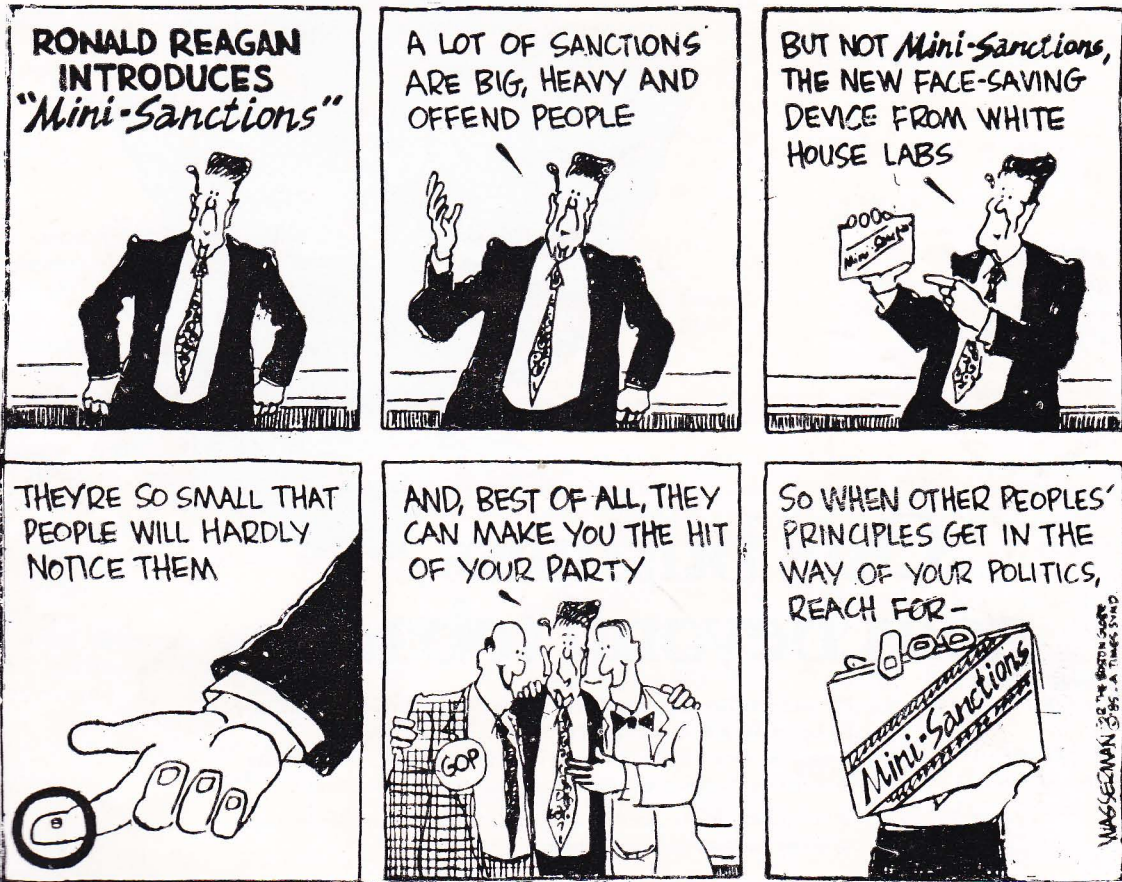


LANKA

GUARDIAN

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Why Reagan is Botha's P.R. man

Anagarika, the Left Leaders and now

Women's Lib! — Kumari Jayawardena

Foreign Research: Cry the beloved country?

S. N. de S. Seneviratne

Wanted a peace movement — Tissa Balasuriya

Battle for Trinco — Richard M. Weintraub

Also: Vijaya and the Tigers,

Amnesty Anniversary and India & her neighbours



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THE ECONOMIC AND THE ETHNIC

Overshadowing all other problems, the ethnic conflict and the accompanying violence have tended to divert attention from all other issues. As a result, both the economic and the 'normal' political have seemed marginally important. This could be a dangerously misleading impression. More so for the government than for the observer of the Sri Lankan scene. The truth may well be that the economic-political and the ethnic are continuously inter-acting aggravating and complicating both.

The demoralisation of the trade union movement, particularly after the government's merciless crack-down on the 1980 General Strike, and the internecine conflicts in the trade union movement have together contributed to a long period of comparative calm on the labour front. If at all, there have been sporadic strikes, disputes, stoppages etc., signalling simmering unrest, but presenting no serious threat to the government.

The most dramatic of these was the spirited battle against the government by the Public Services United Nurses Union, which was made all the more picturesque by the fact that it was led by a Buddhist monk. A tenuous compromise was finally reached. But the signs are the PSUNU will return to the struggle again, this month. The issue appears a small one — the PSUNU's complaint that the Ministry has not kept its word.

It has cut the pay (and leave) of the strikers. A work-to-rule campaign could start again soon.

WAGES, JOBS

But the rank-and-file dissatisfaction is far more widespread, and the established T.U. Leadership, divided and quite inactive, is under growing pressure for bolder demonstrations of protest chiefly over wages.

So, there are also signs that the bigger unions may be forced to make some gestures, however 'token' to release the pent-up feelings of an increasingly restive rank-and-file. The Traditional T.U. leadership, bestirring itself these past weeks, may be thrown into confrontations with the administration.

Jobs, inflation (officially rising to six percent from zero) and wage demands and salary increase form the emerging pattern. The UNP's post-77 open economy saw a job-boom, here and coincidentally, abroad for Sri Lankans the Middle-east. For different reasons (the sharp drop in oil prices and the completion of construction work in the smaller Gulf states) the Sri Lankan migrant workers are now returning home in thousands, while the outward movement is a trickle.

SERVICE INDUSTRY

The hotel-and-tourist industry and ancillary services, and construction were the more striking growth sectors. The biggest casualty of the post-83 violence was of course the high investment tourist industry. Now the hotels are closed or half empty; the four and five-star are operating after more than 50% cut in room rates. Thousands have been laid off.

(Continued on page 8)

TRENDS + LETTERS

CASTE AND BUDDHISM

Re: News item in *Lanka Guardian*; Buddhist Monks on a Hunger strike to support striking Nurses.

Buddhist monks are supposed to be striving hard to get rid of their desires. Surely, some seem to have got rid of one, the desire to teach the real Buddhist teachings to the people, perhaps they have retained all else. Of course, not every monk falls in to this category.

One shouldn't become or remain a monk if one wants to be a politician, lawyer, businessman, tradeunionist, or any other non / professional worker or if one wants to lead a luxury life. Do they accept this premise? The system of nikayas is blatantly and totally based on the caste system which Lord Buddha clearly deplored?

L. Samarasekara
University of Alberta
Canada

LANRA

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CONTENTS

News Background	3
Ethnic Strife Takes a Toll on 'Paradise'	5
Opinion	6
Vijaya — the Wild Card	7
India's Policy with Neighbours	8
Foreign News	9
Amnesty International	11
The Need for a Peace Movement	13
Why Support Agricultural Research?	17
Villains and Witches in Paradise	21
Rupavahini — IV	23

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LETTERS

CHANDRA JAYAWARDENA HONOURED

At the suggestion of Professor Gehan Wijewardena of Canberra I am sending you a brief report of a Memorial Conference for the late Professor Chandra Jayawardena.

Professor Chandra Jayawardena was the founding Professor of Anthropology at Macquarie University, North Ryde, N. S. W., Australia. He died unexpectedly in October 1981, at the age of 52, leaving behind him a unique heritage in the development of anthropological and sociological studies, a heritage being carried on by his colleagues and students based at Macquarie University, as well as those elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

His distinctive contribution was recently commemorated at a three day conference held in Sydney 1986. Organised around the theme of "Equality and Inequality", which was the topic of the last lecture given by Professor Jayawardena, the conference brought together speakers who presented research findings of both empirical and theoretical importance. The topic areas ranged widely, including class struggle on the Australian coal-fields, women in contemporary Indonesia, rank and gender in Vanuatu and language in Sri Lanka. This broad scope reflected the great breadth of Chandra Jayawardena's own interests. His research extended from Guyana to Fiji and Indonesia, and at the time of his death he was planning an extensive comparative study of Indian labour migration, embracing not only the areas he had already written about, but including South Africa, Mauritius, Jamaica, Trinidad, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Surinam.

The Conference was an occasion for intellectual and social interchange and a time of remembrance and gratitude. The Deputy Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University, Professor Gareth Roberts, gave a speech and launched the

Chandra Jayawardena Memorial Fund, the purpose of which is to provide financial assistance to post-graduate students in anthropology and comparative sociology at Macquarie, so that Chandra Jayawardena's name, memory and heritage may be kept alive for future generations of students.

Annette Hamiton

Professor of Anthropology and
Comparative Sociology
Macquarie University
N. S. W. Australia

CAN WE AFFORD THE COST OF A CIVIL WAR?

As a nation Sri Lanka is now at the crossroads and facing its worst crisis since the grant of political independence in 1948. This is a decisive moment in our history when the political leadership in our beloved country whether Sinhala or Tamil is challenged by the logic of events to take stock of the escalating spiral of violence the massacre of innocent people throughout the country and the tragic plight of thousands of refugees in India and other foreign countries and in Sri Lanka. Can we afford the human and social cost of a near civil war situation any longer quite apart from the disruption of our economy through escalating military expenditure and the increasing burdens being thereby placed on the poor and the working people? It is indeed a moment of truth for our political and religious leadership since the decisions we make today to resolve this crisis will decide the future path our nation will take—towards continuing inter-racial conflict with foreign efforts at de-stabilisation or towards a viable political solution based on a genuine devolution of power within an united Sri Lanka. The suffering people with no guarantee of security anywhere in the country are asking our leaders—have we no fundamental human right to live without fear?

In these circumstances we welcome the initiative of the Government in summoning a meeting of

all recognised political parties on the 25th of June. We do hope that the lessons learnt at the All Party Conference and the Thimpu Peace Talks will be taken note of. In view of the credibility gap which exists in regard to Government sponsored talks and in order to bridge this gap and ensure a fruitful dialogue we recommend the following actions by the Government.

1. The re-employment of all Tamil employees who have been sent on compulsory leave in the Rupavahini Corporation, the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, Air Lanka and elsewhere.

2. The release of all political prisoners against whom no charges have been brought.

3. The withdrawal of the armed forces to their camps for the period of the duration of the talks.

4. The cessation of aerial bombing in the North.

5. Seek the active assistance of the Indian Government in achieving a ceasefire during the period of the talks and in reaching agreement with the Tamil militant groups.

We also appeal to the Tamil leadership and the armed youth to:

1. Not insist on a merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces as a pre-condition to the talks.

2. Build unity among all the groups in order to take a common position at the talks.

3. Cease all armed actions for the period of the duration of the talks.

Let us not betray our people and their deepest aspirations for peace with justice at this crucial time.

