

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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## **THE REFERENDUM**

## **DEBATE**



PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
SRI LANKA

REFERENDUM

ACT. No. 7 OF 1981

**P. M.**

**LALITH**

**Issues and implications**

**CRM, CSR,  
UNIONS**

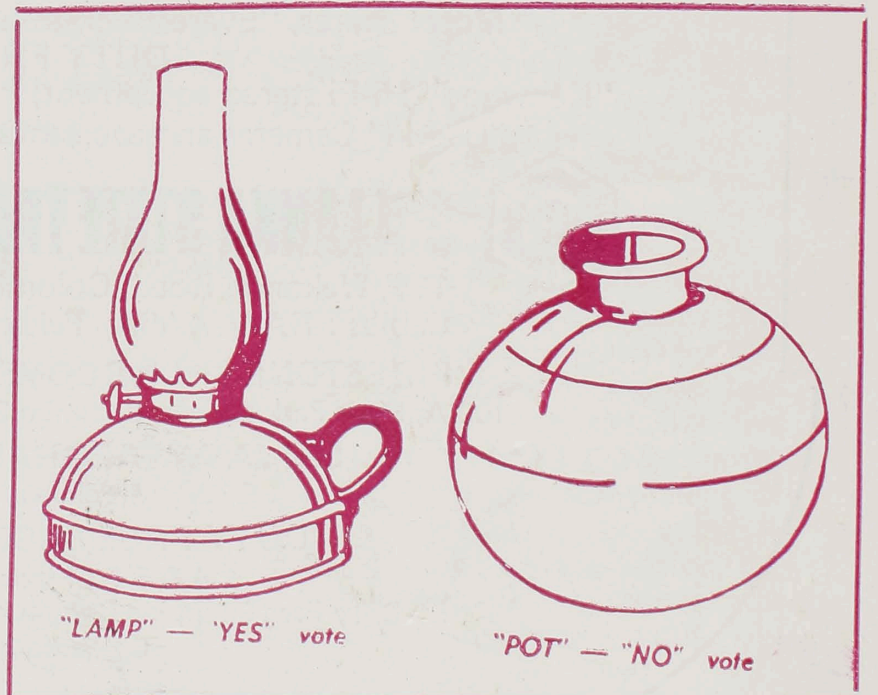
Post-polls notes

**Rohana's Third Crisis**

— D. J.

**The Jaffna Vote**

— Jayapalan



● **MIDNIGHT EXPRESS — ANOTHER LOOK**

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## INTERIM MEASURE

Madison Avenue would surely have used the talents of Mr. Krishna Vaikuntavasan better. A lone operator, he has a genius for seizing the headline and the frontpage in the most original ways. After infiltrating the **sanc-tum sanctorum** of the United Nations, he actually addressed the assembly for 2 minutes as 'foreign minister' of Eelam, a state located between South India and Sri Lanka!

Earlier this year he proposed the resolution on the newly formed Liberation Council of Tamil Eelam in the Auditorium of the Holiday Inn in New York. His deportation last week from India should be read in the light of the concluding paragraph of that New York resolution. It said "resolves and decides to form an interim provisional government of Tamil Eelam within one year from today". (The date was US Independence Day, July 4, 1982.)

It is clear that Delhi knew all this when it sent that telex which forced the Madras authorities to take him into custody. With his unfailing gift for publicity, Mr. V. did tear up his Sri Lanka passport but Delhi's decision suggests that Tamilnadu will not be the home of "the provisional government".

## FALKLANDS VOTE

Colombo's diplomatic community reflected on details of the U.N. vote on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) published in the SUN. The resolution called for resumption of negotiations for resolving 'the colonial situation' of the Falklands. The nonaligned movement takes its position on the principle of "de-colonisation", although after the Argentinian invasion, some members changed their line on the other principle of "use of force".

Now that the **status quo** has been restored and the British flag flies again, many of the nonaligned states voted for the resolution or abstained.

The final vote was 90 for, 40 abstentions and 13 against. With President Reagan's Latin American visit in the offing, the US voted for. So did the other superpower. Sri Lanka voted against — in the company of Britain, New Zealand, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Malawi, Gambia, Oman, Belize the Dominican Republic, and Antigua.

## TU'S COMBINE

At the trade union get-together, most union leaders felt that the White Paper on Employment Relations, which was put aside two years ago, will be re-introduced early next year. The GCSU Hall meeting was of course summoned to protest against the referendum move and to appeal to the working class to defeat it. 21 unions were present. The 14 unions which supported Dr. Colvin R. de Silva initially but turned critical over his "law point" came to the GCSU Hall. Among the seven were many JVP unions, an interesting post-polls development.

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## Liberal Democrats Appeal

The reasons for which the Council for Liberal Democracy requests you, the people of Sri Lanka, to vote, against the extension of the life of this Parliament are many:

1. Such an extension would advance considerably the trend towards the devaluation of Parliament.

2. It would nullify the electorally just system of proportional representation.

3. It would perpetuate a Parliament in which, the U.N.P. is grossly over-represented and the Opposition unfairly under-represented.

4. It would ensure that the 5/6 majority obtained by the United National Party with 51.5% of the votes cast in the 1977 election would last for 12 years in which amendments to the 1978 Constitution could be introduced

5. It would make the electorate of Sri Lanka a passive observer of politics instead of the active participant it had hitherto been.

There is absolutely no need for the Government to have a 5/6 majority in Parliament to continue with economic development. The admirable strides that have been made in the Sri Lankan economy over the last five years, the Mahaveli Development Scheme, the encouragement of foreign investment, the enhancement of the private sector, the free availability of goods and increased employment did not require a 2/3 majority.

(Continued on page 17)

# WHEN TOURING PARADISE.....

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# REFERENDUM — issues and implications

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

Just two months after Sri Lanka held its Presidential poll, the island's 8.1 million voters will once more be converted into one large electorate. This time its going to be a national referendum, again the first of its kind.

At this writing, "the question" has not being framed but the government's intention has been explicitly stated — to extend the life of this Parliament until August 1989, that is by 6 years. The Fourth Amendment passed by a huge 142 to 4 vote has a preamble which offers us the government's rationale. "It is essential to ensure for a further term the stability necessary for the continuation of the program undertaken for the advancement and progress of the people of Sri Lanka and the realisation of their aspirations..."

With over 80% going to the polls on Oct. 20, President Jayewardene confounded both Opposition calculations and some pollsters by gaining a first count win with 52.9%, and carrying every electoral district save Jaffna. He also reversed a well-established Sri Lankan trend by scoring two consecutive victories.

It would a loose, if not spurious, logic that would seek to deny that this was a mandate for continuity; i. e. for the radical changes, principally constitutional and economic, introduced after July 1977, when the UNP won a record 4/5ths majority in Parliament.

It could then be argued that the continuity necessary for "stability", the central objective of the present exercise, has in fact been guaranteed because an Executive Presidency, representing the centralisation of power, is the cornerstone and symbol of such stability.

Why then the need to extend parliament's term and postpone elections until 1989?

The next parliament was to have been an enlarged Assembly of 196 members (not 168) elected on the new P.R. system. A two-thirds majority in such a legislature would amount to at least 131 seats.

Projections of the Oct. 20 voting figures on the basis of 196 seats and P.R. differ. Pro-UNP statisticians concede however that the SLFP is within striking distance of 70 seats. With the TULF strong enough on recent performance to take 17-19, the UNP would have to be exceedingly lucky to get anywhere near the 2/3rds mark. Stability then is identified also with the parliamentary balance despite the fact that parliament, according to all critics of the 1978 constitution, has been "devalued". 2/3ds is the indispensable mechanism for constitutional amendments perceived by a government as necessary to meet unforeseen challenges (*ad hoc* blocs?) or intractable problems, such as Kalamana.

The President gave the Government group another reason why he opted for a referendum rather than the widely expected general elections. Analysing the Oct. 20 figures, he said, that the SLFP would have had, under PR, a sizeable group. He was in no way opposed to a strong democratic opposition.

Such an opposition in fact was a necessary part of a robust parliamentary system. But the SLFP leadership ("politburo") had been captured by a group variously described as "Naxalite-anarchists" and "political hooligans". In large numbers, such elements who have no respect for democracy could disrupt the parliamentary process. (See also "PM — WHY REFERENDUM?")

The debate has moved between the "legal-constitutional" to the "moral democratic". Though the legal debate may have been closed by the Supreme Court verdict (SEE "S.C's Order") the 4/3 division has

made Hulftsdorp minds even more sharply disputatious, and Law Library tongues wagging over law points too intricate for the layman. The Centre for Society and Religion statement issued by its Director, Fr. Tissa Balasuriya and the C.R.M.'s several releases covers these two areas quite thoroughly. (See "C.R.M. Protests" and "CSR on Right to elect")

The SLFP is falling apart and I shall pick up the pieces, said President JR in one of his campaign speeches. How right he has proved to be. The pieces are still falling, big and small — besides the two ex-Ministers, Messrs Kalugalle and S. D. R. Jayaratne and Dr. Leo ex-MP, we now have Basil Rajapakse, former General Secretary of the Maitri group and an illustrious family name in the South, Sarath Dias who did so well in Galle, Vernon Tillekeratne (ex-Speaker Stanley's brother) and Mr. S. D. Bandaranayake MP who is talking of a 'national government'. The biggest prize of all is Maitripala Senanayake who carried so much of the SLFP campaign on his shoulders, and his colleague, Haleem Ishak, both MPs.

They haven't joined the UNP but they voted for the referendum.

Nobody knows what to make of the TULF's actions and statements. Ambiguities may be resolved after the General Council meeting. The TULF MP's have done a mini-UNP. All but the party president and secretary general (Messrs Sivasithamparam and Amirthalingam) have handed over letters of resignation to the party chief. The TULF says that they were elected for a term which expires in August 1983, and will not therefore remain in the House after that date.

In an interview with the WEEKEND, Mr. Amirthalingam has spoken of "cooperation" with the UNP government in all "development programmes". More categorically, he states:

"We will not boycott parliament nor join any so-called 'common front' in campaigning against the referendum".

Without the TULF and the JVP the "Opposition" cannot expect to defeat the UNP at the referendum on a purely arithmetical calculation. Of course, the Opposition can hope that many UNP voters will mark the "pot" ("No") or abstain because their loyalty to the elective principle is greater than their loyalty to the party. On the other hand, Opposition demoralisation may lead to an even lower turn-out than Oct. 20.

The TULF and JVP were **not** present at the combined Opposition meeting presided over by Mrs. Bandaranaike. However JVP unions were at the GCSU office when 23 trade unions met to discuss joint action.

"Mrs. B. is a political trawler and she'll net in more parties and groups than Hector" observes a Jaffna political scientist. "Can she improve on Hector's 2.5 million?" asks a UNP front-ranker.

In a close examination of Mrs. B.'s role in today's uncertain politics,

the well-informed MIGARA of the WEEKEND wrote:

"The fact that Mrs. B. is without civic rights for the referendum does not matter so much because she is entitled to campaign.... So it is likely that President Jayewardene will use her civic rights issue next as a bargaining instrument. Though she doesn't look it, Mrs. Bandaranaike is 66 and when her period of suspension from active politics is over, she will be 71. It is therefore almost definite now that the Presidential elections are over and once the referendum is complete too, and won, President Jayewardene will wish to pardon Mrs. Bandaranaike in an act of supreme dharmista. For this he will surely want a tacit non-participation agreement with Mrs. Bandaranaike for the referendum. Because in the event of a UNP defeat at the referendum, a general election will have to follow and the reality of it is that Mrs. B. will have to be kept out of that election as well....."

