

OPINION

The Powerful and the Powerless

The UNP which filled its power pack with aces at the 1977 General Election has now added all available trumps, following its Mini-General election triumph last week.

No Government within living memory overflowed with virtual omnipotence as does the UNP now.

A hopelessly divided opposition, memory of the previous Government's misdeeds, more goods and more money have helped it consolidate and entrench the position it obtained at the 1977 polls.

Save the TULF which in the North and significantly Trincomalee in the East demonstrated its unassailability, no other Opposition party won the people's support.

So in the ultimate reckoning, with the rest of the Opposition in shambles, the TULF, it is, that will take on the UNP in the local power struggle.

But before the nation focusses attention on this ill-matched combat, what the people are interested in right now is what the UNP will do with this bumper crop of power that it has reaped at the two elections.

Will there be as usually happens to the UNP, a blood rush into its already swollen head and will it start throwing its weight around indiscriminately and irrationally?

Will it, now that it is rooted deep in power, uproot those weeds from which the people are still suffering?

Will it wage a frontal, forthright attack on soaring prices, starting with consumer commodities and goods?

The UNP must recognize and appreciate the faith and trust the people have vested in it, notwithstanding the bruises of the cost of living.

This only means that they seem convinced that rising prices could be arrested by this government. The UNP must honour that faith, that trust by axing the root causes of spiralling prices.

If it is the middle-man, who controls transport from point of production to point of distribution, he must be eliminated or checked. More government distribution points for consumer commodities throughout the island could help.

If massive buying by Tourist hotels has shot up prices, the all-powerful UNP must get down to the business of ensuring that Sri Lanka is for Ceylonese and not for the fattening of entrepreneurs or those foreign charter birds of passage and that too at the expense of what hotel waiters shrug off as "locals" Ceylonese.

While all the people are being battered by price punches, a section of the nation is still reeling under the body blows of discrimination—racial and political.

Clothed in its armour of power, the UNP can afford to be magnanimous and truly not orally just. The powerful must look after the powerless.

With so much muscle it need not bully the people. It should be gentle and gracious towards the racial and political minorities.

If those political parties which represent these afflicted minorities choose to be stubborn and adamant, why should the UNP punish the loyalists of these parties?

No citizen of this country, because he belongs to a racial or political minority should be discriminated against. "Law in a democracy" means the protection of the right and liberties of the minority.

It is a confession of the weakness of our own faith in the righteousness of our own cause when we attempt to suppress by law those who do not agree with us" observes Bernard Smith in "The Democratic Spirit".

Having established this solid sovereignty, the UNP's hunger for power, in the best sense of that word, has been satiated. Should it not now, shed whatever masks of morality, it wore and get down to the business of honestly creating "a free and just society".

NO ACTING - PREMIER

When Premier R. Premadasa leaves for Lusaka for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference, no one will act for him.

Under the Constitution, there is no acting appointment.

This is also so in the case of the President. No one will act for him when he leaves for HAVANNA for the Non-aligned summit Conference.

High-Powered Committee Recommends:-

- ★ Price increases
- ★ Wage increases
- ★ Subsidy slash

Unless there is an immediate price increase in Kerosene, Diesel, flour and transport prices, the Government will be in dire financial straits.

So states the recommendations of a high powered Ministerial and official committee which studied subsidies, wages and the cost of living recently.

The Government, says the committee, will have no alternative but to jack up prices but it also recommends that wages should keep pace with these increases.

It points out recent wage increases have cost the Government Rs 1000 million rupees and this has eroded the finances badly.

It also states that Government's subsidy bill is in the range of nearly Rs 4000 million.

It lists the following items as the most heavily subsidized.

according to the annual subsidy

Kerosene	Rs 525 million
Diesel	Rs 100 million
Lakspray and Liquid Milk	Rs 200 million

Flour	Rs 500 million
CGR	Rs 100 million
C.T.B	Rs 150 million

It stresses that while there is a Government outflow of money, the inflow into its coffers is restricted.

EXAMPLE

As an example it cites the massive rehabilitation that is taking place in the Eastern Province with Government funds.

The promised cyclone

relief aid of Rs 1000 million has not yet turned up. So Government is footing as much of the bill as possible.

The Independent also understands that the Rs 20 billion aid promised for development projects is coming in dribbles.

Evaluation reports of the projects are just taking place and unless donor countries are ensured of a profit of 5 to 1, they will be sceptical of giving aid.

Unless there is a severe slashing of subsidies, the International Monetary Fund will not be prepared to loan Sri Lanka the money needed, since one of the pre-requisites of IMF funding is the abolition of subsidies.

UNP - TULF

In Collision Course

The UNP and TULF are heading for a collision-course unless sanity prevails.

This is the consensus of political observers following the outright victories of the UNP and the TULF in the recent elections.

Both have hardened their attitudes. While the Government has decided to woo the people and ignore the TULF, the Northern Party insists that any moves for solution must come from the UNP.

The UNP has decided to break down the "traditional home and" attitude of the TULF. Sri Lanka belongs to all, says the UNP. No, says the TULF, the Tamils have been rooted there since the dawn of history.

The UNP also pooch-pooches the TULF stand on colonization. Every citizen, they say has a choice of residence. Can Tamils live in Matara, asks the TULF stating the only place where they are safe is

P. M. says

Tamils Voted

Premier R Premadasa debunked a Ministerial suggestion that the Tamils boycotted or in the alternative did not vote for the UNP at the recent Municipal and Urban council elections.

The charge was made by a Minister when the Ministers held a post mortem on the elections.

The P. M. pointed out that the polling in areas where there were heavy pockets of Tamil population such as Wellawatte, Bambalapitiya, Kollupitiya and in Colombo North such as Gintupitiya, Kotahena, Grand pass, Mattakuliya and Hultsdorf the polling was very heavy. In fact said the Prime Minister the UNP did very well in these areas obviously with Tamil support.

When a Minister suggested that the polling was low, the Prime Minister pointed out that the total polling of 70.5 was higher than the polling in 1956 when the SLFP and the MEP routed the UNP. The polling then was in the region of 65 per cent he said.

The President and Ministers congratulated Mr. Premadasa for the yeoman service he rendered the UNP by steering it to victory.

Jaffna.

Can the Sinhalese live in Jaffna, counters the UNP. Look at the exodus.

Meanwhile moderates are trying their best to bring about a solution acceptable to both the UNP and the TULF.

The Political Scene Musings of the Editor

Premadasa — Polls winner

Friend and foe of the U.N.P. were in accord when they conceded that the ruling party had won an outright victory and that the architect of that victory was, without dispute Premier R. Premadasa.

An UNP victory was on the cards. But the virtual swamping of their opponents shook even their supporters, let alone concussing their rivals.

The UNP grand slam was acknowledgely master-minded by the articulate, mobile, shrewd strategist who has mastered the art of election campaigning.

The P. M., popularly known in UNP circles as the Four O'Clock man since he rises at 4 A. M. every day—and that includes Sundays and holidays—left nothing to chance.

I am told that he had mapped out his campaign as early as March. Posters, campaign literature etc. had all been prepared and canvassing went on apace.

FEATS

But what his friends and critics marvel at are his endurance feats in island-girdling with hardly week-end breathers. And that working at his usual high pressure in his Prime Ministerial office.

His campaign strategy consisted in keeping alive in the public mind and memory, the misdeeds of the previous government. He conducted a dialogue with the audience, ensuring that he drove home into their consciousness, the ills of queues, the hardships of rationing, the bondage during the Emergency crowning it all with a charge sheet against Mrs. B of 50 charges.

Those odours of the past kept assailing the nostrils of the voters and they were determined not to experience them again.

