

LANKA

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BRIEFLY...

Three ingredients for prosperity

In an address to the nation shortly after being sworn in as Sri Lanka's eleventh Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga pledged to lead the nation towards prosperity by doing her utmost to cure its gravest ills.

The Premier told a nationwide TV audience that she would solve the North-East problem, restore democracy and re-establish law and order.

"We have dreamt a new dream for our country, a difficult but beautiful dream. Let us together transform that dream into reality", she said.

Abolishing the executive Presidency

A frontline minister in the People's Alliance government, Industries Minister C.V. Gooneratne, told *The Island* that the PA was committed to abolishing the Executive Presidency. He was commenting on speculation that there was re-thinking on this issue in some quarters of the Alliance.

Only the PA could do it

MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardena analysing his party's rout at the General Elections (not a single MP elected) told *The Island* that the people had concentrated on de-

feating the then ruling UNP and had voted en masse for the People Alliance believing that only the PA could defeat the UNP.

"The people cannot be blamed for the defeat of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP). We must accept that the people's priority was nothing but the defeat of the UNP", Dinesh Gunawardena who had campaigned on a Sinhala nationalist platform, said.

Highest preference

Ms Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, the charismatic leader of the victorious People's Alliance, polled 464,588 preferential votes at the recent General Elections, the highest on record. She came in top of the list from the family's home turf, the Gampaha District. Her father S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and her mother Sirimavo Ratwatte Bandaranaike were Prime Ministers before her.

The dividend from peace

The dividend from peace when the North East conflict is settled would be Rs 25 billion, Sri Lanka's new Information Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake told the BBC. This saving could be used to fulfil the promises given to the youth, for development and employment, he said.

The minister also said: "We are assured of majority support for a commission to investigate bribery, corruption and murder".

The Liberals and the Rushdie Affair

Liberal Party leader Dr Chanaka Amaratunga who allied himself with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress at the last General Elections said in a paid newspaper advertisement (before the elections): "It has been brought to my attention that my views and those of the Liberal Party regarding the novel *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie have been misrepresented for partisan political purposes and that the totally false impression has been conveyed that Liberals are hostile to Islam and to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)."

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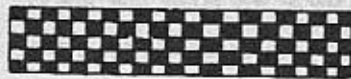
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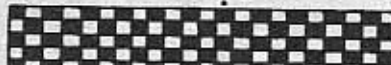
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P. A. PROMISES — THE VOTERS WAIT

Mervyn de Silva

The visit of Mr. Anana Verma, the Indian Prime Minister's special envoy, turned the spotlight for a moment on the external.

If relations with India, our huge neighbour, had been a major problem as in 1988-89, this polls result would have been ideal. We would have had a new Prime Minister who is warmly regarded in Delhi. And to back it up the UNP has chosen an Opposition Leader who is the most outspoken defender of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, and a key player in the Indo-Sri Lankan drama of 1987 and after. The deft diplomacy of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao saw a remarkable improvement in bilateral relations in the final phase of the Premadasa presidency.

17 years of UNP rule have ended. The focus is on the domestic. It started in the South. And the spotlight was on Chandrika. And both the talent-spotters as well as the anti-UNP voter, waiting for the "Big One", spotted a winner — Chandrika, the missing personality factor that completed the equation. Anura's departure of course had helped resolve the conflicts within the party. In the South, Chandrika's campaign style and the solid fact of victory settled the Sirima-or-Chandrika issue. If there was any residual uncertainty, any lingering doubts, the massive May Day gathering in Colombo, and the huge procession, such doubts were cleared. Chandrika was 'the draw'.

The Opposition P.A. romped home. And the South was a perfect field for a trial run. It is the traditional home (Dutugemunu country) of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism as well as Sri Lankan radicalism-Leftism. Dr. S.A. Wickremasingha, one of the founders of the movement, came from the deep south. So did the Rajapakses. And one of them, a Tamil won comfortably. In short President D.B.'s "no ethnic problem, only a terrorist problem" Sinhala-Buddhist hardline made little or no impression.

Strange to say, the only parliamentary electorate that the UNP won in this contest was the assassinated President Premadasa's home town. The lessons? Premadasaist "populism" did pay dividends, however modest. Also, "communalism" was no longer a vote-winner. "Change" was in the air. A demoralised Opposition voter had started to talk of a "Chandrika magic".

And yet, the statistics called for a closer look. The UNP had lost 12 electorates that it had held at the Provincial poll ten months earlier, observed Dayalal Abeysekera in the L.G. May 1st 1994. The cover of that issue signalled in blood red a special May Day warning:

SRI KOTHA

MAY DAY!
MAY DAY!
MAY DAY!

Evidently, Sri Kotha, the headquarters of the "Greens" didn't get the message!

"While the UNP retained its voter base on the whole, Tissamaharama was very decisive in denying over 8000 i.e. more than one fifth of its votes to the UNP" wrote our analyst. "When the more urbane Galle and Matara are marginally willing to be appeased by the policies of a post-Premadasa UNP, the rural peasantry of the Dry Zone are disillusioned by the void left by the late President; the mass disenchantment created by the absence of a champion for their cause compels them to view the revamped PA, still in some degree of disarray, as a viable alternative to the UNP", wrote psephologist Abeysekera.

He also paid special attention to the public servant and the postal voter. A large percentage voted against the regime. The recent results would probably help us sustain the argument that IMF-World Bank policies affect the living standards of the middle-class and lower middle class salariat.

ECONOMIC ISSUE

In the slogan-and-wall-poster, the Seventeen-Year-Curse quite easily beat the Seven-Year Itch. The UNP had a distinct disadvantage. The trials and tribulations of the lower-middle class and the poor joining the long queue at the multi-purpose co-operative store were not really part of the collective memory of the new voter (18) or even the under 21 (once the voting age) in the "llangaratne socialist era" of quotas, shortages, ration cards etc. The Sri Kotha propaganda barrage so deadly in the 1977 had no real fire-power this time. Such memories of the housewife had faded.

Goods were available (the UNP's achieve-

ment) but at a price and the value of money was shrinking. That meant the salariat and the wage-earner, including the public servant whose cooperation is so necessary when fighting an election battle. Likewise the police. Hurt by the economic squeeze, inflation, he would not cooperate with the ruling party.

And so to the slogan war, the full-page AD. and the wall-poster. One of the most effective was the PA's full page ad. addressed to PUBLIC SERVANTS:

DO NOT BE MISLED BY FALSE PROPAGANDA ON WAGE INCREASES. OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS YOUR REAL WAGES (after adjusting for inflation) DECREASED BY 6%. HERE ARE THE CENTRAL BANK STATISTICS. (1989-1993).

Next to inflation, the PA's deadliest weapon was unemployment 12.6%.

PROMISES, PROMISES

The PA's most attractive slogan was bread at Rs. 3.50. This weekend (27-28th) the Chandrika Kumaratunge government kept its promise. The CWE reduced the price of flour by Rs. 4.35 a kilo so bakers could sell a 450 gram loaf at Rs. 3.50. Diesel and kerosene prices could also drop 10 to 20%. Soon, the PA will turn its attention to unemployment. It was not just the fatigue factor that made a notoriously demanding, politically mature electorate decide that the UNP had overstayed its welcome but the rising expectations of a new generation, the new 18 plus voter, over a million. For that same reason the first-time voter would expect quick results; jobs, reduced consumer prices.

"Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunge the victor in this week's Sri Lankan general election will need all the luck she can get if she is to turn her complex coalition of opposition parties into an effective government..." Observed Stefan Wagstyl, South Asia editor of the *Financial Times*.

"We are in a tricky situation. People are going to wait and see before they make up their minds about the government" says Mr. Desmond Fernando, a lawyer-secretary General of the International Bar Association" (See FULL REPORT: SRI LANKA ENTERS UNCERTAIN ERA)

A 'LIMITED SWING' THEORY: A Post-mortem

Dayalal Abeysekera

The 17-year wait of the SLFP-led Peoples Alliance to be voted into 'office' provides more than a legitimate basis for the post-election euphoria. It is equally valid to observe that the "Candrika Wave" was only capable of installing a minority government, not too frequent a phenomenon in Sri Lanka, the only other occasion being the Parliament of March 1960. Although that particular Parliament lasted a mere 33 days, the current alignment of forces is bound to be more enduring and most likely to sustain the spirit of the victory of the PA. The post-election fatigue is also likely to discourage potential boat-rockers in indulging in unduly extravagant antics.

Before we come back to some speculative ruminations on the causes of the PA victory, a closer look at the statistics within a comparative perspective is bound to engage the discerning reader. This analysis will, restrict itself to the 17 districts lying outside the Northeast of the country.

The '94 poll in the Northern Province descended to more than a farce with less than 7.6 percent turning out to cast its vote (Jaffna, a mere 2.3 percent). The Eastern Province, however, did very creditably with more than three fourths (75.2 percent) casting their ballot; but the absence of previous data prevents us from using the same modes of analysis.

It must surely be a relief to note the very high turnout of voters at the Parliamentary Elections of 1994. Nearly 82 percent (81.97 percent, to be exact) cast their vote outside the Northeast of Sri Lanka, there being four more occasions on which the 80 percent mark has been passed. (The nation-wide turnout was 76.2 percent). At the district level the voter turnout has ranged between 77.3 percent in Puttalam to 87.3 percent in Ratnapura, a very consistent performance outside the Northeast (column i in Table). Coupled with the fact that the poll has been judged as a 'most

fair' election held during last couple of decades by all parties concerned, democracy appears to have secured the best victory.

The percent of rejected votes has also been brought down to 4.7 percent (column ii) from an unconscionably high level of 7.2 percent in the Provincial Council Elections of May 1993 and an even higher 9.4 percent at the Local Government Elections of 1991. Though the level of 'voter illiteracy' in 1994 has diminished, Monaragala (9.5 percent) and Badulla (7.8 percent) are still too high to be tolerated. Nuwara Eliya though still high at 6.7 percent appears to have taken some effective corrective measures to bring it down from an appallingly high 11.9 percent at the 1993 poll. A concerted educational campaign on a national scale is however needed to bring down the voter illiteracy level to something between one to two percent.

Percent Polled at the Parliamentary Elections of 1994 and the Provincial Council Elections of 1993 by Major Parties.