Jeffrey Abayasekera
Secretary

Christian Workers Fellowship

Prospects of Peace bring new 'civil wars'

NEWS
BACKGROUND

To the delight of analysts with a taste for dialectics, the "peace process" has introduced 'war' and 'conflict' into almost every influential body of organised opinion whether it be political party, church, or guerrilla group.

How 'united' is the United National party? With each passing week, its leader President JR, shows signs of greater and greater confidence, resolution and boldness. At a meeting in Ratnapura he said:

Today, as head of state, it was his duty to obtain the advice of the Cabinet, the people, the MPs, the Maha Sangha in taking decisions — but the final decision was the responsibility of the President and Cabinet. Such decisions could not be delegated to anyone else.

If a leader took a wrong decision they could oust him at the next election, but till then he alone was responsible for taking decisions. Nobody could force him to do this or that by threatening to strike or to stage satyagrahas. He could be forced only by the votes of the people.

If any form of force was used and the leader was weak, vacillated or broke down, democracy too would be destroyed. The power of the vote would be lost to the people. Therefore, this government would never bow to such force, threats or hartals, but only to the votes of the people who had elected it to protect their right to vote.

The President said the government was facing the most difficult question of the day without fear, as it felt that the people were supporting it.

The undated letters of resignation given him before the Presidential polls in Oct. 1982 (surely one of the most extraordinary events in the political history of any democratic country?) have been returned to all UNP'ers, from Prime Minister downwards. Obviously the Leader knows his men well and relies on their enlightened self-interest outweighing any personal opinion or emotion. "There are no fools in the parliamentary group" he told the press with the gentlest of knowing smiles:

But what do the UNP backbenchers actually feel, especially the younger MP's looking forward to another 15-20 years of active

politics? That would depend on the mood in the electorate, and the MP, a geiger-counter ultra-sensitive to each passing shift of sentiment, would know best. And what of the UNP upper-echelons? The silence of some is truly deafening.

President JR however has made up his mind in the confident belief that he can carry both Cabinet and backbencher, and he's going through with whatever legislation he has already drafted. (The draft will probably be in Delhi and with the TULF in Madras before this issue of the L.G. is out). His confidence comes from another source — from Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. The

SLFP—JVP contacts

Political circles are buzzing with the news of a strange new alignment of forces being worked out in the hush-hush.

The talk is of contacts between some SLFPers and new sections of the JVP.

Some of the obviously racist slogans that have disfigured city walls in recent days against the provincial councils proposals is said to be the work of this section of the JVP assisted by their SLFP backers.

Political circles are wondering whether Mrs. Bandaranaike is aware of the contacts that have been going on virtually behind her back. But some in the know say that the SLFP leader might well have an inkling of the political moves with the group that tried to oust her.

Some SLFPers are also worried that the party might have isolated itself by rejecting the government's peace proposals while most of the recognised parties backed them as a basis for negotiation at the Political Parties Conference.

Though the SLFP Central Committee unanimously rejected these proposals political insiders say that the campaign against them was led by Anura Bandaranaike.

— (Sunday Observer)

Indian leader is going to back him to the hilt as long as Colombo makes an offer that Mr. Gandhi regards as reasonable enough for the TULF (and probably some of the guerrilla groups) to accept.

DELHI'S DISENGAGEMENT

In mid-June relations between Delhi and Colombo reached its lowest point. So much so that there was the real danger of an immediate 'disengagement' by the mediator. But a week of intensive diplomatic activity between June 19 and 25, as the danger passed and the "clarifications" and "improvements" convince Mr. Gandhi that a sound and stable basis for a negotiated settlement had been created. Right now only a re-definition of 'the unit of devolution' is needed for a full accord. To keep 'the boys' off its back, the TULF wants 'the homelands' idea incorporated in some form, however loose. Thus the demand for a 'linguistic unit 'rather than 'institutional arrangements' for inter-provincial coordination. If 'merger' is dropped and these 'institutional arrangements' are fleshed out, the TULF may buy the package while Delhi persuades the militants to accept it too.

The sticking point of course is the Eastern province, and its Sinhala-Tamil-Moslem 'mix'. Perhaps a new Boundaries Commission, which will be set up later, and a referendum in the Tamil districts of the East on "coordination" could be the way out.

Certain of his party's total support, President JR is shrewd enough to know that he must also draw open support from other (Sinhalese) parties and groups. That would demonstrate a wider Sinhala "consensus", while helping him also to isolate his main enemy, Mrs. Bandaranaike and the SLFP. (The SLFP's own objective has been to organise a more 'genuine' Sinhala consensus and isolate the UNP as 'traitor').

ODD BEDFELLOWS

This tactical exercise has produced strange bed-fellows — the UNP's oldest ideological enemies, the LSSP and CP (the CP leaders were shoved into jail three years ago!) and the non-JVP 'New Left', the SLMP (minus Ilangaratne and Kularatne, the authentic SLFP'ers at least on the ethnic issue) and the N.S.S.P. Thus, the UNP sponsored 'peace move' is being backed by Vijaya (the Naxalite) and Vasu (the Trotskyist) both of whom have been guests of the UNP's jails!

Cleverly exploiting a situation where the ethnic issue rather than traditional ideological differences dominate, President JR has carved a position for himself as the 'moderate Centre', enjoying "Left" support, and manoeuvred the SLFP into a new position best termed the 'racist Right'.

But the SLFP finds its line supported by the M.E.P. and influential sections of the Maha Sangha and the Sinhalese intelligentsia, and surprise of surprises, by the J.V.P., if the Lake House press is to be trusted. According to this report (See SLFP JVP contacts) the JVP whose cadres were decimated by the SLFP government in 1971 is establishing informal contacts with the SLFP to denounce the peace move as a 'treacherous UNP sell-out' to Indian capitalism and US imperialists.

GREAT DISORDER

Meanwhile, the 'Peace process' has caused havoc in the ranks of the Madras-based militant organisations. The veteran LTTE spokesman, Dr. Balasingham has been suspended for anti-Gandhi statements, Uma Maheswaran has been ousted by a rival faction of PLOTE, and the EPRLF's spokesman Ketheeswaran, while attacking the 'neo-facist' and racist UNP and protesting against the indiscriminate killings of Tamil civilians, has denounced the 'barbaric acts' of the bus-

bombers and conveyed sympathies to the families of Sinhalese passengers.

The Mahanayake of Asgiriya who has expressed his opposition to the proposals has had a well-attended meeting of monks in which Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha and Ven. Hedigalle Pannatissa were participants, while the Mahanayake of Malwatte who organised a meeting of the Malwatte Sangha Sabha has called for polls. It was last month we saw Archbishop Nicholas Marcus Fernando lock horns with Bishop Deugopillai of Jaffna.

Great disorder under the heavens, at least in the Establishment what do the people think? Is there a 'peace constituency', the constituency we referred to in paying tribute to Sarath?

PEACE CONSTITUENCY

A visitor to Jaffna tells us that there is such a constituency built on war-weariness and the human craving for order and normal life. It would be much stronger he says if only the government was smart enough to remove nagging irritations like 'permits' and traffic 'passes', and saw there was less 'kappan' collecting. More to the point, the government must also erase the impression that there is some kind of 'economic blockade' of Jaffna. Even essentials and urgently needed supplies, are wanting or slow in coming. As a result the 'Tigers' are supplying these items, including drugs to the hospital!

What of the Sinhalese? Is there a move towards consensus and if so what sort of consensus? A tough line or for a negotiated settlement? Is there a slowly growing peace constituency?

In the sad absence of reliable opinion — sampling, we can only on our own sources of information, such as they are, and professional instinct. We suspect that there is a Sinhala-Tamil "Enough's Enough" consensus.

M. de S.

Ethnic Strife Takes a Toll on 'Paradise'

Richard M. Weintraub

TRINCOMALEE, Sri Lanka —

From a Sri Lankan Army helicopter the land below has all the appearance of an island paradise.

Lush green rice paddies, surrounded by neat dikes, set out a checkerboard pattern around villages in jungle foliage. To the east, sandy beaches along the Bay of Bengal give way to the deep, sheltered harbor at Trincomalee.

As the helicopter dips lower, however, a different image emerges. Bridges along the coastal road are cratered, damaged by Tamil guerrilla explosives.

Wide sections of housing, once owned by Tamils, are in ruins, looted and destroyed by Sinhalese mobs. Tourist resorts, which once held promise of economic uplift, are shells after guerrilla attacks.

Trincomalee has become a new battleground in the ethnic conflict in this island nation that has seen an estimated 1,500 persons killed and wounded this year alone.

It is an ethnic conflict in which Sri Lanka's 16 million people are divided into hostile and mutually suspicious camps, each seeing itself as a minority.

As in the strife in Northern Ireland or the Middle East, motives become so suspect that peace initiatives, such as one begun by the Sri Lankan government last month, are met with caution by Tamils and Sinhalese alike.

Sri Lanka's violence is rooted deeply in the belief of the Tamils, who make up 18 percent of the population, that they have suffered in jobs, education, land distribution and justice at the hands of the 74 percent Sinhalese majority. The remaining 8 percent of Sri Lanka's population is mostly Eurasians and Moslems.

While there are divisions among the Tamils, on the surface theirs is a classic case of a minority that believes it has been done wrong.

The Sinhalese, too, have the outlook of a minority. Time and again the argument is heard: "We are but 12 million people alone in the world. No one else speaks our language, shares our culture. Who else is the guardian of our Buddhism? And here we are on a small island staring north at 50 million Tamils."

To the Sinhalese, it is not just the Tamils of Sri Lanka who are a threat but also those to the north in India, across the 18-mile (30-kilometer) Palk Strait.

A small Tamil insurgency, mostly by youths who believed politicians were no longer doing enough to protect their rights, began to shake Sinhalese complacency in the mid-1970s.

It grew in intensity in the early 1980s, finally reaching a point where the insurgents are in virtual control of the Tamil heartland in northern Jaffna Peninsula, and have the security forces in something of a standoff here in Eastern province.

It has been a familiar story, according to diplomats. Youthful insurgents resort to the terrorists' tactics of bombs, ambushes and assassinations. A poorly trained, ill-equipped and undermanned military responds with often indiscriminate attacks and arrests that catch a few of their foes but many more by standers.

"In the last three years, the number of guerrilla cadres has grown from 500 to between 5,000 and 7,000," said a diplomat. "With every atrocity against Tamils, you create new recruits and that is just what happened these past three years."

Most of the guerrillas now belong to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, after a bitter internal fight that wiped out other large guerrilla units. Although their rhetoric is revolutionary, independent observers say theirs is a fervor fired by perceived factional grievances and, so far, has only vaguely leftist economic or political overtones.

While India officially denies involvement, it is known that sanctuary and support in India's state of Tamil Nadu have played a major role in the guerrillas' success.

