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BENAZIR

BHUTTO

ON

ISLAM, NAM AND

THE REGION

— *by the Editor*



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WAR AND PEACE

in the dhammadeepa

Mervyn de Silva

Two important events dominated the past fortnight. Each could have a major impact on the politics of 1995 and perhaps beyond. Each would certainly determine the popularity of the People's Alliance this year and perhaps Sri Lanka's political stability in the foreseeable future. Each event relates to a central issue — (a) economic policy and (b) peace. The two are not unconnected. In fact, President Chandrika's strategy for survival and success is founded on what Dr. Lal Jayawardene spelt out as 'the peace dividend' in his Bandaranaike Memorial Lecture. (If we can trust the widely read political columnist of the *Sunday Times*, Lal typed out the President's policy statement to parliament on his machine in the early hours of Friday 6th).

It takes two to make peace. Is the LTTE ready to make peace or is it merely testing the will of the newly elected government? It did have quite a long honeymoon with the Premadasa administration with a powerful LTTE delegation led by Mahattaya spending months in Colombo negotiating a peace settlement. And all this was done on the explicit instructions of the LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, a master of the Maoist tactic of 'talk-talk, fight-fight'.

After three rounds of 'peace talks', the President and the LTTE leader signed an agreement on a "cessation of hostilities" which would be converted to a formal ceasefire if all went well.

The last delegation to Jaffna marked an interesting change — the inclusion of a Brigadier and the Director of the Navy's Training Institute. This change in the composition of the delegation was more than a symbolic salute to the island's Armed Forces.

It was a recognition by the newly elected President of the increasingly crucial role of the Army in the decision-making process. In a BBC interview, Prime Minister (and later President Chandrika) had rather harsh things to say about the Armed forces its vested interests in the war, and marked indifference to any serious attempt at "conflict resolution" or any effort

to negotiate a reasonable settlement. (One also observed the promotion of five Brigadiers to the rank of Major-General). The fact is that a modest ceremonial Army has grown — about 100,000 today — and now claim more than a million dollars a day to fight the toughest, and the most dedicated guerrilla group in the world. And a guerrilla group that has a "naval arm", the 'Sea Tigers', while working furiously on constructing an airplane. Yes, the LTTE is a proven master of the 'war-war jaw-jaw' approach. It has always kept its powder dry.

But it does recognise institutions that are now more powerful than the Tamil movement or the Sri Lanka government. For instance, the Catholic Church which also runs a State that is internationally recognised, the Vatican. It is located in a small area of Rome but its writ runs across the world, wherever there is a Catholic community or a regime sensitive to Catholic opinion, including the man in the White House. John Kennedy for example.

AUGUST-NOVEMBER

In mid-August the P. A. got a rude shock. It could only win 106 seats in an assembly of 225 MP's. After 17 long years, the UNP led by a colourless "country cousin" Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, the man who was NOT expected to be President, won 94 seats and a surprisingly respectable 44% against the P. A.'s modest 50%. It was Chandrika who raised that 50% to record-breaking 64%. The reason? In a face-to-face, (a) Charisma (b) the combined minorities who have recognised in her a politician untouched by racial-religious prejudice, committed to a multi-ethnic society, free of discrimination, and to democratic ideals. Among these minorities were the (Indian) Tamil plantation workers who had tamely followed Mr. Thondaman's orders. No more. Both "block votes" cut traditional links with the UNP. Thus, the record breaking 64%. The vote in some parts of the northern peninsula was less than 3%. The word was out. The LTTE order — no participation.

DEFENCE VOTE

There is another "vote" though which

is even more significant to any Sri Lankan regime — the defence budget. Sri Lanka was satisfied with a ceremonial army. The police could handle strikes or village-level violence..... until "group" violence (i.e. communal riots) became a feature of Sri Lankan politics — 1956 and 1958. But the expansion of the armed forces began after JVP insurgency of 1971 and the post-1983 EELAM WAR.

Numbers, expenditure, professionalism, modernisation and weaponry, and most of all the increasingly serious threat to the island's territorial integrity and sovereignty, altered rapidly and radically the institutional character of the armed forces and its role, more covert than covert, in

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high-level decision-making. In short, a seat in the cabinet. Our more obviously a voice in the National Security Council, with a veto on occasion. So, it was a charismatic but an innocent Chandrika Kumaratunga who believed she could translate her stirring slogan "Peace in Our Times" to an everyday reality.

First, it takes two to negotiate peace; in this instance, the LTTE. Yes, the LTTE did have a problem. There were other Tamil groups and parties, parliamentary or "militant", which thought its views mattered or its voice should be heard. Wrong. The LTTE dealt with that little problem by ordering the assassination of Mr. Karavai Kandasamy, the DPLF leader, in his home in Dehiwela. Mr. Kandasamy had presented his own 14-point plan to the government. His death was a clear signal "to all concerned" that LTTE is the "sole legitimate spokesman of the people of Tamil Eelam". On this matter, there is no compromise — from Opposition Leader A. Amirthalingam to EPRLF boss (in Madras) Padmanabha and it started way back in SLFP times, Mayor of Jaffna Alfred Durayyapah.

EXPATRIATE TAMIL

Velupillai Prabhakaran is a militarist more than a politician but he understands quite clearly the politico-military nature of his struggle to establish EELAM. He has however inverted the Clausewitzian dictum — war is a continuation of politics by other means. For Prabhakaran politics is a continuation of war by other means. The advent of the Chandrika Presidency, an electoral triumph made possible by the minorities including the Tamils outside the LTTE's mini-state. The Jaffna peninsula, He cannot ignore that fact nor neglect that constituency.

Nor can he ignore the Pontiff, who has a worldwide constituency, though his State occupies only a small part of the city of Rome. It is largely in Europe, and then the US, Canada and Australia, that the EELAM cause has active supporters, fund-raisers in particular. The LTTE cannot ignore the increasing pressure from the large Christian community in the North now that Pope John Paul has included the *dhammadeepa* in his itinerary.

Nor can the convent-educated Chandrika Kumaratunga ignore the pressure from the Church the pro-PA Christians and a Christian constituency in the north to open a "safe passage" from the peninsula.

Though the Sri Lankan terrain is small and not all that important the exercise in decision-making, (diplomacy in short) reveals the complexities of ethnic conflict, and the fundamental issue of self-determi-

nation in a post-Cold war world, shaped by new problems (identity) and new players, including the antistate LTTE, the Vatican, recognised as a State but with "citizens" across the world. And in that context, we also note that the local

Church, at least the Chilaw diocese has taken on the VOA (The Voice of the sole superpower) while the Buddhist prelates would like to have a clarification from the Pontiff on a certain Papal declaration on the dhamma.

Tamil parties hopeful but wary of LTTE

S. Selvakumar

Tamil political leaders expressed hope about prospects for peace following the cessation of hostilities agreed upon between the Government and the LTTE, but also urged caution in relying on the LTTE to fulfil its side of the deal.

Tamil United Liberation Front President M. Sivasithamparam:

We are very happy and welcome the decision. We hope this will lead to a permanent ceasefire and a permanent end to hostilities. The TULF wants this to be a prelude to meaningful negotiations for a political settlement of the problem.

On the question whether the LTTE can be trusted: especially going by its past record, there is no question about trusting the LTTE. They have agreed, and we will wait and see. In the first instance, there should be mutual trust which should blossom into a permanent solution and we would like all political parties, militant or otherwise, to get into the mainstream of politics.

D. Siddharthan, Leader, People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE):

we welcome this move. We hope that it will develop into a permanent ceasefire and pave the way for a permanent solution

and a permanent peace. But a word of caution: In the past the LTTE had used the opportunity of a ceasefire to eliminate their political opponents. Hundreds of cadres of our party, including leaders like Vasu and Kannan were killed by the LTTE when they had a ceasefire with the IPKF. I also recall the assassination of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran, and Sam Tambimuttu. Though we have our serious doubts, let us wait and see, and hope for the best.

Douglas Devananda MP, Leader, Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP):

The truce will certainly give some relief to the people. But the problems of the Tamil people are quite different from the problems of Prabhakaran. The problems of the Tamil people cannot be solved by talking only with Prabhakaran.

Mr. Prabhakaran already enjoys enormous power with his own military and his own administration. In the event of the peace talks succeeding, what will the LTTE leader get? It will only be a demotion from his present status of power. If the President is genuine in her attempt to find peace, the results of her efforts will expose the LTTE to the world and it will isolate Mr. Prabhakaran.

LABOUR UNREST

CMU Press Conference

Considerable press and media coverage has been given to what has been described as "labour unrest", since the Government of the Peoples Alliance took office. Undue prominence has been given to a few cases where violence or other unlawful acts on the part of some workers in relation to managerial staff had occurred. This has been especially so in the case of a few foreign export-oriented enterprises in and outside the so-called Free Trade Zones. The intrusion of the Board of Investments (BOI) into the field of industrial relations in respect of such enterprises also deserves to be considered. We think that certain vested interests are

seeking to brow-beat the new Government into abandoning the Election promises of the Peoples Alliance in relation to worker rights in that context.

The purpose of the Press Conference is to explain the Union's views in relation to the handling of industrial relations by the Government of the Peoples Alliance, with particular reference to strikes and lock-outs that have occurred or continued since it took office. This has to be considered having regard to undertakings given by the Peoples Alliance in its General Election Manifesto on the subject of "Trade Union and Labour Rights".

Talking to the Tigers

President Kumaratunga, emotionally timing the cessation of hostilities to coincide with the 96th birthday of her revered father S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike said that the political package she proposed to offer would be based on the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1958. Some would call regionalism, others federalism and others some otherism. We must not be caught up in mere terminology, nor must be in an emotional make-believe world of our own when we are dealing with a very committed organisation that has repeatedly said they will stand for nothing less than "Eelam", — a separate sovereign state.

The road to peace is full of pot-holes and land-mines on the way. History itself is replete with occasions when signatories to peace accords went to war. Adolf Hitler signed a peace treaty with Neville Chamberlain in Munich while preparing for war, and eventually going to war. The 1990 peace talks with President Premadasa were officially 'on' when 400 policemen were killed in one night in the Eastern Province. There is need to remember, that vigilance is the price of liberty.

On the economic front everybody was asking President Kumaratunga for a comprehensive statement. Indeed she gave it in full and overflowing measure. That's the kind of stuff the country was waiting to hear and by lunch time on Friday the share market showed signs of booming again.

