

Vol. 21 No. 52 — June 18, 1977 — **RUPEE ONE**

TRIBUNE



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Letter From The Editor

WITH THE NEXT ISSUE we begin the twentythird year of *Tribune's* publication. The first copy of *Tribune* was published on May 1, 1954, and the paper has been in continuous publication from that time to this day—except for two periods when the paper was suspended for short periods; first during the Emergency of 1958 and second in 1971. It has not been easy to keep *Tribune* going because the UNP government from 1965-1970 and the United Front government from 1970 to date had refused to place even a small quota of government advertisements in the paper. In the period, 1956 to 1964, old readers will recall, *Tribune* had received a sizeable quota of government and private sector advertising, and this may have been because of the fact that, in that period, *Tribune* had tilted very heavily on the pro-SLFP Government side. The UNP from 1965 took its pound of flesh out of the *Tribune* with a heavy doze of vengeance, because the paper had been and was then still "anti-UNP". *Tribune* had, from its inception, spoken up for the SLFP and the Left because the entire "national press" was set against them. For many years, *Tribune* was the only paper on the side of the anti-UNP coalition and had "fought" (as best as it could) the might of *Lake House* and the *Times*. The role played by *Tribune* in the elections of 1956 and 1960 have historic significance. But in the period after 1963/64, when the SLFP and the Left had developed their own press, *Tribune* had begun to adopt lines of thinking and comment which tried to eschew tilt of any kind. Slowly, little by little, in the years after 1968/69, *Tribune* had begun to establish a reputation for fair, impartial and objective comment. The shift away from a rigid inhibited anti-UNP position to a neutral nonaligned one angered important sections of the United Front. In spite of the many governmental pinpricks inflicted on *Tribune* after 1970, in spite of the total refusal to recognise *Tribune* for government advertising and in spite of the hints to private sector advertisers that it would not be in their interests to advertise in the *Tribune*, this paper has continued to exist. The story of how a non-aligned paper like the *Tribune* has survived must be told, and will be told, at the right time by persons who know how *Tribune* has been kept alive. What the future has in store for *Tribune* is anybody's guess—it is a small paper in a small country—but it has a role to play in Sri Lanka. What the new Government—be it SLFP, UNP, ULF, or a still unenvisaged coalition—will decide on the question of government advertising (over 80% of all available advertising now is government) cannot be anticipated, but developments in neighbouring India are likely to have a bearing on the matter. Right up to the Emergency of June 1975, the Congress Government had allotted all government advertising (though not on a fair basis) to all newspapers, weeklies, periodicals—even Opposition and anti-Congress papers. During the Emergency, government advertising was made a weapon in the hands of the Caucus to straight-jacket the press. Today, the Janata government has promised to restore the old traditions, but with fairer distribution of government advertising to all publications. The Janata government has also taken very wise decisions in regard to the officially-controlled media like the All India Radio—all recognised political parties, participating in the current Assembly elections, were allotted time on the AIR. This is the first time this was done in India and it is to be hoped that other countries in the region, like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and all Southeast Asian countries will follow suit. There is no doubt an element of self-interest in *Tribune's* desire that the new Government should adopt a rational and fair policy towards the press (especially in the matter of advertising allocation, subscription copies for government departments and for its representatives abroad), but there is much more in it than the benefits (small and incidental) it can bring *Tribune*. If this country is to develop a healthy democratic press, which will reflect all trends of thought and opinion, the Government must make it possible for big and small papers to exist. Apart from advertising and other facilities, it is also necessary to have a Press Council Law which is workable, democratic and fair. There are many defects in the present Press Council Law. It was designed to give the Government an opportunity to "manage" a controlled press. The sooner this set-up is ended the better. This week we had promised to survey the existing press in Sri Lanka (we had dealt with the *Lake House*, *Times* and the *Sun/Dawasa* groups last week) but carried away with the story of *Tribune* we have not been able to do so. Next week, we will examine some of the other newspapers which are read and play a part in the political life of the country.

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Election Trends, Israel
And Danger Of War

Colombo, June 15.

A run-through a large number of electorates in the Sinhala northern half of the island, covering several provinces and a larger number of administrative districts, just three weeks after a similar trip immediately after the Dissolution, indicates that there are significant changes in the political undercurrents sweeping through these areas. One month ago, nearly everybody was certain that UNP candidates would romp in home with comfortably large individual majorities. The reports from the Sinhala southern sector were no different, and on the basis of this, many political observers were then tempted to predict that on a national scale the UNP would secure a landslide with a two-thirds majority in the NSA.

There is no doubt that there is a discernible change in the Sinhala Northern half, and though reliable reports from the South are not yet available, there are reasons to believe that a similar political catalysis has begun to transform political trends in the South as well. The number of people—with a keen political sense in the areas outside Colombo—are not as sure as they were three weeks ago that the UNP would steam-roller its way to an annihilating victory. They say that the common people, who were angry and indignant with the acts of commission and omission perpetrated by this Government, (they are still angry and indignant), had sworn they would vote against the SLFP and everybody had therefore concluded that they would vote UNP. These people—and they are a large majority—are still angry with the SLFP, especially for the misuse of power, and want to "teach the SLFP a lesson", but they do not trust the UNP enough to vote for it. And the UNP has still not inspired enough confidence that it is a "new" party—different from the Kotelawela and Senanayakian UNP. The latest round of gimmicks, seeing a Russian behind every bush and making a hue and cry about it with telegrams and

letters to Brezhnev, has tended to increase the apprehensions of the uncommitted voter and the disenchanted SLFPer that the so-called "new" UNP is still the old wolf in a pseudo "socialist" garb. Several pompous statements of UNP leaders in the course of the election campaign have also made many feel that the old UNP is still there in a big way—to mix our metaphors the leopard has not been able to change its spots.

This anti-Left (anti-Russian so far) gimmickry coupled with die-hard pronouncements of UNP leaders may satisfy the cold war instincts of some of the old guard of the UNP, but the old guard by themselves cannot carry the UNP to a landslide victory. UNP strategists seem to be misled by the fact that the very young voter 18-24 (boys and girls), flock to their meetings. These voters are those who do not know the UNP of old. They come of a category of voters who grew up in the era of the SLFP, and the UNP is a unknown quantity to them. These young voters are flocking to the UNP meetings and they are likely to vote UNP, but this group coupled with the old guard cannot give the UNP that kind of majority which will give it a dominating position in the new NSA.

But the over-24 and over-25 "youth" voters have bitter memories of the UNP, and though they are disgusted with the way the SLFP bigwigs have run the country, they are afraid to vote UNP. In the result, many persons in rural areas seem to think that a large number of those who were with the SLFP and the UF would not vote with the UNP: that if they do not abstain from voting they would vote ULF or Independent. Really there is no swing away from the UNP, as some may be tempted to say, but the indignant protest vote which many political observers had thought would go to the UNP—as it had gone Janatha in India—is more than likely to go ULF or Independent.

ULF and Independent candidates may not win many seats—as matters stand today—but they will poll more votes than many had thought they would. This swing to the ULF and Independents will arise mainly in seats where the voters are certain that the UNP will not win outright. What these voters want

to do is to make the SLFP sit up and think, but in this process the UNP is likely to win a number of seats on the divided vote. What pundits in Colombo do not seem to realise is that the anti-UNP sentiment is deep and widespread in the rural areas, and the propaganda that the "new" UNP is a different cup of tea has not gone down very well: it has not convinced those whom it was intended to convert.

The mistakes and misdeeds of the SLFP had generated near-universal shouting and scolding against the Government, and this had led many observers to conclude that there was a definitive swing to the UNP. These people were and are anxious to know what the so-called "new" UNP was like and they have flocked to UNP meetings, especially the meetings of the LEADER—the UNP's personality cult about JR has not gone down well with many—to know what the UNP is and what it proposes to do. The fact that these thousands flocked to UNP was taken as an indication that the UNP was well on top, but a talk with a cross section of the uncommitted and pro-SLFP voters who attended UNP meetings showed that they are disappointed with the UNP mainly because of its poor propaganda.

(We do not intend to analyse and dissect UNP's infantile propaganda coupled with its McCarthyian gimmickry in this issue, but unless the English and Sinhala papers of the UNP show a complete transformation immediately—with just one month before election day—this sentiment against the UNP is bound to harden. There is no doubt that the English (UNP) *The Journal* is reminiscent of the days of Sir John Kotelawela and Dudley Senanayake when the chief election plank of the UNP was a hue and cry against "marxism", "communism", against soviet and chinese "interference". It is also a poor replica of the worst days of Lake House in the days of the late J. L. Fernando—who had specialised in smear campaigns and character assassinations—and in the era of the golden pens and golden brains of Lake House who were later compelled to retire ignominiously from the world of journalism in Ceylon. Some of them have fled abroad to enjoy the material benefits

of the backlash of what is left of the cold war or reap the rewards for the heroic deeds they performed as cold war warriors. A few others, who did not flee the country, have resurrected themselves to show their old hand in the current UNP propaganda journals and have very nearly succeeded in blowing up the image of the "new" UNP which J. R. Jayewardene has tried very hard to create. There is one month to go and much can be done to re-furbish the now fading image of the "new" UNP, but with the old guard so powerfully entrenched in the seats of power in the UNP propaganda machine it is difficult to envisage any real change).

Three weeks ago, many astute observers of the electoral scene had taken bets with *Tribune* that the UNP was likely to bag 100 to 110 seats with the SLFP getting 25 to 40 seats. Last weekend the same prognosticators had come down to 85 to 95 seats for the UNP with a proportionate increase for the SLFP. And they are now willing to admit that voters, whom they had expected to go enthusiastically UNP, had begun to harden against the UNP that this trend was snowballing: that unless the UNP was able to check this trend the number of seats it could win (even in divided three-or-four cornered contests) would drop considerably. Many people who had been expected to vote UNP earlier, the same observers say, would vote ULF or Independent or even reluctantly SLFP (a known devil was better than an unknown UNP).

It is not possible to agree or disagree with these observers and forecasters about the outcome of the elections, because it is not possible to know what is in the minds of voters (remember the old adage the devil himself knoweth not the mind of man) but what can be said is that cocksure self-assured assertion that the UNP was on the crest of rising wave that will carry it to a total two-thirds majority victory has begun to fade. Observers have begun to talk about how close the outcome was likely to become. Even UNP's LEADER, J. R. Jayewardene, in an interview with the Indian weekly *Himmat's* correspondent Vijitha Yapa, had said that "I'll invite them all" when he was asked "which party will you invite to join in a coalition if the UNP fails to get an overall majority?" In that interview, JR himself

exudes the same confidence as if the UNP would get a two-thirds majority (or at least very near it), but while many neutral observers had expressed the same opinion three weeks ago today they show much more caution in what they predict about the elections. They say that the UNP still has a very big edge over the SLFP, but are not willing to predict a landslide.

Our trip round some of the electorates confirms the view expressed by these observers. Even those who say that the UNP will win now say that the UNP has to fight hard for every vote (it was a different story three weeks ago.) Those who do not care to make detailed predictions say that the SLFP will do better than many expect, and also that votes polled by the ULF and the some Independents will be an eye-opener to those who tend things for granted.

IN SRI LANKA, today, all attention has been focussed on the coming General Elections with the result that there has been an unfortunate tendency, to ignore important international events which in the long run, will have serious impact on all Third World countries. One of the most serious of these developments is the coming to power in Israel of a group, acknowledged to be terrorists, under the leadership of Menachem Begin, former leader of the Fanatic Irgun Zem Leumi (the Stern Gang), of the 1940s. This stunning victory of Begin's extremist Likud bloc in the elections in Israel on May 17, has virtually ensured

the eruption of a new Middle East war, and likely World War III, within a short time. The fact that Menachem Begin is a close friend of Orzesinski, Carter's National Security Adviser, has perturbed moderate circles in all countries and even the pro-West groups in the Arab world. Begin is an ultra extremist on questions of defence and foreign policy and his statement have already thrown the Arab states into an uproar.

Arab commentators view the Likud victory as an (American) Zionist conspiracy to bring a head-on confrontation between Israel and the Arabs in order to strengthen American political control over the entire Middle East and its vast oil resources and also thereby seek to curb the power of the USSR in this region. It is this latter confrontation that may spark a world war.

West European commentators state that the emergence of the Likud is an aberration of American efforts to instal a malleable Labour government in Israel around General Moshe Dayan. But the emergence of Likud has stymied American hopes. The Likud has already stated that it will not return any of the territories Israel captured in the 1967 war. It has announced that it will oppose the setting up of a Palestinian State. This is nothing but an invitation to the Arabs to go war.

No sooner the Likud leaders made these statements there was a devastating plunge of the New York Stock Exchange which fell, on May 25, to a 16-month low of 903 on the Dow-Jones average.

COVER

On the cover we have a picture of a tea factory. It is a prosaic picture of a humdrum nature. In the hill country in the bad old days of the Sterling and other Companies there were several hundreds of such factories. Now, after Land Reform and the take over, these tea factories are still in existence, but the majority of them are in a sad state. They have not been maintained as they should have been. Many of them are in a state of disuse. Many others have been misused. Some are already falling apart. In this week's issue we have spotlighted conditions in the plantations. If the economy of the country is to be sustained it is necessary that the tea plantations and the tea industry should be rehabilitated, at least at the level they were kept during the days of the capitalists. It is no doubt true that as a nationalised industry it is possible to develop the tea industry with more modernised, rationalised and sophisticated methods of planting, production and marketing than under private ownership. But the men who have been put in the top positions of the tea industry today do not seem capable of making the grade. Something drastic has to be done soon if the industry is to be saved.

The market is said to have collapsed when it perceived the twin dangers of a Middle East war and an economic breakdown.

The developments in the Middle East are dangerous. The new Israeli government seems determined to trigger a new war. Its military leaders lost no time in declaring that the Israeli Air Force was capable of bombing Arab lands far away from Israel. This was taken to be a threat to countries like Iraq. What is significant is that Baghdad has taken this threat seriously and the government has ordered a day-and-night air alert over its skies—to meet a possible Israeli air attack. Such tactics may seem only a part of a war of nerves, but such a "war" is often a prelude to a real war.

A War in the Middle East will unsettle conditions throughout the world and will bring new crisis and troubles. The oil supplies to many countries will be disrupted and this will bring additional problems. Many in Sri Lanka seem to be blissfully ignorant of the significance of the developments in the Middle East. It is true that a

small country like Ceylon will not be able to prevent war or contribute to peace but it is essential that people should be aware of the real situation.

