

TRIBUNE

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- ON SOCIALISM
- PRE-BUDGET JITTERS
- SHAMBA
- WORLD'S OLDEST MAN
- INANIA
- KISSINGER'S NEWS CONFERENCE
- BUDGET

THE FOURTH BUDGET

The Fourth Budget of the United Front Government is a showpiece. It is a balanced budget with a surplus in the current account. The prices of textiles and cigarettes have been reduced. Middle income employees in the public sector have been given a moratorium on their personal debt liabilities. The Government has also been able to tell the IMF and the World Bank that they could do without their aid with strings. From the extra emphasis laid on the export on gems and non-traditional goods, coupled with tourism, many have tended to forget that the balanced budget and the concessions extended to consumers was possible only because of the saving on food subsidies and the total stoppage of imports of a large range of foodstuffs. If the food subsidies had been cut no sooner this Government had come to power in 1970, and not in October 1973, and food imports had also been stopped in 1970 to promote a hold food production drive, (readers will remember that *Tribune* had consistently suggested this from 1970 onwards), the country would not have got into the mess in which it found itself this year. There is no point in harking back to the past, but if the Government will in future persist in its present determination to concentrate on production without being side-tracked overmuch by pseudo-demagogic slogans about distribution and income equalisation, then this country has a fair chance of effecting a breakthrough on the economic (and food) front. As anticipated in this column, the new UF elite of rich exporters of gems and non-traditional goods, and the hoteliers and tourist promoters, have got the greenlight in this Budget to make more money, but it is surprising why the Government does not want to extend the same tax-holiday and other concessions to farmers and others engaged in the production of food crops. This is probably because United Front *vips* still labour under the delusion that landless peasants on three acre blocks, given free to them, will bring about a Green Revolution to make this country self-sufficient in food. Free land, like free rice, free education and free medicine will neither bring socialism nor a Green Revolution. A new *elite* of a new rich in the green belt, amenable to the UF, has to be fostered and encouraged in order to win the production war on the food front. The sooner the UF realises this the better for the country — that nothing is ever achieved without an elite of brains, of training and of affluence. For the rest, the Budget rationalises the accounting system of the Government. But, the most revolutionary feature of the Budget is the decision to decentralise local government and thus pave the way for autonomy and democracy in local government in Sri Lanka.

Tribunania

On Socialism

THE FOURTH BUDGET of the United Front Government was presented on November 1. This time the Budget was presented in the midst of a new kind of crisis, new for this island: we have a cholera outbreak in the North and a food crisis all over. The first Budget of the UF was presented at the end of October 1970 in the throes of a foreign exchange crisis; but, in the excitement about a democratically elected government seeking to establish socialism through parliamentary legislation, the crisis was forgotten. This euphoria did not last long when dissident youth staged an abortive insurrectionary uprising in April 1971. The second budget came in the backwash of the insurgency, but the tough austere measures, which were proposed, were reversed by back bench pressure and inner-UF intrigues, and this put the Government into greater difficulties.

If the austere measures cutting down food subsidies and charging realistic prices were accepted by the Government Party at the time of 1971 Budget (and also at the time of the 1972 Budget), and if the Government had overcome its allergic obsessions about a UNP-nomenclatured *grow-more - food* campaign from 1971, the food crisis in 1973 would not have been

as serious as it turned out to be. The 1972 Budget had also come at a time of economic crisis, but in the *glory-hallelujah* atmosphere of the new Constitution, the Government Parliamentary Party had compelled the Cabinet to reverse decisions to cut down food subsidies and adopt austere rationing procedures. This year the Budget was presented after many of the tough measures had been imposed on the country as a *fait accompli* from October 1, but what is heartening is that the Prime Minister has taken personal responsibility for launching a food production drive on a war basis. With the apathy and lethargy into which the majority of the people in the island had fallen, doped by subsidies and welfare facilities which this country could not afford, the element of panicky dramatisation which the Government has indulged in to induce people to grow more food, was excusable. More food will certainly be grown, but it is a pity that much more will not be grown (to make this country have an exportable surplus) because of the production-restrictive measures this Government has introduced legislatively in the hope and belief that socialism would be achieved thereby.

ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE, the latest budget of the United Front government has been analysed. In this column we wish to make a brief reference to illusion which has gained credence that Sri Lanka is well on the way towards socialism. Too many people in this country still

confuse nationalisation with socialism and vice-versa. They erroneously think that if Government were to nationalise all private industry we would reach the goal of socialism, and that is why sloganising socialism in Sri Lanka is coupled with demands to nationalise this private company or that. Most UF adherents express satisfaction when the Government nationalises a few private industries.

It is because serious political education along Marxist lines has long been ignored by our Left Parties that many UF enthusiasts think that nationalisation of a few banks and industries would automatically usher in socialism. The mere expansion of the size of the public sector, without a corresponding increase in the political cum technical education of workers to enable them to participate intelligently in management, will not lead this country towards socialism. The "worker participation" which has been practised so far in Sri Lanka is on sectarian party lines (to enable partners of the UF to increase their trade union membership in work places), without the essential basic political cum technical education, and this has made matters far worse, and reduced such undertakings to a mess hampered by bad management procedures, inefficiency, indiscipline and corruption—all leading to low productivity. The situation has been made worse by indiscriminate recruiting to give jobs to party supporters and excessive over-employment has given rise to new maladies that undermine the economy,

The basic aim of socialism is economic equality, but when ordinary people are confronted with a new United Front elite, rushing around in 6 Sri cars, many of which are owned privately, it begins to dawn on the common man that nationalisation and an expanded public sector has only brought in a new elite to replace the old UNP-type elite. In the food-drive hysteria of the Dudley Senanayake era, a new elite had sprung up with jeeps, land-rovers and mini-mokes. The UF government endeavoured to disposses this elite and confiscated vehicles which had not been used directly in agriculture.

The new UF elite are in Peugeot and Mercedes Benz cars, brought in for tourism, for gem exports and on convertible rupees. The UF government also brought in new regulations which enabled relatives abroad to send cars to their kith and kin in Ceylon.

The creation of this new, 5 and 6 Sri car-owning elite by the United Front is the very antithesis of socialist economic equality. Under cover of liquidating the capitalists and landlords of the old regime, a new elite has been created which has no interest in a socialist order—except to mouth slogans in order to maintain a new tribal identity. If the reduction of economic inequalities is the primary objective of socialism, then this Government has not taken the first step towards socialism. After destroying the privileged and the rich of the old order (who did not know how to

creep into the privileged niches under the United Front regime through tourism or gem-exporting, or exporting non-traditional goods), the Government has created a new elite of rich and privileged persons with tax holidays that will enable them to survive a succession of united front "socialist" governments whilst they build up sizable fortunes abroad.

This is not socialism, and when this bluff is called, as it will be sooner or later, then the perpetrators of this hoax on the people of Sri Lanka will have to face the wrath of a people who have been cheated by soul-stirring socialist slogans.

UNLESS the United Front government undergoes a fundamental change in its present socio-political-economic set up and the policies it follows, unless it deprives its own elite of the 6 Sri cars (either privately-owned or state-owned) which they jauntily flaunt before ordinary people, and unless it ends the endless corruption in public sector undertakings, eliminating the new breed of commission agents and contact men who have become a worse plague than the disappearing band of profiteering private traders, all the radical measures of the UF government will take the country further away from socialism and also breed among the people a dangerous psychosis that socialism was a disease that must be avoided.

In this connection, Sri Lanka will do well to know something of what has happened

in Burma, which has had a Government for the last ten years that has implemented a special Burmese variety of socialism. In practice, all that it meant was that nationalisation, total and complete, was implemented with rigour by the military which had established a dictatorship under Ne Win.

The Madras Hindu recently published a despatch by Depth-

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news about the socialism that has failed in Burma. We make no excuses for quoting in extenso

Haphazard laws, corruption that feeds on the loopholes and the resulting erosion of incentives to farmers and industrial workers have brought Burma to its present state.

An exile from Burma now watching things from a border province in Thailand tells a story to explain why socialism has failed the Burmese farmer.

"Let's start at the end of the harvesting season", he says. All rice must be sold to a Government buyer. But the Government buyer sits in his office, and the village farmer must travel over many kilometres by bullock cart, which is probably rented. When he arrives at the buyer's office, the farmer is told he is not in, or very busy, could the farmer come back tomorrow. After several tomorrows, the buyer sees the farmer, and he hums and haws, obviously waiting for a bribe. The bribe is offered and taken.

"Then the farmer trots off to the Government weigher. The weigher takes a look more at the farmer than at the rice and says: "Your rice is wet", or "sandy" and "below government standards. We cannot take it."