Migara's weekend commentary is headlined "A National referendum and a National Government — Is Sri

Lanka heading for one-party rule?". The phrase "democratic dictatorship" has also been used.

In 1978, the L. G. preferred the term "J.R.'s grand design" (SEE L. G. Sept. 15 "**New Constitution and the Stability Equation**"). "The constitution," we wrote, "is only a factor in what political sociologists writing on the Third World like to call 'the stability equation'. It is a precondition to what the government would call its development strategy. The outlines of that strategy and some political concomitants we have already seen... if as many economists believe the international system dominated by market economies, which in turn dominate us, is moving from recession to depression, then the external environment is as important a consideration as domestic factors"...

These "domestic factors" were discussed in subsequent issues: "**NATIONAL GOV'T or SLFP SPLITTING?**" (L.G. March 15 1979). "**GRAND ALLIANCE, GRANDER DESIGN**" L. G. December 15 1979) and **THE SIRIMA-ANURA OPTION** (L. G. March 15 1982).

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# PM on 'Why a Referendum?'

PRIME MINISTER R Premadasa said that President J. R. Jayewardene had decided on a referendum because he had received on October 20 the same 5-6th majority he received at the 1977 general election.

In 1977 the UNP won 141 seats and at the recent Presidential election it got 139 seats the Premier said.

He was speaking after opening the 'Eksathnama' [model village at Batawilawatta, Malwathuhiripitiya in the Mahara electorate.

Mr. Premadasa said that on October 20 the people of Sri Lanka helped Mr. Jayewardene establish a world record by winning convincingly for a second time. Never before in Sri Lanka's political history has a party leader been returned to power twice.

## Lalith defends

TRADE AND SHIPPING Minister Lalith Athulathmudali said the proposed Referendum was an election subject to the election laws; nobody could oppose a Referendum because it was an exercise where the people were consulted to give new life to the present Parliament.

"Whether the people will say 'Yes' or 'No' at the Referendum is another matter", the Minister said.

"But," the Minister added, "there can be no objection to a Referendum as such because it spells out the sovereignty of the people and gives expression to the democratic process. Consulting the people to an existing legislature is a true democratic exercise.

"It is completely different from an earlier anti-democratic step — taken in 1975 — to extend the then National State Assembly for another two years without consulting the people or obtaining their consent". He said: "For the first time in the history of Sri Lanka we had a Presidential election. Despite the

Now that the people had given the UNP almost the same majority the President has decided to ask the people whether he could work with the same Parliamentary team to carry on the mandate given to him.

That was why he had decided to come before them again. They would have to say whether they wanted a general election or not. This was unlike the previous Government which extended the life of Parliament by two years without the consent of the people. Mr. Premadasa recalled how he protested from the Opposition benches in Parliament against such an extension.

Then Dr. N. M. Perera, who was Minister of Finance in the SLFP-LSSP-CP Coalition Government replied that with a 2-3rd majority

rather complicated nature of the voting system at the election the spilt votes were very negligible: only one per cent. It means that within four weeks 99 per cent of our voters learnt very quickly how to cast their votes. It is a tribute to the general intelligence of our people.

"And now, for the first time again, we are going to have a Referendum. We have had a similar voting pattern called the 'local option poll' but it was a measure merely to close down a tavern. The bootleggers naturally voted 'No' in such an option.

"But this is the first time the country as a whole will vote at a Referendum to give new life to an existing Parliament. Those in favour can place a 'X' against the Lamp; those against can strike against the Pot — or the commode, whichever way you like to describe it. Generally a commode or a bed pan is used to cast away things.

— ISLAND

the Prime Minister could extend the period for a further 15 years or to last her lifetime.

That was how the previous government played with the freedoms of the people.

This Government had confidence in the people and consulted them on all important matters. He was sure they would respond at the referendum by giving the President a greater victory than at the Presidential election.

— (C. D. N.)

## SC approves

THE SUPREME COURT, by a majority decision approved the proposed Fourth Amendment to the Constitution to extend the tenure of Parliament.

With a 4 to 3 division the Supreme Court had up-held the submissions made by Attorney General Siva Pasupati, that the Court had no jurisdiction with regard to the proposed Fourth Amendment to the Constitution.

The Court also rejected the applications filed by former Finance and Justice Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike and Attorney at Law C. V. Vivekanandan challenging the Amendment.

Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon on Wednesday night had conveyed the decision of the Supreme Court to the President and the Speaker.

The court verdict read out by Speaker Bakeer Markar said:

"The majority of this court is of the view that the period of the first Parliament may be extended as proposed by the draft bill which is described in its long title as being for the amendment of the constitution and is intended to be passed with a special majority required by article 83 and submitted to the people by referendum.

(Continued on page 6)

# CRM on extending life of

## Parliament

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT is shocked and alarmed at the move to extend the life of the present Parliament for a further six year term. Possibly this is a hasty proposal the full implications of which have not been worked out.

The Working Committee of CRM at an emergency meeting discussed the proposal and decided to point out to the government, the opposition, political parties, to all organisations concerned with democratic rights, and to the public, the dangerous and unprecedented nature of this step which threatens the very basis of democratic parliamentary government founded on periodic elections of the people's representatives. It is also in breach of Sri Lanka's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Sri Lanka, which only last year celebrated 50 years

### SC Approves . . .

(Continued from page 5)

"In view of this decision this court in terms of article (120) proviso (b), states that it does not have or exercise any further jurisdiction in respect of the said bill,

"Three members are not in agreement with the above bill".

The seven-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court comprised Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon Justice J. G. T. Weeraratne, Justice S. Sharvananda, Justice R. S. Wanasundara, Justice D. Wimalaratne, Justice B. S. C. Ratwatte and Justice Victor Perera.

This Amendment sought to repeal paragraph "e" of the article 161 and the substitution therefore a new paragraph "e".

Unless sooner dissolved the first Parliament shall continue until August 4 1989 and no longer and shall thereupon stand dissolved and the provisions of article 70 (5) (6) shall apply.

— (SUN)

of universal franchise, has a history of periodic elections of its legislative assembly which are not part of the lives of the people. This is now under threat. A referendum is no substitute for an election.

CRM opposes the move for the reasons given below and urges the government to abandon this proposal and to protect our people's political right and heritage.

### Deficiency of the Present Parliament

(1) The present Parliament was elected in 1977 on the old system of simple majority in each electorate, which is now accepted to be highly unsatisfactory in that the resulting Parliament does not reflect the true support enjoyed by the parties among the voters. The new Constitution remedied this for the future by introducing a system of proportional representation.

(2) Indeed, speaking in Parliament in 1977, Mr. J.R. Jayewardene (then Prime Minister, now President) in explaining the decision to introduce proportional representation said:

"We feel that that will give a better chance to some of the parties that were wiped out in this election to come into the legislature; that there will be representation according to voting, and you would not find this big swing from the right to the left and vice-versa. **All shades of public opinion will be able to have a voice in this House.**" (emphasis ours).

— Hansard vol. 23, 23rd September 1977 col. 1235.

(3) The introduction of proportional representation has been hailed on several occasions by CRM including in 1977, 1978, 1981 and most recently in CRM's statement criticising the call from certain opposition quarters for a return to the 1972 Constitution.

(4) The proposal now is to prolong for a further full term of six years, a Parliament elected more than five years ago on the old unsatisfactory system which does not properly reflect the state of public

opinion, and in which substantial sectors of opinion remain either under-represented or totally unrepresented, including around one million new voters registered since.

(4A) Furthermore there is today the unsatisfactory situation that at present a two thirds majority in Parliament is enjoyed by a party which received only a little more than 50% of the votes at the general election. It can thus pass Bills to amend the Constitution by the required two thirds majority, which amendments may tend to suit its own narrow party interests rather than the interests of the country. This situation too would continue if the present Parliament is extended instead of holding a fresh election. In a fresh election held under proportional representation it is unlikely that any one party would obtain a two thirds majority, which means that thereafter constitutional changes would require a greater degree of national consensus.

(5) It is argued that so long as the people approve the Bill to extend Parliament by a referendum, then the requirements of democracy are met. The "will of the people" has manifested itself, so all is well. This argument must be considered carefully. There are certainly circumstances where a referendum is desirable and justifiable.

(6) However, what is in effect now being said, is that a referendum by means of which the life of the existing legislature is extended, can legitimately take the place of a fresh election of a new Parliament.

### A Referendum is no Substitute for Election

(7) One cannot treat a referendum to extend the existing Parliament as a substitute for election for a number of reasons. For the purpose of argument, we are assuming here that the referendum is passed by 51% of the votes, though really it needs to be passed only by 50% plus one more vote.



(8) One reason has already been indicated above. Our present legislature has been elected on an admittedly unsatisfactory system. Would it be fair to allow 51% of the voters at a referendum to prolong the life of such a legislature, in which 49% of the voters are unrepresented or under-represented?

(9) Similarly, is it fair to permit 51% of the voters at a referendum to authorise the continuance of the making of changes to the Constitution by a Parliament in which one party has, due to an anomaly which has been rectified for future elected Parliaments, a two thirds majority? In effect, is one not permitting constitutional change by a 51% majority of the voters whereas the Constitution clearly envisages that such change must be approved by members of Parliament representing two-thirds of the voters?

(10) The reason that a referendum is no substitute for a general election is not, however, confined to the fact of the subversion of the principle of proportional representation. Even if the old electoral system continued, there are major differences between a fresh election and prolongation of an existing Parliament.

(11) Firstly, at an election there are clear alternatives placed before the people — parties, policies, candidates. It would have been clearly indefensible had President Jayewardene sought not to face a presidential election (at which there were alternative candidates in the field) but to extend his period of office by a constitutional amendment brought about by a referendum. Why, therefore, apply a different principle to the legislature?

(12) Secondly, general elections in the past have been fought electorate wise. The composition of a Parliament under the old system would depend not on the overall voting in the country but on the distribution of the votes within the electorates. A referendum might show a bare majority in favour of the continuance of the present Parliament. But a fresh election held instead, even if people voted along the same party lines as at the referendum, could produce a totally different Parliament, depending on

how the support of each party is today distributed among the electorates. In other words, a party receiving 51% of the votes taking the country as a whole (as is done in a referendum), might not have a majority of members in Parliament at all.

(13) Even if the party strength in the newly elected legislature happened to be the same, there could also be changes in the electorates — a seat gained here offset by a loss there.

(14) Substituting the referendum for a general election, even under the old electoral system, thus denies the right of the individual electorates to express a change of mind and to be represented by the party or the candidate of their choice.

(15) It should also be mentioned that the argument has been put forward that the voting pattern at the recent presidential election would have given the ruling party a two thirds majority at an election based on the old 1972 system, and that therefore it is quite fair to extend the present Parliament. However, it would certainly not have produced a two thirds majority under the proportional representation system. And in any event, it is not correct to give either of these interpretations to the voting pattern at the Presidential election. For one reason, the personalities, policies and issues are not the same in each case.

#### **Contrary to International Covenant**

(16) The proposed change is furthermore in contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Sri Lanka signed in 1980. The Covenant provides that every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity "to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors" (Article 25). The Covenant clearly envisages **elections** and not periodic referenda to prolong the life of legislatures whose period has expired.

(17) After all, if a referendum can be substituted for an election once, then the process can be

repeated at the end of every six year term. **Elections can in effect be abolished.**

#### **Does the Constitution contemplate this?**

(18) It is true that the Constitution envisages the possibility of extending the duration of Parliament.

