a top leader D. M. Ananda (alias Disanayake Mudiyansele Nandasena), generally reckoned to be the No.3 in the JVP hierarchy, after the leader Rohana Wijeweera and Genral secretary Upathissa Gamanayake. The following description of Ananda's career highlights the various strands of support which gave the JVP its strength.

A native of Wariyapola, 35 years of age. He graduated in Arts from the University of Kelaniya in 1980. He was a Buddhist monk when he entered the University, but gave up robes in his final year. The leader of the Socialist Students Union at Kelaniya University and the Secretary of the inter University Students Federation. [He] was the organizer of the countrywide protest against the proposed white paper on education in 1981. Till the proscription of the party he was the president of the Socialist Students Union of the JVP. His importance increased tremendously in the years following the proscription and while functionally the most important man in the organization, he was in the eyes of his party comrades, No.3 in the organization.²⁴

While the monks were deployed for JVP propaganda, they were particularly useful in agitation on special issues which tendered to give the party a good image among the youth. Monks were in the forefront of agitation against the White Paper on Education, the privatization of the Medical College, Pirivena reform and the Indo-Lanka accord. They also participated in student agi-

tation for higher payments to University scholarship holders, higher salaries for university teachers and other employees and for the holding of early general elections. Monks were also used as couriers and many temples and university Bhikku hostels were used as safe-houses.²⁵

However, JVP monks were confronted with a major dilemma when their party decided on the path of 'revolutionary violence'. There is some ambiguity created deliberately by the JVP regarding the use of violence, particularly the assassination of political opponents and government officials. Wijeweera, the JVP leader, took up the position that the JVP did not engage in violence. That was the the *Deshapremi Janatha Viyaparaya* (DJV) which he said was

not the armed division of the JVP. You ask what the connection between the DJV and JVP is? As far as we are aware the DJV is mass peoples organization. There are members of the JVP, as well as non-members in it. We believe that some members of the UNP the SLFP and other groups, who are against the Indian invading armies, who are against the fifth columnists of the Indians, who are against the Tamil Eelam terrorists, who are against India swallowing Sri Lanka, who oppose the merger of the North and East, who are against the second Kandyan convention of Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene, who are against the provincial councils and who do not want Sri Lanka to be another Sikkim, area also in the DJV.²⁶

In reality the DJV carried out decisions of the political sections of the party taken at the appropriate national, zonal, divisional or sub-divisional level. This was known to the leaders of JVP Sangha organization,

25 A.C Alles *Insurgency 1971*, Colombo, Colombo Apothecaries Ltd., 1976, p. 97

26 *Sri Lanka Sunday Times*, 13 November 1988.

though it is quite likely that the general membership accepted the official party view. The JVP's commitment to the DJV, however, was never in doubt.

How did the monks react? Here we must also add another dimension to this question. While the DJV/JVP did carry out assassinations of its opponents, it claimed that it was only reacting to state violence.

When the public protested peacefully against the Jayewardene-Gandhi pact of betrayal, 142 people were shot. It is in this situation that the DJV was born on a solid foundation. It cancelled the monopoly that Mr. Jayewardene and the Indian fifth columnists held on the use of violence.²⁷

It is correct that UNP 'workers' attacked the MSV during the signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord leading the JVP/DJV towards counter violence. Yet many of the organizations in the MSV began to rethink their positions once the JVP began to dominate the anti-Accord opposition and, more significantly, began using widespread terror and violence. The major political organizations — SLFP, MVP and the Sinhala Bala Mandalaya-distanced themselves from the MSV. So did its chief monks, particularly the Mahanayake of Asgiriya, Palipane Chandananda. About this time the elections for President were announced. The SLFP candidate Mrs. Bandaranaike, issued her manifesto. With the support of ethnic minorities in mind, the SLFP pledged to establish two provincial councils in the East — one for the Tamils and another for the Muslims. This raised a storm of protest. The SLFP which opposed the creation of even a single provincial council in the East, when they were in the MSV, were now going even beyond the Accord by agreeing to create two provincial councils. Gamini Iriyagolle, President of the Theosophical Society and a live wire of the MSV, openly repudiated the SLFP and

27 Wijeweera, *Sri Lanka Sunday Times*, 13 November, 1988.

24 C. A. Chandraprema, 'Profiles of leaders', in *Island*, 5 February 1990.

threw his weight behind the UNP Cyril Mathew another MSV hero, went further. 'A special hell', he said, 'should be invented for Mrs. Bandaranaike and the SLFP for the betrayal of Sinhala Buddhists'.