District	% Polled	Rejected Votes	% polled at 1994 Election by			% Polled at May 1993 Election by				
			UNP	PA	All other Parties	UNP	PA	DUNF	All other Parties	PA + DUNF
Anuradhapura	83.9	4.3	43.5	55.2	1.4	51.9	35.1	10.5	2.5	45.6
Polonnaruwa	83.7	3.8	47.6	51.2	1.2	52.3	33.4	12.5	1.8	45.9
Moneragala	85.7	9.5	43.8	50.4	5.8	55.7	34.9	08.8	0.6	43.7
Badulla	84.0	7.8	54.0	43.5	2.5	57.9	25.5	13.3	3.3	38.8
Ratnapura	87.3	4.9	48.0	50.8	1.3	52.2	36.5	08.6	2.8	45.1
Kegalle	82.9	4.1	51.2	47.9	0.9	49.3	32.6	17.0	1.1	49.6
Kandy	83.7	5.1	52.3	46.4	1.2	49.8	30.6	17.8	1.9	48.4
Matale	84.3	5.8	48.6	49.9	1.5	53.2	26.1	17.6	3.1	43.7
Nuwara-Eliya	83.7	6.7	58.1	32.3	9.5	59.2	18.7	11.4	10.6	30.1
Kurunegala	84.1	4.1	47.0	51.9	1.1	43.6	35.9	19.1	1.5	55.0
Puttalam	77.3	4.5	45.5	53.6	0.9	50.2	36.4	10.8	2.6	46.2
Gampaha	81.5	3.6	41.9	56.8	1.3	41.3	45.7	11.4	1.6	57.1
Colombo	77.6	3.8	41.8	50.9	7.3	37.6	38.1	21.9	2.4	60.0
Kalutara	82.1	4.8	43.8	53.8	2.5	44.2	44.0	13.8	2.7	53.2
Galle	81.2	4.0	41.2	56.4	2.4	44.3	40.2	09.1	2.6	53.1
Matara	78.8	4.3	37.4	59.9	2.7	45.0	31.0	13.9	0.9	54.1
Hambantota	79.6	5.2	38.7	53.5	7.8	49.9	36.1	15.9	3.2	46.9
Sri Lanka (17 districts)	81.97	4.69	45.6	51.5	2.9	46.9	36.1	14.5	2.5	50.6
No. of Voters	(7,715,239)	(362,079)	(3,353,523)	(3,784,926)	(214,711)	(2,994,353)	(2,304,495)	(928,590)	(157,097)	(3,233,085)
Column No.	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(vii)	(viii)	(ix)	(x)

Dr. Dayalal Abeysekera is the Asst. Resident Representative of FORUT in Sri Lanka.

In order to provide a meaningful direction to this analysis (which might otherwise end up in an incoherent mass of statistics), we propose to speculatively pursue the reasons (causations/concomitant variation) which may have given the PA chance for the first time in 17 years to obtain more votes than the UNP. On a more restricted time scale, how did the PA which obtained 689,858 votes less than the UNP at the May 1993 poll manage to obtain 431,403 more vote than the UNP just 15 months later, an attraction of 1,121,261 votes to itself. (This analysis refers to the 17 districts outside the Northeast unless it is specifically referred to otherwise.)

The PA obtained 51.5 percent of the national vote at the '94 poll while the UNP obtained 45.6 percent thus leaving a mere 2.9 percent to all other parties and continued to maintain a bi-party stranglehold in the country (columns iii, iv & v). (In the Northeast, however the other parties commandeered 58 percent of the vote leaving the balance to be shared by the two main parties, 24.5 percent by the UNP and 17.4 percent by the PA.) From the 36.1 percent of votes the PA obtained in May '93, the gain is a very substantial 15.4 percentage points or 1,480,431 actual votes (more than what DUNF obtained in '93).

DUNF FACTOR

One must not lose sight of the fact that at the '93 poll, there was the new-comer DUNF which grabbed 14.5 percent or 928,590 votes from the two main parties as well as the other small parties (column viii). With the DUNF splitting subsequently into the Srimani and Gamini factions and each joining one of the major parties, an intense tussle was on to grab these votes by the two major parties. It appears that the sparring was decidedly resolved in favour of the Srimani faction and PA. This becomes apparent when one pursues the relative performance of Colombo and Kandy districts (where Mrs. Atulathmudali and Mr. Dissanayake contested, both of whom, incidentally gained the highest number of preferential votes) at the two elections. The UNP gained 2.5 percentage points and the PA 15.8 percentage points in Kandy while in Colombo the UNP gained 4.2 and the PA 12.8 percentage

points. The fact that Mrs. Atulathmudali as a novice to politics could command nearly 150,000 preferences against the nearly 200,000 preferences of the veteran Mr. Dissanayake is also a sufficiently strong indicator to suggest that the Lalith Athulathmudali mantle was effectively passed on to his widow.

The registered voter base at the two elections were different, 9,297,742 in '93 and 9,412,008 in '94, a mere 1.2 percent increase within the 17 districts. However, when one considers the change in the actual valid votes cast, the difference is a massive 968,625 which is a 15.2 percent increase over the '93 figure of 6,384,535 to 7,353,160 (not in Table). In other words, while the voter base increased by a mere 114,266, the cast valid votes increased over eightfold. How did this happen? The first component of this increase was engineered by the higher voter turnout (increased from 74 percent to 82 percent) and the second by the proportionate reduction in rejected votes (from 7.2 to 4.7 percent). In a way, it is this additional 968,625 votes and the 928,590 votes obtained by DUNF at the '93 poll that had to be reallocated between the two major parties and the other small parties. The small parties improved its position very marginally from 2.5 to 2.9 percent (from 157,097 to 214,711 votes, i.e., a gain of 57,614 votes or 3.0 percent from the reallocatable vote). The UNP gained 359,170 votes or 18.9 percent while the PA grabbed the lion's share of 1,480,431 votes or 78.0 percent of the reallocatable vote. The foregoing actual numbers of votes are valid if we assume that all three party groupings were capable of retaining in '94, the quantum each polled in '93.

At the district level, there was a major shift in terms of being able to obtain a larger share of the proportionate vote thereby ensuring a larger number of seats in the Parliament. In May '93 poll, the PA could carry only the two districts of Gampaha and Colombo while the UNP obtained a proportionate majority of votes in the 15 remaining districts. Fifteen months later in August of 1994 the UNP could carry only the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kandy and Kegalle, all of which had a disproportionately high share of Tamil voters of Indian origin

domiciled in the plantation sector, the majority of whom were members of the Ceylon Workers Congress headed by Mr. Thondaman whose candidates contested under the UNP banner.

This relatively overwhelming change when translated to the 136 electorates outside the Northeast meant that the UNP which carried 104 at the '93 poll crashed to a modest 44 while the PA ascended from 20 to 92 electorates (3 electorates being won by DUNF). But the proportionate changes are somewhat modest; the UNP which had 46.9 percent of the cast valid vote in '93 dropped to 45.6 percent while the PA increased its share from 36.1 to 51.5 percent. The PA's ascendance was partially facilitated by grabbing the larger proportion of the 14.5 percent of the floating DUNF vote.

The more crucial observation is that in spite of carrying the accumulated hospitality of the voters to an uninterrupted 17-year regime, in spite of a much healed and better organised PA guided by a charismatic new leader, the UNP still maintained its robust constituency. In fact, it enhanced its base of supporters by 359,170 between the two recent elections when the increase in the actual number of registered voters was only 114,266; what it failed to do was to capture a larger proportion of the floating DUNF vote and the enhanced cast valid vote due to higher voter turnout and depressed proportion of rejected votes. But it was still capable of seriously debilitating the PA's victory by denying it the luxury of being able to form a majority government.

Even more interesting is to speculate on what factors may have contributed to making a hapless, rudderless and seemingly impotent PA of May '93 which let an up-start rookie like DUNF (which was not even attacking it at the hustings) grab more votes from itself than from the UNP in 10 districts, to dress itself up as a much more winnable combination a mere 15 months later. The dissolution of the DUNF and the resulting floating of nearly one million votes was certainly a circumstantial factor, not directly engineered by the PA. It was a potentially anti-UNP vote bank but predicated on a more virulent anti-Pre-madasaism.

To its credit is the internal healing of the PA which was apparently engineered within the ruling family and successfully accomplished (though with some anguish) when Mr. Anura Bandaranaike was invited to join the UNP and accepted same. Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga henceforth was capable of deftly navigating the PA by absorbing the modest Anura loyalists and expunging the hardcore. She was provided invaluable media support by the *RAVAYA* which championed her cause in the 'national interest' to the extent of even antagonizing Mrs. Bandaranaike.

With this internal consolidation Kumaratunga was provided the ideal playing field to establish her credentials as an effective campaigner and a leader when the UNP pulled-off the Fransiscu Affair and precipitated the Southern Provincial Council election in May 1994. The test was if she could win back the Southern Province which was more red and blue prior to 1977 but had since gone somewhat green. By winning 20 out of the 21 electorates and grabbing 55.4 percent of the votes, a hereditary charisma was reinforced and enhanced by tangible achievement. A leader was born. But still the UNP's voter base was not seriously eroded.

Within this background of a build-up towards the election, what was it that PA raised as issues that really precipitated the **limited swing** we witnessed at the elections? To an opposition that had been continuously out of power for 17 years, attack on an incumbent government's policies was a more potent weapon than highlighting one's achievements in a gone era. As such, the escalating cost of living, the growth of bribery and corruption to gigantic proportions, perpetuation of crony capitalism enhancing the gap between haves and have-nots, the unresolved ethnic conflict with its unending war were among the main themes of attack launched from the PA platforms.

While there is the escalation of living costs, there is also evidence of the growth of incomes. If this was a crucial issue why didn't it precipitate a much bigger swing in favour of the PA?

Bribery and corruption is an issue of contention for a minority of the voters, disproportionately drawn from the better

educated, belonging to or aspiring to the middle class, the quasi or otherwise literati. One fails to see how a farmer whose burning problem is the lack of water to cultivate both seasons could be swayed to vote because of a scandalous Air Bus Deal! If it was an issue, it was not of a mass kind and perhaps the best effects of this issue are reflected in the postal votes which went overwhelmingly PA's way. Crony capitalism may be evident once again to the upper middle class of business elite but what seeps down to the mass base is the creation of some job opportunities for the rural youth which, though, exploitative in terms of global commerce, is yet more attractive than a semi-feudalism with its promise of a near-zero growth.