THE ELECTORAL TRIUMPH of the Likud has come amid widespread charges of vote fraud and irregularities. It has also been pointed out that (American Zionist groups have worked for sometime now to undermine the Israeli Labour Party and its moderate and leftist elements. The moderate groups led by Yitzhak Rabin had been ousted from the leadership of the Labour Party through various devices (including "a leak" about Rabin's bank account in the U.S.A.). And today, Israel and its immense military arsenal is in the hands of former terrorists like Begin, Shimon Peres and the former Chief of Staff General Yigal Yadin (who now heads Israel's third major party, the Democratic Movement have changed). Uniting this clique of war-hawks, which includes such extremists as General Ezer Weizmann of Likud and General Ariel Sharon, is the shadowy figure former Defence Minister who is

very closely connected with ultra-extremist Zionist circles in the USA.

Arab commentators regard the results of the Israeli elections as part of the active plans of diehard American vested interests to cripple or destroy the capacity of the Persian Gulf to produce at its current level of more than two thirds of world oil exports. Although an estimated 30 to 70 percent of Saudi Arabia oil supplies remains shut down after the mid-May sabotage of a huge pipe line and pumping station, it is likely that the Saudis will be able to put this right within a short time: but, the threat to the Middle East by the Likud government is considered to be very real. Virtually every Arab government has blasted the election of Begin as the signal for a new middle East war. "The victory of an extremist alliance headed by a terrorist of international repute like Menachem Begin will push the Middle East close to a new war," said the Damascus Radio. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait have issued similar statements.

SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

May 29 — June 4

A DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND THE WORLD
COMPILED FROM DAILY NEWSPAPERS
PUBLISHED IN COLOMBO.

CDN—Ceylon Daily News; CDM—Ceylon Daily Mirror; CO—Ceylon Observer; ST—Sunday Times; DM—Dinamina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa; SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina; DP—Dinapathi; SU—Sun; DW—Dawasa; CM—Chinthamani; WK—Weekend; RR—Rivirasa;

SUNDAY, MAY 29: The smuggling of opium to Sri Lanka has increased considerably following the lifting of the emergency in India. In addition to the seven political parties already recognised by the Commissioner of Elections, only the Ceylon Worker's Congress is expected to satisfy the conditions necessary for recognition to field candidates on concessionary deposits at the forthcoming general election. The AMS and the GMOA have agreed to a proposal of the Ministry of Health that the Paediatric Unit at the Anuradhapura Hospital be re-opened till August 1. The People's Republic of China has decided to provide the latest equipment for the Acupuncture Unit to be set up at the Colombo General Hospital—SO. The Indian Premier, Shri Morarji Desai is sending a high-powered delegation to Sri Lanka next week for side-ranging bi-lateral talks on a variety of matters relating to law enforcement which begins here on June 2. All train services have been completely paralysed since Friday midnight as a

result of a certain section of employees of the Railway working to rule. The green light has been given for Air Ceylon's latest lease of a DC8 from Air Canada to undertake the heavy winter programme in Europe. The planting sector is in a dilemma; if the supply of liquid fuel is not rushed to these areas by this weekend the entire tea industry will come to a grinding halt, it is feared—WK. The Left United Front is to contest the next general election on the basis of a twelve point programme. It is stated in the TULF election manifesto that those of the TULF candidates who are successful at the general election will form a 'Tamil National Council' in order to plan the political set up of the Tamil state.—VK While sporadic clashes occurred in Nuwara Eliya town last Friday between supporters of the UNP and the SLFP within a stone's throw of the police station, police did not intervene. The University's Board of Governors has appealed to the University Teacher's Association not to disrupt the June examination through Trade Union Action. The train service is at a standstill and there is no likelihood of its returning to normal until tomorrow the earliest, according to a spokesman for the Railway. Wide coverage has been given in the Indian Press to the selection of Mr. Anura Bandaranaike as the candidate for the Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya seat and Mrs. Bandaranaike's recent 'weekend campaign' for her son—ST.

MONDAY, MAY 30: The 'go-slow' and the 'work-to-rule' in the railway has crippled rail services completely. During the weekend there were no night mail and long distance trains; short distance trains were cancelled from Thursday evening; goods trains were affected and transport of food, fuel, fertiliser, cement

and mail came to a standstill from Friday. Central Bank employees demonstrated on Friday for about three hours against the inadequacies of a salary relief given to them. The Polgahawela seat in the NSA is to be contested by a Buddhist monk at the July elections. The Minister of Health wants the available space in hospitals utilised for ayurvedic dispensaries.—CDN. Land alienation in the Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya electorate will continue according to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa at a mass rally in the Yatinuwara electorate. The main threat to all the gains that the people have made in recent years come from the UNP and the reactionary forces it leads, states the preamble to the declaration issued to mark the formation of the United Left Front. Government doctors are poised for a strike on June 2. The Sri Lanka Vimukthi Balavegaya has decided not to put forward any candidates to contest the 1977 General Elections, according to a press release issued by its general secretary, Mr. Prins Gunsekera.—CDM. No member of the staff manning polling booths will be allowed to stay anywhere other than the polling booth itself on the night before election day. A senior ASP was yesterday rushed from Colombo to take charge of a 'trouble zone' at Nuwara Eliya.—SU. The CTB services in various parts of the island have improved; the CTB is waging a battle to bring the service back to normal after the May Day mishaps.—DP. The CP is reconsidering its decision to contest seats in the Northern and Eastern Provinces; this follows the appeal of some high ups of the CP in the North, who say it should not contest the TULF at this juncture when they are so close.—VK. The Committee on Food Aid has approved aid worth Rs. 43.3 million for 25,000 families to be settled under the mahaweli diversion scheme. Ample shipments of foodstuffs are now being unloaded in the Port of Colombo, while more vessels which have arrived with essential commodities are awaiting unloading arrangements. Condensed milk which had virtually disappeared from the shelves of co-op stores and other retail outlets during the last two months is available again. Consumers have been badly hit by the shortage of soap and matches.—CO.

TUESDAY, MAY 31: The State Plantations Corporation has decided to increase its work force by about 75,000 with immediate effect; a spokesman for the Corporation said yesterday that the regional managers were due to meet this week to draw up plans to give employment to this additional body of workers. The question whether Deputy Ministers can continue to function under a caretaker government is still being debated; the English version of the constitution, interpreted by the Attorney General has ruled they cannot; the Sinhala version apparently goes contrary to the English version. A triumvirate consisting of Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, Dr. N. M. Perera and Mr. Pieter Keuneman will lead the United Left Front, ULF sources said yesterday. The Railway will provide a better train service today when twenty eight trains will operate.—CDN. Only two new parties have been recognised by the Commissioner of Elections to contest the forthcoming general election; they are the TULF and the political wing of the CWC. The stoppage of work by 2,000 odd non-staff grade officers of the Central Bank which started last Friday continues. Train services remained paralysed yesterday as the railway workers continued their work-to-rule campaign defying the call by the Ministry

Transport to resume normal work. The International Cultural Information Service has urged the PM to close all taverns and bars during election week from July 17 to 23.—CDM. More than 1,000 Police personnel will be on duty in the city on Nomination Day—June 6. Para medical personnel are complaining that their demands have not been met so far although an assurance had been given by the government that these demands would be conceded by May 31. The Food Commissioner's Department was yesterday making arrangements to rush food supplies to areas where stocks cannot be moved by train because of the work-to-rule by railway men.—SU. The ULF will not contest the general elections on a common symbol; it has been decided that the two established left parties, the LSSP and the CP will use their traditional symbols while the new PDP will use either of these.—CO. The CID is to keep a close vigil on foreign diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka in connection with the coming general election; they are also keeping a close check on political parties and independent candidates who are contesting the election and their monetary transactions.—DP. Direct dialling is going to be introduced to six new towns; they are Jaffna, Kurunegala, Badulla, Ratnapura, Anuradhapura and Trincomalee; this is estimated to cost around 65,00,000 US dollars.—DM.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1: Over three lakhs of government and co-operative employees will receive enhanced salary benefits with effect from today; this follows a government decision to consolidate the special allowances payable to employees with their salaries. Although the railway managed to run 28 trains yesterday and relieve the burden on the CTB for transporting office workers, still thousands of Poson devotees who normally make the pilgrimage to Anuradhapura by train were unable to do so owing to the go-slow of the railway workers which officially continues. The Joint Committee of the GMOA and the AMS yesterday met in emergency session and decided to launch concerted trade union action which would amount to a walk out.—CDN. A serious situation has arisen at the Colombo Campus, after the resignation of all Deans, Heads of Departments and Acting Heads of Departments of the faculties of Arts, Education and Law; the resignation by the University Teachers' Association, was against government's failure to implement salary proposals. The Board of Governors of the University of Sri Lanka will meet in emergency session today to seek a solution to the impasse created over the salary disputes on University teachers. According to LSSP sources, the ex-MP for Kottawa, Mr. Chandra Goonesekera would contest the PM at Attanagalla.—CDM. Deputy Ministers are continuing in their offices despite the PM's advice that they should cease to function. As the work-to-rule of railway employees continues without any signs of settlement, the authorities have been compelled to curtail train services on most lines and cancel others. The CP will put forward 24 candidates for the coming general election. The LSSP will not field a candidate against Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara who is contesting the newly-carved Eheliyagoua seat at the general elections. The alienation of land in the Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya electorate remains suspended despite Agriculture and Lands Minister, Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa's assertion that it is going on.—SU. Rs. 3 lakhs worth of spare parts belonging to the CTB has found its way to

various parts of the island; this was discovered recently by a flying squad—DW.

THURSDAY, JUNE 2: The government yesterday made a 'final appeal' to all railway employees to resume effective work immediately; a communique issued in the afternoon said that the government does not propose to abdicate its duty or responsibility or to refrain from authority. The majority of police officers attached to the Nuwara Eliya police station in the Nuwara Eliya division have reported sick. The Minister of Health yesterday said that trade union action by the doctors would be a breach of agreement reached between the government and the two doctor's associations in April this year. The ULF yesterday announced the names of 120 candidates for the general election—CDN. All IRC's thugs and others listed as trouble makers will be arrested by the police and warned to be on good behaviour during the general elections. Police expenditure on the general elections will be about Rs 2 million. The administration of four of the five campuses of the University of Sri Lanka almost completely paralysed yesterday due to the resignation of dons of the Colombo, Jaffna, and Vidyalankara Campuses was followed by dons of Vidyodaya Campus too following suit. The Minister of Health commenting on the strike to be launched by the doctors and specialists today said that the strike was politically motivated. A government communique issued yesterday states that the railway strike raises the doubt whether it is motivated to embarrass the government on the eve of the general elections. The Ceylon Bank Employees Union has threatened to call out their members in all banks on strike from June 22 if their outstanding demands were not settled to the satisfaction of the unions before that. A High-Powered team of Indian officials arrived yesterday for today's Indo-Sri Lanka on anti-smuggling, exchange frauds and narcotics at the BMICH—CDM. The SP of Nuwara Eliya has been transferred to Vavuniya, and the present ASP of Vavuniya is to succeed him from June 5; this move had sparked off a wave of protests from police stations in the Nuwara Eliya region—SU.

FRIDAY JUNE 3: The government is expected to fix a deadline for doctors who launched trade union action yesterday to get back to work; if the doctors do not meet that deadline, the government will withdraw the enhanced allowances granted recently and withhold the implementation of the co-operative scheme of channeled practice, authoritative sources told the *Daily News* yesterday. One hundred and sixteen trains, the same number as yesterday, will operate today. The SLFP yesterday announced the list of 161 party nominees for the forthcoming general elections. The GMOA and the AMS have instructed their members in the Kandy hospital to do normal work today, in view of the SLFP rally being held there. The dispute over which some police officers at Nuwara Eliya submitted sick notes has now been settled. The Ceylon Estate Staff's Union will contest three seats at the general election. A drop in price which deflated the recent tea boom for two weeks last month is likely to pick up in the months to come, according to a spokesman for the tea trade—CDN. The Board of Governors of the University of Sri Lanka yesterday discussed with the Amunugama Committee the question of granting enhanced salaries to all grades of the academic staff. Hospitals

throughout the island were completely paralysed as members of the GMOA and the AMS walked out yesterday. The GMOA and the AMS will suspend their strike tomorrow, according to association sources. The Ceylon Bank Employees' Union has threatened to call out their members in all banks on strike from June 22 if their outstanding demands were not settled to the satisfaction of the union before that date. The Weaving Supplies Corporation has increased the price of cotton yarn by almost 26 to 27% following this price hike textile manufacturers are faced with a bleak future—CDM. Trade Union organisations of the SLFP yesterday protested to the PM that they had not been consulted in the selection of party candidates and other matters connected with the general elections. All taverns and foreign liquor shops will be closed for one week during the general elections. Deans and Heads of Faculties and Departments of the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka resigned from their posts yesterday; they followed 26 others in the Colombo and Vidyodaya Campuses who resigned from their posts on Tuesday over a salary dispute with the government. The government yesterday cancelled the transfer of Mr. R. S. D. Silva, S.P., Nuwara Eliya. The PM is likely to attend the Commonwealth PM's Conference beginning in London next week—SU. Government doctors have decided to run 'emergency services' at all hospitals today too—CO. If the railway strike continues the government has decided to requisition private lorries for the transport of food and fuel to the outstations. Railway workers have decided to continue fighting for their demands—CM.

SATURDAY JUNE 4: The PM addressing the crowd at Kandy at the inauguration of the SLFP election campaign said that the people were politically mature enough to vote and that it was not necessary to make false promises. Sri Lanka and Egypt have signed a new five year trade agreement on the basis of free currency payments; the agreement came into effect from May 28 and was signed in Cairo on that date by the Secretary Ministry of Trade. The Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs has decided to import safety matches to meet the present shortage; this is likely to continue till adequate stocks are produced by local manufacturers. Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike will lead the Sri Lanka delegation to the Commonwealth PM's meeting in London to be held from June 8 to 16—CDN. The PM said yesterday at Bogambara that the elections were held not through fear of JR, as he alleges, but because she firmly believed in democracy. The PM has said that the present strikes in the country were politically motivated to make things difficult for the government. Sir Razeek Fareed will not contest Colombo Central as he does not wish to make it a 'triangular contest'. Italian government has gifted 3974 metric tons of wheat flour to Sri Lanka—CDM. The PM yesterday appealed to opposition parties to co-operate in conducting a peaceful election. Doctors are to suspend their strike today and tomorrow. The UNP leader has pledged that his party, when in power, would not touch the temple lands. About 100 policemen were rushed from Kandy to Mawattagama yesterday following clashes between two political factions—SU. About 90,000 acres of land which has been taken over under the land reform Commission, will be given to 1 lakh 15,000 families (who have never owned any land) in small plots for a nominal sum—DM.