"Take it please", says the farmer, "here's some money". The money is taken, the rice weighed and sold, and the farmer is paid—not in cash but by a brass token collectible at the local bank. It takes several days to collect

the money at the bank. The farmer cannot afford the wait, sells his 1,000 kyat token for 900 kyat. Then he goes home. Where local bandits—dacoits—lie in wait. "It is just not worth it" the storyteller comments as he ends this tale.

Even if the farmer made a little nest egg from the season's harvest, it will be of little use. There is nothing to buy in Burma these days. There are acute shortages of many things, like cloth, for instance.

And we have this story about Burma's nationalised textile industry. Under the system, a manufacturer gets his supply of yarn from the government, in return for which he is expected to produce cloth according to certain specifications. It does not matter, however, whether specifications are met or not. What is necessary is to bribe the Government Inspector to approve the finished cloth. The manufacturer then goes to the Government store, where the Government buyer is bribed to buy the cloth. The sale registered, the textile manufacturer goes back to the government for more yarn. He gets the yarn and sells it in the black market. He then goes back to the Government buyer, buys back the cloth he had sold, again with a bribe. The Government buyer's record shows the cloth as sold. The manufacturer then produces the very same cloth before the Government Inspector as finished goods from the second consignment of yarn. "The circle goes on" the storyteller says as he

ends this yarn, "and there is little cloth in Burma."

It is plain that the reforms, instituted by the Burmese governments since the Union of Burma came into existence in 1948 in the name of socialism, have had no positive effect on production. In fact, their impact has been strongly negative.

Furthermore, Burma continues to resist any inflow of foreign investment. Whatever internal funds it has, is eaten up by the huge 200,000 man Burmese army. As a result, there is no domestic capital to finance industrial ventures. There is thus no industrial sector to help absorb the rising numbers of agriculturally under employed.

It will be argued by UF loyalists that we have quoted from the "capitalist" press, but facts are facts even in the capitalist press. Very few people from the outside world now succeed in getting into Burma to see what is happening. The press in Burma is virtually non-existent and the few government-run papers only sing praises of the Ne Win regime and the glories of Burmese socialism. Papers in socialist countries are so obsessed with the idea that nationalisation and an expanded public sector constitute a method by which developing countries can leap frog over capitalism into socialism, that they gloss over the tragedy which has overtaken production in Burma and overlook the gradual pauperisation of the economy. What Depthnews has written about the problems

which confront a farmer in Burma in his dealing with a sole-monopoly paddy purchasing organisation has already begun to take place in Sri Lanka. We are only at the beginning of the process which has gone on in Burma for 10 years. State capitalism, nationalisation and an expanded public sector alone cannot bring into being a socialist system that brings a better life for the ordinary man, especially in a developing country where political and technical education have been neglected or ignored for a variety of reasons. Without a free press and an open society, the political elite which has come to power on emotional slogans, will perpetuate a dangerous tyranny. In Sri Lanka, society is still open, but the press had been greatly circumscribed, but this country has not yet slipped into the unhappy morass into which Burma has already fallen.

Tribune recently had the privilege of meeting a dedicated socialist who had the opportunity of travelling in Burma not very long ago. He was not allowed to travel everywhere, but his observations about what he saw, heard, and learnt first hand has made him very disillusioned about Brumese socialism. What the capitalist *Hindu* has published is a mild and restrained picture compared to the description of the true situation given to *Tribune* by a man whose devotion to socialism cannot be questioned. He has travelled in a great many countries, socialist and otherwise, and as he still hopes to go back to Burma for a short sojourn

he has to maintain anonymity for sometime longer.

If socialism is to succeed in Ceylon it has to be something much more than what has been envisaged by United Front elite dashing around in 6 Sri cars from capitalist countries. This elite does not know what it is to stand in different queues to obtain the weekly rations. They do not know what it is to be humiliated by arrogant co-operative salesmen, saleswomen and officials. They do not know that a "cut" or a santhosam has to be given to co-op stores managers to get hard-to-come-by goods on the first visit to the co-op which is often a long way off from home. The elite do not know that a farmer who wants to buy diesel or kerosene has to bribe the manager of sole-monopoly petroleum products' depot run by the co-op in rural areas —if he is not to make several trips. The elite do not know of the bribes which have to be paid to contact men to persuade MPs and other VIPs to get things done.

All this has begun to happen in Sri Lanka.

The elite know how to get their rations without queuing up. They know how to get extra rice, flour and sugar without paying blackmarket prices. They know how to get their textiles. And they also know how to get the little luxury items like transistors and tape-recorders without too much money or trouble. But, the ordinary citizen does not have enough money to buy even essentials like food.

Upheavals are often caused by irritations which appear small but which symbolise subterranean oceans of hate which build up over the years. The 6 Sri cars of the elite may seem a small matter but one has only to hear what is said in the street corners, in the towns and the culvert-gatherings in the rural areas to realise the hate that is building up. Many seem to think that the fact that many of these cars used by the UF elite sport a government crest takes the sting away so far as the individuals are concerned. This may be true up to a point but the common people, blinded with hunger and frustration, feel that these cars are, more often than not, careering round the country on private jaunts under cover of official work. And, in any case, they feel that most of the government's work could be done without these cars.

The question is now being seriously asked whether this country is going towards socialism. Land for the landless will no doubt satisfy land-hungry voters, but it will not mean socialism. The liquidation of the old elite and the creation of a new elite under different party labels is also not socialism. Just as much as free rice, free medicine and free education was not socialism, so also a new elite of socialist-sloganising 28 Sris, owning and using 6 Sri cars, is not socialism.



ON TAKING IT

BUDGET BLUES & PRE-BUDGET JITTERS

By Canax

PRE-BUDGET JITTERS, as one newspaper called it, has reached such crazy proportions the time has come for us to do something about it, and quick. The thinking so far, if I have got it right, is that we should move to diffuse the crisis, like the Super Powers have done with the Cold War; when the going got chilly, they decided to plunk for detente.

Now detente may be the answer to the Cold War, but unhappily it is not an all-purpose solution designed to meet every conceivable problem. It has even been said that detente is no solution at all, but we won't worry about that because it is bad enough just to know that detente won't work in the case of pre-Budget jitters. The only way we can rid ourselves of that, the thinking goes, is by banishing the Budget altogether, so we won't have any jitters at all, pre-or post-Budget.

A leading economist in our Planning Ministry sat up in his armchair and uttered a few, chosen words of wisdom—and caution—when asked about the Budget Blues. "A known jitter is better than an unknown one," he said, and maybe he has something there. He appeared somewhat jittery himself but, then, he was probably having a known jitter for company.

FUNNILY ENOUGH, a leading businessman also got the jitters when the talk turned to the possibility of our living happily ever after without Budgets. I have no way of knowing what possessed him, or if he was possessed at all, though he behaved as if he had. "Those whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first drive mad!" he raved, though it wasn't clear who he meant, the ones who govern or the ones who are governed. He was forgetting, of course, that we can't have one without the other.

"What's so wrong about a little pre-Budget jitters?" he demanded to know. Anything in moderation, in his candid opinion, was not only useful but also necessary for human survival. It was his considered view that pre-Budget jitters, handled properly, was good for business. It made the difference between profit and loss, which is another way of saying life and death, and since it occurred but once a year, like Christmas, it was silly to allege excessive indulgence.

He did, however, make an allegation of his own. For reasons better left unsaid, he declared, people were being given the wrong kind of jitters.

"Take cholera, for instance, he said. "Now that's what

I call a criminal waste of the jitters. You scare the hell out of people, and, all for what? For nothing."

THE POINT he was making was that cholera jitters, unlike pre-Budget jitters, was a totally unproductive exercise. Giving people the jitters over rice and flour, for instance, paid rich dividends by way of the Food Drive. At a time when the accent, and everything else, was on productivity, more productivity and still more productivity, we should not fritter away the peoples' potential for having the jitters which, though considerable, was not limitless. If it did not in any way contribute to increased output then, sorry, no jitters. That's what he said.

Don't ask me how I got to where I am now, starting with the Budget and ending cheek by jowl with cholera. The journey, if it can be called one, was undertaken not by me but by him, alone and unaided. Another businessman I spoke to also chose to travel the same route as his brother in trade. When I asked what possible link there was between the Budget and cholera, he said, "They are both dreadful, only one is endemic. We haven't had cholera for years."

To perhaps illustrate the uselessness of it all, the man said that after giving people the jitters the Health Ministry, while giving the death toll to date, also gave the assurance that this latest illegal immigrant to the island was a pretty mild sort of fellow. "What do they ex-

pect—the people to die happy?" He wanted to know from me. I couldn't really speak for our bureaucrats, but I did. With them, I said, anything was possible.

