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Realities Before Sri Lanka

TRIBUNE had indicated very clearly more than once in recent weeks that Sri Lanka had no alternative but to import much more food in the form of rice and wheat flour during 1974—much more than had been estimated earlier. We had said this on the rough estimates we had made about actual production and the stocks that were suspected to be in the hoards of producers, black-marketeters and traders. We had taken into consideration official production figures from 1970/71 to date, and on a rough sampling for certain areas reduced the inflated governmental estimates on an island-wide basis. We find that by this method of making assessments we have not been far off the mark. The bureaucrats were always able to get away with their bluff by alleging that large quantities of what had been produced had been tucked away by anti-social hoarders and blackmarketeters. And the adverse weather conditions were also a smokescreen to hide realities. Much more was put on the weather than the realities warranted. In our issue last week, 9/3/74, we had pointed out that existing stocks with the blackmarketeters, producers and the PMB were not enough to feed the people and that Yala this year was most likely to be a failure, and we had therefore stated "... There is a spectre now haunting this land; and people in high places are unwilling to recognise the reality of its existence. The spectre cannot be hidden for much longer behind the propaganda smokescreen about UNP reaction, about the machinations of blackmarketeters or even half-truths about adverse weather conditions... People must have food. They cannot, this year, wait until it is produced in this country. Food therefore has to be imported immediately in quantities much more than had been estimated by our purblind bureaucrats. And if the food people need next year is to be grown here very important measures must be taken to ensure such production ..."

THIS HAS BEEN THE MAIN REFRAIN in the *Tribune* for several weeks now. When the entire propaganda machine of the Government was setting itself hoarse that production for Maha was so high that rice imports could be even less than estimated, we were the sole voice in the wilderness that had insisted that the realities were different. Bureaucratic propaganda had proclaimed that by March 1974 the country would have such a surfeit of subsidiary foodstuffs that the shortage of rice and wheat would not be felt. But, March 1974 has come and the situation is worse than ever. Proper planning always makes allowances for possible adverse weather and takes long range and short range remedial action, but our bureaucrats are different. They are the most optimistic happy-go-lucky blunderers who have been entrusted with responsible tasks. And they have the supreme capacity to make our politicians, who have now been vested with supreme executive power, to believe in an infinite and inexhaustible variety of fairy tales. But, the realities Sri Lanka must face seems to have caught up with the castles of sand we have built in the air.

THE GOVERNMENT finally decided last week to send two Ministerial missions to India and the Soviet Union, and to Pakistan and China, respectively, to obtain food and other essentials on extended credit. What about Ministerial missions to Australia, Canada and the United States—countries which over the years have had agricultural surpluses? This quest for food imports is something which should have been done three months ago when the fate of the Maha crop was known. Realities cannot be wished away: Sri Lanka must face them.

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* On Selling Tea

IN RECENT TIMES, there has been such a propaganda ballyhoo about tourism and the export of the so-called non-traditional goods that many have tended to forget that tea is still Sri Lanka's main export earner. During the last twenty years, the production of tea has increased, but the world price levels of tea have dropped. This, it is admitted, has not been due to increased production in Sri Lanka and other tea-producing countries. There is no doubt that the depressing of tea prices was essentially due to the market manoeuvring by the tea merchants of Europe particularly in Great Britain. For a long time there was a fatalistic attitude that there was little or nothing this country could do about getting better prices for tea and there was an even greater apprehension that any joint action by tea producers to unite to get better prices would affect Sri Lanka adversely if European tea merchants chose to hit back with reprisals. Sri Lanka had bitter memories of what such reprisals—however subtle and indirect—could do, after Lanka's action in breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel.

But even before the diplomatic confrontation with Israel and the estrangement of world Jewry, Sri Lanka had been reluctant to enter into negotiations with other tea-producing countries to adopt effective joint procedures to secure better prices. On many occasions during the last ten years, India had taken the initiative in trying to persuade Sri Lanka to agree on a joint marketing agreement to be a nucleus to bring all tea producers together. But this country, for a variety of reasons—many of them not sound or rational—had not shown enthusiasm for such a co-operative effort.

But, today, the situation is different. The oil producers have succeeded not only in getting better prices but also in holding the merchants and brokers of the West to ransom. Tea is not

oil, but there is no doubt that there is still a world wide demand for this cheap beverage. After Sri Lanka's Prime Minister had her summit in New Delhi with the Indian PM in January, a move for the two countries to take the initiative on tea marketing has gone very far. In this connection, an article in the Madras *Hindu* by C. V. Gopalakrishnan entitled LONDON'S STRANGEHOLD ON TEA sets out in detail and in depth the salient factors which are relevant to the problem.

"A good starting point for India and Sri Lanka which have agreed recently to initiate joint endeavours to secure an equitable and remunerative price for their tea, rubber and other exports may well be in London. The tea-producing developing countries have been getting a raw deal in the London tea auctions.

"Export trade in almost every other commodity—whether it be primary raw materials or manufactured goods—has achieved a high degree of sophistication, but tea is probably the only commodity that has been suffering for years under an ante-diluvian trading system that has exclusively served the interests in London. The tea producing countries, particularly India, shipping tea in bulk to London are more or less in the same predicament of the hapless medieval peasants carrying headloads of their produce to accept whatever price is dictated to them by the barons ruling the market. Those who have had the opportunity to witness the proceedings in the London tea auctions cannot recall a parallel for such iniquitous trading. The tea is brought to London in bulk at the expense of the exporters who are literally orphans at the auctions. Their brokers are almost always British nationals. A handful of firms like Brooke Bonds, Liptons and the Lyons group dominate the auctions. Almost invariably only one of them barks out the price he is prepared to pay and the seller just has to accept the price. He is in no position to withdraw the tea, package it and sell it in the British market. The auctions are generally over in a matter of minutes."

Sri Lanka has been painfully aware of the manner in which Mincing Lane in London has con-

trolled the tea market to the detriment of the tea producers. The United Front government, in its early anti-imperialist fury and thunder, had denounced the London auctions and had threatened to take effective action against such "imperialist practices." Single-handed there was little Sri Lanka could do, but a melodramatic step was taken when it was ordained that more tea than before should be sold in the Colombo auctions. But this unilateral and single-handed action did not help to improve the situation—Sri Lanka only tended to get more and more isolated especially with the important Jewish merchants ranged against her.

GOPALAKRISHNAN, in his article showed very conclusively how helpless and ineffective tea producers had become in their efforts to get better prices. He cites statistics which showed how badly tea producing countries had been treated. These figures have also been often cited in Ceylon in recent months, but the conclusion that was drawn here was that Sri Lanka should tend to forget tea and concentrate on tourism and non-traditional exports—ignoring the fact that tourism is ephemeral and parasitic and that it will be years, if not decades, before non-traditional exports can replace tea in volume or value.

The writer, after stressing the urgent need for action, adopts an optimistic note on what is possible if tea producers get together—they may not be able to go as far as oil producers have gone, but yet there was a lot tea producers could do.

"How wholly defenceless the tea-producing countries have been at this kind of trading can be seen from the figures of tea export prices given in its latest report on international trade by the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). With 1963 as the base year, with the price index at 100, tea is among the very few commodities whose prices have fallen below this level to 79 in 1968, 84 in 1970 and to 81 in the second quarter of 1973. As against this coffee had shot up to 185 and cocoa to 206. The explanation given for this is that there is 'over-production' in the tea-producing countries and consequently com-

petition among themselves in the London market.

"The explanation is no doubt true though it is often advanced to divert attention from London's stranglehold on tea. London is still the biggest market for the worlds' tea-producing countries which sold their 212.23 million kilogrammes of tea in 1972. Though India and Sri Lanka together sold the highest quantity amounting to 97.06 million kilogrammes this year the other countries numbering over 15 sold the balance quantity of 115.17 million kilogrammes. The consequent scramble helped London beat down the sellers to any price it chose to. How could the producing countries reckon with this harsh reality?

"The Union Commerce Ministry does not think that the situation is as hopeless for the producing countries as London has made them think. The oil crisis does indeed leave them no choice but to secure a higher price for a principal foreign exchange earner. India and Sri Lanka should enlist the co-operation of the other tea-producing countries to do two things: (i) They should agree not to send more than a pre-determined quantity to the London auctions so that London does not enjoy an overabundance of tea to dictate its own price; (ii) The producing countries should insist on a floor price below which they should refuse to sell tea at London auctions. India and Sri Lanka which are the biggest sellers should try to do this straightaway, and urge the other countries to do so which will be very much in their interests."

THE STRATEGY envisaged by India has been very clearly explained by Gopalakrishnan. He then goes on to say that India and Sri Lanka should bring the other tea producers together to formulate some joint action to get better prices and break the stranglehold that the London tea auctions have exercised on the industry.

For one thing, the psychological barrier which made many tea producers fear the might and strength of the London auctions has to be broken, but after the oil producers have broken the back of the powerful trading circles in Europe and America, the task before tea producers will certainly be less difficult

It is certainly not going to be easy to do this. Mr. A. C. George, Union Deputy Minister of Commerce, while talking to newsmen on his return from Sri Lanka was anxious not to ruffle the feelings of other tea-producing countries particularly Kenya and make them think that India and Sri Lanka wanted to 'go it alone'. Though the London auctions have not given Kenyan tea as fair a deal as it probably deserved, Kenyan tea has been getting a higher price than Indian tea.

"According to the latest price quotations on February 1, Kenya tea earned 55.93 pence for a kilogramme while the price for North India tea was 49.59 pence and that for South Indian tea was still less at 42.87 pence. It will, therefore, be very unfortunate if Kenya concludes that it is faring quite well under the present dispensation and could stay out of the joint moves initiated by India and Sri Lanka.

"A great deal will also need to be done to destroy not only the sense of helplessness felt over the London auctions by the tea-producing countries. The Indian tea industry itself seems to be despondent over the question of a floor price, because of the problems arising out of the many varieties of tea. The industry seems to think that it would be difficult to work out a universally acceptable formula. The Commerce Ministry does not minimise the magnitude of the effort involved in seeking and getting a floor price but does not see how the effort can be shirked."