ANTI-WAR

Our personal thinking is that the issue which precipitated the limited swing to the PA is the continuance of the war in the Northeast theatre with an end still out of sight. The UNP's performance during the last 10 years was evident failure. Mrs. Kumaratunga's promise that the PA will end the war (or a signal to that effect) gave hope to an appreciable vote-bank directly affected by the war. Approximately 100,000 service personnel drawn primarily from these 17 districts are always under the threat of being exposed to battle. The unending flow of coffins that come back to the village setting is a constant reminder of what one may witness one day with respect to one's loved one. For each serviceman engaged there will be at least one suffering on a daily basis assume that there are at least four more families which are anxious for the safety of each serviceman and that each family has a minimum of two votes. Wouldn't these one million votes be swung in favour of the PA, merely because it is the only desperate hope to save the life of one's loved one.

It is all very well to voice one's patriotism and allegiance to safeguarding the territorial integrity of the country when one does not directly suffer the mental anguish of knowing that a loved one will arrive in a coffin. The rhetoric cannot be sustained when that possibility is very real.

Some electoral evidence is also forthcoming to sustain the notion that the Sinhala

electorate has become less tolerant of a chauvinistic stand. The MEP which perhaps came closest to representing this stance was unable to secure a single seat in the legislature. On the other hand, Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara who went out on a limb and stated in a TV debate that the right to self-determination for the Tamil community should be granted (or something to that effect) was rewarded by the voters of the Ratnapura District with the largest number of preferential votes. (As a corollary to the Sinhala community's softening of its stance vis-a-vis the ethnic stand-off, the rejection of the Tamil chauvinistic overtures of Mr. Ponnambalam by the Tamil constituency in Colombo is yet another welcome feature that transpired out of this election.)

The fact that Mrs. Kumaratunge gave a cold shoulder to the MEP at the negotiating table and went out of her way to accommodate Mr. Nanayakkara before the elections is perhaps an indication that she had more than an intuitive grasp of the need to find a lasting solution to the Northeast problem. She may have regarded the presence of the MEP within the ranks of PA to be an impediment to working towards a solution during a victorious post-election phase and considered the risk of alienating the MEP voter as an acceptable risk.

The post-election scenario of the PA forming a minority government dependent on the continued support of the minority parties would tend to bring in more pressure towards a solution of the ethnic conflict and the war since the latter would receive extremely high priority on the minority parties' agenda. Thus, if the limited swing in favour of the PA was instigated by that sector of the electorate adversely affected by the continued war in a desperate attempt to stop it and the PA is currently buttressed by a group of minority parties clamouring for a just settlement, will the new Prime Minister be given the chance to rise above the cacophony of chauvinism and produce a pragmatic and lasting political solution to this protracted problem? On the other hand, will she be able to survive in office without conscientiously pursuing such a solution. As such, prospects for the survival of the PA in office appears to depend very heavily on its capacity to produce a lasting political solution to the ethnic conflict.

Sri Lanka enters an uncertain era

Stefan Wagstyl

Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, the victor in this week's Sri Lankan general election, will need all the luck she can get if she is to turn her complex coalition of opposition parties into an effective government.

Until she can exert a firm grip on power, Sri Lanka faces a period of political uncertainty which could easily spill over into society and the economy. "We are in a tricky situation. People are going to wait and see before they make up their minds about the government", says Mr Desmond Fernando, a lawyer and secretary general of the International Bar Association.

Fortunately, Sri Lanka is a country which has learnt to live with political turmoil. Neither the civil war in the north of the island, an uprising of nationalist extremists in the south in the late 1980s, nor the assassination last year of President Ranasinghe Premadasa has caused significant social disturbances or thrown the economy seriously off course. It is possible the country will survive unscathed the end of 17 years of conservative rule by the United National party.

Mrs Kumaratunga's most immediate challenge is to hold together her parliamentary majority. With only 105 seats in the 225-member parliament, her People's Alliance, itself a coalition of nine parties, must rely on the support of at least three minority groupings. Moreover, she will have to co-operate with Mr D B Wijetunga, the powerful executive president, who stands above parliament and belongs to the defeated UNP.

Mr Wijetunga's rapid acknowledgement of UNP's defeat suggests he is taking a conciliatory approach. But he may come under pressure from some sections of his party to change tack.

Such pressure may surface soon, as among the main aims of the People's Alliance is a revision of the constitution to curb the president's powers. This change would require a two-thirds majority in parliament — which could only be achieved with UNP's co-operation. UNP will also be concerned about the People's Alliance's

pledge to stamp out corruption. While some UNP members, including outgoing prime minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, conceded the need for tougher anti-bribery laws, they may balk at moves to bring ex-ministers to account.

Economic policy-making presents Mrs Kumaratunga with a particularly awkward challenge.

She has promised to follow the UNP government's pro-market policies, which have in the past five years brought the country fast growth in output, foreign trade and investment.

But businessmen see three dangers. First to satisfy her left-wing supporters Mrs Kumaratunga may be tempted to make some gestures — such as imposing punitive duties on the import of luxuries. Next, even though the overall direction of policy will be pro-market, day-to-day decisions may not. For example, the government is considering the future of the over-manned state-owned tea industry. UNP, which

introduced limited privatisation of the estates' management, was planning more radical reform and Mrs Kumaratunga may be tempted to fudge the issue.

Finally, Mrs Kumaratunga could try to increase welfare spending. Her manifesto includes promises of big food hand-outs to the poor. However, she may not be as profligate as she sounds, as such pledges are routine in Sri Lankan campaigning.

On balance, businessmen are willing to give Mrs Kumaratunga the benefit of the doubt although they may postpone big investment decisions for a few months. Some executives even argue the People's Alliance will prove good for business. They say that the corruption associated with the UNP was beginning to harm investment activity.

Moreover, they welcome Mrs Kumaratunga's determination to end the civil war, in which Tamil Tiger separatist guerrillas are fighting for an independent homeland.

— *Financial Times*

Resurrection

*You sensed the pale Galilean at your side
He walked in Spain, he rose with Stalingrad.
The dripping Fascist fangs that tore your throat
Tore also his calm hands that only blessed.*

*Full cycle in Time, comes the Resurrection
Let us bide the slow tortured turn
From the mad night of Malevolence
To Love, again.*

*Now through your chosen Love
Your warm heart calls us
As we march this May, she will proclaim
Fullsome the grace of surging, risen, feet
Where echoes of earlier, happier Mays, remain
We will trample on the grass, the fallen gold of April
While May puts out its scarlet flamboyants
And the Red Banners that kindled your eyes.*

U. Karunatilake

Lanka's Faith in Democracy

Eric Gonsalves

On the eve of provincial elections last May, Sri Lanka seemed on the verge of a descent to instability. The assassination of presidential contender Lalith Athulathmudali and President Ranasinghe Premadasa highlighted a rising tide of violence.

However, the popular reaction against the murders, as in Bombay after the bomb blasts, brought a consensus that the political leadership should go ahead with business as usual.

The election turnout was almost a record, an average of 75 percent. Despite efforts by the ruling party to use its position to bolster its campaign by inducements to the electorate and the unfair use of government media, it was generally agreed that the elections were free and fair.

Blame on Politicians

That was a significant tribute to the people's dedication to the democratic system. It also underlined the reality that much of the violence and malpractice that tend to mar the electoral systems in South Asia is due less to group tensions than the deliberate exacerbation of such potential tensions by political leaders for immediate gain.

The result of the elections was negative for the ruling United National Party. The People's Alliances, led by former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandanaik and comprising the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and other left parties, gained the largest number of seats in the most important western province, including Colombo.

With the breakaway Democratic United National Front, the PA could lay claim to the two other provinces by a small majority. But the government preempted that by appointing UNP Chief Ministers.

(Eric Gonsalves is a former secretary in the Indian External Affairs Ministry.)

Premadasa followed a two-track economic policy. He embraced the International Monetary Fund reform package, and liberalization has been largely completed.

The domestic and foreign business communities have tremendous freedom and ask only for continued stability in the country and its policies. The economy is doing reasonably well and seems set to improve.

On the other hand, Premadasa also followed a populist policy on housing, employment and rural development. That brought to the UNP many erstwhile supporters of the SLFP in the rural areas and among the working class.

Also, despite the Tamil problem in the north and east, he made serious efforts to look after the interests of the Tamils, whether Muslim or Hindu, estate or urban. Most of them also came into the UNP fold.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress got a disappointing election response. The Ceylon Workers Congress, consisting mainly of estate Tamils, has done well as an ally of the UNP. Looking back, it is interesting to recall that up to 10 years ago, the repatriation of these workers was the major problem relations with India.

In the Nuwara Eliya district, the majority of councilors elected were Tamils. It is freely admitted by the UNP that the consequence has been the alienation of the Sinhala middle class, the party's traditional base.

Equations within and between the parties have to be worked out. Mrs. Bandanaik is ailing. Her daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga has demonstrated her electoral magnetism and is a rising star. The erstwhile heir, her brother Anura, has been forced out of the party leadership.

There is talk of a national government that would include the present UNP, Anu-

ra Bandanaik and Gamini Dissanayake, the DUNF leader. The reason for the DUNF disappearing with the death of Premadasa and probably only a rump will survive.

Eventually, much will depend on personalities, their competence and image. Ideology and issues played almost no part in the recent elections.

Liberalization and decentralization have gone so far that they cannot be turned back. Even committed socialists acknowledge that the private sector will be a major factor for growth. Hence, gaining votes by using public money for housing or employment will be done under the banner of socialism as well that of market forces.

Premadasa's Legacy

No party can afford to ignore Premadasa's legacy. So they will follow in his footsteps to the extent that yields dividends and use the labels that suit them.

There is an effort to forge a consensus on changing the Constitution to revert from an executive presidency to a parliamentary system. This, too, would alter the ground rules.

The government has been able to put down the Sinhala extremist JVP in the south by resorting to considerable force and at times dubious methods. But the Liberation Tigers have not succumbed to force or blandishments, although their area of control has been circumscribed.

The LTTE's almost-certain involvement in much of the pre-election violence and the assassinations was not used to prevent Tamils from participating in the electoral process, nor were they backward in doing so. But the north and east still remain outside the political process. Until they are brought in, the overall problem will remain unresolved.

On Subduing the LTTE

Since the LTTE appears to have no intention of accepting anything but defacto independence, it will have to be subdued by political and military attrition. The question is who has the will.

Formal conventions exist in South Asia for cooperation in dealing with terrorism, as do for limited exchanges between security and intelligence agencies. There is, however, a need to address such problems jointly and in greater depth, as they

seem to have common bases eradicating the causes behind militancy and delinking the local population from the militants.

But this is not to suggest another Indian peacekeeping force.

