

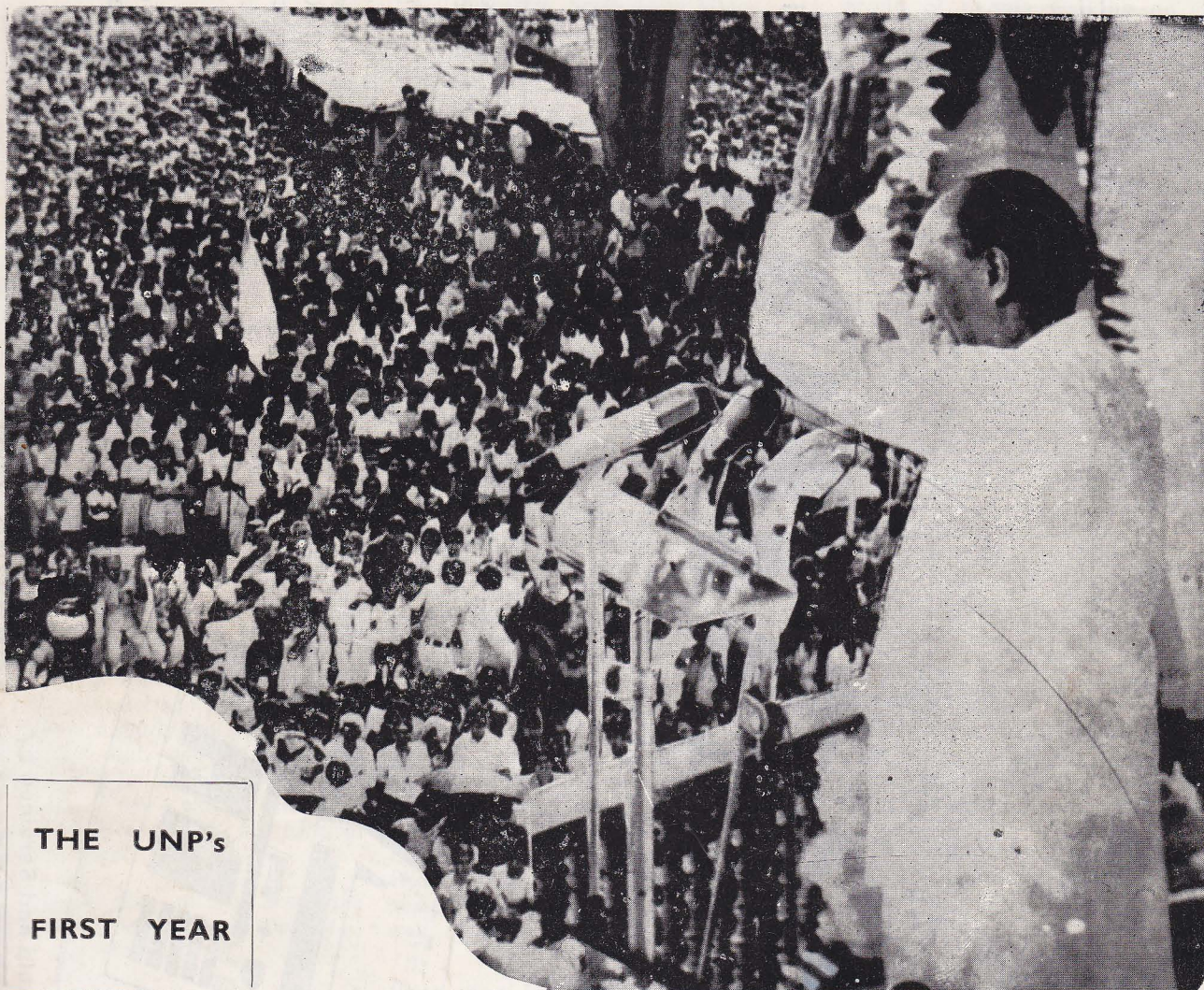
**LANKA**

Vol. I No. 7

August 1, 1978

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# **GUARDIAN**



**THE UNP's**

**FIRST YEAR**

**A. Amirthalingam  
Lalith Athulathmudali  
Gamini Dissanayake**

**Sarath Muttetuwegama**

**Reggie Siriwardena  
R. R. Nalliah**

**A. C. S. Hameed  
Colvin R. de Silva  
Anura Bandaranaike**

**Mervyn de Silva  
Jayantha Somasunderam**

*Also:* How the 'Tiger' movement was born





# LANKA GUARDIAN

Vol. 1 No. 7 August 1, 1978

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## Cover Picture:

FLASHBACK TO 1977 — Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, then Prime Minister, speaks to the nation from the Pathirippuwa (Octagon) in Kandy. — (Picture by courtesy Department of Information).

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## Trends

### Bye, bye to by-elections

When the new constitution replaces the old, we will be saying goodbye to an exciting old ceremony in this highly politicised society—the by-election. If a member dies the vacancy will be filled by a man nominated by the General Secretary of the party which took the seat at the 1977 polls. Likewise, if any member leaves a party he automatically vacates his seat, and the same procedure will be followed. Party bosses will enjoy a new omnipotence. For if a member is sacked, his political career is kaput.

In effect, this means that the party complexion will not be changed—if at all—until 1983.

### Media mayhem

The UNP press and other opposition papers made a favourite target of Lake House under the previous dispensation. Even page proofs of Lake House papers were gaily exhibited by Opposition politicians. Last week the boat was on the other foot. 'Aththa' published an article which had been passed for publication in the 'Dinamina' but had been pulled out at the last moment. The article was a reply by Dr. J. B. Dissanayake, a university lecturer, to a venomous

attack on Martin Wickremasinghe by Lake House Director, S. Manikkaarachchi. Mr. Manikkaarachchi's essay which also castigated Professor Joseph Needham was originally published in the 'Dinamina'. It was re-published in the 'Daily News' with at least one of its ill-mannered passages discreetly excised.

Meanwhile, Lake House hopes to buy a new fleet of buses from abroad. In the days of D. R., the 'Daily News' bus provided public transport while distributing newspapers. Is Lake House back in business? An ex Lake Houseman remarked: "Since Lake House today is carrying so many passengers on its staff, it might as well do it on the public highway."

### Our man in Havana

Plantations Minister M. D. H. (the other Harry) Jayawardena is off to Cuba, but not as some newspapers mistakenly reported, to lead the Sri Lanka delegation to the Youth Festival. The agreeable and affable Harry used to be the butt of many parliamentary wits because he had a habit of dozing off on a drowsy afternoon. "We hope", said a young Castro fan packing his bags for Havana, "M. D. H. doesn't put Castro to sleep". If he does, he will succeed where the CIA has failed 18 times.

## Letters

### Ugly scene

May I bring to your notice an ugly scene which it was my misfortune to witness this afternoon. I was walking towards Dalada Maligawa when I happened to pass a group of people walking on the pavement in a procession escorted by two khaki uniformed officers. This group of men were Remand Prisoners being escorted to the Kandy Remand Prison from the Bogambara Prison. The ugliness of the scene was that these remand prisoners were handcuffed and chained two by two.

Is it not unjust in this "Dharmishta" era to escort handcuffed prisoners through the crowded streets of the town while hundreds of people gaze at them as if they were wild beasts being taken to be tamed. As an ex-prisoner, I sincerely urge you, to mobilize public opinion against this type of insult and indecency which a prisoner is destined to experience in his day to day life.

Peradeniya.

**J. Uyangoda**

### Lenin and 180° turn

In a letter to your journal, Mr. Costain de Vos tries hard to peddle the shop-worn thesis that to a Marxist the end justifies any means.

This is nonsense. Because Marxists always believe that the means determine the end.

Lenin adapted Marxist theory to suit the actual circumstances in Russia and put forward the theory that there need be no "Chinese wall" separating the two revolutions in Russia, and that, "provided the working class gave leadership to the first stage of the revolution, which would be bourgeois, the end of that stage could be the beginning of the second stage, the socialist revolution. That is how it happened in Russia. Where is the 180 degrees turn?"

(Continued on page 7)

## Bank strike's aftermath and changing union mood

**W**as the one-day token strike by the Bank Employees the first shot in a coming confrontation? With the exception of the 'Sun' the general reporting of the event was not only clumsily partisan but extremely ill-informed. A new demand put forward by the Joint Action Committee of the country's major trade unions went completely unnoticed. The Bank Employees Union is a member of this Committee, and the common demand of the 16 federations for an across-the-board 150/- monthly salary increase coincided with the 1 day strike.

These federations are affiliated to the three major opposition parties, the SLFP, LSSP and CP, and include also the CMU, the Maoists, PDP, Trotskyists, and assorted 'new' Left organisations. The membership covers the government service, the corporation and private sector. The other demands are: (a) restoration of the rice ration (b) re-instatement of 'victimised' workers and (c) new collective agreements in the private sector with the Employers Federation.

There have been lightning or wildcat strikes and sporadic stoppages throughout this year but no concerted union action. There are two basic reasons for this:

(a) the mutual hostilities dividing the SLFP and ULF (a legacy of the UF's break-up), and a fragmented Left, in which the 'new' Left is trying to seize or nibble at the Old Left's traditional trade union bases. (The GGSU and Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara's infiltration tactics is a case in point).

(b) The feeling among the older parties that it would be a tactical mistake to engage in a "premature confrontation" with a strong-willed

government. As a result, they are restraining the more adventurous young union bosses and cadres and advocating a policy of probing-and-testing the government until the mass mood is right, and the correct issue comes along i. e. the economic situation.

But pressure from below is also forcing the political parties to re-think tactics with each new situation. The parties cannot be found to trail behind the unions.

The unions feel that the next few months will be crucial. At a recent discussion, their representatives agreed that further subsidy cuts and price increases (flour, sugar, petrol, kerosene) and enhanced fares and charges (transport, electricity, hospitals, postal) will precede the next budget. According to them, this is part of the IMF deal.

The Bank Union claims 90% success in Colombo, and 100% in the provinces. Dutifully, the 'Daily News' published the inevitable picture of work in the bank with the obvious message 'Business as usual'. But the 'Sun' had an interesting headline about strikers being 'struck' by 'unidentified' persons. 20-odd strikers received medical treatment, and four were quite seriously wounded.

Were the assailants "non-strikers" or "outsiders"? "Unidentified" persons broke up picket lines many months ago when clerks were demonstrating against the White paper. The press used phrases like "irate parents" and "innocent passers-by" during the Vidyalandara affair.

One of the best organised unions, the Bank Employees Union, is not affiliated to any party. Representing the upper-crust of

the lower-middle class salariat, the Bank union is fairly conservative, and has no partiality for this or that government. It was locked in a protracted struggle with Dr. N. M. Perera and Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike was its *bete noire* 'Muscle' and storm-trooper' tactics can harden the feelings of 'neutral' unions and prove counter-productive.

## Youth Corps recruitment starts

**T**he National Development Corps (target: 150,000 men between 20 and 40) will get off the ground next month when 100 to 200 'leaders' (officers) will be specially selected for training. The commandant of the new Corps will be Colonel (retd) Denis Hapugalle. A career officer in the regular army Mr. Hapugalle was trained in elite army colleges in U. K. and U. S. Since his retirement, he has been working in the field of family planning.

The Army Commander, Gen. Denis Perera himself is in charge of the special course which has now been planned. The men will get uniforms and some semi-military discipline but no weapons training. Membership is voluntary.

An official spokesman said: "It has some features of National Service in other countries, and some features of the old Land Army, with mistakes of course corrected. While working on development projects on funds provided from the normal votes of the Ministry of Irrigation, they will have in-camp training in technical skills".



# 'UNP's non-alignment vindicated'

— A. C. S. Hameed

(Minister of Foreign Affairs)

**A**t the elections, our party under the leadership of Mr. J. R. Jayewardene pledged itself to a policy of non-alignment in foreign relations and our position has been fully vindicated in the course of this first year" said Mr. A. C. S. Hameed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in an exclusive interview with the Editor "Lanka Guardian" a day before his departure to the non-aligned foreign ministers' meeting in Belgrade.

*Q. You inherited the chairmanship of the movement from the SLFP government. Would you say it is in anyway different?*

A. Ours is strict non-alignment.

*Q. The Janata party which trounced Mrs. Gandhi's Congress as you did Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP promised 'genuine non-alignment'. Is that the same thing? And what do these adjectives imply?*

A. I prefer the term strict non-alignment. There is no need to theorise about these terms. What is important is practice, and this is particularly true in the sphere of foreign policy where events take place in the world outside.

*Q. And what does your actual performance show?*

A. Firstly, we have been so strictly non-aligned that the Jayewardene government and this country have won the regard and respect of all nations, big and small, rich and poor, irrespective of their own policies or outlook. And as a result, we have received and will continue to receive substantial aid from the big powers, western or socialist, US or USSR, China or Japan and many others. Secondly, our non-alignment was tested under more difficult circumstances than we would have anticipated, or Sri Lanka as chairman of the conference had to face in the previous year.