(19) Resort to this is justifiable only in an exceptional situation (e.g. war, when all parties would be likely to agree). Such an extension should also be for no longer than the situation demands. To use this provision to justify an extension for **six years**, with absolutely no unusual circumstances to justify it, is most extraordinary.

(20) Furthermore it is clear that the Constitution does not contemplate the extension of the **present** Parliament. The present Parliament consisting of 168 members, which has its origin in the old electoral system, is dealt with in the "Transitional Provisions" of the Constitution. These provide that the present Parliament, unless earlier dissolved, shall continue "for six years from August 4, 1977 and no longer" (Article 161 (e)). The provision contemplating a possible amendment to extend the duration of Parliament by a two thirds majority and a referendum, very clearly refers only to a future Parliament of 196 members elected under proportional representation. (Articles 83(b), 62, 98 & 99.

(21) It should be emphasised here that our Constitution envisages fundamental constitutional changes being made not by a referendum alone but by a two thirds majority in Parliament plus a referendum. (Article 85). There is certainly a crucial difference between a two thirds majority of a Parliament elected by proportional representation, and a two thirds majority of the present Parliament.

CRM urges the abandonment of this proposal, and the preservation of the long-standing right of our people to free, periodic elections, which during the past fifty years have become so integral a part of the political life of Sri Lanka. The general election due in 1983 must be held.

## CRM statement (2)

In the earlier statement "EXTENDING THE LIFE OF PARLIAMENT" CRM set out its reasons for opposing the current move. Below, CRM expands on just one aspect only indirectly dealt with in its longer statement.

AN ELECTION is not only a process whereby the majority elects the government that is to rule the country for the next six years. It is also the process by which the opposition parties and representatives are elected. This is another crucial reason why a referendum to extend the life of Parliament cannot take the place of a general election.

Take, for the purpose of argument, the electorates in the Northern Province. In 1977 they elected candidates of the TULF to represent them; and indeed the TULF leader became the Leader of the Opposition.

Similarly, other electorates elected candidates of the SLFP to represent them.

What will be the position if the referendum to extend the life of Parliament is passed?

In effect, the majority of the people will be saying to the rest "No, **you** cannot have fresh elections and choose different representatives or a different party to represent **you**. We, the majority, are telling **you**, that those people and those parties which you chose in 1977 will continue to represent **you** in Parliament."

Is it right for a majority of 51% or even 60% or 70% to use a referendum to foist on some electorates parties or MPs which they may no longer want?

A further factor has to be considered. A new election would be under proportional representation at which, if the voting pattern remained the same as in 1977, the Opposition would gain a very much larger number of seats. By extending the present Parliament by a referendum, the majority would,

therefore, also be freezing at the low 1977 figure, the **number** of seats occupied by the Opposition parties, and would be preventing new Opposition parties from having any seats at all.

In other words, the majority will be not only prolonging the term of office of its government, but will also be freezing the number of seats occupied in Parliament by the Opposition, and will be determining which parties constitute that Opposition for the next six years.

Is this fair? Is this democratic? Is this a correct use of the referendum?

## CRM statement (3)

In CRM's earlier statements **EXTENDING THE LIFE OF PARLIAMENT AND ELECTIONS ARE FOR THE OPPOSITION AS WELL AS FOR THE GOVERNMENT**, CRM set forth its reasons for opposing the current move. The present statement explains a further very important implication of this step in the context of the present power to remove and nominate MP's without reference to the electorate.

THE ESSENTIAL content of what the proposed amendment to the Constitution seeks to achieve may be summarised as follows.

\* By seeking to extend the life of the present Parliament for another six years the ruling party is asking the people to surrender their right to elect the members of Parliament to serve for the next six years.

\* The ruling party is asking the people to refuse the right to any citizen or party to stand for election to Parliament for the next term.

\* This is being done in the context that each party has the power, under the present Constitution, to call for the resignation of its members in Parliament and to appoint others in their place. This is done at the absolute discretion of the party leadership.

\* Therefore the request for the extension of Parliament is tanta-

mount to asking the people to surrender, to the leadership of the respective parties already in Parliament, their power to elect members of Parliament to the extent of the number of seats these parties presently hold in Parliament. This number is based on the results of the 1977 election, held on the basis of the 1972 Constitution.

When the above is examined in the context of the present circumstances the following features emerge:-

a) The number of seats the ruling party, the UNP, has in the present Parliament is 143

b) All the UNP members of Parliament have on request handed undated letters of resignation to the President

c) The President may date all or any of these letters at any time to create vacancies in Parliament, and have appointed in their place nominees of the Party without any reference to the people. (This is an unexpected use of a provision in the Constitution that was intended to enable occasional vacancies arising in the normal course of events to be filled by nomination).

d) Therefore the extension of the present Parliament for a further six years is tantamount to the people surrendering their power to elect members of Parliament, to the extent of 143 seats, to the leadership of the UNP.

THE PEOPLE SHOULD, THEREFORE, KNOW THAT WHAT IS SOUGHT TO BE ACHIEVED BY THIS AMENDMENT IS TO CONFER ON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UNP UNFETTERED POWER TO APPOINT AT ITS ABSOLUTE DISCRETION MPS TO THE EXTENT OF 5/6ths OF THE NUMBER OF SEATS IN PARLIAMENT.

e) The remaining seats held by the Opposition will, similarly, continue to be within the control of the Opposition parties, without reference to the people and irrespective of the wishes of the electorates.

f) Even in so-called one party totalitarian states the leadership of the party is compelled by the

Constitution, to refer a panel of candidates to the people for election to the legislature.

g) What is sought here, however, is something even the leadership of such totalitarian parties do not enjoy, namely the power to appoint members to 5/6ths of the seats in Parliament at the sole discretion of the party leadership without any reference to the people at all.

h) THIS WILL RESULT IN THE CONVERSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL LIFE OUR PEOPLE HAVE ENJOYED SINCE OBTAINING UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN 1931, INTO AN OLIGARCHY COMMENCING FROM AUGUST 1983.

The mere circumstance that this is being done by a "democratic" process in the form of a referendum does not in any way alter the fact that what is being sought is to convert a democracy into an oligarchy.

Once an oligarchy is formed, enjoying supreme control over the entire state apparatus, the bulk of the mass media, and indirect control over the rest of mass media, the path is easy for the conversion of the oligarchy into an absolute dictatorship — again possibly through the "democratic" process of a referendum.

The consequences of the change from a democracy to an oligarchy are :-

a) As members of Parliament in a democracy are elected by the people, and are dependent on the people to hold office for further periods, the sensitivity of the members of the legislature and therefore of the government to the needs and feelings of the people is secured. In a democracy, therefore, the people have the power to ensure that ultimately governments will serve their needs. The regular accountability of elected MPs to the people is an essential ingredient of democracy.

b) In the oligarchy, however, the new MPs can be totally unconcerned about the people. They owe nothing to the people for their office and therefore can be totally indifferent to their needs and feelings.

# NSSP's BOYCOTT CALL

WITH A monstrous curtailment of Parliamentary Democracy, J. R. is preparing for this so-called referendum.

1. Though he won the Presidential Election through shrewd tactics, it is difficult for the U.N.P. to win the Parliamentary Elections. For, in such an election, the oppositional parties become active throughout the country with the candidates taking an intense personal interest in the victory. Also people are used to parliamentary election and hence in such an election the confusion that prevailed during the Presidential Election on the issue of political power will not take place.

2. Having a Parliamentary Election soon means releasing oppositional forces for a second round. That will consolidate the hold of the radical leadership, as opposed to the moderate Bandaranaike leaders, on the SLFP mass movement. Also majority of those who got elected will be the radicals. Naturally the U.N.P. considers this as extremely dangerous.

3. If the oppositional parties participate in the referendum, Mrs. Bandaranaike will be able to come into the campaign. Then her trustworthy leadership will be able to reconsolidate itself by reducing the influence of Hector Kobbekaduwa.

4. As Mrs. Bandaranaike was not active in the Presidential Election, imperialism was not able to assess the degree of influence of Mrs. B. among the masses. J. R. wants to show that he could win even if Mrs. B. participates in a campaign.

For the above reason J. R. took the decision to hold this so-called referendum which is actually an election where the sitting MPs of the U.N.P. will be candidates for

the government while the opposition has none. Obviously government MPs will take a personal interest in the elections whereas no one in the opposition will have a direct personal interest in the victory. This alone will make this election completely one-sided. J. R. and his colleagues are worried that the entire opposition may organise a boycott. Hence their eagerness to make Mrs. B. to participate in the referendum campaign.

On this basis Nava Samasamaja Party makes the following proposals to all anti government parties and organisations.

(a) Campaign together for a boycott of the referendum.

(b) Campaign together for the dissolution of the Parliament and to hold general election.

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## CMU denounces

THE 17TH Delegates' Conference of the Ceylon Mercantile Union denounces the UNP Government's decision to seek to prolong the life of the present Parliament by six years by a Referendum, without holding a general election, and thereby enabling President Jayewardene to establish a Government Party consisting entirely of his nominees, as being an attack upon the limited right of the voting population to elect members to Parliament at the expiry of the term of office of the present Parliament.

This Delegates' Conference further resolves that if the Government holds a Referendum, the Union should mobilise all possible opposition to the Government's proposal and call upon the people to vote against it in the Referendum.

# CSR Memorandum on the Referendum

WE ARE deeply grieved that you are taking steps to try to put off General Elections to Parliament for another six years by means of a Referendum to continue the life of this first Parliament till 4th August 1989.

We would like to first mention that we publicly disapproved of the last Government's extension of the life of the National State Assembly for two years under the 1972 Constitution.

We welcomed what we considered were positive advances in the 1978 Constitution such as the introduction of the system of proportional representation and the better provision for certain fundamental rights. We, however, stressed the unsatisfactory nature of the balance of power between the Presidency and Parliament and the likelihood of conflicts and of the breakdown of the system (ref. see Report of 'Select Committee of NSA — Revision of the Constitution, 1978 pp. 284 — 292)

It is now being sought to continue the present power balance in Parliament itself and between the Parliament and the Presidency by a referendum.

The arguments put forward by the government are that:

(a) The October 20th 1982 Election gave the President 52.9% of the votes. It is argued that on this basis the Government Party would have won 139 seats under the 1972 Constitution. Therefore why should the life of the 1977 Parliament be not prolonged for another six years?

(b) There should be a stable Government for another six years for the present development plans to be completed.

(c) The people are given a chance to exercise their sovereignty through a referendum.

Concerning (a) the Presidential Elections we wish to point out that:

(1) **The October 20th Presidential Election was for** one person to be the President out of six known candidates. It was not a vote for the members of the present Parliament but for the President. In fact it was clearly stated several times by the President himself that there would soon be a General Election for Parliament, when the electorate could choose their representatives.

The October 20th 1982 Presidential Election gave a result that was 52.9% for Mr. J. R. Jayawardene and 47.1% for the others of the valid votes counted. At the level of the total electorate, however it was 42.36% for Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, 37.74% for the others and 19.9% abstentions and spoilt.

The Government itself had clearly and categorically rejected the 1972 Constitution and its system of elections. That was why a system of proportional representation on the district basis was introduced. The D. D. C. Elections of 1981 were on that basis. Therefore to argue now on the basis of the 1972 Constitution is really to use Constitutions to the Government's advantage as and when it suits them.

Further the 1977 Elections were for 168 seats. The 1978 Constitution provides for 196 seats. If the referendum is successful a Parliament of 196 members will not be elected till 1989. This is to reduce the representation in Parliament.

There was a boycott of the Presidential elections by the T. U. L. F. and several abstentions in many parts of the country. It was on this basis that the President got 52.9% seats on the first count.