Sunday Times

But the longest journey must begin with the smallest step. Given the history of the conflict and the rancour and mistrust that has piled up over the years, those first steps have not been easy for either side. Now that they have been taken, it is to be hoped that further advances will be less difficult.

Many of Sri Lanka's foreign friends have long indicated their willingness to invest substantially in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-torn districts if the necessary conditions are established and peace is at hand. President Kumaratunga's electoral pledge of forging a durable peace clearly won the applause and support of the people of the war zone. Had the Tigers permitted it, there is little doubt

that they would have massively voted for her for president. The present breakthrough must therefore necessarily enhance her stature in the peninsula and invest greater momentum in the peace process as it takes hold. But, as we said in the beginning, there is much long and hard ground to cover.

Predictably, the anti-LTTE Tamil parties and groups have expressed their reservations. Given their past experience, nobody can fault them for that. Nevertheless it is necessary that all sections of the Lankan polity must support the process that has now begun. Its fruition will both halt the senseless blood letting which has been the country's lot for too long and enable this island to realize its undoubted economic potential. Success in this endeavour will mean a better life for us all.

Sunday Observer

On the Tamil problem she has stated that she was for "peace with Honour". We have on these columns been much critical of her when according to early statements of some of her spokesmen it appeared that they were pursuing 'Peace at anycost'. On this issue too there have been much doubts whether the PA government has been firm enough in its dealings so far. President Kumaratunga has won the confidence of a significant portion of the Tamil community with her sincere attempts to resolve the issue. But her earlier statements which appeared critical of the security forces and her quick decision to lift the ban on certain categories of goods going to the North resulted in fears of being too soft on the LTTE.

There still appears to be some mollycoddling of the Tigers. For example there was last week's picture of the government and LTTE negotiators with the flag of "Eelam" between the tables. It is indeed hilarious that government officials and even commissioned officers of the armed services should meekly sit before the flag of a rebel group which has not yet disavowed its objective of establishing a separate state. This kind of behaviour certainly does not convey the impression of seeking peace with honour.

The ceasefire announced last Friday brings in further implications. Foreign observers are to be brought into monitor

the ceasefire. Some of the countries that have already indicated their willingness to send in monitors are known for their sympathies with the LTTE. The neutrality of such monitors should be beyond questions.

And in proceeding with these negotiations, at no stage should any indication be given that the government has ever considered acceptance of a separate state. President Kumaratunga has achieved some degree of success in bringing about a ceasefire. But much there is a hard and tortuous road ahead. She must continue to negotiate with sincerity but firmly not forgetting the fact that the unitary state of Sri Lanka is non-negotiable.

Sunday Island

Has the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga some extra sensory perception to ignore Prabhakaran's depraved record and reach an accommodation when Rajiv Gandhi himself was betrayed. Can Mr. Rajan Asiriwathan succeed where Mr. Dixit failed.

What then can we do, our readers may ask? Are we, a nation of Buddhists, who believe in the sanctity of all forms of life to indulge in the carnage of a civil war in pursuit of a criminal. This is an option which cannot even be seriously contemplated.

Dr Rajan Hoole an Academic living in Jaffna provides part of the answer. Dr. Hoole says that the LTTE "is an institution which can suppress everything in Tamil society that is healthy and decent" and he identifies a remedy which can deprive the LTTE leadership of legitimacy. "Only the Tamils can do that".

Legitimacy can arise only with democracy and democracy is not negotiable as the Government is attempting to do. We deplore the attempts of the President to reinforce Prabhakaran and his clique with 39,000 million rupees. She can demonstrate her bona fides to the Tamils and all our communities by spending this colossal sum of money on the Eastern Province because it has a democratic administration. The Tamils here and abroad would prefer to see democracy being rewarded rather than fascism being favoured.

Sunday Leader

Benazir Bhutto Speaks

*The Prime Minister of Pakistan answers questions from the Editor of the **Lanka Guardian***

Q: What is it like to be woman Prime Minister or party leader in an Islamic country? I pose this question because Islamic society, it is said, imposes restriction on women? Western writers call it oppressive?

A: First, I should like to dispel the wholly wrong impression in some western minds that an Islamic society is oppressive to women and that it imposes restrictions on women. Nothing can be farther from truth. Islam came as a great liberating force, liberating mankind from many bondages particularly liberating women folk from the shackles of customs and traditions prevalent at the time. Islam gives equal rights to man and woman and makes them stand on equal pedestal before God. It was Islam which for the first time in human history gave unique rights to women — the right to divorce, the right to inheritance, the right to alimony and the right to child's custody. Which other religion has given these rights to women?

It was centuries later when the western women began agitating for the rights to them which were long guaranteed by Islam. So it is wrong to say that Islam imposes restrictions or denies rights to women. True, that in some Muslim societies the women are suppressed but that is because of the male prejudice and male chauvinism and has nothing to do with Islam.

After correcting this misconception I would like to say that it is a pleasant experience to be a party chief and the Prime Minister of an Islamic society.

Q: How serious is the threat to Pakistan from domestic unrest, ethnic and regional?

A: Domestic unrest is a part of democratic process in any democratic society. The acrimonious debates in the national and provincial assemblies by opposition parties forms part of democratic process especially in the third world countries. The present government is not facing any

domestic unrest as such, however, opposition's demands sometimes create turmoil which is never a threat to the country. The present government came to power after fair, free and impartial elections. It has majority in the national and three provincial assemblies. Its a popular government which has deep roots in masses.

We do not have any ethnic problem which may be regarded as a serious threat to the country. All the religious parties and ethnic groups are free to move and practice according to their wishes and norms. Almost all the religious and ethnic parties have their representatives in the National Assembly and the Senate.

We have a hostile and powerful country in this region, which is 10 times bigger and militarily far stronger than us. Pakistan being a small country has limited sources and cannot match its power with its neighbour. Our neighbour's military might is a serious threat to the security and sovereignty not only to Pakistan but also to the smaller states in the region.

Q: After the collapse of Communism, Islam or "Islamic Fundamentalism" has been widely presented as a new menace. How do you understand this attempt to demonise one of the world's great religion?

A: The so-called "Islamic Fundamentalism" is a distorted view of Islam being propagated by certain vested interests in the west. It has become fashionable in some western countries to flash a photograph of a bearded man or a veiled woman and stick the caption "fundamentalist" on it.

Of course there is Islamic resurgence throughout the Muslim world. This resurgence is often misrepresented in the west as "fundamentalism" but in effect it is a return to the faith by the followers of Islam. They are disenchanted with the inequities and uncertainties of the time and see in their faith a remedy to the problems of contemporary age. They are turning to-

wards religious devotion but that is not the same as religious extremism or fanaticism.

True, that Muslim societies also have its share of fanatics and extremists but this phenomenon is not peculiar to Islam. There are fanatics and extremists among the followers of other religions as well.

Like other societies Pakistan also has some religious fanatics and extremists. But they have no popular support. In last year's general elections, for instance, religious parties got less than 2 per cent of the votes cast and won only six seats in a house of 210.

Q: What is Pakistan's attitude to the Afghan tragedy? What is your view of the ongoing civil war?

A: Afghanistan is passing through a difficult period of transition after fourteen years of war. Pakistan is seriously concerned over the continuing instability and turmoil in Afghanistan. Over the last two years we have been engaged in unremitting efforts to help bring about peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan. We have tried to help our Afghan brothers during and after Jihad in every possible manner.

It is basically for the Afghan leaders and people to resolve their internal differences and ensure peaceful political transition. Pakistan adheres to its policy of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs and strongly supports Afghan efforts for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Q: Is Pakistan strengthening relations with the Islamic Central Asian Republics of the former USSR?

A: Yes, Pakistan is committed to strengthening relations with the Islamic Central Asian Republics of former USSR. A natural urge is felt by both sides to revive their historical links through interaction between the Government and the peoples.

Pakistan has taken a number of concrete steps towards achieving these objectives, we have our Embassies in five Central Asian Republics and Azerbaijan whereas our Ambassador at Almaty is concurrently accredited to Kyrgyzstan also. High level bilateral visits have been exchanged. Pakistan International Airlines is operating its regular flights to Almaty, Tashkent, Baku and Ashkabad. We have also extended suppliers credit to each Republic. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are already in the process of utilizing these allocations. A number of bilateral agreements have been signed with these Republics to provide an appropriate political and economic framework for cooperation. With these measures, we have laid the foundation for forging a meaningful and mutually advantageous relationship with the Central Asian Republics.

We are also engaged in exploring the possibility of rail and road links with the Central Asian Republics which are a prerequisite for the establishment of sound economic relations.

Pakistan is also cooperating with these fraternal states through the international and regional fora especially the ECO and OIC. Under ECO, chances of expanding economic cooperation are very bright. All Central Asian Republics and Azerbaijan are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization. The next ECO Summit will be held in Islamabad in March 1995. Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have also joined the OIC as full fledged members. These fora provide excellent opportunities for cooperation to the member states.

Q: Are you pessimistic about NAM and its future? Can the movement play a vital role, and if so, how?

A: I am not at all pessimistic about the future of the Movement. The end of the Cold War has not led to the fulfillment of our common aspirations for the equitable and just international order. This is inflicted in the continuation of hostilities and antagonisms in several parts of the world. The security of small states continues to be threatened. Peoples under foreign occupation continue to be denied their right to self-determination. The principles of the United Nations Charter are being

flouted and the developing countries continue to suffer from poverty and deprivation.

The Non-Aligned Movement symbolizes our common commitment to a world free from oppression, injustice, want and deprivation. The Movement provides an important platform to the Non-Aligned countries to jointly pursue their goals and objectives on the international arena.

The Movement has, over the years, played a creditable role on issues such as decolonization, self-determination, apartheid, disarmament and international economic relations. Its contributions in the attainment of independence by Namibia and the elimination of Apartheid in South Africa are widely recognized. We are hopeful that the Movement will, in keeping with its mandate, continue to plead the cause of the oppressed peoples everywhere particularly in Bosnia Herzegovina, Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir.

Q: Whom would you regard as Pakistan's allies and friends?

A: Pakistan enjoys normal and friendly relations with all countries of the world except India because of the Kashmir dispute.

Pakistan's relations with China, the Muslim world and Sri Lanka are rather special and extremely close.

China: China is a tested and trusted friend. It has extended support to Pakistan in many ways and at critical times in our history. It has played a vital role in preserving peace and stability in South Asia for the past four decades.