Gopalakrishnan, then deals with one more axiomatic shibboleth that has inhibited any joint action by tea producers all these years. This is what he says:

"Another manifestation of the total helplessness felt by the tea producing countries is the endless repetition of what has been elevated to the status of an irrefutable axiom—viz, the tea drinker in the importing countries will not pay more for his cup of tea than what he is now paying for the cheapest beverage. The conclusion, very energetically put forward by entrenched interests in the importing countries and unquestioningly accepted by the tea-produc-

ing countries, is that the latter is in no position to demand higher prices for their tea. But is this indeed true? Can it be seriously contended that the London buyers of tea, who purchase it in bulk from the producing countries, blend, package and label it with their brand names are really selling it at a throw-away price out of altruistic sentiments? What might really happen if the tea exporting countries secure an equitable price



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in the London tea auctions is that they might either make a long-delayed inroad into the high profits that the packaging and labelling industry in the importing countries have been making or there will be a marginal rise in the selling price of tea to the consumers of the affluent countries which could very well afford it."

WHAT HE SAYS should provide a great deal of food for thought in Sri Lanka where planners, tea experts and bureaucrats have believed that they had every answer on the question of marketing of tea and its allied problems. The supreme intellectual arrogance which had often been displayed by our "tea experts" in this matter over the years has been the major factor which has led our tea industry to slip into the doldrums in which it now finds itself.

In this connection, the *Hindu* article points out the economic necessity to sell packaged tea rather than tea in bulk and the difficulties which India has faced in wanting to increase the quantity of packaged tea it has exported.

"It is indeed amazing that India which has achieved considerable sophistication in its manufacturing industry should still be chained to the colonial legacy of having to export tea in bulk instead of in packages. Packeted tea exports do not seem to fetch more than Rs. 4 crores out of the total foreign exchange earnings of about Rs. 200 crores in the same year and this is indeed a disgrace. One does not really have to be a 'progressive' to see that the foreign-owned tea plantations in this country have done very little during all these years in changing the tea exports from bulk sales to sales in packets in spite of all the expertise that is at their command. An explanation given for this is that shipping tea in packages costs a lot more than exporting it in bulk. Surely the companies do have facilities abroad with their principals for packaging tea there instead of having to route them to London auctions. One does not again have to be a 'progressive' to see that the interests of their own principals have robbed them of any incentive to do this. There was indeed a rude reminder of how well entren-

ched these interests are not long ago. The efforts of an Indian company which had acquired controlling interest in a foreign owned tea plantation to export packaged tea were successfully frustrated by the British firms in the U.K. The Indian firm has not however, given up its endeavours."

NEXT, the article pointed out why even foreign-owned companies in India and other tea producing countries should welcome steps to get better prices — although some of these companies are tied up with the tea merchants of London.

The foreign-owned tea plantations do not any longer have any justification to shirk their responsibilities to secure a fair price for tea exports from India. They have been indeed given a preferential treatment under the amended Foreign Exchange Regulation Act of 1973. While almost every other company having foreign participation to the extent of more than 40 per cent has been asked to bring it down to 40 per cent, the guidelines say that 'tea plantation will, by and large, be treated at par with manufacturing industries. Subject to the condition that they will increase Indian participation to not less than 26 per cent of the equity of the company'. Surely the country has a right to expect a return for such hospitality.

"The Commerce Ministry, however, feels that the time has come for India and the other tea-producing countries to free themselves from London's stranglehold with determination. It should be possible for India, which earns around Rs. 200 crores from tea exports, to set up an agency manned by experts to make a beginning in the packaging of tea and marketing it in the U.K. This should not cost more than Rs. 2 crores by way of capital investment. There are certain advantages which should be immediately seized."

Gopalakrishnan also feels that tea producing countries would be able to get considerable help from bodies like the U.K. Consumer's Council and that similar bodies in other countries would also be able to help to reducing middlemen profits and ensure better prices for the producer.

"The U.K. Consumer's Council, a very vigilant and enlightened

body, is not taken in by the pleas that tea is indeed as cheap as it made out to be and that London tea auctions are safeguarding the consumer's interests. The Council is well aware of the high profits of the tea packaging and labelling industry in Britain and India should be able to enlist its co-operation in securing a fair deal for the tea-exporting countries and its own efforts to sell packaged tea. The Commerce Ministry also feels that these countries should be able to invoke the provisions of the U.K. Restrictive Trade Practices Act in their endeavours to sell tea directly in packages to the consumer to break the monopoly of British firms."

THE ARTICLE ended on an enthusiastic and optimistic note, and there is no reason why the matter should not be approached with enthusiasm and hope.

When a Sri Lanka delegation had gone round to all the oil producing countries to get cheap oil they had been advised that instead of asking oil producers to surrender to the rich countries of the West which consumed most of the oil, the poorer developing countries should seek to get better prices for their primary products which were exported.

There is no doubt that oil producers will tend to help other primary producers, who are as poor as the oil producers once were to get better prices.

"All these will call for a Herculean effort from the tea-producing countries but it will have to be initiated. The cost of inputs for the tea industry consisting of fertilizer, fuel oil, pesticides, etc., is going up by leaps and bounds on account of the oil crisis. Before long the London tea barons will make tea production totally unremunerative at the prices they have been enforcing on the exporters for so many years."

Sri Lanka has taken the first faltering steps to co-operate with India and other tea producing countries to get better prices, but a great deal more has to be done to re-orientate thinking in this island to debunk the gospel text that **CEYLON TEA** by itself could look after itself even in a world dominated by western merchants.

Comment

- * OIL
- * COUP
- * UNP
- * MANNAR
- * JANAWEGAYA

THE PRICE OF OIL. News is to hand that India has been able to obtain supplies of crude oil from Iran for \$ 3.50 a barrel. The posted price in the Gulf is around \$ 11.65 or thereabouts, but the auction price of \$ 17.50 a barrel which Iran had once obtained some weeks ago was too much of a rigged affair to be realistic. The Shahanshah has made the most of the Arab-Israeli war by quietly pushing up the oil prices through OPEC whilst the Arab oil producers had their eyes on the political potential of oil on the Arab-Israeli conflict. While the Arab oil producers had an embargo on oil to the USA, Iran was no party to it. But the Shah got his pound of flesh in the form of higher prices.

Now, when the inevitable downward swing has begun with the possibilities of the the embargo to the US being lifted, Iran is once again active on the market. She has signed up with India to supply crude at \$ 3.50 a barrel. It has been called a "subsidised" price but it is not clear how the subsidy will work. Or is it just a bi-lateral agreement with crude at \$ 3.50 a barrel for Indian goods in exchange also at a fixed price.

According to *The Economist* of 2/3/74, the sellers market in oil has begun to crumble. Low prices were bid at the auction in Kuwait last week and "that Saudi Arabia might help the drop on its way". It was believed that the posted prices in the Gulf might drop from \$ 11.65 to \$ 8.33, and that if this should happen the price would have only trebled since last autumn instead of having quadrupled as at present. "Only in Saudi Arabia," said *The Economist*, "is there any real appreciation that high prices could dump a surplus of crude oil on their hands because the rest

of the world will cut consumption if disturbance from oil to most countries' balance of payments brings about a world recession." Saudi Arabia is the one country that does not need the increased revenues the new oil prices will generate, but it is the one country that really decides world oil output. The latest estimates show that if Saudi Arabia increased its daily output to 20 m barrels a d.y. (as against the 9.3 m barrels today), its oil fields could sustain the increased output for a minimum of 60 years. With that kind of reserves, the Saudis can force the market by flooding it, but for the moment the Saudis are not inclined to work outside OPEC. Saudi's oil minister, Zaki Yamani, has recently indicated that he would be able to persuade OPEC to bring down prices, and if the Saudis really want to do this Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Niger'a, Kuwait, Venezuela and Indonesia cannot really do otherwise.

But *The Economist* thinks that "Saudis and the other like-thinking Arabs could be prepared to go along with the American plea for lower oil prices, but they say that this will be politically possible only if Israel makes sufficient concessions". Israel cannot be happy about this. Not even the Americans who might not have sufficient influence over the Israelis to obtain from the Israel's everything the Arabs want.

The posted price which Saudi Arabia might favour is \$ 8.33 a barrel—the price it had suggested at the Teheran meeting of OPEC last December when the Shah had stamped them into fixing it at \$ 11.65. But even \$ 8.33 is a long way from \$ 3.01 a barrel Persian crude was selling in October 1973. In these circumstances, Iran's decision to sell crude to India at \$ 3.50 a barrel is an indication that there has been a great deal of thinking about the oil. This price is close to the \$ 8 posted price.

The crucial question for Sri Lanka is the price our Petroleum Corporation is paying for crude. If Iran can supply India crude at \$ 3.50 should not the Arab countries also supply Sri Lanka crude on equally favourable terms after everything this country has done for the Arab cause ever since 1956?

But what is the price Sri Lanka is buying its crude and

from whom? There are disturbing reports that one or more of the Arab countries have even retracted on contracts for the supply of crude during 1973 and had demanded higher prices. The new prices were no doubt intended for new contracts and ordinary commercial morality demands that old contracts should be fulfilled at the contracted prices.

There is no doubt that one cannot afford to be legalistic and demand fulfilment of contracts in the contemporary world of brigandage, piracy, kidnapping, hijacking and guerilla sabotage, but the least Sri Lanka is entitled to expect is that it is not treated like an enemy by the Arab oil producers.

There is a great deal of secrecy over the price Sri Lanka is to pay for the crude she will get in 1974. Should the Government not take the people into its confidence?