*Q. What sort of special stress or challenge?*

A. Many bilateral disputes between members of the movement. For example, Vietnam and Kampuchea or in the Horn of Africa or more recently in central Africa... As chairman, the slightest deviation from strict non-alignment could have been opened to misinterpretation.

*Q. Could it not be said, on the other hand, that your strict non-alignment was in fact a policy of saying nothing about anything. For instance, the West Asian conflict... I realise it is not a dispute between members but there was a very important event, President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. What is your position?*

A. We stand for a just and lasting solution on the basis of UN and non-aligned summit resolutions which we have endorsed.

*Q. Including the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people?*

A. Of course...definitely.

*Q. Earlier you mentioned bilateral disputes between members of the movement. hasn't that become a critical issue for the non-alignment community right now?*

A. very sensitive problem, yes. You do know the broad principles that all non-alignment states follow...No interference whatsoever in disputes between two members. We listen to their views. We try to understand the conflict... we hope that the dispute will be settled but neither by word nor deed do we try to take sides or intervene... that is not playing safe or maintaining silence...that's the basic practice and convention... but now, as you rightly point out, there is new thinking...should we not have a machinery...some

new lines of approach to resolve these disputes within the movement...some non-aligned members think this is a very important matter at this stage, in the present international context, because otherwise it can lead to interference from outside, from powers outside the movement...some nations are keeping an open mind on this question but all are quite concerned, and as you know there is a Yugoslav initiative which we shall discuss in Belgrade and later Havana.

*Q. It is being said that Cuba is not a non-aligned country and that the conference should not be held in Havana. Any comment?*

A. Then why did 86 non-aligned countries meet in Colombo and decide to hold it in Havana?

*Q. But this is after Cuba is supposed to have helped in the invasion of Zaire, a non-aligned country.*

A. There has been an allegation to that effect, and there has been a flat denial by the Cuban government. Besides, officially speaking, there is only one country, Somalia, from within our ranks that has taken up such a position.

*Q. But don't these allegations and attacks especially on the prospective chairman of the conference weaken the movement? And what is the motive behind these attacks?*

A. More important than speculating about motives is a plain fact. The non-alignment movement is now being taken seriously; as a serious force, by every nation... by those who have been its supporters and sympathisers as well as by those who were critics... Secondly, what is paramount is what we ourselves, the non-aligned think and do...and look at the record. Not one member has left the movement. On the contrary,

each year others are asking for membership at various levels...that is not a sign of weakness but growing strength.

*Q. As you move from Belgrade to Havana, and Sri Lanka hands over the chairmanship, are you satisfied with your stewardship?*

A. As I told you before, our government took over as chairman of the conference in 1977 and since then it has been a very trying year in the sphere of international poli-

tics...you, as a student of foreign affairs, must surely concede that point...and then, in that perspective judge our performance. As far as I am concerned, a policy of strict non-alignment was one of the pledges made by the UNP and its leader, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and one of the matters on which he received an unprecedented mandate...I believe that during this year we have not only kept that pledge but enhanced the country's prestige and brought her substantial benefits... ●

rewards. In fact it had the opposite effect. Groaning under so many hardships, tired of too long a stay in office and eager for a change of regime, the voter was in no mood to be impressed by foreign policy on the grand scale. As a result, the summit became a symbol of extravagance and a rude exhibition of a government's indifference to the citizen's everyday tribulations. Mr. Jayewardene's platform promise not to travel too often abroad showed how easy it was to capitalise on the prevailing popular mood. Questions about Mrs. Bandaranaike's trips abroad are still being asked although the aerial track record of UNP VIP's this past year looks as impressive as Mr. Upali Wijewardene's equestrian enterprises on the English turf.

Anyway, the UNP's "genuine non-alignment" did not mean a sharp break with the past. As in India's case, western analysts who anticipated such a dramatic departure, (meaning a pro-western lunge) have been proved wrong. As with Mr. Desai's policy, Mr. Jayewardene's reveals as many elements of continuity as change. The change is in emphasis and style—a low-key job done by a foreign minister rather than the high-pressure, image-projecting personal diplomat of Mrs. Bandaranaike.

Expectations and predictions of sharp change in foreign policy betray an inability to grasp two basic facts:

(1) The extremely limited foreign policy options open to the under-developed countries.

(2) The varying degrees of relative autonomy (as against effective or total independence) enjoyed by the big and the small, the poor and the poorest, within the non-aligned community.

In the particular case of Sri Lanka, misconceptions arising from a failure to appreciate the above could be doubly misleading if there is a simple attempt to contrast the UF policy of 1970 with the UNP policy 1977-78. The reasons are many:

(a) The main decisions (suspension of relations with Israel,

## UNP — SLFP :

# Change and continuity

by Mervyn de Silva

After the heady days of the spectacular 1976 Colombo summit Sri Lanka's diplomacy has settled on a much quieter course. Like the Janata party in India, the UNP promised 'genuine non-alignment' implying a criticism of SLFP policy which UNP spokesmen wisely chose not to define.

The 1977 pre-election Indian analogy founded largely on the highly visible mother-son parallel had on serious examination, more substance probably in foreign policy than in internal politics.

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who adopted non-alignment in 1956 was very much the Nehruist nationalist. The brilliant Oxford Union debater yearned for a larger forum at a time when the newly independent nations felt a strong psychological need to assert their national identity and collective will. In the immediate Asian context, Ceylon, a small island uninvolved in regional disputes also had obvious uses for her bigger neighbours. There was a ready made role for Bandaranaike as a spokesman for an emerging Asian group and given his lively questing mind, and the intellectual interests and oratorical exhibitionism he had betrayed as undergraduate, it would have been unnatural for him not to seize the inviting opportunity. But he had so little time.

Given her own mental make-up and amazing instinct for power politics, it would have been equally unnatural for Mrs. Bandaranaike not to accept what clearly was an SLFP legacy. An ill-concealed predilection for the spokesman role, an activist foreign policy and an internationalism more realistic than that of the LSSP which had monopolised the platform for 20 years with a noble zeal that deserved a more attainable ideal than the Trotskyist Utopia of World Revolution, became firm features of the SLFP's broad outlook and image. If in the realm of culture, the Kotlawellian UNP seemed a vulgar aberration, the UNP's foreign policy looked like some quaint piece of luggage thoughtlessly left behind by departing Whitehall civil servants.

Though an acquired taste, an assertive foreign policy and its accompanying glamour must have had many attractions to a woman whose cloistered convent education did not prevent her from becoming the world's first woman premier, the non-aligned chairmanship was an achievement second only to the Indo-Ceylon agreement.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Bandaranaike and the SLFP, her crowning glory came too late for political

North Korea and GDR missions at ambassadorial level, recognition of the PRG in South Vietnam etc) were in fact made before the elections and declared in the UF Common program.

(b) Considering the electoral balance of strength, the SLFP was then the major partner but not necessarily the dominant force in policy making process. The Left enjoyed a disproportionate influence. Though there are 'marxists' and 'marxists' and there were many important dissimilarities in the Chilean and Ceylonese situations, the 'Times' London had a point when it noted editorially that there were more avowed marxists in the UF than in Allende's Cabinet of the same year. Partly out of the politician's conventional habit of thinking that what is in the manifesto does not really matter, and partly because articulate anti-Left SLFP'ers like Felix Bandaranaike were not actively involved in the drafting stage, the SLFP acquiesced in this Left-oriented thinking.

(c) As a result, the SLFP/UF's policy posture was more radical and 'left-leaning', as western analysts had it, than its true ideological character.

(d) Under the pressure of unforeseen events and unexpected challenges, the true and rapidly changing character of the SLFP emerged as the party gradually re-asserted its dominant role in the UF.

This process was accelerated by events and developments both political and economic viz. the 1971 insurrection, the most important event of the decade, if not in our post-independence history; the post-1973 world economic crisis and its severe impact on the domestic economy; the SLFP's perception of these events, and its response to them, and the choices external and internal, it identified and adopted; the influence of key pressure groups on the SLFP leadership, especially the new business interests.

(e) The end result was that the SLFP's foreign policy did not end (say Summit 1976) where it started in 1970.

Thus, a comparison between the SLFP's foreign policy profile in 1976/77 and the UNP's performance this past 12 months is far more meaningful. It would show more continuity than discontinuity, although the UNP, never too occupied with foreign policy nor much alive to its importance and intricacies, may not have consciously willed such a smooth transition. The truth is that the UNP's path was prepared by the SLFP from about 1973-74 onwards.

While her left allies let go a shrill, nervous howl about CIA inspiration behind the JVP, Mrs. Bandaranaike turned, almost as a reflex action prompted by her deep-seated ideological convictions, to Britain, India and US (and later Pakistan, USSR, Yugoslavia, and Egypt) to crush what she saw as a security threat from the ultra-Left. The emergency produced a new psychology and style of government which had obviously foreign policy implications. Security came first, the decision-making process became less open (Mr. Subasinghe was to call it much later 'invisible government') and a new apparatus was quietly installed, almost unconsciously. Real authority shifted from the tripartite alliance and even the Cabinet to a coterie of intimate fully trusted advisers one — or two powerful politicians, the court circle, the top bureaucrats and the security experts. One saw the outlines of a bureaucratic-military stratum, gradually usurping power from the Cabinet and the UF. This new apparatus was used by a strong-willed leader for purposes other than security. In a more intensified form and on a tighter time-scale the same phenomenon emerged in India. It isolated the in-group, a cabal, from the party, the party from its coalition partners, the UF from the social forces that had supported it, and the whole government from the people.

Meanwhile business interests close to the SLFP were increasingly agitated over the general direction of budgetary policies, the emphasis on public sector expansion and the Left pressure for wider nationalisation. These interests were an influential segment

of the nascent bourgeoisie (the 'progressive national bourgeoisie' as some SLFP theorists still like to call it) which was nurtured by the import substitution and protectionist policies of the SLFP post-1956, and more so, post-1960, and flourished under party patronage. This potential class, as Samir Amin describes it, had now arrived. With its maturation as an authentic bourgeoisie, its interests and outlook had changed. It looked forward to the next stage of foreign collaboration and overseas markets for 'new' exports. Again, the stage was being set for the IMF-oriented 'export platform' and other policies which the UNP was historically ordained to pursue.

The socialist Finance Minister and the LSSP had done their job in keeping a tight rein on labour and managing, very ably, the (capitalist) crisis. Mrs. Bandaranaike had no further use for him. Or he was not ready to take the new direction when Mrs. Bandaranaike was about to change course.

Returning from West Germany, Mrs. Bandaranaike announced to the party executive 'no more nationalisation'. It was now clear that Dr. Perera's 1974 budget would be his last. An indiscreet remark was inflated into an insult to Mr. Bandaranaike's memory to provide a convenient *casus belli*. Exit the LSSP.

The oil crisis and the post-1973 pressures on the payments position had forced the government not only to court West German and Japanese aid but look for new sources of assistance in the oil-rich Arab countries and Iran.

While Mr. Felix Bandaranaike was drafting the Foreign Investment Guarantee Law, Dr. Seevali Ratwatte then Director Export Promotion was working on the blueprint of the Free Trade Zone. A rear-guard action by the 'Left' within the SLFP-CP, Mrs. Bandaranaike's growing preoccupation with preparations for the summit, and the attacks from the Opposition by the LSSP and masterly diatribes on the multi-nationals by the well-informed Opposition "loner", Mr. Ronnie de Mel (now UNP Finance Minister) helped to



stall these moves. These little ironies, seen in today's perspective, further reinforces the impression of logical extension and continuity between 1976-1978.

On the foreign policy front, these trends found interesting expression. In contrast to Mrs. Gandhi, the Sri Lankan author of the Indian Ocean peace zone whose sentimental attachment to and special relationship with China are established facts, was increasingly muted in her criticism of Diego Garcia. From this, the inclusion of the phrase "super-power hegemonism" in Colombo-prepared draft documents for the summit was an understandable step. So by the 1976 summit, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew was commending Mrs. Bandaranaike's "impeccable credentials" in non-alignment and Washington was praising her "moderate stance".

Some smart UNP'er, probably to the bewilderment of his colleagues, had included the term 'super-power hegemonism' in the UNP manifesto.

Surely Chinese officials must have done their home-work before Mr. Keng Piao's recent visit to Colombo from Pakistan. So, the self-same Mr. Lee, the US and China, have every reason to sing hosannas to UNP non-alignment. They see no fundamental or drastic change; if at all, a shift in the right direction, in more senses than one. Moreover, Peking's attitude to the US, to ASEAN and to governments that can remain outside the Soviet orbit has been fortified this year after the consolidation of the new ruling group in Peking and Dr. Brzezinski's visit.

As the SLFP plans its strategies for the 1980's, it has not only to re-examine the role of the "national bourgeoisie" (an internal issue) but assimilate the self-evident truth that China's attitude to the UNP Government is not going to be determined or seriously affected by the fact that the SLFP is the leading anti-UNP force in Sri Lanka.

(Continued on page 21)

## Economics

### 'We have eradicated fear'

— Laliith Athulathmudali

(Minister of Trade)

**W**e explored with Laliith Athulathmudali, Minister of Trade, some of the problem areas that the Jayewardene Administration has been confronted with in its first year of office. We began by taking up the issue uppermost in the minds of most people: prices.