Iran and Turkey: Pakistan's relations with Iran and Turkey are exceptionally close and warm.

Gulf and Middle East: We have traditionally enjoyed close and cordial relations with the Gulf countries. Pakistan has defence co-operation agreements with all GCC members and plays a critical role in maintaining a balance in the region. A significant proportion of our trade is conducted with the Gulf. Almost our entire fuel imports are from this region. Approximately two million Pakistani nationals are productively employed there. This close co-operation is likely to grow further.

Central Asia: We are working actively to promote new economic and political ties with the emerging countries of Central Asia.

Russia: We are actively building bridges with this major power. We are seeking to promote economic and defence links with it.

The West: There are traditions of close cooperation between Pakistan and the West—firstly through the Commonwealth and secondly through the late Cold War alliances, like SEATO and CENTO.

With the U.S., we are in the process of building a new and mature relationship. Pak-US relations have changed from a strategic alliance to a partnership based on shared values and objectives. It is no longer hostage to one or two issues. Heavy U.S. investment is flowing into Pakistan. Our relations are being broadened despite the constraints of the Pressler Amendment.

Q: Could you kindly sum up India-Pakistan relations after the PPP took office? In which areas, if any, has there been significant improvement?

A: Ever since the PPP Government took office it has been making endeavours to improve Pak-India relations. Our relations with India at the moment regrettably are not good. Much as we would like to have normal and tension-free relations with India as neighbours, a number of outstanding problems have impeded our progress in that direction. My Government has been sincerely endeavouring to resolve all outstanding issues including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir with India.

Pakistan has shown its willingness to negotiate with India. The latest example is that of the Foreign Secretary level talks held in January 1994. However, these talks did not yield tangible results because of the negative attitude of the Indian side. We are concerned about the stalemate in our relations. We hope that the deterioration in our relations can be arrested by progress in resolving the Kashmir issue which will also make it possible to settle the other differences.

Censorship and Society: Some Reflections

G. L. Pieris

The essential function of this law of defamation is to hold balance between these conflicting interests so as to bring about a satisfying equilibrium. There is no social value in exposing the foibles or scandals of individuals to the public gaze for no other reason than catering to the curiosity of the public or the baser instincts of human nature. At the same time, however, there are situations in which material which reflects adversely on individuals may properly be published and commented upon in the public interest in order to serve some legitimate interest of the community in general.

The law attempts to strike the required balance by admitting a series of exceptions to liability under the action for defamation. These assume the character of defence which are open to a defendant as instruments for relieving himself from liability for defamation, even though the elements of the action for defamation have been established initially by the plaintiff. Justification, fair comment and qualified privilege are instances of such defences which, in effect, enable a defamatory statement to be made with impunity because the court accepts that the statement is made for a worthwhile social purpose.¹

The essence of the defence of justification does not consist simply of the submission that a defamatory statement is true in its purport. The law would have little to commend it if spiteful persons had an unfettered licence to tarnish the reputations of others by pulling skeletons out their cupboards and then arguing blithely that no one is entitled to complain because every word they spoke was demonstrably true. The law of defamation does not take kindly to the wagging of fruitless vendettas which can only bring ill-will and potential violence in their wake. This explains why public benefit, quite apart from truth, is a crucial component of the defence of justification. The defendant will be exonerated from liability only if he establishes to the

satisfaction of the court not merely that the statement was true in the substance but also that the publication of the statement was of direct benefit to the public.² It is the latter element which makes the publication of the statement socially valuable. If, for example, a crime had gone undetected for years, and a civil-conscious individual were to take it upon himself to impute responsibility publicly to the perpetrator of the deed, so that way is prepared for the offender to be brought to justice, a worthwhile social purpose would have been achieved by the defamatory publication. On the other hand, if the offender, upon conviction, had served a sentence of imprisonment and had subsequently achieved rehabilitation as a useful and law-abiding member of the community, then the attitude of the law is that no useful purpose is served by resurrection of a previous scandal even though there is nothing false in the defamatory statement which the plaintiff has thought it proper to make. Insistence upon public benefit as a requirement of the defence of justification reflects the balance struck by the law between the interest of the individual and the collective interest of the community.

A similar analysis is appropriate with regard to the rationale underlying the other defences to an action for defamation. Fair comment is a defence which allows wide scope for the conscientious journalist whose aim is to protect society by directing attention to acts which would attract condemnation by right-thinking persons and, by so doing, to uphold standards and values which are beneficial for the life of the community. If a public enterprise is being grossly mismanaged with consequent damage to the economy, if an irrigation scheme is likely to prove futile in the long-term because its conception or implementation is not financially viable, or if there are flagrant irregularities in connection with the award of a tender by a public corporation, it is right and proper that public should have the fullest access

to information in regard to these improprieties, so that remedial action could be taken to ensure that public life is cleansed and the economy effectively managed. The defence of fair comment comprises two major elements. The first is that the comment is based on a sequence of events which is narrated accurately and dispassionately. The facts must be presented in their true light without distortion and without any attempt to divulge selectively only a part of the story.³ If the description of the events, as they took place objectively, is marred by half-truths or by obscurity, the defence of fair comment fails on the basis that facts on which the comment is predicated are not fairly placed before the public. The second element of this defence is that the comment itself must be substantially balanced and that it should be made without malice or vindictiveness.⁴ The law will not allow a public situation to be made use of as an ostensible pretext for ventilating a private grudge. So long as these two requirements are fulfilled, a conscientious journalist who has no other objective than to expose a public scandal and to ensure the application of standards of public rectitude will find the defence of fair comment a welcome instrument which the law has placed in his hands to enable the effective discharge of his professional duty.

In the case of qualified privilege, the crux of the defence conceded by the law is the legitimacy of the purpose for which the defamatory statement is made.⁵ The applicability of qualified privilege as a defence is conditional upon propriety of the motive which governs the defamatory publication.⁶ The law excuses the defamatory publication because the person responsible for it is under a legal duty to make the statement to another.⁷ For example, an executive in a corporation who has discovered that the accounts of a department within the corporation have been falsified by an employee may be under a duty recognised by the law to

convey this information to the Chairman or General Manager of the Corporation. The making of the defamatory statement entails no liability, since statement is made on a privileged occasion.

The maker of the statement is legally obliged to speak, and the person to whom the statement is made has a reciprocal interest in receiving the information. It is this coalescence of interest as between speaker and hearer, which is directly linked to the attainment of a socially desirable purpose, that places the statement beyond the pale of legal liability. The important consideration, however, is that any improper or extraneous motive on the part of the person making the defamatory statement defeats the protection which the law ordinarily confers upon him. The crucial feature of this limitation is that defence may be availed of by defendant only so long as he does not resort to the defamatory statement for some reason of his own which the law does not identify as being relevant to the protection of a viable social interest⁸. Any such motive as personal enmity, jealousy or hatred will furnish adequate ground for withholding the defence of qualified privilege, if the statement is in other respects made under cover of a privileged occasion. In this area the propriety or impropriety of motive actuating the defamatory publication is treated by the law as the decisive factor in holding the scales evenly between the individual interest and the social interest⁹.

But there are other situations in which the law, for paramount reasons of policy, is prepared to confer protection on the maker of a defamatory statement, notwithstanding that his motive in making the statement is wholly malicious. These are cases in which the setting or occasion for the making of the statement is such that not even the unreservedly spiteful quality of the motive is regarded as a countervailing element which makes the defence unavailable. Parliamentary privilege is the clearest example of such a situation¹⁰.

(To be continued)

Notes

1. Union Govt. v Sykes 1913 A.D. 156 at 161.
2. S. v. Revell 1970 (3) S.A. 611 at 616.
Mohamed v Kassim 1973(2) S.A. 1.
3. Marais v Richard 1981 (1) S.A. 1157.
Davies v Lombard 1968 (1) S.A. 558 at 585.

4. Cramford v Albu 1977 A.D. 102 at 113.
Warming v Mervis 1969 (4) S.A. 542.
5. Benson v Robinson & Co. Ltd. 1967 (1) S.A. 420.
6. Borjén v De Villiers 1980 (3) S.A. 556.
7. Bogin v De Villiers op.cit.
Maskowitz v Pienar 1957 (4) S.A. 195.
Young v Kemsley 1940 A.D. 258.
De Klerk v Union Govt. 1958 (4) S.A. 496.
8. Monckton v British S.A. Co. 1920 A.D. 324 at 331.
Lalaram v Lekay 1970 (4) S.A. 306 at 314.
9. Pogrun v Yutar 1967 2 S.A. 564 at 574.
10. eg. sec. 2 (25, Powers and Privileges of Parliament.
Act 91 of 1963 - South African.

LETTERS

Buddhist-Hindu Womanhood

I read the article "The Sinhala Buddhist Womanhood" which appeared in the "Lanka Guardian" (No 12) of October 15, 1994. I am impatient and hasten to write this note to congratulate the writer.

I have no patience to wait to read the subsequent instalments. It takes time for these magazines to come here. I feel that what I have already read is adequate enough to make the writer deserve my congratulation.

We Sinhalese and Tamil Hindus have lived through the revivalist stage far too long. Buddhist and Hindu women are still expected to help the revivalist process and indoctrinate our children in the indigenous cultures. Our women are cheated. It is unfortunate that they take pride in their role.

We the Buddhist and Hindu women are confusing the role expected from us and our need to fight for our rights as human beings. I am sure you are going to show how this role morphia has induced our women to sleep and forget the real issues that women need to worry about. You have begun well. I wish someone will write a similar article about Hindu women.

Thanks and congratulations, Kumari Jayawardane.

M. Rasaratnam

Nallur, Jaffna.

Necessities of Life

Each New year is another special grace of God for renewal of our lives; a time of renewed hope for better times, and in our context, to see the long awaited cease-fire, the opening of a safe passage for travelling and lifting of all blockades.

Although these do not constitute peace itself, and are mere conditions for human living, the Government finds it difficult to yield even in these. This shows how far we have strayed into denial of even the necessities of life.

These are means adopted by the Government for the throttling of a people to subdue them and to force them to submit to their own terms of governing by the majority. While we sincerely strive for peace and harmony with all, we cannot afford to weaken our position, by begging for even these necessities of life as concessions.

Fr. S. J. Emmanuel

Director,

A. Santhiapillai

Gen. Secretary,

Centre for Better Society

Jaffna.