(a) The Presidential Elections were held with the leader of the main

contending party being debarred from contesting or canvassing at that election by a resolution of Parliament.

As the President himself said his victory was one of mathematics, political strategy and the disarray of his opponents.

(b) The second argument is concerning the stability of government. This should not be ensured by denying the people a right to change or choose their representatives for 1 years. We should not have stability by prolonging the disproportionate representation realized under the 1972 constitution which this government itself rejected.

(c) The deeper question is concerning a **referendum and the sovereignty of the people**. It is true that a referendum is an exercise of the sovereignty of the electorate.

What is now sought by Government may be **legally correct** if the people approve the constitutional amendment by a majority vote with at least 2/3rds of the electorate voting.

**What is legally correct is not necessarily just and righteous.** Democracy is based on the principle of majority rule and the understanding that the majority will respect the rights of the minority. Government by consent is acceptable only if there is a fair and reasonable chance for the minority also to share power and/or if their rights are respected. Otherwise those who are excluded from the exercise of power lose confidence in the democratic system of majority rule. The problems of the North bear witness to this.

The present proposal, even if the referendum is positively supported by over 50% of the voters, and though it may be legal according to the Constitution enacted by this

Parliament **UNDERMINES THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS** for the following reasons:

(1) The minority which may be up to 49% has no opportunity of improving their representation in the legislature for 12 years from 1977 — 1989.

(2) The majority too cannot decide on their representatives as it is only the party chiefs who can nominate members to Parliament, even when there is a change.

The present Constitution does not provide for Govt. MPs of Parliament the possibility of expressing discontent with the Government, except at the risk of losing their seats. Crossing over can be only to the Government.

(4) The electorate cannot change the proportion of seats even among the Opposition.

(5) According to the system of P.R. on the basis of the October 1982 Elections the Opposition would have had about 40 — 45% of the membership of Parliament. But under the referendum they will have only about 16%. The SLFP with 2,458,438 votes, i. e. 39% of the electorate, in its favour will continue to have only 7 MPs.

(6) No new parties will be represented in Parliament. This is grossly unfair by the JVP which has obtained 273,428 votes in October 1982 and demonstrated its national status as a political party willing to function within the democratic system. Likewise for the All Ceylon Tamil Congress and other parties not represented in Parliament. The President has often expressed his desire to have eminent political leaders of smaller parties in Parliament. This too is excluded by this legal but unfair process.

(7) Younger citizens are denied a chance of contesting, nominating or voting for candidates other than those presently in Parliament, for twelve years 1977 — 1989.

(8) The referendum does not give the voters a choice of alterna-

tive candidates, parties or policies. Nor does it give an opportunity for the electorate to opt for another proportion of party representation within Parliament.

(9) The MPs are not personally accountable to their constituencies, though they were elected in 1977 to represent territorial constituencies. The vote is now for a slate of 142 Government MPs or party nominees, 17 TULF, 7 SLFP, 1 CWC and 1 CP. This must be necessarily maintained till 1989 with the possibility of crossing over only to the Government.

(10) The District Development Councils too would not have a renewal of members by election, as half of them are MPs.

(11) No by-elections have been held (except after election petitions) or will be held because the Constitution of 1978 provides for proportional representation. With the proposed referendum there will be neither proportional representation nor general elections.

(12) If the present President relinquishes his office before February 1989 i. e. the end of this second term, it is the present Parliament, which now wants its term extended, that will elect a President to complete the balance period of the second term. This too is a breach of trust concerning the presidency itself.

The present referendum, if accepted by the electorate may be legally correct, but it will be a contravention of the principles and spirit of democratic government. It will be an unfair use of power majority in a Parliament in the last few months of its term.

Such a situation will frustrate the large minority of 45 — 49% who will have to be content with 16% of the representation in Parliament.

When the political process leads to such frustration, there is a loss of faith in representative government, by consent. Our electoral map would then in effect be rolled up or frozen for 12 years 1977 — 1989. There will then be no legal possibility of changing policies or rulers by popular will. We are on the way to one party rule. This is the road to the violence of the disaffected, to legal injustice, terrorism and counter-terrorist.

This is the sad state to which our country will be brought by this urgent rush to freeze now the composition of our Parliament from 4 August 1983 to 4th August 1989.

The rulers of today bear a heavy responsibility for the future of our country if they thus deprive a large section of the population of a democratic path to determine policies through elected representatives.

We therefore urge the Government for the sake of our democratic way of life, and for its own good name not to proceed with this measure which in effect denies the electoral representation to nearly half the population and seriously limits also the choice of representatives even of the Government supporters.

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# Presidential Elections '82 and the Tamil vote

V. I. S. Jayapalan

**S**LFP has been defeated by U.N.P. in all the districts of Sri Lanka except Jaffna District. 35.46 percent of the valid voters of the Jaffna District decided to cast their votes for the S.L.F.P. in spite of the call of boycott. This is despite the fact that the SLFP started their election campaign on a communal tone in Kandy with Dr. Neville Fernando, playing a leading role.

## COMMUNALISM and TACTICS

In the 1982 Presidential Election campaign, communalism was not wielded in an overt manner. None of the so-called National parties denied the importance of the Tamil voters in this election. However, UNP isolated Jaffna and tried to exploit anti-Jaffna feelings of the Sinhalese without affecting much, the Tamil voters living outside Jaffna peninsula. For instance, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene openly challenged the Jaffna voters. His tactics were more powerful than J.V.P.'s anti-Tiger slogans. In this, UNP tactics had a more professional touch. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene knows the art well.

On the other hand, SLFP wanted to exploit the anti-Upcountry Tamil (Tamils of recent Indian origin) — feelings of Sinhalese of Kandyan areas, but wanted to get the votes of the Sri Lanka Tamils, especially the votes of the Jaffna farmer, on the economic question. The main mistake in their tactics was the over-estimation of the distance, information-wise, between Kandyan areas and other Tamil areas. Their tactics are self-contradictory and this communalism is not sophisticated enough to serve in a nation-wide election to elect one man. The basic SLFP votes of Kandy should have gone to the SLFP, but they lost the anti-CWC Indian Tamil votes which are not insignificant.

In the case of the JVP, their mistake is that, instead of developing their own tactics, they just adopted the wrong side of populist tactics in a wrong election. Wijeweera's communalism is different. He wanted to exploit anti-Tiger (Tamil Liberation Fighters) feelings and anti-Police hierarchy feelings of the Sinhalese voters. In the case of the Police, he said that all the five top Police officers were Tamils and that they were trying to ban the JVP.

JVP has not clearly understood the area of voters and floating voters who can really consider them, seriously. Those are basically anti-UNP and pro-left and consider the traditional left inadequate to lead them forward. Those sectors would have been inspired if Rohan Wijeweera had indicated that he had some understanding with the Liberation Fighters of the North and he could co-ordinate with them in Island-wide struggles.

## Behaviour of the Tamil voters — Northern Province Jaffna and Vanni Districts

During the Presidential Election, the Tamil speaking people who are supporting the self-determination of the Tamil speaking people of Eelam, were confused by the behaviour of several forces who had accepted or tactically utilized the "Cry for Eelam". Several radical organizations with a sector of T.U.L.F., who considered the mandate for Eelam was already obtained in 1977 General Election, called for a boycott in the name of Eelam. Meanwhile Kumar Ponnampalam of the Tamil Congress, who had never accepted the right of self-determination of the Tamil people, used the Eelam cry as the main trump card in the campaign. In Batticaloa and in other areas, while a considerable section of the TULF worked for Kumar Ponnampalam, a section of the TULF notables worked for the UNP too. "Thamilar Suyadchi Kalazam" of

V. Navaratnam, one of the Eelam parties, openly campaigned for Hector Kobbekaduwa on economic and tactical grounds. In this confused and confounded situation, Tamil voters have acted in the following manner:

In the Jaffna District, while 53.69% of the registered voters had refrained from voting, 17.67% of the registered voters cast their votes for Kumar Ponnampalam. The total percentage of the people who had refrained from voting and who had cast their votes for the Tamil Congress, which used the Eelam cry as their trump card in the Northern Province, was 66.86% while this percentage in Jaffna District was 71.36% (10,610) in the Jaffna District. It also appears that a good number of the rejected votes carried Eelam slogans. The above trend could reasonably be interpreted as an expression of support for the call for Eelam or its numerous variants.

The voting pattern of the Vanni District and some parts of Jaffna District were affected by the C.W.C. activities and those of Mr. S. Thondaman who has been deeply involved in UNP Election campaign, because of the fact that the participation of recently migrated Up-country Tamils is not yet solicited by the mainstream Tamil politics.

Another important point to mark here, is the rejection by Kilinochchi voters of the mandate called for the granting of a District Status to Kilinochchi. In the Kilinochchi Electorate, among the voters who have not boycotted this election, only 3,616 people had voted for Jayewardene while, 9,822 voted for Ponnampalam and 4,188 voted for Kobbekaduwa. Another important aspect is the rejection of the JVP

(Continued on page 15)

# Rohana's third crisis

The Left should be thankful that Mr. Kobbekaduwa did not win. Had he done so one of two things would have happened. Either the Sirima-Anura-Felix clique would have returned, carrying out the UNP's economic policies but with a greater degree of political repression or the economic instability generated by a left-leaning Kobbekaduwa would have given rise to a Right-wing putsch. 1962 would have been repeated twenty years later, but this time successfully. The unarmed Left would have been wholly unprepared to deal with such a situation. Mr. Jayewardene's defeat was seen as imperative by the non-JVP Left (every shade of it), to roll back the 'fascist threat' and secure a breathing space. In truth it is Mr. Jayewardene's victory that now provides such time however limited, for the Left.

The JVP probably sees it this way too, and must be relieved that its worst case scenario, a return of Bandaranaike, did not materialize. It must also gain some satisfaction at having buried the LSSP which hounded and tormented it in the '70's. The early issues of 'Niyamuwa' (Vanguard), the JVP's official paper after 1977, carried a three part article on 'The LSSP's last journey'. Mr. Wijeweera was right, there. But then the JVP leadership has little else to be pleased about, in terms of its own chosen strategy, namely that of electoral politics and the goals it has set itself.

Mr. Wijeweera was always prone to exaggeration. On the basis of what he had told them, JVP militants in each district hurled themselves into battle in 1971, believing that their party was extremely strong in other districts. Some even believed that support was due from abroad and cleared areas in the jungle to receive such aid! This is how Mr. Wijeweera managed to inspire and enthuse his followers: the message was that a few years of great effort would definitely

bring victory. He was the pusher — man, offering the petty-bourgeoisie a quick-fix. The JVP came down from Cloud-Nine in April '71, and went 'cold turkey'! The party must be undergoing the same painful withdrawal symptoms now.

Mr. Wijeweera may tell his followers that his prognosis of 'the end of the road for the SLFP' has been proven correct in that the SLFP candidate failed to win the election. But the UNP too, stayed out of office from 1956 to '64, only to return in 1965. Then it was out in the cold for the '70-'77 period, but made a tremendous come-back in 1977. The chances therefore, are that it is the SLFP rather than the JVP which will be in line for office come the next Presidential poll that is, if there is one. And by that time, Mrs. B's civic disabilities would have lapsed! Mr. Wijeweera will be hard pressed to keep his team together and explain 'semi-finals' have been re-scheduled for 1986...or whenever. This is particularly so when there is no guarantee that the 'semi-finals' will ever be won by the JVP. The JVP's illusions were based partly on its performance at the District Council elections, but when both Establishment parties were in the fray, the JVP wound up a poor third. If the 5 party 'Left Bloc' of Oct '79 had remained intact, exploiting the crisis of the SLFP, it is possible that the hegemony of the anti-UNP struggle could have been wrested away. Without the organizational skills of the CPSL and the propaganda conducted by the 'Aththa', Mr. Kobbekaduwa would have fared much worse. If all these were at the service of the JVP, it would have done better. The point is that Mr. Wijeweera abandoned an important part of his own 'game-plan'. When the Left bloc was formed, he announced that the JVP had deprived the SLFP of the left 'crutches' without which it could not stand. Well, young Rohana, by his sectarianism, actually gifted one pair of crutches

right back to the SLFP, which needed it more than ever.