The Liberation Tigers openly collect "taxes" in Jaffna to support efforts and run a rudimentary system of local justice for ordinary law-and-order offenses, according to reports from the area. Those suspected of betraying the Tamil cause are sometimes found hanging from lampposts.

The army presence in the Jaffna area is limited to heavily barricaded bases and occasional armed patrols, a defensive posture reinforced by the apparent failure of a recent offensive to dislodge the Tamil units.

While its limited offensive in the Jaffna area met with only marginal success, the Sri Lankan Army is generally credited with growing professionalism as it struggles to absorb new recruits and adopt to more modern equipment. Some of the training is done by veterans of British Special Forces, according to diplomatic sources.

It is here in the Eastern province that the battle has taken its sharpest turn. Jaffna and the Northern province are overwhelmingly Tamil but the Eastern province is almost equally divided among Tamils, Sinhalese and Moslems.

Villages and neighborhoods of each community are intermingled, leading to an often explosive mix in recent months as tensions erupted in open confrontation.

"It used to be just the Tamils who were attacked or kidnapped, but now it is both sides," said a resident of Trincomalee. "A few Tamils will disappear and then a few days later, some Sinhalese. It goes on like that, tit for tat."

— International Herald Tribune
(July 8)

Civil War in Paradise

Sri Lanka, until the fighting began, seemed marvelously well equipped to lift itself into rapid and sustained development. It is an interesting country that, although very poor in conventional terms of income, has a remarkable high standard of living by the more important measures. On GNP per capita of about \$330 a year, which is lower than Pakistan's it lives like the countries that the World Bank calls the upper-middle-income group. In those respects that make most difference it has reached the same standards as, say, Malaysia, which has a money income five or six times as high.

Sri Lanka's average life expectancy, which is a pretty good indicator of public health in general is longer than Malaysia's and, in fact, the longest in Asia except for Japan's. Its infant mortality rate is one third Pakistan's. Its food production has been rising at a phenomenal rate. Its population growth is moderate. The

level of education is strikingly high. A youngster's chance of going to secondary school is better than in most of the middle-income countries. Sri Lanka seemed by every calculation to be among the most hopeful of countries, until the fighting began to spread.

The guerrilla warfare that started more than a decade ago is becoming more intense. Casualties have soared in the past few months. The deep ethnic hostilities suggest a parallel with Northern Ireland: The island's Tamil minority has longstanding grievances over discrimination, but the Sinhalese majority sees itself as the embattled defender of a threatened culture vastly outnumbered by the Tamils nearby in southern India. When a few Tamil youths first began to resort to the gun, the Sri Lankan army, mostly Sinhalese, responded with indiscriminate vehemence. The civilian casualties and outrages then drew more Tamils into the guerrilla movement. That part of the story is as familiar as it is melancholy.

The government, alarmed by the rising scale of warfare, has now offered a proposal for a political settlement providing more democracy in the provinces where most Tamils live. But enmities have reached a point that makes easy solutions improbable. As an aid donor, the United States has a little leverage. As Sri Lanka's closest neighbor, India has a good deal more — particularly since the guerrillas are being supplied by Tamils on the Indian mainland.

Both India and the United States seem to be moving to do what they can, although it is never easy for outsiders to repair a country's internal political failures.

Meanwhile, the civil war continues, with vast damage to a country that recently was one of the most promising laboratories in which the world was learning how to raise the quality of life for its poorest people.

Editorial

— The Washington Post, (July 7)

FOR WELL OVER A HALF A CENTURY

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VIJAYA — the wild card

Mervyn de Silva

The Second session of the Political Parties Conference (PPC) convened by President Junius Jayewardene last month closes today with almost all political parties, participants and non-participants, making a contribution, large or small, to the prevailing state of total confusion.

"What the PPC has demonstrated is the grievously divisive impact of the ethnic conflict on the island's once well established party system," says a leader of the Socialist LSSP.

Far from creating broad national consensus, or even a majority Sinhalese consensus, the conference has introduced new conflicts, altered old alliances and blurred the traditional ideological distinctions of Right, Left and Centre.

The 79-year-old President, a great gamesman, has finessed his only formidable opponent, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the former Premier, by writing to her a letter widely publicised yesterday. He wrote that he would present to the conference the counter-proposals of her Freedom Party (SLFP), which is boycotting the conference in support of the party's demand for a general election soon.

Though Mrs Bandaranaike reiterates her party's commitment to a "political solution," her real strategy is to mobilise Sinhalese opinion on this issue, isolate and weaken the rightwing UNP Government and force it to hold elections before 1986. The highly controversial 1982 referendum extended the term of the old Parliament, in which the UNP has a five-sixths majority, by another six years.

While her criticism of a "totally unrepresentative Parliament" is valid, whether her party, whose strongest base is the rural middle class, can produce a "parliament of the streets," or even mobilise a rank-and-file figure such as Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto is doubtful. Mrs Bandaranaike's line of

attack on the Government's provincial autonomy offer makes obvious her target audience. She denounces the offer as a surreptitious attempt to create a "federal structure" and "federalism," which is equated with "division" in the Sinhalese mind, the dirtiest word in their political vocabulary.

This stance draws support from the People's United Front (MEP) which has one MP in a House of 168. The MEP is a "Left Nationalist" party and nationalism, predictably, has outweighed socialism.

This is apparently not the case with the other supporter, the proscribed People's Liberation Front (JVP), which has branded the move as part of a plot by "Indian capitalists," "Tamil chauvinism" and the US Central Intelligence Agency, (CIA) to divide Sri Lanka. The JVP, whose charismatic young leader, Rohana Wijeweera, collected a quarter of a million votes at the 1982 presidential polls, led the exclusively Sinhalese youth insurrection in 1971.

A "New Left" party, the NSSP, which has links with Britain's left-wing Militant group, is participating in the conference but not in the committees. This is also true of the Tamil Congress, once a rival of the main Tamil party (Tulf) but of little consequence today.

Tulf leaders who returned from exile in Tamilnadu, the southern Indian state with a 50m Tamil population, decided on direct talks with the Government without participating in the conference. But it is keeping a close watch on Sinhalese political trends and an even closer eye on events in Sri Lanka's Tamil North, where the army and Tamil guerrilla groups are fighting for control.

The wild card in the pack is the People's Party (SLMP), led by Mrs Bandaranaike's film-star son-in-law, Vijaya Kumaranatunge, and her younger daughter, Chandrika. With a fine sense of drama, both have made two trips

to Madras and New Delhi, where they met the Tamilnadu Chief Minister, Mr M. G. Ramachandran, a former movie-star himself, the leaders of all the separatist rebel groups, and top Indian officials.

On Wednesday, Vijaya (whose name is the same as the first Sinhalese migrant from India 2,500 years ago) had a successful rally in Colombo, where he said "I am the only Sinhalese politician who had the guts to face the terrorist leaders and tell them we are against division but stand for peace and justice."

Mr Velupillai Prabhakaran, leader of the most powerful guerrilla group, the Tigers, described the couple as "enlightened Sinhalese" and hoped there were more like them in the new generation of Sri Lankans.

— The Financial Times
London (July 18)

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Policy with neighbours under review

The Government of India is currently engaged in a detailed review of its neighbourhood diplomacy to assess whether the present policy of bending backwards to placate intransigent neighbours is yielding the desired results.

A comprehensive paper on the subject has been prepared by the Ministry of External Affairs for consideration at the highest level, to determine whether this policy needs to be revised in any respect to make it more effective both in its articulation and implementation.

Objective unchanged: The basic objective remains unchanged, to the extent that India will continue to strive for better and mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbours consistent with the country's national interests. The review under way relates primarily to the procedures to be followed for exercising the option open to India more effectively.

The dialogue with China, for example, is running into difficulties for reasons that are not directly connected in any way with developments in and around the sub-continent. A clearer picture of the new Chinese tactics and their motivations in adopting tougher postures will emerge only after the latest official level talks in Beijing.

Emboldened to press claims: But the fact that China has chosen, for whatever reason, to reassert stridently its territorial claims across the McMahon line with a token incursion in a strategically vital segment of the Tawang region cannot be viewed in isolation. The continued internal turmoils in India have emboldened some neighbouring countries to take liberties and attempt to step up pressures to extract concessions.

The uneasy relationship with Pakistan has been strained further, not only by its persistent support to the extremists in Punjab but also by Islamabad's increasing assistance to Sri Lanka in its cam-

paign against Tamil sub-nationalism. The talk of a friendship treaty or no-war pact has turned out to be a non-starter despite all the rhetoric of a shared desire for normalisation.

If the Punjab crisis has given Pakistan a chance to meddle in India's internal affairs, the incipient agitation for a Gorkhaland in the Sikkim-Darjeeling area is enabling the hardliners in Nepal to give an anti-Indian slant to it. This is leading in turn to an extension of Chinese influence in the mountain kingdom, while Bhutan is engaged in complex negotiations with Beijing for settling its border problem.

Deep-rooted animosities: The recent visit of Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad has, no doubt, helped to create an atmosphere of improving relations with Bangladesh. But beneath the surface there are deep-rooted animosities giving an unfortunate twist to the prevailing discords over issues like the Ganga waters and maritime boundary demarcation.

The Tamil problem has soured India's relationship with Sri Lanka

to such an extent that this highly strategic island is becoming increasingly vulnerable to all kinds of foreign influences. Though the two superpowers have so far kept out, the lesser ones are getting more and more involved, either as arms suppliers or supporters of Sinhala chauvinism.

All these disturbing developments in India's neighbourhood are being studied carefully for formulating the policy options open to the Government. The intention is not to adopt stronger attitudes, but project Indian policies in such a manner that the country's well-meaning gestures for better relations are not mistaken for appeasement.

The next few months are going to provide many challenges in the conduct of India's neighbourhood diplomacy, confronting the country once again with the exasperating dilemma whether a recalcitrant neighbour can be won over from a position of strength with some meaningful concessions, or a display of excessive solicitude for its susceptibilities that are quite different from legitimate grievances.

— Hindu (21st July)

TRENDS . . .

(Continued from page 1)

A reasonably well-paid, steady job is less and less easy to find.

Five thousand young men have applied to join the 'commandos' when the vacancies number only 500 and 7,000 young women have applied for places in the Police Reserve which accommodate another 1,000.

I. M. F.

Tight budgetary control — the IMF's standard message to all those who stand on its doorstep asking the relief. And that means no wage increase if your budget deficit is as high as 13% of G. D. P. It will have to be reduced to 8% next year if the IMF is to look kindly at Sri Lanka's request

for concessional assistance amounting to Rs. 6,500 million.