Having talked to several businessmen, the idea I seem to have got is that while they have little love for the Budget itself, they unreservedly welcome the climate it creates a little in advance of its arrival.

Asked one of me, "What do you think has kept me from taking a running jump into the sea these past few years?"

"Because you never learnt to swim," I ventured.

He said I had missed the point completely. Business had been so lousy month after month and year after year that it was only the pre-Budget jitters (of others) that kept him from giving up the ghost. He lived from one pre-Budget jitter to the next, a time lag of approximately 12 months, although it seemed like 12 years to him.

THE BUDGET gave him the jitters too, he said, only his affliction had been diagnosed as post-Budget jitters, while most people seemed to catch it in advance. Thanks to this slight difference in time he was able to make a killing, business-wise.

A member of the public confided he experienced no jitters whatever over the Budget, and went so far as to make a shrewd guess about his unique immunity. "I think it has something to do with my purse," he said.

"It's charmed, huh?"

SHAMBA

Tall Stories ; Little Progress

JULY 22 – JULY 25

by ANITORY BUKOBA

July 22,

There is much too little planted, even though what is growing has all to be watered from the river. Long ago I wrote the quantities of various vegetables that I had told had been planted or replanted, in more or less a

"No, it's empty," he said. "Most of the time."

At home, I asked my wife if she had had the jitters. She hotly denied it, thinking I was talking dirty. When I explained, she suggested I ask myself the question. What she means is that a week before the Budget I always thoughtfully stock up on the essentials.

She won't admit it, I know, but she stocks up too, only she concentrates on the luxuries like rice, flour and sugar.

"Since when have cigarettes and arrack become essential to sustain life?" she wanted to know.

So I told her. "From the day I started smoking one and drinking the other."

I have tried to show her how wrong she is, but she refuses to see the point I am trying to make, even though it is not my point at all. When it comes to austerity, I said to her, what items does the Government ask us to practice austerity on?

Not cigarettes and arrack, for sure.

day. The figures given me were some what big and loyally recorded here, although I could see the corresponding work on the ground. There is nothing like these figures growing now. They could not all have died off, although many did. Most of the vegetables growing now are from what were moved later.

Be that as it may, I was upset today when it looked as if I was going to be frustrated in my hopes of giving everything a thorough watering. My friends had already trotted out their excuses for their impending absences this evening. At that time the heat was really striking bad. It pre-aged a storm, but would that happen at this season? It seemed not likely. Then the storm clouds came up, and after thunder could be heard.

But would it rain? It seemed too much to hope for. When it did rain it came on very slowly. Ten minutes later the ground seemed hardly wet. Would the rain peter out? It held and came on more fiercely. Then we became aware that the rain was going to be enough. A great relief it was, and it is still raining, I have been assured that it will not be necessary to water anything tomorrow or the day after.

So the murunga, the plantain trees, the few papaw, the water melon, and a whole

host of other things, numerically few, but much in variety, have received what they would have yearned for had they been capable of feeling. I wonder if the two coconut trees have their holes full of water. Welcome rain!

July 23,

A man turned up this morning and said he had come this way to look for a job. I had met him not so long ago and then he had said he was from a village where I had lived years ago, but, I could not recall his face.

He turned up today and said he left Colombo with Rs. 3/50 and spent Rs. 3/40 on the journey. He had not eaten, he said, but that did not matter, he added, so long as he could get a leg on, on the next stage of his journey. I had breakfasted on ten stringhoppers at six cents a piece, and I was hungry. I contemplated asking him to cook some mungatta, or green gram as it may be called in English and sharing it him. With that gone we should have so much less food, and as money is short just now, I hesitated. I spoke about asking some *kadday* friends to put him on a lorry, and not knowing him at all, I did not want to leave him alone in the house while I went to the next house, to call someone to stay here while we went to the road. I asked him to go over and bring the chap back. He agreed to do so, but I did not see him again. This has been a long story, and

I have told it because it is typical of what has been happening to me quite often — people turning up here after using all their money on their fare, or at least claiming to have brought no money with them for their return and staying a few days and expecting me to pay their fare home which I have always done. It has always knocked a hole in my pocket and made nonsense of any proper budgeting that I have tried to do. Financially, this sort of thing has set me right back each time, and it is a wonder that I have been able to catch up at all.

While I am on this, I might relate another story. Some one spotted me and said he had come to meet me. My whole instinct, and his demeanour, told me what he had come about. His child was very ill, he said, and he wanted to rush him to hospital. Short of money as I am, I at once took him to some prosperous, acquaintances or rather friends, close by. I thought that they might at least know the man better than me, as he worked closer to them. They gave us quite cogent reasons why they could not part with any money. I was eager to try more people, but the man had enough. It is no small matter to refuse help to get a sick child to hospital, and I hunted for the man later and found his house. His wife said there was no one ill, but pointed out to me a girl who had had fever much earlier on that day. She had obviously recovered before the man had

come to me, and he had cried over his tale in my presence!

With the rains we had yesterday, I was keen to resume planting. All the seeds, the mango seeds, that have been lying here for weeks, I planted in coconut shells. The three biggest would not fit into any shell, and so all three went into a small *mutti* which, cracked, was good for nothing else. The old shells which had mango seeds in them were all emptied and investigated. This one and the good seeds were replanted in shells. A few seem to have dried up, their insides were empty. Two *jamanarang* orange seeds were planted in a shell. Two *alligatta pera* seeds were planted in separate shells. They are big seeds. The various chilli-plants were all packed round with earth and some new ones transplanted. All the old papaw seeds I could find were sown thickly in one bed. This is to see if they will germinate. Some more red onions were sown.

July 24,

After a long time I resumed my old task of piling up the thorns I had cut so long ago, and I started some new heaps. The old ones have steadily refused to burn, and all the ones I tried to burn tonight were just as stubborn and would not catch fire. There is only a little more to clear in this way, and sooner or later I must go over all of it again with a mamoty. Once all the old cut vegetation is piled into heaps, I shall feel free to

resume work with a slasher, and I am anxious to get going again with that job until, we have reached our boundaries.

While I was working among the thorns, there were two people in the house and I was able to go about this task happily because I know they were there. I preferred them in the house doing nothing than not having them there at all.

Today two of us visited the fair, and it is fun having a fairly knowledgeable person with me to select the vegetables. I bought some tomatoes after a long time, and we extracted the seed before having them for dinner tonight. A vegetable new to me that we bought is called, I think, *Puhul* and it may be ash-pumpkin in English. It looked like a melon to me, and we bought a slice of it. One of the first things I did when I got home was to remove all the visible seeds in it for planting, and for selling. I have an array of seeds in coconut shells on one of the shelves in our room. There are so many shells, I have to double them up, one on another.

A good half of the watering was done this evening, and some more chilli transplanted. The newly transplanted chilli was not watered so as to give them a little time to settle. This was contrary to my usual practice of drowning the roots with water. Or, should I say, dowsing? Nearly all the ones moved yesterday are doing well, and the few weak ones, that looked dried up, were wat-

red. They will all be watered in the morning.

Tiny leaves have appeared on one of the dried-up jak plants. Thank goodness I have been watering it. I am however, reduced to having only one vine left. The other three, I discovered were, really dead.

There was no bread to be had this morning. My companion had the left overs of that night's rice while I had hoppers and sambol. From one point of view he had the better choice, but I do not like rice for breakfast.

July 25,

This evening I started watering quite early, and when I had to stop because of the poor light, I had not finished the vegetables. The murunga, plantain and the manioc were not really touched at all. The chilli is doing well, and there are only a few weak ones, newly transplanted, that may die if they are not given a good dowsing with water. The tomato is doing well and does not seem to need much water. There are two kinds of *bandakka*, lady's fingers, with two kinds of leaves. One is quite big with a dark green leaf, the other kind, smaller, with a differently shaped leaf, is bearing fruit while the other is not *Kekiri*, *vatta-kolu*, *makaral*, red onion, and spinach are the vegetables that we really have growing, not many, but definitely an advance. The English name for *vata-kolu* is *luffa*, which is a leafy vegetable, and *makaral* is bean *Kekiri* is probably cucumber. There are only two water

melon plants left, making some progress as far as I can see. Perhaps it is not the season, and the rains should start in mid-October, which is the time of the North East monsoon.

This morning, at noon, I noticed the heat for the first time. I went out in it and I thought I might get sun-stroke. I felt I might drop. When I sat down, I felt too ill to get up and I sweated profusely. To be sure of getting home safely, where lunch was waiting for me I had a bite in a *kadday* and tea, and I felt stronger. Then this evening I must have made twenty trips to the river for water, or so it seemed to us.