The suicidal tendency to exploit ethnic problems across borders must be seen for what it is — self destructive. It inhibits cooperation by fostering suspicion and makes South Asia appear as a less-attractive place for those from other parts of

the globe who may be interested in economic exchanges.

Relations Improving

Relations with India are steadily improving. Both sides hold similar views on the LTTE. Economic ties and other exchanges are growing. The value of regional cooperation is appreciated.

The Indian Tamil issue has disappeared. This augurs well for the development of a more-effective South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

A return to Uncertainty

People in the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) still talk about it with awe. For the elections in 1977 — which practically blanked out the SLFP and the then prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike from power and hasn't let them back in since — Junius Jayewardene's United National Party (UNP) had adopted a low key, surefire method of campaigning. Volunteers stood in bread queues, bus queues or at any social or political gathering and started discussions on how the SLFP had taken the country to the brink of disaster.

"It was a brilliant strategy", says Suneethra Bandaranaike, Sirimavo's eldest daughter. "We thought people would appreciate what my mother was trying to do for the country. But we had not expected such a groundswell of reaction".

This time around, as Lankan voters go to the polls on August 16, the clock may be turning back. Chandrika Kumaratunge, Sirimavo's second daughter and anointed successor, poses the first real leadership alternative to the UNP in many years. The SLFP is also a leading partner in the People's Alliance, a grouping of nine parties including the Muslim League and the Left, formed after snap parliamentary polls were declared six months before the election deadline. And the ruling UNP, in a vastly different political situation, and bereft of strong leadership since President

Ranasinghe Premadasa's assassination last year, is pulling out all the stops to stay in control.

An opinion poll conducted for *The Sunday Times* in Colombo among 1,600 eligible voters — over 90 per cent were Sinhalese — found that 44 per cent would vote for the UNP, 23 per cent for the Alliance, while a significant 29 per cent were still undecided. This bloc is expected to be the key element for either party to cross 113 seats, which would give an absolute majority in Sri Lanka's 225-seat Parliament.

Currently, manifestoes are not much help. "Both the parties are more or less on the same lines on most issues, whether it is corruption, liberal economic policies or the North-East (Tamil separatists) problem", says J. Kadegama, economist and commentator.

The main political issue this time is Sri Lanka's system of governance, which switched from power to the prime minister to absolute power with the President. Sources close to President D.B. Wijetunge and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe say that even if the UNP wins, it may have to consider reverting to the old parliamentary system. The Alliance, besides advocating parliamentary supremacy, says it will also push for a ruling that doesn't require a two-thirds majority for ame-

ndments, and scrap the system of referendum which allowed Premadasa to postpone elections and continue in power.

Any which way, both sides are likely to be in for some nasty surprises. For the UNP, it could be a power struggle between Wickremasinghe and Gamini Disanayake, a Jayewardene protege. "In fact", says a senior government official, "the reason behind the President declaring early elections may have as much to do with stemming further rot in the UNP as catching the Alliance off guard. The UNP will have to do some housecleaning".

And if the Alliance — mainly the SLFP — wins, it could, on its part, face trouble as soon as ministerial berths are allotted. Besides, it will have to deal with a president — who is also the head of the cabinet — from the UNP. Presidential elections are due this November, and the new head of state will assume office only next February, which could be a prime recipe for a political crisis.

Also, neither party has yet factored in the LTTE — and a war that is costing the exchequer about Rs 1,600 crore a year — in its plans. "I don't know what will happen after the elections", says Christine Edwards, a Colombo housewife and an undecided. "Or if voting will make a difference. But it's time Sri Lanka got some peace".

— *India Today*

India should keep her hands off Lanka

In an interview with J.R. Jayewardene

Mayank Chhaya

Former Sri Lankan president Junius Jayewardene has said India should continue to keep her hands off Sri Lanka but acknowledged that lately new Delhi has adopted the right approach.

She (India) had already sullied her hands. It is not trusted by its neighbours, especially here. The best thing for her to do is keep her hands off, Mr. Jayewardene said during an interview while responding to the question if India had any role to play in Sri Lanka.

The former president, 85, now leading a retired but an agile life, agreed that during the past five years India's approach towards Sri Lanka had gradually improved.

Mr. Jayewardene spoke of the Indian role during former prime minister Indira Gandhi's government with particular candour. Asked if there was a way to solve the Tamil insurgency problem without compromising the country's integrity, he said the insurgency is almost finished. It would have been over a long ago but for India.

Asked if he was saying India had sustained the insurgency, he told India Abroad News Service India had sustained, financed and trained the Tamil insurgents both at the Tamil Nadu government level as well as help from the central government (under Mrs Gandhi) against a democratically elected government.

He said even former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had started off on a wrong note but he quickly realized and then began to cooperate with the Sri Lankan government in fighting the insurgency. Rajiv and I became very good friends and he helped us take up arms (against the insurgents), Mr. Jayewardene said.

On whether he thought the government

of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao was approaching the Sri Lankan problem non-intrusively, he said Mr. Rao is an adherent to that (the policy of cooperation and keeping distance).

But Mr. Jayewardene pungently added but Mr. Rao is one of one billion people (referring to India's population).

On the outcome of the parliamentary elections he said he was happy that the polls were peaceful. There is no question of happiness or unhappiness at the verdict. Obviously many people wished for a change, he said.

Mr. Jayewardene had unambiguous views on the raging debate over whether or not to abolish the executive presidency, which he originally introduced in the 1970s. He said without a two thirds majority it will not be possible for the People's Alliance to abolish the executive presidency.

It has worked well and I think it will work well. But if there is any change to be made it should be under the constitution through a two thirds majority as well as referendum Mr. Jayewardene said. He said the executive presidency was working well in France as well as in the U.S. and it is the same here.

Asked if there could be problems of incompatibility between a People's Alliance government and a United National Party President, Mr. D.B. Wijetunge, Mr. Jayewardene said they should not behave like ignorant people. With the narrow margin it (the PA) cannot possibly abolish the executive presidency. They should try and work together.

However, he said there was a case for shortening the term of parliament as well as the presidency from the current six years to four or five years. When the

six-year-term was introduced, there was a lot of development work needed in the country. But now that we have taken care of most of that development work, we can have shorter terms, he said.

Mr. Jayewardene said the Sri Lankan economy would remain on course if it continued the economic reform and carried on with a free market economy.

— India Abroad News Service

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Opposition victory may bring ethnic peace

Mervyn de Silva

“We are committed to free-market policies. We will have a clear economic policy and the private sector will be its main promoter.”

So says newly installed Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga, leader of the People's Alliance which won Sri Lanka's August 16 parliamentary election. Dominated by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party of former Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike, Kumaratunga's mother, the Alliance is a coalition that includes communist factions. In her heyday in the early 1970s, Bandaranaike, along with Indira Gandhi in India and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan, epitomised the populist-socialist policies then prevalent in South Asia.

But clearly, the new generation of South Asian leaders have all got the free-market religion. In India, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is busily dismantling the licence-and-permit raj, while his Pakistani counterpart, Benazir Bhutto, is presiding over a major privatisation of state assets. In that context, Kumaratunga's statement only provided fresh proof of how completely the old economic ideologies have been swept away in the region.

The United National Party (UNP), which until its defeat at the polls held power for 17 years, had generally received good marks for its economic policies. But some concerns were raised by a package of pre-election goodies that President D.B. Wijetunge introduced earlier this year. Inflation remains at double digits, and Kumaratunga will have to keep her campaign promise to lower prices. To that end, she has kept the key portfolios of finance and planning for herself.

Some political analysts also believe that the Alliance's victory has raised fresh hopes of an end to the 11-year-old civil war with Tamil secessionist guerrillas in the north and east. Kumaratunga has said she is willing to open unconditional talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who are fighting for a separate homeland in the north and east of the country. In an apparent indication of her determination to find peace, she has held on to the new portfolio of ethnic affairs and national integration.

The prime minister has a busy time ahead of her. The election for Sri Lanka's executive presidency must be held by November. Wijetunge is expected to contest the poll, and many believe he will be opposed by Bandaranaike.

The Alliance has had to postpone plans to change the executive presidency to the old parliamentary system for want of a two-thirds majority.

Lacking a stable majority in parliament, Kumaratunga has to count on the support of the minority parties. To do that she must concentrate on the ethnic problem. The Alliance was denied a clear mandate in the election because it did not get more than 50% of the popular vote. Its 105 parliamentary seats are not enough to give it a clear plurality in the 225-member house. By the same token, the UNP did manage to get a respectable 44% of the vote, which translated into 94 seats in parliament.

The new Alliance administration is dependent on the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), which won seven seats and has promised to support Kumaratunga, and assorted Tamil groups, some of them former separatist guerrillas. But that may not go over well with Sinhala nationalists.

Already, some of the non-Sinhala parties are asserting themselves. In a discussion of the role of the SLMC in the government, its leader M.H.M. Ashraff said: “The SLMC should not be taken for granted”. Asked to explain, he added: “She [Kumaratunga] should realise that this is not an Alliance government; it is an Alliance-SLMC government”.

But Ashraff also gave Kumaratunga the supreme compliment from a minority politician. “What made me sign with Chandrika was the fact that she was the first Sinhala leader who had the courage to identify Sinhala chauvinism publicly. We are opposed to Tamil chauvinism and Muslim chauvinism. I am convinced that a Sinhala leader who is opposed to Sinhala chauvinism is the answer to the bloodbath in our country”.

Ashraff's comments seem to have emboldened S. Thondaman, leader of the plantation Tamils of the central highlands. Thondaman has been a member of UNP cabinets for the past 17 years, but has now informed President Wijetunge that his party, the Ceylon Workers' Congress, will “function independently”.

Thondaman did not insist on his independence when he was a minister in former President Junius Jayewardene's cabinet, nor when he served the late President Ranasinghe Premadasa as his tourism minister. But Jayewardene and Premadasa had clear majorities in parliament. In today's changed circumstances, both the Muslim and plantation Tamil communities are redefining their relationships with their Sinhala-Buddhist partners from a new position of strength.

In the eye of the ethnic storm, of course, are the Tamils of the north and east, not those of the central highlands or the Tamil-speaking Muslims of the east. Kumaratunga will have to respond soon to the statement of Anton Balasingham, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam spokesman, who has welcomed her unconditional offer of a negotiated settlement.

But President Wijetunge has retained the defence portfolio, which is crucial to the government's handling of the Tamil insurgency. Kumaratunga said: “We intend to end the ethnic conflict as soon as possible. I hope to have a reasonable working relationship with the president”. Most analysts believe the Tigers are far more interested in talks with the present government than the UNP, which always insisted they lay down their arms first.