The Prime Minister fully aware that public memory is short-lived achieved a psychological coup in resurrecting the misdeeds of the SLFP, searing the public with those memories the pain of which would have prevented all save the hard core SLFP loyalists from voting for the SLFP.

POLLS

This the polls statistics amply bore out. Although the total following was comparatively low, just over 70 per cent casting their votes. This against the record 88 per cent during the General Elections was not really not good going.

Colombo voters were the worst offenders, over 100,000 refraining from voting. In the Municipal Councils, the UNP polled 53.56 per cent, while the SLFP received 22.43 per cent of the total polls. In the Urban Council, the UNP received more than in

Municipal Council, with nearly 65 per cent.

The Left was routed, edged out by the JVP who also did not come up to expectations. But as the youngest and newest party in the field, they should not be unduly depressed by their performance.

The TULF had good reason to blow their trumpets. They romped home winners in the North and Trincomalee as the UNP elsewhere.

UNP

They polled 60,000 as against the UNP's 15,000, in six Councils while the Tamil Congress polled 11,000 in the three councils they contested.

BY R.L.M

In the Jaffna Municipality itself the TULF polled 16,300 out of 38,000 votes while the T.C. polled 7,400 votes. At the 1977 General Election the TULF polled 16,200 out of 33,000 votes while the T.C. polled 6,900 votes. The UNP polled 5,066.

A point of interest in the Jaffna Municipal Council was the voting among the 3,000 Muslims in that area. It is estimated that 1,800 voted for the UNP 1,300 for the TULF and 750 for the T.C.

The Muslim Vote was traditionally the Tamil Congress block vote. A swing towards the UNP is understandable but 1,500 votes for the TULF is a new phenomenon. Apparently the Muslim youth think differently from their elders, one of the slogans used effectively by the TULF to win the Muslims was, "Tamils are victims today. It will be the Muslims tomorrow."

ANALYSIS

Ever since the UNP landslide victory political pundits have been trying to dissect the reasons for the opposition disaster.

In the cold light of analysis the UNP victory was due to: (1) Proximity to the SLFP's seven year misrule. Memories were still fresh (2) Those who voted for the UNP in the General Elections were satisfied with the performance of the UNP (3) Availability of goods prices notwithstanding. (4) Abolition of irks such as queues etc (5) A hopelessly divided opposition. (6) The SLFP's indifferent campaigning as against the UNP's high-pressure tactics (7) The political consciousness of the

ERA OF THE CROOK

He always gave me the impression that he was a gay, flippant type who seldom took life seriously.

Although he had scaled the heights in his profession, girdled the globe, clicked glasses with society's Sahibs as easily as the toiling masses, there was nothing prim or pompous about him.

Often, tension-laden situations were diffused when he tossed a jest into the conversation which seemed ill-timed but helped shatter the seriousness of the situation.

The other day, I caught him off guard. We were downing our usual drinks at dusk. I asked him when on earth he would take life seriously and he countered with his usual light heartedness:

"Come, fill the cup", he cracked quoting Omar Khayyam, and in the fire of spring.

The winter garment of repentance flung;

The Bird of Time has but a little way.

To fly - and lo the bird is on the Wing.

"Cut it out" I said, "and be serious" "Right!" he answered and clobbered me with another Khayyam quote; "The worldly hope men set their hearts upon."

Turn ashes - or it prospers; and anon.

Like snow upon the dusty face.

Lighting a little hour or two is gone.

BRUISE

Knowing him so well, I knew he was bandaging some bruise of bitterness with the plaster of poetry. "Spit it out", I said. "Instead of killing Khayyam."

He sipped his drink thoughtfully, gazed upwards into the gloaming and asked; "Does honesty pay? Or for a matter of that do hard work and simplicity, pay?"

"Of course" I said facetiously, you will attain heaven without too many days in purgatory. "Who the hell is interested in Heaven when you are fighting your battle on the good earth. Victory or defeat should be right here - where our feet are implanted," he commented almost hotly.

His was a good question. As the parry and thrust of our conversation waxed sharper with every sip, I felt I was

people which felt that if opposition parties were voted into power they would get step-motherly treatment from the ruling power. Over and above all this Mr. Premadasa's one man whirlwind campaign buoyed up even the lethargic voters.

getting closer and closer to the mental wound from which suddenly dripped adversity's sweet or sour milk, philosophy

The truth eventually emerged. "It's like this" he said, strangely fumbling for words. And he bared the well spring of his question. He had been to a party a few days earlier which was nothing unusual in his case - and encountered what he called "one of Sri Lanka's Many curses".

I thought he was talking of politicians. Or the cost of living. Or the C.T.B. A score of curses flitted across my mind as I surveyed the local scene.

CON-MEN

So I did not guess. "Con-men", he said "confidence tricksters". I sat up and listened intently. This was one of his oh! so rare moments of seriousness although occasionally he could not resist sprinkling it with sarcasm.

The chap he was referring to was not a sleek, suave fellow as con men usually are. He gave all the appearance of a strong silent man—the more dangerous among the breed, he commented.

The talker was telling a group of avid listeners how he had advised Minister A on one matter and how Minister B had telephoned to seek his advice on another problem and even the President was among the notables in whose drawing room of confidence he was - according to him.

As a student of human behaviour—"The proper study of mankind is man" Alexander Pope said my friend, he did a few spot checks on the man and his story.

"From all that I heard" said my friend whipping out a witticism "this man of the hour as he was at the cocktail party, has to be watched every minute, he is a quiet fellow but he is always letting off steam. I am sure he can double-cross a bridge.

"What's wrong" I asked "you are the guy who laughs away such chaps with your 'may all beings be happy. What's eating you now?'"

"May all beings be happy. Sure. But not by making others unhappy. This fellow must surely be blackening others to white-wash himself for the eye and ear of the V. I. Ps. What about the others, the clean Honest folk who have all the mental and moral equipment who cannot make the grade because they do not indulge in that kind of deceit?" he asked. They are overtaken by fellows like him.

What about them indeed? We discussed quite a few

persons we knew of transparent honesty, of unaffected sincerity and of unquestionable ability who did not reap their due reward because they had nothing fake or false about them. They did not bum or bootlick the hierarchy.

As against this we lined up platoons of personalities in various layers of power who were patently dishonest, notorious intriguers but whose forte or strong point was pandering politically to the powers—that of worming themselves confidence of the high-priests by unashamed flattery or other unscrupulous methods.

As we meandered along, it struck us that many of the time-honoured and time-worn words of wisdom such as "honesty is the best policy", "One hour today is worth two tomorrow", "Trust begets trust", "Money is the root of all evil" "Hard work reaps its reward" and such enduring concepts have been tossed into the limbo of forgotten things.

Today, as one gazes at the line-up of those who matter, such virtuous wisdom as our parents and teachers taught us read like obsolete observations, unrealistic rigmaroles, of another age. They have no relevance to our time.

REWARD

However, I tried to year him round to the old adage that "virtue is its own reward". He retorted, "Try telling that to your son". I knew I was bowled neck and crop because a friend of ours told us how his talented son had not been given a place in the college cricket team, although he was well qualified. When the father cheered him with the usual, "Better luck next time", formula, the son shot back; Yes, when I am reborn into the right race and religion

The parents had reeled back under the weight of the son's spontaneous blow. They felt it was time to talk to him. The 17 year old told them all they already knew but hoped he did not know.

He told them how he had been teased because of his community; because he could not afford to sport new shirts and slacks as frequently as others. He shocked them by stating how rich boys and sons of VIPs got a better break than the poorer but more studious children.