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The Tamil press and pluralist democracy

A. Sivanaseselvan

This survey deals with the evolution of the Tamil press in Sri Lanka, its structure and organisation, its editorial policies, and with the ways in which the issues on ethnicity and reconciliation have been focused on. The Tamil press in Sri Lanka has a responsible history which spans a period of a century and a half. The first newspaper that was published in Sri Lanka in any language was the Morning Star, (Udaya Tharakai) — a bilingual fortnightly which was introduced in Jaffna. The first printing press had been founded by the American Missionaries in 1834 in Manipay in North Sri Lanka. The Morning Star although it centered on religious matters also conveyed information on social events and other developments within the peninsula. The American Missionary also had a strong interest in education and the newspaper contained interesting information on the establishment of new educational institutions and their progress. The Morning Star continues still to be published in Sri Lanka — enjoying thereby an unbroken continuity in being the longest serving newspaper in Sri Lanka.

In the same year in 1841, Simon Casie Chetty, a renowned scholar and sociologist, started the Tamil newspaper in Colombo called Udaya Athithan. This newspaper had 13 issues and was subsequently discontinued. Later on, in 1864, the Ceylon Watchman and the Ceylon Patriot were published by the Catholic Church. In 1877, the first Hindu paper edited by HM Sinnathamby called the Ilankai Nesan was published. It was followed by the Hindu Rising Star in 1880. In 1873, the first Muslim paper Puthinalangari was published by Wapicchi Marikkar and Nainda Marikkar. In 1882 Siddhi Lebbe published the Muslim Nation in Kandy and this paper played a significant role in Muslim life.

There were several other publications in the last quarter of the 19th century and the early 20th century but they do not need a detailed reference in this paper.

In the 20th century, a major development was the founding of the Virakesari in 1930. Its first editor was Subramaniam Chettiyar and a parallel newspaper called Eelakesari was started in the same year in Jaffna by N Ponniah Pillai. In 1931, the Thinakaran was started after the Donoughmore Constitution was enacted by the British colonial overlords by the Lake House group. One of the most important regional newspapers that altered the course of Tamil journalism is Eelanadu newspaper begun in 1960. One of its most eminent editors was Mr N Sabaratnam whose elegant Tamil prose, incisive analysis and erudite editing set high standards for Tamil journalism in Sri Lanka and South India.

The Virakesari as a newspaper enjoys the distinction of having gained from some outstanding editors such as Mr K S Haran, Mr K V S Vaas, Mr K Sivapragasam. The Thinakaran too had a good fortune of having eminent editors such as Mr V K P Nathan, Dr Kailasapathy and Mr R Sivagurunathan. The Virakesari improved its circulation from the mid eighties and today has a circulation of 80,000 in respect of the Sunday edition of 40,000 in the daily edition. The copies of the Virakesari are distributed in most of Europe, Canada and Australia. In Jaffna today, there are many important regional papers which are published which includes Eelanadu, Murasoli, Udayan, Eelamurasu and Eelanathan. These papers continue to function despite the constraints of shortage of newsprint, and of electricity.

It is therefore clear that the Tamil press in Sri Lanka continues to play an important role in the history of journalism in this country. Its focus has been primarily riveted on political and social issues, particularly in regard to the problems and challenges faced by the Tamils and Muslims in a period of ethnic turmoil and confrontation. At the same time, it however, did

make a significant contribution in the evolution of Tamil prose, poetry, literary criticism and fiction. It encouraged many young writers and dwelt on their recent publications. It has maintained invariable high standards of Tamil writing and did not suffer from decline as did some of its counterparts in Southern India.

The Tamil press and the ethnic conflict

The Tamil press has an extremely sensitive and delicate task to perform in respect of ethnic conflicts especially when a concerted effort is being made to resolve such conflicts and restore peace. Here I refer to conflict of the Sinhalese, Tamils and of the Muslims. Not only the people of Jaffna but the other Tamil speaking people of the North-East as well as in Colombo have to understand and appreciate the nature of the problem and the seriousness of the efforts undertaken to achieve peace. Without sensationalism or emotion the Tamil press has to narrate the developments maintaining a balance — at the same time you must not belittle the peace effort. You cannot give room to too much optimism without a sound basis for it. It has to be objective. Every move, every military operation has to be seen from this perspective and reporting has to be carried out with restraint and responsibility. There can be no censorship but yet a generally high level of self imposed censorship or restraint is needed so that news or news analysis do not lead to any provocation. To achieve this, the Tamil press always maintains its credibility by providing authentic information.

The conflict is now understood in the international scene. Many countries have lauded a situation here a government has taken on the challenges, offered conflict to a solution in one form or another. Recent history has offered examples and methods of conflict resolution. We have heard of third party mediation or of the use of an external facilitator to bring the parties to the conflicts together and thereby create conditions that would be conducive toward a dialogue. This is what we are

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interested in the Israel-PLO Accord with the Norwegians playing the catalytic role now particularly the British and Irish authorities have resorted to a behind the scene secret parleys with the IRA so as to pave the way for a ceasefire and comment talks with the political wing of the IRA through Mr Jerome Adams.

These two methods seem to command a higher chance of success than any international intervention or the lack of it. As we see in the tragic war of Bosnia the resolution of the UN, the power of the NATO or the persuasion of international mediators from the US or the UK have had no positive impact towards resolution whatsoever. In Sri Lanka, the two sides have already established official contacts with the ICRC playing only the postman's role. Till the talk reaches a political level, nothing tangible can be expected. But the main problem will relate to the ceasefire when it is declared. Who is to monitor the ceasefire? Who will apportion the blame to one or other for any violation? This is something that has to be resolved before a ceasefire is entered upon and the opening of either the Elephant Pass or the Pooneryn path becomes reality.

One of the important functions is the accurate reporting of human rights abuses. The Tamil press such as the Virakesari is fortunate that it has a good network of correspondents in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavunia, Mannar, Amparai, in all parts of Jaffna and in the upcountry areas. We also have correspondents in the south. We get immediate access to information on arbitrary detention and arrest, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, and torture. This information is reported and is also available thereby to domestic human rights groups such as INFORM, CRM, the Home for Human Rights. These human rights groups are thereby able to further verify the information to take necessary follow up action. The Virakesari has been able to function with far greater degree of independence objectivity and impartiality than most other newspapers. We are informed that vital and significant policy makers in the previous government used to receive daily translations of important news stories and editorials that were produced in the Virakesari. The regional papers in Jaffna also publish speeches and important events in Jaffna which were not otherwise available to the Colombo press. There could be no informed assessment of developments in Jaffna without

access to this information. Moreover, the Virakesari was first with the news on several occasions and it carried stories from the battlefronts and the North-East which other publications had been ignored in many instances.

The editorials of the Virakesari and Thinakaran have been important in spotlighting on important issues of social policy, educational matters, political developments and in relation to constitutional reform. A large percentage of such editorials have analysed in depth the national question viewed in its historical context. It has brought out history on the political aspirations of the Tamils and Muslim, issues of discriminatory treatment, the absence of constitutional safeguards, failures of agreement, the need for equality, the Official Language Policy and its effective or ineffective implementation and the questions that have arisen about devolution. The editorial pages have also been utilised to highlight on human rights issues, domestic and international human rights reports and institutional changes in such as the structure on creation of a Human Rights Task Force and the deficiencies in the system of an Ombudsman.

The editorial page had been used in a liberal and open manner to project a wide spectrum of opinion, particularly on political issues, while short essays by persons in the provision and districts have been particularly encouraged. These essays also focus upon questions of developments and discriminatory treatment of a localised nature and thus provide feedback to policy makers in Colombo. The editorials have encouraged a just resolution of the national question on the basis of a federal form of devolution coupled

with regional autonomy. It has upheld the ideals of multi-culturalism, bi-lingualism and ethnic pluralism. It has called for the utmost respect for individual and collective rights and positively supported the cause of human rights in Sri Lanka and abroad.

Conclusion

It is thus clear from this analysis that the Tamil press has played an important part in responding to Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis. It has sought to inform its readership of political developments which affect their lives and also helped shape their consciousness about the institutional arrangements indispensably suited for a plural society. It has always believed that the political future of Sri Lanka is dependent on an informed vigilant public opinion. It has therefore been responsive to the informational need and analytical needs of a highly literate and politically alert readership. It has also been sensitive to the diversity of its readership consisting of Tamils who live in the north and east, Muslims, Upcountry Tamils, expatriate Tamils and other who see the newspaper as an important mirror of public opinion. It has endeavoured to provide space for a diversity of viewpoints on the most sensitive issues. It has endeavoured to be responsible despite the constraints of private newspaper ownership and their business affiliations. It has a very critical readership which responds immediately to the newspaper if the paper loses its objectivity or its responsiveness. In that sense, a newspaper remains continuously accountable to its readership and that which affords the best measure of its success in this sphere is its wide and varied circulation.

Waiting

*I am waiting
But I know you will not come,
My eyes do not stray to the harbour clock anymore*

*Only Night has come,
And the lights of the ships and the Stars,
And the water full of broken lamps*

U. Karunatilake

A Press Commission and After

K. M. de Silva

The SLFP and LSSP and other groups in the Marxist left were soon co-belligerents in the enterprise of bringing the press under government control. Together they must take the credit, if such it can be called, for systematically undermining the free press in Sri Lanka. The appointment of a Press Commission on 23 September 1963 was a result as much of agitation by the LSSP and CP, as it was a response to pressure from a powerful section of the Buddhist movement then engaged in a very vocal campaign of opposition to the influence of the Roman Catholic church and the Roman Catholic minority in the island's public life.

The commission immediately ran into difficulties with regard to two of its members. While all its members including its chairman KD de Silva, a retired Supreme Court judge, were intent on supporting the government's objective of bringing the press under governmental control, one of them, Mrs Thejavia Gunawardene, had been such an outspoken critic of Lake House and Times Group and so vehement in advocating the strongest possible measures to curb their influence that there was an outcry against her appointment. The other member to whom objection was taken was S.W. Walpita, a left-wing lawyer. The criticisms raised against the former were too solidly based on facts for the chairman to ignore them. She was replaced by a less controversial figure. K.D. de Silva succeeded in retaining the services of S.W. Walpita.

As the sittings of the commissions continued and as witness after witness sought to convert it into a campaign to bring the press under state control, neither the chairman of the commission nor its members gave any impression of being above the fray. They were intent on bringing the press under state control and for two reasons. The first was an ideological argument against a "monopoly" press that reflected the views of the capitalist "classes" and supported the UNP. The second, was the religious content, the attack on Lake House and the Times group for their alleged support of the Roman Catholic minority against the Sinhalese Buddhist majority, at a time when the SLFP and its Marxist allies had successfully concluded a long drawn out campaign to bring the school system under state control against the sustained opposition of the Roman Catholic church.