The withdrawal of the senior monks from the SMV left the JVP monks in a quandary. They could not repudiate the violence of the JVP/DJV. On the other hand, their senior monks did not come to their rescue. In this situation the JVP monks reacted to the impasse in several ways:

- (a) allowed the JVP to assassinate senior monks who were supporters of the UNP or Left Parties.
- (b) pressured senior monks in their temples, regional organizations and *Karaka Sabhawa's* to desist from supporting the UNP or SLFP.
- (c) criticized senior monks who did not support the JVP.
- (d) organized a national and international campaign against attacks on JVP monks.

The assassination of senior monks including Pohaddaramulle Pemaloka (patron, S, KP), Thambugala Sumanasiri, Vellatota Pannadassi and Kotikawatte Saddhatissa and many leading priests of regional areas, have been attributed to the DJV/JVP. These monks had broken the rule imposed by the JVP/DJV that they should not lend support to parties which were in favour of the Accord. The *Vinivida* attempts to resolve this dilemma by suggesting to its readers that the JVP was not involved in these killings and drawing attention to state killings of young monks. This response became necessary as senior monks including those in the 'non-violent' sections of the MSV, openly condemned Pemaloka's murder.

The assassination of Pemaloka Thero appears to be another step in a political conspiracy. We have received information that this was not a killing car-

ried out by the Deshapremies; (DJV). On reading the statement of a certain group of monks, published in the *Divayana* of 23rd December, we came to the conclusion that there is a coterie of monks in this country who are unaware of the arrest, torture, disrobing killing of (young) monks.²⁸

Though not visible to laymen, JVP monks were also exerting pressure on senior monks from both within and outside their traditional organization. JVP monks organized several *satyagrahas* was arranged near the Temple of the Tooth, a show of strength which was designed to impress the sangha establishment of Asgiriya and Malwatta. Soon after this demonstration the highest decision making bodies (*Karaka Sabha*) of these two establishments passed resolutions condemning the Accord and seeking protection for the monks who had been taken into custody by armed services. When the JVP escalated their terror tactics, leading Buddhist monks were characterized as 'traitors' and sent 'death threats' As a result some left the island and others drastically curtailed their religious and social activities.

While pressure was being put on chief monks through Sangha Sabhas, a public campaign criticizing them for 'inaction' was also launched. Buddhist reformers from the time of Anagarika Dharmapala have been critical of 'the sloth and lack of commitment' of the Sangha leadership. Later on, reformist monks, who were sympathizers of socialist parties, criticized their chiefs for supporting the UNP in exchange for worldly benefits. This critical vocabulary ('lazy, spittoon-filling monks') was resurrected by pro-JVP monks to criticize their elders.

Critique of the Sangha Leadership

In an essay in *Vinivida*, a young monk Kumbalagemuwe

²⁸ *Vinivida* 20, January-February 1989, p. 7

Dhammananda presents a critique of Sangha elders.²⁹ He begins by broadly classifying these elders:

In modern Sri Lanka out of about 30000 Bhikkus, over a thousand are *Nayakas*. Such *nayakas* have been appointed at provincial, district and sub-district level. In each district there are chief, deputy, chief *adhikarana* (adjudicator of ecclesiastical law), deputy *adhikara*, etc, for each of the sects.

He then describes the functions of these *Nayakas*, which he claims are incorporated in their *sannas* or letters of appointment. These functions are: The protection and enhancement of the *Buddha Sasana*, ensuring the safety of the sangha, resolution of conflict among monks in order to safeguard sangha unity, ensuring the welfare of the Buddhist laity and giving leadership to the Sri Lankan nation.

However, says the writer,

these leaders have deliberately shirked their duty and have tragically allowed international conspiratorial forces to drag down the country, race and the Buddha sasana.