Wisely the parents gave him full ear. They did their best to cushion the blow stating that ultimately truth honesty and humility would triumph. The boy smiled but the smile, commented his father, was heavily coated with cynicism.

As we poured out our "one for the road", my friend raised his glass, "Let's drink", he said, to the disappearance of the era of the crook. I had to add my ten cents worth. "And" I urged, to the resurrection of honesty, hard work and simplicity as this country's ruling virtues.

We heard an eerie hoot within ear-shot. It was that of the all knowing owl.

Don't toy with students' lives

appeals K. KANDASAMY

The proposed method of admission to the Universities is one amongst a few problems that is causing lots of Political heat in our dear motherland.

Why this should be so is the burning question?

The Government has introduced a formula for admission to the Universities based on merits, populations, and under developed area basis in the proportion of 30 percent, 55 percent and 15 percent.

The reason adduced for the introduction of this scheme is to give opportunities for higher learning to the students from areas lacking in good educational facilities. The declared objective is a laudable one and merits dispassionate consideration.

Idam Vo Natinam hotu

Sukita hontu natayo.

Let this (Merit) accrue to our relatives and may they be happy.

Unfortunately the scheme as introduced is going to boomerang on the students of the major community and therefore must prove detrimental to the nation.

How would it be detrimental to the major community and the nation?

If population weightage has to be given for students from Colombo, Kandy etc and not merit alone, it is a confession of the lack of good educational facilities in these areas. But this is not so!

Then one must necessarily come to the conclusion that the quality of the students in these areas are poor and therefore the Government has to assist them by giving population weightage.

DANGER

The greatest danger from this action is that the confidence of the students in their ability is being surreptitiously undermined by planting in their subconscious minds that they have not the capacity to face fair and open competition. Therefore they have to be produced by population weightage.

No country can make vigorous economic progress if most of its student population are fed with thoughts of inferiority complex unwittingly planned and assiduously nurtured by a seemingly benevolent government.

Surely one cannot expect positive results by planting negative thoughts!

Man sows a thought and reaps an action. He sows an action and reaps a habit. He sows a habit and reaps a character. He sows a character and reaps a destiny.

Man has made his own destiny by his own thinking and acting. He can change his destiny. He is the master of his destiny. There is no doubt. By right thinking and strong exertion he can become the master of his destiny. There is no doubt of this too!

Since the declared aim of the Govt. of Sri Lanka is to achieve economic prosperity with social justice, it should be the cardinal policy of the administration to encourage and stimulate intelligent and hardworking students to achieve higher professional qualifications so that they may set the pace and example for others to build a prosperous Sri Lanka. Planned effort and the sweat and toil of its people are the only known essential ingredients for the prosperity of a nation.

SOLUTION

Then what is a fair solution to the Universities' Admission problem? My suggestion is 65 on merit (Nation wide) and 35 on merit from under developed areas. This, in all likelihood, should prove acceptable to all.

Since independence (i.e. for the past 33 years) the politicians of this country, with few exceptions, have been propagating sectarian interests. The natural consequence of all this has been to set brother against brother, race against race, faith against faith!

Today this once proud country, which was an example to others, has become a beggar and laughing stock of rest of the world. The irony of it all is that a few of our countrymen, who have migrated overseas, have established their name and fame through diligent hardwork and ability.

Our politicians profess one thing and preach another, causing havoc in the heart and minds of a truly wonderful people - the average Sri Lankan. If they will only preach and act according to accepted

North, South Dialogue Essential

(By Mohan Pereira)

When you arrive in Jaffna with tortured limbs after 9 hours in those Romanian coaches, in the dust and heat of a long journey (how nice to go by helicopter) you are glad to be welcomed by your Jaffna hosts. The cups of coffee are a relief. The change in conversation from venting your frustration at the designers of the torture coaches to Tamil affairs, is abrupt yet at the back of your mind the prospect of the return trip and further agony, looms large.

This is not a feature on trains but it needs mention because it is one of the major trials that travellers, mostly Tamils, on the longest journey in Sri Lanka have to endure. It will probably be so for the next 30 years until the coaches become obsolete and are replaced.

Eelam is the main topic of conversation in every home and with every individual you talk to. No one talks of violence nor believes nor wants violence. Some feel that if nothing is done, then violence will be the fall-out of that inertia. Even the youth you talk to would have preferred it otherwise. There was unanimity in opposing the present concept of manipulators and political manoeuvring. A young lawyer echoed these sentiments when he said that "there are several Tamils betraying their race for their personal gain, but this has united the majority of Tamil people even more".

INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

It is now an established fact that this Tamil-Sinhala issue is no more an internal problem, it has become an international issue. A very reliable source said that certain countries have agreed to support their struggle for Eelam, others are ready to recognise a free and independent Eelam. This person said that the idea of self-determination had become deeprooted in the Tamil people,

more than ever before, in the last two years. "The western powers may help the Sinhalese government but they do not realise that you cannot conquer an idea with money or guns" the source said. A farmer I talked to urged me to tell the government to give a guaranteed price for the Jaffna farmer's produce. Speaking about Eelam he said that marxist ideas were catching on in Jaffna because "the marxist countries and their people had sympathy for our cause".

One family whose house had been robbed by a gang of thieves at night said that every night at least one house was broken into in Jaffna. The police are unable to track down the culprits and now they have given up. Even if citizens recognised or knew the culprits, they will not speak for fear of their lives.

THE YAWNING ABYSS

I made it a point to visit four of Jaffna's network of leading educational institutions. The discipline and eagerness in the students made a great impression. Some of the class rooms were as hot as ovens. But concentration on the teacher's lessons was not to suffer. One eminent educator said that there were more foreigners who had visited his school in recent years than Sinhalese people. With the advent of the Sinhala Only Act, the yawning abyss between the two communities is increasing daily. He himself had only written to a Sinhalese friend after 15 years. "We were the closest of friends. In the past I would go to Moratuwa or Kandy at the drop of a hat. But now we have drifted apart," he said. He wanted to re-establish contact with his Sinhala friends.

You cannot help but meet many people who had some relatives or friends who suffered in the violence of 1977. At the back of people's minds

lies the question "are we safe as a race in this country? Will our children's blood be spilt in the future? A man who had a car and a house of his own in Colombo was forced to sell off and settle in Jaffna. He rides an old bicycle now and does not have the highly paid job of two years ago. "It is better for me to live like this in dignity than to die in humiliation in an alien country" he said. Such is the depth of the hurts and wounds inflicted on many people.

TASK OF THE HOUR

It is in this sphere that much needs to be done. The wounds of the past must be healed. The resentments and hate must be defused. Despair must be turned to hope. It is easy, when the headlines do not leap at us with the plight of the suffering, to forget them. But the sufferers carry their scars with them. The pain of these scars fuels the militancy and spirit of despair in many.

No amount of constitutional changes and legislation in itself can resolve the emotional damage that has been caused. Only a change of heart on both sides can. It is hoped that the statesmanship on both sides will rise beyond the present war of words and instead bring the change of heart that is needed. That will lift the problem from the dimension of 'race against race' to a 'not who is right but what is right' basis to quote that famous MKA adage.

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central theme of all religions - "Love thy neighbour as thyself and do unto others as you would want others to do unto you" then there would be peace, harmony and prosperity in this land of ours.

Sri Lanka is one homogenous whole. All its people are like the spokes of a wheel. Damage one and you injure the whole.

Let absolute truth and justice prevail and the wheel of Dharma will surely lead our beloved motherland to peace and prosperity.