The Petroleum Corporation is entitled to make its profits. The Government is entitled to make its levies and BTI imposts. The Government is also entitled to force consumption down by jacking up prices. But it will be wise for the Government to place all the cards on the table and tell the people just how much it is making out of the oil crisis. It is also well to remind ourselves that unnecessarily high prices will seriously impair agricultural and industrial production in this country, and unless we produce more locally and more of the essentials, especially in grains and foodstuffs, the profits we make on petroleum products (or the foreign exchange we save by cutting down imports) will more than vanish into thin air owing to the increased imports of food and other essentials we need—if we are to stave off starvation and famine which are realities that have begun to loom large on our horizon.

JR'S COUP STORY. The National State Assembly on March 6 voted down, 99/25, the joint Opposition resolution demanding that a Select Committee should be appointed to investigate J. R. Jayawardene's allegation that the "sovereignty of the people" was being endangered by a group presently entrenched around the PM's palace establishment. With the present Party

alignments, the voting in the NSA was a foregone conclusion, but many impartial observers were anxious to know whether J.R. had anything really concrete to say about the plot, more than what had transpired in his earlier press statements. J. R. made a lengthy statement which was published in full not only in the *Sun* but also in the *Daily News*. The PM's reply was published in full in the *Daily News* two days later. The debate was reasonably fully reported in our meagre newspapers, and observers were able to make up their minds what it was all about—though J.R. claimed that he could disclose the evidentiary basis of his allegations only before a Select Committee—perhaps in closed sessions.

JR's statement in the NSA was a lengthy one in which he alleged that the country was being run by an "inner group", the *Janawegaya* group, round the PM—a group which made a mockery of Cabinet rule. Names were named and the positions occupied were detailed. What JR recounted in Parliament was only what has been talked about in political circles and in the cocktail circuit for sometime now. But what many were anxious to know was whether this Group had really planned a "coup" to undermine democracy by extra-parliamentary means. From what JR said it would seem that this Group only had sought to utilise the forms and techniques of parliamentary power to promote certain ideological trends—using the powers vested in the Prime Minister and other Ministers under the new Constitution. The only conspiratorial aspect about which JR made allegations was about a tough-arm brigade which had been organised to break up UNP satyagraha by certain stalwarts belonging to the Establishment.

JR's statement was no doubt an excellent expose of the mechanics of power politics in this country at the present juncture. But how far his version conforms to realities is a matter for history—just as history must also pass its verdict on the inner-councils and the power elite which had run the country from the time of Independence in 1948. D. S. Senanayake had an inner council of some Ministers, a few Civil Servants and even newspapermen: the *Times* and *Lake House* were with him (and had done what the

Janawegaya is seeking to do now because the state-controlled Lake House is unable to do the job being neither fish nor flesh); and D. S. had journalists like J. L. Fernando and D. N. W. de Silva to do the dirty work for him by character assassinating those he did not like in the columns of the papers. Sir John Kotelawela had his Purple Brigade and the notorious M. I. 5 of police officials to run the country. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike created enemies willing to venture on assassination because many powerful groups did not like the elite he chose to rule the country. When Dudley Senanayake was in power from 1965-70 he had a number of inner councils and a palace guard which ran the country and it is known that JR had strenuously opposed this and had himself a parallel power group around him. Each power centre in the 1965-70 period had their set of newspapermen to do their bidding, and there is no doubt that in spite of the liberal democratic inhibitions of Dudley Senanayake, opposition groups and newspapers were unnecessarily hampered and penalised—and the UF has only followed in the footsteps of this tradition.

All this is fascinating study for a historian or a student, but it does not establish a case for an imminent coup. If one is really around the corner, JR has not succeeded in alerting anybody because he was so obsessed by the anti-satyagraha thugs that he seemed to have forgotten the bigger issue of the coup. JR made a point that many suspected of being part of the 1971 insurgency had been now placed in positions of power, but many speakers had reminded him that he himself had given top jobs to many 1962 coup accused—they had been found guilty on the facts of attempting to stage a coup by the Supreme Court, but had been released only because the Privy Council had decided that the laws under which they were tried were ultra vires of the Constitution.

All this is only part of the parliamentary game: and as long as this country is committed to this system of government this kind of drama or melodrama will recur from time to time.

THE UNP STATEMENT ON FOOD. On February 24, the U:IP issued

a statement on the food situation. This statement was issued by Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and is no doubt the first reasoned and rational statement on the current situation by the UNP in recent times. It is a statement which concentrated on economic and political issues without confusing the issues with unrealistic gimmicks about satyagraha and the like. JR listed very seven good grounds why the food situation is in the present mess—1.) Dismantling UNP's food drive; 2.) Political Interference and Vindictiveness of the UF; 3.) Rise in the Costs of Paddy Growing; 4.) High Costs of Essential Items; 5.) Government's Pricing Policy; 6.) Restrictions to Marketing; 7.) Government's Double Standards of Payments—Rs. 50 to the Chinese farmer and Rs. 25 to the local farmer.

But the statement had one weakness—the solution offered was to invite people to go back to the "UNP procedures" of the days of Dudley Senanayake—which everybody knows that JR himself had strenuously opposed when Dudley was alive.

Moreover, there is no going back to anything. New solutions and new programmes must be offered if people, especially the youth, are to be attracted. The UNP, if it hopes to succeed—and it can in the present situation if it does its homework—must come forward with alternative plans and solutions and not depend on assertions of a negative character (merely reversing UF policies) or asking people to go back to old UNP procedures.

MANNAR BY-ELECTION. The UNP candidate Rahim, won by a slender majority of 75 votes. He had lost to the FP candidate in 1970 by an equally similar number of votes. Mannar is an electorate where the Muslims constitute only a third of the electorate, the two-thirds being Tamils, with the Catholics and the Hindus in numbers which are about equal. The fact that a Muslim in 1970 and in 1974 had obtained more votes than the mere Muslims vote in the electorate is an indication that the UNP still has a foothold among the Tamils, among the Catholics as well as among the Hindus.

The FP had, on both occasions, had nominated a Catholic to contest the seat, but its voting strength has always been problematically static. Alagecone (1970) was said to be a good candidate and that Mark (1974) was a poor one, but the votes they obtained did not show much difference between them. However, it was felt that since the FP had blossomed out into the TUF, its nominee would sweep the polls.

The results of the Mannar by-election only shows that even the FP and the TUF (with strong CWC backing) cannot take things for granted even in the Tamil areas of the North. It is certainly not yet the sole voice of the Tamil people in the manner it claims it is. The FP-TUC, like the UNP, has no positive political or economic programme of action of a practical and concrete character. Its policies are negative, vague and ephemeral. Its popularity is based on strong emotionalism tinged with chauvinistic jingoism based on the many acts of commission and omission for the UF government. Like the UNP, the FP-TUF will also miss the bus if it does not quickly enough formulate concrete economic policies on which it can base its politics.

THE JANAWEGAYA commemorated its first anniversary with a special number last week. The occasion was also marked by the issue of the first number of a weekly in the Tamil language, the *Janawegam*. In one year of its existence, the *Janawegaya* has carved out a niche for itself in serious political journalism in this country. There are many significant points to be noted about the *Janawegaya*. It is the first SLFP-based political journal with a consistent leftwing outlook.

The SLFP has had weeklies in the past, but all of them were more emotional and less political, although they did a great deal of politicking with questions like language, race and religion. These papers either did not last or did not have the necessary impact in the developing political world of Sri Lanka. The SLFP, for some time, had a daily paper, but this was a hotch potch with the Right and the Left mixed up in the most incohesive manner and its emotionalism verged on the communal. With

the result, the SLFP for ever 20 years of its existence depended on the vigorous political press, weeklies and dailies, of the Left parties, to fight its political battles.

Right up to the time the *Janawegaya* started, the SLFP relied upon the LSSP and CP papers which claimed to speak for the whole of the UF, for political sustenance. The *Aththa* and the *Janadina*, the *Nation* and the *Forward* carried the SLFP on their shoulders. With the split in the CP, the *Forward* has made only occasional appearances. The Left Partie had long ceased to pay attention to Tamil political journalism because they had written off the Tamil-speaking masses as incurable camp-followers of what they regarded as reactionary political parties and trade unions. The few Tamil periodicals they published were feeble efforts and were probably intended only to salve whatever was left of their marxist conscience in regard to question of national minorities.

The *Janawegaya* has marked out a different course in SLFP political journalism. There has been much on which *Tribune* agreed with the *Janawegaya*, but much more on which we disagreed, especially in the matter of interpretative analysis of national and international events, but it was refreshing to have a weekly in our midst with a vigorous point of view. And what was more, it was a clear indication of the fact that a section of the SLFP had begun to assert itself and had begun to carve out a separate identity in the Left politics of Sri Lanka. It is only with the *Janawegaya* that the Leftwing in the SLFP has begun to show signs of maturity as a separate group.

The fact that this Left *Janawegaya* group was well within the Establishment, with deep roots in the Administration, has brought in its wake opposition from many quarters from both within and without the UF. Thanks to the propaganda bombast of the UNP and the virulent polemics of J. R. Jayewardene, the *Janawegaya* group has been given national importance and a national notoriety which it could not have got otherwise. Whether the *Janawegaya* group can transform this notoriety

into responsible political advantage is yet to be seen, but this notoriety can be dangerous if it turns heads made dizzy with power.

It is difficult to say from the first number what the Tamil weekly of the *Janawegaya* group will turn

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out to be. The first number follows the copyback pattern of the *Janawegaya* and its layout is far too reminiscent of the Tamil political papers that had been published by the Left Parties in the past. The jargon and idiom of the Tamil *Janawegam* is a hangover of the moribund Tamil political journalism in Sri Lanka. The first issue is mainly a declaration of faith and in many ways a replica of the Sinhala *Janawegaya*. If the *Janawegam* is to make an impact on Tamil youth it has to reach to the innermost chords of the Tamil youth in idiom that must be different from that used by the established parties—all of which have disappointed the Tamil youth.

However, it is a happy augury that the SLFP Left, as represented by the *Janawegaya*, should have decided to start a Tamil weekly. It is a reflection of a sense of political maturity that the *Janawegaya* should have opted for a Tamil weekly before venturing on an English weekly which it also needs and which it will probably start sooner or later. But, the priority given by the *Janawegaya* group to a Tamil paper is significant. Its main plank is Sinhala-Tamil unity.