CANNED FISH

C.W.E. Officialdom's Comments On "Tribune's" Story

About three to four weeks ago, an official of the Ministry of Trade telephoned the **Tribune** and said that the Ministry (or the CWE) had a communication to send us about the **CANNED FISH** story in the **Tribune** of April 23, 1977. The official was informed that **Tribune** would be happy to publish any correction or information about canned fish. On or about June 2 **Tribune** received a letter in Sinhala from an official in the Ministry of Trade enclosing an unsigned copy of a report—this was in English—purporting to be from the Chairman of the CWE to the Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, about the **Tribune** story on canned fish. **Tribune** returned the official's letter in Sinhala asking him kindly to send an official translation in English, as required by law, (many of our bureaucrats either do not know the law or do not bother about the law). So far, we have not yet received the official English translation, but in the meantime on June 7 we received a letter dated June 3 a signed letter from the Deputy Chairman of the C.W.E. seeking to set out the "correct" facts relating to the CWE import of canned fish. We publish below the two communications received—we shall publish the covering letter from the official when we receive it—so that readers can know what the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the CWE have to say about a matter which about there has been much public heart-burning and disgust (though the bureaucrats in the CWE do not seem to have even the faintest glimmer of it in their smug complacency). We shall make our comments on the statements by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in due course, in a forthcoming issue, after we have gone further into the matter. (We also invite our readers to send us comments on this question of the canned fish: the statements of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman throw revealing light on the operational practices of the CWE which imported the fish and the Co-ops which distributed the same).

However, we would immediately like to make one preliminary and tentative comment on the "admission" that the lowest and most attractive tender offer was rejected because it was (a) from a prohibited source, namely South Africa, and (b) the tender was received late. Regarding the first "excuse"—frankly, we treat it as an "excuse" and not a valid reason—Sri Lanka has exported and continues to export to the prohibited country of South Africa tea, coffee and other nontraditional exports. (If these have been stopped recently there has been no public notification of the same). Furthermore, CRA holders have been allowed to import freely from the "prohibited source" of South Africa. CRA imports are licensed by the Government, and it is difficult to see why the governmental authority which licenses CRA imports should object to CWE imports from South Africa. If it is Government policy that there should be no imports from a "prohibited source", should this condition not be laid down as part of the tender stipulations, i.e. by excluding all tender offers from South Africa and other "prohibited sources"?

In the absence of a clear-cut government policy on imports and exports from South Africa and the non-inclusion of such a stipulation in the tender notice, it is difficult not to draw the inference that the "excuse" of the "prohibited source" is an after-thought to buttress a weak argument as to why the lowest tender was rejected.

And if the CWE has become so sticky about "late" receipt of this particular tender—and if the CWE felt that it was a good enough excuse—it need not have trotted out the excuse about the "prohibited source." But two weak arguments do not make one good one. Regarding the second "excuse" of "late" receipt, neither the Chairman nor the Deputy Chairman say how "late" the two "late offers" were. Is it suggested that the offers were received "so late" that they were made after some persons opening the tenders had "leaked out" the earlier offers to the "late" tenderers?

Further, it is also stressed that these two tenders did not "conform to the conditions laid down in the tender notice." What were these "conditions" and was this "nonconformity" and violation so grave and heinous that merited off-

hand rejection of the tenders—though much foreign exchange would have been saved if the "late" offers had been pursued. The CWE must throw more light on this aspect of the matter.

However, to come back to the "lateness," the two communications seem to indicate that the two "late" tenders were received before any final decision was made. Even if the offers were received "late", and even if there was a suggestion that the "late" tenderers had waited for "leaked information" from the CWE regarding offers (has any CWE official been taken to task for such a "leak"?), did not the national interests of Sri Lanka demand that the CWE should have confronted the "in time" tenderers with the prices offered in the late tenders and offered, at least, the "successful" tenderers (Mitsubishi and Itoh) an opportunity to come down on their prices if they wanted the order? Has this practice not been followed in hundreds of cases of tender purchases during the last thirty years and more? Tender rules have been framed to get the supplies from the cheapest source and also to minimize other malpractices in purchases of this kind, and not be made an "excuse" to reject lower tenders on the most specious grounds? But tender rules have always, especially in recent years, been applied in the most flexible manner.

Even if the CWE has developed a sudden (and new) stickiness for "correct" tender procedure, is it not within the rights of the CWE bureaucrats to make use of the lower "late" offers to bring down the prices of the offers "in time"? How much foreign exchange has the country lost because the lower offers, even by "late" tenderers, were not used to secure an advantage of a substantial kind for the country at a time of great economic stress? Normal common sense should have made the CWE use the lower offers to compel the Japanese suppliers to come down on the prices—otherwise the CWE could have threatened to call for fresh tenders stipulating that it would not entertain offers from South Africa. It will be interesting and enlightening to know what the CWE has to say as to why so much foreign exchange should have been thrown away under cover of "excuses" that are not convincing (unless additional facts are adduced by the CWE in support of their contention).

C.W.E. officialdom will do well to clear up this matter, because of

the main allegations in the "gossip" referred to in the **Tribune** "Confidentially" column of April 23 is that some C.W.E. officials have developed a remarkable and continuing "softness" for Japanese suppliers. This kind of allegation could have been set in motion by disappointed tenderers, but **Tribune** investigations have shown that these allegations have not emanated from interested trade circles alone. —Editor.

Co-operative Wholesale
Establishment,
44, Union Place,
Colombo 2.
3rd June 1977

Ref. D/CH/16.
The Editor,
Tribune Publications,
43, Dawson St.,
Colombo 2.

Dear Sir,

I refer to the paragraph on Canned Goods which appeared in your valuable Journal of the 23rd April 1977 and would like to set out the facts relating to the import of Canned Fish, for your information.

2. On 20th January, the Secretary, Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs informed the CWE that the Government had decided to release an allocation of Rs. 30,000,000/- for the import of Canned Fish. This was in view of obtaining larger quantities of Dried Fish in the effort to combat the prevailing high prices of fish, dried fish etc., in the market. Accordingly Tenders were invited for the purchase of Canned Mackerel in Natural Oil of the sizes 15 ozs. and 5.5 ozs. At the time of closing tenders the CWE received 18 offers and there were two late offers.

3. The lowest offer for 15 oz. tins was from M/s. Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan at US \$ 16.24 per carton of 48x15 ozs. tins. The lowest offer for the 5.5 oz. tins was from M/s. C. Itoh & Co., of Japan at US \$ 14.30 per carton of 100 tins. There were no offers either of Mackerel in tomato sauce or in natural oil which were lower than these among the tenders received in time. One of the late offers was from South Africa and offered 20,000 cartons of Pilchards in tomato sauce at US \$ 13.17 per carton. Apart from the fact that this offer was from a prohibited

source, it did not also conform to the conditions laid down in the Tender Notice.

4. The CWE decided to import Canned Fish in Natural Oil because in the past too we imported canned fish in natural oil, and considering the fact that fish in natural oil enjoys a general all round consumer acceptability.

5. The imports were made not with a view to competing with the C.R.A. imports but to supplement the supplies of dried fish with canned fish, as mentioned earlier. The prices quoted at the tender were net prices and did not include any discount or commission either to local Agents or to the CWE.

6. The distribution of canned fish at the moment is only through Co-operative Societies at the rate of one large tin or two small tins per Household, per month. The distribution so far, has been successful.

Yours faithfully,
**The Co-operative Wholesale
Establishment**

K. Sittambalam
Deputy Chairman.

COPY

The Secretary,
Ministry of Trade,
330, Union Place,
Colombo 2.

I refer to the paragraphs on canned goods which appeared in the **Tribune** of April 23, 1977. In these paragraphs, the following points are made:—

i. Most of the luxury items imported and sold in Sri Lanka are sold at extraordinarily high prices, as the imports were made under the CRA for which credit premiums are charged plus FEECs at 65% plus large margins of profits for the dealers. The CWE has found that canned fish, such as Sardines in Tomato Sauce and Sardines in natural oil have been sold at Rs. 8.50 upwards by the private shops in Colombo.

ii. The CWE set out to compete with the CRA holders in regard to Canned Fish and that the

country would be flooded with this item during the New Year.

iii. The CWE sold this item at low prices, but the prices could have been cheaper if the CWE had bought canned fish from the cheapest source.

iv. There is "gossip"—before investigations regarding availability of Dried Fish were completed—the CWE called for Tenders.

v. At the Tender, the CWE bought 15 oz. tins at a higher price than the price offered for 16 oz. tins.

vi. The CWE had to forgo 4 dollars per crate which is the commission normally paid for purchases.

2. The facts are as follows:

On the 20th January 1977, the Secretary to the Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs sent for the CWE Officials and informed them that with a view to combat the prevailing high price of fish in the market and as larger quantities of dried fish were not available, Government had decided to release an allocation of Rs. 30 million for the import of canned fish. Accordingly, tenders were invited on 24.1.77 for the purchase of canned Mackerel in Natural oil of the sizes 15 ozs. and 5.5 ozs. The CWE received 18 offers before closing time and two late offers. The lowest offer for 15 oz. tins was from M/s Mitsubishi Corporation, Japan at US \$ 16.24 per carton of 48x15 oz. tins. The lowest offer for the 5.5 oz. tins was from M/s C. Itoh & Co. Ltd., Japan at US \$ 14.30 per carton of 100x5.5 oz. tins. There were no offers either of Tomato Sauce or of Natural Oil which were lower than these among the tenders received in time. One of the late offers was from South Africa and offered 20,000 cartons of Pilchards in Tomato Sauce at US \$ 13.17 per carton. Apart from the fact that this offer was from a prohibited source, it did not also conform to the Tender Notice. The CWE decided to import canned fish in Natural Oil because (a) in the past, CWE imported canned mackerel in Natural Oil and (b) a technical report from our Research & Development Division reported as follows:—

"Considering Sri Lanka, fish in natural oil enjoys a general all round consumer acceptability. On the other hand considering the

In The Plantations

eating habits of an average Sri Lankan, fish in tomato puree will appeal only to the sophisticated consumer."

We received on the 21st of March and 25th of March, two consignments of canned fish from Japan amounting to 7.4 million tins. These were cleared with the utmost speed and were made available to all the outstations by the 9th of April and to all the Colombo Co-operatives on the 10th of April. It must be mentioned that the CWE staff did an excellent job in clearing this quantity and made it available before the New Year. The scheme of distribution was originally to make the canned fish available in Co-operative, Marketing Department shops and CWE shops, but it was decided that to ensure equitable distribution, the entire quantity should be channelled through the Co-operatives and issued to householders at the rate of two small tins or one large tin per household. The distribution has gone on smoothly except that in a number of instances people preferred to have the larger tin rather than the smaller one and in certain areas such as Batticaloa where fresh fish is available, the canned fish tins did not sell well. The total quantity ordered was found to be adequate for 4 1/2 months and a further allocation of Rs. 15 million has been obtained to import the requirements of further two months.

3. As regards the points made at (ii) to (vi) in para 1 my observations are set out below:—

(ii) The aim was to make adequate supplies of dried fish and canned fish available. The quantity of dried fish expected during the next six months was at the rate of 30,000 cwts per month, but this would have been enough only for a 4 oz. ration. During April, the quantity of canned fish distributed alone was approximately 18,000 cwts. In other words during April the quantity of dried fish and canned fish available was about 38-40,000 cwts. as compared with the following quantities distributed during the previous months:—

| | | |
|--------------|---|--------|
| January 1977 | — | 36,622 |
| February " | — | 17,000 |
| March " | — | 10,000 |

The quantity made available during the New Year and the post New

Year period in April was more than any previous month.

(iii) The cheapest source as already mentioned in para 2 was from a prohibited source and there is no substance in this allegation.

(iv) There was no investigation, but the CWE had sent a delegation to Pakistan in November/December 1976 and increased the prices by 25-40% with a view to getting additional quantities, but were informed that in view of the prevailing high prices of fresh fish, no substantial increase in the quantities could be expected. The CWE also offered similar prices to other sources, such as India, Singapore and the Middle East.

(v.) This is not correct in view of the fact that it was for a different quality of fish from a prohibited source.

(vi.) Offers were invited for supplies at the lowest prices and the question of commission did not arise, as none of the suppliers offered either a discount or a commission. 4 Dollars is presumably the upward rounding up of the difference between the price at which CWE made the purchase and the price offered by the prohibited source. The offer for Pilchards from South Africa was made by St. Anthony's Hardware Stores, Colombo.

Yours faithfully
The Co-op Wholesale Establishment
Sgd.....
for Chairman.

DEVON, SANQUHAR, DELTA

Where Will It End?

Editorial, *Satyodaya*, Bulletin No. 51, 1977 incorporating the Bulletin of the Co-ordinating Secretariat for Plantation Areas.

On 11 May the Commissioner of Labour was in consultation with estate trade unions on the question of estate land alienation. The black ink was not yet dry on the agreement that was reached when the red blood of workers began to flow at Devon and at Sanquhar. Six days later, on 17 May it was the turn of Delta estate. Again workers were injured and merciless looting of lines took place.

At Devon it was the police who opened fire, killing a youth. At Sanquhar and at Delta there was no loss of life, but stabbings occurred and hapless estate workers were rendered homeless and robbed of their belongings. Devon, Sanquhar and Delta were the logical outcome of an unprincipled and unjust programme of land alienation. It cannot even be called a programme, if a programme means something legally and publicly enunciated. Certain groups of individuals, backed by chauvinists and bourgeois communalists in high places, took the law into their hands. They entered the estates, broke into the line-rooms, burnt, pillaged and seized anything that came their way. The unfortunate Tamil workers had only to survey the ruins in absolute dejection and utter dismay. It was poor consolation that to be defenceless had been their lot since their forefathers were brought into Sri Lanka in the last century to work under slave conditions for British owners of the estates.