There is one passion fruit a-growing, and two *lawulu*, a coconut tree or seedling, one rejuvenated jak tree, another one, whose life is uncertain, a number of mango trees devastated by humans, perhaps people who were here, two cadju trees, whose life is uncertain because of a wilt in their leaf, which might even have been caused by too much watering. There are five or six pineapple tops down, none of them making much progress.

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LANDMARKS

The World's Oldest Man

By
Jepharis

There died recently in the Caucasian Mountain Range, between the land-locked Caspian and Black Seas, around the Province of Azerbaijan (an agrarian, wheat-producing region of the Russian Steppes notable for its large proportion of active centenarians), the world's oldest known man (I forget his name) at the age of 168 years young—I deliberately say young, because he had been riding horses and working on the fields almost to the end.

To give some idea of his fantastic age, I will give a few historic landmarks along the road of his life.

He was born during the year of Trafalgar (1805). It was as if we spoke with one who kept watch on deck on the night of "Trafalgar"—Denzil Batchelor or Wilfred Rhodes 1877-1973

He was a boy of 10 at the time of the Battle of Waterloo (1815)

He was a youth of 14 when Queen Victoria was born (1819)

He was a young man of 32 when Queen Victoria ascended the throne (1837)

He was "middle-aged" (50) at the time of the nearby Crimean War on his native Russian soil (1854-5)

He was 62 when Tsar Nicholas II was born (1867)

He was 90 when the last Tsar ascended the throne of All the Russias (1894)

He was 96 when Queen Victoria died (1901) an age which is considered to be pretty ancient, nowadays, e.g. Pablo Casals, Wilfred Rhodes, Lady Hilda Peiris).

He became a centenarian during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5)

He was 109 when World War I was declared (1914)

He was 112 when the Great Revolution broke out in his own homeland (1917)

He was 134 when World War II began (1939)

He was 168 when he died (1973)

Not quite as old as the celebrated "Upland Tortoise" perhaps, said to have been introduced to Ceylon by Captain Cook in 1772, and which at various times graced the lawns of the Colombo Museum, and the sands of the Lunupokuna beach.

Nevertheless he lived to a great age by mere human, if not by tetrapodjan standards; his prescription for longevity (may all would-be centenarians take note) being

"a little gentle gardening allied to a short walk every day, coupled with a vegetarian diet teetotaling habits, and a healthy, robust, vigorous, uninhibited sex-life" he—survived five wives and kept a sixth (equalling Henry VIII), and left a large colony of descendants going down some seven generations....

The Alert

Moscow, October 27,

In connection with the events in the Middle East, reports about the alert of the United States armed forces in some areas, including Europe, were made in Washington. Trying to justify this step, officials made references to some actions of the Soviet Union that allegedly give the grounds for concern. TASS is authorised to state that such explanations are absurd since the actions of the Soviet Union are aimed solely at promoting the implementation of the decisions of the Security Council on ceasefire and restoration of peace in the Middle East. This step of the United States that does not promote international detente by far was taken obviously in an attempt to intimidate the Soviet Union. But those who are behind this step should be told that they have chosen the wrong address.

—Tass

Inania Of This, That and The Other

RELENTLESS SEARCH

By INNA

Today we will have a chorus of voices in search of truth.

Stephen Spender who wrote that spirited poem of the lawn-mower: "The lawn-mower spiriting its fountain of vivid green," was a member of the communist party for a brief period after 1937. He said he found in the Communists "disregard for scrupulousness in anything but theory applied to behaviour. The ends justified the means. Thus, the correspondent of the Communist paper took quite a pedantic pleasure in telling me that it was necessary to lie" (God That Failed, p. 259)

He goes on to sum up: The happy Communist lives in a state of historical-materialist grace in which, instead of never seeing the wood for the trees, he never sees the tree for the wood!

"In one's absorption in an ideal, it is possible to imagine that one generation can be sacrificed for the sake of its descendants. But sacrificing people may become a habit unto the second and third generations. I thought, in my Soviet phase, that I was serving humanity. But it is only since then that I have really discovered the human being." (Louis Fischer, p. 231, *ibid*)

Thus wrote **Louis Fischer** Philadelphian born teacher-journalist sent by the *New York Post* to Berlin in 1921 and who had roving assignments till about 1946 in Europe and Asia.

He hated the fawning adulation and the saccharine glorification given to The Great Leader, Stalin, "infallible, kind, omniscient author of of everything that is good, from whom all blessings followed" (p. 213). The outward trappings of Czarism, formerly reviled by Bolsheviks as relics of the ugly past, were restored, titles for army officers and Epaulets appeared once again. And yet all men are equal!

Then there was the man who wrote those powerful lines: "In such sordid squalor, men, women, children, cats, dogs, existed, lived, made merry, and pro-created their kind," talking of an Italian village. It was **Ignazio Silone**, the novelist of the Abruzzi Appenines, founder-member of the Italian Communist Party who after over a score of years, left the Communist party: "The day I left the CP was a sad one for me, it was like a day of deep mourning" (114). One day he joked with Togliatti saying: "the final struggle will be between the Communists

and the ex-Communists" (p. 114)

Arthur Koestler we quoted him in *Inania* (7) speaking of the fallacy of "the unshaken foundation" says that "the belief that a State capitalist economy must necessarily lead to a Socialist regime" is in itself a fallacy. The addition to the Soviet myth is as tenacious and difficult to cure as any other addiction" (p. 74)

I took out George's little slip of paper about the neo-capitalism of certain countries and compared with what **Andre Gide** says in the book quoted here: "The illusion that the masses are composed of a finer clay. I think they are merely less corrupt and less decadent than the others that is all. I see already a new bourgeoisie developing in the Soviet Union from these untried masses, with exactly the same faults and vices as ours" (Gide, *God that Failed* p. 196)

Gide reached Communism through the Gospels, and not through Marx (said Enid Starkie, *ibid*, p. 174)

Is there nothing by way of lesson for all of us, from these men who sought relentlessly for the truth? Is there no lesson from the original intent of the Soviet Union? What of those who wield power in state or church or temple or institution?

"Power is saved from corruption if it is humanized with humility. Without humility, power is turned to persecutions and executions and public lies" (Stephen Spender, p. 258)

FROM MOSCOW

Peace Is An Invaluable Asset

*Summary of Leonid Brezhnev's speech
at the World Congress of Peace Forces*

THE TASK is to turn the detente achieved in the decisive areas of international relations into a stable, durable, and, irreversible factor, said Leonid Brezhnev, addressing the participants of the World Congress of Peace Forces with a long speech devoted to an analysis of the present day international situation.

In his address the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee stressed: (1) All states and peoples of the Middle East should be ensured a just and lasting peace, security and the inviolability of frontiers. The Soviet Union is prepared to contribute to appropriate guarantees. (2) It is necessary to agree on the reduction in Central Europe of both foreign and national ground and air forces of states; (3) As for the reduction of armed forces and armament, the Soviet Union would be ready for real steps in that respect already in 1975; (4) The peoples of Asia need a lasting peace and constructive cooperation no less than the peoples of Europe.

Analysing the sources and causes of the present turn in the world situation, the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee emphasised the great role played in this process by the forces of socialism, by the socialist community of states and by

the states that have cast off the colonial yoke and achieved national independence. He paid due credit to those statesmen of the Western countries who seek to overcome the cold war inertia and to take to a new road—the road of peaceful dialogue with states belonging to a different social system.

IN HIS SPEECH Leonid Brezhnev devoted a great deal of attention to the situation in the Middle East. It is difficult to understand, said Leonid Brezhnev, what the Israeli rulers are counting on by following an adventurist course, routing the resolutions of the UN Security Council, and defying world public opinion. Apparently, outside patronage has something to do with it. Calculations to ensure peace and the security of state through forcible seizure and holding of foreign lands are wild calculations doomed to an inevitable failure. Such a course will yield neither peace nor security for Israel.

The courageous struggle of the Arabs and the growing solidarity of the Arab states are convincing evidence that they will never reconcile themselves to the Israeli aggression, will never give up their legitimate rights. The Soviet Union firmly and consistently supports the just demands of the Arab peoples.

To normalise the situation in the Middle East, the Soviet Union is prepared to cooperate with all interested countries. But actions taken in the last few days by certain circles in NATO countries like the artificial fanning of passions by the spread in all manner of fantastic fabrications about the intentions of the Soviet Union in the Middle East cannot, of course, be conducive to such cooperation. The Soviet Union firmly stands for the ensuring of peace, security, and inviolability of frontiers for all the states and peoples of the Middle East. The Soviet Union is prepared to participate in appropriate guarantees.