Contrasting present sloth with the glorious heritage of a Bhikkhu, he says that in the past monks like Kudapola and Welivita Sangaraja placed 'the motherland first' because 'without a sovereign territory', language, religion and culture cannot flourish. How then did the *Nayakas* lose sight of their mission? According to the writer, British colonialists were responsible because they converted sangha or commonly owned property to private ownership of the chief monks, thereby making them selfish and 'this' worldly'. Thus the monk lost sight of his 'patriotic tasks' and became a seeker after money and property. The monk who was previously engaged in the *yuga mehwara* (historic task) of protecting the race and sasana now 'began to waste his time in the law

²⁹ *Vinivida* 18, November 1988, p.3

courts, litigating with teacher, fellow monk, and lay supporter in order to gain wealth, property and position'. This decline had many consequences. Politicians have used monks for their own ends. The Catholic Church has conducted a subtle campaign to encourage Eelamism, discredit monks and convert Buddhists to their religion. This is due to the weakness of Sangha leadership fragmented on party, sect, caste, and *parshava* (groups within a Nikaya) lines. Learned monks, who obtain doctorates, prefer to go abroad to spread the message to foreigners while their own countrymen suffer.

The writer then comes to his immediate concern —

When the young monk (*Podi Hamuduruwo*) who entered the university together with the village *Dayaka's* (lay supporter) son begins to fight the anti-Buddhist aggression of international conspirators and agitators against cut backs in free education killing of unarmed people and the massacre of students, they are assaulted, tortured and imprisoned. Many others are killed and burned. But some Mahanayakes know nothing of this.

Next comes a broadside at the Nayakas:

Chief priests have no time for these problems. But they have time to invite a Minister to declare open the new temple. *Tharana*, pull down the 18 cubit Buddha statue and build (in its place) a 88 cubit Buddha statue, lay a marble floor in the bathroom and trade in the car for a new model Datsun.

The writer contrasts these selfish concerns with the commitment of young monks and concluded by inviting the seniors to relinquish their positions if they cannot fulfil their responsibilities.

Monks and Armed Opponents

When the armed services and vigilante groups launched an offensive against the JVP, young monks faced extreme danger. Unlike their party leaders who had gone underground, monks who had spearheaded public agitation were easy targets. At this stage many of the senior monks, who had borne the brunt of radical attacks, like the one quoted earlier, were not willing to come to their rescue. By this time Mahanayakas' 'bete noir' J. R. Jayewardene was out of power and his successor President R. Premadasa, was quite acceptable to them.

The *Vinivida* is indignant about chief monks who were quoted as saying: 'young monks were more dangerous than the Northern Tamil Terrorists'.³⁰ According to this journal hundreds of monks were being tortured and killed by their armed opponents. JVP monks responded to this crisis in several ways. Some surrendered, or criticized the JVP for misleading them and became supporters of the government. Their statements were given wide publicity in the media. Some others gave up robes or fled to other countries. It is likely that core supporters gave up robes and joined the JVP guerrillas who had retreated to jungle camps. There were many reports of the disappearance of monks, sightings of laymen with shaven heads and the discovery of discarded robes in public places.

The poetry and short stories published in journals like *Vinivida Ravaya Vivarana* and the largest circulation Sinhala newspaper *Divayina* depict the dilemmas of young monks who find their 'hoyl cause' defeated by violence. In all cases they remain silent on JVP violence and seek to focus attention on the victimization of innocents.

In a short story entitled *A Brief Tale* we meet a young monk, 30 *Vinivida* 18, November 1988, p. 4

Mahinda. He is his chief monk's favourite. Mahinda gets on very well with the village youths who, despite their difficulties, help the monks to repair the temple and string up coloured lights for *Poson*. When the villagers fail to contribute to temple charity, the chief monk loses his temper. Mahinda pacifies him by explaining that their congregation is poor; yet they never fail to send food for the monks.

One day, the peace of the village temple is shattered, Mahinda's father, a village carpenter, his eyes full of tears, conveys a fateful message

'You tell me father that Malli (younger brother) was absolutely innocent.'

'You know that he is innocent. He and his friends had fired the brick kiln and were chatting on the Lake Bund when the armed men came. They put hot coals into his mouth and threatened to kill him if he did not give information. I have looked everywhere for him. He's not to be found.'

The father falls at Mahinda's feet in worship and goes looking for his other son. Mahinda standing very still 'like a rock statue' sees in his mind's eye has younger brother who had unselfishly taken over the burdens of helping his parents. Without the brother's generosity he could not have become a monk. Mahinda's reverie is broken by his friend Gunapala who comes with bad news.

I' rowed your father across the river. Near the rubber estate there were a lot of people looking at a body which had washed up. Your father took one look at it and started wailing. It was Piyadasa Malli.

'Enough Gunapala. I cannot cry like my father. I had a hunch it would come to this. Do me a favour, please look after my father.'