Whom could they turn to now? The bourgeois leaders of the Tamil United Front would be interested only if they could use the estate workers to make louder their communal cry for a separate state, and the estate workers could not be expected to understand that cry at all. The Sinhala-led political parties—whether of the right, the centre or tragically also of the left—all feared loss of precious Sinhala votes in their bid for hollow parliamentary victories. The estate Tamils were expendable because they did not have the vote. The UNP deprived them of this in 1948 and 1949 and no party ever after cared to campaign against this gross denial of human and civic rights to this important and most hard working section of the working class. The Buddhist leaders maintained a silence of acquiescence, the Hindu and Muslim leaders a silence of incomprehension, the Christian leaders a silence of diplomacy.

What about the Trade Unions? The answer is that the estate worker trade unions—the big ones like the CWC and the DWC and

he score of smaller ones—can do little for two reasons chiefly: their leaders for several reasons will risk but little in defence of their members, and, secondly, without the support of the urban industrial unions or the urban clerical unions they cannot engage in effective strike action. And the support of the urban unions is lacking for the same reasons that the enthusiastic support of the radical parliamentary left is lacking: the Tamil estate workers have no vote while the Sinhala peasants do. There is no doubt that the horse is being flogged to death and no one is ready to recall the brutal horse-driver to a realization of his senseless cruelty.

One pities the fair-minded Commissioner of Labour when he agreed with the estate unions on 11 March:

In the resettlement, programmes will be implemented with due consideration of the human factor. Or when he agreed again with the estate unions exactly two months later, on 11 May:

There will be no dehousing of workers resident on the estate. There will be no discrimination between Sinhala Village residents and Sri Lanka citizens working on estates in the selection for the allocation of (such) land.

For Devon, Sanquhar and Delta have shown that the agreements are not worth more than the paper on which they were written. They have shown that it is not the Commissioner's fair-mindedness that won the day, but the devilish malice of the demagogue.

It is time—the optimists hope that it is not past time—to call the nation to its senses. We pride ourselves on 2500 years of ahimsa, of kindness, of toleration, of fair-play. We say that we are the only country in the world where the four great world religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam—are authentically and vitally practised. We say that we are the best democracy in the Third World. We attack racial discrimination in Africa, in the United States of America, against the original inhabitants and the recent Asian immigrants of Australia. Are we then a nation so blind and so deaf that we cannot see the injustices and the indignities heaped upon so large a section of our working people nor hear the cries of their agony when

they are driven out of their homes in which fires are lighted to warn and feed the intruders and burn up everyone and everything else?

JAFFNA CAMPUS

SCIENCE STUDENTS' UNION

Report On The Delta North Estate Incidents

A team was sent by the Science Student's Union of the Jaffna Campus to make an investigation about the incidents of looting and arson that took place at the Delta North Estate, Pussellawa. The team consisted of Messrs E. J. Jeyarajah (President, S.S.U.), N. Sivapalan and M. Rajaratnam. After spending two days (22 and 23-5-77) in Pussellawa the team has submitted the following report. The report has been authorized by the Executive Committee of the S.S.U. for release to its members and to the public.

Delta North Tea Estate is situated 3 miles away from Pussellawa in the Gampola electorate. On Tuesday 17.5.1977 about 10-30 a.m., 300 persons invaded the above estate, looted the belongings and set fire to the estate lines of innocent plantation workers of Indian origin.

Out of the 35 lines on the Estate, 17 were looted, 7 were completely burnt down, and 9 were partially gutted by fire: four staff quarters were also looted. Nearly 150 families have been severely affected by the attack; the value of the personal belongings plundered has been estimated to be about Rs. 4.5 lakhs.

Our team visited the affected area on 22 & 23.05.1977 and interviewed affected persons, the injured, members of the estate staff including teachers, representatives of trade unions and social service volunteers; this report is based on the eye-witness accounts given by the above persons.

On the particular morning, the attackers arrived at a spot near the Kalugolla Factory in four Co-operative lorries and in some P.W.D. jeeps. From there they proceeded on foot to the lines on Delta North Estate. They were

armed with dangerous weapons such as guns, handbombs, axes, knives, swords, iron rods and petrol sprayers.

These persons broke into the rooms in the lines and began to plunder the valuables therein. Since it was a working day there was no one on the lines except the sickly, the aged and small children. On hearing the hooting made by the attackers, the labourers rushed to the lines to protect their belongings, only to retreat quickly on being confronted with the weapons. In their terror they took refuge among the tea bushes. Looting and assault took place in the most cruel and inhuman manner. Jewellery was forcibly snatched away; old men were assaulted with iron rods, lives of children were held to ransom for the jewellery worn by their mothers.

P. S. Nallammah (23) was attacked with an iron bar and one of her ear-rings was snatched away, tearing her ear. In terror she handed over the other ear-ring and her bangles and chain too. Her old father was struck with an iron pipe; his nose was cut by a sword. A. Suppiah (25) who rushed to the spot was assaulted severely and his skull was split by an axe. Seven other viz: S. Palaniyammah (26), K. R. Periyasami (46), K. R. Kandiah (40), P. Mookaie (36), P. Suppiah (75), Ponan (73), M. R. Marimuttu (48) also suffered serious injuries and were admitted to the Pussellawa and Gampola hospitals.

The attackers divided into three groups, one carrying out the looting and assault, the second transporting stolen goods to the vehicles, the third proceeding to set fire to the lines using the petrol sprayers and scores of handbombs. Slogans inciting communal hatred were shouted freely.

All goods of value to the attackers were stolen: the rest, documents, certificates, clothes and furniture were completely burnt down. Citizenship certificates, birth certificates, identity cards and Provident Fund Papers are among the documents destroyed.

At the estate Amman Kovil, the figure of the deity was stolen together with its golden chain and electrical appliances were smashed. Damage to the extent of Rs. 5 000/- was caused here alone.

In The Plantation

Statues were smashed up at the St. Sebastian's Church on the estate. The grocery was broken into, goods worth Rs. 30 000/- plundered and the building set on fire. Crackers stolen from this store were fired on the way when the gang left the premises of the estate after the looting and arson.

Quarters belonging to Tamil staff were ransacked completely; the buildings were not set on fire, but clothes and mattresses were removed and burnt in front of the quarters. Telephone connections were cut off. The residence of the Estate schoolteacher was also looted. School books, important documents such as birth certificates and results-sheets were set on fire. About one hundred slates were smashed into smithereens. Personal belongings of the schoolteacher, Mrs. Grace Peter, valued at Rs. 20,000/-, were robbed. The residence was not set on fire.

The invaders left Delta North Estate around 12.30 p.m. A Police party from the Pussellawa Station arrived at the spot around 1.30 p.m. viewed the damage lines and left the place, taking with them a few of the wounded. They did not stay to make any investigations. Another posse from the Kandy Police Station arrived at 4.30 p.m. following complaints made by trade union leaders to the S. P. Kandy. They conducted inquiries and conveyed other wounded persons to the Pussellawa hospital.

The most important cause of this incident is the discriminatory manner in which land was distributed under the Land Reform Law. Estate workers of Indian origin, who have been living on these lands for many generations, were not given portions, whereas peasants from nearby villages and estate workers of Kandyan origin were given portions of the lands on which the labourers work. These lands were given free of cost to the peasants and estate labourers. As a result of this, Tamil labourers were either compelled to work under the new landlords for poor pay or forced to leave the estates due to employment being unavailable.

Due to these reasons Tamil labourers opposed the entry of surveyors to measure the lands. Their demand was not that Sinhala people should not be given land; rather,

they requested that they too, who are citizens of the socialist democratic republic of Sri Lanka be considered in the distribution of land.

At this point we recall that a young estate labourer Sivanu Letchumanan of Devon Estate, Pattana, was shot dead by the Police on 11.05.77 while protesting against the entry of surveyors. On the same day (11.05.77) estate lines on Sanquhar Estate, close to Delta North, were ransacked in broad daylight; 24 families lost their belongings worth Re. 83,040/-, and 11 people were injured, three seriously.

Certain political personalities who are trying to retain their power are alleged to be behind these incidents. The Delta North Estate is populated mainly by Tamil estate labourers. It is understood that they can exercise about 300 votes and these votes may be a deciding factor in a highly competitive Election. Also, distribution of land to the Sinhalese villagers alone, will displace the Tamil estate labourers out of this electorate (Gampola); it is stated that this is done in the hope that the beneficiaries will give their support to the particular politicians involved.

Some of the suspects arrested hold high positions in nearby estates. We give below a few: (1) Ananda Bandara; (Project Manager, Pussellawa); (2) Nandana Bandara, (Project Manager, Orwell Estate); (3) Wimalasena (Estate dispenser, Delta North); (4) Kumarasinghe (Teacher, Gampola); (5) Samson (Field Officer, Kalugolla); (6) Ukku Banda; (7) Kaluchandra (8) Sumanasena Banda

So far 31 suspects including the above have been arrested.

Prompt actions were taken by trade unionists and by voluntary workers of several social and religious organisations for the relief of the affected. The refugees are now sheltered in the Estate School, St. Sebastian's Church and in the less-damaged lines; and some have shifted to an estate nearby. An advance of Rs. 200/- per family has been given following the talks between the Janawasama and Trade Union leaders.

Labourers of the neighbouring estates were providing meals in turns and some organisations such as Catholic missions and the Hindu Union of the Pusselwa K/C.C.

Tamil Mixed School' also distributed food parcels and clothing.

The general opinion of the ordinary people of the estates and that of the estate staff and learned around the area is that this thuggery has been performed on a communal basis. They say that they came to this conclusion particularly in view of the following facts.

In one of the unburnt (but plundered) lines, we interviewed a Sinhalese person who was earlier a labourer on the same estate and now has been granted an acre of tea land (just four days before the incident). He was in his room at the line when the invaders arrived. They asked him, "Are you a Sinhalese or a Tamil?" When he answered that he was a Sinhalese, they asked him to stand in the doorway of his room. All the other rooms on the line were looted except that of this person. Also, because of him the entire line was not set on fire.

We also met in another line a young Sinhalese woman. When the attackers questioned her as to her nationality, she replied that she was a Sinhalese and also untruthfully stated that all those living in that line were Sinhalese. At that the invaders declared that they would not harm the people of that line and proceeded to the next line. People say that it is only because of this noble Sinhalese mother that entire line was saved from destruction. We do not wish to reveal the names of these two Sinhalese people in view of their safety.

We also find that communalism has been exploited by certain politicians to further their own political ends.

We strongly condemn the action of the Pussellawa Hospital authority for having discharged the injured when some were still in a serious condition. When we were leaving the place the Ceylon Workers' Congress leaders were making arrangements to readmit them, but in Kandy hospital.

We are of the opinion that the police have taken a step-motherly attitude towards the incidents. It is well known that the police took almost no action regarding the Sanquhar Estate looting. Had they acted properly the incident at Delta North Estate could have been prevented, as many persons

are alleged to have taken part in both the incidents. It is to be noted that an express letter sent by the 'Ceylon Workers' Congress on the 10th of May to the S.P./Kandy, expressing fear that the Sanquhar Estate incidents might be duplicated at Delta Estate, was disregarded. The estate superintendent too had given a complaint to the police before the incidents took place. We strongly condemn the inaction of the Police during the whole of this series of incidents.

The affected people, from all rungs of estate worker society, have lost all their possessions and are without even a change of clothing at present; but their immediate requirement of food is being met by the various sources mentioned earlier. Therefore we request the various Unions on the Campus and Service Groups outside to organize relief funds especially in the form of clothing, to help these afflicted brethren of ours.

We submit this report to the members of our Union and to the public for their reflection, and action.

• • •
SOCIALISM BETRAYED

Tragedy At Delta

Tuesday the 17th of May will go down in our history as a chaotic evil day when the communal passions so easily stirred up by power-hungry politicians burst forth in uncontrollable fury!

One hundred odd homes of Tamil plantations workers on North Delta Estate were ruthlessly looted by thugs imported in four lorries. Then, as if that was not enough Petrol bombs were flung into seven "lines" to set aflame whatever was left of their possessions and destroy their homes

These irrational forces even ignoring party loyalties looted and burnt homes of Trade Union members of the governing party. Not surprising perhaps

when considering the lure of stolen wealth even when plundered from the fruits of the lifelong toil and sweat of badly exploited plantation workers
Even the kovil and the church were not spared in the frantic search for loot. A hen's head lay at a doorway torn from it's body as easy as an ear ring torn off a young girl's ears.

It is ironic that this tragedy comes in the wake of an agreement reached between the Government and thirteen estate sector Trade Unions. One principle agreed to stated there would be no de-housing of workers resident on estates. Devon, Sanquhar, Delta Where will this nightmare end?

Besides these fundamental principles underlying Land Reform to give preference to workers on the land and in the case of Land Alienation to give preference to those resident on the land continue to be conveniently ignored when plantation workers are involved.

Is it because in the eyes of the powers that be—despite socialist slogans and the overthrow of "imperialist" owners—these workers and landless peasants too do not really count as people?

Has a realistic land alienation policy ever been discussed and decided on by Sinhala peasants and Tamil plantation workers themselves?

Without political manipulation interacting amongst themselves would they not have found a solution living as they have done peacefully for several generations?

The answers to these questions are obvious to the politically conscious and the remedy is close at hand. Communal politics and politicians are doomed as past history has clearly shown. The masses cannot be so easily fooled. Pull down the masks of false integration between peasant and plantation worker! Equality and justice will triumph in the struggle of peasants and workers who live Socialism!

JEFFREY ABAYASEKERA

• • •
LETTERS

• Politics & Politicking

Sri,
May I be permitted to add a few bits to the "Editor's Note Book" (*Tribune*, June 4, 1977):

(i) One should say that any intelligent reader will recognize "ever greater logic" in Prins G's decision not to contest. His rhetoric has little to do with his wise decision. This "great man", who has allied with quite an assortment of reactionaries in recent years, in his desperate attempt to build his "third front", certainly knows how to say that he has not a dog's chance at the polls.