SPEAKING of collective security in Asia, Leonid Brezhnev refuted the claims that the idea of creating and ensuring security in Asia by collective efforts is directed against China. Nobody has ever raised, Leonid Brezhnev said, the question of China's non-participation or, much less "isolation". As for the Soviet Union, it would welcome the participation of the Peoples Republic of China in steps aimed at strengthening Asian security.

Leonid Brezhnev said that the Chinese leaders refuse to halt their attempts at poisoning the international climate and heightening international tension. They continue to make absurd territorial claims on the Soviet Union. What strikes the eye is the total lack of principles in the foreign policy of the Chinese leaders. They say that they are working for

socialism and peaceful co-existence, but in fact they go out of their way to undermine the international positions of the socialist countries and encourage the vitalisation of the aggressive military blocs and closed economic groups of capitalist states.

TOUCHING upon the development of relations between the USSR and the USA, Leonid Brezhnev pointed out that the Soviet Union is faithfully fulfilling its obligations under the Soviet-US treaties and agreements and intends to continue to do so in future. Naturally, we expect the other side to do likewise, he said.

On the situation in Europe Leonid Brezhnev pointed out that maintenance of peace in the continent has in substance become an imperative necessity, and the utmost development of diverse peaceful cooperation among the European states the only really sensible solution. Leonid Brezhnev expressed the hope that the political foundation worked out at the European conference and the day-to-day peaceful cooperation will be supplemented and reinforced with measures aimed at achieving a military detente in the continent.

Leonid Brezhnev noted that the standards of peaceful co-existence and peaceful cooperation should prevail in Europe and Africa, and in South and North America. Speaking of the arms limitation talks, the General Secretary stressed that a sincere desire to check the arms race, reinforced by mutual restraint, and not new mili-

tary programmes are needed for success. The process limiting and arresting the arms race, like the process of detente, should spread ever wider, involving new states and areas of the globe.

THE TRAGEDY of Chile has echoed with a pang in the hearts of millions of people, in the diverse sections of democratic opinion in all countries, said Leonid Brezhnev. Behind the Chilean tragedy stand home and foreign reactionaries who are ready to commit any crime in order to restore their privileges contrary to the clearly and freely expressed will of the people.

Leonid Brezhnev described as hypocritical the campaign being conducted in the West in "defence of human rights" in the socialist countries. Let us call a spade a spade, he said. With all the talk of freedom and democracy and human rights this whole campaign serves one purpose: to cover up the attempts to meddle in the internal affairs of the socialist countries. We have no reason to shun any serious discussion of human rights, Leonid Brezhnev pointed out. Our revolution, the victory of socialism in our country not only proclaimed but have in effect secured the rights of the working man of any nationality, the rights of millions of working people, in a way capitalism has been unable to do in any country of the world.

From the bourgeois point of view such human rights as the right to work, education, social security, free

medical aid, rest and leisure and the like, may be something secondary or even unacceptable. Just one figure: nearly a hundred million people are at present unemployed in the non-socialist countries. Many capitalist states infringe upon the rights of national minorities and foreign workers, and the rights of women to equal pay for equal work. This is probably why many Western powers have not yet subscribed to international covenants establishing the social and political rights of man.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY expressed conviction that the principles of peaceful co-existence are now coming to the forefront of the struggle to strengthen peace.

First and foremost, this means cooperation in settling the still existing armed conflicts on a just basis. This means creating a collective security system in Europe and Asia which would make it possible gradually to eliminate the present division of the world into military and political blocs. This means ending the race of nuclear

AGGRESSOR

Israel is the aggressor in the current Mideast fighting and it is being commanded and wire-pulled by the US imperialists. The Vietnamese people severely condemn the aggression being made by the Israeli reactionaries, henchmen of the US imperialists.

—Nhan Dan, Hanoi

AT THE MOSCOW CONGRESS

A Sri Lanka Delegate's Views**Kumar Rupasinghe on the Great Forum**

THE World Congress of Peace Forces is a unique gathering of progressive anti-imperialist forces in the world today.

The most unique feature of the Congress is the broad

and other armaments through honest observance by the states of freely accepted commitments and—this is especially topical—involve ment of all the major countries in this process. This would mark the beginning of a gradual reduction of the material basis for a military confrontation. This means the development of economic scientific, technical and cultural cooperation based on complete equality and mutual advantage without any discrimination and without attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of each other.

The long years of cold war, Leonid Brezhnev noted, have left an imprint on the minds not only of professional politicians: prejudice and suspicion, and poor knowledge—even a reluctance to acquire knowledge—of the real positions and possibilities of others. And it is by far not easy to turn over a new leaf. But this has to be done. The Soviet people were and will remain in the forefront of the struggle, Leonid Brezhnev said in conclusion.

nature of the forces which are represented here. There are representatives from national liberation movements; youth organisations, trade unions, religious bodies, different political parties, specialised agencies of the United Nations etc.

The gathering of so many social forces and political trends has become possible due to many reasons. They can be briefly enumerated as: (1) The relaxation of the cold war and the atmosphere of detente which prevails in the world today; (2) The consolidation of socialism and the great advance made by the socialist countries in their economic, scientific and social life; (3) The heroic victories won by the peoples of Indo-China, (4) The advancement of the anti-colonial struggle and the consolidation of democratic forces in the world.

THE SPEECH of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee L. Brezhnev was impressive and inspires the peace-loving democratic forces in the world. This speech reflected the aspirations of the Soviet people, and the Communist Party of the USSR towards the noble aims of peace and progress in the world. The speech covered many of the complex problems which face mankind today.

We were glad to note the firm commitments and solidarity which Mr. L. Brezhnev showed towards all anti-imperialist and progressive forces struggling for peace. We welcome his declaration of support for the Arab people. We wholeheartedly welcome his denunciation of the fascist junta in Chile. Mr. Brezhnev's speech is a reflection of the firm foundation of socialism and peace which were the hallmarks of the Great October Revolution of 1917.

THE PEOPLE of Sri Lanka under the United Front Government of Prime Minister Madame Bandaranaike, has pursued a consistent policy of non-alignment in world affairs. At the same time we have taken a sound anti-imperialist and progressive stand on many issues which confront us today.

The United Front Government has consistently supported the Arab people in their just struggle. We have recognised the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and have given diplomatic recognition to the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

The people of Sri Lanka welcome the aspirations of peace and progress laid out by Mr. Brezhnev. The Sri Lanka delegation to the Congress is grateful to the Communist Party of the USSR, the Soviet Government and Soviet people for their generous hospitality and good-will.

FROM WASHINGTON

The UN's Value In The Middle East Crisis

By Barry Brown

By curious coincidence, the week during which the U.N. Security Council adopted the resolutions that led to a cease-fire in the war in the Middle East was also "United Nations Week," the period annually designated to celebrate the virtues of the international organization.

This time, the U.N.'s performance amply justifies the praise it has received, but the most appropriate tribute that can be paid is to try to understand just what the world body was able to accomplish and why. A realistic appreciation will serve the U.N. and the cause of peace better than the rhetoric sometimes heard during "U.N. Week", which has too often produced exaggerated expectations and subsequent disillusionment concerning the capacities of the United Nations.

The most obvious and immediate evidence of the enduring value of the organization is the simple fact that everybody turned to it automatically as soon as the latest Arab-Israeli war broke out. An international forum for the exchange of ideas about how to stop the fighting was thus again recognised to be indispensable. This experience has been repeated often enough during the past 25 years—and even on occasions

when the international machinery could not function as well as it did this time—to give substance to the familiar saying that if the U.N. did not exist it would be necessary to create it.

Nor does it detract from the value of the organization to note that the first resolutions calling for a cease-fire did not instantly and completely put a stop to the shooting. There are always vast practical difficulties in applying some words set down on paper in New York to the confused situation on a distant battlefield. Moreover, it is probably true that Egypt and Syria were in no haste to heed the cease-fire call until the military situation turned against them, just as Israel finally accepted it with considerable reluctance when it stopped her advancing armies.

A peace achieved through the moral sanction of the U.N. is nevertheless likely to register the results of the war up to the point of its ending.

In short, the U. N. is not an entity exercising power in its own name and right. Even a Peace-Keeping operation such as the new one now being organized in the Sinai is designed to put a small screen of troops in U.N. uniforms between the

combatants, rather than to impose peace on them through the U.N.'s exercise of superior military strength. This is one of the world organization's most valuable functions, but it can be performed only when the member states—and the parties to a conflict—agree to permit it.