The Press Commission published its inter-

Continued from the Dec. 15th issue

im report in August 1964⁸, recommending the establishment of a Press Council with wide powers over the press, including judicial powers; the establishment of a government corporation to take over Lake House; the establishment of a co-operative to run the financially ailing *Times of Ceylon*,⁹ and the enactment of legislation to eliminate "undue concentration of ownership and of control and ownership by non-Ceylonese" over the other newspapers in the island.¹⁰

Despite its many reprehensible features the need for a press council envisaged in the report of the Commission could have been justified as a means of checking unfair reportage stemming from political partisanship on the part of the press or as a means of providing cheaper and quicker redress to individuals, institutions or associations, from irresponsible or deliberately misleading reports published in newspapers. Nehru's India had a Press Council, and quite there had been proposals in Britain itself for a similar council. But the recommendations which provided the most intense hostility from the parties of the opposition and indeed from all except the most partisan supporters of the ruling coalition, were those which related to the establishment of state control over Lake House and the Times of Ceylon newspaper groups. Whatever gloss the Commission may have endeavoured to place on those recommendations through their emphasis on the need to break the monopoly position these institutions enjoyed the newspaper world, the essence of their recommendations amounted to replacing one monopoly with a more dangerous one — control by the state of the principal newspapers in the country. Not only would it end the freedom of the press in Sri Lanka that the country had enjoyed from colonial times, but there would be substitution of a more malignant form of partisanship for the one the Lake House and Times of Ceylon groups had been accused of by those who gave evidence before the Commission.

The interim report of the Press Commission spelt the doom of press freedom in Sri Lanka. The parliamentary opposition led by the UNP and the Federal Party (FP), the leading party of the Sri Lanka Tamils, found a cause on which they could unite against

the government. The UNP, in particular, with J.R. Jayewardene in the lead, decided on a nationwide extra-parliamentary agitation against these recommendations. The governmental coalition was taken aback by the depth of opposition to these recommendations but they proceeded nevertheless to give the highest possible priority to the drafting of legislation for their implementation.

The final report of the Press Commission was published in October 1964.¹¹ The commission had set itself up as prosecutor, judge and jury and its verdict was predictable. The report itself was no more than a set of not very coherent arguments to meet a political need. Reading it now after thirty years of its publication one is struck by the capricious tone of its arguments, and its blatant partisanship. It was a hysterical diatribe against the national press. Nowhere do we see any glimmer of an understanding of the dangers of bringing the press under state control. In this they did not rise above the political prejudices of the day and were no better and no worse than the political leadership of the coalition and other parties of the left. By the time the interim report of the Press Commission was published, a coalition government between the SLFP and the Trotskyist LSSP had been established. This meant that the pressure for a totally rigid policy on the control of the press was greater than ever before. Not only was a section of the LSSP in the government now, but the rest of the LSSP group, as well as the CP were purposefully if somewhat less formally linked to the government.

Virtually from the moment the interim report of the Press Commission was submitted to the Governor General on 27 July 1964 the coalition government decided to press ahead with the preparation of a Press Council bill based on its recommendations. By the time the final report of the Commission was handed over on 28 September the bill was being debated in the Senate — the upper house of Sri Lanka's parliament. It gained the approval of the Senate on 6 October by which time however the government's program on the enactment of this legislation was enmeshed in a procedural trap laid by JR Jayewardene.

The details of this procedural wrangle need not detain us here. They are dealt with elsewhere, and the interested reader can turn to those sources for information on that.¹² The objective, at this stage was the very

limited one of embarrassing the government and causing a delay. Any delay, it was thought, would favour those opposed to the bill because a general election was expected after July 1965, which was about eight months ahead, time enough to prepare a last ditch battle to force a postponement of the bill in the hope that the UNP would be back in power after the next general election, in which event this bill would be abandoned. Even JR Jayewardene had no idea at all that he would be setting in motion a train of events that would see the government defeated on a vote of confidence within three months of this. Nor could he have anticipated that the government would make a succession of procedural blunders all of which played into his hands and resulted in its discomfiture.

Using a little known provision of the parliamentary standing orders the opposition "adopted" the government's bill and moved it as its own and moved also that the debate on it be fixed for a later date than the one set by the government. To the consternation of the government the Speaker ruled that this was in order, and that the government's bill did not conform to the requirements of the standing orders. Having lost the ensuing battle of wits, the government introduced another bill to bring the national press and in particular Lake House under state control. Once more there was a breach of parliamentary procedure in the sense that there were now two bills on the agenda, with similar objectives — the bill that the government had introduced, and this new bill. When the Speaker once again upheld an objection raised by the opposition to this deviation from normal Parliamentary procedure, the government decided to get over the difficulty by proroguing Parliament, and recalling it for another session after a short break. The advantage to the government of this new line of action was that upon prorogation, the bills already introduced would lapse. It would be possible for the government, through this tactical move, to introduce an altogether new bill, one that would ensure that state control over the press would be established without any further delay. Nevertheless the opposition had succeeded to a far greater extent than they had anticipated in the objective of confusing and embarrassing the government and delaying the introduction of legislation on the control or nationalization of the press.

The speech from the throne which heralded the commencement of the new session of Parliament was fixed for 2 November and the debate on it was scheduled to go on till 3 December. By the time Parliament met the agitation against the government press legislation had reached a crescendo. The campaign was organized by JR Jayewardene with the assistance of Esmond Wickremasinghe, Wijewardene's son-in-law, who virtually ran Lake House in the absence of DR

Wijewardene's heir, his son, who was then an undergraduate at Cambridge University. The idea of using an army of *bhikkhus* to join in the protest was entirely Jayewardene's. But loads of *bhikkhus* were brought into Colombo. When about 7000 of them marched in single file from Galle Face to the Town Hall, many of them covering their mouths with a black or white cloth to symbolize a gagging of the press, it proved to be an utterly effective propaganda move both in terms of the response it evoked from the public and the embarrassment it caused the government.

Although this campaign succeeded in attracting public opinion against the government's press bills, there was little hope that it would deflect the government from its determination to bring the national press under state control during the next session of parliament. There was no reason to believe that the government was in any way vulnerable within Parliament. Indeed the Prime Minister Mrs Bandaranaike herself had begun negotiations with the Federal Party in December 1963. A set of regulations to give life to the Tamil Language (Special Regulations) Act of 1958 were drawn up. The negotiations continued once the alliance with the LSSP was effected.

The throne speech of 2 November 1964 was the briefest on record. It dealt with just one theme, the press take-over, thus demonstrating afresh the government's obsessive pursuit of a wholly illiberal policy. From the time the throne speech was published JR Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake the UNP leader realized that these recent parliamentary debates on the government's press legislation had disturbed a section of opinion within the government itself. Those who were critical on purely ideological grounds of the decision to bring the LSSP into the government, now had reason to believe that their worst fears of the inherent dangers of Marxist infiltration were about to be fulfilled. Many of them were appalled by the attempt to intimidate the Speaker of the House of Representatives. None more so than CP de Silva, Mrs Bandaranaike's deputy and Leader of the House of Representatives who saw a further diminution of his influence in the government with the entry of the LSSP Ministers.

Very soon JR Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake were meeting CP de Silva through intermediaries. CP de Silva was not merely the most senior SLFP MP in Parliament, but he was also seen, and saw himself, as the leader of a caste group among the SLFP parliamentarians, commanding the loyalties of at least 5 MPs. Should he leave the government and cross-over to the opposition it would weaken the newly established coalition considerably. By the middle of November CP de Silva had made the decision

to cross-over to the opposition during the debate on the Throne speech, and to bring with him his group of supporters. The decision was kept secret from all except Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake. So anxious were they to win CP de Silva over that they even offered him the Prime Ministership in any coalition government that would be established after the next general election, an offer he declined.

Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake were now beginning to feel confident that the government could be defeated on the throne speech. There were several disgruntled SLFP MPs who were willing to cross-over, and at least one former Minister. With this knowledge available to them JR Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake set out about winning others over. The Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) leader, S Thondaman, then an appointed MP and upset over Mrs Bandaranaike's proposal to place Indians who gained Sri Lanka citizenship under an agreement reached between the governments of India and Sri Lanka, on a special register, rather than the general electorate was a willing recruit. In crossing over to the opposition in December 1964, Thondaman began an association with the UNP which was to continue till November 1994 when he crossed over once again, this time from the UNP to the present coalition government.

The aim now was to bring together at least 76 MPs to vote against the throne speech. The target was becoming more attainable with each passing day. By the third week of November, Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake were working very closely with CP de Silva's group to increase the pressure on potential defectors from the SLFP. Some were willing to cross-over on a matter of principle or on personal grounds but needed an assurance about the continuity of their political careers. These assurances were easily given to a few who were promised nomination as UNP candidates. Others preferred to maintain their distinct identity and sought to fight the election as members of a separate political party. They wanted an assurance that the UNP would not put up candidates against them, and would back them against the nominees of the SLFP or the coalition.¹²

As the number of MPs approached by the UNP leadership increased so did the prospects of information leaking out. And leak out it did. Yet the government was so confident of its position that they disregarded all the stories that were in circulation. The crucial vote was scheduled for 3 December 1964. The opposition calculated that they would win the day with a 3 vote margin. In the event the margin of victory was narrower than that: the opposition won by 1 vote. The press had won a reprieve.

(Final part next issue)

Towards a 3rd path

Tisaranee Gunasekera & Dayan Jayatilleka

Attempts to create a Third Path are not something new — but they have acquired a greater urgency in the unipolar post Cold War world. The failure of 'really existing socialism' (and the state capitalist 'closed economy model in a host of Third World countries) has strengthened the global hegemony of economic neo-liberalism. The collapse of the 'Socialist Bloc' means that the countries of the Tricontinental World have little room to manoeuvre and are less and less able to resist the pressure from the international financial institutions to embark upon the path of monetarist, free market capitalism.