It is still difficult to say the particular orientation the leftwing politics of *Janawegaya* will take. If Mr. J. R. Jayewardene's allegations are to be believed, the *Janawegaya* has a pro-China and pro-Mao tilt because many stalwarts of the China wing of the old Communist Party are closely associated with the paper and the group. But the columns of the *Janawegaya* have not, as yet, betrayed, any tilt towards Peking. The *Janawegaya* line on domestic politics is something to which neither the LSSP nor the pro-Moscow CP can take objection, and in international matters Mao or Maoism have certainly not figured in a big way at any time. If as Mr. J. R. Jayewardene alleges, the *Janawegaya* is part of a Chinese conspiracy in Sri Lanka, the columns of the *Janawegaya* have not (as yet) been used for the purpose.

The *Janawegaya* and the *Janawegam* are papers that merit serious attention, because for the moment at any rate they reflect what an important section of the Establishment think. The Opposition has quipped that what the *Janawegaya*

thinks today, the Government does tomorrow. This may have happened on a few occasions, but more often what the *Janawegaya* says is only an indicator of what certain people think should happen or should not happen. The Establishment in Sri Lanka is not in a position, as in every other country, to do everything it wants or implement what even a paper that is close to it suggests.

The *Janawegaya* now thrives and flourishes in the full glory of official patronage but its capacity to survive in leaner days without a surfeit of official advertising will be the true test whether the Left in the SLFP has come to stay. But a very significant step forward is that the SLFP Left has decided to reach out to the Tamils to build a united Ceylon.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BY ARIEL

- ✻ BRITAIN
- ✻ MIDDLE EAST
- ✻ JAPAN

LABOUR is once again in power in Britain, a minority government with limited options, but nevertheless the only one which can immediately deliver some of the goods most needed by the country. The coal strike has been settled and the country is once again back to a five-day week. Britain also needs foreign exchange credit of nearly £ 700 million immediately to tide over the mess left by the Tories, and Wilson has to rely heavily on the IMF and the IBRD for this.

The British general elections once again demonstrated that the best laid plans often go wrong. Heath and the Tories, confronted by increasing labour and industrial unrest which stemmed from the wage-freeze policies of Phase Three, wanted to break the power of the trade unions for all time, or at least for the foreseeable future. The plans were laid several months ahead and the oil crisis was made the excuse and the smokescreen for the ultimate coup, against

the British working class. Austerity measures, far more severe than the situation warranted, were imposed on the people and it was made out that "industrial action" and the wage-demands were responsible for this far more than the oil crisis. It is known that February 28 had been the day chosen for the General Elections early in December, but before that Heath introduced a mini-budget which was designed to make the mass of ordinary voters angry with the trade unions, and the three-day working week was enforced with the threat that it might soon be a two-day week. All this was calculated to turn the voters against the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Heath and the Tories set out to show that they were "saviours" trying to save the nation from the greedy trade unions and when opinion polls showed that the electorate had swallowed this line in a substantial way, the date of the General Elections was announced. The Tories were confident that they would sweep the polls and thus stabilise their position in Britain as well as in the ECM on terms negotiated by them. Magazines like *The Economist* had written stirring editorials that unless the trade unions and wage demands were brought under control, Britain could not hope to survive in the fiercely competitive world of capitalism or sustain its position within the ECM. Though *The Economist* generally likes to straddle in the middle of the fence, its editorials in December, January and February, made it quite clear that it was backing the return of Heath and the Tories. *The Economist* and other elements in Britain, which had wanted the power of the trade unions curbed, were almost certain that with the announcement of the General Elections on top of the three-day week, the miners would call off their strike. Their calculation was that the Labour Party, in its own political interests, would pressurise the miners to call off the strike.

But British trade unionists realised that if they retreated before Tory pressure even in the face of a General Elections, Heath would have the upper hand and make it out that the strike was political and not economic as the miners had always claimed.

The miners did not call off the strike and during three weeks of electioneering the British electorate evidently began to see through the Tory game. But not quite enough, and Labour failed to win an overall majority. Heath thereafter tried to inveigle the Liberals, with their strength of 15, to support him in a Coalition, but the Liberals refused to play ball with him.

The *Economist* with its ears very much to the ground, wrote an editorial (issue of 2/3/74) even while the votes were being counted. This is what it said: "when this issue of *The Economist* went to press very early on Friday morning (i.e. March 1, the day after the elections - Ed), the only winners of the election so far were the Don't Knows. In one of the gravest crises of its peacetime history Britain appears to have cast an indecisive vote for indecision. It was impossible to say who would eventually receive the Queen's commission, but it was already possible to urge to what should and should not be done.

"If Mr. Wilson does have any sort of overall majority at the end of the long count, then he will take up the task of government again, albeit in appallingly difficult circumstances. Even if he should not have an overall majority, it will be better to have a Liberal-supported Labour government."

"Britain would be rather badly governed by a minority Heath cabinet which has been told by Liberals from the commanding depths of the Parliament that they should yield a little more to inflationary wage claims here, give a few more subsidies to particular vested interests there, unite (as it is called) the country by class conscious and envy-ridden measures against the rich, and create a slump by heavy taxes designed to puncture business's falling confidence at precisely the wrong moment. Britain should be better governed by a minority Labour cabinet that would be told by the centre-seeking Liberals to curb its own natural predilections to move in all these directions. A minority Wilson administration could also have on its side a trade union movement which felt some obligation to try to keep a weak government in office, instead of to make a last heave to get a weak Tory government out...."

That Wilson government now has its work cut out, and it is interesting what it will do before it calls for another General Election at the earliest convenient point of time. Among the matters which will interest the world is what the Wilson Government will do about its relations with the ECM. France has already sounded a note of warning by stating that any attempt to re-negotiate the terms on which Britain entered the ECM would lead to trouble.

A question of supreme importance for Sri Lanka is what the Wilson government will do about Diego Garcia. It had been the firm policy of Labour to withdraw from east of Suez before the end of 1971, and this was reversed by the Heath government. Will Wilson underwrite the Heath government's agreement with the USA regarding Diego Garcia? With all the foreign exchange credits Britain urgently needs now, can Wilson withdraw from Tory commitments to the USA on Diego Garcia? Or, will Wilson think that it will be more advantageous to keep the littoral states of the Indian Ocean on his side?

IN THE MIDDLE EAST, Egypt is forging ahead not only in bringing other Arab countries to support its arrangements with Israel and its plans to re-open the Suez Canal, but it also is well on the way to re-establishing good relations with the USA. Full diplomatic relations have been re-opened, and Egypt is leaving no stone unturned to see that the oil embargo against the USA is withdrawn even before the final peace settlement with Israel is concluded.

But Israel is in a pickle. It is not able to arrive at any settlement with Syria and fresh fighting has broken out on the Golan Heights. Furthermore, the last General Elections has left Golda Meir in a position where she finds it difficult to form a stable government. There also seems to be widespread disillusionment in the country, where war has disrupted economic life. There even seems to be a move by many settlers to re-emigrate to countries like Canada and Australia where more stable conditions prevail.

Kissinger's efforts to settle the Israel-Syria deadlock have so far, failed, but instead of a breakdown

the talks have been adjourned to Washington. But it is becoming increasingly clear that unless Israel withdraws from all lands it had occupied in June 1967, including east Jerusalem, there will be no peace in the area.

Though Ethiopia is not generally taken as part of the Middle East—it is part of Africa—this country is very close to the storm centres in West Asia. It is the one country on the African continent where the ruling hierarchy and dynasty are members of the Coptic Church which still has a major foothold in old Jerusalem. Emperor Haile Selassie has ruled the country for a longer time than even General Franco has ruled Spain—though Selassie was in exile during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in the thirties. The Emperor has maintained a despotic rule and has regularly chopped off the heads of anybody who questioned his divine right to rule and the system of government he maintained.

More recently, Ethiopia, has had its run of unexpected troubles. Famine had led to death by starvation of thousands. And then, came the mutiny in the army, which had been the Emperor's special creation for the safety of his dynasty. The army had been used all these years to suppress any vestige of dissidence or protest. But now, the army is in full revolt. The old Cabinet of Ministers was dismissed by the Emperor and he had sought to form a new Government under a new Prime Minister. But this has not ended the crisis.

The *Economist* felt that the emperor's chances of saving the situation depend on the hope that the troops of the Imperial Guard will not be infected by mutiny. But there is no guarantee that the Imperial Guard will be loyal. The *Economist* summed up the situation thus: "...Haile Selassie's rule has no political base: Ethiopia has no political parties. Apart from the personal loyalty he still evokes, he depends on the support of the big landowners, who have an almost feudal control over their territories, and on the loyalty of the officers of the armed services. So far there are no indications that any senior officers are involved in the mutiny. But it is the young officers and the men who carry the guns."

JAPANESE PREMIER TANAKA'S recent trip to Indonesia has not only highlighted the problems Tanaka faced at home but has also brought a great many things in Indonesia to boiling point. In recent years, Japan has invested heavily in Southeast Asian countries, as direct investments as well as under the cover of "aid"; and it was thought that when Tanaka left on his southeastern trip in January it would be at triumphant progress through Japan's new co-prosperity empire. Unfortunately, the Thais, Malaysians and Indonesians seemed to have thought differently and the upheavals which marked his visit to these countries have given the Japanese much food for thought. The older generation seem to have memories of the horrors of Japanese occupation during the second world war, and the younger generation seem to resent the "silent occupation" of their countries by imperturbably polite businessmen, bankers and advisers who come from the "Land of the Rising Sun"—though the invasion this time did not come in battleships but in super jetliners (JAL wherever the line was permitted to land).

One aspect of the southeastern tour of Mr. Tanaka which has not been spotlighted adequately is the fact that the trade and investment's rivalry between Japan and the USA has now become more acute and serious. This rivalry was kept below the surface for a long time, but observers think that secret

confrontations are coming out into the open.