Mr. Wijeweera has faced two serious crises in his political life so far. The first was when his leadership was being questioned just prior to April '71, and autonomous groupings were forming. Rohana contained this by touring the island and telling his militants that maximum unity was essential since the Great Moment was close at hand. By this method he avoided a fullscale internal debate. The next crisis was inside the jails, in the aftermath of the April uprising. What helped Mr. Wijeweera there was the lack of a single personality with sufficient stature to challenge him. Those who could have, like Sanath and Sarath Wijesinghe, were dead. Others like Lionel Bopage who had the theoretical knowledge, acquitted themselves poorly in '71 and in any case were too overawed by Wijeweera's personality. Militants who had fought bravely, and were critical of Wijeweera, were not sufficiently well known on a national level, to unseat him. James Samaratunge (alias Bola Samare) who had the necessary attributes (brains and guts) for the task, and in fact, led his own group in the jungles till '77, pleaded guilty after being taken into custody. The militants grouped together in the 'Janatha Sangamaya' could have given Rohana a good run for his money, but they wasted their time in the company of decrepit Maoists, who turned into Sirimaists later. Reacting to Wijeweera's neo-Trotskyist nonsense (circa 1974), they embraced Maoism at a time when it was in crisis and decline. Thus, when Wijeweera's JVP and the Janatha Sangamaya militants came out of jail, the former got about the business of party-building, while the latter was embroiled in debates over the Theory of the Three Worlds, the Sino-albanian issue, the Vietnam-Kampuchea war, the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, the overthrow of the Gang of 4 and De-Maoization etc. By the time they emerged

from these woods, and abandoned the hopeless task of unifying the 'Marxists-Leninists', Wijeweera had taken seven league strides in rebuilding his movement. Indeed the veterans of '71 had even abdicated the title 'JVP' (to which they had much more claim than Wijeweera) to their former boss.

Thus it was that Wijeweera survived the second crisis, and prospered. Now he faces his third. Having abandoned an armed struggle strategy and built the party exclusively for electoral mobilization, he now confronts the high cut-off point at the General Elections. In other words he has no viable strategy, no 'winning strategy', to put to his followers. His entire strategic line is now exposed as being unable to deliver. The worst that can happen to a charismatic leader is to proven wrong visibly, undeniably and publicly. His charismatic appeal dwindles considerably and there is a crisis of faith. In the post 1977 period, he kept his party out of class battles (eg. the General strike of July 1980) and put the brake on other mass struggles (the student struggle over the White Paper) by arguing that the main task was to build the 'vanguard party of the proletariat' and that such participation would bring about 'the repression'. If his arguments were valid then, they would retain validity in the upcoming period too, what with JRJ's 52.9% poll! Then what happens when the 'second phase' of the UNP's economic policies are implemented, resulting in tremendous hardships for the masses? One likelihood is that Mr. Wijeweera will renew his post-1977 policy of non-confrontation with the govt, hoping that the severe economic difficulties will generate massive shift of public opinion in his favour, which would enable him to win the next Presidential election. Meanwhile his party could become fully Euro-Communist (or Euro-Socialist) and moderate its programme in order to be more acceptable to the electorate. But since it is the SLFP rather than the JVP which is likely to benefit from mass discontent with the UNP, **so long as the battlefield is electoral.** Mr. Wijeweera will find it difficult to 'sell' this line to his supporters.

**None of this means that Rohana will cease to be leader or that the JVP will wither away.** The LSSP lasted for over 45 years despite all its betrayals. Similarly, Peiter Keuneman still occupies his 'spot' in Lankan politics, and in his party, despite all the manifest failures of the strategic line and the compromises it has entailed. Mr. Wijeweera has achieved one aim stated by him at the massive Town Hall meeting after his release: he has eclipsed the Old Left and made his party the dominant Left party in the country — the 'Third Force'. President Jayawardena once said that the JVP could occupy the same position that the Liberal Party does in Britain. **That then is Rohana's slot and he will remain a figure in Lankan politics.** If he and a handful of his top lieutenants enter Parliament, they will make their contribution like Dr. Wicks and the 'Samasamaja twins' did.

#### JR's warning

But Mr. Wijeweera is known for his vaulting ambition, and will definitely not be satisfied with this. Will this tempt him into refashioning the JVP, accepting a drop in membership while streamlining the Party and forging it in the upcoming day-to-day struggles of the masses, as an instrument of class war? Would it even prompt him into another adventure a la 1966 (the Udugama coup attempt) or '71? **This is most doubtful** because Rohana's ambition is matched by another personality trait—namely a deep aversion to risking his own skin. He is likely therefore to bear in mind JRJ's warning in '77 that if any return to ex-parliamentary struggle is envisaged by the JVP leaders, they'd best find a place to hide.

Is it possible than that Messrs Bopage or Gamanayake would take on Rohana? Barely. It is not probable, because these leaders have much that bind them together, and a vested interest in not rocking the boat. In any case they are known to be too much in awe of Wijeweera's personality. Expecting them to revolutionize the Party once again, would be like the old expectation that Sarath Sahodara would revolutionize (or radicalize) the CPSL.

Not that this means that nothing will happen inside the JVP. In 1965, under a new UNP government, with the SLFP in second place a significant Left representation in Parliament, **and a 'revolutionary' Left outside it is the form of Mr. Sanmugathasan's CCP** (not to mention the LSSP-R), a young man moved out of the CCP and began the preliminary work of forming what was to become the JVP. In fact several groups split it from Shan's party in the 60's, and Wijeweera's turned out to be the most significant. The charge they levelled was that Shan was talking revolution but not doing it and was maintaining an autocratic regime within his party. Rohana may find himself facing the same criticisms today, and someone may do to him what he did to poor old Shan. Such a challenge would not be likely to come from anyone in the leadership. When Wijeweera left Shan (or was sacked) to undertake his historic task, hardly anyone knew of him.

#### Other Left Forces

The rest of the Left will probably liquidate itself, for all practical purposes, into the SLFP. Vasu's 17,000 should surprise no one, and it certainly would not have come as a shock to him personally since he expected between 10,000 — 20,000 votes. The real shocker would have been JR's first count victory. 17,000 supporters is quite a bit if one is seriously building a party for armed struggle, but this kind of effort is not likely to come from Trot academics. An alliance with the JVP too, is less likely than 'entryism' into the SLFP.

The CPSL should note that the Opposition lost Kalawana by a very narrow margin, and would not have lost at all, had the JVP not contested. Many CPers, especially in Galle and Matara, may join the JVP. **In fact, the depletion of Rohana's ranks may be particularly compensated for by an influx of supporters of other left parties and even the SLFP,** who see the JVP as the sole independent anti-capitalist force. The CPSL not only deviated sharply from its Xth and XIth Congress lines, but worst of all, could not justify it by showing



results. A win by Mr. Kobbekaduwa and the restoration of the strikers jobs could have covered up its sins.

The Maoists will disappear completely into the folds of the SLFP perhaps hoping to convert it into an SLFP (M-L) ! That the CPSL will be snuggling close to that party is not incongruous. Anyway some 'left' presence close to, and inside, the SLFP will probably come in useful, when Anura Bandaranaike makes his inevitable (and UNP supported) attempt to wrest control of the SLFP as a prelude to carrying it into a 'National Government.' Not that the 'Left' can prevent this from taking place, but the tug-of-war would weaken the SLFP further, while participation in a coalition with the UNP will discredit it utterly, in a period where huge economic burdens will be heaped on the masses. Such a polarization would open the way for electoral advance by the Left, and it is the JVP that is best equipped to benefit. Mr. Wijeweera

will doubtless use this argument to retain many of his supporters and expand his party, but whether it will convince his more revolutionary followers is doubtful.

### Optimism

"Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will" was the motto which adorned the masthead of Gramsci's 'Ordine Nuovo' Lankan leftists should adapt it creatively and maintain 'optimism of the intelligence' because intelligence should tell them that the crisis of world capitalism is deepening (the October 18th issues of *Newsweek* magazine and the *International Herald Tribune* should be read for confirmation); that the 'second phase' of the UNP's economic policies are going to generate tremendous social disparities and contradictions; that the resultant discontent and protest will cause the regime to be more authoritarian.

### Presidential . . .

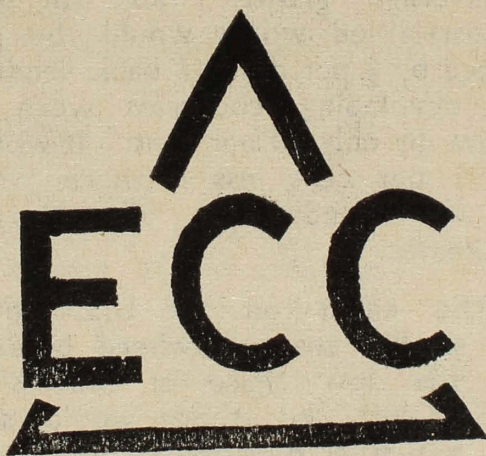
(Continued from page 12)

after their expensive and hard political work since 1979 because of their double standards on the National Question. They have obtained only 0.6% of the total registered votes in Jaffna District and 0.8% of that of Northern Province.

Tentatively analyzing the Eastern Province based on overall data is not easy because of the following reasons:-

(1) The homogeneity of this province of the Tamil Speaking People has been highly affected by the state-sponsored Sinhalese colonization (apart from Batticaloa District).

(2) The non-homogenous population pattern of Tamil Speaking People itself.



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# Third World growth rates threatened

FOREIGN NEWS

Peter Montagnon

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES face a sharp fall in their economic growth rates as it becomes harder for them to obtain loans from commercial banks in the wake of the Mexican and Argentine debt crises, according to a new study by Morgan Guaranty Trust.

This will spill over to the economies of developed countries, reducing their own growth rates and worsening their balance of payments as export markets in the developing world stagnate, the bank says in the latest issue of its publication *World Financial Markets*.

Last year, bank lending to developing countries rose by 20 per cent. This is around twice the rate of increase in bank capital and reserves.

If banks were to cut their lending growth back to 10 per cent in line with the increase in their capital base developing countries would lose about 1½ per cent of real gross national product (GNP) as inflows of foreign capital were reduced by \$25bn (£14.7bn).

The impact would be particularly strong in Latin America, Morgan says, as the region is very heavily dependant on bank loans. Growth there would fall by 3 percentage points, while in Asia, which is less dependant on bank borrowings, the drop would be only ½ a percentage point.

An even worse picture emerges if banks stop new lending to developing countries altogether. The total loss of output is estimated at about 3 percentage points; compared with the level it would reach if bank lending continued to grow at its previous pace of 20 per cent.

Real output growth in Latin America alone would be around 5½ percentage points less, Morgan says.

The consequences for developed countries could be severe, it adds, industrial countries seed around 25

## DEVELOPING COUNTRY DEBT SERVICE RATIOS (percentage of export receipts needed in 1982 to service foreign debt)

	Total	Interest	Principal (including short-term debt)
Argentina	179	44	135
Mexico	129	37	92
Ecuador	122	30	92
Brazil	122	45	77
Chile	116	40	76
Philippines	92	18	74
Korea	54	11	43

Source: Morgan Guaranty.

per cent of their total exports to the developing world, with the ratio of the U.S. and Japan much higher, at 38 per cent and 45 per cent respectively.