(ii) The JVP, despite all pretences, is much closer to the Trotskyists now (if the dozen or so 4th International will forgive my calling Bala Tampoe a Trotskyist). Whether Chou's statement of 1971 was unsolicited or not, I guess the editor does not think that the insurrection was any form of a "revolution". I do not pretend to know what prompted Premier Chou to issue the statement—but I am certain that, in the light of the irresponsible accusations of China in '71 by the late M. Thiruchelvam (the FP's Senator and

Minister in the Hath-Havul government) and certain UNP elements and the role played by N. Shanmugathasan in misleading his party and its sympathisers on China's attitude towards the Sirimavo Government, it did a tremendous amount of good to Sri Lanka-China relations (Even N. M. and Pieter and, of course, Nanda would have vouched for this!).

(iii) I think that you have missed an interesting portion of the polls scene in the North. Pieter's partners in Jaffna are playing some very interesting games there. I suppose it all started when V. Ponnambalam reportedly announced (!) that he was quitting politics and followed it up with glowing tributes to a TULF leader (not SJVC). I hope you would not let your readers miss much of this fun.

S. SIVASEGARAM

Faculty of Engineering,
Peradeniya.
June 4, 1977

• **Kobbekkaduwa**

Sir,

Your editorial of 3rd June spotlights the pontifical statement made by Mr. Kobbekkaduwa who is believed to be a responsible Minister. People of this country have watched this Minister ride rough shod over Land Reform. Nobody in his right mind would disclaim the social virtues and the need for land reform, but every right thinking person must surely denounce the discrimination and injustices done in its implementation. The adverse effects on the economy are no less obvious. The most dangerous thing for the peace of this country is the racialism and violence which has recently been unleashed against estate folk in the same anarchist tradition as the utterances which have been made.

At Yatinuwara the sword of Kobbekkaduwa was proclaimed would prevent the UNP coming into power again. On another occasion the Minister proclaimed that Thondaman would be deported and his 50 acres taken over. On many previous occasions the Minister has proclaimed that Sri Lanka would achieve self-sufficiency in rice production and milk production and so forth by specific

target dates. The Minister perhaps has had no difficulty in obtaining milk from the Milk Board which is placed under him and, naturally is perhaps unaware of the long suffering shortage of milk which we have been faced with for so many years. He and his officials dealing with this subject are either unaware or unconcerned that there are over a million children in this country suffering from protein-calorie malnutrition, one cause being, no doubt, a severe shortage of milk over a long period.

Either the Minister likes to believe what he hears when he makes such statements, or he is completely misled by his officials who claim fictitious achievements.

Perhaps it is time the Prime Minister made a note that such irresponsible statements and claims which overshadow the truth of the neglect of the agricultural sector in the last so many years, due to the over-emphasis given to land reform and the building of institutional empires by power hungry officials, must surely have adverse results on the forthcoming elections.

Unhappy Voter

Colombo.
5. 6. 76

• **English**

Sir,

I would like to ask two questions of those who enter the lists in favour of English in Sri Lanka *Status Quo Ante*—First, will not such a measure increase the sense of 2nd class citizenship which the Sinhalese speaking person feels in the presence of the English speaking chap—after 30 years of 'sinhala only'? Second, who is going to grow the food we need—the English speaking chap or the Sinhalese speaking fellow?

May I repeat what I have said before *Ad Neuseam*—It is not my desire to discourage English which prompts me to write. I am concerned only to make the Sinhalese speaking fellow equal in social status with the English speaking fellow.

I do not believe we can progress until we mobilize leadership in the Sinhala speaking human.

I understand from your journal that the J.V.P. supports a three

language solution. Because of the special status the English speaking group enjoys this will result in a stampede away from Sinhala to English throughout the country. And if present performance is to serve as guide—a stampede of all who do well in this language to Katunayake Airport!

To destroy the foes of famine and want and disease, we do not need English so much as a morale "shot-in-the-arm" which can only come when our peoples—Sinhala speaking—walk as equals with the English speaking folks in Sri Lanka—How can this be done?

Bryan de Kretser

Hendala-Wattala.
15.5.77

• **One Nights Experience**

Sir,

Recently I took a patient to the Accident Service. The doctor on duty examined the patient thoroughly and warded her. Due to severe pains, the patient was unable to lie down and so I asked the nurse for a bed-rest. The answer was that there was not a single bed-rest in the ward. Then I asked her for a pillow and there were none. Two disprins were ordered for the pain—there was not even a disprin in the ward. It was bought outside and given to the patient. I was simply stunned at this state of affairs. All emergency cases are taken to the Accident Service and these are the facilities!!! How abhorring! Patients can die before they are attended to. Something that I overheard put me in a cold sweat—and that was about the instruments in the Operating Theatre. The scaepels are blunt. I'm sure butchers have sharper knives to slaughter cattle than surgeons to cut the human body.

Another experience—a patient who could not get up from bed asked for the bed-pan late at night and neither the nurse nor the attendant gave ear to her pleadings. She had to wait till about 5 a.m. to get it. Why inflict more pain on a patient who has already enough to suffer? It is sheer callousness on the part of the nurse and the attendant.

It is quite a common thing in the hospitals that when the attendants go round giving bed-pans at certain times, the patients must try to use them. If not, woe be unto the patient who asks for it when the need arises. While in hospital, the human system must be fashioned to suit the convenience of the attendants.

That some nurses and attendants haven't the faintest notion that they are dealing with human beings is beyond doubt. The manner in which some of them shout at the patients makes one's blood pressure rise to the point of causing a rupture. Lives have been lost or a permanent damage caused, due to the carelessness of some nurses. A book can be written on these things.

Why can't action be taken to "kick out" those who play about with human lives and those who don't perform their duties? How long should this state of affairs be permitted to go on?

The poor patients have so much to suffer—pain, anxiety, fear, depression and so on and when those who are at their "service" treat them so carelessly and cruelly they only add to their pain and suffering.

Charmaine Mendis

Colombo 5.



MUNICIPAL AND OTHER COUNCILS

Illegal, Immoral And Worse

Mr. A. H. A. SAMY, FORMER MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER OF DEHIWELA-MT. LAVINIA, GALLE, JAFFNA AND MATALE HAS QUESTIONED THE LEGALITY OF THE PRESENT COLOMBO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND SOME OTHER COUNCILS, WHOSE TERMS OF OFFICE HAS BEEN EXTENDED. IN HIS STATEMENT HE STATES:—

THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT has, by notification in the Gazette Extraordinary (Part IV) of 15.2.1977, extended the terms of office of 457 local authorities

upto 31.1.1978 and dissolved 153 other local authorities. Such large numbers effected en bloc at one time are certainly a record in Sri Lanka, and may perhaps be in the world.

My contention is that the extensions of many these council and the appointment of special commissioners to most of the dissolved local authorities are not legally valid. In the case of the Colombo and Nuwara Eliya M.C.C., the present councils were constituted for the four year terms from January 1970 to December 1973. The Minister of Local Government gave the final year of extension upto December, 1974. Thereafter, in terms of Regulation framed under the Public Security Ordinance, their terms were extended from time to time upto 16.2.1977 on which day the EMERGENCY REGULATIONS were withdrawn. After the revocation of these regulations, the Minister has once again sought to extend the terms of these councils to 31.1.1976, under the M.C. Ordinance. The Minister is empowered to extend each council's term only by 12 months and no more, and as he had already exercised that option before the Emergency Regulations promulgated, my contention is that his second extension by a further 12 months which would exceed the maximum statutory limit of 5 years, would seem to be in violation of section 10 (2) (b) of the M.C. Ordinance. The same legal objection would apply in the case of the majority of the extensions of the 457 local authorities.

This is how I, as a laymen, understand the term of a Local Authority. If it is not so, will the Minister or some lawyer throw light on the legal position of these Councils? If my contention is correct, then the present councils under the extensions have no legal status, and all the regulations passed by them and acts done by the Mayors and Councillors beyond the five year terms would seem to be illegal and therefore a nullity.

At the end of the statutory term of five years, the only course of action is to hold fresh elections, but the Minister, purporting to

act under section 277 (1) of the M.C. Ordinance has dissolved the six Municipal Councils of Galle, Dehiwela, Jaffna, Negombo, Kurunegala and Ratnapura, and 147 other local authorities on the ground of being "not competent to perform the duties imposed upon them".

But this cannot be arbitrarily resorted to in view of the findings in the Privy Council Case "Duraiappah Vs. Fernando," New Law Report Chapter 69 where it has been ruled that—"no Minister should have the right to dissolve a local authority without allowing it the right to be heard upon that matter," namely "competency". It is, therefore imperative that the Minister should have observed the principal of 'Audi alteram partem' in the circumstance of this case. It is not known whether "Show cause Notices" had in fact, been served on all these Councils and investigations instituted during the intervening period when the Public Security Ordinance ended and dissolutions came into operation, which curiously happens to be the same day, namely 15.02.1977.

It is rather significant that every one of the 153 Councils was dissolved under one omnibus ground "incompetence to perform the duties", instead of listing specific acts of incompetence which should have been done. It seems that this devious expedient had been conveniently resorted to in order to avoid the holding of fresh elections.

There appears to be another anomaly. In the Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia M.C. its normal terms ended in December, 1971. Thereafter, under the Public Security Ordinance, the terms of the Councillors were extended until 31.12.74. As no further extensions were granted a Special Commissioner was appointed. When the P.S. Ordinance was revoked from 17.1.1977 the Status Quo Ante of that Council stood automatically restored, and fresh elections should have been held. But the Ministry resorted to the easy expedient of dissolving that Council for incompetency. Thereby, the principles of natural justice and 'Audi Alteram Partem' referred to above in the Privy Council case have been denied. The arbitrary dissolution without calling for any explanation

would end to vitiate the change of incompetency levelled at the council.

Just prior to the dissolution, this Council had been administered by a Special Commissioner appointed by the Government. Hence the charge of incompetency is tantamount to a Vote of No Confidence by the Government on its own nominee, and it appears to be more incongruous that the same special commissioner had been re-appointed.

When the emergency was lifted, the Special Commissioners appointment *ipso facto* got terminated and, during the intervening period, in terms of the the M.C. Ordinance, "the Municipal Commissioner shall exercise the power, duties and functions of the Council, Mayor or Deputy Mayor..." Accordingly, the present special Commissioner had no legal right to continue in that office until his re-appointment, and all acts done by him during the intervening period of the dissolution and his subsequent reappointment are null and void.

A further question arises. The terms of office of the Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia municipal Councillors terminated on 31.12.1974, but its only by the Gazette — of 15.2.1977 (i.e. 25 months later) that the Ministry has dissolved that Council with retrospective effect from 1.1.1975. There appears to be no authority for the dissolution of local Authorities with retrospective effect. These same legal objections held good in the case of the dissolution of the majority of the other Councils and the appointment of Special Commissioners.

Mr. Samy's statement raises many profound questions of fundamental importance. If what he says is correct—and there does not seem to be any ostensible flaw in his logic—the UF-SLFP "extension" of the life of many favoured local bodies and the "dissolution" of others for "incompetence" is nothing short of blatant illegality, anti-democratic immorality and worse. And all these gross violations of law and democratic practice were perpetrated under the pretext of "safeguarding" the gains of "socialism" and "checking" the attempts of "fascist reactionaries" to undermine a left-minded "progressive" government.

—Ed.

BACKGROUND FLASHBACK

Mahaweli

An Early Record

by R. Kahawita

Those days one hears over the radio, the government controlled press and at Political propaganda meetings, the multi-benefits of the Mahaweli diversion. The latest is the promise to take Mahaweli waters to Iranamadu Tank—"a political vow" of the Post and Telecommunication Minister to the voters of Killinochchi. All these are an attempt to collect praise and kudos for the concept of this nationally important project, and the falsehoods uttered are many. Some claimants say they had a vision to divert the Mahaweli to the dry zone, others say that they were inspired by the sufferings of the peasants in these areas. Yet there are others who claim to have had a hand in turning "the first a mental sod" to divert the Mahaweli water at Polgolla to the N.C.P. These claims were many just before the ceremonies on January 8th 1976—the birthday of one of our respected leaders, and since then with the hotting up of the general elections these claims have increased and pledges are given to take the magic waters everywhere if the present Government is returned to power again.

Early last year when these claims were being made, to put the picture correct, I published a historical note in the *Tribune* as to who initiated this project, how and why the original blue prints were changed etc. After the publication of those articles I was searching for a more authentic record than my memory. I have come across such a record.

In days gone by, the then Minister for Agriculture and Lands—Late Mr. D. S. Senanayake—created the advisory Body called the Central Board of Agriculture. Into this Board he appointed Heads of Departments who had to deal with agriculture and other allied subjects, members from the public who were known to be specialists in various agricultural activities, and who had contributed to the development of agriculture and its allied disciplines. These members were elected irrespective of poli-

tics or political colour, cast, creed or race. I know of a colonist of Minneriya who gave a lead to paddy cultivation there being elected to the Board. It was a truly democratic institution with all the members having a common objective—Development of Agriculture in Ceylon.

The Board held quarterly meetings at which various subjects were discussed and if there were unanimity in the need for the subject matter, it was sent to the Minister for Agriculture and Lands in the form of a resolution by the Board for his consideration. Thus the Board became a very important advisory body to the Minister to formulate Policy. Even the ideas of the Minister were sent to the Board for their views through departmental channels. One important outcome of this Board was that knowledgeable persons of the country got involved in the agricultural development of the country, and their contributions were very valuable. As far back as 1951 the Board discussed schemes for cattle and crop insurance, development of land on Co-operative principles, quality control of tea, rubber, cocoa, copra, desiccated coconut, fibre, oils, cinnamon for export and local use. During the succeeding years and in the march towards a socialist or communist society some of the crops like cocoa and cinnamon have disappeared and with Land Reforms, what was left of these also have been abandoned. In the wake of marching towards socialism, new set-ups like the Productivity Committees, Political Authorities etc. purposefully designed to destroy so-called capitalist institutions were established which have become more destructive than creative to the people's progress.

At the ninth meeting of the Central Board of Agriculture, held in the Boardroom at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya, on 19th March 1951, the following resolution was to be moved by Mr. U. B. Unamboowe—a board member. "The Central Board of Agriculture recommends to Government that investigations be made by a Competent Officer to find out whether it is possible to divert water from the Mahaweliganga at a suitable point to augment the supply of water in the tanks of the Matale and Anuradhapura districts". The motion was put off for the next meeting of the Board due to

the absence of Mr. Unamboowe who had given notice of the motion.

At the time Late Mr. D. S. Seganayake was the Prime Minister who moved up from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to be filled by Late Mr. Dudley Senanayake as the Minister for Agriculture and Lands.