The Minister cautioned us at the outset that his Ministry did not have an overall control over prices since the co-operatives, the main retail outlet, were not in his hands. He only oversaw the CWE and the State Trading Corporation.

Mr. Athulathmudali accepted that prices of many items had in fact moved up during the past year. But that was not the whole picture. The prices of many essentials like rice, sugar, onions and chillies, and even flour until recently, had either been static or decreased. Even where prices of essentials like milk foods have gone up, it must not be forgotten that they are now freely available. The new parity rate of the rupee has led to the price of imported items going up — but today *the supply position and availability of all items is extremely favourable.*

The rise in the price level sprang basically from two sources, explained the Minister. On the one hand there was the depreciation of the value of the Rupee. But equally important is the availability of more money in the hands of consumers. The favourable tea prices have contributed to this; so has the repatriation of funds from Sri Lankans living overseas. The wage increase granted last November, the enhanced earnings of paddy farmers and rubber plantation workers are also contributory factors. With the exception of paddy farmers, most groups are having money in their

hands, ahead of production, thus giving rise to inflation.

The inflationary trend would have been much more severe pointed out Mr. Athulathmudali, if the government had not introduced measures to tighten money supply.

Has the purchasing power of people declined? If at all, conceded the Minister, it would be of only some groups; like those in the three to six thousand income group. On the other hand the purchasing power of paddy and sugar cane growers, rubber estate workers and those in the lower income groups has improved — so has their choice of goods. We can assume therefore, he summed up, that the standard of living of significant sections of our population is better today than it was a year ago.

We asked Mr. Athulathmudali to what extent was the floating of the Sri Lanka rupee, one of the principal sources of inflation, dictated by foreign lending institutions.

"Requests of course of such a kind are made to the Sri Lanka Government, but there is no compulsion exerted on us. Look; nobody is over-eager to lend us money. And if we had sought to go it alone, without foreign aid, then we would have had to cut all our subsidies in order to finance development. But this would not have been acceptable to our people. It would not have been humane either. It is not a real alternative. And if therefore we are seeking the assistance of foreign lending institutions like the IMF or the IBRD, we must come to terms with them."

Mr. Athulathmudali went on to deal with the charge that the liberalisation of imports has led to the importation of luxury



items, even superfluous ones. Not true he said. Such luxury items account for only 0.5 percent of our total imports. In any case, they would have come in. After all, during seventeen years of import controls, haven't luxury items flowed in, to meet demands exerted by the upper income groups? Where necessary feasible controls are being imposed. Cars over fifteen hundred cc are banned. And the import of luxuries are automatically regulated by the high price and duty that have to be paid for them.

"All countries that have tried the closed economic system such as that which we have had for the last seventeen years have given in to liberalisation."

On the other hand, explained Mr. Athulathmudali, thanks to liberal imports, something like 4,000 new lorries are hitting the roads. Already the transport cost of vegetables from the Uva are falling.

We next dealt with the threat to local industry which liberal imports pose. There are no cases of employees being thrown out due to closing down of plants, assured the Minister. But industrialists are complaining because they can't make the profits that they have grown accustomed to. But there will be situations in which we will have to protect specific industries. And this requires a product by product study. But we will not protect inefficient local industry—that's certain. Nor will there be the kind of blanket protection that our industry enjoyed in the past.

"Sri Lanka has always benefited and prospered on the basis of a vigorous import-export economy", insists Mr. Athulathmudali. "Small markets like ours cannot sustain the kind of seige economy that we have tried to foist on our country in the recent past. It is a strong import-export system that has led to the prosperity of small countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malta, Belgium, Holland and Denmark. Those industries of ours that will survive

and develop, are those that are export oriented—not the import substitution ones. Labour will thus flow into the prospering export industries, say like the garment industry, which is thriving thanks to the absence of import controls which enable liberal imports of equipment and material, and the new exchange rate which enhances export earnings."

We next discussed the lack of response from foreign investors, who stand to benefit from the depreciation of the Rupee. There has to be a time lag allowed for, said the Minister, between the opening of the economy and the inflow of foreign capital. Don't forget that Sri Lanka's status in the estimate of the international business community had deteriorated to a considerable extent. Foreign business may still be nervous.

"In any case, remember, that the more foreign investment we get, the more funds that flow in, the greater the inflationary spiral" continued the Minister. "The challenge is, how fast can we turn investment into goods?"

Would the government abandon the pluralist system in order to provide security for foreign investors?

*No, says the Minister. Far better to be poor and free than live in a police state. When the President was asked whether Sri Lanka would follow South Korea, he had replied no, he hoped South Korea would follow Sri Lanka and protect freedom!*

One of the things that this government has achieved, continued Mr. Athulathmudali, is the complete absence of fear. We have in fact liberated the country from quasi-fascist rule. The degree of political freedom that prevails would have been unimaginable eighteen months ago. We have set a high standard of public life and we are emphasising economic development within a democratic framework. Even anti-social behaviour as it exists has got to be dealt with within the con-

straints of our system of democracy.

Likewise where the minorities are concerned, I am convinced that their position has in fact improved. The new constitution formalises this. The District Ministers scheme will involve them increasingly in the business of administration and the ombudsman will protect them from discrimination.

Finally we raised the question of employment. Every cent that is being saved by reduction of subsidies, assured Mr. Athulathmudali, is being channeled into development. And just as there has been some alleviation of the unemployment problem in the past year he feels confident that there will be substantial improvements in the forthcoming year.

— J. S.

## Letters...

(Continued from page 1)

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was also a product of the times. Lenin decided to hasten slowly, to go back a little to gain a breathing space so that they could advance more swiftly later. Thus, he advanced NEP and gave concessions to the peasants. But that was only for a strictly limited period of one year. Thereafterwards, the socialist advance continued. Where, then, is the 180 degrees turn? A little Lenin is a dangerous thing!

## A Student of Marxism

### From the side lines

I was a member of the Ceylon Communist Party from 1949 till the split occurred between the two communist giants. In high dudgeon I denounced the Soviets as revisionists, social imperialists betrayers of the revolution blah! blah! blah! and formed a group of the pro-China C. P. Wing in Kurunegala. After working actively I realised that things were not what they should be. I resigned from that Party also and watched the whole political arena from its periphery.

From the time the government of "Our Lady" jailed me for "the heinous crime of not committing a crime" I have been a keen student of politics, not a politician. What do I see now? China has completely gone over to their once avowed enemies.

Take the following instances:—  
1. When the Bengalis fought to liberate themselves China supported the aggressors of the Bengalis and gave them logistical support and military hardware. 2. The recent pronouncement of the Chinese Foreign Minister at Kinshasa and the aid to Mobutu is a crime of the greatest magnitude.

"Time" in its issue of 26.6.78 states "After some earlier protests Mobutu now seemed ready to accept a few restrictions on how he spends Zaire's money either because he realises he has little choice this time or because he has already salted away enough cash for a worry-free retirement. An estimate of a Belgian expert ranks Mobutu as the world's second wealthiest man next to the Shah of Iran. 3. In the liberation movement in Angola China supported Dr. Holden Roberto the brother-in-law of Mobutu. 4. China has no criticism of NATO or CENTO.

5. Pakistan's military dictator is "a friend". 6. Even E. M. S. Nambooripad and Jyoti Basu have now denounced China. They broke away from the C. P. I to form the M. L. Party. 7. "Asia Week" in its issue of June 30 states that China is investing heavily in HK, a British colony. Two Peking controlled banks have agreed to back two local companies which are to build a HK 600 M commercial residential complex. 8. Immediately after the death of Chairman Mao his widow became a Capitalist roader. 9. Teng Sio-ping, according to the Chinese Party once a traitor and denounced as such, was rehabilitated and taken back. 10. Lin Piao who was heir-apparent to Chairman Mao ended as a revisionist. 13. The author of "How to be a good Communist", the President of the People's Republic of China, suddenly became a revisionist.

**H. L. Premadasa**  
Attorney-at-Law,  
Kurunegala.

## Press opinion



### The President's message

The President said in his message that every voter has the right to ask, "What have I got from the government I helped to put into power?". The right to ask questions is not the only right that a voter has. He has also the right to protest and struggle. The voter is now asking questions in very plain Sinhala. But those who go in helicopters cannot hear him. Those who travel in cars and jeeps cannot hear him. Nor can he be heard by residing in the President's palace or the Prime Ministerial palace. To hear what the public is saying in pain and vexation about the UNP it voted into power one has to walk in the bazaar or travel in buses. If the President's message issued on the completion of a year by the infamous UNP government needs any introduction we may say it is just big talk.



### A dharmishta year

Maintaining that a "dharmishta" society can be made merely by re-transferring the Pattirippuwa to the sangha or by taking around the Kapilavastu relics is being ridiculous. A society's "dharmishta-ness" is not decided by the ownership of the Pattirippuwa. If people can become dharmishta by worshipping Buddha's relics, then the Buddha's tooth relic the holiest thing for the Buddhists in Sri Lanka and which has been with us for

thousands of years, is alone sufficient. It is difficult for us to see the relationship between making principles of Non-alignment meaningful (assuming for a moment that such a feat has been performed) and "dharmishta-ness". A special feature of making the principles of Non-alignment meaningful appears to be a convivial picture of the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Keng Piao with President Jayewardene. Dharmishta-ness must in fact begin with efforts to keep the people alive. By letting them die and by letting the rich enjoy more and more and even greedily the pleasures of life, by letting the rich live off the poor, why, that's an intolerable dharmishta-ness!



### Punish the thugs

The token strike staged by the bank workers yesterday has been a great success in spite of the thuggery. The strike was not staged to obtain any relief from the present unbearable cost of living but on behalf of 971 comrades who have been dismissed unjustly by the government and to ask the government to re-employ them. Right from the beginning the Bank Union has been appealing to the Finance Minister against this unfair dismissal but the Union has had no reply to its appeals. The island-wide token strike launched by the Union was to expose the silence of the government on this question and tell the people and the authorities concerned of this injustice. If the Finance Minister has the right to dismiss 971 workers and appoint new men to these posts as he pleases then the bank workers have every right to struggle against such low action.



# Trends in Sri Lanka's economy — 1977-78

by Arthika

(Teaches Economics at the  
Sri Lanka University)

Given the peripheral and dependent nature of the Sri Lankan economy in relation to the world economic system it is necessary to view domestic economic trends from a global perspective. The recession which has enveloped the market economies (i. e. the non-socialist economies) of the world, commenced in the mid-sixties, sharply intensified in the seventies and shows no signs of abatement. Within this overall context, the material affluence and welfarist social-democratic politics of the developed countries could be maintained only by transferring the larger share of the economic burden on to the Third World countries. Since historically the very development of the richer nations was contingent upon the under development of the Third World, this imposition of an additional burden has sharply accelerated the downward spiralling process of underdevelopment.

The most important recent development in the West's attempt to formulate and implement a coherent strategy for economic recovery — at the expense of the Third World — is the establishment of the TRILATERAL Commission. Comprising over 200 top members of transnational big business, this body functions as a kind of executive committee to co-ordinate the power elites of the three dominant metropolitan centres i. e. US., Japan and Western Europe. In the past year Sri Lanka and many other LDC's (Less Developed Countries) have been experiencing the manifold effects of the Trilateral Commission's new global strategy which is routed through the IMF, the institutional device for the financial control and manipulation of

the LDC's by the metropolitan centres.

The new strategy presented by the IMF consists of 4 main components.

1. 'Free' trade — abolishing protectionism by lifting tariff barriers and import restrictions.
2. Dismantling social welfarism through sharp cuts in subsidies.
3. Currency devaluation.
4. 'Open door policy' — liberal investment incentives and firm guarantees for transnational capital.

The initial structure of the Sri Lankan economy, the interests of its dominant groups and the nature of the economy's external linkages have led the country's policy planners to opt for a strategy of growth which is heavily dependent on massive injections of aid and capital investment from the West. An inevitable corollary of this has been the acceptance of the terms and conditions imposed by the West. Although this has been a constant feature of Sri Lanka's economic policy under successive governments, particularly since the sixties, the present global crisis and the West's new strategy for recovery has led to the imposition of terms and conditions that are exceedingly harsh. In essence however, the situation over the past year reveals not so much a sharp reversal of or departure from past economic policies and practice, but rather a logical evolution and a change in degree.

The Exchange Rate Reform of November 1977 under which the rupee was 'floated', amounted to a de facto devaluation of large proportions, and fulfilled one of the requirements of the Trilateral IMF package. A direct result of this move has been the fuelling of domestic inflation. Given the external dependency of the Sri

Lankan economy, the country which has experienced increase in the general price level after the 1967 devaluations as well as the implicit devaluation of 1971 now faces the same problem, owing to the direct impact of the price increase in imports. There is also an indirect inflationary effect on domestic products — since the structure of domestic production has a sizable import content. Another indirect result has been a rise in the price of all other complementary goods and services. Thus the Exchange Rate Reform of 1977 has had the overall impact of a substantial upward movement in the general level of prices and double digit inflation continues to beset the consumer. The wild fluctuations of the metropolitan currencies and the capricious performance of the ill-baked dollar has also severely weakened the 'floating' rupee.