It will be recalled that Sukarno had thrown out the Americans from many, if not all, spheres of profitable business activity in Indonesia. But whilst he did this he had opened the gates wide to Japanese capital and influence. Sukarno's youngest wife, Sri Ratna Devi, was a Japanese beauty who had an immense hold on the aging President and there is no doubt that she had helped to channel a great deal of Indonesia's business into Japanese hands. Cynics used to quip that the US Ambassador Howard Jones was no match for Ratna Devi. When Sukarno fell, the Japanese received the news with unrestrained apprehension and regarded it as a setback for Japan—while the capitalist countries of the West had hailed it as a great event for the world of free enterprise.

With Suharto, the USA was able to stage a comeback of sorts, but the Japanese have become even better entrenched with the new regime. Though 80% of Indonesian oil was owned by American Caltex and Stanvac, the new regime sold over 70% of the oil to Japan while only about 6% went to the USA. The new regime also gave the Japanese large and profitable concessions for the exploitation of timber, nickel and other natural resources of Indonesia.

Moreover, Japan sells to Indonesia much more than the USA

does. Cheap Japanese goods are more easily marketed in Indonesia than precision-made but expensive US manufactured goods. Japanese cars, motorcycles and scooters, watches, photo and movie equipment, television sets and transistor radios fill the chic urban department stores in Indonesian towns as well as in the suburbs. The recent student protest focussed attention on the link-ups between Japanese businessmen and high-ranking officials in the Indonesian government.


It has been noted that the vehement and vigorous demonstrations against Tanaka in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia struck a sympathetic chord in the American press whose reports and analysis did not reveal any anger at the student demonstrators.

Japan had also sought to go-it-alone in its relations with the Arab oil producers leaving the USA in the lurch—so far as Israel was concerned, and it was therefore only natural that Kissinger should plough this lonely way in West Asia without relying much on America's erstwhile allies viz. Japan and Western Europe. The new tone in American writing about Japan and Japanese affairs is a clear indication that Washington will not be unhappy if Japan's image suffered a few setbacks in Asia.


* *

CASAR IN BLUNDERLAND -

Only in this fairyland does one send clinker from a spot in the North to a spot in the south 320 mls away—both by rail; and by sea with a special harbour built to receive it, to help the people of the south to make cement!

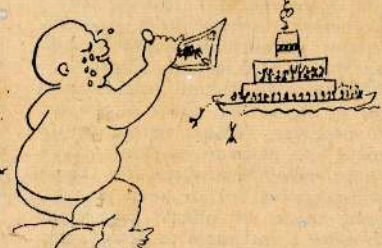


Q: Why not save all this money and make the cement where the clinker is?
A: It is a non-national procedure.



Only in this fairyland does one build gigantic complexes without the raw material to make it functional.
Q: Where's that?
A: e.g. The Plywood Complex at P.....v.....a

Only in fairyland does one send skilled labour abroad to enrich other countries and increase their yield.
Q: For example, who?
A: What about the skilled cheap Tamil labour sent back to India instead of utilising it to grow more food in uncultivated areas.



CHRONICLE

Feb. 28 – Mar. 6

*A Diary of Events in Sri Lanka and the World
compiled from English-language dailies published
in Colombo.*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28: The President of the Common Market Commission, Mr. Francois Ortoli, left the island yesterday after a brief stay here. New measures by the European Economic Community have helped Sri Lanka's major exports to the Common Market countries: tariffs on important exports such as tea, desiccated coconut, coconut oil and even tobacco have either been totally removed or substantially reduced. Over a million workers in the public and private sectors will walk out at 2.30 p.m. today to join a mass rally at the Hyde Park in support of a 20 per cent wage increase demanded by the Joint Council of Trade Union Organisations. The Cabinet at its meeting held yesterday decided that there would be no increase in the guaranteed price of Rs.25/- for paddy being purchased by the Paddy Marketing Board. Mr. Sumanadasa, President of the Kattubedde campus of the University of Sri Lanka, has been appointed as Vice Chancellor of the University. The Government yesterday decided to increase the sugar ration to one pound from the present three-quarters of a pound per ration book per month from tomorrow: the price of sugar on ration will continue to remain at 72 cents per pound; the price of off-ration sugar will be Rs. 5 per pound. The Ceylon Shipping Corporation has decided to divert four of its vessels to bring in urgently needed rice and flour to Sri Lanka: an emergency food purchasing mission from Sri Lanka will fly to Australia today to negotiate the purchase of any thing up to 10,000 tons of wheat flour and 70,000 tons of wheat grain. The British General Election takes place today. The French Government of Prime Minister Pierre Messmer's government resigned yesterday. The repatriation of Bangladesh and Pakistani nationals resumed yesterday after a week's suspension because of the Islamic Summit at Lahore and security measures at Karachi and Lahore airports.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1: Sri Lanka has sent out an urgent appeal to potential suppliers for 10,000 tons of sugar to meet the country's requirements. Grama Sevakas will be authorised to issue permits allowing genuine cultivators who have to transport their paddy from their homes to the nearest mill for milling and to transport such rice back to their homes. Mr. J.R. Jayewardene, the leader of the Opposition, called the sugar price increase "unjustified" and trade unionists demanded the immediate roll back of the off ration sugar price. Following the price increase of sugar many hoteliers said that they will not serve tea in their hotels: in several hotels a cup of milk tea was sold between 50 to 75 cents and plain tea at 35 to 40 cents. The Criminal Justice Commission yesterday allowed the release of Mr. K. K. Jagtiani, the fifth suspect in the first exchange frauds inquiry on security bail of Rs. 50,000 to enable him to

find the money to pay the fine of Rs. 221,417 imposed on him earlier. According to the Sun, Sri Lanka and India have reached an understanding on common measures for marketing packaged tea. Government has no official information about the foreign VIPs attending the 30th annual session of the ECAFE to be held in Colombo at the end of this month. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh will meet soon to take further steps towards normalisation of the situation in the sub-continent, the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said yesterday. British elections showed a slight swing towards Labour Party. The Soviet Union redoubled its campaign against the establishment of a United States nuclear base on the Diego Garcia atoll in the Indian Ocean and proposed a plan to convert the region into a zone of peace. Egypt and the United States have agreed to restore full diplomatic relations, President Anwar Sadat announced yesterday.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2: Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, yesterday sought the co-operation of all to overcome the grave economic problems facing the country when she addressed the 75 member SLFP Working Committee at Temple Trees: the extra half measure of rice and the sugar quota issued on the ration were being continued at tremendous cost to the government and she also said that this state subsidy was being extended to the issue of flour on ration as well. The Sri Lanka Freight Bureau has asked the Shipping Conference for more information on the decision of the Conferences to increase further the bunker surcharges imposed by them. The leaders of the ICTUO have told the Government that it should not reverse its decision to abolish the channelled practice now prevailing in the country's medical institutions. The Price Control Department will soon launch raids on hotels, shops and restaurants and other places in the city and suburbs to unearth hoarded rice and to confiscate it. India's ruling Congress Party won an absolute majority in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh at the recent elections. No political party has got an absolute majority in the British polls: The Labour Party won 300 seats, the Conservatives 295, Liberals 11 and others 19: the three party leaders retained their seats: 10 more results are yet to come. Three of President Nixon's top aides were charged with conspiracy in the Watergate scandal. Queen Elizabeth cut short her tour of Australia and returned to London to be at hand for the formation of a new Government. US Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger, arrived in Israel from Cairo and commenced discussions on the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights.

SUNDAY, MARCH 3: The Colombo Municipal Council has been given its full lease of life, till December, 1975, the Minister of Local Government, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, has told the Council that he was satisfied the way the Council was now running following his advice. There has been a resurgence of cholera in Colombo within the last two weeks, according to the medical authorities. A proposal to increase the weekly rice ration to one and half measures per person has been made by the Working Committee of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to the Government: this proposal was discussed on Friday at a meeting of the Executive Committee presided over by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike; the Committee also decided to ask the government to increase the guaranteed price of paddy

from Rs. 25 to Rs. 35. According to the *Observer*, more than 300,000 bushels of paddy were turned over to the Paddy Marketing Board by farmers within the first ten days of the ban of purchase and transport of paddy and rice by unauthorised persons. Mr. Harold Wilson, Labour Party Leader, yesterday issued a statement that his party was ready to form a government: Labour now has 301 seats out of the 635 seats in the British House of Parliament: Mr. Wilson said that the British people rejected Mr. Heath's call for a mandate and that Mr. Heath has no mandate to form a government: Mr. Edward Heath, Prime Minister, is still hoping to retain power and has so far not indicated that his government will resign in view of the current impasse: according to political observers, Mr. Heath is hoping to get Liberal support for a new government. Seven former associates of President Nixon were indicted on a wide range of criminal charges in connection with the Watergate affair. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are expected to hold tripartite peace talks in Cairo at the invitation of Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat.