The particular value of the Peace UN Keeping Force in this instance, in fact, is that it is composed of troops from nations without sufficient power to be involved in rivalries in the Middle East. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger stated the case for excluding forces from the five Permanent Members of the Security Council as a means of rejecting proposals for U.S. and Soviet intervention, saying: "It would be a disaster if the Middle East, already so torn by local rivalries, would now become, as a result of a U. N. decision, a legitimized theatre for the competition of the military force of the Great nuclear powers".

The role of the United States and the Soviet Union in ending the Middle East war is the final proof that the U.N. is nothing like a "super government," but that it can be extremely useful when its member states—and first of all, the Great Powers—choose to use it. For it is quite true that the cease-fire resolutions could not have been adopted unless the two superpowers had agreed upon them. The new efforts that are now anticipated to persuade Israel and the Arab states to negotiate a permanent

TOPICAL

KISSINGER'S NEWS CONFERENCE

Washington, Oct. 25,

The following is the official transcript of Secretary of State Kissinger's October 25, News Conference:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thought the most useful introduction to your questions

settlement, which will inevitably be related to the U.N. though reference to the Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, may likewise depend heavily on the stance of the American and Soviet backers of the two sides. But acknowledging those realities in no way really diminishes the value of the U.N. machinery.

During senate hearings on his confirmation as Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger observed that "the United Nations lacks the effective power to make itself prevail against one of the Great Powers." That stark reality is embedded in the veto clause of the U.N. charter, and it could not be eliminated merely by abolishing the veto. It expresses the larger truth that the United Nations is an instrument for multilateral diplomacy in a society of sovereign states. If this makes it something less than the "Parliament of Mankind", as it is sometimes called in speeches during "U.N. Week", it has nonetheless proved its worth again in this latest crisis.

—IPS

would be a summary of events between October 6 and today so that you can evaluate our actions, the situation in which we find ourselves, and our future course.

The crisis for us started at 6 a.m. on October 6, when I was awakened with the information that another Arab-Israeli war was in progress. I mention this personal detail because it answers the question that the United States intervention prevented Israel from taking pre-emptive action. The United States made no demarche to either side before October 6 because all the Intelligence at our disposal and all the Intelligence given to us by foreign countries suggested that there was no possibility of the outbreak of a war. We had no reason to give any advice to any of the participants because we did not believe—nor, may I say, did the Israeli Government—that an attack was imminent.

In the three hours between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m., we made major efforts to prevent the outbreak of the war by acting as an intermediary between the parties, of assuring each of them that the other one was attempting to obtain the assurance of each side that the other one had no aggressive intention.

Before this process could be completed, however, war had broken out. And it star-

ted the process in which we are still engaged. I do not think any useful purpose is served in reviewing every individual diplomatic move, but I thought it would be useful to indicate some of the basic principles we attempted to follow.

Throughout the crisis the President was convinced that we had two major problems: *First*, to end hostilities as quickly as possible—but, *Secondly*, to end hostilities in a manner that would enable us to make a major contribution to removing the conditions that have produced four wars between Arabs and Israelis in the last 25 years.

We were aware that there were many interested parties. There were, of course, the participants in the conflict—Egypt and Syria on the Arab side, aided by many other Arab countries; Israel on the other. There was the Soviet Union. There were the other Permanent Members of the Security Council. And, of course, there was the United States.

It was our view that the United States could be most effective in both the tasks outlined by the President—that is, of ending hostilities, as well as of making a contribution to a permanent peace in the Middle East—if we conducted ourselves so that we could remain in permanent contact with all of these elements in the equation.

Throughout the first week, we attempted to crystalize a consensus in the Security Council which would bring about a cease-fire on terms

that the world community could support. We stated our basic principles on October 8th. We did not submit them to a formal vote because we realized that no majority was available and we did not want sides to be chosen prematurely. On October 10th, the Soviet Union began an Airlift which began fairly moderately but which, by October 12th, had achieved fairly substantial levels.

Let me say a word here about our relationship with the Soviet Union throughout this crisis and what we have attempted to achieve. The United States and the Soviet Union are, of course, ideological and, to some extent, political adversaries. But the United States and the Soviet Union also have a very special responsibility. We possess—each of us—nuclear arsenals capable of annihilating humanity. We—both of us—have a special duty to see to it that confrontations are kept within bounds that do not threaten civilized life. Both of us, sooner or later, will have to come to realize that the issues that divide the world today, and foreseeable issues, do not justify the unparalleled catastrophe that a nuclear war would represent. And, therefore, in all our dealings with the Soviet Union, we have attempted to keep in mind and we have attempted to move them to a position in which this overriding interest that humanity shares with us is never lost sight of.

In a speech—*Pacem in Terris*—I pointed out that there are limits beyond which we cannot go. I stated that we

will oppose the attempt by any country to achieve a position of predominance, either globally or regionally; that we would resist any attempt to exploit a policy of detente to weaken our alliances; and that we would react if the relaxations of tensions were used as a cover to exacerbate conflicts in international trouble spots. We have followed these principles in the current situation.

It is easy to start confrontations, but in this age we have to know where we will be at the end and not only what pose to strike at the beginning.

Throughout the first week, we attempted to bring about a moderation in the level of outside supplies that were introduced into the area and we attempted to work with the Soviet Union on a Cease-Fire resolution which would bring an end to the conflict.

This first attempt failed, on Saturday, October 13th, for a variety of reasons—including, perhaps, a mis-assessment of the military situation by some of the participants. We were then faced with the inability to produce a Security Council Resolution that would command a consensus, and the substantial introduction of arms by an outside power into the Area. At this point, on Saturday October 13th, the President decided that the United States would have to start a resupply effort of its own. And the United States, from that time on, has engaged in maintaining the military balance in the Middle East

in order to bring about a negotiated settlement that we had sought.

Concurrently with this, we informed the Soviet Union that our interest in working out an acceptable solution still remained very strong, and that as part of this solution, we were prepared to discuss a mutual limitation of arms supply into the area.

In the days that followed, the Soviet Union and we discussed various approaches to this question, the basic difficulty being how to reconcile the Arab insistence on an immediate commitment to a return to the 1967 borders with Israeli insistence on secure boundaries and a negotiated outcome.

As you all know, on October 16, Prime Minister Kosygin went to Cairo to work on this problem with the leaders of Egypt. He returned to the Soviet Union on October 19th. We began exploring a new formula for ending the war that evening, though it was still unacceptable to us. And while we were considering that formula, Secretary General Brezhnev sent an urgent request to President Nixon that I be sent to Moscow to conduct the negotiations in order to speed an end to hostilities that might be difficult to contain were they to continue.

The President agreed to Mr. Brezhnev's request, and, as all of you know, I left for Moscow in the early morning of October 20th.

We spent two days of very intense negotiations and we

developed a formula which we believe was acceptable to all of the parties and which we continue to believe represented a just solution to this tragic conflict.

The Security Council resolution had, as you all know, three parts. It called for an immediate Cease-Fire in place. It called for the immediate implementation of Security Council Resolution 242, which was adopted in November 1967, and which states certain general principles on the basis of which peace should be achieved in the Middle East. And, thirdly, it called for negotiations between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices to bring about a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

This third point was the first international commitment to negotiations between the parties in the Middle East conflict. The United States and the Soviet Union were prepared to offer their auspices if this proved to be acceptable to parties to bring about and then to speed to the process of negotiations. The United States continues to be ready to carry out this understanding. This, then, was the situation when I returned from Moscow and Tel Aviv on Monday evening.

Since then, events have taken the following turn. On the first day—that is, Tuesday of the implementation of the Cease-Fire, there was a breakdown of the Cease-Fire which led to certain Israeli territorial gains. The United States supported a resolution which called on the participants to

observe the Cease-Fire, return to the places from which the fighting started, and to invite United Nations Observers to observe the implementation of the Cease-Fire. This seemed to us a fair resolution.

In the last two days, the discussion in the Security Council and the communications that have been associated with it have taken a turn that seemed to us worrisome. We were increasingly confronted with a cascade of charges which were difficult to verify in the absence of United Nations Observers, and a demand for action that it was not within our power to take. There was a proposal, for example, that joint U.S. and Soviet military forces be introduced into the Middle East to bring about an observance of the Cease-Fire.

I would like to state on behalf of the President, the United States position on this matter very clearly. The United States does not favour and will not approve the sending of a Joint Soviet-United States force into the Middle East. The United States believes that what is needed in the Middle East, above all, is a determination of the facts, a determination where the lines are and a determination of who is doing the shooting, so that then the Security Council can take appropriate action. It is inconceivable that the forces of the Great Powers should be introduced in the numbers that would be necessary to overpower both of the participants. It is incon-

ceivable that we should transplant the Great Power rivalry into the Middle East, or, alternatively, that we should impose a military *condominium* by the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States is even more opposed to the unilateral introduction by any Great Power, especially by any nuclear power, of military forces into the Middle East in whatever guise those forces should be introduced. And it is the ambiguity of some of the actions and communications and certain readiness measures that were observed that caused the President at a special meeting of the National Security Council last night, at 3 a.m., to order certain precautionary measures to be taken by the United States.