The development of Mahaweli according to these dates was taken up after the implementation of Gal Oya project and while the Walawe project was being actively considered. The motion was discussed at the Tenth meeting of the Board on 11th June 1951.

The proceedings of the meeting were recorded in "The Tropical Agriculturist"—The Agricultural Journal of Ceylon—in vol. CV III No. 3—July to September 1951. I reproduce in full the motion and the discussions thereon as appearing on page 187 et seq. of the Journal. This record will authenticate what I had said in my first article on "Mahaweli Diversion." FROM THE TROPICAL AGRICULTURIST

Mr. U. B. Unamboowe moved the following resolution:—

"The Central Board of Agriculture recommends to Government that investigations be made by a competent officer to find out whether it is possible to divert water from the Mahaweliganga at a suitable point to augment the supply of water in the tanks of the Matale and Anuradhapura districts"

Mr. Unamboowe said that this was a very simple request. He was only asking the Irrigation Department to investigate that question and see whether it was possible to divert the water of the Mahaweli Ganga to lower elevations.

He added that the Mahaweli Ganga starts from the hills of the central portion of the Island and all that water enters the sea, and desired that investigations be made whether that water could not be put to better use. He said that when the biggest rainfall is recorded from the south-west monsoon in one part of the country, the dry zone gets no rain at all. He therefore felt that it would be a great service if Government could divert the excess water flowing through the Mahaweli for purposes of irrigation. He said that most of the members of the Board would be aware of the conditions that existed in the North-Central Province,

about 25 or 30 years ago. The first scheme that was inaugurated by Government was the Minneriya Scheme. That Scheme was made a success under very difficult circumstances. Thereafter so many other schemes had been inaugurated and a large number of people from different parts of the Island had now gone to the North-Central Province to reside. Besides the water that is required for cultivation purposes, people in this area sometimes suffered for lack of water for their own needs. He hoped that as those schemes grew in importance, more and more people would go into residence in that part of the country. At present the people of the North-Central Province depended on the tanks for all their requirements of water, and that was depended on the rainfall from the north-east monsoon. During the last year or the year before, rains did not come down at the proper time and as a result all the tanks went dry, causing a great deal of hardship to the people. He emphasized that there should be no reason at all why the waters of the Mahaweliganga should not be diverted for the use of these people. He reiterated that he was only requesting that investigations be made by the Irrigation Department to see whether that water could not be diverted. If that was a possibility, extensive tracts of paddy land from Matale going further north would be benefitted which usually remain uncultivated during the South West monsoon. As an example he said he would like to mention that during the time of the construction of the Railway from Rambukkana to Bandarawela, they had come across several obstacles and various difficulties and they had to bore through several hills before the construction of the line to Bandarawela was a possibility. With all the difficulties, that was a success. He said he was only asking the simple question whether it was not possible to divert water from the Mahaweli Ganga to lower elevations.

In conclusion he said that if an officer was especially appointed for that purpose, those who were interested in that project could submit their views to him. He therefore requested that an officer be detailed for that investigation.

Mr. R. T. Chelliah seconded the resolution with an amendment to the original resolution with the

permission of the mover, viz.: "... to augment the supply of water in the tanks of the Matale and Anuradhapura districts and any other districts possible."

The mover and the Board agreed to this amendment and the amended resolution read as follows:—"The Central Board of Agriculture recommends to Government that investigations be made by a competent officer to find out whether it is possible to divert water from the Mahaweli Ganga at a suitable point to augment the supply of water in the tanks of the Matale and Anuradhapura districts and any other districts possible."

Mr. R. T. Chelliah emphatically inquired why such a scheme should benefit only the Anuradhapura and the Matale districts. He said that it was very essential that the maximum benefit should be derived from such a scheme and therefore it should be extended to other districts as well. He added that Government had investigated that matter some years ago and that some experts from India were employed for the purpose. Their investigations had revealed that it was possible to divert the water of the Mahaweli Ganga for purposes of irrigation not only to Anuradhapura and Matale districts but even the Northern Province. He said that this flow of water which comes down from the hills carry with it valuable manure as well. He stressed the value of this project and said that if this water could be stored in tanks in various districts to benefit irrigation as was done in the days of the ancient kings, cultivation of crops would be facilitated to a great extent. In conclusion he said that it would be helpful if the representative of the Director of Irrigation could enlighten them on the subject.

Rev. Fr. Wickremasinghe in supporting the resolution said that it was surprising that although Ceylon was prolific with rivers running north and south yet a large part of the Island suffered without water even for drinking. He said that there was another resolution by Mr. Wickremasinghe for the diversion of surplus water of the Nilwala Ganga to the Dry Zone. He hoped that these schemes if implemented would not only help the irrigation of the whole Island but would also ensure to the whole Island a sufficient supply of water for drinking purposes. He said he

knew of certain large villages in which the people have no water for drinking. Sometimes they were forced to squeeze mud and obtain a little water for drinking. He felt that it would be very feasible if a survey could be made with the hope of providing water to different parts of the Island. He said that instead of resuming the work of the Nilwala Ganga flood protection work it was essential to protect the people from suffering during the drought without water for drinking. Fr. Wickremasinghe therefore suggested that both these resolutions should be amalgamated into one urging that investigations be carried out on all rivers of the Island whether they could not be diverted at suitable points where there was enough water. He requested that the Deputy Director of Irrigation who was present be asked to enlighten the Board on the matter.

The Chairman at this stage said that the resolution to which Rev. Father Wickremasinghe had made reference was postponed at the request of Mr. Wickremasinghe as he was unable to be present. Unless the mover's permission was obtained for its discussion in his absence and without prior notice, the Chairman felt that it was not in order to speak on Mr. Wickremasinghe's resolution.

Poholidde Dissawa speaking next, said that during the last 15 years it has been a common occurrence to have a drought once in 3 years. He believed that the Deputy Director of Irrigation would be able to tell them the large sums of money spent for the storage of water for irrigation purposes. For that water the country had to depend on rains. Therefore if by some means or other the Mahaweli Ganga water could be dammed, then there was a possibility of supplying water to a very large number of the existing tanks some of which are in ruins today, up to Elephant Pass. He believed that with Kalawewa on one side and the Huruluoya on the other side, water could be made to run all over the district. He said that if once in 3 years as much as 5 lakhs of rupees could be spent on relief work he could not see why a substantial amount should not be spent on a scheme as the one suggested, the benefits of which are many. At present the North-Central Province, which is one of the big-

gestaddy producing areas, had to depend only on rain water for their cultivation and other needs. In conclusion he said that if the anticipated expenditure on a scheme of this nature was calculated along with the large sums of money spent on relief work, it would be realized that it is far more beneficial to complete a scheme of this nature than incur periodical expenditure ranging to large sums. The Deputy Director of Irrigation read the following memorandum containing the observations of the Irrigation Department on the resolution:—
DIVERSION OF WATER FROM THE MAHAWELI GANGA TO THE ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT.

(To be Concluded)



SIXTY YEARS AFTER

The Secret Of The "Charm Of The Russia Revolution"

By Lev Bobrov

Is it possible to do away with unemployment for gold within a matter of 13 years? Can a backward agrarian country turn within a matter of 20 years into an advanced industrialised power and to take, within the lifetime of one generation, a leap from the uncivilized state to universal literacy. A high degree of education and modern culture? Yes, it can, as the experience of the USSR shows. But, indeed, once even less ambitious aims seemed unattainable.

After his meeting with Lenin (in 1920). H. G. Wells wrote in his book, *Russia in the Shadows*, that Lenin's plans for electrification, modest by the present yardsticks, could be a measure of USSR's achievements and programmes: that it was impossible to imagine a more daring project. Adding that whatever magic mirror he was looking into, he could not see that Russia of the future, but that the short man in the Kremlin possessed such a gift. Ore recalls this while reading a report delivered by Mikhail Zimyanin, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, at a commemorative meeting held in the Kremlin on the occasion of

the 107th anniversary of the birth of Lenin.

The speaker made an analysis of the sources of what Lenin had described as the "Charm of the Russian Revolution". Where does it lie? What are the results the land of Soviets has achieved over the almost 60 years of its existence?

While sitting in the plush chairs of Bolshoi under the crystal chandeliers, foreigners can hardly visualize people in shabby coats or grey bullet-ridden overcoats seated in the same chairs, with what remained of the meagre daily rations in their pockets—a handful of oats issued instead of bread. It was cold in the auditorium like in a cellar, and several hundred bulbs using a diminished current hardly showed through the light mist born of the people's breathing.

On the stage, one could see a map of Russia with colour circles indicating future power-generating centres. They flashed out for a moment, when the speaker wearing a fur-coat was directing his pointer at them. In order to illuminate the auditorium and the map thus, consumers in the centre of Moscow had been switched off. And even in the Kremlin, in the Ministers' studies, all bulbs, except one of 16 w capacity, had been taken out.

Such an atmosphere prevailed at the 8th all-Russia Congress of Soviets (December 1920). This discussed the state plan for the electrification of Russia—Geolro. Against the background of economic dislocation, inflation and unemployment resulting from the civil war and foreign intervention (1918-20) and in the conditions of a political boycott and economic blockade from outside. The German *Elektrische Zeitung* qualified this plan designed for a period of 10-15 years as if "utopian initiative". But it was put into effect, and ahead of schedule at that. In 1917-67, power generation in the USSR grew hundreds of times over (throughout the world it increased 40-fold, and in the USA 30-fold, in 1975 it exceeded a million kilowatt-hours) second place in the world. But what matters is not a drive for record rates of electrification.

In 1937, twenty years after the revolution, the once backward

agrarian country became the second largest industrial giant in the world, second only to the USA. But, as distinct from the USA and other capitalist countries, it did away with the exploitation of man by man. Moreover, it abolished unemployment as early as 1930.

It seemed that the times of privations were past and gone. But these were brought again—by the aggression of Nazi Germany. In 1941-45, the USSR lost 20 million human lives and nearly a third of its national wealth. It was believed in the west that rehabilitation would take decades. But already in the early fifties, the USSR's economy surpassed the pre-war level. As before, its development is dynamic and steady.

Thus, the Soviet 10th five-year plan (1976-80), just like the 9th plan, like the very first one, which coincided with the great depression of the early thirties, has one underlying characteristic: a confident growth against the background of recession and stagnation in the west.

"Again famine! the last ten years have been marked, not only by the ruin of the peasantry, but by its veritable extinction authorities admitted that death of famine was quite a probable fate for a considerable number of Russian peasants.

An end was also put to this once and for all. Lenin's co-operative plan was carried out. The countryside changed beyond recognition under the impact of socialist transformations. Small households voluntarily united into large collective farms.

In 1976 the country gathered an all time high grain crop—224 million tons. The USSR leads the world in the output of cotton flax, mineral fertilizers, tractors, (aggregate engine capacity) diesel and electric locomotives, oil, coal, steel, iron ore, cement and many other products. All this despite the fact that the USSR spent 20 out of the past 60 years on wars to resist enemies and on economic rehabilitation after its tremendous losses. In 1976 the country's national income was 65 times above the corresponding figure for the pre-revolutionary period. The average level of prices has virtually not changed in the USSR since 1965. At the same time, the average monthly labour remuneration of

the collective farmers has nearly doubled and the wages of factory and office workers increased by 60 per cent. The wages of 31 million factory and office workers in the non-productive sectors will grow by 18 per cent in 1977-80.

In 1976-90 the material and financial resources of the USSR will nearly double, as compared with the preceding 15 years. Possibilities are also growing for the solution of the main socio-economic tasks set forth by the 24th and 25th CPSU Congress a considerable rise in popular wellbeing, the improvement of the working and living conditions of the peoples, and the progress of the public health services, education and culture.

"There is no other country so barbarous and in which the masses of the people are robbed to such an extent of education, light and knowledge—no other such country has remained in Europe. Russia is the exception", Lenin wrote in 1913. Illiteracy stood at 73 per cent and at 94 per cent in Central Asia. Today in the USSR, there's 100 per cent literacy, a high level education: and the latest achievements of culture have long become a possession of all 100-odd nationalities of the country.

"Finally, there is Soviet man, the most important product of the past 60 years. A man who, having won his freedom, has been able to defend it in the most trying battles. A man who has been building the future unsparing of his energy and making every sacrifice. A man who, having gone through all trials, has himself changed beyond recognition, combining ideological conviction and tremendous vital energy, culture, knowledge, and the ability to use them. This is a man whom while an ardent patriot, has been and will always remain a consistent internationalist" L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, emphasised at the 25th Party Congress.

Of course, by far not all problems have been solved. We know our shortcomings and difficulties better than our foreign critics. We also know the ways of further progress better than they do. We should not indulge in self-implacency because very much is still to be done. Mikhail Zimyanin stressed, How-

ever, it is indisputable that every Soviet man constantly feels concern for his life to become better and more satisfying.

Socialism guarantees the basic rights and freedoms of which many bourgeois constitutions do not say a word. This is, for example, freedom from exploitation and the rights to work, the protection of health, all types of social maintenance and free education.

The October Revolution awakened in the masses the thirst for creating a new way of life, a society of emancipated labour, this is the main source of what Lenin called "The Charm of the Russian Revolution".

—APN

IN MEXICO

IMF Recovery Plan Produces Disastrous Slump

Alan Riding

The Financial Times, London

Under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund, Mexico has run into its worst economic trouble for 40 years. In some parts, peasants are now only able to afford food every second day. But the government is sticking it out in the hope that the bitter medicine will eventually work.

Mexico City,

An austerity programme sponsored by the International Monetary Fund to control Mexico's rampant inflation has provoked the most serious economic slump that this country has known in forty years. Having enjoyed average annual growth rates of 7 per cent during the sixties and much of the seventies, Mexico's economy grew by just 2 per cent last year and is expected to register close to zero growth in 1977. With a population growing by 3.2 per cent each year and an economic structure that has traditionally benefited the wealthy, the crisis has meant a sharp drop in living standards for most of Mexico's 63m inhabitants and real hard-

IMF's "Austerity Fails"

ship for the rural poor and urban slum-dwellers.

But Mexico's new government, closely advised by the IMF which has lent Mexico a highly-conditional \$ 1.2bn, has concluded that inflation can only be controlled through a painful two-year austerity programme. Like many industrialised countries, Mexico was first struck by the worldwide wave of inflation in 1973, suddenly finding prices rising by more than 20 per cent a year against traditional rates of less than 5 per cent.