The following morning Mahinda was gone. His robes were left behind. The chief priest said 'Mahinda is a good person. He may have given up his robes. But he had gone to do good.'³¹

The ending leaves the clear impression that Mahinda has joined the guerrillas. In a poem which has the same theme, the ending is more explicit. The monk sheds his robes, takes a T-56 submachine gun (the T-56 came to symbolize JVP military strength) and disappears into the night.

Conclusions

Most writings about the Sri Lankan crisis tend to describe the Sinhala Sangha as a monolithic organization having 'clear cut' views on ethnic and political issues. In reality it is not so. At the formal level there are the sangha's institutional structures for the making of pronouncements. It is rare that they make pronouncements on public issues. Informally, monks participate in a variety of organizations with their own agendas for action. Charismatic leaders of the Sangha work to build coalitions of these organisations so that a common position can be articulated. They do not often succeed. Nor does the success of such coalition building depend entirely on the sangha. The strength and commitment of lay groups become crucial.

Second, we see that the notion of Sinhalese 'custodianship' of Buddhism is so strong that monks are willing to rationalize the use of violence against the 'other', even though it contra-

venes the basic tenets of Buddhism. The arguments and strategies adopted to resolve this dilemma favoured the domain of *realpolitik*. In this they were directly in line with the sangha we encounter in the Pali chronicles who link the fortunes of the Buddhist Church with the Sinhala state. Despite more than a century of 'Protestant Buddhism' its intellectual overlay was stripped as soon as the modern Sinhala 'nation' faced a real crisis.

Third, changes in Bhikku education, particularly in the Pirivenas and universities and changing patterns of recruitment to the Sangha (not analysed in this essay) are creating a new strata of radical socially committed monks. They, however, still operate within the traditional 'Sinhala-Buddhist' axis. It was this strata which formed an important support group for the JVP. Their membership and influence is likely to increase

Fourth, though the use of violence against the Tamils, the UNP and the Left was rationalized by the radical monks in terms of the needs of modern 'realpolitik', they attempted to draw on classic Buddhist textual concepts of the inviolability of the monks (anantachari-papakarma) and an interpretation of social intervention (Bahujana-hitaya) when they in turn were the subjects of state violence.

Fifth, the commitment to social revolution is so strong among radical monks that they are willing not only to condone the use of violence by the JVP but also in many cases shed their robes and take up the gun. This phenomenon which has been noticeable in several contemporary Buddhist societies juxtaposes the radical monks persona, Buddhist 'selflessness' and new Buddhist interpretations of social intervention.

Sixth, we see the attempts of Sinhala monks to understand social reality in terms of Buddhist symbolism. When dealing

with secular notions like ethnicity, democracy, revolution and violence, monks attempted to relate them to their culturally prescribed world of symbols. They go back to the examples of the monks — Wariyapola, Kudahapola, etc., who confronted state power. Communism is understood in terms of the Buddha's prescription of communal living (absence of private property, sharing of alms, etc.) for the sangha. This leads to the continuous 'oversimplification' of complex contemporary issues.

Finally, in contrast to the conventional view of Sinhala monks as a confident, assertive power group within the national polity we find that they perceive themselves as a deprived, alienated group inadequately recognized by both political authorities and the Buddhist public. They believe that they are 'used' by politicians and unless better organized, would be outmaneuvered by 'foreign conspiratorial forces' including Eelamists and Roman Catholics.

The intrusion of monks into the arena of revolutionary politics has resulted in a loss of their charisma. Monks are arrested, stripped of their robes, publicly humiliated and even killed by armed Sinhala Buddhists. This change in perception has been noted by the monks themselves.

When demonstrating monks are teargassed and assaulted they are forced to run for cover with their robes tucked up. When they run about the streets like laymen, will the public exhibit religious devotion? Will not their *bhakti* be destroyed?³²

This dwindling of social esteem of and for Buddhist monks may have long term implications for recruitment, education influence, and the religious vocation of the Sinhala Sangha.

31 *Vinivida* 24, July 1988, p.22.

32 *Vinivida* 24, July 1988, P. 17

REAL ESTATE

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

IMPORT FINANCE

CONSUMER FINANCE

PLEDGE LOANS

HIRE PURCHASE OF
MOTOR VEHICLES

LEASING OF PLANT, MACHINERY &
COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

LAND FINANCING

LOANS AGAINST JEWELLERY

PERSONAL LOANS IN THE FORM OF
EASY CASH VOUCHERS

FIXED DEPOSITS

PUBLIC SUBSIDISED LOAN SCHEME

CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT

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