Meanwhile, troubles abound within the UNP camp. Gamini Dissanayake, a senior minister who opposed Premadasa, is making a strong bid to oust ex-Premier Ranil Wickremasinghe from leadership of the UNP parliamentary group. The feuds that once raged between the various Bandaranaike family members seem to have receded into the past with the Alliance victory; now it's the UNP's turn to be riven by dissension.

— *Far Eastern Economic Review*

Sri Lanka tilts to the left

The president of Sri Lanka, Dingiri Banda Wijetunge, took a gamble when he called an early parliamentary general election. He believed that Sri Lankans, however fed up with the ruling United National Party after 17 years in power, would shy away from the left-leaning People's Alliance. With a parliamentary victory behind him, he would enter the even more important presidential contest in November confident of victory. It hasn't worked out that way. The UNP lost on August 16th, albeit by a small margin. Mr Wijetunge could go the same way in November.

The new prime minister is almost certainly Chandrika Kumaratunga, a mother of two children and daughter of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, a prime minister back in the 1970s and widow of yet an earlier prime minister. She was expected to take office on August 19th. Mrs Bandaranaike — albeit she is nearly 80 — now hopes to join her daughter in power by beating Mr Wijetunge for the presidency.

The People's Alliance won 91 directly elected seats and 14 allocated under proportional representation, a total of 105, in the 225-seat parliament. One of its allies, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, won nine seats. The election commissioner, announcing the Alliance victory, was apparently satisfied that it would command a majority in the new parliament. The UNP won 94 seats. A number of small parties shared a few seats and are likely to support the Alliance.

The campaign had had brutal moments, with at least 20 political workers killed. Mrs Kumaratunga claimed the government was plotting to kill her. But election day was fairly peaceful, with the army out in strength to protect the polling booths. Not in the far north, though. There, where the Tamil Tiger separatists are active — in some areas in effective control — there was no voting.

The market economy was the central

issue in the election. The UNP pointed to the country's prosperity, with the economy growing at more than 6% a year. The People's Alliance said the government's policies had led to double-digit inflation and corruption on a scale not seen before in Sri Lanka. The Alliance promised to restore the welfare state and a mixed economy.

Just what sort of welfare state has not been explained. After Ceylon — as it was called in those days — won independence from Britain in 1948, education and medical care were free. Basic foods were subsidised. Legislation to protect workers was the most advanced in Asia. By the time Mrs Bandaranaike's socialist government was thrown out in the election of 1977, more than half the budget went on welfare.

The switch from a market economy was the work of Junius Jayewardene, the lawyer who led the UNP. Backed by a huge majority in parliament, he slashed at most welfare payments. Subsidies were ended. The top rate of income tax was cut from 65% to 35%, indirect taxation filling the gap.

The darker side to the economy is that the poor have become poorer. While a few people have grown visibly — and irritably — very rich indeed, some estimates put 40% of the population below the poverty line. Inflation is high and corruption rampant in high places. Mr Wijetunge is not accused of it; many ministers and bureaucrats are. Most people agree that Sri Lanka needs a government with the will to look afresh at these problems, seen as more important even than the conflict with the Tigers, which is at least being contained.

The new government cannot do much without the president's consent, thanks to a constitutional shift engineered by Mr Jayewardene that transferred real power to an executive presidency, a post he took

himself. His successors have retained this system. Mr Wijetunge thus is head of state, head of government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. It is he who summons parliament and appoints the prime minister and other ministers of the cabinet. He also presides over the cabinet and can hold any portfolio he wishes; Mr Wijetunge is both defence and finance minister.

Even if Mr Wijetunge loses the presidential election in November, he will hold office — short of a coup or revolution, neither of them the least likely — until the end of the year. Though his parliamentary ploy has not worked, he will be hoping for conflict within the Alliance. And he may not be disappointed.

Mrs Kumaratunga was the star of the election, sometimes addressing 30 meetings in a day. She has the sort of energy (and family connections) that put Benazir Bhutto into power in Pakistan. She and her mother have been struggling for supremacy within the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the main party in the Alliance. Mrs Bandaranaike, imperious though infirm, is the official leader of the opposition. Her daughter may be none too keen to see her in the presidency, not least because Mrs Kumaratunga herself has presidential ambitions.

The UNP will not easily live with its defeat. After 17 years, its tentacles extend right down to the lower levels of the bureaucracy. In the election campaign it reminded the electorate that, when Mrs Bandaranaike was in power, there were bread queues and a ban on restaurants serving rice more than twice a week. One newspaper wrote during the campaign that Sri Lankans had to choose either to hold their noses and vote for the UNP, or to close their eyes and vote for the Alliance. For better or worse they have shut their eyes and hoped for the best.

— *Economist*

Conflict and responses to conflict

Kumar Rupasingha

Increases in the devastating effects of violent internal conflicts since the end of the Cold War necessitate a reassessment of political approaches to conflict and greater emphasis on preventive strategies and activities. The development of preventive diplomacy as an effective instrument for the peaceful and constructive resolution and transformation of complex and protracted internal conflicts will involve sustained, multi-dimensional approaches at both the national and international levels. Leadership and contributions in expertise and resources from humanitarian and development agencies, human rights organizations, the scholarly community, conflict resolution organizations, the business community, the media, governments and inter-governmental organizations will be necessary to formulate and implement a viable policy framework to advance preventive diplomacy.

While during the Cold War the West focused on global conflict through the distorting lens of the nuclear threat hanging over all humanity and judged all other conflicts as more or less critical, depending on the degree of superpower involvement, now we can clearly see that these old and newly emerging conflicts have had and will continue to have their own complex dynamics. The dilemma faced by Western governments and publics is that current man-made catastrophes and threatened catastrophes can no longer be neatly categorized, explained or understood as proxy wars or other types of offshoots of the superpower rivalry.

Globally there were 50 serious and emerging ethnopolitical conflicts in 1993-94, according to Ted Robert Gurr, head of the "Minorities at Risk" project. Gurr attributes 26.8 million refugees to these conflicts and about 4 million cumulative deaths over the duration of the conflicts listed. The Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University has compiled an initial list of 28 major armed conflicts in 1993, defined as conflicts which have produced more than 1,000 casualties in a particular year, as well as 22 minor conflicts (less than 1,000 casualties in a year).

The UN Development Programme, in its *Human Development Report 1994*, states: "During 1993, 42 countries in the world had 52 major conflicts and another 37 countries had political violence. Of these 79 countries, 65 were in the developing world".

More than half the conflicts had been under way for more than a decade, taking the lives of four to six million people... Since 1945, more than 20 million people have died in wars and other conflicts.

The writer a Sri Lankan who did his post-graduate studies at the Peace Research Institute, Oslo is Secretary-General of the International Alert, London.

"Lessons from the Philippines — Lessons for Sri Lanka"

Professor Ed Garcia of the University of Philippines and author of several books and articles on theories and practice of conflict resolution, as well the Philippine experience with internal conflicts, presented a lecture entitled "Community-based Strategies for Conflict Resolution: Lessons for the Philippines". The talk was organized by the Centre for Policy Research and Analysis, which is affiliated to the University of Colombo. The talk took place at the Faculty of Law recently.

Professor Garcia, no stranger to Sri Lanka, has interacted with Sri Lankan academics as well as human rights and political activists in various international fora, expressed anguish over the unresolved internal conflict in Sri Lanka. He further observed that this being the "Election Year" in Sri Lanka, the conditions were favourable for a "bipartisan peace initiative". He, however, also cautioned against the tendency on the part of politicians to use the "peace process" for narrow political ends.

Proceeding to the Philippines case, Ed Garcia pointed out that more than 80,000 people had been killed in ethnic conflicts, as well as in relation to conflicts over land. The advance made in resolving the internal conflict was primarily due to "Citizen Participation" in shaping events and in exerting pressure on the State and Guerrillas alike.

Professor Garcia, whose specialty is methodology of conflict resolution backed by practical experience, placed before the audience what he termed his "Bakers Dozen"- or Reflections on 12 essential components of conflict resolution:

- Commitment to a negotiated political solution.
- Citizens participation to ensure continued vigilance that priority issues figure high on the national agenda.
- Recognizing the need for 3rd Party mediation.
- Confidence-building between parties in conflict and strong leadership to harness support for peace process.
- Searching for acceptable processes aimed at overcoming mistrusts and phobia vis a vis each other.
- Defining the substantive issues.
- Identifying areas of convergence, before proceeding to tackle contentious issues.
- Time frame for de-militarization of conflict.
- Monitoring mechanisms.
- Long-term Peace Education Programmes.
- Looking for different alternatives.

Following the presentation by Prof. Garcia, there was a lively discussion amongst the audience which included academics, students, political activists and journalists.

A broad survey carried out by the PIOOM Foundation, a non-partisan, Dutch-based nonprofit organisation conducting research on causes of gross violations of human rights, listed 160 violent and potentially violent domestic and international conflicts in 1992.

PIOOM's survey for that year enumerated 32 "outright wars", in which there were at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year, another 69 low intensity conflicts "in which the violence is more sporadic and less intense", and 59 serious disputes "in which one of the parties has threatened the use of violence or has deployed military troops or made a show of force". The number of outright wars and low-intensity conflicts outweighing the serious dispute category, indicates the potential for escalation to low-intensity conflict or outright war.

Whilst there was a decrease in global spending on armaments from 1987 to 1990 of some \$ 240 billion, military spending in many parts of the world, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, did not decline. In general, violent conflicts have led to the diversion of scarce resources towards military spending. According to the UNDP, in 1990-91 all developing countries spent the equivalent of 60 per cent of their combined expenditures for education and health on military expenditure, compared with 33 per cent in industrialised countries. Among the highest proportional spenders on arms and armed forces in 1990-91 were: Somalia 200%, compared with health and education spending; Ethiopia, 190%; Angola, 208%; Yemen, 197%; Pakistan, 125%; India, 138%; Myanmar, 222%; Iraq, 271%; Sri Lanka, 107%; Syria 373%. (*Human Development Report 1994*)

Countries which have experienced war are extremely vulnerable to further devastation. A U.S. aid delegation warned recently that 20 million people are at risk of starvation in nine African countries, including more than 6 million in war-torn Sudan, Somalia and Rwanda. (*International Herald Tribune, June 1, 1994*)

Further research findings

1. Most of today's conflicts are internal, rather than inter-state. According to the UNDP's *Human Development Report 1994*, only three of the 82 armed conflicts between 1989 and 1992 were between states.