But while Mexico's initial inflation was largely imported, the government of the then president Luis Echeverria ignored the warning signs and stepped up its massive deficit spending on infrastructural and social-improvement projects. And as the organised labour movement began complaining about the increased cost of living, Mr. Echeverria merely decreed huge wage increases and set the vicious circle spinning faster.

Mexico's external sector immediately began to reflect the policy. Increased foreign borrowing was necessary to cover budgetary and balance of payments deficits so that the country's foreign debt has blossomed to exceed \$ 28bn today. At the same time, with domestic inflation eroding the relative value of the Mexican currency which had been stable since 1954, speculators began moving their money out of the country for fear of a devaluation.

The dam burst on August 31 last year when President Echeverria finally succumbed to mounting pressure against the peso and effectively devalued the currency by allowing it to float. Immediately, it lost almost 50 per cent of its value and, in an atmosphere of near-hysteria, prices began to rocket. The President, anxious to preserve his populist image, decreed a new 23 per cent wage increase and promised more at the end of the year. The private sector, on the other hand feared an even worse crisis and continued buying now-overvalued dollars.

The situation inherited by President Jose Lopez Portillo on December 1 clearly required drastic action.

The IMF was willing to provide the prescription: a floating currency, limited foreign borrowing, controlled wages and a tight rein on public expenditure. To the surprise of many economists, finance minister Julio Mortezena has kept strictly to the programme: the peso, is slowly floating downwards as it absorbs continuing inflation, new foreign credit for this year has been limited to \$ 3 bn, wage increases are being held to 10 per cent and government spending is down to a trickle.

But in a country where the private sector has traditionally followed the lead of the government, this policy has provoked a drastic slump. With no significant government spending and public sector projects being put into mothballs, businessmen are doing no more than announcing ambitious investment plans—and waiting. Business at all levels, though, is being hurt badly by the austerity. Falling demand has forced such vital sectors as automobiles and steel to cut production. But smaller industries, faced with paying inflated wages and high raw material prices, are suffering even more, laying off thousands of workers and, in many cases, suspending all activity.

Many companies with high dollar debt commitments were caught by the devaluation and, as in the case of the massive Fundidora De Monterrey steel company, have been forced to seek government assistance to roll over their debts. While many companies and shops will go into the red this year and some will even go bankrupt, the real drama of the crisis involves the hundreds of thousands of poor Mexicans who have lost their jobs and are forced to do anything from cleaning shoes to selling sweets in order to survive.

No reliable unemployment figures exist nor are they even necessary in Mexico—because no unemployment benefits, or general social welfare, are available. But most officials recognise that perhaps 15 per cent of the workforce is fully unemployed—and therefore living off friends and relatives—and another 40 per cent is underemployed. Tens of thousands of peasants who come to Mexico City and other urban areas to work on building sites for example, have been hit by the slump in the construction industry. They have been forced to return to their vil-

lages, where there is little for them to do, or to risk crossing into the United States as illegal migrants.

The crisis is even being reflected in sharply increased malnutrition, above all in remote villages and depressed slums. According to Dr. Adolfo Chavez, head of the government's Nutrition Division, the lack of food in many areas is resulting in a rise in infant mortality for the first time in 25 years. In other areas, he said, peasant families have taken to eating on alternate days.

The government nevertheless hopes that this bitter medicine will bring Mexico's inflation down from 45 per cent in 1976 to about 20 per cent this year and around 10 per cent next year. If successful, this policy should allow the public sector to start reflation the economy and stimulating much-needed job creation by late 1978.

Aware that in the long-run any programme designed merely to limit demand is certain to fail, the government is trying to shape an "alliance for production" between public and private sectors that is also approved by the labour movement.

But the danger of a "stop-go" approach to Mexico's economic problems is very real. While the economy is stopped, the challenge is to repair, somehow, those defects that could result in new inflation and devaluation when economic activity does get going again.

—Financial Times News-Features

REPORTAGE

The Marriage Broker —He Helps God To Join Together—

by R. C. Thavarajah
Retd. Supdt. of Police

As a slight variation to the sacrosanct pronouncement so solemnly repeated at wedding ceremonies, George Bernard Shaw wrote:—

What God has joined together, no man SHALL put under. GOD will take care of that.

The great Irish wit, poet and playwright probably did not foresee the emergence of a breed of 'Homo

sapiens' which is fast becoming an institution especially in the North—the Marriage Broker. Had G.B.S. done so, I am sure he would have included the marriage broker in his valediction. If marriages are made in Heaven, the marriage broker appears to be the accredited representative here on Earth.

At marriage Registration and wedding ceremonies, he sits in his 'pedestal' pleased as Punch at what he considers a 'magnum opus' most admirably completed. He acknowledges, most condescendingly, the encomiums showered on him and has his ears and eyes very wide open for a possible odd comment on the man and woman he has joined together. After all, he feels that as the chief architect of the *eclat*, he should be interested in the consensus of opinion.

A varied range of specialities and pre-requisites will be required to make a capable marriage broker. He should be suave, extremely skilled in PUFFERY, self-assured, tenacious but at the same time flexible under certain circumstances, quite adept at 'comparing' horoscopes of the male and female partners to be and, above all, a very convincing debator. With the unreserved acceptance of this profession, one wonders whether it will be legalised just as in the case of the teaching, legal or medical profession although abolition of the dowry system is one of the shibboleths of resurgent political parties.

Every distressed mother whose daughter is losing her youthful appearance and is on the verge of being placed on the shelf as "Un-saleable" or "Un-disposable" must seek that glib gobemouche who knows everybody and everything, placate him and pay him his fee. If you do not mind my attempt at poetry, they all seem to cry out desperately:—

Broker, Broker—hear my call;
You're the wisest of them all.
Find a groom for my daughter soon;
I'll give the stars and e'en the moon.

It was, therefore, not in vain that the great poet, wit and clergyman, ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1633) wrote in his *Counsel to Girls*—

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
Old Time is still a flying
And this same flower that smiles
today
Tomorrow will be dying."

With mission in mind, he calls on the parents of the prospective

bridegroom. He has, in the meantime, studied the family background, social status, employment details and all the 'bio-data' of the groom. He exudes Old world charm and *bonhomie* as he settles down smugly and tells the host that he happened to be passing by and thought of dropping in. After satisfying himself that the mood and disposition of the host are favourable, he most ingeniously and adroitly broaches the subject. He may not have been schooled in prestigious Academies and excelled in Political Science to be acclaimed 'Envoy Par-Excellence'. He may not be endowed with the quintessence of State diplomacy—whether it is pragmatic, shuttle, ping-pong or our local volleyball. He may not measure up to be entrusted with a highly deliberative and responsible demarche—be it Detente, SALT, Peace Zone or Non-Alignment. However, his versatility, sang froid, resilience and patience even in the teeth of open rebuff 'toties quoties' seem to of surpass those of Emissaries of International repute.

"Why, Sir, do but reconsider. The girl has "A" to "G" he would interfect with an air of some unyielding combatant who has executed a superb *riposte*. When the puzzled parents of the groom-to-be express their bewilderment at what appears to be an alphabetical 'abracadabra', he will explain with aplomb "simple" Sir—"A" is for Ancestry." The girl, according to him, is of excellent lineage. Her paternal great grandfather was a Mudaliyar. He, most artfully, avoids being specific whether it is Gate, Kachcheri, or Court Interpreter. What matters is that the honorific serves the purpose. "B" is for Beauty. From his description of the girl, the parents of the bridegroom-to-be and even the groom-to-be visualise the face of Helen of Troy, Cleopatra of Egypt or to come nearer Home, the local Aryan *Avurudhu Kumari*, Beauty Contest, or the Dravidian type who has won the Newspaper Sports Festival in the North.

"C" is for Character he proclaims as he extols the virtues of the bride-to-be. The prospective bridegroom immediately conjures up roseate vision of something of the brand of rare vintage as in William Shakespeare's "Tempest" where Ferdinand effuses his romantic overture to Miranda, Prospero's daughter:—

"But you—O you
So perfect and so peerless are
created

Of every creature's best..."

"D" is for Dowry and Donation he adds. It would appear that the term "Dowry" owes its origin to some concepts such as "Dos (Dowry) Profecticia"—Dowry furnished by wife's father or paternal ancestor, *Dos Adventicia* Dowry provided by the wife herself or anyone else on her behalf and *Donatio Propter Nuptias*—Gift on account of marriage. These concepts were introduced into their Legal System by the early Romans several years before Christ and which were ratified by Justinian when he codified the Roman Law.

At the mention of the monetary aspect of the intended union, there erupts a sudden burst of enthusiasm and interest by the bridegroom's parents as this is undoubtedly the *sine-qua-non* which clinches the issue. "Money is the root of all evil" is the oft-repeated sermon especially by those whose only qualification appears to be the inability to acquire that which has been described as "the bottomless SEA in which Honour, CONSCIENCE and TRUTH may be drowned."

In spite of the delectably didactic precepts both in Religion and Philosophy in practically every part of the Globe, nothing so far had the effect of teaching us a contempt for this commodity. On the other hand, especially in the present situation in our country, it is more than an accepted truism that MONEY really makes even the most obstinately reluctant quarduped—the Mare—to get a move on. "Money Talks" they say. In the Tamil language, there is a hackneyed aphorism that Money can make even a corpse to open its mouth and talk.

I suppose this is done without resorting to the services of a proficient ventriloquist! How, what is often referred to as "filthy lucre", can induce speech and possibly loquacity in a cadaver is something that beats me. It certainly calls for some re-thinking by Forensic Medical experts, Phonetists, Elocutionists, Eschatologists and, above all, Morticians, especially if there is a possible dispute regarding the undertaker's bill! One cannot altogether rule out the possibility especially in the context

of alleged defections, reported as news items in a prestigious daily. *Tribune* of 7th May, 1977 had some very apt and witty comments on these defections which were reported to have been most vehemently long after 'rigor mortis' had set in.

"E" is for Education, according to the broker. The bride-to-be has passed the G.C.E. "O" level with a credit in Home Science. "Mind you, Sir,—Home Science" he reiterates as if that is a qualification for any important and profitable occupation these days. Considering various things, there seems to be some justification in the marriage broker's assertion.

"F" is for fidelity which, according to the Great Cicero is the most sacred of the "Excellences and endowments of the human mind." The broker assures the bridegroom's party that the many-splendoured Paragon can be trusted in any part of the Island from Point Pedro to Point Dondra. It matters not whether it be the riotously romantic Ranweli village or the lush tempting beaches with the effervescence of erotic exhibitionism which offers so much for the libidinous lot of the Bohemians in certain parts of "Hic"—sorry—"Hippiekaduwa."

If the bridegroom has any pyromaniacal tendencies, either latent or manifest, he is at liberty if necessary to subject the girl to the historical test of Purity—the ordeal of the "Fire-bath" referred to in the *Ramanaya* adventures—of Rama—India's Great Epic Poem in Sanskrit (24,000 couplets in length) by the sage *Valmiki*. This Chastity Test would depend on Permissive Society, the Women's Lib, the Police, and of course, the weather permitting. From the broker's evaluation, it would appear that the bride-to-be would pass the test with flying colours literally and metaphorically as the militant of the Rationalists have a habit of flying over cinders to prove their point. Even the tassels of her expensive Kanjipuram or Manipuri saree will not be singed!

"G" is for Gold jewellery which, according to the broker, there is such an abundance as would be sufficient for a separate State to consolidate its Economic position by maintaining its own Gold Standard instead of the flimsy, combustible basket (paper) currency.

The offer is accepted. When matters are finalised, the broker is shrewd enough to collect his fee before the marriage ceremony. He knows that there is no strict bilateral contractual binding, notarial execution or other adequate documentation to establish his claim for the fee. In the English Law, such contracts are Void. The South African Courts too prefer the English view. In Ceylon, there is a divergence of opinion on this matter. About sixty years ago, His Lordship Justice Wood Renton held that an agreement with a Matrimonial Agent (euphemistic term for Marriage Broker) for the payment of a reward upon the completion of the marriage brought about by the agent is *Unenforceable*. In a subsequent judgement, His Lordship Justice Dalton refused to follow Justice Woodrenton's argument. However, in a recent decision, Justice Weeramantry was of the view that Justice Dalton's view is to be preferred as being in accordance with the Roman Dutch Law (Which is often described as the Common Law of Ceylon) and also the indigenous custom of Ceylon in relation to marriage.

According to the present market rates, the commission charged by marriage brokers is 2% of the dowry from the brides' parties and an additional 2% of the dowry from the bridegrooms party. Fantastically tempting! Getting ideas?—Don't forget; it is a highly specialised field. It is not everyone who can make the grade and display that singular forte to avoid paying Income tax, wealth tax, capital Gains tax and even the B.T.T. despite the bloodhound vigilance of the super sleuths of the Department of Inland Revenue with their highly developed investigative skill which will peeve even those above them on the higher floor.

O, I almost forgot. Every story must have a 'fairy-tale' ending. And so, the Prince charming saves the fair damsel from the hydra-headed dragon of permanent spinsterhood and they both plunge hurriedly into marriage—"The bloom or blight" according to *Bryon* "Of all men's happiness."

From there onwards, it is their "baby"—we hope. As for the marriage broker—it would certainly appear that it is *He* who lives *Happily* 'ever after'—on his earned income.

BOOK REVIEW

Christ Was No Sissy

JESUS CHRIST AND HUMAN LIBERATION

By Tissa Balasuriya O.M.I.

Published by Centre for Society and Religion

"All modern Churches are instruments of bourgeois reaction" wrote Lenin in 1909. But this was not always the case. The history of Christianity is bifurcated by Constantine; so long as it was the religion of the oppressed slaves of the Roman Empire the faith adhered to the revolutionary teachings of Christ. 'Not long' after Christ died those who claimed to follow him gave up practicing his revolutionary principle—observed H. G. Wells. This degeneration coincided with the adoption of the faith by the Roman Empire—Christianity in practice became establishmentarian.

But Christ was a revolutionary. "Consider some of his basic teachings," writes George Verwer the head of Operation Mobilisation who float *The Logos*, "Love your enemies, 'Do good to them which hate you,' 'Bless them which persecute you,' 'Do you suppose these ideas fell in with the cultural pattern of Christ's day?'"