EXHAUSTION FACTOR

The United Front extended its 5 year term by 2 years through a doubtful constitutional device. This did not stop the SLFP from forcing its major partner, the LSSP, out long before 1977. But by then, the SLFP was already on the skids. Staying in office until July 1977 only made matters worse. The 'exhaustion factor' in an electorate accustomed to five-year regimes was already undermining the regime. Last week, the UNP elected in 1977 celebrated its 9th year in power. Thanks to the Dec. 1982 referendum, Parliament's term ends only in 1989 — 12 long years. The 'natives' are getting restless.

Why Reagan - Maggie are the apartheid-kissing couple

President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia has always been regarded as a moderate African leader and a respected Commonwealth personality. He is hardly ever given to rude behaviour or intemperate language. Yet he was guilty of both last week when Sir Geoffrey Home, the British Foreign Secretary was in Lusaka on his way back from his EEC mission to South Africa. President Kaunda kept Sir Geoffrey cooling his heels in an ante-room while he went on Zambian TV to talk about the Home mission and President Reagan's speech to Congress.

In doing so, he added a stinging phrase to the growing body of invective that has accompanied the emotion-charged international debate on South Africa. He accused President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher of "kissing apartheid" and Sir Geoffrey's own conduct on his South African visit as "deplorable". Feelings, especially, African feelings are running high.

Despite pressure from the US Senate and Congress, Mr. Reagan ruled out economic sanctions and offered a standard 'Reaganite' excuse for US policy on the racist regime. Addressing South Africa's Whites, he reassured them that "resuming progress towards ending apartheid "did not" mean negotiations with those who wish to replace White tyranny over Blacks with Communist tyranny over all". The most spirited reply to Mr. Reagan came not from President Kaunda or any other African leading figures of the Christian Church in South Africa. Bishop Tutu, the Nobel Prize winner told Mr. Reagan "to go to hell" and described his speech as "nauseating". Mr. Botha, said the Bishop "must be

feeling very thrilled that he has got such a wonderful public relations officer in the White House"?

"Nauseating" was also the word that Dr. Allen Boesak chose. Nauseating nonsense was his crisp summing up of Mr. Reagan's address. No less critical of the Reaganite position on South Africa were US leaders. Senator Edward Kennedy said that America was "the last best friend of apartheid" while Rev. Jesse Jackson thought Mr. Reagan was only came second best. "America is now a co-conspirator (with Britain) in continuing apartheid". In Britain itself, Mr. Denis Healey the shadow Foreign Secretary had no doubts as to the effect of the US-UK anti-sanctions policy. It will 'prolong' he said 'the black agony', which is a precisely the opposite view to that held by the Reagan-Thatcher combine. Their reluctance is justified on the grounds that it "hurt the blacks".

Meanwhile Mr. Malcolm Fraser, the former Australian premier who headed the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) which, by a decision taken at the Nassau Commonwealth Summit last year, reported to the Commonwealth Heads of State, saw the future quite differently from Mr. Thatcher and Mr. Reagan. Only the US Congress may be able to avert a bloody civil war, he said.

What accounts for the obduracy of these two leaders? Is it that they are basically pro-racist Pretoria because of their own pro-White sentiment and innate racial prejudice? Or is it economic interest? Certainly, there can be little doubt about the vast US and UK capital investment in a country of great natural wealth. Both have invested well over 10 billion pounds. To fortify the economic argument is the policy,

by the way, of the other major state opposed to sanctions, West Germany. It is the third largest investor but way behind the two leaders.

Strategic Interests

There is yet another consideration which besides the liberation of Azania and the independence of Namibia will be regarded as vital by the Non-aligned movement, particularly the African and the Indian Ocean states. It is South Africa's role as a strategic partner of the US and NATO.

That is why the South African issue, probably with varying emphases, will figure prominently first at the mini-Commonwealth summit in mid-August in London, and NAM's 8th summit in Harare, Zimbabwe.

As a strategic asset, South Africa's importance is three-fold: a) Its strategic raw materials.

In an article published by the Third World Quarterly, Azim Hussain, wrote:

"The US and Western Europe, but pre-eminently the US, became the metropolitan power in relation to the raw material producing South Africa. South Africa is estimated to have 48% of the world's manganese resources, 49% of gold, 52% of cobalt, 65% of vanadium, 83% of chrome, and 85% of the world's platinum reserves... These strategic materials and others such as coal, uranium and copper, are regarded as vital to western defence and high technology industries. By 1980 the value of mineral exports became almost as equal to that of gold of which South Africa is the leading producer supplying 80% of the capitalist world's gold production"

(2) Its usefulness as western policemen and de-stabiliser of newly independent neighbouring

states, and preventing Namibia (South West Africa) from attaining independence under the radical nationalist SWAPO.

In the advance to 'uhuru' (political freedom) placed on the African agenda most vigorously by Kwame Nkrumah, a nationalist with socialist ideas, it was only Kenya which gave Imperial Britain serious trouble. In the 1950's and 1960's the path to independence was reasonably orderly. The best example was Zambia where Mr. Kaunda has been undisputed leader for almost two decades. So with that outstanding African leader, Julius Nyerere. Not so the 1970's when a weak, far less sagacious metropolitan power, held on to its colonial possessions with such tenacity and stupidity that the option of orderly peaceful transition was ruled out. Inevitably the answer of nationalist resistance movement was 'armed struggle', in Angola and Mozambique.

This was also true in the last British colony Rhodesia, which was white minority ruled, and therefore a special case. Again, the reply was 'armed struggle', with rival 'liberation fronts' in the contest for power.

There was a distinctive feature about these liberation struggles: a predominantly Marxist leadership which obtained assistance, including arms, from the Soviet Union and its allies, and from sympathetic sources such as Cuba. It was this characteristic which alarmed the West. Would the new Africa not only be independent but led by parties and personalities with an anti-capitalist and anti-West outlook? And would such a development not merely change the political landscape of southern Africa but threaten White-ruled resource-rich South Africa. Namibia, the last of the colonies, awaited de-colonisation; South Africa (Azania) awaited liberation.

It was with the exit of the discredited President Carter that US policy found a clearer definition. Mr. Reagan's top adviser called it "constructive engagement" with South Africa. Under this policy, South Africa was installed as the chief instrument of de-stabilising Angola, Mozam-

bique and Zimbabwe, while the US and its NATO allies used the U. N. to deny Namibia, a virtual colony of South Africa, independence.

In Angola, and Mozambique, it was open military intervention. South African armoured columns had advanced rapidly into southern Angola to help the pro-US Unita of Jonas Savimbi against the MPLA. But the Angolan government, immediately after independence, invited Cuban forces to help it beat back the US-supported South Africa-UNITA military intervention.

Only recently Mr. Savimbi, just like the leaders of the Nicaraguan 'contras', was publicly hanging about in Washington eagerly waiting to collect his "funds" (aid) from Mr. Reagan, who is simultaneously engaged in a global campaign against 'terrorism' and "subversion". In Mozambique too, the South African regime and Army gives military help to "contras" (anti-government forces) to fight the the socialist regime of President Samora Machel.

Pretoria's tactical choice was the same — active support, including military, to the anti-government M. R. M. Here the 'contras' have not only gained control of parts of Mozambican territory but at one time threatened Mozambique's main port, Beira. Its capture would have served a dual purpose: crippling blow to the Mozambican economy, and a denial of access to an alternative exit point for Zimbabwean exports. Land-locked Zimbabwe depended heavily on transport by rail to South African ports.

Economic blockade, and harassment, and sabotage are Pretoria's main means of continuous pressure on Zimbabwe.

In May, South Africa launched raids on Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana against what it called "ANC 'terrorist' bases" in these countries. One of the buildings destroyed in Lusaka, Zambia, was a UN Refugee Centre!

To the military and economic is added the political-diplomatic in America's "constructive engagement" with the racist regime. The objective is the 'containment'

of liberation in southern Africa. Namibia is the best illustration of the way the US and its western allies work closely with South Africa in pursuit of a common strategy.

By the time Mr. Reagan took office, Namibia was well on the road to independence and UN sponsored elections. It was clear to everybody that South West Africa Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) would become the Government. But by 1980, when Namibia's right to independence and SWAPO's role as "sole representative" of the Namibian people had been accepted by the international community, the Reagan administration, undermined the entire settlement process.

Namibia is important for another reason. Sixty percent of South Africa's Atlantic coast is Namibian territory. And this is the third vital consideration in US policy.

Its crucial place in US/NATO Indian Ocean Strategy. Again this received much higher priority with the advent of the Reagan administration, the elevation of Carters Rapid Deployment Force into a full fledged "Central Command" with an 'area of authority' of 17 Gulf and Indian ocean states and in the context of the full development of Diego Garcia, and the rapid expansion of US naval presence in the Indian ocean.

With the massive boycott of the Commonwealth games signalling the most important crisis to confront the Commonwealth, South Africa will loom large at the London mini-summit this month. It is however in the context of the Indian ocean and its militarisation that South Africa will be a major issue at the September NAM summit. For as Prof. Oye Ogunbadejo, of the Univ. of Ife, Nigeria wrote in his essay on "Diego Garcia and Africa's Security", the leaders in Pretoria realise why Mr. Reagan does not mind "kissing apartheid". Pretoria is fully aware, he noted, that the Reagan administration values South Africa's place in the U.S. Indian Ocean strategy.

— JAY.

(Continued in the next issue)

Amnesty International: A David Battling Goliaths

Jonathan Power

LONDON

Amnesty International was started in 1961 as a one year campaign. Its half-million members are now celebrating its 25th birthday, and more and more people around the world know that if their neighbors or sons or daughters are taken away in the night, the outside world cares and is prepared to act.

Five years ago, in Amnesty headquarters in London, I was converted from a doubting observer to the conviction that an organization with a full time staff of only 150 could move mountains in far away places.

At 11 o'clock on the morning of Saturday, Feb. 28, 1981, the telephone rang at Amnesty International. The press officer, Richard Roech, was in his office catching up on work and took the call since Amnesty, still beguilingly amateurish, had no weekend duty officer, or even an answering machine. The call was from Buenos Aires. The caller identified himself. Mr. Roech recognized the name because the man's brother was one of the adopted prisoners whose case had been featured by Amnesty in its Abolition of Torture campaign.

As Mr. Roech took notes, the caller reported that police had arrested Dr. Jose Westerkamp, who on behalf of his imprisoned son Gustavo had toured Europe to raise support for the campaign. Boris Pasik, Carmen Lapace and Gabriela Iribarne also had been arrested. The latter had lived in Canada for 15 years and was in Argentina on holiday.

By noon the the Amnesty researcher on Argentina had been briefed and was calling Argentina for more details. She was told of new development: the arrest of Emilio Mignone, a leading lawyer who often conducted the defense of political prisoners in Argentina, and of Augusto Conte MacDonell, the co-president of the Argentine

When the United Nations celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, TARZIE VITTACHI, the best known of Sri Lankan journalists, wrote in his NEWSWEEK column that two individual achievements stand out — the idea which inspired UNICEF and the enterprise and courage of the man who founded AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

A.I. which celebrated its 25th anniversary last month, produced a scathing report on Sri Lanka last year and a special report on "extra judicial killings" in March. This anniversary tribute comes from the eminent American journalist, Jonathan Power of the NYK Times.