MONDAY, MARCH 4: A top level Committee on education has decided that colleges affiliated to the University of Sri Lanka should be opened in the provinces: the Committee which met over the weekend also agreed in principle to the establishment of a campus in Jaffna if government finances permit it. Cheque frauds and misappropriation of money amounting to nearly Rs. 20 million, in government departments, State Corporations, the Co-operatives and in the private sector are now being investigated by the Police. Municipal health authorities have quarantined over 25 cases of suspected cholera in the city last week. According to the *Sun*, the system of Political Authorities came under heavy fire at a meeting of Colombo District MPs held last week. A massive combined operation of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Police will get underway next week for the feast of St. Anthony on the disputed island of Kachchativu. The 500 strong Law Students' Union has appealed to the Justice Minister Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, and the other members of the National State Assembly to withdraw and reconsider the Council of Legal Education (Amendment) Bill which has been gazetted and is to be presented in the NSA tomorrow. British Prime Minister Edward Heath was still clinging to power after Britain's deadlocked general elections, with his hopes of staying there resting on an alliance with the Liberal Party. Prime Minister Golda Meir decided to tell Israel's President that she cannot form a government. India will get crude oil from Iran at 3.50 dollars a barrel in 1974 under a bi-lateral trade agreement: at present India is paying about 7.50 dollars a barrel for crude oil while its adjoining neighbour, Sri Lanka, is paying about 12 dollars for a barrel of crude oil after the oil price hike in January.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5: Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, has said that there is no cause for alarm over the supply position regarding flour. Several committees are to be appointed to look into transfers, appointments and training of officers of the Foreign Service. The Joint Council of Trade Union Organisations meets the Prime Minister on March 14 to discuss its demand for a 20 per cent wage increase in the public and private sectors: the UF oriented JCTUO will also discuss with the Prime Minister the present political situation in the country.

the need for a clear cut policy over worker's participation in the food drive and the question of a monthly wage for plantation workers. According to the *Sun*, employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Paddy Marketing Board continue to get a measure of *samba* rice every week at Rs. 2.40: they are also given a permit to carry the rice to their homes. The Paddy Marketing Board is reported to have made a profit of Rs. 1.7 million from the sale of rice in 1973. Seventy-one positive cases of cholera have been detected in the Colombo district since February 1. Mr. S. C. Shirley Corea, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, died yesterday. Government has called for applications to raise another loan of Rs. 100 million locally, to meet the current year's budgeted expenditure. Britain's Liberal Party was reported to have rejected Mr. Heath's offer of an alliance and has suggested that a "grand coalition" of the nation's three chief parties be formed to overcome the general election stalemate and rescue the nation from its economic troubles. U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, left the Middle East yesterday without resolving deep Syrian-Israeli differences: but his five-day tour has brightened prospects for peace in the region. Two Palestinian Arabs hijacked a British airliner and set it ablaze upon landing in Amsterdam before they were caught trying to flee: the British Airline Pilots Association said that it was willing to support a series of 24-hour strikes in a bid to deter further hijackings.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6: Proposals to establish an export processing free trade zone at Trincomalee are due to be reviewed at a full meeting of the National Planning Council on Friday presided over by the Prime Minister who is head of the National Planning Council. Imports to Sri Lanka, already severely pruned due to spiralling world market prices of most commodities, will be cut back further this year to meet mounting payments due on maturing debts in addition to rising import bills. Several Government MPs yesterday urged the government to take immediate measures to solve certain difficulties the people were facing regarding food. The Soviet Union bought 500,000 pounds of tea on Monday's auctions held in Colombo. This year's Republic Day celebrations on May 22 will be held on an austere note, according to Home Ministry sources. The Opposition Parliamentary Group met yesterday and discussed the increases in the price of sugar: it was decided that a joint opposition demand for an immediate price reduction should be made to the government. The newly elected member for Mannar took his oaths in the National State Assembly yesterday. A question of privilege against the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, was raised yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, in the NSA: Mr. Jayewardene's question was in regard to a statement reported to have been made by the Prime Minister at a meeting recently: the Speaker said that he would look into it and give a ruling today when the NSA meets at 2 p.m. Following Mr. Heath's inability to secure the support of the Liberal Party and his resignation, Mr. Harold Wilson, Leader of the Labour Party, became the Prime Minister of Britain for the third time: Mr. Wilson announced his Cabinet yesterday. Egyptian troops took over undisputed control of both banks of the Suez Canal, for the first time in more than six years, and Egyptian Foreign Minister said that Egypt was now ready for the next step towards a final Middle East settlement.

Inania of this, that and the other

Swords Are Still Swords

by Inna

SOME MONTHS AGO, the *Tribune* cover carried a design of a man beating his sword to make a ploughshare—a reference to a text from Isaiah. While some say the armed men must patrol the streets, others say that there should be more seeds and more fertilizer, or are they the same who say both?

How base are the efforts of those who decry bases in this or that ocean, if in the same mouth and with the same tongue they do not condemn all kinds of war — be they in Ireland, Israel-Araby, Vietnam(s) or where-are-you.

From the end of the Thirty Years' war till the Napoleonic wars, there was a spate of military alliances. It has been asserted that in the twentieth century there is much evidence to show that military alliances dominate international politics and are likely to lead to the extension of war: one alliance breeds its opposite. Years ago, in school, we learnt of the Monroe doctrine: America for the Americans, and *en revanche*, each country for itself. This 1823 doctrine was put forward in the name of anti-colonialism but "proved to be one of the tools of US Neo-colonialism" (Robin Jenkins in *Exploitation*, page 183).

JOHN FOSTER DULLES with, heavy backing, built up military alliances like the NATO, whose article Five states: "an armed attack against one of the signatories in Europe or N. America shall be considered an attack against all of them." Take The ANZUS Pact, the Pacific Security Treaty signed between USA, Australia and NZ. Each nation signed article Four which states that "an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the other parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and it would meet the common danger in accordance with constitutional processes."

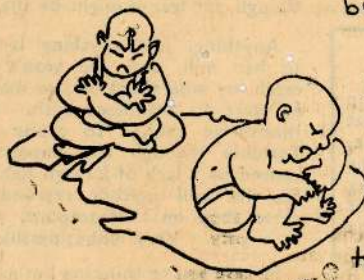
GREED, greed, greed Shameless on Australia or New Zealand can greed, unabashed greed. As len- be co.sidered as an armed attack kins says: "That an armed attack on the USA is surely a measure

CERTAIN THOUGHTS OCCUR TO ME by CASAR

Was Moses mis-directed when he landed the Israelites in the middle of the Arabs?



Is there any race like the American for
① Religious revivals;
② Beauty contests;
③ Witch hunts - and particularly the last to find out the truth speak the half-truth and do nothing about the real truth?



Is there any land as beautiful as Ceylon, which can produce as much antagonism between two small races?

of US financial interest there" (p. 184). Or are you afraid of China's teeming millions? What about the multi-nationals? And the slow, systematic raking-in of the shekels. Where are the abrahamic minorities spoken of by Helder Camara? Why can't they share all this doctrine and shape world opinion against falsehood and for the truth?

DULLES, a good christian (praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!)—a special type among christians—put forward the idea of united action in South East Asia "in view of the grave threat to the whole free community deriving from possible Communist domination of Indo-China" (Keesings, 1968 p. 139) and so, later in 1954, the SEATO was formed. In six years after that, the USA established a witch hunting party—by its world military presence which has been maintained ever since. Diego Garcia base is one point in this onward onslaught. When will people see sense?

Is everything wrong with Communism and nothing wrong with Communion as practised by christians, at least some christians?

Didn't Camara say at Liverpool: "Take care, Christians, my brothers. Beware of invoking the fear of Communism as an excuse for avoiding a change in the structures which confine millions of the sons of God in a sub-human condition. It is not honest to say that to tamper with the structures is certain to lead to a plunge into Godless communism", 24 June 1972. Camara quoted in Neville Cheetham (*People With A Purpose*. 3)

John XXIII gets the Nobel Peace prize, but his loyal son and brother, Camara is not worthy! Let him get only the People's Peace Prize!!! People matter much. So say even the most die-hard: some even call them People of God, which is all to the good, if they really believe it.

KILLING

Some time ago people in Parton (England) noticed that women working at a local chemical plant had hair of the most fantastic hues—from sky blue to scarlet. It turned out that it had changed colour by itself—as a result of the experiment made at the plant with a new weed-killer.

HOME SWEET HOME

For Argument's Sake....

by CANAX

"Do you," asks a reader of me, "enjoy arguing with your wife?" I'm scared to give a yes-or-no answer because it sounds very uncomfortably like the lawyer's celebrated question to the witness which went something like, "Have you stopped beating your wife?"

I think I'll parry that with a question of my own such as "Does it matter?" and try to get away from the query since the query won't get away from me. If I say yes I'll be made to look one of those impossible types every wife has to learn to live with, and if I say no I'll be considered a mouse by my fellow men, an opinion I can never learn to live with.

Isn't it good enough that I argue with my wife, or must I enjoy it too? As I asked a while ago, does it really matter? Apparently it does for there are quite a few people the two of us know, and many more we don't who are having a whale of a time on the quiet (if such a thing is possible) watching me make a fool of myself.

If I may qualify my answer, no, I don't argue with my wife because I like doing it but only because she makes me do it. She seems to expect it as of right, as though providing stimulating intellectual companionship is part of the marriage contract. If it is, it's probably in the fine print common to most contracts and which invariably escapes the eye until it's too late. I haven't bothered to check it, though, for fear it might be there.

Anything, just anything is grist to her mill, and you won't ever catch my wife short on raw material to start an argument with. She's innovative enough to cruise comfortably through any import ban caused by a lack of foreign exchange. So she will neither retrench or close shop on that account, which is a pity. Very unbusinesslike.

In case you're thinking I'm making this all up, permit me to show you what I mean, or rather what

we mean. (I keep forgetting this is a joint venture, so she shares the credit equally).

"Good morning, dear," I say to her one morning and her testy response is none other than, "How do you know?", which sets the scene for a delightfully pointless argument right there.

To a few words on my behalf, I have never tried saying 'Good Morning' to her at night, so nobody can say I haven't gone out of my way to avoid an argument. I have been conscientiously looking for areas of agreement, not the other way round, ever since she came into my life, so you know it wasn't Nixon who discovered detente. I have always wanted peace at any price, and long before he and Henry made it so fashionable a policy.

One of the reasons I don't really enjoy arguing with my wife is because she's an incredibly lucky girl and finds herself more often than not on the favourable side of any argument. This happens largely by accident rather than by design, for her responses are what you might call ad hoc.

How could she possibly have known I was going to say 'Good Morning' to her that morning—I mean after all these years? I could have said anything, or I could have said "Is the coffee ready?", which is what I normally say before I sit up and drink my tea. We never seem to tire of arguing about that.

Considered in that light, her counter to my greeting does seem an impromptu performance which put me one down even before I got started, and I can recognise a hopeless situation when I see one.