Mexico is the U.S.'s third largest export market and took 8 per cent of U.S. merchandise exports last year.

Average growth rates in the industrialised world would be reduced by ½ per cent if bank lending to developing countries were to grow by only 10 per cent. It would be 1 per cent less if there were no new lending at all, Morgan estimates.

The effect on the U.S. would be smaller than elsewhere because of the low share of exports in U.S. GNP, but there would still be a further deflationary impact on other industrial countries amid growing signs that U.S. economic activity in the second half of this year will in any case be weaker than expected.

Morgan says one important conclusion of its study is that there must be a proper balance between financing the deficit of developing countries and economic adjustment to reduce their trade and balance of payments deficits.

"This will require close co-operation of all the principle parties — the banks, the developing countries, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the industrial countries," it says.

"As regards the banks, it is recognised that a cessation of new lending to developing countries would be counter productive."

The cuts in economic growth and living standards would be so large as to have a "sledgehammer" effect on those countries, it says. This could eventually jeopardise their ability to pay interest on existing loans.

Morgan concludes that a moderate overall expansion in new lending to developing countries of, say, 5 to 10 per cent would be preferable. This would still imply \$25bn to \$35bn less in new bank financing, while developing countries would face a temporary slowdown as they adjust their balance of payments.

The IMF will meanwhile need a sizeable infusion of new money, which makes the establishment of a special emergency fund highly desirable.

Industrial countries should meanwhile pursue policies which will lead to a significant reduction of interest rates and an eventual economic recovery. But it would be a mistake to abandon fiscal restraint aimed at reducing budget deficits only to replace it with expansionary policies which have failed in the past, Morgan says.

— Courtesy: *Financial Times*

## SOUTH AFRICA

# Bowling a Sri Lankan googly

Eric Marsden

With the arrival in Johannesburg of a 14-strong Sri Lankan cricket touring team, South Africa has served notice on the anti-apartheid movement, the Commonwealth and the United Nations that it will fight the isolation of its sportsmen by campaigning to undermine national sports authorities.

When an English rebel team led by Graham Gooch toured earlier this year, South Africa was accused of trying to split cricket into white and non-white camps. By inviting the Sri Lankans, the South African Cricket Union aims to disprove that charge and to emphasise its desire to play black and brown teams. The union hopes the Sri Lankan tour, which comes after its failure to coax West Indian players, will encourage more non-whites to defy their home cricket authorities.

When Sri Lanka won full membership of the International Cricket Council, giving it a non-white majority for the first time, it seemed an unlikely recruiting ground for such a rebel tour. Initial contacts may have been made through English players when Keith Fletcher's team stopped off in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, in February after touring India. Within a few months, 14 players had signed.

Team members are reported to have been offered about £30,000 each, but only the handful of test players are likely to receive so much. The Sri Lankan cricket control board has suspended all the players from national cricket, cricket management, and taking part in any tours, for 25 years. The South African government considers the cash it will lose on the tour will be well spent on cocking a snook at the world's cricket establishment.

The South Africans skilfully misled the press about the tour, thus avoiding the leaks that have scuppered

previous tour plans. Ten days ago the cricket union chief, Joe Pamensky, sorrowfully announced the tour was being cancelled because one player had alerted the Sri Lankan cricket authorities.

Dispatches to South African newspapers from Colombo say that though the Sri Lankan government and cricket union have condemned the players, most people wish them luck.

Six months ago South African breweries lost about £250,000 on the Gooch tour, but there will still be no difficulty in finding a sponsor to put up £500,000 or so. The South Africans would have paid much more for West Indian stars such as Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Malcolm Marshall and Collis King. Cricket union sources say the former Springbok captain Ali Bacher had almost clinched a £1,000,000 deal with a mainly West Indian team a few months ago when private entrepreneurs forced up the price to £5,000,000.

— Courtesy 'Sunday Times', London.

### Letter... (Contd. from p. 1)

As a liberal democratic group opposed to socialism and fully in support of the Government's liberalised economic policies, the Council for Liberal Democracy believes that the United National Party's violation of democratic and liberal norms, far from achieving a political stability required for development, will usher in a repressive and unstable society. We therefore urge those who, like the majority of our members, voted for President Jayewardene on the 20th of October and intend to vote for the United National Party in a General Election, to vote No on the postponement of Parliamentary elections and affirm their commitment to a liberal economy in a liberal democratic state.

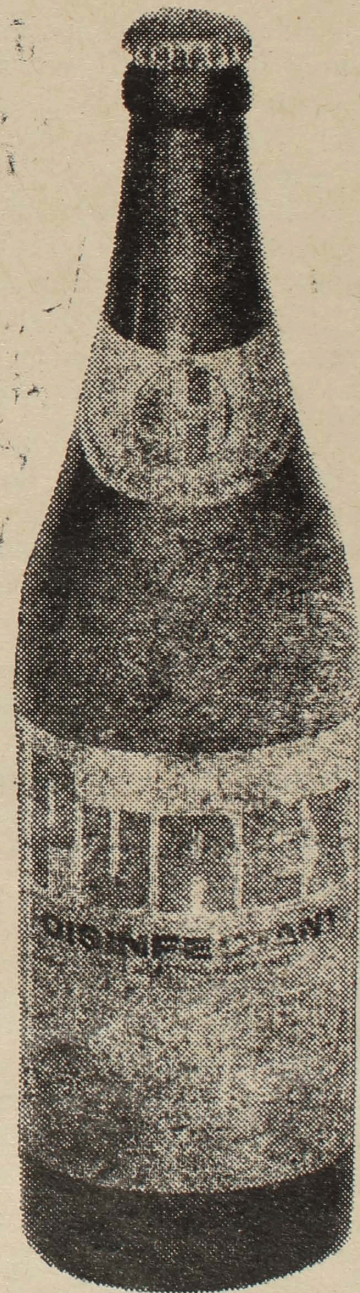
**Chanaka Amaratunga  
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# Reagan's depressed America not alone

Lester Thurow

**C**AMBRIDGE, Massachusetts — In President Reagan's speech on economic matters last week, not one word was addressed to the international dimensions of the problem. But current difficulties are not an isolated American phenomenon. The entire world is trapped in a prolonged period of zero economic growth.

British industrial production is below where it was 10 years ago. U. S. economic growth stopped in 1979. The West German economy has not grown for two years. Japanese industrial production has been stagnant for a year. There is no country in the world, communist or capitalist that has a strong growth rate. For all practical purposes the world economic engines have been shut down.

What President Reagan fails to understand is that once the entire world sinks into the quicksand of stagnation the characteristics of the economic system change.

In a normal recession a depressed America is helped to recover by a booming Europe or vice versa. But when everyone is experiencing a slumping economy, each slump helps to reinforce the other. The American economy falls, resulting in lower imports from West Germany. That increases the downward pressure on the West German economy, which means lower imports from America, which in turn reinforces the initial American slump in an ever-aggravated cycle of downward pressure.

Enormous amounts of idle capacity arise. It serves as a sprinkler system preventing new investment. New factories and equipment simply are not needed until the old factories are back at work. Several years of recovery will be needed before that can occur.

But how is a capitalist economy to have several years of recovery in the face of falling investment?

As the period of zero economic growth lengthens, the financial structure gets weaker and weaker until it cracks. Ominous cracks are now beginning to appear. The major American and European banks are in a precarious position. A Mexican default would wipe out 40 percent of the capital of the 10 largest American banks. A Polish default would clobber the West German banks.

The authorities are smart enough to prevent a financial collapse similar to that of the 1930s, but America's financial system is like a balloon with more and more holes — each hole patched, but each patch leaking, so that the balloon slowly falls with its loss of helium.

If the Mexicans were to default for example, the Federal Reserve Board would rush to the rescue with liquidity, but the depositors would gradually withdraw from weaker financial institutions and flee to quality institutions. Borrowers from weaker banks would find their funds cut off, just as housing has been cut off as funds fled the savings and loan associations. The quality institutions would also become more cautious in their lending and would refuse to serve some of their current customers.

The Reagan administration has now reversed course and is relying on the consumer rather than the industrial investor to lead America out of stagnation. But that is unlikely to happen. The consumer faces some strong incentives to cut his own spending and is unlikely to find cheap plentiful credit. Banks will simply need a long period of lending high and borrowing low to restore their financial stability.

At some point unemployment becomes so pervasive that even the

most inveterate spender decides that something must be put aside for a rainy day. Unemployment insurance does cushion the economic shock of unemployment but only for 40 percent of the 11 million people who are officially unemployed in America. For many consumers a rainy day is near enough at hand to require precaution — a cutback in personal spending and a liquidation of debts.

With stagnation everywhere, pressures are springing up to keep foreign goods out of the United States. The other guy always engages in unfair competition. But a trade war hurts everyone. Countries export [the products they make best and import the products they are worst at making. As a result when everyone prohibits imports everyone loses jobs in his best sectors and gains jobs in his worst sectors. Bad jobs are created for good jobs and everyone loses. Such a process is well under way both in the United States and abroad.

The current stagnation was not caused solely by American mistakes and it will not be solved by American policies. To blow the world out of its economic quick sand will require coordinated worldwide policies to stimulate the economy. But the Reagan administration does not recognize the worldwide character of the problem and in fact resisted the allies request for such a coordinated response at the Versailles summit in June.

Mr. Reagan points to the stock market to bolster his arguments that "make no mistake, America is recovery-bound". Question: Why do you suppose President Hoover said recovery was just around the corner in the spring of 1931? Answer: The stock market had risen almost 20 percent in the first eight weeks of 1931.

The Reagan administration first said a recovery would occur in the fall of 1981, then in the fall of 1982, now in the spring of 1983. As in 1931, recovery is always just around the corner but forever fading out of sight.

*The writer, author of "The Zero-Sum Society," is professor of economics and management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*

# Some fatten on hunger

J Collins and N Allen

**S**AN FRANCISCO — It is not sufficiently widely realized that some people benefit from keeping other people hungry.

The hungry will often work for low wages in indecent conditions. Large landowners in Central and South America can pay landless or land-poor farmworkers \$2 for a day of picking crops for the export market. If these labourers were not hungry, if they had access to land, they could grow enough food for their families. But then, the landowners fear, they would not work on the export harvests, or they would be able to hold out for decent wages.

Operators expanding big banana and pineapple plantations on the Philippine island of Mindanao drove thousands of small farmers off their homesteads. Dispossessed, these hungry peasants are now available to work for low wages to produce luxury fruit for export.

The beneficiaries of hunger include the American and European corporations whose subsidiaries manage and market the crops harvested by hungry plantation workers, and multinational manufacturers who close down plants in the United States and move to countries where there are many people hungry enough to produce electronic calculators or textiles for wages far below U.S. scale.

Many Third World governments and their business partners benefit from keeping the prices paid to small farmers low. Although these farmers are often the main producers

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*Joseph Collins is co-founder, with Frances Moore Lappe, of the San Francisco-based Institute for Food and Developing Policy. Nick Allen is a researcher at the institute.*

of staple foods, the price controls keep them poor and willing to work part of the year on the export plantations. And low prices for staples make it easier to keep wages low in the cities, because workers there can still afford a subsistence diet.

In proclamations, everyone opposes hunger. But to work effectively against it we need to analyze the forces that keep hunger in place.