A substantial decontrol of foreign trade and a 'liberalization' of imports has also been effected in line with the IMF prescription thereby intensifying the already acute unequal exchange in terms of trade. There has been a huge influx of imported consumer durables and luxury items. The plush cinema and newspaper advertisements and the pavements cluttered with imported trivia are some of the visible manifestations of steady depletion in the country's vital foreign exchange reserves. It must be noted that for 80% of the population which earn less than 400/- monthly and consequently do not possess the requisite purchasing power, the new import policy is of little benefit. The current scheme of decontrolled importation also has adverse effects on small and medium scale domestic production — the massive unemployment currently facing workers in the handloom textile industry, being a case in point.

The combination of devaluation and liberalised trade has resulted in Sri Lanka's exports being made cheaper in foreign markets while

simultaneously resulting in a higher price for their exports to us. In effect, Sri Lanka's purchasing power is reduced, while the import bill is increased, thereby intensifying the phenomenon of unequal exchange.

The traditional means by which previous governments sought to partially insulate the consumer and producer from price increases has been the tax, tariff and subsidy policy. However, the policy of gradually abandoning these which was initiated by the last regime and is being inexorably pursued by the present one—has almost removed this 'cushioning' effect. The partial withdrawal of the rice, sugar, flour and transport subsidies must be taken together with the price rises of dryfish, onions, Astra margarine, fish, meat, vegetables, condensed milk, books, drugs etc, on the open market—all resulting from yet another budgetary feature, namely the de-control of prices which has imposed a heavy burden on the consumer.

While competition with imported items hinders the progress of local manufacturing, as stated earlier, the increase in the price of intermediate investment goods (eg. machinery, spare parts etc.) has also retarded domestic production, while the consequent rise in production costs will continue to be passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Though the reduction in the B. T. T. was a boon to the local businessman, except in the case of a few items like soap, toothpaste, biscuits etc. there was no 'spread effect' beneficial to the mass of consumers. The increase in the guaranteed price of paddy and in the fertilizer subsidy together with the rise in the open market price of rice has not offset the disbenefits accruing to the poorer farmers from the increase of the price of imported inputs as well as other consumer items.

Judging from the 'dose' recently administered on the IMF prescription by the governments of Portugal, Turkey, Egypt, Peru, Tunisia and Sudan, further cut-

backs in subsidies seem to be inevitable in Sri Lanka too in the very near future, with bread, milkfoods, health and educational facilities being the likely areas for pruning—if not amputation. The government continues to retain slight room for manoeuvre thanks to the current tea boom, which, given the cyclical pattern of trade is sure to be temporary.

Apart from abandoning the remaining subsidies, the government has just one more requirement to fulfil for the completion of the Trilateral/IMF strategy. Although the most attractive incentives have been extended to potential foreign investors, and low wage rates are indeed a tempting prospect, there does not as yet exist a suitably stable climate for investment. It is safe to assume that the government will soon move to defuse the Trade Unions, therefore fulfilling a factor in this 'stability' equation. The strategy of export oriented industrialization which is heavily dependent on the West for virtually all factors of production excepting labour, has been urged by 2 sources—foreign and domestic. Since wage rates are extremely low in the periphery (ie the Third World) costs of production are also quite low in relation to the developed countries and therefore the rate of surplus expropriation is consequently higher in the periphery than in the metropolitan centre, making it much more profitable for the multinational corporations to locate their industries in the periphery. Domestically this is also profitable for local big business which, after having matured under import substitution and state aegis, now seeks to shuffle off those selfsame statist forms and gain access to foreign capital, technology and markets.

The convergence in the interest of these external and internal

elite groups found expression in the UF government's White Paper on Foreign Investment' (1972), the proposed Foreign Investment Guarantee Law of the SLFP, (1975) and has finally reached fruition in the present FTZ. The government has chosen to disregard wide-ranging criticism that surplus generated domestically will be drained out via the FTZ and accumulated in the metropolises thus leading to a de-capitalization and further underdevelopment of the country. Critics have likewise asserted that employment generation will be marginal and manifold socio-political-cultural problems would also proliferate in the wake of the FTZ centred pattern of growth.

Just as the structural inequality of the world economic system causes a disproportionately large burden of the global crisis to be transferred on to the Third World countries, the structural inequality within the respective economies of those very countries causes the working populace of the Third World to bear the brunt of this burden. This is how the symbiotically linked local and global elites maintain their living standards in the context of endemic crisis. The trends in Sri Lanka economy bear this out.

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# The making of a President

by Dr. Colvin R. de Silva

*(As the U. F.'s Minister of Constitutional Affairs 1970 — 1975, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva deputy leader of the LSSP, was the principal architect of the 1972 Republican Constitution.)*

**C**omparisons are said to be odious. But comparison of the new constitution which Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and the UNP are systematically putting into shape with the 1972 Constitution which they are replacing is natural and inevitable.

The first and fundamental difference is in respect of the fulcrum of power. The fulcrum has been shifted from the National State Assembly to the President.

The concentration of power in the President in the new set up is enormous. The power of the Prime Minister in the 1972 set up bears no comparison. In fact, the powers of the Prime Minister under the old set up are gathered into the hands of the President under the new—with further additions which betoken the plenitude of the power of the President.

The President is really a power unto-himself and a power over all; and not merely an executive President. He is "the Head of the State, the Head of the Executive and of the Government, and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces". In any of these triune capacities he is not merely "Head"—he is the source of power. For "the executive power of the People including the defence of Sri Lanka shall be exercised by the President of the Republic" and, for the period of his incumbency, he is the irremovable Head of Government and Head of Cabinet. Cabinets may come and go; governments may fall; but the Head of

Government and Head of Cabinet remains; for the incumbent President is uninterruptedly, the Head of Government and Head of Cabinet who automatically slips into the seat of the Head of the incoming Government and of the incoming Cabinet. He chooses the Cabinet; he chooses the ministers including the near-cypher Prime Minister, and appoints them; he allocates the subjects, including allocation unto himself as a Cabinet Minister, though he is not in Parliament but has the right of audience. Just to complete the tale, he also chooses and appoints the Judges of the highest echelons of the courts system.

In relation to a President with this remarkable concentration of power, not only the Prime Minister and the Cabinet but also the NSA and the very electorate to which they are presumed to be intimately subject, stand seriously devalued. The Cabinet in fact falls into utter subordination to the President, even as the initiator of legislation; for, no legislation can be initiated without the consent of the Head of Cabinet. Whoever defies the Head of Cabinet or, for a matter of that, a Cabinet that defies its Head, goes. So, the Prime Minister can fall, the Cabinet can fall, but the Head of Cabinet remains—and forms another Cabinet. As for the NSA, it can bring down the Cabinet and defeat the Government, but it cannot bring down the Head of Cabinet and the Head of Government. That personality—the two Heads are one and the same—continues in both offices. If anybody has to go, it is the NSA that has to go.

There is a brave declaration that "the President shall be responsible to Parliament for the due execution and performance of his powers and functions under the Constitu-

tion" and there is provision for Parliament to remove him. But the power of removal is given only in very narrow conditions; namely, being permanently incapable of performing the functions of his office by reason of mental or physical infirmity or being guilty of (i) intentional violation of the Constitution, (ii) treason, (iii) bribery (iv) misconduct or corruption involving the abuse of the power of his office, or (v) any offence under any written law, involving moral turpitude. And the procedure for the exercise of removal by the NSA is so tortuous that it will be more difficult to impeach a President of Sri Lanka than it is to impeach a President of the United States of America. As the procedure stands—it takes too much space to set out here—we may have to tolerate not only a bad President but also a mad President. The President is well nigh irremovable during his period of incumbency.

The President is really removable only at a Presidential election. In the meantime, the general elections to the NSA do not enable a change of government in its true meaning. The issue in a general election is: who—nowadays, which political party—shall govern. And that, in turn, involves choosing the Head of Government and Cabinet; formerly, the Prime Minister. But now the constitutional, the permanent, and the irremovable Head of Government and Cabinet is the President. And so, the issue may well be only whether you will choose a Parliament to co-operate with the President or to tussle with him at the risk of deadlock and perhaps dissolution of Parliament. In this connection it should be remembered that Parliaments, unlike Presidents, do not always go the full term of six years. So a hostile President and a hostile Parliament may face each other

for quite a time—with the electorate helpless.

Two further fundamental changes require reference—the Referendum and Proportional Representation.

The referendum, which is so much trumpeted as a device which brings the electors into direct participation in the legislative process, is in this constitution very much more a device for weakening parliament and strengthening the President. To begin with, the plenary right of Parliament to act by a two-thirds majority in regard to the Constitution is hedged about in respect of the state and its unitariness, sovereignty and the exercise of sovereignty, Buddhism, the fundamental rights of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the extension of the term of office or duration of Parliament to over six years. In all these cases there must be both a two thirds Parliamentary majority and success at a referendum to follow before the bill becomes law.

Secondly, the President may, in his discretion, go over the head of Parliament to the People even when parliament does not provide the two thirds majority necessary for constitutional change. He can nevertheless carry such a bill into law by referendum if not less than half the members have voted for the bill. So also, in the case of bills requiring only a simple majority. The President may submit them to a referendum if not passed. Any bill whatsoever which is subjected to a referendum becomes law if it receives an absolute majority of the valid votes cast or if approved by not less than one third of the whole number of registered electors. The devaluation of Parliament and of the electorate is plain.

The President can also resort to a "yes" or "no" referendum on any question which in his opinion is of national importance. An absolute majority of the valid votes cast determines the answer.

As to the proportional representation system contemplated—the list system cuts out from the electorate the choice of individuals and the right of individuals to fight a cause and rally electoral support. The grip of the party system and of the major political parties on the electoral process and on Parliament's functions, indeed in the political process generally, is greatly enhanced. As also is the grip of the leaderships on their parties. Crossing the floor is impossible and defection can be political suicide. The major parties are strengthened and the weaker and smaller parties are shut out from Parliament by, in effect, disfranchising those who vote for them unless they total at least one eighth of the votes polled. United Fronts too have no place. The voting itself will be on the highly sophisticated single transferable vote system which, in the context of the illiteracy of more than a quarter of the registered voters, can result in what really is wide disfranchisement—another blow at the universal adult franchise. The hope is to make changes in representation patterns minimal even though voting patterns change widely.

It is a constitution for Presidential dictatorship, dressed partly in parliamentary democratic habiliments. It is a constitution weighted in favour of the party in power and of the big parties generally. The power of the universal adult franchise will stand heavily eroded in the new "democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka" which will no more see "my MP's" and by elections. We must search in Africa for a Presidential equivalent; certainly not in the USA or even in France, as pro-Government propagandists would have it.

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# 'Mahaveli : the last frontier'

— Gamini Dissanayake

(Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways)

Agreeing that the UNP's development effort rests on a tripod (the Accelerated Mahaveli, the Greater Colombo scheme and the FTZ) and that the success of the Mahaveli is vital, the Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake told the *'Lanka Guardian'*: "It can be done and will be done".

Yet, there are many sceptics, including some experts. Mr. Dissanayake replies: "If you mean that there will be problems and difficulties, of course. It is common-sense that a project of this magnitude will produce problems. It is not just a colossal scheme but a complex one, with so many aspects—land, people, water, power, environment and ecology, social and economic... Nowhere in the world can anybody undertake a project on this scale and not face problems... In fact, already we are learning things, identifying problems, learning lessons on the job. But when I say it can be done, I am thinking of finance and technical feasibility. Many years ago when Dr. Gamani Corea asked the World Bank why it recommended a 30-year period, he was told that we did not have the money nor the human resources. Well, I am happy to say that thanks to the confidence of donor countries in the Jayewardena government, we have got the money, and we have the labour, our unemployed youth, and we have the expertise. The foreign engineers are amazed at the skill of our engineers and technical officers, and where necessary we are of course having consultants and foreign engineers".

**Q.** To get back to the question of money, is it not correct that while some countries have pledged support, it is conditional on their own feasibility studies, and this will take time...?

**A.** There seems to be some confusion here. Let me explain. First, the IBRD has accepted the feasibility of the accelerated Mahaveli scheme. Let's call it, overall feasibility. Now under the IBRD umbrella, different donors have identified projects which they can finance. For example, Victoria (Britain), Randenigala (West Germany), Koimale (Sweden), Moragahakanda (Japan) and so on. The first three are firm commitments, with nothing conditional about them. But of course, these governments must get funds from parliament—it is public money, and their parliaments must be totally satisfied. So when the vote is taken up, their parliaments would like to see a feasibility done by their own experts, itemising costs—tunnels, turbines, major canals, expertise etc... I have met the ministers in charge of these matters in most of these countries, and I might add that the expert teams are already here. In fact, the IBRD itself has accepted as consultant, a French firm Sogreah, which was a consultant to us, too...and its report and another from Nedeco, are now with me...you can glance through them and see how detailed they are..."