The adoption of such a strategy has, however two main and intrinsic weaknesses — one socio-economic and the other political. Firstly, though it may result in economic growth, such a strategy also exacerbates income inequality and poverty (with all the attendant social ills). This means a lowering of living standards of a large segment of the populace (perhaps even the majority). The other drawback consists of the political consequences of such a strategy. The resultant mass discontent can lead to political instability — in the form of civilian or military revolts, thereby destabilizing fragile democracies and attempts at democratization. The phenomenon of 'IMF riots' has become quite common in the Third World. It's not for nothing that Der Spiegel commented: 'The IMF has overthrown more governments than the military'. With a majority of Third World countries opting for multi-party democratic systems (with periodic elections), these weaknesses have become evident.

It would be no exaggeration to say that at least in certain parts of the world, successful electoral revolts against this neo-liberal strategy are taking place. The victors of these electoral contests are those parties promising (however vaguely) to follow a midway course between neo-liberalism and state capitalism/socialism. This means that the task of exploring a 'Third Way' or at least assessing its viability has once again been placed firmly and urgently on the agenda of history.

It is in this context that we must look at the Premadasa economic thinking and praxis. Sri Lanka's experiment with a variant of a social market strategy took place side by side with an extensive export-orientation, a drive to attract foreign capital and, most pertinently, a Structural Adjustment Programme (followed by an Extended SAF) implemented at the behest of the IMF and the World Bank. This placed a number of harsh constraints on these development programmes at the level of implementation. Still the progress made at the level of concepts/policy making, official discourse and praxis under the Premadasa project are considerable. Therefore Sri Lanka's experiment in adopting and implementing certain components of a social market strategy in a dependent, peripheral capitalist context, should be of interest to the rest of the Third World. Is a social market economy sustainable in such a setting?

Shelter from the Storm

In this regard we would like to highlight Sri Lanka's experience in providing shelter to the needy — partly because homelessness is a problem common to most countries in the Third World and even in the affluent West; and partly because of all Premadasa's programmes this was undoubtedly the most successful (due to the fact that he was able to guide it and oversee its implementation personally for almost a decade).

The One Million and 1.5 Million Housing programmes were different from all the other housing programmes implemented previously, not only because of their scale and scope but also because of their radically new approach to the issue of shelter: "Shelter is not charity — it is a necessity. Shelter must liberate — not suffocate. Shelter programmes must create hopes in dwellings — not allow people to dwell in hope. Shelter must mobilize the social dynamic against the dynamics in society." (26) The Housing Programme was also a multi faceted one which included not only the provision of shelter, but also rural development, employment generation, skills development and community participation. The target groups were also varied — from poor and depressed caste people to the workers and the middle class.

Premadasa also tried to expand the Housing Programme to involve the local private sector and the international community. Premadasa wanted the private sector to play a complementary role (to the State) in Housing development, by achieving a balance between the profit motive and social conscience. As a result he was particularly critical of "real estate agents" who are continuing.

"with their speculative land deals, which have spiralled land prices sky high. This has removed housing further from the affordability of the people, particularly salaried employees and the urban poor. If this is allowed to continue, it will negate all positive efforts of the government. I invite the private sector to seriously consider the various options that are available to them to take part in the provision of housing to the employees. The provision of housing, or for that matter enabling the employees to build their own homes will improve their performance at the work place. Employees housing schemes have never got off the ground in our country. The security of housing can also bring about a sense of belonging in the minds of employees. It also promotes good employer-employee relationships.

This can be achieved in many ways.

— through low-cost housing schemes for workers on easy payment basis, — through payment of bonus in the form of shares in houses.

— through creating housing trust for employees' families and through investing a percentage of the provident fund in housing for employees." (27)

In the international arena, Premadasa's greatest success was getting the U.N. to declare 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. He also made a number of proposals which can serve as the foundation of an international approach/effort at solving the problem of Homelessness — which is becoming increasingly necessary.

"First, I would like to suggest the initiation of Regional Research Groups on Settlements, Technology and Educa-

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tion. What we envisage is a network of both privately and publicly funded groups working on settlements technology, materials and ideas appropriate to the culture and geography of their region. A relatively small investment in these centres would provide us with innovative and inexpensive materials and equipment, with educational resources and information on ancillary requirements of settlements. If we look upon settlements as an ongoing task, extending over a period of time, it is essential that we develop centres of study to support our efforts."

Second, I reiterate my proposal for the creation of a global housing and shelter bank. At a time in international affairs when existing capital institutions are under pressure of lending or re-scheduling demand, it is essential that we have a special purpose institution for settlements. This would harness international capital resources, channel them into local programmes and organize funding and repayments on a responsible financial foundation. I have, on past occasions, suggested that we appeal to the global armament stockpilers to divert a minimal amount of their expenditures from war to peace through contribution to such a fund or bank. But before we can begin an appeal we must have an institution.

My third proposal concerns the acceleration of settlement building. During the International Year, we could create an accelerated pledging programme through which nations could enhance their commitments to building shelter. This pledge to the international community could extend over a decade and we could then measure performance against promise. Today, the global shelter effort is somewhat ill-defined and confined largely to separate national efforts. By creating an international pledging system we can achieve several objectives — establish targets and measure performance globally, allocate global resources in a most effective way, create a system of international accountability, and develop long-range forecasts and strategies for the future. We need all of those, if we are to build for the generations yet unborn." (28)

"My fifth and final proposal called for the establishment of a specialized international agency. Perhaps this could be within the United Nations system. Its objective is the promotion of shelter. Its approach should be non-political and non-partisan. It should involve substantial participation from non-go-

vernmental organizations and even commercial interests. This institution could truly be a global parliament for housing, as well as a coordinating and implementing agency." (29)

The South Asian Space: Exporting Poverty Alleviation

President Premadasa believed in collective self reliance on a regional (and perhaps even on a tricontinental) basis. He believed that regional (and perhaps tricontinental) co-operation can be a way of the underdevelopment cum poverty trap our countries are caught in. And he tried to put these beliefs in to action during his tenure as the Chairman of SAARC, representing one billion people.

The Colombo Summit in December 1992 chaired by President Premadasa concentrated on the question of poverty in the region. As he stated in his address at the opening sessions "among the central questions which affect our region is poverty." He recommended the appointment of an independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation. In his address at the inauguration of this Commission in 1992 in Colombo, he spelled out his vision:

".... South Asia's poor constituted a huge and potential resource. However, their basic needs had to be met. They had to be mobilized to create economic growth. They had to be empowered and energized. They had to be linked to the mainstream of development. Should we not ensure primary education to all children between the ages of 6 to 14 by the year 2000? Shouldn't adequate shelter and good environmental management be treated as integral aspects of poverty alleviation? The nature of the task before us is clear. The new thinking on this subject has to be brought to the centre of the stage. It should be made definitive."

President Premadasa also believed that regional co-operation will make us less dependent on the developed West and the international financial institutions dominated by those countries. He regarded regional co-operation as one of the main axis of our development effort. It's because of this that the proposed working towards an EEC style economic union at the Colombo Summit. For President Premadasa, regional co-operation had a direct bearing on his two main concerns, his two most important priorities — alleviating poverty and safeguarding independence and national sovereignty. As he stated at the Colombo SAARC Summit; "Collabo-

ration with candour best enables us to resist any unwelcome attempts to impose needless linkages on our relations with other regions of the world. We appreciate assistance from anywhere. But how can legitimate governments deriving their sovereignty from their people accept fetters on our freedom from outside? We must be alert to the danger of a new colonialism wrapped in spurious moral considerations emanating from alien cultures."

The New Reformism

Premadasa's development strategy obviously does not constitute a panacea for all ills — either for Sri Lanka or for the rest of the Third World. His development programmes contain both successes and failures. But the Premadasasist strategy is the most creative, viable and progressive of all the available alternatives in Sri Lanka and the hugely populous South Asia. In a context in which fighting for/building socialism is not on the immediate agenda of History and the path of closed economy — state capitalism has proved to be an economic cul-de-sac, the only realistic option is to seek some sort of a **reformist** alternative to the economic neo-liberalism imposed on us by the Bank and the Fund. This alternative cannot be anti-capitalist; and it has to be situated within the overall context of a strategy of open market economy.

In the contemporary global context and historical period, a **people-centric** development cannot be **autocentric**. The development concepts, policies and programmes of Premadasasim constitute such an experiment at creating viable and more advanced alternatives. As such the Premadasasist Project will be of relevance to the countries of the Third World which are increasingly forced by political, socio-economic, financial and electoral considerations to achieve some degree of balance between the dictates of the International Financial Institutions and the interests and demands of their own peoples. It may not constitute a Third Road, but it does amount to a Second — and a Half Road, for the Third World. It is the most imaginative yet practicable contemporary attempt at implementing the line of 'Walking On Two Legs' — into the 21st century.

Notes

26. International Shelter Seminar — MIT - 28.7.86.
27. R. Premadasa — Address made on the occasion of the World Habitat Day - 6.10.86.
28. R. Premadasa — Address at the Ninth Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements — Istanbul - 5.5.86.
29. R. Premadasa — Address at the International Housing awards Ceremony, London - 3.10.88.

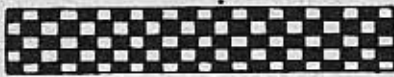
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Understanding Janasaviya

Susil Sirivardana

3. **The hamlet frame of implementation:** Implementation takes place at the most micro scale, the hamlet, where everyone knows and is kin of everyone else.
4. **Social mobilization:** The crux of the whole process is the quality of the social mobilization and the process of setting up their own organizations. Small groups are formed early in the process. It is this aspect that enables the poor to realize their inherent capacities, understand the causes of their poverty and stir them into action. Basically two strata of Social Mobilization trainers are there — at community level and at the Divisional level. They are paid by the Programme.
5. **Support Teams:** A mechanism called the Support Team facilitates the basically self-managing process.
6. **Savings:** Savings is internalised and practiced from the inception of the process at several levels — individual, group, and community.
7. **Mobilizing the Support System:** This is sought to be done both formally and informally, more through the latter. This involves a major process of reorientation and sensitisation.
8. **Scale:** The number in each Division could vary from 2,500 families in a small division to 7,500 families in a larger division. All families have to be mobilised during the initial 24 months period. The scale issue is therefore paramount.
9. **Organizations of the Poor:** The goal is to set-up organizations of the poor. This is primarily at the hamlet level, where sovereignty rests with the full hamlet Janasaviya community. More service related organizational forms will be present at the upper sub-divisional and divisional levels.
10. **Three major Problems:** The toughest problems have been threefold. First, how to get the Social Mobilization process right, meaning the training of skilled and committed trainers who will identify themselves with the poor and conscientise them indepth. Second, the more difficult problem of reorienting the members of the support system, especially the bureaucracy and retaining their sensitivity over time. Third, is the patient and trying challenge of institutional building — the organizations of the poor — with the requisite accountability and clarity.