Permanent Assembly for Human Rights. Two other lawyers working for El Centro de Estudios Legales Sociales had been arrested.

Amnesty issued a news release to the wire services. A film on two prisoners of conscience, one of them Gustavo Westerkamp, was to be shown on BBC television the next evening and included an interview with Jose Westerkamp. Mr. Roech phoned the producers and arranged for an item on the arrests to be included at the end of the program.

Meanwhile, a telegram deploying the arrests had been sent to the chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights. On Sunday the Amnesty press officer in Toronto reported that major newspapers and networks in Canada had covered the events. The Amnesty representative there had spoken by phone to the Canadian ambassador in Buenos Aires and, as a result, the Canadian government had asked that a representative be allowed access to Gabriela Iribarne.

At 2 o'clock on Monday morning, the researcher received another call from Buenos Aires. She was told that the Argentinian press had reported the case, and that those arrested were being held incommunicado, would be charged under article 224 of the penal code for the possession of diagrams and plans of military establishments and faced eight years' imprisonment.

The researcher surmised that the only military plans the human

rights activists were likely to have would be diagrams of torture centers and detention camps drawn by former prisoners.

By the middle of the week the press coverage of the events was extensive. The Latin American correspondent of The Guardian wrote a major piece based on information provided by Amnesty. A critical editorial appeared in The Washington Post and was reprinted in the International Herald Tribune. The New York Times carried a lengthy news report.

A week after the arrests the phone rang again in London. The judge dealing with the case had called everyone into court for an announcement. Late that night, a call from the U. S. section of Amnesty brought the news that although the judge had said police investigations would be continued, he had ordered the prisoners released, citing insufficient evidence.

Now, 25 years on, Amnesty International is still young and poor while the state machinery for imprisoning and torturing and killing has a long tradition and vast resources. The challenge now is to build the human rights movement to a size that will make governments finally understand that no amount of hypocrisy or prevarication will suffice. One day, governments must be told, they will no longer get away with it.

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The need of the hour is a powerful peace movement

Fr. Tissa Balasuriya O.M.I.*

Sri Lanka today is going through its most agonizing crisis of this century. A virtual civil war has engulfed our country in large scale destruction of property and of human lives. The economy is slowly grinding to a halt. Our debts are mounting. Suspicion, fear, hatred is increasing. Our sons are killing each other by several hundred each month.

It is in this tragic situation that we are meeting here in Madras. I am conscious that I am speaking in the city from where one side to the conflict directs its military operations. I am aware that we are dealing with a very sensitive issue in which misunderstanding and misinterpretation is possible or even probable due to the intensity of the emotional undergirding of the issues. All the same I wish to speak to you as frankly as possible, with malice to none, remembering that life is short and we pass this way but once.

10-12 years of escalating violence:

Our country has now seen 10-12 years of escalating violence. Starting from mob violence and individual acts of violence it has now grown to a large scale war on a wide front with sophisticated equipment and international involvement. Several years of conflict does not indicate that one side or the other can have final victory by war. If hate continues, whichever side wins, the next generation of youth is likely to recommence the struggle. Both sides seem to accept that this is a **NO WIN** situation.

* The text of a speech made by the Director, Centre for Society & Religion, at a Seminar in Madras Organised by the Indo-Lanka Maithri Sangamaya on 5th July 1986.

Yet both sides want to negotiate from a position of strength. There is no confidence in each other, hence no basis for a cessation of hostilities or even de-escalation of violence.

It is my experience, having gone round to most parts of the country, during the past decade on peace missions that the vast majority of our people of all communities want a just peace. They want the killing to stop. But they are unable to express themselves. They cannot speak to each other across the great divides of ethnic prejudice and the war front. In this situation let me reflect with you on some aspects of the responsibility of the different actors or agents in this human tragedy.

On the Sri Lanka side:

The Governments of the past 38 years since Independence have all had a dominance of Sinhala political leaders. The ethnic violence was first unleashed by the Sinhala mobs in 1956 when the Tamil leaders protested non-violently on the Galle Face Green in Colombo. The officers of law and order merely looked the other way. The SLFP Government of the day seemed to more than merely tolerate. Similar and more widespread violence was unleashed in 1958 when about 50,000 Tamils fled from the South to the North by land and sea.

After nearly 20 years during which the problems were not resolved, large scale (ethnic) violence against the Tamils erupted in 1977, followed by further bouts in 1979, 1981 and the most disastrous and systematic attack on the Tamils in July 1983. Tamil violence which began in the early 1970's was a response and reaction to the Sinhala violence, often ignored, if not tolerated or even

approved by the rulers of the day. **The Government of Today** which has ruled the country since 1977 has to accept a very large share of responsibility for the escalation of violence during its regime. Unfulfilled promises, broken pledges, and failure to recognize the depth of the frustration among the Tamils, specially the youth, led to a worsening of the situation. The Government has attempted to contain discontent by repression. Every stage of repressive action had led to a greater resistance among the Tamil people. This in turn has led to greater repression by the Government. The spiral of violence has thus been escalating.

The Government has made the problem more difficult of solution by its policies towards the other political parties of the South, specially the SLFP. Given the tragic situation of today the Government must take every step necessary to reach a consensus among the political parties of the South in order to propose a viable and acceptable political solution to the Tamil people. The resolution of the N/S conflict is directly related to a solution of the South-South problem — specially of the U. N. P. and the S.L.F.P.

The Government fails to do so, it will be unfortunately presiding over the disintegration of Sri Lanka as a political unit, and also of our peoples civilized way of life.

The SLFP: The other major political party has shared power with the UNP during the past 30 years. It has also to share the blame for our present calamity. Both the safeguarding of human lives, and perhaps even political wisdom, should bring it to cooperate actively with the

Government in resolving this issue. If it fails to transcend narrow interests of party politics, the country may witness once again the power conflicts of political parties jeopardizing a peaceful and just settlement of this conflict. Should the S.L.F.P. expect to return to power, it has to consider that if in power it will inherit a situation worse than even now, and without much outside help to prop up a severely damaged economy.

SLMP: We welcome the initiative taken by the S.L.M.P. to request an all Parties Conference and visit Tamilnadu prior to it.

The Left Parties in S. L. have also off and on contributed to the worsening of ethnic relations. But today most of them are on the side of a just and peaceful solution.

The TULF which has often been the victim of broken pledges and has stood for a peaceful solution of the ethnic problem, has also a large measure of responsibility for the present difficulties in that it was the T.U.L.F. that propagated the demand for Eelam as a separate sovereign state. This extreme demand, though the fruit of frustration has been a cause of the unresolved conflict of the past decade. We urge the T.U.L.F. to make as constructive though critical, a response as possible to the proposals for reconciliation and power sharing offered by the Sri Lankan government, despite sad memories of past infidelities. Failure at this stage too can add immensely to the suffering of our people. We invite them to come to Sri Lanka to meet the ordinary Sinhala people and speak with them.

The Tamil Militants Groups is the response of generous and dedicated Tamil youth to the Sri Lankan denial of Tamil rights and the T.U.L.F. propagation of Eelam as a goal of the Tamil people. They have gone through and are enduring much personal hardships and suffering. Hundreds of them have given their lives for the cause of Eelam. They have opted for a military response to the violence of the

majority and the authoritarian attitude of the State.

10-12 years of conflict have built up the power of these groups over certain areas of the North and East of Sri Lanka. In the meantime the State security forces have also increased their numbers and equipment. It is desirable that these militant groups realise that in the present conflict they too do not have much chance of a lasting victory. For while their violence is a response to that of the majority community, it is now leading to an unfortunate mobilization of the state also. If the conflict continues another 10 years there will be immeasurable harm done to the country, specially in the areas of conflict.

The whole of Sri Lanka is thus caught in the bind of the spiral of violence. This has disastrous effects on the relationships between the communities, suspicion, distrust and hatred are more and more hardened.

The majority of the people of all communities ardently desire a just peace, but they are unable to articulate their better inspirations, or organize themselves for it. The gap of communication, specially between the Sinhale and Tamil people is deepened by the inability of ordinary people to meet each other or dialogue with each other through the media. The conditions of violence do not permit the people on either side to know the immense good will of the vast majority of the people on the other side. The media of communication aggravate the situation with exaggerations of our already bad situation. In the process both the Sinhale and Tamil people as well as the Muslims are all hardly free to really meet each other. Prejudice is bad enough, but fear of misunderstanding and even of punishment of one type or other further limits the possibilities for the ordinary peace loving peoples to meet each other.

Tamilnadu

The Government and people of Tamilnadu too have a share of responsibility for the Sri Lankans tragedy of these years. Tamilnadu

has been a haven for refugees who have fled Sri Lanka and State violence; and a sanctuary for the TULF as well as for the Tamil militants engaged in an armed struggle against the Sri Lankan State. As within Sri Lanka, the Tamilnadu political leaders may tend to decide their political stances on the Sri Lankan problem more with a view to electoral gain, than to being helpful towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

This is further complicated by the trend among the people of Tamilnadu to view the Sri Lankan state as wanting to exterminate the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sinhala people as the enemies of the S. L. Tamils. The media here are probably unaware of the desire for peace among the vast majority of the Sinhala people or has no means of knowing it. Likewise the Sinhala people tend to judge Tamilnadu reactions to S. L. in the background of their historical fears and collective memories of past invasions from South India.

Due to these sad realities it is very important that the people and leaders of Tamilnadu also meet the people and leaders of the Sinhala people in order to foster good relations among them. An absence of such a communication may contribute towards hardening of attitudes and fears on both sides. Tamilnadu sensitivities may in turn make it more difficult for the Government of India to serve as a friendly mediator.

It is important that the people and leaders of Tamilnadu consider that encouraging the resort to the gun from within its territories can have, in the long term, undesirable effects on its own policy.

The Government of India has been a helpful mediator in the present conflict, since July 1983. It has also to bear in mind that permission, explicit or implicit, to use its territory for attacks on Sri Lanka, may if allowed to continue long, further complicated India's own problems of national security. For forces beyond the control of all these agents may want to further inter-

nationalize the issues. We believe the Government of India wants to settle the issue speedily with fair play and justice to all, and we would encourage all concerned to cooperate with it in this reward.

If the conflict draws on it is the peddlars of arms that will benefit from it. Unfortunately there are too many companies and other agencies interested in fostering armed conflicts in poor countries, for the sake of their arms sales, and for destabilizing these countries. We must all be careful that we do not become victims of these.