Yo Ve uppatitam Kodham,
ratham bhantam Va dharaye,
tam ahum sarathin brum,
rasmiggaro itaro jano (Dhammapadam).

whosoever pulls backrising anger
as a driver a voling chariot -
him I call a charioteer;
Others only hold the reins.

On this auspicious Wesak Day, let us recall the one 'gatha' which sums up our Lord Buddha's whole doctrine:

Sabba pappssa akaranam,
Kuslassa upa-ampada
Sachitta pariyo dapanam -
Eam Buddhanusasanam.

'To Cease from all evil actions
To Generate all that is good,
To Cleanse one's mind;
This is the advice
Of the Buddhas.'

LION OF RUHUNA

Over four decades ago Ruhuna could have been a French province before the French Revolution.

For the parallel was there — the aristocracy of the land, the titled and landowning "nobility", the Mudaliyars, Muhandirams and Headmen, serving their English masters, trod on the poor peasants of Ruhuna. Emancipation from both the white and brown sahibs was a far-off dream for these poor people, scoffed at and humiliated by their own people.

Their men dare not wear shirts, their women could not have a jacket on—such was their plight.

When they brought their agricultural produce to the weekly "pola" they were given a raw deal. I was Hobson's choice for them. The aristocracy named their price, and the poor peasants had to submit or pay the penalty. But every crisis brings out the hero, the champion. For the poor people of Ruhuna it was the "Lion of Ruhuna", D. M. Rajapakse, the son of the Ruhuna soil, who decided that this state of affairs could not go on. The people had to be liberated.

The Ruhuna folk were illiterate. He established schools for them and educated and taught them to bear responsibility. He instilled in them national consciousness and pride in their own ability to work out their own future.

To counter the unfairness of the "pola" he opened his own "pola" where no victimisation was allowed. The cultivators got their due.

The Sahibs of both shades, white and brown, took notice. Here was a new danger to their privileged positions.

COUNCIL

So when he came forward as a candidate for the Hambantota seat in the 1936 General Elections for the State Council, the full force of capitalist and reactionary power, finance and thuggery was heaped on him. Both Rajapakse and his wife Emalin, popularly known by all as Mamma, traveled by bullock cart to outlandish and inaccessible rural areas during their election campaign, hounded at every turn by the aristocracy, the titled and the powerful forces of the officialdom. He had been harassed and tormented at every turn before and had been produced before the Court more than 32 times.

The peasants, for whose emancipation he had campaigned relentlessly, voted him in with a landslide 12,000 majority as their member for Hambantota in the State Council. Even while the results were announced their hero, Rajapakse, the Lion of Ruhuna, was behind bars.

The colour he chose for the elections was Kurakkan brown, the colour of the soil and its produce.

There was no stopping Rajapakse now. Until his death on May 18, 1945, the Lion of Ruhuna was their champion and he was returned to State Council on every occasion.

He organised the Left Movement in Ruhuna and was President of the Suriya Mal Movement with which were associated leading Left leaders, Dr. N. M. Perera, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe and late Mr. Philip Gunawardena, one of the harbingers of the liberation movement.

By
D. M. Rajapakse

He was associated with every movement that had as its aim the liberation and emancipation of the masses. The Left leaders were prevented from holding meetings in Ruhuna, thugs and hirelings of vested interests broke up or disrupted such gatherings. But they dared not interfere with meetings presided over by Rajapakse.

LION

At the mass meeting in Galle Face, Colombo, over the Bracegirdle affair, Rajapakse the Lion of Ruhuna, roared in full throat against the imperialists.

He spent his entire fortune on his campaign to emancipate the peasants of Ruhuna. In fact when he died in 1945 his ancestral home was under mortgage.

He established schools, commenced the renovation of Mulikirigala Raja Maha Vihare helped the peasantry to ameliorate their condition by clearing thick jungle areas and start cultivation on them, built and made them acutely politically conscious.

Not only as a politician but also as a poet of great learning and achievement, he directed his talents towards the liberation movement. As his widow Mrs. Ema in Rajapakse once recalled "my late husband was a patron of arts and literature. He gave authors and poets every encouragement. He revelled in their company and held regular discussions with them". He was President of the All-Ceylon Poets' Congress.

The people of Ruhuna held the name of D. M. Rajapakse in high esteem. When he died in 1945 his brother D. A. Rajapakse was returned to the Hambantota seat without a contest.

The Rajapakse of Ruhuna will long be remembered for generations, most of all D. M. Rajapakse the pioneer freedom fighter for the upliftment and eventual emancipation of the people of Ruhuna.

Research Into Rebirth

WHAT happens after death? Is the human soul born again in a different body? Dr. Satwant Pasricha and Dr. Vinodha Murthy are part of a team of researchers, who have stumbled on startling data. Over a period of three years, 80 cases of "reincarnation" have come to light, mostly among children, in India.

The researchers have been specially trained in the brand of methodology of Prof Ian Stevenson of Virginia University in the US, whose investigation spearheaded the spiritual and psychic research movement in America. He is the author of two books—*"Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation"* & *"Ten Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation"*.

When researchers spot a case they first make contact with the family. Symptoms are examined in the person claiming to remember his or her birth and details of family history, ancestry and medical records are scanned and recorded. Behaviour patterns which do not fit in with the present personality are singled out for further scrutiny.

Murthy, who is at the Department of Clinical Psychology at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences in Bangalore, spoke of a six-year-old girl who was born into an orthodox Brahmin family but suddenly erupted one day with a recipe of a non-vegetarian dish. The shocked parents imagined she had picked up details of culinary skill from some non-Brahmin neighbours. But the strange symptoms persisted. She began cleaning lavatories like a grown-up woman would covering her mouth with an improvised veil. A little later she affirmed that she did not belong to her present parents. She talked of a house near a railway line where she had actually lived. Researchers cross-checked her utterances and were able to locate the site of her "previous life." She told them what her name had been and investigators discovered that a young woman by that name had been run over by a train some years ago.

Difficult Process: But the investigation was not complete. Researchers had to unleash the child into the environment of her past life and observe her reactions. She not only remembered persons correctly by their names but also revealed a memory for the nooks where she had stowed away certain possessions, unknown even to her family members.

The process of gathering information was a long and difficult one. Persons who could converse in the innumerable local dialects had to be recruited. The collection of material and follow-up took Pasricha over three years and involved tracking through inhospitable terrain and wading through miles of data collected from subjects who were not always communicative.

Said Murthy: "In the beginning we advertised but received a deluge of responses which

made it difficult to sift the genuine from the fraudulent cases. Now we have developed contacts who relay information to us."

By
Mayah Balse

Of the 80 cases, 77 have been culled for final analysis. Though the age group ranges from five years to 35 years, the majority are children. Some of these cases have been segregated by Pasricha for her thesis on children who seem to provide "living proofs" of reincarnation. Detailed information and fully verified case histories of children below 15 years form the core of this interesting work in the preparation of which Murthy has guided Pasricha.

Case studies are kept confidential. During Stevenson's earlier research, journalists had got hold of specific facts and the "reborn" Mridulla had been besieged by reporters who made her life miserable. The researchers were unwilling to court that risk again.

TORTURE

Said Murthy:
"Sometimes a reported case

turns out to be an outright hoax. But we have found it is the adults who tend to tell lies and not the children." This may be one reason why children have been chosen for the work. Also, the lingering memory of a previous life is more pronounced among the young. It is seen to fade as the child grows older and the strains of the present life exert themselves.