**Q.** Talking about human resources... the impression given during the first months of the government was that a vast army of unemployed youth would be mobilised, somewhat in the Chinese style... millions of hands at work... now that kind of mobilisation seems easier where there is high motivation, a moral incentive together with a material one... I mean ideological motivation, whether its a little red book or something else... and what people might call regimentation... do you expect that here?"

**A.** Why not? Our youth are no different from the youth in China... at least the youth that

I know, the mass of youth who rallied to put our party in power... they want to work for money, of course, and I take your point about motivation... but we intend to educate them into a sense of participation in a huge effort that will not only benefit them but the nation as well... if you want to call it indoctrination, well all right... education into a sense of national objectives and ideals... also we are going to give them special training in basic skills... at the Hardy Institute for instance, so that they know they have a bright future and also that their toil today will liberate resources which the country can then use for industries, and for building schools, hospitals etc... these six reservoirs represent the last frontier... that is the idea, the mission which will inspire them..."

**Q.** Can you say something of the youth response in actual fact?

**A.** Certainly, on one of our smaller projects where we used about 3000 youths from the National Youth Council, and the adjoining electorates of Mahaiyangana etc, the response was fine... it was contractual labour... we don't mind how many hours of work they do but we pay them by the cubic feet of earth they dig... not only did they acquit themselves well but they freely offered us positive ideas and criticisms... some of these proved very useful... for example the top layer of earth was too hard to crack, and they suggested a ripper... the Mahaveli Board agreed, and agreed to bear the costs... but this was more than compensated for by the output once the machine had done the initial job... in the end, it would be energy-saving and money-saving without in anyway reducing the number of hands at work.

**Q.** Is the proposed National Development Corps an attempt at regimentation?

**A.** An attempt at creating a disciplined youth corps. My officials tell me that the Land Army

(Continued on page 25)

# 'Trail of broken promises'

— Anura Bandaranaike

(2nd MP for Nuwara-Eliya - Maskeliya  
and Chief Organiser of the SLFP  
Youth League)

The United National Party was elected to govern Sri Lanka for six years with an unprecedented majority. One year has already passed. 52 weeks or 365 days is sufficient time to judge or comment on the performance of any Government. Specially the performance of a Government that has come into power on essentially a few basic issues.

Let us go back to the Election campaign of 1977. What did the speakers on UNP platforms promise the people?

They promised a drastic and immediate reduction in the cost of living which was to receive the highest priority. 'Walkingskeletons' 'People eating off dustbins' were common phrases employed on UNP platforms without the slightest hesitation.

In other words, the Cost of Living became the main campaign theme of the UNP followed by the promise of jobs for the unemployed buttressed by 'Job cards' liberally distributed in the villages, as liberal as the promise to bring down the cost of living.

'Nepotism' was to be ended, 8 lbs. of cereal (nutritious at that) were to be freely distributed, a 'new era' was in the offing and they went as far as to even give it a name — 'Dharmishta'.

That word implies amongst many things a fair and just rule where all can live in harmony and happiness filled with unrestricted and unrestrained 'mercy'.

In short an age of 'Milk and honey' (and mercy) was promised. The promise was believed.

But what has happened since then?

The 8 lbs. of cereal (nutritious, of course) is yet to find its way to the shopping bags of the consumer who expected parippu, cow, pea and mung-ata. The Government has forgotten all about the 8 lbs. and the subject is deliberately avoided. It was only an year ago when some gullible consumers rushed to the co ops hoping to get the 8 lbs. only to return with empty bags.

Each and every item required by any housewife has doubled in price. The prices of vegetables, fish, milkfoods, coriander, soap and textiles, only to mention a few, have surpassed the so called 'himalayan heights' of the former regime and now reach sky level. Bread prices were reduced and then increased and has been earmarked for further increase. Whether the increases were via radio, or 'mid-night gazette' or otherwise has faded into insignificance with the rapidity of the increase in bread prices.

The price of a bus ticket has shot up accompanied by the increasing and alarming failure to provide better bus services to the harassed commuters.

The prices of medicines have doubled leaving behind a clear message that all beings should be advised never to fall 'ill'.

The prices of books and magazines have sky rocketed leaving a literate nation with the possibility of turning illiterate.

In short, living has been made increasingly difficult for a vast majority of the people, not to mention about the withdrawal of the rice and sugar rations from more than 50 per cent of the population.

It is better not to imagine the fate of the UNP if they had the courage to mention one word about

the withdrawal of the rice ration before July 21, 1977.

If the economic rationale behind the withdrawal of rations was development, it should have been thought of and explained to the people before the General Elections.

In fact, the UNP argued then, quite persuasively, that all development must await the elimination of hunger and the reduction in the cost of living. After victory was achieved the positions, without even an apology, were swiftly switched.

The Government has sounded a warning that oil prices might rise at the end of 1978 and that will increase the price of nearly everything. We recall vividly the day that the President and his Prime Minister, then in the Opposition, rode to Parliament in a bullock cart to protest against the rise in price of oil. One genuinely wonders whether we would be treated to a similar spectacle at the end of this year. It might be a fitting conclusion to the festive season at year's end.

The promises made yesterday have been forgotten and broken. The hope for a better to-day and a even better to-morrow lie in the far distant horizon and the distance lies far, far away.

The 'Job cards' promising employment to the youth have remained a promise like most other promises, of the present regime. Grandiose statements emanate from the state run press promising jobs. It has over the last one year turned out to be a 'sick joke' perhaps, enjoyed only by those employed in those newspapers.

'Nepotism' can be traced and found in most ministries from the summit down-wards. A 'family-tree' can be abandoned for a 'jungle of family trees' if one



was inclined to publish cartoon books — UNP style.

The day when opponents of the UNP were to be 'embraced and kissed' is not long past. The violent eruptions of hatred and thuggery immediately after the last elections resulted in the burning and looting of thousands of SLFP homes all over the island. SLFP men and women were thrashed and humiliated publicly.

None were 'embraced or kissed.'

Thousands of teachers, corporation employees and workers have been transferred, sacked or intimidated. Their only crime being their support for the SLFP or other opposition parties.

No doubt all this adds flavour to the concept of 'Dharmishta', and gives depth and a new dimension to 'embracing and kissing' political opponents.

Laws, presumably, 'obnoxious' were repealed and challenges made to contradict the statement that Sri Lanka was one of the 'freest' nations in the world. Laws were labelled 'obnoxious' when it applied to foreign exchange offenders and some had even shed 'tears' on their behalf.

The law proscribing the so-called Tamil Liberation 'Tigers' empowers the Minister of Justice to detain any person he thinks is involved in aiding them, for three months or even more. Such a Ministerial decision cannot be questioned in any court of law.

With the introduction of the new constitution we see the end of by-elections. If an MP dies, for example or resigns, the new MP will be named by the General Secretary of the party that MP belonged to. The people of that

constituency cannot choose their MP. Three cheers for parliamentary democracy and for the UNP.

After all, it was the UNP that talked so much about parliamentary democracy.

Civic rights are to be taken away. Yet, in spite of all these laws, the Government claims that we are the freest nation in the world. Either, it is said in ignorance or deceit. Neither sin is quite pardonable in the world of democratic politics.

Every promise has been broken and shattered beyond recognition. Shamelessly the Government at the end of its first year advertises the fact that they will create a 'free and just' society. Freedom and justice for whom while the nation crumbles under the hardships placed upon its people by the UNP Government?

Without any shame the UNP rulers blame the former Government for its omissions. Perhaps this could be done convincingly for 3 or even 6 months. Not for one whole year.

The chief tactic of the UNP is clearly obvious now. They have attempted to divert the minds of the people from the pressing problems with imported goodies, (which less than 5 per cent of the population could afford to buy) and TV, Sacred Relics, Presidential Commissions, Massive Tamashas; Baby trains in Colombo Parks, and Fountains at roundabouts, Bazaars and Pop festivals!

Meanwhile the problems go beyond the control of the Government. The people look on in anger stunned by the trail of broken promises, whilst the rulers march on happily and merrily on the path of no return.

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# Promise and performance

by Sarath Muttetuwegama

(A member of the Politburo of the C. P.)

One year ago the U. N. P. was elected to power with an unprecedented vote of 51% and 4/5 of the representation in parliament.

They were elected by a people who had been promised a relatively high standard of living at low cost; they were elected by the youth who had been promised jobs; they were elected by a people who had been promised a society free of corruption, nepotism and injustice, a free and just "Dharmishta" society.

When the Govt. was formed one year ago, the prestige of the U. N. P. was indeed high. The U. N. P. benefited from other favourable circumstances—export prices had been so good that in 1977 Sri Lanka had a favourable balance of trade for the first time in many years. We had a bumper harvest. Coming after the Indian victory, South Asia was arousing so much curiosity that internationally there was a cautious friendship towards the govt. Sri Lankans employed abroad are remitting 1. million rupees daily back to our country.

Despite all this the U. N. P. emerges from one year of rule with a very sad record. The cost of living has risen to record heights, whilst an imports spree has resulted in all sorts of luxury goods flooding the shops, at prices beyond the reach of the common man. Full employment has proved to be a mirage and the thousands of young people who clung tenaciously to their U. N. P. Membership Cards (which friend and foe alike labelled Job Cards) are sadder if wiser men. The Dharmishta Society has proved to be a sanctimonious term.

Why has the U. N. P. which was swept to power on a wave of

popular support lost this base so soon? The causes are many—and not the least of them are the personal foibles of the U. N. P. leaders. But the fundamental reason lies elsewhere—in the ideological positions that the U. N. P. has.

Despite the use of socialist terminology the U. N. P. is a party that is wedded to capitalism. In its search for solutions to the problems facing the country the U. N. P. has therefore opted for openly capitalist, indeed neo-colonialist, solutions. The two main measures proposed by them are the creation of a Free Trade Zone and the acceleration of the Mahaveli river diversification from thirty years proposed by the previous govt. to six years.

Both entail a very large dependence on foreign capital investment and assistance from the main capitalist lending agencies like the World Bank and the I. M. F.

It is as a result of their dependence—and desire to placate the World Bank etc.—that the U. N. P. succumbed to its demands and devalued the Rupee in Dec. 1977. The extent of the devaluation can be gauged from the fact that the new parity brought the rupee rate below the then prevailing black-market rate.

The consequences are only now being felt. Imported items went up even more than the devaluation demanded. Prices of essentials like medicines, books fertilizer, machinery, clothes etc, have soared sky-high. In addition to the devaluation the World Bank demanded and got from the Sri Lanka Govt. a substantial reduction of consumer subsidies with which the poorer sections of the population had been protected from the high cost of living. The rice ration was withdrawn from nearly 60% of the

population. The recent speeches of the President and the Finance Minister are a revelation "Are we" they ask, "going to have subsidies or development?" The question surely is rhetorical.

Increases in the price of flour, petroleum products, bus & rail fares, postal services etc. could be expected shortly. This is the price that the man in the street will have to pay for loans from the World Bank. Moreover, at the end of one year, the Mahaveli plans are still on the drawing boards, and the type of employment which the scheme could at best create, would not correspond to the job aspirations of the secondary school educated youth who form the bulk of the unemployed. In fact at a conservative estimate, the number of unemployed would top 2 million by 1980.

The consequences of the Free Trade Zone which is still struggling to be born are no less serious. In order to attract the foreign capitalist investors, Sri Lanka has to be more Singaporean than Singapore. A Bill was therefore introduced to create a Greater Colombo Economic Commission. The Constitutional Court rejected certain provisions of this Bill as being unconstitutional. They included a provision to enable investors to have numbered bank accounts which could not be scrutinised even by the Govt.

Repatriation of profits, and a myriad financial concessions to the foreign investor are envisaged, but these would not be sufficient. The would-be investor wants to be sure that the guarantees granted by the present govt. would not be withdrawn by a subsequent one. The foreign investor would also require a compliant working class.

To satisfy the first demand the govt. has embarked upon constitu-



tional reform, which is a complete dismantling of the present constitution. The reform which ranges from the Executive-style President to a complicated system of proportional representation is designed to ensure the continuance of bourgeois parties in power.

To wards the second demand of a controlled working class, the Govt. introduced the now notorious White Paper on Employment Relations which the Trade Unions led by the J. C. T. U. O. resisted so strongly, that the Govt. was forced to relegate it into temporary oblivion.

The Govt. now faces a dilemma: it has to impose its plans for neo-colonialist development in the face of a popular movement which will not accept it. In democratic conditions, resistance will obviously be strong.

History teaches us that a bourgeoisie faced with economic stagnation and mounting popular discontent and opposition, nevertheless determined to preserve the dominance of their class, resorts to increasing authoritarianism.

In the days of the United Front Govt, when faced with the imperative demand for a left-ward turn of the country we heard the insistent cry for a so-called "strong" Govt. for curbs on the working class and on the student population. We saw that the right-wing leaders resort to emergency legislation which made inroads on certain democratic forms and institutions. We heard the demand for the postponement of elections.