Need of a Peace Movement: Sri Lanka is thus suffering today due to the sad failure of a whole generation of leaders to evolve peaceful and constitutional means of conflict resolution. They have not been able to inspire the younger generation by their sense of honesty, fair play and dedication to the common good of all. The violence of the young is a result of this failure of the older leaders. This is true of the 1971 Sinhale youth inurrection and of this Tamil insurgency or liberation struggle.

The Tamil youth militants have also to realize that their option for arms is not an unambiguous virtue. For the conflicts among themselves, and their authoritarian approaches towards the population of their own areas leaves the Tamil people also with concerns for their future. The repression by the state and the attacks by the state's security forces, however ensure them the support of the Tamil people in considerable measure.

The Tamil and Sinhala youth are today being motivated by antagonistic feelings to resort to arms for the defense of their race, homeland, country etc.

Recently I was on a short peace march at MUNNESWARAM near Puttalam. A sturdy young Sinhale boy of 15 was waling by my side. I asked him what he would do as a man. He said his father was a policeman. He would like to join the army or the police force. When I asked

him why. He replied that the country was in danger and who else could go to the battle front if not youth like him. I asked him, do you know the cause of the conflict. He said "no, I do not know", but I feel I have to volunteer.

Similarly I have met Tamil youth of 14 and 15 dropping out of school and joining their elder brothers and sisters in the jungles to struggle for their liberation. Our youth are being thus thrust into combat manipulated by the myths, prejudices and social forces prevailing in Sri Lanka, for the defence of their race, homeland, country etc. It is sad to see how the flower of our youth is thus growing up in hatred and with a desire to give their lives for a cause which includes killing others. This is also true despite the desire for peace among the majority of the people.

The escalation of violence has now reached absolutely horrible proportions. The State has been resorting to aerial bombing of sections of people in the cities of the North. This is leading inevitably to the killing of innocent civilians. Likewise, heinous even if it be only a response to the violence of the security forces, is the militant action of the killing of innocent civilians by bombs exploding in civilian transport and urban areas, aircraft, factories etc. We deeply deplore that the conflict is thus escalating. It has to be kept in mind by the Government that continued aerial bombing could lead to the militants bringing in counter weapons. Has not each escalation of violence led to a response related to it? The killing of civilians by bombs can also lead to an increase in the frenzy of mob violence on either side, to extents which will totally destroy much of what is left of our country.

In this a most sad and terrifying situation. The persons and groups who are for a peaceful solution **must get together** so that a peace movement in Sri Lanka may become the cry of a suffering people — of all ethnic groups against the encircling bru-

ality and devastating inhumanity of man to man.

Let me state that personally already in 1956, in the Social Justice Review of May — Aug 1956, I wrote an article on "The Frustrated Community" where I said that if the racist policies of the Government of the day continued, we cannot expect the Tamils to want to belong to one united Ceylonese nation.

Today after thirty years, may I take this occasion to tell you and through this seminar to all the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, that I am extremely sad at the way the Sinhale governments and mobs have treated you during the past three decades. I bow my head in shame for this record of cruelty and lack of understanding of your legitimate aspirations for human dignity, identity as a people and self management of your own destiny. I ask your pardon for the faults of our rulers and of some Sinhale people.

I would like you to accept my witness, after having travelled to most parts of Sri Lanka that the overwhelming majority of the Sinhale people are peace loving and want to live in peace with all others. These are the best inspirations of their personality, religions and culture even though suspicion fear and hatred sometimes overtakes these among some of them. I believe likewise of the Tamil and Muslim people among whom I have lived and travelled during these decades.

Unfortunately all these people of good will are unorganized, inarticulate and not a **social force**. They do not exercise state power, or control the mass media. They are often manipulated to serve the interest of power holders and power seekers on both sides.

The survival of Sri Lankans — Sinhale, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher as civilized human beings depends on our ability to come together as human beings respecting each other's rights as persons and peoples, and compelling our leaders to work out the political constitutional and economic structures for a just and free society. Our

(Continued on page 24)

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Why Support Agricultural Research?

S. N. de S. Seneviratne

The scientist preaching the research gospel may also be permitted his text. And mine is from Alan Paton's immortal novel "Cry, the beloved country":

"Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed."

This land of ours, Sri Lanka, is holy, sacred, and has sustained man in this country from time immemorial through that wholesome occupation it lends itself to, agriculture. When agriculture flourished, there was peace and plenty, stability and prosperity, and those buoyant periods in our country's history bequeathed to posterity the masterworks of our creative genius and the rich ingredients of our cultural heritage.

Sri Lanka is, in our age too, essentially an agricultural country and agriculture will remain, in the foreseeable future, the base on which national life will be structured. More than 50% of her people, including a majority of the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable sections of the community are engaged in pursuits related to agriculture. It is the principal determinant of the state of the national economy accounting for about 60% of her export earnings. These are compelling reasons why agriculture should be cared for and its viability ensured.

The vigour of the agricultural enterprise is determined very largely by the quality of the research that sustains it. Research is the spring from which all else flows. It is not an optional extra; it is an endeavour which deserves

It has been the constant lament of the scientific community that the national commitment to research in Sri Lanka is dismally low. Indeed, in a study of the 1980 expenditure on agricultural research of 67 developing countries, Sri Lanka ranked 65th in research funding per scientist. (India spends more than twice as much as Sri Lanka.)

This is a paper prepared for a meeting at which scientists were to present the case for increased research funding to a group composed of members of ministries concerned with national budgeting.

Dr. Nissanka Seneviratne is a plant pathologist who as Deputy Director (Research) Gannoruwa, headed the Central Agricultural Research Institute at Peradeniya.

the highest priority, not least in the allocation of funds from the national budget. So we, from Research, are here today to persuade you about the claims of research, to convince you, hopefully, of the crucial role that research has to play in our country development, and to plead with you for an increased and adequate commitment of funds from the national budget to support and sustain research.

In the brief period of time available to me, I will attempt to place before you some considerations which might impress on you the paramount claims of research.

The pressures of today — food, employment and incomes — have introduced a compelling urgency for meaningful answers to our pressing problems. Our best hope for their solution lies in how well we utilise our natural resources for the upliftment of the quality of life of our people. These primarily are land, water and sunshine. Climate is an overriding factor and the word environment is pregnant with meaning. Research is indispensable in charting the correct course for the judicious

utilisation of our endowments.

In responding to the challenges of our time, changes have to be made — forests cleared, rivers dammed and crops or livestock raised where nature once held sway. Nature sustains; nature is not readily malleable we have, as it were, to negotiate with nature and effect these changes within the parameters of manipulation if we are to avoid disastrous consequences. Examples are plentiful all over the world, of man's ignorance and arrogance in overstepping permissible limits. For instance, in the United States, the fragile soils of the plains of the arid Southwest should not have been put under the plough; ranching offered the best hope for the plains. In the late 1880's concerned people sounded this warning. However, the US Congress willed otherwise, influenced by powerful pressure groups. The plains were cultivated. The great dustbowls of the 1890's and 1930's were the inevitable consequence. The Great Plains Committee which reported on the tragedy in 1936 declared that the disaster was wholly man-made, the result of his attempting "to impose upon a region a system of agriculture

to which the plains are not adapted." — a warning to us too in Sri Lanka as we weigh our options, respond to pressures, and make decisions affecting not only the present generation, but generations yet to come. Sound information generated by research must surely be the light to lead us on a sensible course and away from the pits of disaster into which we are in danger of falling.

While science and technology hold the keys to the proper utilisation of our resources, the evolution of strategies and methodologies relevant to our situation in Sri Lanka is of the utmost importance. True, science is universal and transcends boundaries of time and place. The experiences from the cradles of civilization, whether Egypt or China, may have something to offer us as do the hydraulic engineering feats of mediaeval Sri Lanka. Modern science has thrown up innumerable possibilities. Yet, we in Sri Lanka, cannot rely wholly on results obtained elsewhere. Thus, systems developed elsewhere for irrigated farming in flat lands may not be suitable for Sri Lanka; the water management and land utilisation practices adopted in them may be irrelevant for the undulating expanses of Sri Lanka's dry zone where the massive irrigated schemes have been launched. We need to assess the appropriateness of methodologies developed elsewhere in different situations, critically examine their relevance for our situation, and adapt, modify, adopt or reject as dictated by informed judgement. Indeed, we have to fashion courses appropriate to our own distinctive needs, blending our inheritance from the traditional past with the recent advances in science and technology through the sustained effort of local research. Wisdom has to be acquired with patience and humbleness.

The means adopted to secure our salvation must, in the short term, be able to optimise the productivity and profitability of resources and effort in fashioning a viable agriculture. Equally, in the long term, we must preserve

the resources that can sustain life in this country for the generations yet to come. It is the later generations that pay the greatest price for the sins of their forefathers and are compelled to bear the greatest burdens because of the follies and indiscretions of the preceding generations, just as they will be the chief heirs to whatever benefits that accrue through the wisdom of their forebears. Therein lies the compelling need for meaningful research. We have to take our destiny into our own hands. We cannot abdicate our thinking and our activities in research to practitioners and agencies beyond our shores; we have to meet the challenge ourselves, American marines cannot fight the militants in the north.

In travelling the road called development, decision makers frequently stand at the fork — which way to go. And choices at the fork can be made only on an adequate information base. In its absence, the wrong turn may be taken, the information vacuum being readily filled by imaginary projections, false claims, misinformation and bad advice. The tendency to be attracted by the temptations of glamorous and highly advertised modernities is an ever present reality — the nuclear options and the sweet tranquilisers of high technology. One of our own engineers, D.T. Abeysiri, has put the point well: "Take the case of solar energy. Everybody wants to use advanced and currently costly solar cells, etc. If somebody suggested that the best use of solar energy today would be re-cycling of trees on a scientific basis to give wood charcoal and firewood, he would not be taken seriously since it requires minimum expenditure and some effort only. This is not the fashionable thing today; we must put up a proposal to install a nuclear power plant, which may take billions of rupees and take 20 years to build and create pollution..." Many are our lost opportunities and errors of judgement. Many also are the "dead ropes" given by "loyalists", the pills prescribed by foreign "ex-

perts", and the costly blunders committed by "infallible" guides. Their consequences are disastrous and it is well to cite some examples as a potent warning of the dangers inherent in decisions made without adequate information and reliable research data.

About 25 years ago, the Seven Virgins Project at Maskeliya which could have provided nitrogenous fertilizer as well as electricity to meet the increasing demands of long term expansion was aborted. Later, the urea factory was built at Sapugaskanda, dependant on imported feedstocks. It was soon to become a white elephant while the quest for electrical power led to the high dam, Victoria, with the submergence of Patha Dumbara, one of the most fertile stable and productive agricultural regions of the island. Meanwhile, we are now importing fertilizer which could have been produced locally.