I don't know if this happens to other couples as well, but when my wife starts an argument with me I find I am before long silently arguing with myself in addition to her. If one is bad enough, two is the giddy limit. Now, why did I say 'Good Morning' in the first place? Was it necessary? If so, why, and if not, why not? The questions keep crowding my mind and I look for answers in the vain hope of using them to prop up my end of the argument with her.

I must admit that until she threw it right back at me I had made no effort to ascertain the truth or otherwise of what I had said. This

may sound like an apology, but I was taught at an early age that it was a nice thing to say and possibly the only way for civilised beings to greet each other on meeting for the first time in the day.

Maybe my mistake was in interpreting too liberally, perhaps, loosely, what I had been taught. Nobody told me, not even Eustace Chesser, that it was all right, or not all right, to say "Good Morning" to one's wife, so I went and said it. We live and learn, I guess.

Anyway I side-stepped the argument before it grabs me by mumbing, "Sorry, I was only talking in my sleep", then jump out of bed and go about my business as though I couldn't care less whether the morning is good, bad or indifferent. She seems loathe to see it slip away that easily. I can tell from her looks.

Newspapers, I have found, provide her with ample opportunity to start arguments with me, but that's simply because I'm the only one who's sort of ready to hand when she spots anything that looks promising.

Of course, no argument starts off looking like one. The moment her eyes alight on something that tickles her fancy, she lobs it over and across to me, giving no indication if she's for or against. It could, for instance, be Badi frowning on schoolgirls' minis. That's what the news item says, and that's what she says to me. She isn't taking sides, at least not just yet.

"In 20 years I'll frown too," I say with the grin.

"I doubt it very much," she snaps back, "unless your eyes pack up by then."

Too late I realise I have foolishly substituted myself as the target in Badi's place. "Are you frowning on Badi frowning?" I ask hoping to disengage myself.

"I'm only wondering why he's frowning."

"He's not a Doctor for nothing," I say.

"What's it he's so worried about?"

"Over-exposure," I explain. "They will catch cold."

"Nonsense!" she cries. "I think he's frowning because minis leave little to the imagination." I let her have her way since she seems to know Badi's mind better than I do.

Another time the subject is Nixon. It matters little to me if he can or cannot go his full term despite the fortune he has collected on the side, because I'm more worried that I can't go even half the month on what is doubtless jokingly referred to as a living wage. But trust my wife to pick on Nixon's predicament in preference to mine.

"Why do they want to impeach him?"

"Funny," I reply, "that's exactly what Nixon wants to now, too."

"I think," she says, "it is because he brought the boys back from Vietnam."

"Ah, yes, I forgot. He brought them back alive, didn't he?" Anything to avoid an argument, I remind myself.

"Yes, but Americans were fully expecting him to bring back Vietnam instead, dead or alive, and leave the boys behind."

I'm on my guard at once. "That doesn't sound right to me."

"Are you contradicting me?" she wants to know."

"I got the idea they want to string him up for something else."

"Now you're resorting to rumour," she says accusingly. "I suppose you consider him a crook?"

"Not me," I plead, "but many Americans feel he's the brains behind the gang that has terrorised the country for many years now."

"But he's not a crook. He said so himself."

"That's good enough for me," I cry, seizing the opportunity to back out.

"And those tapes prove his innocence beyond doubt."

"Especially those long, silent gaps," I admit.

"God loves Nixon," she tells me. "I'm sure it was His finger on the button."

"Amen." I whisper and quietly edge out of the room. It was my luck she hadn't heard the White House was giving all the credit to the Devil.

F.A.O. ON SMALL FARMS

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) wants that small farms in the Asian region should be fully exploited with the help of new technology. In its report on the state of food and agriculture this year, the FAO says that given a larger holding and the lack of capital or improved technology to exploit its advantages, yields per hectare depend mainly on the intensity of labour input. The small farm's greater land productivity is reflected in higher levels of cropping intensity as shown by multiple-cropping indices in India, Japan and the Philippines. The situation would change if new capital inputs are made available to the small farmer, or new technologies which are highly responsive to scale, become available. In this connection, the FAO blames poor availability of credit and its assurance as being responsible for the weakness of the small farmer. Another problem is that the technology available is often designed for the larger farms well-endowed with capital. The small farms cannot be wished away. Nor is it any longer socially or politically practicable to bypass them through a growth strategy which favours large farms. It might be necessary for many countries to increase the number of small farms as a means of intensifying production and absorbing labour.

SHAMBA

LIFE GOES ON

— difficulties multiply —

By

Anatory Bukoba

February 15.

The *vici katha* I was using almost in the manner of an ordinary *katha* at times today, using it to slash vertically instead of horizontally, with the result that I damaged the iron of which it is made. It showed a crack and I stopped using it; before it broke off altogether. It will be easier to repair with the two halves still together. I cleared nearly the whole of the top of our hill where the old brick house used to stand right back in the jungle at the top of the river bank, more in that direction, I think, than I had ever done before. I also lost some coin out of my shirt pocket for the third day running Rs. 1/-, the first time, 40 cts. the second, and Rs. 2/10 today.

The family have gone without food—well all day. They would not cook the few vegetables they have. Ceylon cooking does not lend itself to this, it seems. I bought them a few sweets and delicacies, that was all. If I had bought something more substantial, I should have had to spend Rs. 5/- to buy them enough, and with the husband not at work today, I did not feel inclined to do more for them. With the little money he earned by selling some firewood, he bought just sugar, because tea keeps them going and keeps the hunger away. In spite of this, they all look quite fit. You would not think they were next door to starvation.

As far as the *kaddays* go, there seems more food around now than

there has been for a very long time. The price is high but not as bad as it is in some other places. It is a change, because this village used to be the most expensive place in Ceylon once, as it was when I arrived.

These few days I have been back to where I was when I first took up residence on the acre. I am writing this on a mat on the floor with the aid of an oil lamp; it is hard on the elbow. The chair and the table that were here as my friend's have been returned to the owner. I would like to make a little digression here, but I hesitate because I wonder if what I want to say is quite within the orbit of a *Shamba* article. As the thought came to me yesterday morning, I may be excused putting it down. It is this, that if I were to sum up the Roman Catholic faith, I would do so in five words; god, love, man, prayer, penance. Love, I would define, as it is recounted in I Cor. 13. of the new testament of the Bible.

The finest place around here is where I bathe, and there can be very few places to beat it in Ceylon. There are two islands in sight and enormous big *kumbuk* trees around, and an open reach of rock on which I sit in the middle, study and think.

February 16.

One of my finest days here it was. There was a knot of thorns forming a large clump near the entrance to the *Shamba*, it was annoying because it obscured the view of the road from the house at a rather vital place, and nose-parkers could eavesdrop from there if they wished. I had attacked this clump of thorns more than once, and I could never make much progress with it. From time to time it had been reduced in size, but not much. Today I got to the heart of it. It took some doing, and my fingers are full of thorns or thorn-pricks. They hurt, but I expect they will feel better tomorrow, most of the thorns were creepers, about twelve foot long.

The day started with three people coming over to help me. It was not *shramadana* but a sort of a payment of a debt, so as to avoid a cash transaction. They could

hardly have stayed an hour; I thought at the time, but the hours do go by very quickly here. I set them to work where the acre starts along the road, and we cleared the bank between the road and the property. For the road has been built up and overlooks the property. It was quite steep, and what we cut had to be pulled up to the grass verge of the road and piled there in small heaps. After we were served with tea, we never got going again, and they were glad to take advantage of the opportunity I gave them of shoving off.

I carried on with the help of another companion. This young man had come to see me. He seemed to know all the trees and creepers and I continued working along the bank to where I had left off clearing so many months ago. It was not far to go, and I got as far as the corner or, rather, just short of it, when we knocked off to go for a bath. The family had no food, and I did not want to be too late getting them some. What I got them was a measure of cowpea at Rs. 3/- the measure. The *angelus* rang while we were down at the river and I had thought we had still an hour to go.

It was in the afternoon that I performed the feat I have already described. It was almost the last thing I did, for I was improving the view from the front of the house to as far as we had cleared in that direction, before that. I meant lopping all lower branches and new growth, and using my long knife singly as the taller weeds where I would, I think, have used my *vici katha* if I had had it in good repair.

There has been a little trouble. An axe has been borrowed for four or five days and left at a place some miles away in rather mysterious circumstances. I wonder what the morrow will bring. I hope there is going to be no trouble about returning it. I was attending to the matter as late as 9.30 or 10 p.m., tonight. The matter is complicated by tomorrow being our big feast day when we should all be at church.

February 17.

People stayed up all or most of the night getting food cooked for the *dana* tomorrow. Quite

FOR NEWS
BEHIND THE NEWS

read

TRIBUNE

regularly.

some massive pots were used on wood fires in the open. I happened to be up, about and around at 1.15 a.m., and seeing the church lights on, and the ground lights on, I went in to have a look. Among the little group of people around the pots which were cooking were a kaffir grandmother and a burgher mother and quite some young men, too. It was a very cold night but warm by the fires.

The sermon during the service was on the importance of helping each other. About the middle and towards the end, the sermon was quite intelligible. To be able to talk in intelligible Sinhalese seems a great gift, most preachers seem quite unable to do so, for all their talk about speaking in colloquial Sinhalese. The *dana* followed the service, and it was open to the whole village, or to anyone who was there. The queues moved fast. At this *dana* food is served to be taken home. At the *dana* in the Buddhist pansala, it is served to be eaten there, which I prefer because it is much less of a mess; plantain leaves may make excellent plates, but unless they are treated with hot water, they are not much good for carrying food around it.

It was not long before I was involved again in the axe business. It spoilt the Sunday and the feast a little for me. Two axes have been borrowed. There are no signs of either. The man has not yet returned. I was told there was a place where an axe might be found, and it turned out to be a false trail, unless the people at that end were hiding something, too. My mind is so tired, I can hardly think, and I even fell asleep while writing this sentence.