The United States position with respect to peace in the Middle East is as follows: the United States stands for a strict observance of Cease-Fire as defined in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 adopted on October 22nd. The United States will support and give all assistance and is willing to supply some personnel to a United Nations Observer Force whose responsibility it is to report to the Security Council about the violations of the Cease-Fire, and which would have the responsibility, in addition, of aiding the parties in taking care of humanitarian and other concerns that are produced by the fact that on the Egyptian, Israeli front a series of enclaves exist in which demarcation is extremely difficult.

If the Security Council

wishes, the United States is prepared to agree to an international force, provided it does not include any participants from the Permanent Members of the Security Council to be introduced into the area as an additional guarantee of the Cease-Fire.

The United States is prepared to make a major effort to help speed a political solution which is just to all sides.

The United States recognizes that the conditions that produced the war on October 6th cannot be permitted to continue, and the United States, both bilaterally and unilaterally, is prepared to lend its diplomatic weight to a serious effort in the negotiating process forseen by Paragraph 3 of Security Council Resolution 338.

We are, therefore, at a rather crucial point.

From many points of view, the chances for peace in the Middle East are quite promising:

Israel has experienced once more, the trauma of war and has been given an opportunity for the negotiations it has sought for all of its existence, and it must be ready for the just and durable peace that the Security Council asks for.

The Arab nations have demonstrated their concern and have received international assurances that other countries will take an interest in these negotiations.

The Soviet Union is not threatened in any of its legitimate positions in the Middle East. The principle has been

mentioned earlier of the social responsibility of the great nuclear powers to strike a balance between their local interests and their global interest and their humane obligations remain.

And, seen in this perspective, none of the issues that are involved in the observance of the Cease-Fire would warrant unilateral action.

As for the United States, the President has stated repeatedly that this administration has no higher goal than to leave to its successors a world that is safer and more secure than the one we found. It is an obligation that any President, of whatever party, will have to discharge, and it is a responsibility which must be solved if mankind is to survive—

by the great nuclear countries at some point, before it is too late.

But we have always stated that it must be a peace with justice. The terms that have been agreed to in the United Nations provide an opportunity for the peoples of the Middle East to determine their own fate in consultation and negotiation—for the first time in twenty-five years.

This is an opportunity we are prepared to foster. It is an opportunity which is essential for this ravaged area and which is equally essential for the peace of the world. And it offers an opportunity that the Great Powers have no right to be permitted to miss.

Now I'll be glad to answer questions.

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RAMBLING NOTES

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

✱ Budget ✱ Soviet Anniversary

✱ Observer ✱ Oil

THE BUDGET presented on November 1 this year was evidently fashioned and tailored to evoke a favourable response from the supporters of the United Front and at the same time neutralise and minimise the adverse reactions of the critics of the Government. To a considerable extent, the Minister of Finance has succeeded in accomplishing what he had set out to do. And it will be a long time before the smokescreen is pierced and the people realise that the basic problems confronting them have not been solved by this Budget, or minimised in a significant way.

With the cut in the food subsidies, the reduction in the flour ration and other imported foodstuffs, and with the total ban on the imports of all subsidiary foodstuffs which could be grown locally, there was not the slightest doubt that the Budget would be balanced. The amount of saving to the Government in the food subsidies' and food imports' bill is probably in the region of Rs. 600 to Rs. 700 million rupees; and, with this substantial saving on the government's financial resources, the cash liquidity position of the Government was easily maintained at a solvent level. Once the rest of the food subsidies' and food

imports' bill is cut, as the Government will probably do before the next Budget, no Minister of Finance will find any difficulty in presenting a balanced budget which is genuinely development orientated.

The full text of the Finance Minister's Budget Speech is not yet available. What was published in the daily papers is really not the bulk of the main part of the speech, but the introductory preamble to the speech and the gazette notification setting out the new BTT levies (which will push up the prices of a whole lot of consumer articles) are extremely important documents for a critical examination of the Budget as a whole. At the time these notes were written, these documents have not become available in their entirety; and, after they are received and perused, this column and some of the other writers will examine the latest Budget with the usual *Tribune* critical objectivity.

Superficially, the Budget has offered a few sops to the middle income earners in the public service and in the private sector. In fact, public sector employees have also been given a moratorium in respect of their personal debt liabilities. (It is

notworthy that a number of public servants had evidently anticipated this moratorium and had rushed to get loans from Lady Lochure and other funds in the last three or four months). The compulsory savings minimum has also been pushed up from Rs 12,000 to Rs 18,000.

But the most spectacular gesture was to reduce the price of each cigarette by one cent. One cent less on each cigarette will not help to bring down the cost of living (of essentials), but it is the kind of puff which is tantamount to a budgetary gimmick. This reduction in the price of each cigarette had also a sadistic touch which would automatically win universal popular approbation. Cigarette distributors, retailers and other traders had hoarded cigarettes in the hope that cigarette prices would be pushed up. The biggest hoarders were the big distributors of the Tobacco Company some of whom are even alleged to have obtained bank loans running into lakhs to effect large-scale hoarding.

It is a well known trade secret that for decades some vips in the sales side of the Tobacco Company have colluded with certain chosen distributors to hoard large stocks of cigarettes just before each Budget, and large profits were cleared no sooner the budget imposts were announced. Lakh-millionaires have emerged from this gambling on tobacco hoarding before each budget.

This time these hoarders have been caught on the

wrong foot, but not entirely with their pants (and sarongs) down because a cent on each cigarette would probably be covered by the wholesalers' and retailers' trade discounts. What the cigarette hoarders have lost is only the profit that would have accrued to them, but they are not likely to have suffered any loss because they were covered by the discounts. *The man in the street however, expects the cigarette prices to be upped in a few months through a gazette notification—a fitting climax to a transparently clumsy gimmick.*

THE BUDGET SPEECH did not detail the BTT changes. Special mention was made on the reduction of the BTT on textiles, cotton yarn and ready made garments, but apart from mentioning that practically everything else (except a few items) had been brought under BTT, the budget speech did not examine the impact of these BTT increases on a large number of consumer foods—on essentials, on semi-luxuries and luxuries. There is not the slightest doubt that the prices of a whole range of consumer goods used by ordinary people will be pushed up; and, only when the impact of the new textiles is felt will the smokescreen which now covers the Budget will be removed.

Concessions have been offered, as expected, to the new capitalist class being fostered by the United Front, the gem dealers and exporters, the exporters of non-traditional goods and the promoters of tourism. The leaders

of the Government undoubtedly expect these new capitalists to accept meekly the *socialism* which the United Front hopes to introduce in stages, but objective students of history cynically point out that a leopard does not change its spots and that a viper does not lose its poison. The United Front's new rich constitute the new elite of brahmins of this era and the Budget has been welcomed by them—welcomed by textiles magnates and leading lights in trade associations which represent the new exporting and tourist elite. The added concessions regarding convertible rupee accounts will also give more elbow room to the new UF rich. (Whether this new elite will ultimately cut the throat of the UF socialists or whether the radical ultras in the UF will dispossess the neo-capitalists is a matter for the history of the immediate future).

This new elite has also been shown a way to intrude into other fields of private investment through what are called "broadbased-ownership companies." What these private capitalist companies will be is not very clear, but if the new rich and those surviving from the old rich are willing to "broadbase" ownership the company tax will be less. In the mixed economy of the United Front programme, the private sector is said to have an important role to play—and it is only in the Fourth Budget of the United Front this new UF private sector is being brought into the forefront after it had been quietly

nurtured behind various curtains so far. The Gifts Tax has also been reduced and concessions have also been given to single house owners. And finally, foreigners with means (from hard currency sources) have been invited to live in Ceylon with tax and other concessions. This new group will give a great deal of support to the new elite and the new rich in this country, and thus a new marriage between local and foreign capital is being sponsored under UF auspices. (How different this new collaboration between local and foreign capital will be compared to the earlier collaboration established under UNP auspices is yet to be seen).

These are some of the observations we can venture upon until the full documents become available. But from what has been published so far of the Budget, certain matters like Sri Lanka's relationship with the IMF-IBRD, systems of accounting in public finance, the control of corporation finance, and the new direction in local government finance merit serious consideration and this will be examined in the *Tribune* in the coming weeks. THIS WEEK, the Soviet Union celebrated the 56th anniversary of the October Revolution on November 7. A message has been sent by the Soviet Ambassador in Sri Lanka to all the daily papers and we publish below a few highlights in the message. "Today the Soviet people and all our friends abroad celebrate the 56th anniversary of

the Great October Socialist Revolution that opened a new era in the life of mankind, an era of revolutionary renovation of the world and transition from capitalism to socialism. The main achievement of Soviet society during these years is the construction of socialism and the creation of practicable pre-conditions for its transition to communist society guided by the teachings of Lenin.