Legislatively, we have the "Tiger Bill": containing a provision which enables the President in his discretion to ban any movement which has similar objectives. This

cannot be challenged and could well be used to ban working class parties if they "prove troublesome"

Another Bill was passed to prescribe a minimum jail sentence and to prevent the grant of bail for a wide range of offences. The original draft submitted to Parliament contained a revealing provision. Among the offences in the Schedule was Sec. 120 of the Penal Code, which makes it an offence among other things to "promote ill-will or hostility between subjects." It is interesting to remember that the only occasion on which this section of the law has been used was some years ago when a Trade Unionist was charged in connection with a speech he had made containing reference to the workers and capitalists. The courts acquitted him, and this section has never been used since.

At the moment, a bill to deprive specified persons of their civic rights in consequence of a finding of certain commissions of inquiry is before the legislature and is likely to be enacted into law. More presidential commissions are to follow, and the numbers of those to be deprived of their civic rights could increase.

We have now an Act enabling Parliament to punish contempts of it and its members.

Further restrictions of the democratic process can be seen in the ban on demonstrations and processions—a well-known form of protest in Sri Lanka, which Mr. J. R. Jayewardena has used often. A Reserve Police Force of 15,000 men is to be formed, and recruitment is to be by U. N. P. members.

The Public Sector is being reduced. management of important state corporation ventures like the Thulhiriya Textile Mill is being handed to private contractors, and there is talk of Air Ceylon being handed to a private cartel, private T. V. stations being allowed, and even the C. T. B. being gradually reduced to make room for private operators.

Singapore is held up as a model of development, and Lee Kuan Yew on a recent private visit to Sri Lanka received a welcome which must have surprised even him.

Imports are freely allowed and with the complete elimination of planning, foreign exchange is being frittered away without any regard to priorities. The super-rich and the speculators are on a wild importing spree.

Two parallel developments are therefore evident: determined pursuance of a capitalist, neo-colonialist attempt at development of the economy, and an authoritarian style of govt. which will stifle people's protest.

But, the opposition to the Govt. is growing. The U. N. P. has derived some comfort from the confusion created within the left movement by the number of parties and splinter groups which claimed to speak on behalf of the left. Govt. propaganda high-lighted this feature, but it is clear that with the passage towards more and more dictatorial forms a strong united left will also develop which can and will spear-head the resistance which this will evoke.

### 'Grievances still present'

— A. Amirthalingam  
(Leader of the Opposition)

The first year of the U.N.P.'s return to power has been crowded with momentous happenings. The events during the last one year affecting the Tamil nation have been equally important and far-reaching. Within a month of the General Elections communal violence of an unprecedented nature was unleashed on the Tamil people and thousands of families are yet struggling to rehabilitate themselves. The Tamil people cannot look back upon the year that is coming to a close with any satisfaction. On the contrary, the details of woe that are being unfolded before the Sansoni Commission every day have added to the bitterness and feeling of deep seated grievance of the Tamil people.

The U.N.P. in its election manifesto recognized and enumerated certain problems facing the Tamil people and gave its solemn undertaking to the people that they will find a solution to those problems on the basis of an all party conference. They went to the extent of admitting that the grievances of the Tamil people are of such a nature as to drive them to supporting a demand for secession. It will be pertinent to ask the question to what extent has the U. N. P. government removed these grievances during the last one year.

The government may claim that they have done away with standardisation which was one of the irritants in the body politic. There is no doubt that the government has very cleverly increased the number of students admitted to the universities thereby ensuring that deserving Tamil students are admitted while at the same time ensuring the admission of all Sinhalese students who would have been admitted if the standardisa-

tion system was in operation. When one considers the totality of admissions to the the universities one would find that the same ratio as between the linguistic groups is maintained in admissions this year as under the standardisation scheme. Any how the admission of deserving Tamil students is no doubt an advance.

As against this on the positive side we are faced with a situation where a whole heap of new grievances are added on the negative side. The handling of the refugee problem by the government has left very bitter feelings among the affected Tamil people. The government may say that they are awaiting the findings of the Sansoni Commission for them to take remedial steps. If the government accepts the position that the Police were found wanting at the moment of crisis in August 1977 certain recent appointments to the higher echelons of power in the Police have created grave misgivings in the minds of the Tamil people.

The government has in revising the Constitution completely ignored the will of the Tamil nation as expressed in the General Elections by the mandate they gave the T.U.L.F. No one would have expected the government to agree to a division of the country. But the people who expected an attempt on the part of the government to work out a solution to this problem accepting certain fundamental positions and trying to get all party consensus for such a solution are bitterly disappointed.

I do not want to comment on the Draft Constitution which has not yet come before Parliament. I would only say that the events of the last one year coupled with the half-hearted attempts to meet the situation by the government

have only strengthened the feelings among the Tamil people including those who may have had some doubts on it that the mandate they gave the T.U.L.F. is the one and the only solution to their problem.

### 'Cry for Ealam will recede'

by R. R. Nalliah  
(The author is the U. N. P's District Organiser for Jaffna)

The United National Party emerged out of the ashes of its 1970 defeat to lead the country out of a truly chaotic situation. Its leader Mr. J. R. Jayewardene is today looked upon as the only person who can find sanity in the present situation; a one dedicated to the cause of human freedom he is one who can hold himself acceptable to all the divergent elements in the country. The UNP has under his leadership a grave responsibility to forge national unity as well as make the country alive to fundamental issues. There has to be a final parting of the ways to sectarian and communal politics. This sort of politics has too long been allowed to tarnish the fair name of Sri Lanka. The foresight and statesmanship of our leader will no doubt help to focus light on the prevailing darkness so that the Sinhala and Tamil people will be able to look inwardly for points of reconciliation—an inwardness which by long tradition the Buddhist and Hindu philosophies have achieved. The practical issues confronting the country call for a truly pragmatic approach towards the reconciliation of what are regarded as conflicting group interests.

If the present cleavage between the Sinhala and Tamil people continues and politicians are to



thrive on slogans of separation there will be serious impediments to economic and social growth. Our leader has explained the situation clearly during the debate on the first budget.

The endless clamour for rights destroyed any understanding of duties and only after the UNP came into power the concept of a united nation based on the proper performance of duties by all its citizens has any meaning or application. The very nature of our society has to change and the concept of a united people as understood by the United National Party has to become a reality in the social and economic life of the country.

The UNP will therefore pursue a conscious path to forge unity on the basis of fundamental human rights stemming from the proper performance of duties. The call for rights before the correct performance of duties is like asking the cart to pull the horse. Our duty is to show the people the way to common understanding through the proper performance of duties. In the present situation a way out has to be found. The UNP has a spiritual task which is to give the Tamil people a right type of leadership. The Tamil people too need a broad-based UNP leadership based on national identity in place of sectarian and communal leadership.

In 1958, the Tamil Language Special Provisions Act was enacted and in 1967 regulations were framed under this Act by the UNP Government and they were implemented until the United Front came to power in 1970. In 1970 the United Front Government took up the position that these regulations were ultra vires. Really it was not so. It was legislation made for the Tamil Speaking People and was not limited to the North and the East.

The 1972 Constitution contained a Chapter on fundamental rights and freedoms, but these rights were restricted on several grounds and their incorporation in the constitution served little

or no purpose. The late Leader of the Federal Party wanted certain minimum demands from the Constituent Assembly in 1972 which was refused and this led to the "Ealam" Resolution of the T. U. L. F. in 1974. The UNP Draft Constitution has granted more than what Mr. Chelvanayakam had asked in 1972.

The Draft Constitution preserves the status of Sinhala as the Official Language while making Sinhala and Tamil the National Languages. The status of the Tamil Language will receive constitutional recognition by incorporating it in the constitution. Article 8.2 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of language. The Draft Constitution does not permit restrictions on fundamental rights and the restrictions imposed are very narrow. Article 14 confers the right to seek remedy from the Supreme Court in respect of any infringement of fundamental rights by executive action. The Supreme Court will also be the forum where laws will be tested to decide on their constitutionality. All citizens in future will enjoy one single status and will be called citizens of Sri Lanka. The UNP has restored the freedom, dignity and the rights of the Tamil people which were earlier threatened by the retrograde constitution of 1972. The UNP will ensure that the provisions of the constitution relating to minorities will be implemented in its spirit as well as in its letter. Standardization has been abolished and appointments are being made on merit. The teaching of Tamil to Sinhala students and Sinhalese to Tamil students in schools is a great step forward in forging national unity.

The recommendation made by the Select Committee headed by the Honourable Prime Minister Mr. R. Premadasa that Tamil should be accorded the status of a National Language is of great significance. His Excellency the President, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene assured the Tamils soon after he assumed the office of Prime Minister that he would endeavour to satisfy the aspirations and hopes

of the Tamil people and with great courage and vision he has done it. The T. U. L. F. is now co-operating with the Government and is acting as a responsible Opposition. With the many concessions granted to Tamils the cry for "Ealam" will soon recede.

## **'Liberation Tigers' and the youth movement in the North**

The "Tamil Liberation Tiger Movement" which created widespread controversy in recent weeks is receding temporarily, at least from the front pages of the newspapers. Vamedaven and some others, described by the police as leaders of the movement, are now in Police custody. We do not propose in this article either to disclose items of sensational information or discuss its legality. We shall look at this "Tiger" saga only as a political problem with deep-going roots. This movement or the recent deaths in the north are not isolated acts. All this is the political expression of a deep-seated and long term national crisis.

First of all we must be mindful of the tactics of the capitalist class which seek to dissolve incipient anti-imperialist forces by arousing racialist, religious, caste and regionalist tendencies. Only then can we consider this problem scientifically. Today a substantial section in the north is moving towards the slogan of a "Separate State". Why has such an orientation taken place?

To get the answer we must consider the problem critically and unemotionally. It is important to keep in mind that the demand of "Tamil Ealam" is of very recent origin. It was after 1972 that the Federal Party and the Tamil Congress once called the Tamil United Front and now called the Tamil United Liber-

ation Front officially approved this demand. Some think that this was only an election slogan. But to us it appears as the political expression of a cry raised by sections of oppressed Tamil middle-class youth.

The organisation known as the "Liberation Tigers" has openly said that their aim is to establish a separate state, encompassing the northern and eastern provinces. It is also clear that the hub of this demand is the Jaffna peninsula. Also the main motive force of the TULF's massive electoral triumph was the northern youth. What is clear to an observer of political development in this part of the country, is that though the separate state demand was the TULF's sole election slogan it originated outside the front. How did "Tamil Ealam", which was the butt of not only criticism but also ridicule as late as 1970, become its main slogan?

To use the words of a Tamil youth, what influenced the course of Tamil politics before 1970 and after was "youth power". It is true that after the "Sinhala Only" Bill in 1956 some politicians argued for a separate state. But those who fell into this category like Mr. C. Suntheralingam (a close friend of Mr. D. S. Senanayake and an ex-Minister) were rejected by the Tamil people.

Even after that the Tamil self-rule party which FP rebel ex-Kayts MP V. Navaratnam formed could not win a single seat at the 1970 General Election. A few months before the election, the people of Kayts invited Mr. Navaratnam and Mr. Amirthalingam now the Leader of the Opposition for a public debate. In that election Mr. Navaratnam lost his seat. This makes it clear that even in 1970 the Tamil people rejected the demand for a separate state. Though substantially alienated from its people as a partner of the UNP the FP could win a considerable number of seats defeating the separatist cry.

Today things are very different indeed. With the "separate state" demand the Tamil youth have

come to dominate the northern political scene. Though the majority of Tamil leaders are the same ones who were there in 1970, today they mouth a different cry. Their utterances today are the echoes of the war cries of the youth, rejecting Mr. Chelvanayakam's Gandhian pacifism. The angry youth who stand with clenched fists and flaming eyes behind the leadership, have had enormous influence on TULF politics.

The popular concept of the northern young male until recently, was that of a book-worm. A political activism operating outside party orbits was first seen in the north when in the late 60's students of some leading Jaffna schools paraded the streets shouting anti-Government slogans. During this period the FP too was a party to the Government which was a coalition of seven partners. The main slogan at these demonstrations was racial inequalities. What sparked them off in the main was rapidly growing unemployment among educated youth. It was their contention that the Government was discriminating against them when providing employment. They also raised the slogan of a separate state for the Tamils. But this movement collapsed soon in the absence of firm political leadership. A section joined the FP while other sections joined the self-rule party or remained on their own.

The post-1970 developments are very important if we are to understand the rise of youth. Actually the politics of this period everywhere in the country clearly demonstrates both the power as well as the limitations of the youth. It was with great expectations that youth everywhere looked up to the UF which scored its massive victory on the promise of ushering in socialism. But soon youths on both sides of the Elephant Pass realised that this was a mirage.