The forest cover of the montane region was of vital importance and not only for the well-being of Sri Lanka's agriculture. Yet, schemes dictated by blind arrogance in the name of potato production and ruthless jungle clearing for agricultural expansion spared neither the forest cover nor Sri Lanka's unique botanical and ecological sanctuary, the Horton Plains. Claims that the bacterial wilt disease which affects potato will not occur at altitudes over 5000 feet, a reason adduced to clear virgin forests and mutilate the Horton Plains for potato production, have since been proved to be untenable. The damage to the water sheds which sustain the rivers and the attendant effects such as erosion, silting of reservoirs, floods, earth slips, etc, consequent on the clearing of the natural vegetation, supposedly to advance agricultural production, is inestimable. Time will complete the story of our follies with the events that are likely to unfold downstream and in the lands opened up under the massive irrigation schemes.

The vital importance of research to generate knowledge on land

utilisation patterns and water management practices for the success of agricultural ventures under irrigation is illustrated by the wreck which is the sugarcane development programme, one which also emphasises the importance of healthy planting stock for successful crop production. Both at Kantalai and Hingurana, faulty irrigation practices have laid waste much land in these plantations while the utter disregard for measures to contain disease problems has wrought havoc in the in the plantations where virus diseases and smut are rampant. So after more than 25 years of sugarcane development, only 20,000 tons of sugar are produced annually! Had the nascent sugar industry been supported by an adequate research capability in vital areas, had research information been generated to ensure the success of the project, and measures dictated by that information been implemented, the sugar story would have been vastly different. The new drug called biotechnology will not cure the sugarcane ills. Now, in the aftermath of the tragedies at Kantalai and Hingurana, Multinationals have arrived on the sugar scene and gained a hold in Vellassa ("hundred thousand fields"), the ancient district now known as Moneragala. Even Haddawa Mookalana, the jungle that has been preserved for centuries and is regarded as an important factor governing the water regime in the area, is being sacrificed on the altar on sugar. **While one tragedy follows another caused by the absence of sufficient research information to execute projects successfully, what remains of Sri Lanka's natural endowments is being systematically destroyed.**

Agriculture in this country is now caught up in the repercussions of decisions already made, of schemes that have already been launched. Their consequences are both good and bad, hopeful and frightening. We marched with the Green Revolution. We built a High Dam across the Mahaweli. The intensive agriculture associated with the Green Revolution technology was based on the application of high dosages of chemical ferti-

lizer, the cultivation of high yielding varieties, and the increased use of pesticides. High yields were obtained, true. Yet, the ill effects need to be recognised, among them the depletion of micronutrients from the soil, the deleterious side effects of pesticides in the soil involving microbial processes, the damage caused to the soil by tractorisation and the alteration of its properties. The Aswan High Dam across the Nile was commissioned in 1971. Within a decade of its commissioning, its negative ecological-morphological effects became apparent and the question came to be asked seriously — whether the dam should have been built at all, and whether its step-by-step dismantling now is a preferable alternative to the cost of measures necessary to combat its ill effects. With the Victoria Dam now commissioned, we have no time to lose before researching the new factors that have come into play in the irrigated areas influenced by it. Other perils, besides the yellow one in the Hambantota District, have already surfaced. They too need to be researched in depth and not glossed over with gimmicks.

Finally, research is important because national salvation lies in agriculture. It is our best hope of overcoming the violence of despair and the politics of hate; of halting the voluntary and involuntary sale of Sri Lankan babies, maids, slaves and professionals in markets abroad; of combating the evils that have proliferated in the absence of satisfying occupations for the rising generations — terrorism, drug peddling, banditry, male and female prostitution; of preventing the abortion of the values that once governed community life — tolerance, compassion, respect for order, concern for others; of countering the assault on our cultural heritage.

In early 1971, I encountered a group of articulate youth in the deep south. They told me about their frustrations, and the condition of hopelessness gripping their lives. They poured out the anguish in their hearts. They said: "We, in the country are blessed with fertile land, water and sunshine.

We have people. If our resources are developed and utilised, need we be subject to this anguish? We cannot accept our condition; we will struggle to change it or die in the process." They signalled the violence that was soon to grip the country in the insurgency. Many of our country's finest youth perished in that uprising.

Humbled by the lessons of the youth uprising in 1971, I pleaded in my address to the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science in 1975 thus to achieve those objectives so clearly recognised by restless youth: "We can spare our nation the agony of our restless rising generations being slaughtered as they challenge the authority of the state in their struggle for a fairer social order. It has happened once and it can happen again unless we can persuade them that it is a preferable alternative to convert swords into plough shares. Their conversion cannot be achieved by channelling our meagre resources to procure sophisticated armaments. But there is more than an outside chance that giant strides in agricultural development and in the exploitation of our natural resources could achieve this objective — as has been demonstrated by China". But, as so often happens with the pleas of scientists at their posts in this country, whether for research funds or for an improvement in the quality of life, the plea too fell on deaf ears. And so we have violence again — this time in the north — in the challenge of the restless rising generation for a fairer social order. Among those who have turned to violence, there are undoubtedly unscrupulous opportunists and despicable scoundrels, ruthless terrorists, agents of imperialism, beneficiaries of the armaments industry and the drugs trade who make their millions by cycling aggrieved youth through crises. Yet, to fail to recognise that among them there are also many, perhaps a majority, in whom the spark of idealism to struggle for a fairer social order has not been extinguished, is surely a mistake.

If our country is to be healed of its mortal sickness, the moral

(Continued on page 24)

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MASTERS

Villains and witches in paradise

Kumari Jayawardena

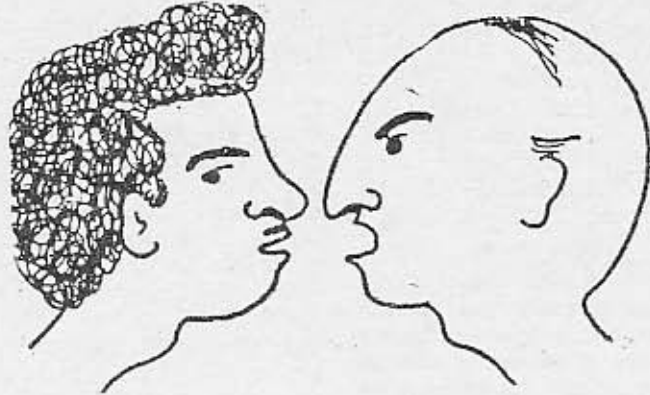
The smear campaign on the Sri Lankan women's movement led one woman to exclaim "I'm surprised the witch hunt took so long in coming."

Since 1975, the new women's groups have challenged the view that women in Sri Lanka are liberated. They have recently been at the forefront of the peace movement in Sri Lanka and have also highlighted women's economic exploitation, the degradation of women in the media, legal discrimination, the oppression of women in the family, violence against women, the rape of Tamil women and a host of other questions involving women's rights and women's liberation. They have also joined and helped the struggles of working women including the strikes of the Polytex garment workers and the nurses.

But according to the current diatribe Sri Lankan feminists (by definition 'bad women') are living off foreign funds, are promoting foreign ideologies, are anti-Sinhala Buddhist, are supporters of Tamil terrorists and are perverting rural women with liquor and sex. A real witches brew! The first reaction is to laugh — but then we should pause and ask ourselves, 'What kind of society do we live in where legitimate agitation by women for basic democratic rights is so distorted? Who is behind these smears and what purposes are served by their publication?

However, this is not an issue limited to women. All those concerned with preserving democratic values must reflect on the on-going witch-hunt — namely the denunciation and vilification of groups and individuals (both men and women) who challenge the prevailing ideologies of those in power. Of course this is not new. From colonial times to the present day, movements perceived to be "threatening" to structures based on foreign rule, class domi-

Men are such gossips!



"All Lesbians, it seems"

nation, caste oppression, discrimination against ethnic minorities and the subordination of women, have been subject to both violence and verbal violence.

In considering verbal violence one sees several lines of assault on the 'villains and witches' of each epoch. There have been 5 popular hits among the horror stories aimed at frightening and exciting the public; — "The Forty Thieves", "Foreign Devils", "Treason", "High Life" and "Loose Morals." The public, in this case, is presumed to be poor, devout, patriotic, loyal, simple, rural, non-drinking and chaste.

"THE 40 THIEVES"

One of the persistent and most popular smears against 'agitators' — whether they be Buddhist leaders, trade unionists, left politicians or feminists is to allege that they are stealing the organisations funds and are enriching themselves through 'foreign gold' (received from Moscow, the CIA, Catholic Action, Oxfam or Mary Foster as the case may be).

Anagarika Dharmapala, was plagued for years with allegations (made by the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie who dislike him) that he was pilfering funds received from Mary Foster an American benefactress of the Buddhist re-

vival and Buddhist education. The Left leaders have been taunted in the local press for receiving "Moscow gold", and almost every trade union leader has had to face allegations of misappropriation. Today it is the turn of the women's movement and we are not surprised at the allegations that feminists were operating a racket and misusing large amounts of money sent by foreign funders.

"FOREIGN DEVILS"

The other popular line is that if foreign funding is wicked then foreign ideologies are worse. It is argued that Marxism, Socialism and of course Feminism are foreign imports of no relevance to Sinhala Buddhist culture and traditions, which has already given us the blueprint for socialist society and women's liberation. Those introducing dangerous alien ideas to paradise have been educated or trained abroad and act as the agents of foreign powers. Earlier the attacks were on Marxism, forced on us by Moscow and Peking; today the same line is used against the women's movement, namely that Western feminism, a product of decadent society, is trying to corrupt Sri Lankan women and that in this sinister scheme, the Church, the CIA and foreign-educated women are playing a manipulative role.

In a period of intense Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism when allegations against minorities arouse strong reactions, one of the popular targets has been Christianity as the religion imposed by imperialists and missionaries, and that today, any money or support for local movements coming from Church sources, are suspect. In recent attacks on the women's movement this argument was a key one, **the target being ironically the radical Church groups not the Church hierarchy!**

"TREASON"

The most popular way to hit at a movement or person today in Sri Lanka is to make allegations that they are traitors, betraying the Sinhalese and supporting Tamil terrorism. In the past, the colonial rulers shouted sedition, whenever anyone like Dharmapala raised his voice, and even mild reformists of the colonial period would be accused of treason.

Elements of the Sinhala bourgeoisie too used this type of invective against other Sinhalese who from the 1930's onwards were fighting chauvinist ideology and defending minorities. The Left leaders, in particular, received their share of vilification — especially in the years from 1956 to the early 1960's — when they courageously held out for parity of status for the Sinhala and Tamil languages at a period when 'Sinhala Only' was the popular cry.