After dozens of blue-ribbon commissions and shelves of academic studies, most experts now concede that poverty — not scarcity, not overpopulation, not technological ignorance — is the root cause of hunger. The single most important step toward ending world hunger would be allowing the hungry access to the food-producing resources — land, water, credit — that are now monopolized by a wealthy minority in so much of the world.

“Seventy percent of our children in El Salvador are malnourished,” a former Salvadoran minister of agriculture said recently. “That’s why we are fighting a war in our country.” As the 30,000 deaths in that war demonstrate, the desire of the hungry for access to food-producing resources is an enormous threat to the elite who benefit from their low paid labour.

Instead of helping U.S. policies in El Salvador and elsewhere often work against the hungry. The military and economic aid that shores up the elite also thwarts the efforts of the hungry who are working to improve their situation.

To truly help the hungry, we must put ourselves on their side by insisting that governments and corporate leaders change the policies that allow others to profit from hunger.

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# Dr S. A. Wickremasinghe and the Left Politics of Sri Lanka

Professor Wiswa Warnapala

Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe's pioneering role as the leading pioneer of the Marxist Movement in Sri Lanka cannot be analysed without an examination of the national and international background of the environment in which he was born in 1901, and it was the politics of this environment which, to a considerable extent, influenced his militancy and socialist aspirations in later life. The village of Aturueliya in the rural district of Matara was his birthplace, and he was born in April, 1901, nearly thirty years after the birth of Lenin, who, during the life time of Wickremasinghe, became the main source of ideological inspiration. Both the revolutions of 1905 and the October Revolution of 1917 occurred after the birth of Wickremasinghe, and these, along with the ideology of Leninism, provided a source of inspiration for Wickremasinghe, who, during the period of his active political career, fought against exploitation, poverty and oppression of the Sri Lankan masses suffering under the yoke of imperialism. It was this quality of the man that made him the pioneer of Sri Lankan leftwing politics. Neither a contemporary among the galaxy of the leaders of his time nor a revolutionary to be born in the future could have occupied the place which Wickremasinghe held as the pioneer of this movement. He was born in a country which formed a part of a massive colonial empire and it was this yoke of imperialism which dominated nearly 75 percent of the globe.

Inspired by the need to emancipate the masses from the yoke of imperialism, with dedication and commitment he fought for the liberation of the oppressed poor.

*This is a revised version of a talk delivered at the Wickremasinghe Commemoration Meeting held in Colombo.*

His mission was not confined to those in his own land; he saw the emancipation of the oppressed as a global need. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that Dr. Wickremasinghe's relentless struggle for the emancipation of the masses, primarily those of his own country, was known in the international working class movement. Nationally, there was yet another important event that injected and imbibed anti-imperialist ideas. The 1915 riots, which the colonial masters recognised as a manifestation of a nationalist upsurge, became a vital source of inspiration for subsequent nationalist agitation and though the terror unleashed by the colonial rulers in 1915 roused no opposition from the stooge 'national' bourgeoisie, it injected a desire in Wickremasinghe to lead a mass struggle some day against imperialism and its agents.

The history of nationalist movements in the countries subjugated by colonialism provides evidence to the effect that the people were in search of a mode of struggle to oust the colonial oppressor, and the 1915 riots in Sri Lanka, in the same way, provided the necessary inspiration for the people. The Assistant Government Agent for Matara, reporting on the riots of 1915, particularly on the incidents which occurred in areas such as Akuressa, Kamburupitiya and Weligama, stated that 'there can be no doubt that these societies and movements were guided by people who had other ends to serve than merely harassing the Moors'.

Similar activities inspired the anti-imperialist events in India, Ireland, Turkey and Indonesia, and it was in this background of the upsurge of anti-imperialist activity that Wickremasinghe proceeded to London in pursuance of higher education.

The young men of those days, unlike those of the present generation, pursued higher education while searching for a road to emancipate the oppressed masses from the clutches of imperialism. Wickremasinghe's involvement with student political activities in London and his association with Indian student leaders, who later became stalwarts of the Indian freedom struggle, indicated that, imbibed with ideas of anti-imperialism, he seized all the available opportunities to create and activate a platform of opposition to imperialism among the students from colonial territories. Significantly enough, this period (1926-1928) was considered to be a vital stage of the struggle against imperialist domination of the countries of Asia and Africa. Yet another development of the period was the permeation of Communist ideas into the nationalist movements of India and Indonesia, and this resulted in the emergence of a new trend in the anti-imperialist struggles. Inspired by the national awakening in India, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, on his way back home after completing his higher studies in London, came to India with a view to meeting the Communist leaders who were at the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle. Most of the leaders of the Indian Communist Party, which came to be formed in 1925, had been jailed by the British imperialists, and this prevented Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe from coming in contact with a dedicated set of leaders. However, he came in contact with a group of militant nationalist leaders from whom he obtained all information relating to the nature of the anti-imperialist struggle in India. Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet whose works provided a special inspiration to the country's nationalist movement, was another leading figure whom he met, and it was during this visit to Santiniketan

that Wickremasinghe met Rev. Udakendawela Siri Saranankara, the pioneer political bhikku of Sri Lanka who later played the pioneering and most significant role in the Marxist Movement of the country. The traditional role on which the members of the Sangha had played in the politics of the country was re-activated and Rev. Udakendawela Siri Saranankara, primarily owing to the efforts of Wickremasinghe, became the most militant 'political bhikku' whose militant role and active involvement in left-wing politics inspired many a Buddhist bhikku to come to the forefront of the anti-imperialistic struggle. The politics of the Buddhist Sangha, though opposed by the national bourgeoisie who feared the potentiality of the Sangha as a force in politics, was entirely due to the early association which it established with the forces of anti-imperialism through the personality of Rev. Udakendawela Siri Saranankara. The bourgeoisie leaders, as at present, condemned the involvement of the Sangha in radical politics, and it was because of the fact that these reactionary leaders opposed both democracy and socialism. This, in brief, was the first phase of the anti-imperialist activities of Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe.

#### **Next Phase : The Donoughmore Era**

The next important phase of anti-imperialist activity of this dedicated revolutionary begins with the inauguration of the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931, and the legislature became the main platform of his anti-imperialist activities. National and international factors that constituted the background of the Donoughmore System of Government need to be mentioned in order to see the developments in their proper perspective. The impact of the great depression of 1929 and the outbreak of World War II made these years a period of intensive political and economic change, and the politics of the period came to be marked with the emergence of that monstrous ideology called fascism. Fascism became a powerful influence over a large part of Europe and overturned the working class movement. The crisis in the imperialist countries was felt in the colonies

and Sri Lanka, therefore, was no exception. The colonial masters, in an attempt to achieve the collaboration of the national bourgeoisie for the perpetuation of the oppression of the masses, introduced the Donoughmore system of government—which offered an opportunity for the first Marxist in the legislature to launch a struggle against colonial domination. Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe entered the Donoughmore Legislature, the State Council, as the member of the Morawaka constituency and thereby, became the first Marxist to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage at a national election. The Marxists of other Asian countries were engaged in underground activities during this period while Wickremasinghe successfully used the floor of the State Council as a platform for anti-imperialism. One significant contribution of the island's left movement to the emancipation of the masses was made via the State Council. The representatives of the national bourgeoisie, true to their spirit of servility to the cause of imperialism, collaborated with the agents of imperialism, while Wickremasinghe led a lone struggle for the rights of the working class and the peasantry. As the first Marxist in the legislature, he was expected to play this role; he played it in a spirit of militancy and commitment. Through his attacks on colonialism, he successfully exposed the collaborationist role of the local agents of imperialism, and the purpose of this strategy was to divert the attention of the imperialist rulers towards the needs of the workers and the peasants. The ruling class of the Donoughmore period was therefore compelled to introduce economic, social and educational reforms which, in the long run, benefited the workers and peasants of the country. The malaria epidemic of the thirties developed into a canker in the social fabric of the country and besides kindling the social consciousness of an important segment of the people, it exposed the social and economic malady of the country. Wickremasinghe, in his dual role as medical doctor and revolutionary, did yeoman service

during the malaria epidemic, in the course of which he demanded the immediate expansion of the health facilities in the island. Such issues as child labour, trade union rights, maternity benefits for women workers, the rights of the vernacular teachers and Ayurvedic physicians, the needs of the down-trodden peasantry and various other national problems, attracted the unfailing attention of Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, and all these problems, he emphasised, could be solved only with the achievement of full political freedom for Sri Lanka. The idea of complete political freedom surfaced several years before 1931 and it was Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe who advanced this slogan of complete political independence through the Matara Youth League, another important precursor of the Sri Lankan left movement. Inside the State Council, he led a one-man struggle for total political freedom. Many a right-wing politician in the country today claims to have pioneered the struggle for political freedom conveniently forgetting the fact that Wickremasinghe spoke of total political independence at a time when others thought it a crime to speak of it. The reactionaries cannot be allowed to claim the credit for the struggle for political independence because it should rightly go to the pioneering leaders of the Sri Lankan Marxist movement. Wickremasinghe was undoubtedly the leading pioneer of this movement. Another facet of Dr. Wickremasinghe's political career was that, unlike some of his contemporaries, he utilised every social and economic issue to strengthen the movement against imperialism. The Buddhist Theosophical Society, which managed a network of denominational schools in the country, was used to serve this end; even the national dress—Arya Sinhala dress—in the case of Wickremasinghe, became a symbol of anti-imperialism. The Suriya Mal movement gave birth to the Lanka Sama Samaja Party in 1953, and Wickremasinghe's third phase of anti-imperialist activity began only after 1940.

#### **The most militant period:**

This phase of Wickremasinghe's political career, which began after 1940, could be recognised as the

most militant period of his life. He led many a battle for the emancipation of the workers and peasants. The Colombo Workers Club, the United Socialist Party and the Ceylon Trade Union Federation were the platforms which he used in the early forties for his battles. The United Socialist Party (1940) played a vital role in generating feelings of anti-fascism among the people, and in addition, it supported the heroic struggle of the Soviet people against the Fascist enemy. The anti-Fascist stand which the United Socialist Party took during this period and its commitment to the unity of the anti-imperialist and patriotic forces influences the imperialist rulers to make this party illegal in 1942. Wickremasinghe, unnerved by this attempt of the imperialists, wanted to convert a newspaper into a powerful weapon of the anti-imperialist struggle. He published an article attacking the imperialist rulers in the newspaper called '*Janasakthi*' and this was sufficient for the imperialists to sentence Wickremasinghe for a one-year jail term. '*Janasakthi*', as Wickremasinghe stated in the first issue of this newspaper, was expected to oppose imperialism and the imperialist war, and as he anticipated, it became an important weapon. The fighting spirit and the militancy of Wickremasinghe could not be destroyed by a jail term and in a message from the jail in 1941, he stated that the mass struggle would continue.

The next phase of Wickremasinghe's anti-imperialist activity begins with the formation of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka in July, 1943. He was a pioneer in the formation of this party and remained at the forefront of its struggles on behalf of the workers and peasants of Sri Lanka. The representatives of the reactionaries in the country, with a view to weakening the movement which Wickremasinghe represented, wanted to close the portals of the national legislature to him and necessary legislation was passed to achieve this objective. He fought for the recognition of the strategy of the United Front in the 1950's, and it reached fruition in the sixties and seventies. The people were able to win certain freedoms and liberties as

a result of this strategy. However, the intensification of the canker of 'family power' into the body politic of Sri Lanka obstructed the achievement of further reforms through this strategy of the United Front.