The media-wise standardisation introduced by Education Minister Mahmud appeared to the northern youth as a big blow aimed at them. This greatly influenced the Jaffna youth who felt that hundreds of

eligible students had been shut out. The Jaffna man imprisoned by such unfriendly factors as the barren land, unsatisfactory climatic conditions and the pressure on the land caused by large families, had always looked up to education and state sector employment as the sole means of social mobility and security. In fact the Jaffna economy has been called a "money-order economy" because of this. The bulk of Advanced Level students are the offspring of middle-level peasants, teachers, clerks and other middle-class elements. The offspring of the upper middle-class and the rich however are mainly educated in Colombo. When they fail to gain entrance into universities here they go to India, Europe or the USA. So it was the northern lower middle classes who were worst hit by Mr. Mahmud's standardisation. Closing the avenues of education to this class was tantamount to shutting the door of social progress and economic security on them. The threat of unemployment haunted them starkly. The UF made some kind of effort to justify the scheme but for the youth the future before them was dark and empty.

The agitation against standardisation spread like wild fire in the north. Students in higher forms in almost all schools in the peninsula took to the streets. Residents of Jaffna had never before seen a demonstration such as the one in which thousands of young men and women defied police orders and walked from Kokuvil to Jaffna. The main target of attack of this anti-standardisation demonstration was the Education Minister. At the end of the demonstration an effigy of Mr. Mahmud was burnt at the Town Hall grounds. This demonstration was led by students and unemployed graduates. Their conduct showed that they were not enamoured of political parties or leaders. Though several FP leaders tried to address the rally which followed, they were not allowed to do so.

As the anti-standardisation campaign burgeoned into a massive youth movement led by some unemployed graduates the cry of



"Tamil Ealam" too began to be raised. It was also through this movement that the body known as "manavar peruvai" (students front) started spreading in the north and the east.

During the UF regime bodies calling themselves SLFP branches began mushrooming in the Tamil areas. Two TC members joined the Government. But it cannot be said that the SLFP received any deep-going support. In late 1970 and early 1971 some provincial SLFPers were threatened with violence. Since they asked for Police protection from their political opponents they became further alienated from the people. In the name of keeping the peace the UF Government strengthened the Police particularly in Jaffna. By mid-1971 several Tamil youths were in jail.

The insurrection ended by killing hundreds of young men and women, jailing thousands and bringing in its wake an unprecedented depression. And in the ruthless and barbarous repression, for the first time the Tamil youth met radical Sinhala youth under one roof in jail. As a result several militant Tamil youths became inclined to the left. Their slogan of "Tamil Ealam" now became "Socialist Tamil Ealam".

In the meantime by launching a campaign against the UF Government's educational policy its strengthening of the police and the jailing of the youth the FP masterfully washed their hands which had become soiled by association with the UNP. It was also intelligent enough to avoid any contradictions between itself and the militant youth. It was the Republican Constitution passed in 1972 which brought these two sections together almost removing any gap which might have existed. The youth were in full agreement with the FP argument that this constitution did not provide any security to the minorities or official recognition to the Tamils.

Both the TULF (FP and TC) as well as the student's front expressed their strong opposition to the

constitution and called upon the Tamil people to observe Republic Day as one of mourning. Mr. Chelvanayakam quit his K.K.S. seat and challenged the Government to contest him on the issue. Shortly after this resignation the TUF officially declared that they stood for a separate state. The young activists considered this a great victory. "Students front" cadres joined the TUF which was called the TULF after 1975.

It was also the pressures of the young leadership released from prison, which inspired the slogan of a "Separate Socialist Tamil State" now raised by the TULF composed of the FP and the TC until 1970 the bosom pals of the UNP and big capitalism. It is the vacuity of the course pursued by them for several decades which the TULF leaders are now trying

to hide with the words "socialism" and "liberation".

The TULF has been able to change its policies from time to time and keep the youth within their orbit mainly because of the incorrect strategy of the Old Left on the minority question. There is no Old Left in Tamil areas today. The Tamils had rejected them long before they were physically chased out of Jaffna recently. Though they wax eloquent today, the JVP's shameless racist record cannot also be suppressed. The Tamil youth are a section who can and must be won over as partners of the struggle against imperialism and big capitalism. That is one of the tasks of our time.

—Translated from the "Desha Vimukthi"

(Passed by the Competent Authority)

## Change and . . . .

(Continued from page 6)

To sum up, the internal trends (1975-77) and the changes in the external environment were moving towards a certain congruence which in turn supported continuity rather than disjuncture in Sri Lanka's foreign policy.

The UNP's inherited outlook and the development strategy the 'new' UNP has consciously chosen prompted some observers to anticipate a sharp change. Perhaps we would join ASEAN, if that was made possible. Or, more likely, there would be ASEANIZATION of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. This could still happen after Sri Lanka is no more chairman of the non-aligned conference. Why didn't it happen this year?

(a) The UNP's traditional indifference to foreign affairs and its long held view that foreign policy is a costly distraction for a small country have been a brake on active diplomacy.

Out of power for so long, it has been out of touch with even the unwritten rules and rhetoric of the Third World. Hence the grotesque lapse of its Ambassador-designate to the UN who stopped over (of all places) Seoul on his

way to be the chairman of the non-aligned Co-ordinating Bureau in New York to announce to the world that South Korea was a fine model for Sri Lanka.

(b) The collective obligations of the non-aligned and the institutional role of chairman have proved constraints on any efforts to breakaway from the inherited policy or any sudden Lee-ward lurch. Mr. Athulathmudalali's address at UNCTAD shows that the chairmanship is proving an education in itself.

(c) The network of bilateral and economic relationships cannot be easily dismantled. This is true of our relations with India on the one hand, and our economic pact with China on the other. In any case, a study of Mr. Jayewardene's foreign policy speeches over the past two decades will show that a firm friendship with India is a central tenet in his thinking. Pakistan and Iraq are big tea buyers and trade with the socialist bloc has increased ten-fold in the 1970's.

Our policy will take shape according to the imperatives of the new economic strategy as Sri Lanka moves to the next phase of capitalist development, "modern" to its supporters, "neo-colonial" to its critics.

## Where has all the professionalism gone?

by Jayantha Somasunderam

The J.R. Jayewardene Administration celebrates its first year in office. This is an appropriate time therefore to review the state of the media during the last year. The print media is of great significance in a country that has a high literacy rate, wide circulation of newspapers and substantial readership figures.

The electronic media is not without its importance, but it serves more as an entertainment media than a news media. In time, with the introduction of television, provided sets are readily available, the electronic media may become important as a source of news and opinion. But today the newspaper retains its role as the primary source of information.

It is unfortunate that the kind of ownership and control that our national press was subjected to has never been very encouraging. Until the United Front Government of Mrs. Bandaranaike took office, control of the press had been largely the prerogative of a few families and parochial groups.

In attempting to break the family monopoly that stifled the national press, the Sirima Bandaranaike Government created further problems. Promises regarding the diffusion of ownership and professional control of the press were never really met. Instead, that section of the press that the state took responsibility for, came under a new type of party bureaucracy that had emerged on the political scene.

Press reform was therefore high on the cards when the J. R. Jayewardene Administration was swept to power last July. The UNP itself made extravagant promises, they even promised to put opposition representatives on the SLBC. Most of these promises have since gone by the board. A "free press" has proved a hollow promise.

Worse, The controlled press displays a uniform dullness unredeemed by any touch of professional skill. Where have all the journalists gone? Both *Lake House* and *Times* had inauspicious beginnings. At *Lake House* the "Green Guards" took over no sooner the new Government assumed office. Those suspected of having connections with the previous regime were either summarily thrown out or subjected to the green litmus test: they had to prove their allegiance to the grand old party by paying homage to a picture of D. R. Wijewardene. Some of the *Lake House* employees were then daubed in green paint — Red Indian style. A lady editor who was man-handled by the goons ended up in hospital.

Once the sadistic games were over, the dust settled down a bit and things came back to normal, at least where life and limb was concerned, at *Lake House*. But the dislocation suffered by the newspapers, through dismissal of editorial staff, arbitrary transfers and the placing of people in coventry, seems to continue. The papers have become dull and colourless. Heavy doses of advertising which must be boosting finances, has had no comparable effect on the quality of the papers,

The action then moved over to the *Times*. This, our oldest newspaper group, was nationalised overnight and brought under the control of one of the men-behind-the-scenes of the UNP.

Both *Lake House* and *Times* have during the past year indulged in the most embarrassing sychopancy. A cabinet minister has but to blow his nose and its there on the front page of the big dailies. It would appear that ministers are vying with one another to hit the headlines.

The kind of coverage that government personalities and their accomplishments get only fills readers with contempt and disgust. It is surprising that the UNP which saw for itself the damage that a fawning press can do, has fallen into the self-same trap.

The *Sun* group of newspapers has yet to forgive Mrs. Bandaranaike for what she did to them in 1974. But at least they keep their columns open to diverse opinion, and give fair coverage of news. But it is said that *The Virakesari* is the only real newspaper in Sri Lanka today.

A heavy burden has therefore been thrown on the periodical press, not merely in order to review events and provide contrary opinions, but even to report straight news. How many people who read the national press are aware that the textile mills at Tulhiriya and Pugoda are crippled by strikes. Such news never makes the front page.

The task remains therefore to keep alive as many journals as possible, in all three languages, in order to give space to all competing opinions. It is upto them to probe and uncover controversies. Their task is to keep an ear to the ground.



# Back to orthodoxy

by Reggie Siriwardena

When the Ministry of Education under the last regime decided to replace the A-Level examination with the HNCE, I was one of the members of a committee which produced an anthology of 'literature in English', *Reading with Understanding*, as the basis of a new syllabus. Readers of the *Lanka Guardian* will perhaps remember the outraged protests from academically conservative dons, teachers and parents which greeted our anthology. What? No Shakespeare! And it was made clear to us that we had compounded this offence, bad as it was, by another even more heinous: we had actually included pop singers Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger and John Lennon and dared to call their stuff literature!

I was reminded of these battles not-so-long-ago when, glancing through a recent issue of *The Listener*, I saw a report of a BBC talk by Christopher Ricks titled *Bob Dylan and the Language that he Used*, in which the speaker mentioned Dylan in the same breath with Dickens and even Shakespeare. Those who were horrified by the inclusion of Dylan in our anthology will leap to the conclusion that Christopher Ricks must be some beatnik or way-out literary eccentric. Not at all. His academic distinction is beyond anything they could pretend to. Not only is he Professor of English at Cambridge University, he is the author of one of the most original modern studies of Milton's poetry, and the editor of the most scholarly contemporary edition of Tennyson. This is what Professor Ricks says about Bob Dylan:

'He belongs with the artists who've looked for the widest possible constituency: let's say, Dickens in the 19th century, with an appeal to everybody, or, even more important than Dickens, Shakespeare.

'He's not what they will write and tell you he is, if you talk about him on the BBC — "an obscene howling hobo." That's the sort of letter that you get. He's not that. The idea that he isn't a poet is wrong. He isn't a poet, in that he's got more than just the words to use; but he is, I think, a conscious artist.'

There follows a discussion of *Blowing in the Wind*, the song of Dylan which we used in *Reading with Understanding*. I won't quote this part of Professor Ricks's talk because I am against supplying notes for students (a practice that *Reading with Understanding* was meant to discourage). But I hope that those who refused to believe that *Blowing in the Wind* was poetry when A. J. Gunawardena, Ranjith Goonewardene, Jeanne Moonesinghe and Reggie Siriwardena, said so will take a second look at it now that it has the imprimatur of the Professor of English at Cambridge University.

But perhaps they won't bother. For our little anthology is one of the casualties of the post-1977 educational counter-revolution. Or rather, it has survived, but only at the price of being vivisected. In the new A-Level syllabus, students have a choice, in the verse selections from *Reading with Understanding* or of an anthology of English verse published earlier by the Ministry; in prose, of the prose selections from *Reading with Understanding* or of an anthology of contemporary short stories. All those teachers who were embarrassed by the fact that they understood Bob Dylan less than their pupils will now sigh with relief at being able to go back to good old Campion and Donne. I can almost hear the note being dictated: 'the elaboration of the imagery in *Cherry-Ripe* is

characteristic of the Elizabethan lyric...'

But who, I wonder, was the phillistine who chopped our anthology into halves for the new syllabus, leaving it open to schools to do only the prose or the verse (or of course, both or nothing at all)? If he had taken the trouble even to skim through the book first, he should have realised that this wasn't the kind of book that could be divided in that way. *Reading with Understanding* isn't compiled on the basis of a division between prose and verse as different literary forms. It is arranged thematically, in relation to various aspects of human experience, and one of the purposes of the anthology is to break down the distinction between prose and verse, and even that between creative literature and other kinds of good writing.

Dividing *Reading with Understanding* into separate halves (only one of which some classes may do) is to destroy the thematic unity of the book. For instance, in the very first section *Family*, our intention was to present various aspects of family relationships — both the tensions as well as the sustaining and life-giving qualities of the relationships. The fact that these experiences are communicated, some in prose and some in verse, is much less important than their human content. If students read only the prose or only the verse, they lose part of the experience.