2. Civilians make up the vast majority of casualties in today's wars, according to the UNDP, as much as 90 per cent.

3. Internal conflicts have created the greatest forced movements of people since 1945 — in 1993, 18.2 million refugees and 24 million internally displaced, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It has been estimated that this total could rise to as many as 100 million people by the year 2000.

4. There is a wide gap between indications of the escalation of internal conflicts and attempts at mediation.

5. There is a lack of effective regional frameworks for conflict prevention and resolution.

6. The massive proliferation of small arms throughout the world has increased the scope and lethality of war.

7. Landmines are often used indiscriminately, render vast areas extremely dangerous for civilians and amount to a

lingering legacy of destruction.

8. Strong linkages between criminal activity and conflicts such as drug trafficking and gun-running and extortion.

9. Violent internal conflicts lead to gross abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, as well as genocide, as in Rwanda.

10. many of today's conflicts are identity conflicts, where granting substantial devolution of power or territorial autonomy would likely bring an end to the violence.

(To be continued)

Polls in Jaffna : a futile essay

Sudha Ramachandran

Call for boycott

As usual, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has called for a boycott of the elections.

Whether elections should be held at all in Jaffna has been the most controversial issue in the present polls. The Jaffna electoral district returns 10 members to Parliament. It has an electorate of 5.5 lakhs, the majority of whom live in areas under Tiger control, where Colombo has neither a political nor a military presence. With the LTTE calling for a boycott of the polls, a significant proportion of this population will be unable to exercise their franchise.

With most people in Tiger territory staying away from voting for fear of Tiger reprisals, the question uppermost on many minds is whether the choice of a mere 20,000 voters living in areas cleared by the army, can be accepted as representative of the entire Jaffna District. How credible is such an election? Moreover, are voters in the cleared areas really free to vote and will the elections be fair?

Challenging the legality of holding elections in the peninsula, the TULF filed a petition in a Colombo court. It argued that holding elections in Jaffna contravenes Articles 4E and 93 of the Constitution, which guarantee the right to vote to every citizen of voting age. In the situation prevailing in Jaffna, a free and fair exercise of one's franchise will not be possible.

Moreover, since the Election Commission is using an electoral register prepared in 1986, those who attained voting age since then, are being denied their right to franchise. Despite these valid arguments made by the TULF, the Court has rejected the petition and Jaffna will go to the polls as scheduled.

While the atmosphere in areas 'liberated' by the LTTE is far from conducive to a fair election, the situation in areas 'liberated' by the army is no better. In the outlying islands, the EPDP is in firm control. Its gun-toting cadres are preventing contestants from other parties from campaigning.

The Government's law and order machinery is conspicuous by its absence. Will the UNP allow its ally, the EPDP to carry weapons even on polling day and to tamper with the polling process? That the EPDP will be allowed to do so is feared by many.

Unlike the 1989 elections, when the contest in Jaffna was primarily between EROS and the TULF-EPRLF combine, these groups seem to have little chance of winning now from Jaffna. There has been no scope for political work in Jaffna since 1990, and groups like the EPRLF have lost whatever little support they may have had then.

The contest in the current election appears to be mainly between the EPDP and the SLMC. While the former is likely to win from the islands, the latter enjoys support among the Muslim refugees living in Puttalam, who were driven out of the peninsula by the LTTE.

As for the LTTE, despite its boycott call, it is believed to be supporting "one of the independent groups". Apparently, some candidates in the East have been allowed to campaign by the local Tiger leaders. Yet, in comparison to 1989, the LTTE's involvement is rather low key, for in 1989 the LTTE not only expressed tacit support to the EROS list but also many Tiger sympathisers were known to have contested on this list.

No credibility

Few in the Tamil areas believe in the usefulness of the elections and Parliament. The contestants are aware that the elections will not solve the ethnic problem. Yet, they are contesting to keep Tamil representation from falling into the hands of the Sinhalese parties. The Tamil people then are confronted by an election which to them has neither any use nor credibility. Undoubtedly, the conduct of elections in Jaffna is not indicative of a return to normalcy in the region.

By holding an election in the Tamil areas, perhaps the Government is trying to prove that it is in control. However, by thrusting a farcical election on Jaffna, the Government is fooling no one but itself.

The new wave of Islamic awakening

HASSAN AL - TURABI, the 'spiritual chief' of Sudan's Islamic military government, responds to criticism on questions of human rights, minority rights and the case of Salman Rushdie's apostasy

A new, mature wave of the Islamic awakening is taking place today from Algeria and Jordan to Khartoum and Kuala Lumpur. As first evidenced in the Iranian revolution, this awakening is comprehensive — it is not just about individual piety: it is not just intellectual and cultural, nor is it just political. It is all of these, a comprehensive reconstruction of society from top to bottom.

This widespread Islamic revival has been given impetus by the vacuum left by a bankrupt nationalism, especially Arab nationalism, and African socialism. The post-colonial nationalist regimes had no agenda but to throw out the imperialists. Once they achieved their goal, they had nothing to offer the people. Then they turned to socialism as an alternative to the imperial West. Now, like everyone else, the Islamic world is disillusioned with socialism.

The Islamic awakening began to build in South Asia and the Arab world, as well as in Iran, in the 1950s — participating in some governments in the 1970s. Perhaps due to the limitations of language and access to the sources of Islamic law, the expansion of Islamic consciousness came somewhat late to North Africa and then south of the Sahara. The Gulf war, which brought foreigners into the vicinity of our sacred religious centres in Saudi Arabia, gave an enormous boost to the movement in North Africa, not only among the general population but also among the elites.

The new and critical aspect of the recent Islamic awakening is that the elites in the army and government — the so-called "modern" sector — are themselves becoming Islamicised.

This has already happened in Sudan and is in the process of happening in Algeria. In 1985, the Sudanese army led by General Abdel Raman Siwar el-Dahab intervened to stop Islamisation. But his efforts led to an uprising by junior officers who supported Islamisation.

The form this Islamic awakening has taken has depended on the nature of the

challenge from the West. In Iran, the challenge was very sharp, so the Islamic movement became obsessed with the West. The US identified so closely with the Shah's effort to introduce the post-Christian-West lifestyle — materialist, sexually licentious, highly emancipated in terms of drinking alcohol — that Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers became fixated on confronting "the Great Satan".

In Malaysia, to take one contrasting example, decolonisation came about rather gently. So the people there focused less on the common enemy than on common ideals. The awakening there has thus been more constructive than Iran's revolutionary reaction.

Awakened Islam today provides people with a sense of identity and a direction in life, something shattered in Africa since colonialism. In the African context in particular, it offers a sense of common allegiance.

Islam provides a focus for unity and a minimum consensus in the face of the regionalism and tribalism which have been so devastatingly rampant in Africa. The idea of the "nation" has offered nothing in this regard. Everyone knows that African nations are only the legacy of colonialist cartographers.

Moreover, the Islamic code of *shari'a* provides the people with higher laws and values, which they obey out of belief and not because they are enforced by government.

In the wake of the collapse of materialist totalitarianism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the West has talked endlessly of the rebirth of "civil society", that sphere of activity beyond the reach of government. But only when the Muslims lost the *shari'a* as their binding law under colonialism did they suffer the bitter experience of absolutist government.

Under *shari'a* no ruler could suppress his own people. So the individual was protected and society was autonomous. People felt that the norms that governed

the society were their norms because they were God's laws.

The colonialists did away with that, introducing a sense of alienation between people and government with their secular laws divorced from indigenous values and internal norms. That alienation remained as the legacy of colonial rule. Even if there were formal elections, people just elected their tribal relatives or voted for those who would give them money. There was no representation.

Finally, and fundamentally, neither nationalism nor socialism could mobilise our societies to develop. Religion can be the most powerful impetus for development in social situations where profit and salary incentives are insufficient.

When people are taught that agriculture is their *jihad*, their holy struggle, they will go for it in earnest. 'Be good to God and develop agriculture'. That is the slogan that is transforming Sudan from near-famine to self-sufficiency in food.

To the rich West that may sound strange. But what role did Puritanism play in carving America out of the wilderness? What role did the Protestant ethic play in the development of the European economies? Religion is a motor of development.

Those who fear (or seek?) confrontation with the Islamic awakening point to several areas of clashes with the West: the rights of women, the rights of non-Muslims, the penal code under *shari'a* and the case of Rushdie.

Let me respond. First, on women. It is true that a very powerful tradition developed in some Islamic countries that segregated women from men and deprived them of their rights of sharing equally and fairly in society.

With the new revival of Islam, women are gaining their rights because no one can challenge the Quran in the name of local custom or convention. In Sudan in particular, the Islamic movement campaigned for giving women their political rights. Now, women not only have equal educational chances but are playing substantial

roles in public life — some have gone to parliament. Women returned to the mosque as well.

On the rights of minorities, under *shari'a* there is a guarantee for non-Muslims of freedom of religion and cult. Private life, including education and family, is immune from interference by Islamic state law.

Under such covenants in Islamic history, for example, alcohol was free to be consumed in the Jewish or Christian quarters.

The *shari'a* itself is not one standard code observed worldwide in a monolithic way. It is applied in a decentralised way according to varying local conditions. Different Muslim communities have different schools of law.

On the penal code, when Maj. Gen. Gaafar Mohammed al-Nemeiry applied the *shari'a* penal code in a makeshift manner back in the 1980s as a political gesture to demonstrate his Islamic commitment, it brought worldwide conde-

mnation of cruelty and abuse of human rights. As a result, many in the West think that, under the rule of *shari'a* every act of theft will result in such punishments as the severing of hands or even execution.

That is not true. Over the past two years or so there have been only two such sentences because, under properly administered Islamic law, the degree of proof required is very high.

The whole idea is to associate severe punishment with major theft as a deterrent in order to morally educate the people. Petty theft is punished no more severely than in most of the world.

On Salman Rushdie in Sudan, he could not be convicted of apostasy. Although Islam is very universal in its implications. It does accept territory as the basis of jurisdiction. Thus, the jurisdiction of an Islamic state does not extend beyond that state. Those living abroad are not subject to Islamic law but to international treaty obligations between states.

Within Muslim states, it has been a traditional view that public apostasy is punishable by death, subject to trying to persuade the perpetrator to change his mind and recant. But, from the early days of Islam, apostasy completely coincided with treason, because warring societies were based on religion and someone who publicly abused his religion would objectively join the other party as a combatant.

Today in Sudan such intellectual apostasy as Rushdie's is not punishable by death. It must involve active subversion of the constitutional order.