Some parents treat such children with abject cruelty, flogging them to dull their memories or tying them to a wheel and rotating it at a fast pace. "These tortures are quite common," said Murthy, "especially among the illiterate rural masses who believe it perhaps to be some kind of possession. But in possession, the child displays peculiar symptoms and spells of consciousness during intermittent trance states when he seems

(Continued on page 5)

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Cultural Pollution In Sri Lanka

By
Jegatheswari Nagendran

It is becoming apparent that the world is living in an age of Gerontocracy [Govt. of old men.] We are being governed by the gracefully ageing the old and wise. Sri Lanka, India, China, and now Iran have gone that way. The awe-inspiring Ayatollah Khomeini combines charisma with crusading ardour in his clamorous, ruthless plans for a Holy Islamic empire.

He does not leave a single stone unturned in his search for toadies of American imperialism. Americans revel in instant coffee; Khomeini prefers instant execution and says that defence lawyers delay the course of quick justice. Today's headlines: "Khomeini lashes out at U.S.A." reminds me of the Spanish priest at the Holy Inquisition murmuring to himself: "Our relations are being strained to the utmost." while he ordered his unfortunate second cousin to be stretched on the Rack.

I have noticed that racial pride, religious fervour and bloodshed often blend in discordant symphony, bringing forth chaos, death and desolation. We have seen this happening in India whenever fanatics of Hinduism and Islam confront and clash with one another. The Jews and Christians fought and fell into continuing hostility during the first few centuries following the crucifixion of Jesus. In England after King Henry VIII broke away from the church of Rome and founded the Anglican church, many Catholic monasteries were plundered and families ruined or massacred as Papists, with the king's approval. Even today many Catholics insist that the original St. Peter's Roman church is the spiritual home of the one true faith.

Yet nowadays the Christians fear the force of militant Islamic brotherhood more than the Heavenly fire of Judaism. In Sri Lanka too rabid racists have caused dark clouds to gather on the hitherto clear horizon. Like Mark Antony in Julius Caesar, they manipulate the manifold emotions of the fickle crowd. We too have our quota of Khomeinis, Gaddafis, Dengs, Titos, Brezhnevs and Desais arrogantly spouting contradictory statements at every public meeting.

To counteract the explosive effects of aggressive elements who want to unleash the dogs of war, certain well-meaning groups are advocating universal love—the only snag is there are so many types and forms of love and the young need guidance in this.

DECENCY

Education is meant to instil in humans, the essence of decency, decorum, discipline and self-restraint, from the earliest days of infancy; in nurseries of good homes and schools.

During the last twenty or thirty years amazing teaching methods have been made. Today's children are far more fortunate than their forbears in having world attention lavished on them by UNESCO and other World bodies interested in child welfare. The West and the Far East have gifted books, films, educational and sports equipment, musical instruments and scholarships of all kinds to aid talented youngsters in Sri Lanka.

WESTERN INFLUENCE

At the same time the young are exposed to the worst aspects of Western materialism and decadence. Having been like the rare, modest, mountain bloom born to blush unseen, this serene is and has now been catapulted into panoramic vistas of tourism and television. As I've said before, TV is not an unmitigated evil; neither is it indispensable, as our new rich and our feudal lords and ladies seem to think. In a way TV does away with serious thinking. Who in Lanka wants to think anyway? All we want is food, clothing, homes, cramshops and entertainment. Politicians are thinkers. Look what happened to Socrates, in old Athens. Dissidents, intellectuals, and rebels today are tortured or liquidated.

Most people are pleased with all the cabarets, songs and circuses now in circulation, at a price of course. Only fresh air is free, and that too will soon be rare and rationed at the rate the environment is being polluted. Horror stories of nuclear leaks have come true... e.g. the Harisberg nuclear reactor on three mile island in Pennsylvania. The radio-active gases released by the massive leak are said to be drifting northward, wafted on the rising breeze.

Soon we shall see genetic mutation, as happened after Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Already we are being contaminated by mass-produced gas and garbage from radio networks, flung in our faces, and into our unresisting ears and brains. Tawdry films full of blood and sand and sex excite the curiosity of ignorant and bovine youngsters. TV's international tentacles can bring the world and the galaxy into our homes if we have the money and leisure to enjoy it.

Thanks to instant communication via the mass media a common subculture known as Genitocracy is growing wild all over the world today; the

mass media is obsessed with sex, and they say: that's what the people want. The medical term for sexual organs in general is genitalia; the trendy one may not know that word, Genitocracy. Humans have to defy something, they cannot have a vacuum! If it isn't God it has to be work, sports, music, drama, literature, food, painting, sculpture, mountaineering, government, gurus, flowers, animals, birds or the human body.

The ancient epics of Greek and Hindu civilisation celebrated the beauty of love, and abound in sexual imagery. Sculpture and painting are full of it all over the world; there's nothing new under the

sun. Even the Holy Bible has passages of purest pornography and patriarchal lust. Shakespeare's plays and poetry, unexpurgated, are as explicit as any modern film or book. But they are not spurious like the pop culture of today, which is being so superbly imitated by Sri Lankans.

Some wit once said that sophisticated people with money and time collect old Masters and acquire young mistresses! It works the other way too: old mistresses find young slaves who in time grow masterful and manipulate them with masterly skill! Sri Lanka's mimics could well learn from the B.B.C. word service which awakens us before dawn with the ringing midnight chimes of London's Big Ben... then we listen to the tales of woe and war, all told in measured tones of dignified world-weariness.

At six o'clock the throbbing Kandyan drums herald the dawn of a new Dharmist day. Plumy chummy voices and the screaming songs of

pop idols rouse lethargic Lanka from her deep sleep. Recently I told a group of young adults about a howler by Arjuna of Asian Diary fame, concerning Rasputin and Catherine the Great... you see even Homer nods; "Ah, the lover of the Russian Queen," they said knowing the pop song by heart! "But it was not Catherine the Great who," I said, "had her own palace Guard of handsome young officers; and she lived a hundred years before Rasputin! Why don't you write to the Editor and tell him to publish the facts: he always says that facts are so sacred." I wrote to him twice but he won't publish it! "Why, is he so scared of Arjuna? surely this chap can't be so strong as all that, though he is got the same name as Krishna's friend And he is giving wrong information; shall we notify the Russian embassy? They won't like their history being distorted by Asians, or even Lankans". Don't man, it might lead to an international incident." So we shall wait and see, for, as Dryden said: "All, all of a piece throughout Thy chase had a Beast in view; Thy wars brought nothing about; Thy lovers were all untrue,

Tis we'll an old age is out. And time to begin a new. DRYDEN: THE SECULAR MASQUE.

Research into Rebirth . . .

(Continued from P. 4)

normally tuned to his environment. In 'reincarnation', the behaviour pattern is continuous."

The cycle apparently follows no definite pattern. For instance, cases have been recorded from among Muslims and Christians who do not generally believe in the phenomena though the majority still appear from Hindu families who do. Sex is also interchangeable from one life to the next. A study of several cases has shown that a sudden and violent death is a precursor of "reincarnation" but even here, it is difficult to generalize.

MYSTERY

A surprising fact is that all the 80 cases discovered recently are from three states—Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Murthy said this could be because there were more violent deaths in these areas. Another reason could be that research in the north has been going on for much longer and people therefore know whom to contact when such cases come to light.

In spite of much work being done on the subject, nothing conclusive seems to have been established. Pasricha's thesis neither pretends to provide definite proof nor claims that the data it contains is 'exhaustive and representative.' Life after life at least for several years to come, appears destined to be a mystery that will tax many minds,

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A true Story of race riots of '58

It was after mid-day that Sirisena came back to the gypsy encampment. He found Thangamani fast asleep by the baby in the hut. She was stretched out partly on the spotted deer pelt and partly on the bare ground. There appeared to be a tinge of sorrow or bitterness in her face, which he noticed. Was it sorrow or bitterness? He could not define it even to himself. It was only a flash of a thought whether it was sorrow, but the next instant, it was replaced by an anxiety as to what they were to do. How was he to take this young woman to safety?