### Relevance and heritage

The deepening economic crisis of Sri Lanka, occurring largely as a result of the neo-colonialist penetration into the national economy, constitutes a context relevant to the discussion of Wickremasinghe's ideas on economic independence. He opposed the concentration of national wealth in the hands of imperialists and their local agents; he never doubted that these exploiters, would be resuscitated after a new invasion of neo-colonialist penetration of the economy. Today Sri Lanka has become a playground of the neo-colonialist exploiters, and the neo-colonialist exploitation is now called 'development' in the country. Another aspect of this trend is the gradual erosion of the people's democratic rights; the right for which Wickremasinghe fought a lifetime's battle and the tribute, which we can pay this leader at his first death anniversary, is to fight a relentless battle to destroy completely the forces of neocolonialism now penetrating all aspects of the life of the Sri Lankan nation.

Wickremasinghe deserves a special place among those politicians who wanted to develop the country on the basis of the utilisation of available national resources. Irrigation, river valley development and agriculture attracted special attention, and his ideas came to be utilised by others who framed policies in these fields. He devoted a great deal of his time to the study of river valley development, through which he envisaged a new phase in the agricultural development of the country. Another purpose was to shake and destroy the imperialist stranglehold over the peasantry of the country. His views on industrial development of the country were based on his analysis of imperialism and neo-colonialism. No imperialist country seeks to

develop industries in the newly independent countries of this part of the world. They want these countries to be 'dumping grounds' of their industrial products. Wickremasinghe, advancing a set of ideas relating to the proper utilisation of the mineral wealth of the country, saw industrial development as a way of breaking away from the clutches of imperialism. The process of industrial development, which he wanted Sri Lanka to follow, has now been obstructed by the penetration of the industrial scene by the neo-colonialist forces.

He enjoyed a highly respected and esteemed position within the international socialist movement, and his political career could only be compared with those of such leading pioneers in Asia as Dange of India and Aidit of Indonesia. His contribution to the promotion of the international solidarity of the working class and international friendship amongst peoples came to be recognised by the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union which awarded the Order of Friendship to Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe who received it on 3, June 1976 at the Kremlin. On receiving this prestigious award of the Soviet Union, he stated that it symbolised his struggle for democracy, peace and international friendship. I participated in this ceremony at the Kremlin and deeply impressed by the spirit of humility which Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe received this award of international friendship.

Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe's first death anniversary is being commemorated in the background of a crucial stage in the political life of this country. Democracy has been given a new interpretation and an organised attempt is being made to destroy the very foundation of democratic life of the country. The rights, for which Wickremasinghe fought during the long span of his life, are being eroded.



# Midnight Express : Another look

Jagath Senaratne

**M**idnight Express' has created a good deal of controversy and has been subject to criticism from varying standpoints. While the views held by all the critics generally show a healthy irreverence for effete aestheticism and apolitical avant-gardism, the categories actually being used by these critics are highly inappropriate and unwieldy.

The high degree of politicisation of criticism is, in my view, in the right direction, but I would question whether naive Third-Worldism, laced with liberal doses of anti-American jargon would lead us into fruitful areas of critical investigation. The North-South 'dialogue' and UNCTAD as absolutely minimum economic programmes have their merits, but whether we'd be able to develop coherent criticisms from them is in doubt. **The New International Information Order deserves our fullest support, but to caricature it's concepts is to ultimately pave the way for its rejection.** Although none of these institutions are openly mentioned, their influence is manifest in the criticisms. It's the misapplication of these 'political' categories which has led some to the ludicrous position of calling upon the Turkish ambassador as a referee to the debate — and the Turkish ambassador is not exactly the most impartial authority on the subject!

**Costa-Gavras's** new film "Missing" has won critical acclaim and was given the Grand prix at the Cannes film festival this year. Although the predicament of Charles Horman, the young American in the film is quite different from that of Billy Hayes, the general pattern of relationships between these individual Americans and their government is similar. In the case of Hayes the US govt. stands by impassively while the Turkish govt. makes an 'example' of him. The diplomatic relations between the two govts. were strained at that time, and Hayes was a bungling innocent, a mere cipher, and was dealt with accordingly by the two

States. Charles Horman was a left-leaning journalist who went to Chile after Allende came to power. The film, based on extensive circumstantial evidence produced by Horman's father and wife, and also on the book on the subject, describes the manner in which Charles Horman discovered the US role in the coup that toppled Allende. Unlike Bill Hayes, Horman was a definite threat to US policy in Chile, and there is evidence to believe that the US had a role in his death at the hands of the Chilean junta. Although now the US role in the coup is universally known, at the time the US agencies operating in Chile were prepared to authorize the execution of one of its citizens in the attempt at a cover-up. (for more information, but not necessarily an unprejudiced view, refer *TIME*, 8th March '82. Also Thomas Hauser's book)

My introduction of "Missing" into this debate can be challenged, as it has not yet been released in Sri Lanka, but comparing the two roles of the Americans is of great utility in our attempt to clarify the issue. Actually, the fact that Hayes is **not** a political prisoner is a blessing in disguise, because unlike the case of Horman we are forced to think out the issue with greater rigour and clarity. In the case of Horman, I would predict that his role would be universally acceptable by our critics, given his impeccable 'political' credentials. I don't intend to sound ironical as regards Horman's fate, but extending the logic of the arguments of our critics, shouldn't we be taking the position that Horman had no business to go to Chile, a Third World country trying hard to 'develop'? A country going through a hard period of 'transition'? For 'interfering' in the internal affairs of a country solidly composed of good, Spanish speaking. Third World Latinos?

Then again lets take some examples which have not yet become the basis for films. Four Maryknoll

nuns were killed by El Salvadorean Army Death Squads in '81. Are the nuns to be condemned for 'interfering' in the affairs of a small Third World country? How about the two Dutch Journalists working for a Dutch TV network, gunned down by the Salvadorean Army (incidentally it's this some Army that's being given extensive training within the US, amidst widespread criticism) in '82 — were they just the hired agents of the Network Imperialists, and therefore of no consequence? Although the circumstances of these two cases differ yet again from those of Hayes and Horman, they fall into a general pattern.

The era in which we considered the US govt. and its sponsorship of the US military-industrial complex, and the US public as one and the same entity is long past. In the past it could be considered such for all practical purposes, as the national 'consequences' was largely intact. One could of course anticipate the resurrection of 'consensus' when generations unfamiliar with recent periods of US history (Watergate, Vietnam) start making their views felt. But in the meantime the manner in which US public opinion has been mobilized to the extent of actually playing a role in determining US policy in El Salvador, is evidence of at least a residual momentum. There is a deep and widespread suspicion of Washington bureaucrats and the formal institutions of the US State.

To identify Hayes, Horman or Jane Fonda (who went to North Vietnam during the war) with US Imperialism is a mistake of the first order. The reality is that the interests of the US and authoritarian dictatorships of the 3rd World correspond to a great deal, be it Uruguay, Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, South Korea or Philippines. The Turkish State is a brutal military dictatorship, and the power of the reactionary Generals was manifest even during the brief periods of civilian rule. **This has**

been totally ignored by our 'radical' critics, and to talk in terms anti-/pro-Orientalism is to mask these issues. It's totally false for our critics to even imagine that US imperialism has any desire to divulge the brutalities of its client States. The wealth of doublespeak and doublethink used by the US govt in 'reviewing' the human rights performances of El Salvador, Philippines... etc bear witness to this. These realities must be internationalized by our critics, otherwise the risk of losing important 'critical instances' such offered by this film are very great. It should be remembered that the critic who started this discussion actually suggested this film be banned! If I'm accused of having strayed from "Midnight Express" proper (defined in a very narrow sense), I would maintain that such a foray as necessary in a effort to evaluate the categories used in the criticisms. I hope my partial foray has at least brought to the surface some of the pitfalls latent within the cavalier usage of political categories. Concepts such as 'American Imperialism', 'Cultural Imperialism', 'Cultural pattern formation' should not be misused. The careless over-use will result in them being devalued and distorted beyond recognition, ultimately leading to a situation where they are lost to our political lexicon.

In his sketch "Visit to a Prisoner" Ignazio Silone recalls a childhood incident where he laughed at a man who'd been arrested. Recalls Silone "my father looked severely at me, dragged me to my feet by my ear and led me to his room. I'd never seen him so angry at me. 'What have I done wrong?' I asked him, rubbing my injured ear. 'Never make fun of a man who's been arrested! Never!'

Why not?'

'Because he can't defend himself. And because he may be innocent. In any case, because he's unhappy'.

This anecdote from the life of one of the most humane socialists of our time illustrates an aspect almost totally ignored by our critics—Bill Hayes' extential predicament. We don't have to subscribe to Haye's view on the non-existence

of mercy within the Turkish judicial system to reflect upon his predicament. On the contrary a strict Law and Order position is taken.

The politics of institutionalized brutality: This film reveals the brutal mechanisms lying at the very core of the State's coercive apparatus. With films such as these, dealing with issues seldom touched upon by the conventional cinema, we should grasp the rare opportunity offered by generalising the discussion to a wider audience. The administrative, law enforcement, and penal institutions use of torture and in human and degrading forms of punishment as an extension of govt policy exists on an unprecedented scale in the world today. The General Filmgoer is predisposed to think as little as possible of these aspects of present day reality, and when one thinks of the mass of commercial trivia which masquerades as cinema, a film, although not without its inadequacies, which deals with this type of issue is to be commended and certainly not banned!

The need for human championship and warmth is negated within the dehumanized environs of the prisons. The affection Alex lavishes upon his cat gives us a glimpse of the tortured sublimation of emotions which take place—an exquisitely fragile little reservoir of sanity, destroyed by an inmate brutalised beyond recognition, and ultimately destroyed in turn. The homosexual relationships which form, are desperate attempts to maintain a balance within this environment, and judging by the snide comments of some critics, the real human agony as reflected in these tenuous relationships get not the slightest sympathy instead a ridiculously shallow moralistic stance is taken. In the death of the head jailor, killed by a fortuitously located wall peg, the Director seriously flaws the film by surrendering to audience expectation. The audiences' feelings of righteous indignation are assuaged—the bad guys get their due. This is a fatal compromise. In reality, torturers live to play with their grand children on their knee, while their victims are but blotchy

shadows in faded dogeared photographs. Ask the mothers, boyfriends, girlfriends..... of (the disappeared) in Argentina, Turkey, Philippines... or in Jaffna.

I think a fairly valid objection has been raised by those who note that the Director has not stuck closely to the general contours of Bill Hayes's book. If the Director conveys to the audience that the film is based on strictly factual events—as he does by periodizing the different phases, and also at the very end where he very effectively uses stills and a narrator to heighten the "factuality" of Hayes' reunion with his family—then think he should stick to the content of the book. Of course he has to cut corners and conflate events to make the film but the situation is significantly different from that of a film based upon a purely fictional work, where the Director has greater lee-way. If the Director insists on giving the film a factual atmosphere, then he must acknowledge the constraints that he'll have to function under.

The film is well made, although such craftsmanship does not, necessarily counter balance any of the flaws alleged by other critics. After all, the films of Nazi film maker Leni Rieffenthal were exquisite cinematic creations, and their well known unity of form and content give one cause for reflection. This film is a complex entity and big issues like the difference between justice and legality, the nature of institutionalized forms of law and order maintenance, and political understandings between States, are juxtaposed with crises in the lives of individual prisoners who in turn bring contradictory motivational impulses into the picture. Our tools of criticism should be subtle and fine-grained enough to incorporate these different levels of experience. Not a mere abstraction of the so-called content, which is then bludgeoned from various directions, while other aspects of the film and levels of experience are totally ignored.

It is the development of such categories which will enable us to become aware of the innermost experiences looked within the structure of the film, and the meaning of the signs.

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