The Islamic awakening has reached a new stage. It is no longer interested in confronting the West, in fighting with the West. The West is not our preoccupation. We are concerned with the constructive regeneration of our societies by mobilising our souls and our minds, not fighting "Great Satans". Except when a policy is directed against Islam, the West is not the enemy for us.

(New Perspectives Quarterly)

DRUG PRICES

Third World, Fifth Column

U. Karunatilake

In a recent Newspaper feature a medical administrator who appeared to be saying things sweet and reasonable about drug policies suddenly slipped up with the phrase "Third World Generics". Insidiously implied was that Generic Drugs made in the Third World Countries were third class! Here was the sorry spectacle of a creature who owed his education, his job and his salary to the poor of his country, deliberately devaluing the rationals of the WHO policies for Third World self-sufficiency in medicines.

Since the early '70's WHO had intensified its efforts to bring effective Health Care to poor populations mainly by bringing Primary Health Care and Essential Drugs, within reach of Third World Budgets. In this effort WHO was fortunate at the time to be able to enlist the dedica-

ted assistance of Health Workers Worldwide who had committed themselves to the Social Welfare ideals of the UN Charter.

In Lanka this effort was spearheaded by Prof. Bibile and his team who under WHO auspices set up a procedure for drug rationalization that soon became standard for most poor countries. WHO had identified these countries as those grappling with health problems created not just by poverty but by the drug promotional activities of Multinationals who had aggravated these problems.

Drug rationalization was made easy to some extent by the Drug Regulatory activities of the Governments of some industrialized Countries which were also engaged in curbing Multinational profitee-

ring, Monopoly Moves, and the promotion of irrational use of drugs. Fortunately the Health Administrators in the Industrial World upto two decades ago were mainly those of the Post War, Welfare States interested in the well being of their people. With Reaganomics and Thatcherism breaking out in the seventies Drug Regulation in the Industrial World was given a subtletwist that ensured once again the dominance of the Mutinational Corps. Just as Reaganomics and Thatherism got under way with the use of wierd Victorian Vocabularies so did the spill over of these policies into the medical field also rely on such Vocabulary. The catch phrases of the New economics were.

1. Market Oriental growth for the Health Sector
2. Market Oriented innovation, inve-

stment, and return on Health Services.

3. Market Oriented Research and Development
4. Abolition of Controls
5. Profitability of the Health Sector, the pervasive motive for the progress.

This vocabulary of catch phrases took the idea of profitable investment in Human Suffering from the Multinational Corporations to the Actual Health Services and the new generation of Health Workers of the '80's.

With this turn in the '80's the Multinational Corporations began claiming that a large percentage of their Budget was innovation and research expenditure.

The 'Research' consisted of picking up leads from fundamental research carried out at Worldwide centres of excellence and following up avenues that gave promise of quick returns. Unfortunately in the Pharmaceutical Industry 'quick returns' are obtained from areas of wide spread suffering like Aids, Anxiety States, Asthma, Allergy, Cancer, Diabetes, Gastritis, Hypertension, Insomnia and Skin Ailments.

The result is that research workers, in research based industry keep driving (or being driven) round in the same profit obsessed circles all the time.

All the losses in the Multinational Corporations from poor decision making, outright corruption, inefficiency, bribery of Governments, and downright Corporate ignorance get camouflaged in the area of tax exempted Research expenditure. Even if the mountain has laboured long to bring out a product which does not sell against the established drugs or which cripples or maims its users the research which was apparently unable to predict its clinical failure or its ill effects gets tax exemption.

Also tax exempted are all the so called New Product Development Activities for such dud products as well as legal compensation paid out to victims of ill effects. The Multinational Dividends paid out of all this blunder, deceit, murder and maiming, is of course like in the armaments industry

the cream of the share market.

Innocent of all this abuse of their intellectual endeavour the real research workers at international centers of excellence continue to spew out fundamental information which is greedily pounced on by Multinational R & D and shrewdly transformed into their so-called intellectual Property.

A depressing example of this process is the application of the brilliant fundamental discoveries in molecular biology which have swung vaccine production out of the hands of Medical Research Foundations into the clutches of the MNC's. The tragic side of the Joke here is that masses in the developed and developing countries who used to get immunization at a nominal cost via the Research Institutions on both sides of the erstwhile Iron Curtain now find they have to pay fantastic prices for vaccines from Multinationals. These Multinationals who coolly claim that they pass a million or two out of their ill-earned profits to some Research Foundations, are actually being subsidised by the WHO on their tax tales of losses on Research and Development. Worse still some Research Foundations have even abdicated the function of testing the bio-engineered vaccines. Adverse effects, or may be failure of a vaccine is now often established on a statistical basis after mass administration in the Third World. Even so the MNC involved takes over the function of Judge and Jury and Repriever as has happened in the case of fluoro-refrigerants, and leaded fuels and Transformer Oils in other areas of Health and Environmental monitoring.

With a fraction of the subsidies paid out (to keep these MNC's from putting up their prices further) Governments could have set up a worldwide net-work of applied biotechnology units, to research, produce, test and monitor administration of, all the vaccines the world needs at low cost.

WHO has already achieved cost control of Essential Drugs so that, except in Lanka, the country of its conception the Drug Rationalization process has:-

1. Created a massive viable Generic Drug Industry in the Industrialized Countries on which the American Federal

Drug Authority has after careful investigation and follow up delivered a verdict of soundness, safety and cost effectiveness rating above the MNC's.

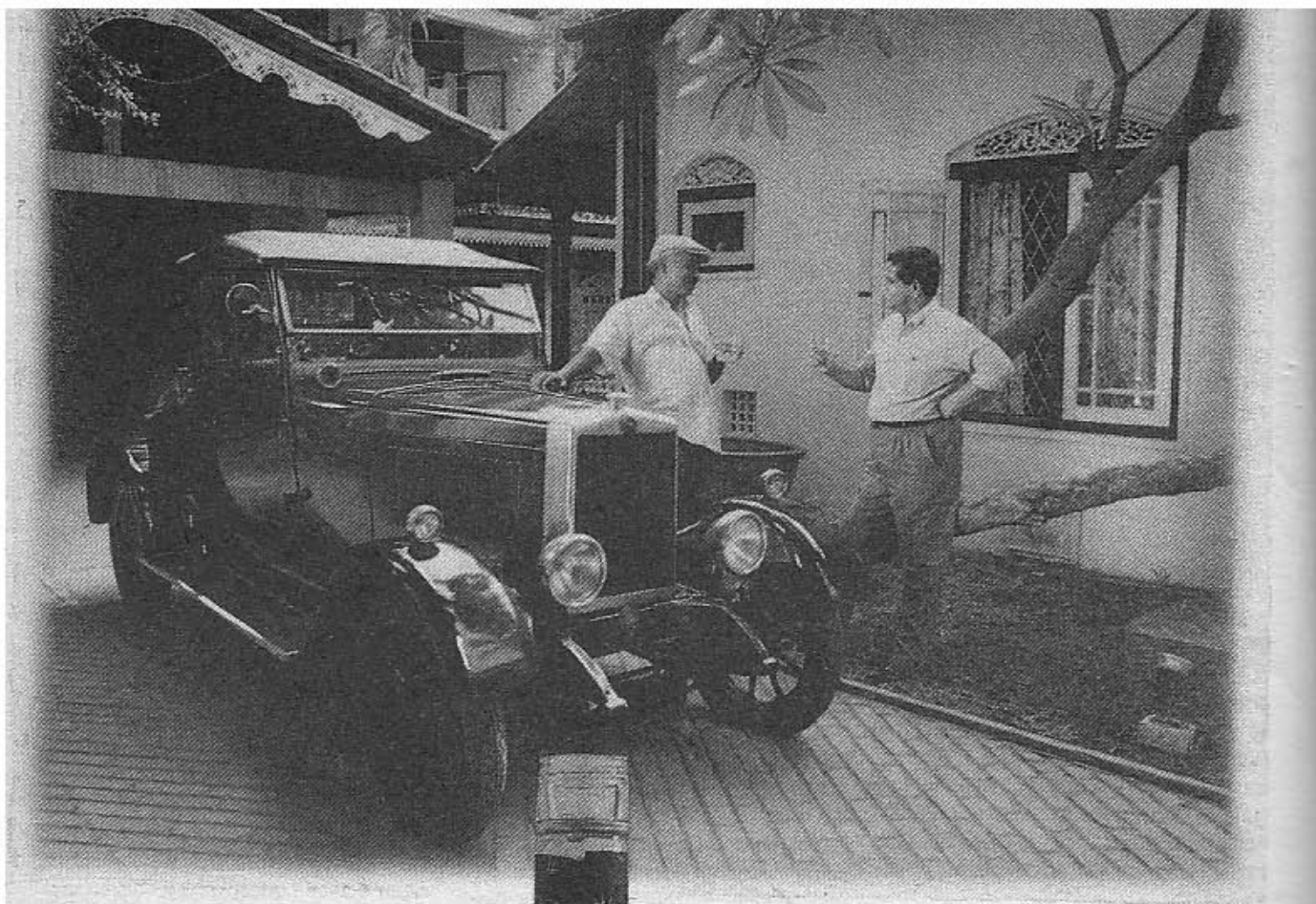
2. Set up a Third World Network of UN sponsored Drug Factories in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific Region which produces high quality generic drugs to meet Government Tender requirements of these countries, as well as a vigorous Export Market in each region.

Hence our Medical Administrator's belittling and patronising comment on 'Third World Generics' signals a new emerging class of Third World Administrators nurtured on the toil and suffering of Third World Populations but ready to betray their people for personal incentives offered by the MNC's. Falling for private promotional goodies is bad enough but getting even partially brainwashed by the pseudo-scientific promotional claims of the MNC's is a griveous insult to the Universities they attended both at home and abroad.

In Lanka this MNC's Fifth Column of administrators, professionals and sometimes (sad to say) Academics has from the eighties systematically dismantled the clean edifice conceived by Wickramasinghe and Bibile and built by Bibile and his inspired team.

While in the country of its Conception the mopping up operations of the Witch Hunt against Drug Rationalization are nearing completion and the last of these who co-operated in Bibile's great adventure are in the sniper's sights, those inspired by his ideas are sowing the seeds of Scientific Welfarism from the Atlantic to the Pacific. May be even these workers will be targeted by the MNC's because the MNC Fifth Column apart from gaining control of Governments appears to be infiltrating into several UN bodies like UNIDO, WHO and UNCTAD. In fact, quite a few of those administrators, in our own Health Ministry who violently opposed implementation of the Bibile-Wickramasinghe reforms compelling Bibile to go to the Ministry of Industries for implementation have subsequently become sundry WHO Officials around the World on the basis of Bibile's reputation.