The mutilation of *Reading with Understanding* in the new syllabus has obviously been done by somebody who approaches the book with an old-style 'practical criticism' fixation and doesn't understand or sympathise with what we were trying to do. Rather than have the book torn in two, I would rather say, like Grusha in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, 'Let it go! Let's drop the whole book!'

But quite apart from the parental feelings about the anthology that I share with the other compilers, I have a more important reason for drawing attention to this ques-

tion. I grant that the fate of the HNCE English syllabus isn't of earth-shaking importance — there are only a few hundred students doing English, anyway. But what has happened in English is representative of the general educational mish-mash consequent on the switch-back from HNCE to A-Level, which in other subjects affects many thousands of students.

Because students have been doing the HNCE syllabuses a compromise, in externals, has become necessary, so there is a show of preserving some elements from the previous syllabuses. But the heart has been taken out of whatever educational innovations there were: the general line is back to academic orthodoxy. When the last administration adopted the HNCE reforms, one criticism was that not enough people had been consulted before the changes were made. How many are being consulted now, and who are they?

Another criticism of the HNCE used to be that it didn't provide a sufficient equipment for University courses for those students who entered the campuses. This criticism pre-supposes that existing University courses are all that they should be, whereas in many subjects University curricula themselves need to be modernised and reformed. In my own subject, English, the HNCE innovations had led to re-thinking on some campuses. For instance, the Colombo Campus adopted for its Certificate course a syllabus which explicitly made reference to the HNCE syllabus as a reason for change, while the Jaffna Campus was engaged in working out a new degree syllabus based on the concept of 'literature in English' when the campus was disrupted by the communal rioting of last year. Now this kind of experimentation and innovation on the campuses themselves may be halted by the A-Level counter-revolution.

## Educational changes

By V. P. Vittachi

Mr. E. H. de Alwis writes in a light, elegant, skimming style which rather puts me in mind of a hovercraft which covers a lot of territory while rarely touching ground. While I admire his skill I confess I find it difficult to understand exactly what he is saying. He writes: what we mean by welfarism will ensure, not at the expense of development but as a necessary consequence of it, the equitable distribution of wealth and the control of the means of production. Assuming for the sake of argument that this is an acceptable definition of welfarism, it certainly is not what Mr. de Alwis meant by it when he first charged the government with aiming to dismantle the 'welfare system' and queried the 'conventional wisdom of the World Bank and the IMF' in regarding welfarism as a serious impediment to economic growth. In the first sense welfarism precedes economic growth, in the second sense it is a consequence of it. I myself firmly believe in the truth of Shaw's proposition that no decent and civilised human society can be built except on the basis of an equitable distribution of wealth. Wealth, however, must be created before you can distribute it (which appears to be what Mr. de Alwis is now saying), but as to whether this can be achieved by 'the control of the means of production' (meaning no doubt State control) is seriously in doubt. One has only to look at the record of our public sector enterprises.

Though Mr. de Alwis complained that the cost of education, not its quality, seemed to be the Minister's paramount consideration he now concedes that what the country is getting in return for its money spent on education is a 'very pertinent question'. He, however, faults the Minister for not appointing a commission or committee to advise him whether 'the educational returns' are commensurate with 'the educa-

tional outlay' and to suggest 'remedial measures'. I myself do not share Mr. de Alwis's faith in the efficacy of commissions and committees. I think the Minister is as competent as any hodge-podge committee to figure out remedial measures. Mr. de Alwis goes on to say that such a committee could also suggest 'other measures to improve the quality of education irrespective of cost'. This takes us back again to the money-is-no-object Cloud-cuckoo-land.

Mr. de Alwis thinks English, if at all used, should be the only medium for higher education and should be confined to the intelligent section of the student population. He thinks trying to teach English to everybody would only 'dissipate the resources for teaching English'. This to me seems to be the most efficacious way of achieving the very elitism which Mr. de Alwis has been decrying.

Mr. de Alwis considers a knuckle-duster found among a student's effects an anti-climax. It is obvious that he has not seen (as I have) the effects of a knuckle-duster used with efficiency on a human face. He is no doubt aware that what he calls 'an occasional outburst of resentment' includes homicide, grievous hurt, assault with deadly weapons, sexual violence on University teachers, and sexual violence on freshmen and freshwomen.

Mr. de Alwis himself admits that halls of residence meant for one or two hundred are packed with thousands and that University learning has degenerated into taking down notes. This is precisely why the University today is incapable of providing the environment for self-motivated learning which is the point I have been making all along.



## Kovoor and the kumbha mela

I did not think Dr. Kovoor would resort to the politician's subterfuge of blandly denying what he said. He takes very high ground: "The two quotations cited within inverted commas, claiming that they are from one of my letters to the press, are both false. He was deliberately trying to make readers believe that I have stated that mass killing of human beings takes place as religious ritual at Kumbha Mela." That is as clear and explicit a denial as he could have made would you not say?

Now here is the relevant portion of the letter from Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor published in the *Ceylon Daily News* of 16 November 1976: "Can Mr. Bandara with his 'much learning' enlighten me about the symbolism and truth of the following religious rituals? 1. The burning alive of Hindu women on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands. 2. The sacrificing of human beings and animals to please the gods. 3. The mass killing of Hindus once in eleven years during the Kumbha Mela festival at the confluence of the rivers Jumna, Ganges and the fictitious 'heavenly' river Sarasvathi. Like the Hindus, the Christians too get rid of their 'original sin' by the ritual of external wash known as baptism or internal wash known as holy mass. But they are not so dangerous as the Hindu ritual at Allahabad during the Kumbha Mela! I must confess that with my 'little learning' I cannot understand the 'true meaning' of these murderous religious rituals.

You see there is nary a mention (still less an emphasis) of devotees trampled to death in a mad rush. Shaw once wrote: "My way of joking is to tell the truth — it's the funniest joke in the world." While I have no wish to accuse Dr. Kovoor of barefaced fibbing I can say he certainly is no joker in the Shavian sense.

### And now the double dactyl

First there was the limerick. Next came the cleriheh invented by E. Clerihew Bently. And now, in the same genre, comes the double dactyl:

Higgledy-piggledy  
Heliogabalus  
Lurched through the forum, his  
Bottom a-wag

Vainly pretending to  
Gynaecological  
Problems beneath his Imperial drag.

Clippety-cloppety  
Dorian Williams  
Seldom if ever to  
Anguish succumb

Save when the Royals make  
Anticlimactical  
Cock-ups at jump-orfs and  
Land on their bums.

Invented by Anthony Hecht and John Hollander the double dactyl has strict rules. 1. It consists of two quatrains the last lines (only) of which rhyme. 2. All lines except the rhyming ones are of two dactyls. 3. The first line is always a nonsense line e.g. higgledy-piggledy, jiggery-pokery etc. 4. The second line is a double dactylic name e.g. Vladimir Nabokov, Marcus Aurelius, Josephine Bonaparte. If the name one wants to use is not double dactylic one must use Procrustean methods to make it so. 5. Somewhere in the second stanza one of the double dactylic lines consists of a single word. 6. The subject matter as in the limerick and the cleriheh must be of a historical / biographical / critical nature. It is not really difficult when you know how. Let's try some:

Folkery-fakery  
Gert-Alice Toklas-Stein  
When asked to explain her  
Verse and her prose

Smiled a coy smile and most  
Infuriatingly  
Just said a rose is a  
Rose is a rose.

Higgledy-piggledy  
Zbigniew-Bizesinski  
Went to the Great Wall and  
Made a big speech

Premeditatedly  
Aiming to widen the  
Sino-Soviet diplomatic breach.

Jiggery-pokery  
Colvin R de Silva  
Wrote us a Constitution for all time

But JR changed the thing  
Unrecognisably  
Claiming it had neither  
Reason nor rhyme.

Ringaling-dingaling  
Bernardo So-y-sa  
Passed off as statesman and  
Sage rolled in one

But I am sad to relate  
Late that his claim was a  
Terminological  
Imprecision.

### Mahaweli...

(Continued from page 13)

produced the best work in the period 1965-70. Team work, normally does. Men who are trained together in the same way, work, eat, sleep and sing together do attack a given job more efficiently.

Q. The target figure quoted in the press was 150,000 but sometime back the Mahaweli was expected to provide anything between 500,000 to a million jobs, wasn't it?

A. The Youth Corps is not the total employment target. The accelerated scheme will have so many spin-off effects. We see it already. 118,000 acres will be covered by the Maduru Oya scheme... a larger area than Minneriya, Polonnaruwa and Medirigaya... private enterprise has moved in... little shops have come up... as the jungle is being cleared, trucks and bulldozers... workshops, repair shops... small canteens... stores... later there will be hospitals and schools, cinemas... co-ops... a whole new economy is taking shape, and there is a sense of bustling growth... the multiplier effect of all that will be tremendous...

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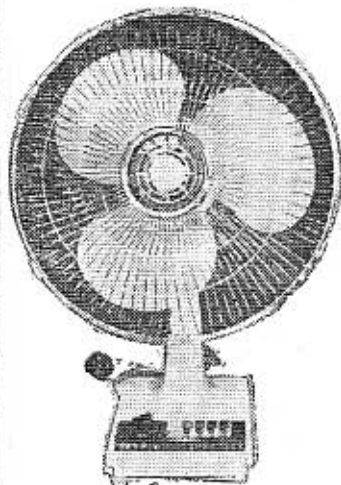
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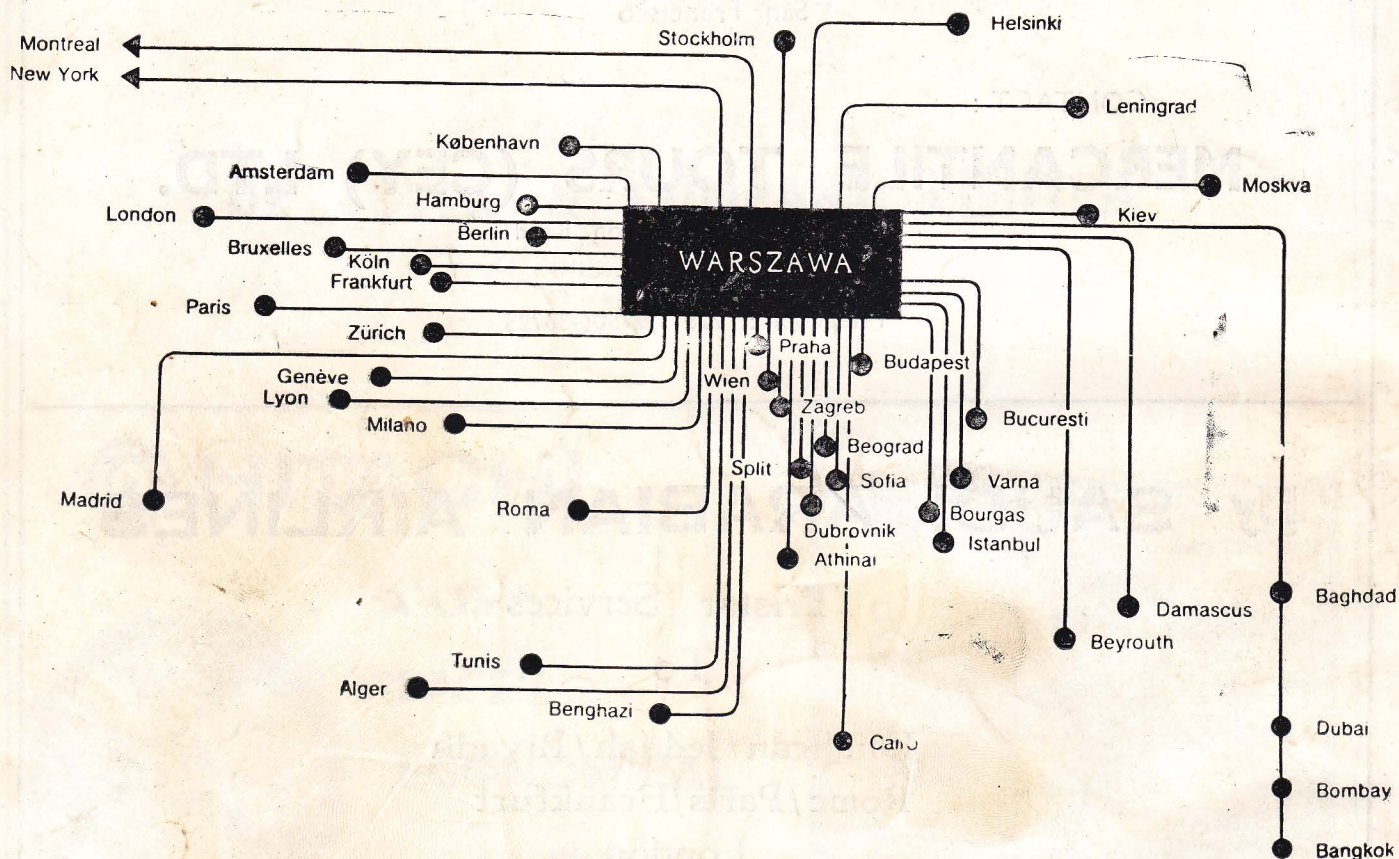
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