Could she stand the strain of walking through miles and miles of jungle? He went out of the hut and lay at the foot of a palm tree, covering his face with his arm to keep off the glare of the heat around. The gypsies were striking camp the next morning, he had been told. They were some distance from Anuradhapura. The gypsies had said that they were about ten hours travelling on foot from Anuradhapura. Could there be danger at Anuradhapura? Surely, in the Sacred City, the Tamils could expect sanctuary, he thought, as he fell asleep.

CHAPTER 8

Close to the Twin Ponds at Anuradhapura, there was just one kiosk open for business. About four or five men were seated inside, discussing the events of the last few days.

"The Tamils must be got rid of, once and for all," Wijepala, a swarthy big made man, said. "They have been our hereditary enemies and even the authorities have given instructions to the Police not to prosecute those who kill them. In Polonnaruwa, all the parademallu have been wiped out."

Wijepala was a well known character amidst the criminals in Anuradhapura. He was about 30 and had spent a fair number of years of his youth inside the Anuradhapura Prison.

"William Aiya and I have already done our bit for the cause of the Sinhala Language," continued Wijepala. "Two nights ago we caught some Tamils in the jungle in the Galakkara area. There were four of them, husband, wife and two children. They had run away to what they thought was a safe place and

were cooking that night, by the Malwatu Oya. We stealthily walked up to about five fathoms of the lot and shot them down. One of the small Tamil fellows began to scream but William Aiya, quickly sent him to hell by smashing his head with a stone."

NOT WORTH THE TROUBLE

"It was not worth our trouble, or, the two cartridges that Wije used," William Aiya added with a curse. "They had only about a measure of rice tied up in an old rag and the man had eighty three cents tied round his waist."

"They must have been the peasant cultivators in the Galakkaraya area, who were paupers," Charlis, another man said. "I remember how some of those fellows used to come to me for fifty cents worth of 'cortal' every evening. I used to give them small doses of 'embalm' and they liked the stuff very much. You should have caught Rama Mudalali and his brother and you would have been the winner of a sweep."

"Rama Mudalali and his brother escaped with the aid of Sinhalese traitors," Wijepala replied in a tone of utter disgust. "We threw the bodies of the demallu into the Malwatu Oya, to be certain that some treacherous policeman will not have a chance to incriminate us."

THE CONSTABLES

In another boutique, in the New Town of Anuradhapura two constables were at a table discussing the troubled situation. PC Perera had been to a school in Galle but he had been compelled to give up his studies and seek employment when his father died of a sudden illness, leaving him to look after the family. He was ambitious and wanted to be promoted as a sergeant so that he could get married with a little money and then give his younger sister in marriage. P.C. Sumanadasa, the other man had about 15 years service but he was just able to write out his signature. He had no ambitions. He knew that he would end up as a constable and

was quite contented with his lot.

"Our Inspector is a fine man, no Ralahamy?" said PC Perera. "I was afraid that the Army fellows might have suspected that the refrigerator had been removed before the house of the Irrigation Engineer caught fire."

"What nonsense are you talking about?" replied PC Sumanadasa. "How do you think that Inspector came to be in that position, if he did not know how to please his superiors and 'polis tactics'? When we set fire to the house the 'prig' was already in the bungalow of the Inspector. The Irrigation Engineer and his wife were well that side of Vavuniya and there was no one else about as we are enforcing the curfew very strictly. The radio and the books were also in the house when the Army men came to put out the fire, so they could not suspect anything."

To prevent further argument and also embarrassing questions coming from PC Perera, Sumanadasa, in a superior tone advised his young colleague to wait till he was married and having children before he raised questions about police duties and such useless matters as fowls. That clinched, whatever may have led to further argument.

THE RESEARCH STATION

The Agricultural Research Station at Maha Illuppa was in the hands of the labour force. The Sinhala senior officers had either run away or locked themselves in their bungalows. Some of the Tamil officers who happened to be among the junior staff had sought shelter in the jungle. The wife of one of the clerical hands, a Tamil, heavy with child was hidden in the bathroom of a Sinhala Officer, who lived in the premises with his family.

the others searched the house. Then there was a general cry of exultation as a couple of men dragged out the terrified woman. It was quickly decided that the 'Tamil woman' should be shot forthwith. Then the wife of the Sinhalese Officer fell on her knees clutching the feet of the rabble leader, one of her husband's labourers, and pleaded that they could shoot her that instant, instead of the expectant mother. Even the hearts of the beasts who had gathered there were moved by this appeal. The man at whose feet the wife of that official was yet pleading on her knees, looked around, like a Roman conqueror deciding on the fate of a mighty but vanquished foe pleading for clemency. A few yelled out, "A life for a life. We'll shoot the Sinhala traitor, instead of the Tamil woman", meaning the official who had befriended her.

"You can do what you like with me, but why should you want to kill that harmless person?"

This remark from the officer who was yet against the wall with a loaded gun pressed into his stomach, made those men, who were pretending to hide their own degradation under a cloak of patriotism, squirm. They were Sinhalese without a semblance of manhood, without feelings but that of hate. The tone in which that remark was made, the subtle sarcasm and the utter indifference to the fact that in a split second he could be sent to eternity, shook the pseudo patriots.

"Let us leave this pariah to be dealt with by others," the man with the gun shouted out derisively, as he took the gun off the official. "It's a shame for the Sinhalese to shoot cowards like this dog, but if you love your wife and children, drive the Tamil woman out of the house," he added as the rabble turned away in search of new pastures and victims.

TO BE CONTINUED

By A. M. Hettiarachchi

A well known Journalist who in his introduction says: "This book does not claim to be exhaustive nor does it mention incidents during the communal disturbances of '58 in other parts of this country, as my intention was to put down only what I experienced and witnessed myself. The North Central Province where I served as a newspaper correspondent for about 20 years, was the area worst affected in 1958. No post mortems or magisterial inquests, as required by the laws of our land were held in those dark days. A conservative estimate of deaths, could be put down to 250. This includes the five killed by Police firing at Polonnaruwa and the eleven men who fell on the Padaviya Road, when a Bren gun was opened on them after they had abjectly surrendered.

"Taking the 'frig' is quite a different matter to stealing fowls of Tamils by the police," PC Perera replied in a rather conciliatory tone. They had been warned that if anyone spoke about what the police were doing, in Anuradhapura, that person was bound to get it in the neck. "The danger, Ralahamy, is that the rich Tamil man whose fowls were robbed by our boys at Saliyapura may be having relatives who are senior Police Officers. He may complain to them even later on, after these troubles are over."

"You are a fool, puha," the older PC told him sympathetically. "The Tamils are finished. You have a lot to learn about the work in the Police. When we go for inquiries, we take money from both the complainant and the accused party. From the complainant to file a plaint. From the accused not to file a plaint. Then we wait till one party is killed and file a plaint against the other. And what are fowls? We had a good feed and the Inspector took five Whiteleghorn hens and a cockbird for rearing at home. Where is the time to look after fowls? Can you imagine our Inspector reporting to the ASP that a large number of fowls, said to be costly, have been brought to the Police Station from the Tamil man's house? protecting private property does not mean fowls according to the ordinance, man."

PC Perera was stumped,

Early in the morning about the end of that fateful month of May 1958, a number of armed men walked up to the bungalow of this particular officer, demanding any Tamils hidden in the house to be put out immediately. They were armed with guns, ketties and clubs. The Officer came on to the verandah and explained to the rabble that there were no Tamils in his house. One of his labourers poked a loaded gun into the pit of his stomach and held him against the wall, while

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WHAT THE WEEKLIES SAY

Do the Rich Subsidise the Poor?