Today the label of traitor is being placed on women — especially on those Sinhala women who spoke out on the ethnic conflict, rejected a military solution called for negotiations with the militant groups. The women's groups which campaigned for the release of Nirmala Nithyanandan (and others, both Sinhala and Tamil taken in under the repressive PTA), which worked among the Tamil victims of the pogrom of July 1983, and also kept links with the Mothers Front of Jaffna, are today being denounced as enemy collaborators. In addition, the militant Tamil groups are depicted as CIA-sponsored terrorists by Sinhala extremists; it is

therefore not difficult to also 'link' the women's groups with the CIA by alleging that they support terrorists!

"HIGH LIFE"

Moreover in a class stratified society, it is easy to identify those under attack with a hated group of exploiters, whether Brahmins, landlords or members of the bourgeoisie. In Sri Lanka, the British tried to exploit class and social differences — condemning local nationalist leaders as worker-class 'agitators' and skunks who regretably, had been to Cambridge. British planters in the thirties distributed pamphlets among workers, attacking the trade union leader Natesa Aiyar for being a Brahmin and therefore oppressor of plantation labour. Left leaders too have been denounced for being from privileged families and their foreign education is held against them. This populist line has frequently been evoked against women, with the added complaint that they are travelling abroad frequently.

"LOOSE MORALS"

However the most lethal attack is the one based on morality, a weapon used by the British, by the local bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, today, to denounce anyone whose opinions on social and political change they see as threatening.

Of course character assassination and allegations of homosexuality are among the oldest tricks in the book and the British used them with a vengeance in the early 20th century. As Professor Ralph Pieris has revealed (in *Lanka Guardian* 1980), the Inspector-General of Police (Dowbiggin) alleged that Anagarika Dharmapala was a homosexual and made the same charge of homosexuality on many of the Theosophists who taught in Buddhist schools; he added that their seditious anti-British views were not surprising since they had distorted and perverse minds — and were a danger to society as they were corrupting Sinhala youth. (Around this time the British hanged the

Irish nationalist leader Roger Casement — justifying his hanging to the public by alleging that his diaries proved he was a homosexual.)

Feminists, women in politics and the wives of politicians, of course, have been the target for obscenity, slanders and personal mud-slinging in recent years. In the past and today, the vulgar remarks and vicious cartoons against Mrs. Bandaranaike are often non-political, but are connected to the fact that she is a woman.

Moreover women members of parliament have been subject to coarse jokes and many women active in politics have, over the years, had to deal with this deplorable aspect of Sri Lankan society.

The women's movement is also accused of promoting other types of un-Sinhala behaviour — especially drinking foreign liquor, said to be a more heinous vice than consuming local brew. Lurid stories have been spread of feminists forcing whisky down the throats of innocent rural girls. These attacks are reminiscent of the allegations against 'whisky drinking Leftists' and are only to be expected in a society, riddled with hypocrisy, where 'temperance leaders' have been known to take a 'quick nip' and in a country where, among Buddhist males, alcoholism is one of the most prevalent problems!

* * *

Food for Thought

In discussing the issue one has also to understand the current political context and the class forces at work in our society. The problem is a complex one. To only give one example, how do the virtues of the open economy strategies of the government become vices to those who support the government? For at a time when we are geared to foreign aid and investment (not to mention consumerism), virtues and visions of the good life (which are freely advertised) such as making money, travelling abroad, acquiring foreign languages and education, enjoying

(Continued on page 24)

Part IV

A close look at Rupavahini

Jeanne Pinto

News content THE LOGO

It took roughly a year for the old ITN logo to be replaced, despite constant reference to its unsuitability. Then came, what even the staffers termed "torn underwear" with ragged music to match — that too lasted a year or so. Early this year, with a more rigid definition in format, into local and foreign news, two or three more logos were developed — some of which only served to underline that a serious approach to news could be vitiated by a disco treatment of a logo.

The point to be made here is that more care should go into the devising of a logo — for, once introduced, it tends to stay on ad nauseam.

The trouble with a format, as TV officials think it up, is just that it is a format, fixed, strained, tedious, boring — with everything in its place and predictable — news, local sports, weather; foreign news, foreign sports, etc. The padding out, with lotteries, hand-outs, anniversaries, prize-givings and so on, is quite distressing and a waste of valuable time.

Judging from the format, one would imagine the country's news-producing resources to be very meagre indeed.

Foreign news

As has already been remarked, it is very extensively covered by Asia-Vision services.

* Tighter editing and a more intelligent commentary (with script more definitely related to visuals) would ensure better viewing and the chance of more stories being included.

* As TV is not merely visual (a fact that seems to elude most officials) better use could be made of wire services — with, of course, relevant graphics (maps, slides,

etc.), and the standard picture a reporter at a telephone in one corner of the screen.

This would give a sense of immediacy and urgency to the news, especially the late night summary.

Local News

This, it is widely agreed, is the weakest part of a news bulletin. The faults are many but so easily remediable:

* The news is not "newsy" — that is, it rarely has reference to the events of the day;

* It is so easy to bring in a sense of continuity from one bulletin to another, with an overflow and follow-up, sourced in other media. Television is neither unique nor isolated: the mood and pace of events in the country should and could be captured in so many imaginative ways, inspired by ploys and practices of other disciplines.

* **The news is mainly propagandist:** There is too heavy a dependence on ministerial addresses, inauguration ceremonies and departmental publicity material. Given the demand for, and insistence on political coverage and hand-outs, there is still scope for a more creative and more educational approach to and treatment of this material, with for instance —

(a) an alert camera

Even if there was no presidential ruling about the time to be allotted to any one Minister or MP, that camera need not record the set "back of the head: side view; occasional side glance, once the camera site has been discovered". There are faces in a crowd to be highlighted — not the standard pan. There are relevant parts of or entire buildings to be inserted... the examples are legion.

(b) an emphasis on information

It is not the VIP's presence anywhere that is the central point of the story: a little bit of research would inspire the approach to any story.

(c) an intelligent commentary

Proper briefing, meticulous research could make the (seemingly) stock coverage come alive with the right words.

(d) variations on the theme

With on-the-spot interviews of other people involved, especially with the articulate, sought out and sounded beforehand — preparation being the key to the entire coverage.

* The News is not credible

If, for instance, the prominence given to lottery results is because of "mutual assistance" (Rupavahini displaying winning numbers to help boost National Lotteries Board sales, and the NLB returning the compliment by donating prizes for competitions, etc.), then that is a violation of professional ethics, a "sale" of news time.

UPDATE

The recent intrusion of the weekly share market report into all three bulletins is surely another of special interests taking up valuable news time. The point to be made is that all these can be carried in a separate slot — which can be paid for!

* The news is diffuse, irrelevant and dull

What place has a birth/death anniversary of an (undoubtedly) famous character, foreign or local, in a news bulletin? It may be worth nothing, it may even be interesting and educative — but is it news?

Local TV has still not learnt the value of a five-minute (or less) feature, to be shown in its own right — much more relevant and certainly not time-wasting like the stock stop-gaps of birds, fish and flowers.

This is where the anniversary place belongs.

(To be Continued)

Why Support . . .

(Continued from page 19)

decay that has penetrated deep into every ethnic group in the country, there is no time at all to lose before adopting corrective measures which might deliver us, as a nation, from our terrible predicament. We need to get our priorities right; agricultural research is an activity worthy of the highest priority for it can contribute immeasurably to the improvement of the condition of our country and the upliftment of the lives of her people. Yet, support for agricultural research has been minimal. For 1985, the allocation to the Central Agricultural Research Institute, Gannoruwa, was Rs. 2.7 million for operational costs with included wages of labour, laboratory supplies, chemicals, fertilizers, fuel, electricity and communications. Staff salaries worked out to an additional Rs. 3.1 million approximately. The total was around Rs. 5.8 million. On 15th July 1985, The Island headline read "Lalith wants Rs. 1,500 m. more for defence — Ronnie". The

report continued that the Minister of Finance and Planning Ronnie de Mel had promised the National Security Minister the additional Rs. 1,500 million asked for whatever the difficulties that might be encountered. These figures tell their own tale of the lost opportunities in independent Sri Lanka, current priorities, and the magnitude of the tragedy today. They provide also, an insight into the underlying causes of our present troubles. Sri Lankan women do not degrade themselves in West Asia to give expression to their national pride; neither do Tamil youths peddle heroin in Western Europe to fulfil their cultural aspirations. These wanderers are merely the more conspicuous representatives of vulnerable groups in crisis denied basic human needs — employment opportunities occupations — in their homeland. Armaments will not secure their needs; agricultural research holds out hope.

I started with a quotation from Alan Paton's "Cry the beloved country". I want to conclude this plea for more funds for rese-

arch with another from the same immortal novel:

"Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or a valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much."

Surely, our beloved country, Sri Lanka, too must cease to cry for the unborn child; he must not be the inheritor of our fear today. Let him be born into a Sri Lanka where he may laugh and stand silent before the beauty of his motherland, and be moved, and give his heart without reserve. It is within the power of the people occupying positions of authority and influence in our country such as you to ensure this by supporting the agricultural research effort with adequate funds from the national budget.

The need of . . .

(Continued from page 15)

future is linked together — for happiness or for barbarism. It is **too valuable to be left in the hands of only party politicians.** It cannot be resolved ultimately by the force of arms, trust and confidence in each other is the only way.

This may seem a naive proposition. To give teeth to this human solidarity we must build a Sinhale-Tamil-Muslim peace coalition for the liberation of all our peoples from hatred and mutual slaughter. The people of Tamilnadu too can help by relating to us — to all of us Tamil, Sinhale and Muslim in such a chain of human understanding and solidarity. We would like to meet the active peace groups here. I would like those would like to join in this work to meet with us for a few minutes after this meeting.

This task needs patient hard work and truthfulness even in our

tragedy and in the face of organized violence. If these persons and groups for a just peace can emerge as a powerful social force, there is hope for our country. May the Indo-Lanka Maithiri Sangam contribute to this cause! Through the crucible of suffering we may still be able to rebuild a united and free S. L. If I have said anything incorrectly or inadequately please excuse me. □

Villains . . .

(Continued from page 22)

the latest fashions, gadgetry, foreign food and liquor — have become **vices** in the columns of the same pro-government newspapers, who are suddenly concerned that members of the women's movement are behaving like decadent capitalist and are not supporting class struggle.

All this raises many questions which women will have to reflect

on in the coming months. It is easy to trade abuse with our opponents and shout fascist. But it is more important to try and understand the phenomenon of 'creeping fascism' which makes use of the prevailing chauvinism and sexism in society and resorts to propaganda based on the Big Lie and the Big Myth. (The bigger the lie the more it will be believed said Hitler!)

This is a critical period in the country's history when we are poised between a rational solution to the ethnic problem on the one hand and succumbing to the forces of chauvinism and obscurantism on the other; we have therefore to be alert to the vilification of democratic forces by reactionaries, using arguments that are supposed to appeal to the 'people', including the lies and smears against those women's groups who pioneered the movement for women's liberation in Sri Lanka.

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