"Our way to Communism was not simple and easy. It was necessary to abolish the power of the exploiters, to repulse numerous foreign interventionists, to suppress sabotage and diversion by internal enemies. But as a result of the tenacious, and selfless labour of all Soviet people, of the great labour enthusiasm of workers, peasants and intelligentsia guided by the Communist Party, great Soviet successes were achieved.

"Today Soviet economy and culture are developing dynamically and powerfully. The welfare of the Soviet people is growing. This year the Soviet Union is to fulfil the indices of the third, decisive year of the 9th five-year plan. It is expected that all basic targets of this decisive year of the five-year period will be fulfilled successfully.

"By virtue of the constant concern shown by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to the development of agriculture, and the dedicated effort of Soviet farmers, we have had a record harvest this year. It seems likely that we shall bring in more than 215 million tons

of grain, more than 7.5 million tons of cotton and more than 83 million tons of sugar beet..."

"The Soviet people are satisfied at the fact that Soviet-Sri Lanka economic and cultural corporation is broadening and strengthening more widely. The metallurgical works and the tyre plant constructed on the basis of the combined effort of the USSR and Sri Lanka as well as the flour mill are working profitably and form the basis of the corresponding branches of the state economic structure. Soviet specialists are rendering Sri Lanka help in carrying out an oil seismo-survey in the Northern parts of the island. Cooperation in the field of deep-sea fishing and in development of some other branches of the economy is flourishing. For many years our mutually beneficial trade relations have been successfully developing.

"The beautiful land of Sri Lanka is visited by many delegations of trade unions, youth and cultural and other public delegations of the USSR. In its turn the USSR is visited by many representatives of the Sri Lanka public. More than 200 Lanka youth graduated from the higher educational establishments of the USSR and successfully work in different branches of the economy. 150 youth of Lanka are still continuing their education in Soviet higher establishments.

"We are glad that a very representative delegation from the Republic of Sri Lanka also took part in the work of the recent World

Congress of Peace Forces held in Moscow—one of the broadest international meetings ever held. Our foreign policy is Leninist policy of peace, friendship and co-operation and enjoys ever-increasing support from all progressive mankind."

BEGINNING FROM NOVEMBER 1, the Ceylon Observer seems to have had a new-rebirth. It has gone a long way from the days of the Fergusons who had started and owned the paper. During the 130 odd years of its existence it has undergone many changes, but the latest under the auspices of the state-sponsored ANCL Ltd. is of some significance.

Mr. W. Lionel Fernando has now assumed duties as Editor of the daily paper and the Sunday magazine edition. Although Mr. Fernando had been drawn into administrative work ever since he had joined the Department of Information in 1957, he was a working journalist for many years before that. He had joined the *Times of Ceylon* as long ago as August 1937, after having served a short period of apprenticeship in the then *Ceylon Independent*. After a short spell at Galle, Mr. Fernando had moved to Colombo, and with his capacity to ferret news he had become the Chief Reporter and Political Correspondent of the *Times* group. For two years (1954-55), he had joined the short-lived Swadeshi Newspapers Ltd., but he had later re-joined the *Times* in 1955 and was attached to the London office as its editorial

assistant until August 1957, when he had been granted long leave to accept the part of Private Secretary to the first Ceylon Ambassador to China, Mr. Wilmot Perera. He was in Peking from March 1957 till August 1957 when he returned to Ceylon to assume duties as Deputy Director of Information. He was appointed Director of Information in September, 1958 and had continued in this capacity till 1963 when he went into Provincial administration. He served as AGA and GA in various places until March 1971 when he was appointed Commissioner of the Department of People's Committees. He finally retired from Public Service in August this year.

A *Tribune* correspondent has pointed out that Mr. Lionel Fernando is the first Buddhist to hold the post of editor of the *Observer* and is also probably the first *Observer* Editor who regularly wears national dress as his ordinary costume. It would be interesting to see what Mr. Fernando makes of the *Observer*. His appointment is a departure from the usual *Lake House* tradition and this experiment is being watched with interest.

THE OIL SQUEEZE. The Arab oil-producing countries as part of their contribution to the Arab cause in the Middle East conflict, had not only decided to push up the prices of crude oil but also cut down production by about 20 per cent. The squeeze had already hit many countries. Prices of all petroleum products had skyrocketed and various kinds of voluntary and not-so-volun-

tary rationing schemes had been put into operation.

The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation on November 6 had issued the following communique: "The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation has been informed by its suppliers that the price of Crude Oil has been increased from 16th October, 1973. The increases vary from fifty to seventy five per cent of the present prices. As a result of these increases, the price of Crude oil to the Corporation has now increased by over 100 per cent from the price at the beginning of 1973. The Corporation has also been informed by its suppliers that there will be a twenty per cent cut in the Crude Oil, shipments to the Corporation.

Although the Arab countries had exempted certain countries from being hit by the 20 per cent cut in production, Ceylon does not seem to be one of them. The cut is probably being imposed on all the western oil companies which draw supplies from Arab oil fields. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation gets its supplies of crude through such a western company, and this is undoubtedly the reason why Sri Lanka has been adversely affected by the cut.

Sri Lanka is one of the few countries which has consistently espoused the cause of the Arabs over the years, going to the extent of breaking diplomatic ties with Israel and it is ironic that this country should also suffer from the Arab production cut, whereas countries whose

support for the Arab cause was more lukewarm than this country have not been affected by cut although they have to pay the higher price.

At the time of going to press, it is known the price increases will be decided upon by the CPC and the Government, and the kind of rationing which will be enforced.

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IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

* OBSERVER

IS IT NOT TRUE that a big transformation has come over the *Observer*? That from November 1, the *Observer* has a new look? That it also has a new content? That after many many years the *Observer* has a new type-face which is not only pleasing to the eye but one that will enable more news to be fitted into its columns? That for a long long time now, the daily *Observer* had only sensational headlines in the biggest possible heading types? That big types thereunder were used to write small-time stories? That the inside pages were devoted to insipid features with illustrations which took most of the space? That one page was usually devoted to publishing pictures of up and coming socialites at cocktail parties? That this page was a scandal? That it is known that staff photographers earned a great deal of money "on the side" to get this kind of publicity for young Colombo 7 type debutantes on the marriage market? That ageing dowagers, who were middle-aged twenty years ago, continued to find a place on this page to model allegedly new dress ensembles? That pictures of brides and the like were blown into five column blocks to

grace this page? That apart from being money-making racket for photographers, this page was an eye-sore which aroused indignation among ordinary people that this country, sunk deep in shortages and austerity, was still a land of cocktail parties and young and not-so-young women who were only interested in sarees, blouses and brassieres not to speak about new versions of the cloth and jacket (and the lugi and camboy)? That to provide a smokescreen for this newspaper racketeering a few pictures of diplomats, ministers, parliamentarians, and other vips were occasionally thrown in for good measure? That one of the greatest contributions to journalism in Sri Lanka will be to eliminate this kind of picture page to bolster the cocktail circuit? This will also end one of the most unethical aspects of journalism in this country where photographers, reporters, feature writers and the like fattened on the new and old rich anxious to secure publicity? That some of these journalists also exploited the wives and daughters of diplomats and also some diplomats themselves?

That the new daily *Observer* has very correctly laid emphasis on news, both local and foreign? That it has shown that a great deal of newsworthy news could be packed into four pages? That after a long time the daily *Observer* had a readable piece as Lobby Notes to cover Budget Day? That Manik de Silva, one of the few promising young journalists of this period, was resurrected to write this? That a great deal more has to be done in the arrangement of news? That it was good that the earlier *Observer* frontpage editorial howler by "Titiak," which never failed to give a pain-in-the-neck feeling of revulsion, has been dropped? That a similar change seems to have come over the Sunday *Observer* as well but it is yet too early to say what character the new weekly edition will take?

That the management of the new government-controlled Lake House has done extremely well to effect this change in the *Observer*? That there is not the slightest doubt that within a few weeks, if not sooner, the circulation of the *Observer* will begin to increase? That what people want in a daily paper is news, and that is what dailies in Sri Lanka do not give today? That advertisements, pictures, banner headlines, inept comments and stale features take most of the space? That even one daily paper which prints all the news fit to print, objectively reported, will revolutionise journalism in Sri Lanka?