By
Nawaz Dawood

The term subsidy is a misusage, in the sense that it has been hitherto used in Sri Lanka in connection with the rationing system for the general public (at controlled prices.)

The statement that there is a subsidy has implied hitherto that the rich (who work) subsidise the poor (who do not work)? The truth is in fact the opposite.

One must examine the nature of the economic relations in a country in its entirety, in order to determine the nature of what is meant by a subsidy. The rich in fact do not subsidise the poor. It is the poor who subsidise the rich.

THE WORKER

Capitalists become capitalists by virtue of their ability to extract surplus value from workers. For instance, when a worker is paid Rs. 10 a day, you will find that in fact he produces much more value than ten rupees. Often, it can be even ten times more value. The worker is thus being robbed of his sweat and toil.

Of course, all kinds of arguments will be used by bourgeois economists and businessmen to justify and explain this state of affairs. They will say that capital need only pay the 'market value' of labour. They argue that if the market value of labour is only Rs. 10, then that is what should be paid. In fact we find that the Rs. 10, or whatever, is totally insufficient for survival precisely because the greater part of the value of labour is stolen through this legal process itself. In short, the workers are being continuously robbed of their due share of wealth created by the capitalist classes.

PEASANTS

The same thing is true of the peasant. He is underpaid for his produce by the middle man. Costs of his inputs (which come from the city) have increased. What he saves in good harvests is often expended the next year in sheer survival and cost increases. The system conspires somehow to rob his fairweather surplus.

His poverty is further exacerbated by all kinds of parasites from the city. Even the so-called 'subsidies' that are given to him by the State are nowhere near sufficient. Like the worker, therefore, the peasant also subsidises his richer city and village counterparts. But in common parlance it is often said that the peasant is subsidised by the State.

The UNP government has made much noise about how subsidies are supposed to have ruined Sri Lanka. They have claimed that the policy of 'granting' state subsidies which was faithfully followed for the last thirty or forty years is a policy which must be done away with, and they are continuing to implement that line of thinking. The State, however, in the last 30 years is controlled by the 'have-nots' vote. This is like throwing the baby out with the bath water.

The UNP's policy is to settle our local prices at an equilibrium with the local market price levels. We shall come to that later.

phraseology about a just society, will ultimately lead to economic 'justice' for a few, (perhaps 100,000) at great cost to the rest of the 14 million. The UNP would have, thereby satisfied its class foundation and backbone, the comprador bourgeois class. One must expect any political party to seek to fulfil its obligations to its real supporters. And so the UNP must be expected to satisfy its real supporters.

COST OF LIVING

One other aspect of this policy of import liberalisation and exchange liberalisation, is already been felt by the

ld countries can at least reduce the impact of imperialism. By using protective tariffs, Third World countries keep away the cold imperialist winds.

For these thirty years, we survived with bad colds. The ordinary people will soon suffer from pneumonia as a result of the open door policy.

character.

At this moment of time, apart from the limited option protecting our small industries and giving some perks to national industrialist, there is little else Third World countries can do in that sphere, a revolutionary alternative apart.

INDEPENDENT
NATIONAL ECONOMY
AND FTZ

The rich in fact do not subsidise the poor. It is the poor who subsidise the rich.

COMPETING FOIBLES

It is sheer madness to even to make attempts to compete with the industrial products of the advanced technological countries. Such attempts betray lack of understanding of imperialism itself. They further show that the belief in free trade competition as a panacea for our ills is not only boorish, but plain stupid. The only way in which we can compete at this stage of our history is to invite foreign multi national corporations to produce in this country and then export. But then, such a policy hardly fits into the bill of 'national production'. Local production labels do not make locally produced goods national in

The most obvious way out of the impending economic crisis is agricultural self reliance and the gearing of a great portion of the national industrial effort toward helping agricultural production in order to build an independent national economy.

The production in the FTZ, apart from salaries paid (which are also very low) will unquestionably be of an exploitative nature. Sri Lanka may gain statistically by FTZ production but in fact it will lose as a country.

The government seems determined to follow the export industrialisation option despite the known dangers of such a policy, and the conclusive evidence about its devastating nature.

S.L.F.P. NATION

The term subsidy is a misusage in the sense that it has been hitherto used in Sri Lanka in connection with the rationing system for the general public at controlled prices.

WELFARE SOCIALISM

Sri Lanka's welfare policies have received the plaudits of the world. The government's attempt to put in its place Singapore, in one shot changes the balance violently against the poor majority. Our standards of living and we are talking specifically of the level of living of the ordinary masses have for long been higher than other similar countries in Asia. Sociologists and other similar specialists have referred to this very often in their published reports and findings, and have often recommended such policies for other countries in the Third World who wish to work within the world imperialist framework. The paradox is that the UNP is giving up the very aspect of our national policy which made life tolerable (only barely even) for millions of people in Sri Lanka. It is therefore, giving up quality of life for the majority in order to achieve an international quality for very few Sri Lankans.

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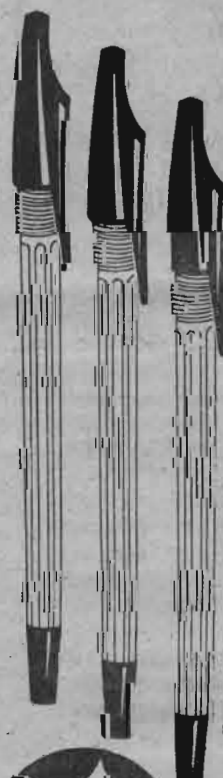
For instance, by its own admission even in 1984, there would probably be about 30,000 T.V. sets for a population of 14 million. This will be and seems to be, the be-all and end-all of the present way of thinking. There is no doubt that the ultimate result of all the simmering, high-sounding

people, and that is, the rising cost factor. This policy is at the behest of imperialist fund-entities like the IMF and the World Bank. The same is true of devaluation. The combined effect of these policies on the official statistics may be adrenaline to some but it is poison to the people. Every man, woman and child has felt this policy in the tightening of his or her purse and the hollow din of the pantry cupboard, that is except the few who have.

TRANSCENDENTAL LEVITATION

The Government seems to work on the basis that world market prices must be accepted by us, despite its participation in UNCTAD deliberations. At least UNCTAD should have taught the government that the entire Third World is at its wit's end about trade practice and prices which are controlled, manipulated and kept in a continuous state of transcendental levitation. It is one way of describing a phenomenon known to the world for a long time. It is the latest and most devastating incarnation of imperialism.

If the government does not use trade and customs barriers discriminately, it opens the people of this country to greater and more damaging exploitation by imperialism. Preventive measures like this are still the only way in which Third Wor-



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The Prime Minister turned god father, not the Brando type, I am told, when he was motoring down from N'Elia to Colombo during the Wesak holidays.

Packing picnic bags for snacks and lunch on the way, the Premadasa family decided at Welawaya that lunch was indicated. So they scouted around for a suitable place to sit down and tuck into the lunch.

In the wilds of Welawaya such places becoming Prime Ministerial eminence do not come easy. But not for the Sri Lankan Prime Minister. He spied a clean looking mud and wattle hut and the Premadasa family stepped in.

It turned out to be a chena cultivator's hut. The only occupant at that time was the 13 year old daughter who quite unaware of the identity of the Premadasa family smilingly invited them inside, produced mats from within and made things as comfortable as could be in a chena cultivator's house.