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Think about it: killer comets are out there

Arthur C. Clarke

At 0946 GMT on the morning of 11 September, in the exceptionally beautiful summer of the year 2077, most of the inhabitants of Europe saw a dazzling fireball appear in the eastern sky....

Moving at 50 kilometers a second, a thousand tons of rock and metal impacted on the plains of northern Italy, destroying in a few flaming moments the labor of centuries.

The cities of Padua and Verona were wiped from the face of the Earth; and the last glories of Venice sank forever beneath the sea as the waters of the Adriatic came thundering landward after the hammer blow from space...

After the initial shock, mankind reacted with a determination and a unity that no earlier age could have shown. Such a disaster, it was realized, might not occur again for a thousand years — but it might occur tomorrow. So began Project Spaceguard.

— "Rendezvous with Rama," 1973

COLOMBO — Soon after the last fragments of the comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 crashed into Jupiter last month, the monsoon skies above my home in Colombo cleared momentarily and I hurried to set up my 14-inch Celestron telescope.

I didn't really expect to see anything, so I could hardly believe my eyes when I clearly observed a line of dark bruises spread out across the planet's southern hemisphere.

Some imaginative souls suggested that the comet might have a catastrophic impact on Jupiter, but its effect will be largely cosmetic. And it will certainly have no effect on Earth, despite the inevitable alarmist warnings by religious fanatics.

But the spectacular collision between the newly discovered comet with the solar system's largest planet has brought sudden new attention to a genuine threat: the chance that a rogue comet or asteroid could strike Earth, with possibly devastating consequences.

As a result, the fictional "Project Spaceguard" I described in my 1973 novel will now begin in reality if Congress approves an amendment to the 1994 NASA authorization bill requesting the space agency to identify and catalogue within 10 years "the orbital characteristics of all comets and asteroids

The author of "2001: A Space Odyssey," invented the communications satellite.

greater than one kilometer in diameter in orbit around the Sun that cross the orbit of the Earth."

Though this amendment was prompted by the Shoemaker-Levy comet, it is really the result of an "International Near-Earth-Object Detection Workshop" organized by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1992. With a nod to "Rendezvous with Rama," the official report of this workshop was entitled the Spaceguard Survey.

I wonder what Thomas Jefferson would have thought of these developments, in view of his famous remark on hearing of a meteorite landing in New England: "I'd rather believe that two Yankee professors lied than that stones fell from the sky."

Certainly no one could have imagined how quickly and how dramatically a cosmic event so apparently removed from everyday affairs would become prime-time news.

In view of the number of collisions in this century alone — most notably, a comet or asteroid that exploded in 1908 in Siberia with the force of 20 hydrogen bombs — there is a very good case for a global survey of the possible danger, particularly as the shared cost among nations would be negligible compared with most national defense budgets.

(Historians might also be advised to undertake some surveying. Just as the numerous meteor-impact craters on Earth were never found until we started looking for them, so there may have been disasters in history that have been misinterpreted. Sodom and Gomorrah have a good claim to be meteorite casualties. How many others are there?)

Many people would probably prefer not to know of impending cosmic doom, if nothing could be done to avert it. Yet given sufficient warning time — which we hope Spaceguard would provide — we should be able to develop the technology necessary to ward off, or even destroy, such intruders from outer space.

There are at least three ways in which oncoming asteroids, or their cometary cousins, might be deflected. The first is the brute force approach: nuke the beast. A sufficiently large bomb — probably in the gigaton class, or the equivalent of about a billion tons of high explosive — could split an intruder into many fragments.

This would not necessarily be a good thing, because some of the pieces might still be heading straight toward us. The atmo-

sphere, however, would burn up most of the smaller fragments, and at least instead of massive devastation in one area there might be minimal damage spread over numerous sites. Needless to say, such a preemptive strike is advocated by enthusiastic and currently under-employed bomb designers.

Perhaps a better solution is one I adopted in another novel, "The Hammer of God," in which a potential killer asteroid is detected a year before it will collide with Earth, giving astronauts barely enough time to make a rendezvous and deflect it into a harmless orbit by mounting rocket thrusters on its surface.

Given enough warning time — at least several years — this could be done with very modest amounts of power. An initial deflection of only a few centimeters, at the beginning of a multimillion-kilometer journey, could ensure that the asteroid steered well clear of us.

Although the orbit of a solid body like an asteroid can be calculated centuries in advance (once the object has been discovered) the rocket-thruster solution might not work so well with comets. These flying icebergs warm up as they approach the sun and begin to vent gas. The resulting "jet propulsion" makes their future position uncertain, so if we ever have to deflect an oncoming comet, we would have to allow a very significant safety margin.

An even more elegant solution has been proposed by scientists at NASA and elsewhere: "solar sailing." The plan would be to attach a huge lightweight mirror of metal foil to the comet or asteroid, capturing the minute but continuous pressure exerted by sunlight. Unfortunately, the acceleration produced by this feeble pressure would be so minimal that years, even decades, of warning time might be required.

All these solutions would require a vast investment in new technology. But people who say "Why waste money on space?" should remember the dinosaurs, whose extinction it is now widely believed was caused — or at least accelerated — by the impact of a giant meteorite around 65 million years ago.

And NASA's increased commitment to identifying threatening bodies in space could have another benefit: It could give new inspiration to America's faltering space program, and restore some of the lost magic of the Age of Apollo.

— The New York Times

EXTERNAL COMPULSIONS OF SOUTH ASIAN POLITICS. Edited by Shelton U. Kodikara. Sage Publications, M-32 Greater Kailash Market-1, NEW DELHI-100 048. 1993. Rs 325. pp352.

A semblance of South Asian politics

Punyapriya Dasgupta

This is another seminar related book. Some of the articles included in the volume were written for a seminar in early 1989 at the University of Colombo. Others are reprints of papers published elsewhere, a couple of articles were written by the editor of the book, Shelton Kodikara, a Colombo academic, to give the publication a semblance of comprehensiveness.

The Ford Foundation found the outcome of such an exercise meritorious enough to be encouraged with a grant and the result is, as the blurb says, a publication that "will interest students of South Asian politics and international relations".

The book retains in its title the theme of the seminar: External Compulsions of South Asian Politics. Its purported aim is to explain how the international system has influenced the regional subsystem of South Asia and why the South Asians themselves invite external powers to come and play some role in the scene.

The parts played by the United States, the erstwhile Soviet Union and to some extent by China are dwelt upon. And since, by the time the publication of this book had been arranged, the Gulf war was fought, it was thought necessary to have a chapter on the impact of this important event next door, on the South Asian peoples. The task of writing this piece fell to Prof K.R. Singh of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Of the thirteen professors and researchers contributing to this book, four from Sri Lanka make the largest national group — understandably, because the seminar was held in Colombo. Of the others, three are from India, two from Pakistan and one each from Nepal, Bangladesh and USA. All of them do not write about the external compulsions of South Asian states.

The longest essay, of 35 pages, by Shaukat Hassan of Dhaka University is devoted entirely to the ethnic issues that have provoked questions on internal stability in South Asia. After a survey of the problems of the Chakmas in Bangladesh, of the Sikhs and the Assamese (but surprisingly, not of the Kashmiris) in India, of the Pathans, Sindhis and Baluchis in Paki-

stan and of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, Shaukat Hassan lists the reasons for the rise of the ethnic challenges to the so-called nation-states in the subcontinent.

In South Asia the ruling elites' ideas of national integration proved faulty because they sought to repress or even eliminate the salience of cultural and linguistic diversity within a polity.

Jinnah's rejection of Bengali as a national language of Pakistan, although it was spoken by the majority of the people, was the beginning of the process that ended with the creation of Bangladesh. The Sinhalese rejection of Tamil threw the island of Sri Lanka into its still unfinished civil war. The competition for scarce resources and scarce economic opportunities aggravates ethnic tension. And when governments run by national parties fail to remove ethnic grievances, sectarian political parties rise and amplify ethnic demands.

On the main topic of the book, that is, external compulsions in South Asia, the principal thesis has been presented in what has been described as the "core chapter" of the book contributed by Rasul Rias of Quaidi Azam University in Islamabad.

Briefly, it is that internal conflicts in South Asia have largely determined the process of external interactions and also that amity or enmity between of among the global powers has influenced intra-South Asian relations only marginally at the most.

This Pakistani professor admits that India's population resources and military capability are far greater than the combined strength and resources of the rest of the South Asian countries.

This structural imbalance would continue to remain a source of conflict within the region unless either India's primacy is acknowledged by word and deed by the other South Asians or someone else — most likely, Pakistan — acquires and projects a military capability big enough to counterbalance India.

From this viewpoint the development of nuclear weapons by Pakistan can be justified. Rias is aware at the same time that although a nuclear parity may produce strategic stability, the "traditional rivalry" between India and Pakistan is not only unlikely to end but may even enlarge the geographical area of competition.

Pervaiz Cheema's 'Security in South Asia: An Approach' is a reprint of a paper first published in *South Asia Journal*. This professor, also of Quaidi Azam University, parades his government's propaganda on Kashmir with some academic make-up. He sees the "Kashmiri intifada" as the "universally acknowledged product of a new generation of frustrated young Kashmiris rather than (a) manifestation of Pakistani efforts".

He seems unaware of the fact that in the original intifada in Israeli-occupied Gaza, Palestinian children fought with stones and slings and not with the Kalashnikov rifles which their elders had used in the sixties and the seventies. In Kashmir Pakistan supplied the separatist militants it had motivated and trained, with abundant Kalashnikovs and other weapons.

This Pakistani academic has many solutions to Kashmir's problem, from which he wants India and Pakistan to choose. His preamble is that India should not insist on treating Kashmir as integral to it when Pakistan refuses to accept such a position. He suggests partition of Kashmir along the river Chenub leaving very little of the State of Jammu & Kashmir to India.

Alternatively, he is for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to remain with Pakistan, Jammu and Ladakh with India and the Valley to be placed under UN trusteeship for ten years after which a plebiscite should decide whether this core of Kashmir should join Pakistan or India or become independent.

Cheema concedes that these solutions may not be the only ones available. His anxiety is that the Kashmir issue must be settled and only then will nuclear development, domestic upheavals and outside equalisers lose their potency.

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T. D. S. A. Dissanayaka

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