2.2 Urban Poverty Alleviation

Urban poverty alleviation is the function of two potentially interfusing processes. One uses several entry points like savings and credit or environment or women or health or sanitation or agriculture. The other uses the explicit

entry point of urban housing by the poor, to transit to a more sustained process of overcoming poverty after the houses have been built. While the first process has only very recently begun to function in highly urban locations, the position regarding urban low income housing is quite different. Urban housing by the poor has been an important part of housing policy since 1988 upto now. So it is to the process of urban low income housing that we must now turn.

The urban low income housing process spans three phases. First, the period 1978-84, when the pioneering theoretical-conceptual and experimental-practical work on the ground was done under the Slum and Shanty Division of the Urban Development Authority. This period was rich in conceptual development, data collection, and laying a foundation for subsequent work. The second phase is from 1985-89, when the Urban Housing Sub Programme of the Million Houses Programme was implemented by the National Housing Development Authority. This was the vital phase where the paradigm shift from provider based low income housing to support based low income housing was successfully done and a whole innovative methodology of community based urban housing was developed to span the total urban scene across 51 urban local authorities. It was this methodology that has come to be better known as Community Action Planning and Management or CAP. The third and last phase is from 1990 upto 1994, when the Urban Housing Sub Programme of the 1.5 Million Houses Programme was implemented. This was an attempt at centrally linking poverty alleviation and housing development by creatively adapting to the pro poor environment of the post 1988 phase. In fact, it is important to recall the fact that President Premadasa's New Vision New Deal policy articulation regarding the new 1.5 Million Houses Programme for the period 1989 to 1994, expressly and explicitly says "The One Point Five Million Houses Programme will simultaneously attack the twin problems of Shelter and Poverty. First it will provide basic and appropriate shelter to all the needy in the villages, towns and plantations; second it will simultaneously take steps to get them out of poverty."

It is necessary to make one further point before moving on to the next section, where we assess performance on the ground in urban housing at the micro level. That is to revert once again to the major disjuncture between pre 1988 and post 1988. This issue was key for housing as much as it was for the whole development landscape. One way to understand the new imperative is to see, that relative to the evolution of the pre 1988 urban housing process, the post 1988 process demanded a massive enhancement and deepening of the practice of support based housing. To put the same point in a slightly different way is to state that the post insurgency civil society demanded from the support system a new order of praxis, based on pro poor values, openness, depoliticization and debureaucratization. So quite clearly, more of the same

of the Million Houses strategy, was simply inadequate. Something denser and deeper was called for. The new condition compelled both housing and poverty alleviation to be tightly interlinked. Janasaviya was that new strategy. The Million Houses Programme could justifiably claim primary parentage for the Janasaviya strategy. The latter was a qualitatively deeper and completely readapted set of principles tested out in support based housing from 1984. If the Million Houses strategy was the first serious foray into genuine participatory development, the 1.5 Million Houses and Janasaviya together demanded a substantially more holistic and indepth internalisation of participatory development within civil society and the support system of the state.

3. Micro performance — aspects of the Colombo case and urban housing

3.1 The Colombo Case

The Colombo Urban Housing case has an unbroken evolution from 1978. During this fifteen year period, 601 communities comprising approximately 240,000 people have enjoyed the fruits of improvement. For the eleven year period from 1984 to April 1994 the CMC alone has spent Rs 25 mn or US\$ 520,833 on the programme. From 1979 to 1994 all agencies participating in urban housing are estimated to have spent something to the tune of Rs 232 mn or US\$ 4,833,333. A basic working data base has also been built up.

A functional institutional and coordination machinery has been built up starting with Community Development Councils at the base, Habitat Cells in each of the six District Officers, six District Housing and Community Development Councils, and finally, the main Housing and Community Development Council presided over by the Mayor.

This is underpinned by several strata of staff deployed within the Health Department of the Council, under the supervision of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has given these impressive statistics regarding Infant Mortality and the nutritional status of children.

Health status of Colombo's poor

Type of Indicator	Baseline	Current
a. Infant mortality rate (Deaths 0-1 yrs./1000 births)	17.5	2.16
b. Child mortality rate (Deaths 0-5 yrs./1000 births)	1.7	1.5
c. Maternal mortality rate (Death of Mother/10,000 births)	6.0	3.09
d. Number of deaths/year from:		
- Measles	Nil	Nil
- Accidents	4224	292
- Diarrhoea	2640	68
- Neo-natal Tetanus	14	Nil
e. Number cases of Polio	09	Nil
f. Children below 2 yrs fully immunized	87%	92%

Nutritional status of children of Colomb's poor

Type of Indicator	Baseline	Current
a. Low birth weight \leq 2.5 kg	27%	9.8%
b. Malnourished children (2nd or 3rd degree among 0-5 years)	30%	23.7%
c. Babies exclusively breastfed for three months	100%	85.0%
d. Children in growth monitoring programme (0-5 years)	100%	60.0%

3.2 Urban housing and related aspects

Now lets look at the performance of Urban Housing. In order to understand the larger picture and the relative status of Urban Housing in it, we need also look at some related aspects. For the purpose of our analytical design, we will see it in terms of the watershed year, 1988.

Urban housing sub programme of 1.5 MHP

Pre 1989 Six years 1985-1989

Families Reached	Units Completed	Expenditure Rs.
38,125	33,664	313,480,584

Post 1989 Four years Plus 1990-1994

Families Reached	Units Completed	Expenditure
26,213	18,252	294,534,000

(NB — though the Prog. ended in 89, work carried over till 1993)

Before commenting on this, let us look at the larger picture also.

Six sub programmes of the 1.5 MHP 1990-1994

Sub programmes	Familles Reached	Units Completed	Expenditure
UHSP - Urban	26,213	18,252	294,534,000
RHSP - Rural	131,508	97,407	1,007,479,000
RDHSP - Reconstruction Development	54,135	28,885	705,070,000
PCHSP - Provincial Council	6,624	3,771	43,179,000
Employee Housing	545	180	16,518,000
5,000 Houses Programme	1,010	1,010	708,568,000

These figures indicate significant recent trends. First, the current UHSP has not matched up to the earlier UHSP both in terms of Families Reached and Units Completed. Second, the level of investment has also dropped. Here we must bear in mind that loan ceilings were changed between the two UHSPs — from Rs. 15,000/- US\$ 313 during 1985-89 to Rs. 25,000/- or US\$ 521 during 1990-94. Second, the largest investment in urban housing has been clearly for the new 5,000 Houses Programme. It is a programme of mainly low income direct construction flats in inner city areas. It appears fair to infer that there was negative competition between the UHSP and the 5000 HP to the detriment of the former. This is the aspect of overall programme outputs.

Another aspect relates to **urban land** for the poor. Overall the record has been positive. Out of total number of 20,685 shanty units, upto March 94, 18,291 families have been reached. Of this number reached, 10,846 have had their plots regularized. This is mainly on the land they have squatted, with a small amount of relocation on new land. Of those whose lands have been regularized, 6,471 families have received housing loans. The balance plot-holders and families are in the process of having their regularization and loan processing being done.

Regularization means *de facto* tenure. The process is as follows. All squatters are first registered and issued with cards. Cardholders have taken the first step to becoming plotholders. Thereafter, the card is replaced by a letter from the National Housing Development Authority, which formalises the process a step further. The third and last step is the giving of a deed with 30 year tenure. This has been tied to the completion of housing loan repayments. Hence hardly any deeds have yet been given. However, the bulk of plotholders have graduated to the second step in the process.

3.3 Significant innovations

While most of what has been described above has been normative, there are some significant innovations which merit special mention. Three of them are Habitat Units, CAP or Community Action Planning and Community Contracts.

Habitat Units to a specific implementation mechanism where groups of staff of the NHDA working in the Head Office in Colombo, were relocated in the six District Offices of the Colombo Municipal Council from 1991. This was a conscious management decision to strengthen the capacity and role of the Council to assume major implementation responsibilities for urban housing in the city. The NHDA teams consist of anything up to five or six officers from Managers to field level technical officers. Once they are in the District Office, they come under the day to day administration of the Medical Officer of Health in each District Office.

The results have been prompt and extremely fruitful. Now each community sees the their Habitat Unit as the operations centre for all housing activities in their area. They freely move in and out of the Units. There is a special Register kept where each visitor's complaint/need is

recorded and follow up action is taken. Where field visits are called for, they are done there and then. A new co-ordinating mechanism in the form of the District Housing and Community Development Council handles the more serious problems. It meets monthly on the last Wednesday of the month. Only the really difficult problems are thus taken up to the central HCDC presided by the Mayor.

CAP is perhaps the most significant single development in the whole urban scene. It originates in the heyday of community based activity during the Million Houses period. Then it was a quick and dirty instrument of rapid action. The vehicle took the form of a one day or half-day issue oriented community workshop, where decisions for action were taken and followed up by the community and the support system. The more recent phase of CAP from 1992, has seen both an expansion into 13 other urban areas outside Colombo and a deepening and streamlining of the methodology. The range of workshops are from an initial two day micro planning workshop for identifying issues and strategies for action, to workshops for strengthening the work of Community Development Councils, a land regularization workshop for community laying out of plots, a building guidelines workshop for community specific building codes, a housing information workshop and a women's enterprise support workshop for group savings and credit for income generation.

The community Contracts system is designed to offer all small scale infrastructure construction work in the first instance to Community Development Councils. A detailed procedure has been worked but for a participatory process of community involvement in the design and construction of these facilities. The methodology again originates in the Million houses period, but subsequent work has refined and streamlined the procedures. This has found great acceptance among communities and successfully resolved the problems of poor quality work and dissatisfied communities.

4. The Elusive strategy option

The foregoing recapitulation of some of the more illustrative elements of the implementation strategy of the UHSP raises a fundamental and strategic question. **Given the specific context of the post 1988 condition, how much of it is still a continuation of the old delivery oriented strategy and how much of it is a conscious departure from it to the new mobilizational strategy?** This is fundamental because this was precisely what the new post 1988 discourse was about. If housing was to be linked with poverty alleviation, then there was only one way by which this could be cost effectively and sustainably done. That was by a total commitment to learning from the process of participatory support based housing, where civil society would achieve the primacy they were seeking. Equally this meant that the State would have to do a great deal of unlearning and relearning of the terms of the new mobilisational discourse. The logical goal of this quest is to make the mobilizational strategy the **mainstream strategy** for all pro poor development activity.