Fr. Balasuriya in his book has tried to explain the link between historical events and theology. Because as Emile Durkheim said "we worship our social relations inverted"

With the increasing identification of Christianity with the ruling classes and ruling nations, its theology was adapted to suit and justify the oppressors. Thus the person of Christ was interpreted with emphasis on his negative qualities. We had an "effeminate Jesus, meek and mild, sweet and gentle, obedient unto death like a lamb. A conformist, domesticated, apologetic Jesus."

But Jesus was nobody's sissy!

Jesus was a worker, a carpenter, earning his living most of his life, living bang in the midst of the oppressed classes in an oppressed nation, alive to the suffering and oppression that was meted out by Roman Imperialism and the Jewish

Theocracy. Although Jesus moved with all classes of people he was a special friend of the poor, the weak, the outcast. He was human to the extent that he could rejoice with those who rejoiced and weep with those who wept; he loved children and could establish rapport with people with his simple straight forward stories, which had profound truths that have stood two-thousand years of retelling.

Yet he was strong and uncompromising in his stand against injustice. He was devastating in his criticism, calling King Herod a fox and the Pharisees a brood of vipers. It took immense courage in the cruel, rigid, society in which he lived to challenge prevailing values.

It was in his identification of the human as a person who is important and must be cared for, that he set a revolutionary principle. He called God 'abba,' father, and insisted that through him, all humans could claim the fatherhood of God. And that such a relationship demanded the brotherhood and sisterhood of mankind as well. "Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers you do unto me."

Jesus was not pedantic, he did not come to establish an institutional church. He came to establish the kingdom of God and his dictum was "seek ye first the kingdom of God."

This kingdom was the alternative to the oppression that man was subjecting himself to and being subjected to in the brutal Roman Empire. But it was to be like no other kingdom, for the poor become rich, the first last, the small will be great and the humble and lowly shall inherit the earth.

Jesus conceptualised a system where the personal worth of every human could be appreciated. At that time to propose a doctrine of human dignity and specially to live it, was truly radical and revolutionary. Both the Roman conquerors and the Jewish rulers had no concept of human freedom—their society was exploitative, their ideas racialist and obscurantist. Jesus loved people for what they are and wanted to free them from the tyranny that they had succumbed to, a tyranny that manifested itself in an alienated mentality. He helped them to develop into self confident men and women, to attain personal liberation, no

matter how inhibiting circumstances may be. And for this he gave them his peace, because as he said, "I have overcome the World."

We who take so many social liberties for granted will hardly be able to appreciate the revolutionary significance of his life—for example how non conformist he was in his attitude to women. Mary, his mother, personifies the liberated and self conscious woman that Jesus helped to mould; but she was not an exception. Throughout his earthly ministry he was sustained and supported by so many illiterate, despised and rejected women. But they followed him to the cross, and it was they who found him when he arose triumphantly from the dead.

"The World consists of two kinds of people" says *Campus Life*. "Winners and losers". Our culture worships the winners—and all of us know who the winners are and what goes to make a winner.

Class society is built on the ethic that virtue is aggressive competitiveness. Possessiveness and domination are the expressions of this ethic, and cruelty, brutality and sado-masochism are its perversions. Jesus contested this ethic and advanced a new criteria for human inter-personal and social relations. Whoever wants to be great must be the willing slave of all. And to drive home the point, in that class and ritual conscious age, he washed his disciples feet.

This is revolution! In doing this he was contesting the political structure of his day—and he continues to contest the political structure of our day. This is why the Jewish hierarchy and the Roman Imperialism executed him—not because he was a weak, milk and water reformist; but because he was a dangerous subversive of the political system, social values and cultural ethics.

"The prominent places in hell are reserved for those who are neutral on the big issues of life," says Billy Graham. And Jesus was not neutral—that is why they flogged his back, crowned him with thorns, spat in his face, and nailed his hands and feet to a cross. But he carried his revolution to its logical end—from the cross he looked down and forgave his tormentors.

Fr. Balasuriya is one of those Christians who has been able to recapture the revolutionary vision of Christ by going back to the person and teaching of Christ, going behind the distraction that the churches have become. He has sought first of all to live and to preach according to these principles. Now, he has documented them stressing their relevance to this our day and age.

Our world inspite of material advances is one where human personalities are underdeveloped, nay, oppressed, as they would be in any class society. The desire for pleasure without responsibility ruins lives, families and homes. Consumerism keeps people in competitive tension and lack of acceptance has led to so much of psychological stress, so much of neurosis. Our world is strewn with class, race, caste, colour and every form of social discrimination.

All of this alienation dehumanizes, for the rich are never satisfied and the poor are discontented. Adults seek pleasure, wealth and power and neglect their children. And men and women seek personal fulfilment but fail to achieve it because they don't respect others.

What is more, they don't even respect themselves. The personality of Jesus re-emerges in relevance. We see him approaching life with a healthy detachment yet an intense openness to all. And it was his love and respect for each and everyone that made him enunciate socially unacceptable values. Above all, he was no sissy, he lived out those values and spent his life time preaching them. Yet no society will tolerate its values being questioned—to go against such values is to preach revolution. And society offers only death, either physical or otherwise, to its revolutionaries.



FOREIGN REPORTS

• Nonaligned

United Nations, May 15,

Sri Lanka has forwarded a draft agenda to the United Nations for the General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament. This draft was prepared by a group of Non-aligned countries.

The draft agenda has been received favourably at the United Nations. Now, its consideration is expected to the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session on which of a total of 54 countries, 32 are Nonaligned or observers in the Nonaligned Movement.

According to evaluations to date, the Non-Aligned countries' agenda proposal is acceptable to Austria as well as to Colombia, above all because the proposal calls for a programme of measures for disarmament and a political declaration. This proposal was described by Belgium as useful, who recommended it to the rest of the countries in the preparatory committee as an acceptable basis for the final composition of the agenda. Spain considers that "general support" has been manifested for the concept of a General debate at the Special Session, adopting a political declaration of disarmament, a programme of measures for disarmament and intensifying the role of the United Nations and the system of negotiation on this global problems of the present day world.

The East European socialist countries see the Special Session as, foremost, taking up the Soviet proposal for convening a World Disarmament Conference. Besides, the draft agenda, as Poland officially proposed it, specifies nothing on a programme of measures for disarmament, nor suggestions to change the present mechanism of negotiations.

The other Big Powers do not at all want the Special Session to get involved with the idea of a world Conference and be reduced to some kind of a "prelude" to the main act—the World Conference. In this disassociation, Sweden has gone a step further with an official proposal immediately to recommend a new, second special Session to be held in three to five years. Obviously, the idea is to develop

disarmament measures and a follow-up of this process in the near future through the United Nations alone.

In the current stage of preparations, very present is the idea that a favourable climate must be created for disarmament. But there is some danger in this approach, since on some sides such an advocacy is practically reduced to a call for work on "the climate" to replace work on disarmament measures.

In reference to the draft agenda concerning the United Nations role in disarmament—Austria recommended a restructuring of the machinery of the United Nations to give it the dominant role. This was supported by many countries. The impression is that on this point considerable difficulties can be expected, since the current institution of negotiations suits both West and East.

—Tanjug

* * *

• Apartheid

Maputo, May 17,

An abundance of documents and materials prepared for the conference on racism and apartheid in Southern Africa, opened here last night, gives a concise insight into the "identity card" of apartheid.

Zimbabwe, whose colonial name is South Rhodesia, is populated today by 6.5 million people: 6.23 million black, and 270 thousand white people. The white population owns half of the entire territory, including the richest and most fertile areas, while the Africans are crowded into the bare highlands and sterile land south of Zambezi river. Annual income of the average of one African amounts to 80, and of White to nearly three thousand U.S. dollars.

And about one million black people are unemployed, while in the neighbouring African countries live more than 100 thousand refugees. The concentration camps of Zimbabwe (so-called "protective villages") are populated by 300 thousand poor black people at the moment. Only 9,000 black people in Zimbabwe today have the right to vote.

The diamond—uranium, —and gold-rich country of Namibia, three times larger than France, was occupied by the South African army in 1915. There are 95,000 white and 700,000 black people living there. All mining areas, every piece of fruitful land, and the entire Atlantic Coast are owned by Europeans. The Africans are crowded into "reservations" in the South or on the Central highland between the Namibia and Kalahari deserts. The average annual income per African amounts to 100 U.S. dollars. On the other hand, almost every adult white owns a private airplane.

German colonialists, and later the South Africans, committed a real genocide over the Namibian people. At the beginning of this century, there were not less Africans in Namibia than at present. The Herrero and the well-shaped famous warrior "bushman" tribe are almost eradicated. In the Namibian capital of Windhoek a museum was built to glorify the German Emperor Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler. Hitler's birthday is being publicly celebrated every year.

Finally, in Vorster's South Africa, called "the citadel of apartheid", some 4.5 million white people are owners of 87 per cent of state territory, while 19 million black and "coloured" people are expelled to ten "bantustans" (reservations), each of which, according to Vorster's plan, should become a "sovereign nation".

Here, the white race is considered to be "predetermined by god's will" to remain "superior" for ever. Some 500 thousand black people are in arrest in this country at the moment. A very important fact is, that leading western countries' investments in the economy of apartheid are today greater than their investments in all other African countries put together.

—Tanjug

Confidentially

• LAKSPRAY

IS IT NOT A FACT that one of talking points in all co-op queues is about the very big shortage of Lakspray in tins? That even Lakspray in cellophane packing is equally scarce? That the small quantities of Lakspray that come to the co-op are handed over to people who can establish, on birth and marriage certificates that, they have legitimate children of their own in the age group which co-op bureaucrats think need milk powder? That these most humiliating procedures have been devised to see that Lakspray does not get into wrong hands? That the excuse trotted out in some newspapers as to why Lakspray is so short is that the supplier of the tins had "let them down"? That *Tribune* inquiries into the matter revealed that an order had been placed with one contracting firm in Singapore for the tins and that a strike in that factory had resulted in a default? That the Milk Board should be taken to task for placing all their eggs in one contracting firm so far as tins were concerned? That a prudent management would have placed orders with two or more contractors in different places and countries, either by dividing the order or by multiplying it, to ensure that the supply was not interrupted by strikes or go-slows? That, in passing, it is necessary to recall that *Tribune* has pointed out more than once in the past (in this column) that the topnotchers of the Sri Lanka Milk Board have a penchant for placing orders in Singapore (and nowhere else)? That it is doubtful if Singapore is the cheapest source for tins and bottles? That readers will remember that some of the top officials of the Milk Board, when they quit the services of the Board, or were compelled to quit, chose to live (with good jobs), in their temporary "retirement" or "exile" away from Sri Lanka, in Singapore? That this kind of coincidence has naturally set tongues a-wiggling?

IS IT ALSO NOT A FACT that the current shortage of Lakspray is not entirely due to the shortage of tins? That *Tribune* has made

inquiries as to why cellophane and cardboard box packing Lakspray were also scarce and unearthed the following information? (That the Milk Board should make the true facts known if what we state below is not correct or accurate?) That it would appear that the Welisara Milk Packing Factory had commenced working the line on July 26, 1976? That on that day, the 26th of July, the Milk Board in the true spirit of "socialism" had entered into an agreement with the Workers' Union that the workers on the line would produce 90,000 pounds a day with a guarantee of 3 hours overtime—although the line was capable of producing 100,000 in one shift of 8 hours? That this Milk Board "socialism" (feather-bedding at its worst) had from the very start legalised a "go-slow" whereby the workers would produce 10,000 pounds less than its 8-hour capacity in a 11-hour working shift (with the last three hours paid at one and half overtime in normal days and double on Saturdays and treble on Sundays and holidays)? That this initial "feather-bedding" led to more serious consequences? That, on July 27, it was found that in the 11-hour shift the production was only 60,000 pounds? That in spite of this low production, the workers demanded the three hours overtime pay and, surprisingly enough, this too was conceded by the management which thereby abdicated its rights to the Union? That in genuinely socialist countries this kind of blackmail and sabotage by the "workers" would not be tolerated? That readers will know that the Milk Packing at Welisara Plant had started functioning in July 1970? That the output from 1970 to July 1976 was in the region of 1.5 million pounds of Lakspray every month? That, with the line, it was decided to increase the production and the figure of 2 million pounds was decided upon? That the increase was effected by paying overtime in a way that was contrary to the interests of the consumer and the country? That apart from the question of surrendering to the blackmail of the Union and its members who want higher pay for less work, it is also necessary to inquire how the Milk Board had decided on the production target of 1.5 million (and then 2 million pounds) a month? That it would be pertinent to know whe-

ther the decision to fix the monthly production monthly at 1.5 and 2 million pounds was made arbitrarily on the whims, fancies and hunches (or guesses) of some officials? That it is essential to know whether there was a market study? That the Milk Board should make public how it estimated the demand for Lakspray? That it is not known whether there was even an attempt to base the estimates on ration books of infants and also adults who buy Lakspray because supplies of sterilised and pasteurised milk are either uncertain or unavailable?

IS IT NOT TRUE that many of the bigwigs in the Milk Board management do not know that MRI (Medical Research Institute) has stressed in its nutritional recommendations that 42% of our population is between the age group of 1 to 15 and that these require 7.5 million pounds of milk or milk powder a month? That Ambawela produces about 900,000 pounds of Lakspray a month? That our imports (to reach the 2 million target) are in the region of 1.1 million pounds? That in the course of our inquiries other revealing information became available? That it is known that the milk intake at Ambawela was 200,000 pounds per day upto December 1976? That the total collection by the Milk Board is now about 300,000 pounds a day? That when the collection of milk had begun to drop in 1976 and 1977, more milk was diverted to Ambawela? That this diversion created a shortage of sterilised and pasteurised milk? That, in the milk booths today, pasteurised milk is over within minutes of the Board's vans arriving with supplies? That there is not enough sterilised milk to enable all booths to stock it? That, in Colombo, those who want sterilised milk have to trek to the Narahenpitiya headquarters of the Board to obtain supplies? That in spite of tall talk and empty boasts, that milk production was increasing, it is common knowledge that milk production is falling very fast? That with poonac at over Rs. 200 a cwt Sri Lanka's cattle no longer get any concentrates? That milk, meat and bull-power will soon be a thing of the past? That it is idle to talk of buffalo-power to work our fields? That everybody bemoans this sad state of affairs but nobody has a remedy?



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