She explained her parents were away in the chena and that she cooked and kept house. She was coaxed by Mrs Premadasa to partake of the lunch which she manifestly relished. But she relished even more the gift of some frocks, belonging to daughter Dulanyali who herself gifted it to the cultivator's daughter. The frocks were in the holiday suitcase.

But the Godfather story does not end there. Two days after the slap-up lunch the chena cultivator and his wife were relaxing in the dusk when a car drew up alongside the hut. The family fears were soon allayed by the cheerful visitors who dropped two friendly bomb shells which had the family tongue-tied.

Their visitors of two days ago were, they were told, the Prime Minister and his family.

They were pop-eyed when they heard this. But their eyes almost fell out when they were informed that the P. M. and his family were donating a Rs 10,000 house to them to replace their mud and wattle shanty.

All they could do was to weep unashamedly—tears of joy.

Curiosity among the people has majored into active interest in Prime Minister R. Premadasa's physical fitness and mental alertness after his mini-election performance.

How does the the 55 year old political dynamo keep his engine running at such a furious pace.

He beats the dawn by an easy two hours. Even before the cocks could crow, his voice resounds through telephones and in his San Sebastian Hill office from 4.30 A. M.

His flock tell me that he keeps everyone on their toes from the first streaks of dawn. Hence a clean city. Hence prompt attention to complaints. Hence personal forays into work sites to check on progress.

Where does the trim always clean-shaven, brisk Prime Minister draw his energy from? A closely watched diet for one thing. Rigid, well-disciplined habits for another.

Premadasa-watchers—and there are quite a number of them tell me that he has turned vegetarian. He has no time for alcohol or cigarettes and save for his lunch breakfast and dinner are frugal.

Eat less, work more is the Premadasa slogan. He criss-crosses the island with less effort than a worker from Mt. Lavinia and he does not hug a helicopter, as Ministers usually do.

TV COMES TO SRI LANKA

In the last month, TV has taken Colombo by storm. Though only 'canned' Western programmes are being televised at present by the privately owned Independent Television Network (ITN), the desire to own a TV set has meant sales have skyrocketed — so have the prices. Despite a reduction in Customs duty from 50 per cent, to 12 1/2 per cent, black and white TV sets are still being hawked for Rs 3000 or more while a colour set can cost from Rs 6900 to 20,000. But prices are expected to come down when the Government imported low priced TV sets hit the market later this month.

The Managing Directors of ITN are two cousins, both in their early 30s. Anil Wijewardene studied International Business and Management in Los Angeles. Shan Wickremasinghe studied TV Technology in London. They combined forces to apply for permission to start a private TV station, when the Government asked interested parties to submit applications.

Both have their roots in mass media. It was their grand father, Mr. D. R. Wijewardene, who started Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd (Lake House), the largest news paper publishing group in the island. Anil looks after the business side of ITN while Shan looks after the technical aspects.

Incredible as it may sound, there are no other staff at ITN at present. Shan manages the technical aspects by operating a TV console the size of a large writing table. The equipment is the latest for colour TV transmission, and will be used for TV transmission of the 1980 Olympics. It is fully automated and can be operated by one person. ITN is the first TV station outside the US to use this sophisticated equipment.

Pacific Telecommunications of USA is assisting ITN to obtain the TV programmes and has interests in ITN. The American company operates small TV stations in some South Pacific countries and Micronesia.

PROBLEM

One of the first problems ITN faced was when the TV station had to be shifted from Colpetty, three miles from Colombo city, to Pannipitiya, in the suburbs just outside Colombo city limits.

This meant raising the height of the TV transmitting tower from 70 feet, as originally planned, to 175 feet. The reason for the shift in venue was because there may have been delays in constructing the tower in Colpetty, due to some misunderstandings between an engineer representing ITN and the owner of the tall building where the tower was to be constructed. Initial transmission was from a height of 45

feet which meant that many who had TV could not get clear images. But this has been rectified now. A tower which normally takes three months to construct has been put up in a month by Sri Lankan workers.

Vijitha Yapa

The TV hardware and the cost of setting up the station has been in the region of Rs. 4.5 million. The annual licence to operate the station costs Rs. 100,000. TV programmes for one year are expected to cost Rs. 5 million.

With such high costs was an independent TV station economically feasible? To my surprise, the Wijewardenes had not worked this out. "No one knows how many TV sets there are in the country. So how can one do a feasibility study?" asked Anil. UNESCO predicted after a survey that there would be 10,000 sets during the first year but that this would grow to 50,000 in five years. But present estimates place the number of TV sets in the country at 10,000 and a similar number are expected to be sold when the Government imports cheap sets in a few weeks.

Anil is in the process of preparing advertising brochures and trying to get some idea of what audiences he is reaching. At Rs 750 a minute, (US \$ 50) Sri Lanka must be offering the cheapest rates for TV advertising in the world.

Though the Government charges a licence fee of Rs. 150 a year for a black and white TV set and Rs. 250 for a colour set, ITN does not share in any of this revenue.

The Government TV network, a gift from the Japanese Government, is expected to begin transmission in January 1981. The Central transmitter will be installed at Mount Pidurutalagala, the highest mountain in the island.

No Government has so far given adequate thought as to what Sri Lankans should do in their leisure hours. The few cinema halls are nearly always full. Secretary to the Ministry of State, Sarath Amunugama says that when the present Government announced plans to shift the capital from Colombo to Jayewardenepura, the first question many people asked is how many cinema halls there are in the area.

To prevent TV from being restricted to the privileged few the Government has ambitious plans to have TV sets in as many villages as possible. A responsible person, preferably a science graduate in the village, will be trained in TV set maintenance. He will be responsible for the Government donated TV set in the village. As others in the village acquire TV sets, they will be able to come to him when repairs are necessary, instead of bringing the sets all the way to the nearest city.

Secretary to the Ministry of State, Sarath Amunugama explained that Sri Lanka was keen to avoid the mistake made by India when the SITE TV transmission was beamed at Indian villages using the American communication satellite.

At any given time in India, only 20 per cent of the TV sets used in that village experiment were found to be working," says Mr Amunugama. He says that the majority of the TV sets needed only slight repairs. Sri Lanka is keen to avoid such a situation.

For the Government perhaps the most important use will be to show progress on the various development projects which have been undertaken. The Minister of Education would like to use TV to teach subjects like science, as there is a dearth of trained teachers in this field.

The private TV station has not been issued with any regulation on what it can and cannot show. This has meant that ITN has been able to try out a variety of programmes to test what Sri Lankans prefer. "We have been given a free hand but it does not mean that we are going to screen things like pornographic movies just because some viewers want it," says Anil. The trust placed on these young men has meant they are more careful in selecting programmes than if they had to go through a censor board.

Perhaps the most important programmes of any TV station is the news section. Anil says as for world news, Visnews of London have offered Sri Lanka their Pacific News Service. For local news, there are no plans at the moment.

One reason is that they want to establish themselves and get through all their teething troubles before embarking on news programmes and local productions. The major reason though may be that they are not keen to get involved in politics, an inevitable factor in Sri Lanka.

Having watched from the sidelines, giants in the business world in Sri Lanka are impressed with what ITN has been able to achieve in a few weeks. Millionaire businessman Upali Wijewardene has asked for permission to start TV on three channels, to broadcast in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Others who are interested are the Maharaja Organisation and the Gunseenas, who own Independent News papers Ltd.

The Government has taken pains to explain to the Japanese Government that ITN's transmission is restricted to a small radius round Colombo; this, it appears, has pacified the Japanese to some extent.

As for the influence of TV on Sri Lankans, it is too early to say anything. Only one letter has appeared in the press so far about TV, and that from a woman who does not own a TV set!

(HIMMAT)