What actually happened?

What happened was that in spite of the presence of massive opportunities like a convinced Head of State giving personal leadership, a clear articulation of policy, a readiness on the part of civil society to absorb new participatory values, the availability of space in the State system immediately after the insurgency and a great deal of sound learning cum theoretical work done in the country (for example, the work of the Janasaviya Programme, helping to build up, the Janasaviya Trust Fund and the work of the Independent South Asia Commission on Poverty Alleviation), the intended breakthrough has been **unacceptably uneven**. On the part of the poor it would be correct to say that there is considerable disillusionment at the manner in which the old order has reasserted itself to narrow the space. This is what we have termed the Elusive Strategy Option.

This is the point at which we must assess the contribution of the new order of community based organisations and NGOs which have emerged from this very process of mobilisation. The three groups participating from CBO/NGO sector at the Workshop — the **Praja Sahaya Sevaya, Sevanatha and the National Forum for People's Organisation** — are all emanation of this phenomenon. Let us analyze these three formations from the point of view of the practice of mobilisation strategy.

The best way to assess the value of these new initiatives, is to ask the question to what an extent have they sought to overcome the **manifest limitations** of the conventional process. First, is a superficial understanding of the form and content of participatory development. They show no experiential understanding of hard social mobilization. The mobilization is limited to satisfying the housing need and thereafter, the coherence is exhausted. Second, there is no awareness of the primacy of savings and credit in poverty alleviation and the need for it to be led by women. Third, they are not thinking in terms of the community building up its own financial base, so that it has the necessary autonomy to negotiate with the system, without being over dependent. Fourth, the process cannot be sustained. It is essentially short term and poverty cannot be tackled within such confines. Fifth, the support system is unclear about its new deprofessionalised role as a facilitator and sensitive catalyst.

It would be correct to say that these new formations are quite conscious of these limitations and seriously searching for ways and means to overcome them. They are all working in an experimental mode in that sense. What is critical to their maturation is their capacity to learn. In this respect they have begun a new NGO-CBO discourse about the practice of mobilizational strategy. There is a considerable amount of interaction and exchange of experience going on.

Perhaps the best way to characterise them is in terms of mobilisation processes. It is possible to view the pre and post 1988 periods as basically encompassing **two mobilizations**. The first mobilization was what CAP sought to do from 1985 right up to 1990-92. The second mobilization is the work of this new potential vanguard,

which has arisen from the process itself. Many of them have come from **outside** the State.

We may sum up this section by two more observations: First, that though the support system failed to respond positively to the opportunity within the crisis and quickly fill the new space that was opened up, there was an important compensating gain. **That is that the base communities — civil society — have learnt a great deal from the opportunity afforded by the pro poor policy package and have enhanced their capacities.** In other words, through the ingenuity of these poor groups, they have taken many initiatives which have proved to be extremely valuable. Thus, a positive process of self-empowerment has taken place at the base of society.

5. Dismembered perspectives

Let us now try to briefly sum up some of the lessons and present them as issues for a current agenda. It is to the extent that we analyze this experience in depth and draw the correct lessons, that we will be able to move forward.

1. **Delivery vs Mobilization Strategy:** the issue is still very much a priority one. There is a great deal of obfuscation and ambiguity about this. The poor are still seen as a problem. The support system is not prepared to reorient themselves.
2. **The lead role of the State as enabler:** the role of State is not clear. It is still synonymous with doing and implementation from the top. The fact that there are many more efficient actors and partners, led by the poor themselves, is insufficiently realised. The moral responsibility of the State to support and provide space is also lacking.
3. **The capacity for self-empowerment by the poor:** In a society like ours, where literacy is over 90%, the people have a great capacity to learn. However, a minimum of catalytic action is necessary to trigger these impulses and deepen and strengthen them.
4. **The fragmentation of discourse:** This is a major problem. One way to understand this period is in terms of multiple fragmented discourses. There is hardly any critical debate which will compel these discourses to really relate to the needs of people.
5. **The concept of Pro Poor Planning:** This offers a great deal of promise for work in the future.

The current context is one of disarray. From the vantage point of the initial post 1988 phase, where the project was clearly a search from coherence and system change, the current process is disappropriating. However, there are positive gains especially on the part of civil society. That is why we have talked of Dismembered Perspectives.

(To be Continued)

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Sinhala Journalism: The Formative Period (1830-1930)

K. N. O. Dharmadasa

First Sinhala newspapers and periodicals appeared in the 1830's as part of the religious propaganda launched by Christian missionaries. It is generally believed that *Masika Taagga* (1832) was the first Sinhala periodical. It was a monthly publication brought out by the Kotte Missionary Press and it contained stories from the Bible.¹ The second periodical, as the records indicate, was *Lanka Nidhanaya* inaugurated in 1840 and, interestingly enough, it was printed in Kandy for "The Sinhalese Tract Society."² While we do not have information on the editor of *Masika Taagga*, we know that the editor of *Lanka Nidhanaya* was the Rev. Robert Spence Hardy. Its contents were more varied. For example, the number published in February 1850 carried articles on Taverns, Food habits, the Railway, the Rich and the Poor, and noteworthy news items of the day.³

The article on the Taverns contained the correspondence between government authorities and John Murdoch, who had resigned from his post as principal of the government central school in Kandy to establish The Sinhalese Tract Society, co-ordinating the work of the missionary printing programmes.⁴ Murdoch was campaigning against the opening of taverns by the government.

Several other journals edited and printed by Christian missionaries followed, such as *Uragala* (1842), *Vistrakaranna* (the Commentator, 1844), *Sastra Nidhanaya* (1846), *Lanka Pradeepaya* (1846) etc., until *Yatalaba* (1854) was to appear as the first Sinhala journal edited by a Buddhist. *Yatalaba* was printed at the Roman Catholic press in Colombo. It was devoted largely to the publication of articles pertaining to a literary debate named the *Sav Sat Dam* controversy which was about the use of prosodical devices in Sinhala poetry.⁵

Yatalaba was an exception in the early history of Sinhala journalism, for, the main impetus for publishing the first Sinhala newspapers and periodicals was religious. The Christian missionaries took the lead in using the printed word, for which they had the monopoly until 1861, as the principal weapon in the proselytizing endeavour. As the Rev. D J Goggerly, the

manager of the Wesleyan Mission press saw it in 1831.

"It is by means of the Press our principal attacks must be made upon this wretched system... We must direct our efforts to pull down this stronghold of Satan."⁷

Although the Buddhist response was slow in emerging, it came from about the beginning of the 1860's, first in the form of debates and subsequently in the form of printed rebuttals, voluntary associations, novels, poetry, theater etc., so that during the last few decades of the 19th century there was a full scale Buddhist revival in the island.⁸

Between 1860 and 1870 the Buddhists led by *bhikkhus* such as Walane Siddhartha, Migettuwatte Gunananda and Hikkaduwe Sumangala began ten periodicals while the Christians came up with thirteen in addition to others inaugurated earlier and still in publication.⁹ As the Buddhist revival gathered momentum, the Buddhists outdistanced the Christians in journalistic activity. Thus, during the period 1888-1900 the Buddhists brought out nineteen new journals, seeking to "suppress the insults made to Buddhism by false-believers" as against only nine by the Christians.¹⁰

As the revival progressed, the purely religious motivation in journalistic efforts abated, especially among the Buddhists, and more and more journals with other interests, again of a revivalist nature, came to be established. Thus, during the same period, from 1888 to 1900 there were twelve new journals intended for the publication of material of literary and scholarly interest and five others devoted to matters related to "the welfare of the Sinhalese people". During the same period there also emerged three journals devoted to Ayurveda (traditional medicine) and Astrology; three in the Pali language, the language of Buddhist scriptures. These Pali journals contained material on Buddhism as well as on Pali philology.¹¹

It needs mention here that this burst of journalistic activity among the Buddhists was a direct result of the newly emerged seats of Buddhist learning, the *pirivenas*, set up by the leading scholar monks of

the time. The first modern seat of Buddhist learning was set up at Ratmalana, then a little village close to the new capital Colombo, by the Ven. Walane Siddhartha in 1842. This was an indication that the Buddhist monkhood, was adjusting itself to the new situation. Walane's students, Hikkaduwe Sumangala and Ratmalane Dhammaloka were to establish subsequently the two best known *pirivenas* of modern times Vidyodaya in Maligakanda (1873) and the Vidyalandara in Peliyagoda (1875) respectively. Situated as they were in suburbs of Colombo they became not only centres of learning and revivalist activity, but also training centres for generations of scholar monks who took the modernization message to peripheral regions in the island. Other *pirivenas* thus followed suit. Vidyabhasa in Maligakanda (1884), Gunaratana Mudalinda in Matara (1890), Sadananda in Doranegoda (1896), Saddharmakara in Pinwatta (1900), Sri Saddharmodaya in Godawila (1901) and soon. By 1917 there were sixty two well established *pirivenas* in different parts of the island.¹²

(To be continued)

Notes

1. Kalukondayawe prajasekara thero, *Sinhala Puva-tpat Sangara Ithasaya*, Vol. 1, 1965, p. 3.
2. *op.cit.* Also see the photograph of the title page of this journal given between pages 6 and 7.
3. *op.cit.*, p. 6.
4. Kitsiri Malalgoda, "The Buddhist - Christian Confrontation in Ceylon 1800-1880", *Social Compass*, XX, 1973/2, pp. 171-200.
5. prajasekara, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-45.
6. For details see E R Sarachchandra, *The Sinhalese Novel*, Colombo, Gunasena, 1950, p. 44.
7. Quoted in Yasmin Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon, 1815-1878*, Dehiwala, Tisara, 1968, pp. 90-1.
8. For details see K N O Dharmadasa, *Language, Religion and Ethnic Assertiveness: The Growth of Sinhalese Nationalism in Sri Lanka*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1992, ch. 4.
9. Based on information from Pannasekera, 1965, Vol. 1.
10. The Quotation is from the editorial of the *Riviera* (1887) published under the guidance of the Rev. Migettuwatte Gunananda. The statistics are computed from *Sinhala Puva-tpat Sangara Ithasaya*, Vol. 2, by the Ven. Kalukondayawe Prajasekara, Colombo, Gunasena, 1966.
11. Based on material from Pannasekera, 1966, Vol. 2.
12. *The Annual Report of the Director of Education*, 1917, p.4.



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