February 18,

Tonight came the news that the transport of paddy has been cut out altogether, and I would like to reflect on paper what this will mean. Let us go back a little to the other two events which were quite shattering at the time. The first, that of the cut in the ration was what I shall call a two-issue affair. On the one hand, I do not think any government is under a moral obligation to have rationing at all on the other hand, this particular government broke an

election promise by cutting the ration.

The price of rice rise, but the people were still free up to a point to dispose of their paddy as they wished. Then came the virtual doubling of the price of fuel both for transport and for the home. Here, too, no government is under any obligation to subsidise travel, and nobody can quite be said to own fuel until they buy it.

Lastly, we have tonight's news, where government has denied the right of the paddy producer to dispose of his paddy as he wishes. I am not really concerned with the morality of that here, although its implications are plain enough. What I would like to try to forecast is the practical consequences to the rice eater of what they have done.

Until tonight, rice could still be had, but at a price, and paddy could be kept by the owner of the land or the producer. Now rice can only be had from an authorized dealer. Off-ration rice, it seems, is out. Authorized dealers are not to be found everywhere.

Are we on the brink of chaos? Either we are, or the people will ride this one too. How, it remains to be seen.

BRITAIN AND SOUTH ASIA - 2

Fears About Soviet Naval Presence

by B. Vivekanandan

This is the second instalment of an article about the policy of the Heath Government from 1970 in regard to the major countries of South Asia. The first part had appeared in *Tribune* on 2/3/74 and the concluding part will appear next week. We publish this informative and topical article with acknowledgement to *India Quarterly*.

THESE NOTABLE POLITICAL MEASURES to improve relations with South Asian countries were

supplemented by suitable economic measures. During 1970-71 and 1971-72 Britain had disbursed financial aid to the tune of £ 115.5 million for India and Pakistan alone. In 1972-73 Britain's aid for India had surpassed the amount pledged in the aid-India Consortium.

Following the suspension of American aid, Britain emerged as the largest aid giver to India. Its helpful stand to protect India's trade interests, following the British entry into the EEC, could be seen in the fact that ECC's readiness to conclude a separate trade agreement with India is largely due to Sir Alec Douglas Home's counsel for it. The British contribution to the humanitarian relief work in Bangladesh was also quite substantial. Apart from the £ 14,750,000 (Rs. 26.5 crores) official help and more than £ 1,000,000 (Rs. 1.8 crores) from British charities, all for relief work, Britain has so far made available £ 9 million (Rs. 16.2 crores) to Bangladesh mainly for restoring the country's transport and communications systems. In addition to this it had given two interest free loans, together amounting to £ 4,800,000 (Rs. 8.6 crores) to assist the economic development of Bangladesh. In March 1973 Britain announced £ 1.86 million interest-free loan to Ceylon.

UNDOUBTEDLY, Heath Government's policy for South Asia flows from the convergence of British interests. Heath himself had made this criterion very clear in 1970 when he bluntly declared that his Government's policies would be "determined by British interests." It may be noted that in South Asia Britain has a large financial stake. A substantial portion of total £ 14,910 million British private investment abroad in 1971 has been located in South Asia. Its net advantage to the British balance of payment from the East of Suez is £ 300 million.

Its annual invisible earnings from the region is roughly £ 30 million. Heath Government's concern for the future British private investment in the region is discernible from the fact that its future in Bangladesh was a major topic of discussion at the first meeting between Edward Heath and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, when the latter made his first appeal.

rance in London after his release from imprisonment in Pakistan.

A few days later Mujibur Rahman assured that the British investments in Bangladesh "will stay". Britain's trade with the region also is substantial. In 1972 British exports to India, Pakistan and Ceylon touched £ 188.6 million. While friendship with the nations can be the most effective way of guaranteeing the protection of these important British economic interests, its strategic considerations are also equally important.

South Asia is an important region in Britain's Oceanic relationship. In view of its heavy dependence on world trade, Britain is naturally interested in the safety of sea routes. Moreover, almost the entire oil shipments for Britain, and Europe as well, from the Middle East is now made through the Cape of Good Hope.

In this context Britain is very much concerned over the growing sea threat in recent years following the stepping up of the Soviet Union's naval activities in the Indian Ocean. It is keen that "the Indian Ocean should not be the monopoly of any one power." Britain thinks that the visit of a flotilla of the Soviet Navy to the Indian Ocean in 1969 was part of its Indian Ocean build up, a new factor that was not conspicuous when the Wilson Government announced in 1968 its intention to withdraw British forces East of Suez by the end of 1971.

In view of subsequent developments also the British strategists believe that a serious threat is developing to the increasingly important oil route from the Middle East to Western Europe via the Cape of Good Hope. They fear that if the route is closed in war or threatened in a crisis, decision making in London and other Western capitals would be seriously handicapped. In the opinion of Mr. Heath the Soviet Union would not dare to wage a direct attack on Western Europe because the risk is too high. But political pressure, which could be shrewdly applied and backed by the threat of superior physical force, might compel one of the more exposed members of NATO to lapse into neutrality.

SUCH A SITUATION in his opinion, would inevitably mark the beginning of the disintegration of NATO alliance, giving way to the extension of Soviet influence in Western Europe and the Atlantic. During the debate on defence on 2 March 1971 he remarked: "They (Soviets) are playing cat and mouse with the Americans in the Caribbean at this moment. They can at anytime use the same tactics to menace or threaten traffic in the Indian Ocean. These are the facts. They cannot be wished away."

However, at the moment Britain is not panicky over Russia's enhanced naval activities. According to Sir Alec Douglas Home: "No one expects the Soviet fleet to attack British or any other ships, but after our experience in the Mediterranean we must see that they do not have a monopoly in case military force might be used to improve political settlements adverse to free countries." Pertinently, when Mr. Heath went to Singapore to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in January 1971 he discussed the question of the security of the Indian Ocean with the Prime Ministers of India, Ceylon and with Heads of other Commonwealth countries.

From the British point of view the Soviet Union is trying to gain control of strategic check points and access routes to get control of the world's principal bodies of water. To quote Mr. Heath: "With the establishment of Soviet presence in the Middle East and the access it has given them to the warm waters of the Mediterranean, the Soviets are now looking further afield to the shores and islands of the Indian Ocean. We are involved in the Indian Ocean. We want to help to keep the peace there and to sustain the countries that are working to develop their economic and social systems in a free and democratic society. Major British interests are at stake, because we rely on that part of the world for much of our supplies of oil and other materials."

However, the fact remains that the Soviet Union has gained foothold in important sea corridors like the Skagerrak between Denmark and Norway, the Dardanelles in the Black sea and the Tsushima Strait between Korea and Japan.

If the Suez Canal is also opened it would make the Russian task easy to provide a direct link between its forces in the Mediterranean and its expanding flotilla in the Indian Ocean.

HEATH GOVERNMENT firmly believes that long ago the Russians took a strategic decision to become a global sea power. It was manifested first through its efforts to establish a missile base in Cuba in the early sixties, followed by recent efforts in the Mediterranean and the insertion of tactical missiles along the Suez Canal.

Apart from this, in view of the increased naval activities in the Indian Ocean and also in the light of an increase in the Soviet military expenditure, Britain thinks that the Soviet sea threat is increasing on a global scale. Moreover, in the Russian determination to emerge as one of the major naval powers in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, Britain sees a real threat to vital British and European interests.

Therefore, ever since it came to power three years ago, the Heath Government is keeping a close watch of the Soviet naval activities in the Indian Ocean. At the Conservative Annual Conference in Blackpool in October 1970 Sir Alec Douglas Home stated that a new factor in Britain's defence planning was the Soviet Navy's emergence on a transoceanic scale. But the reaction of Britain and its allies should not be of panic. "It is not safe", he said, "whether in the Mediterranean now or in the Indian Ocean soon, to leave the communists as undisputed masters of all military activity in an area where vital British interests lie. Once we do that, we and other countries of the free world—and I include African countries would find ourselves unable to carry out policies which were desirable in the interests of order and peace and of the free world generally."

It may be noted that Soviets have stepped up naval activities in the Indian Ocean from 1969 onwards when a Russian naval task force was sighted in the Indian Ocean.

In March 1969, a Russian flotilla consisting of two ships and three submarines of the Soviet Navy

anchored just beyond the territorial waters of Ceylon. It is a fact that after gaining firm foothold in the Arab world and the Mediterranean the Soviet Union is now making efforts to gain a firm foothold to its navy at some strategic points in the Indian Ocean.

It intensified efforts in this direction from 1971 onwards. Even though Mrs. Bandaranaike's Government was somewhat lenient to Moscow, the Soviet assistance to her government to quell the armed insurrection of "Che Guevarists" in 1971 had raised many eyebrows in Whitehall. During insurgency the Soviet Union had helped Ceylon with 6 Migs, 10 armoured cars and 2 helicopters besides arms and ammunition. Britain felt that behind the aid the Soviet intention was to gain naval facilities at Trincomalee naval base which was once in British hands. If the Soviets succeed in their efforts it would facilitate the Soviet expansion in the Indian Ocean region.

On 21 April 1971 the *Daily Telegraph* wrote:

It is worse but understandable when India, on request, sends in aircraft, pilots and troops to help suppress the rebellion. India cannot tolerate the risk of a conflagration on this scale getting out of hand on her doorstep. What is however downright alarming in a world-wide strategic sense is that Russia is so promptly sending a squadron of Migs with Red Air Force Pilots. The fact is that a great power, with no treaty relations with Ceylon, is now established there with operational forces. After the way the Russians took advantage of the Arab's appeal for help against Israel to set up their vast military establishment in the Middle East, it is hardly likely that they will not now seek a strategic foothold in Ceylon. Trincomalee would be ideal for a Russian fleet, especially with the possibility of re-opening of the Suez Canal. These are dangers which America, Britain and indeed the other democratic nations dare not ignore.

WHAT BRITAIN feared was that a permanent Russian air contingent in Ceylon would help consolidate the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean.


in 1971 the Soviet Union had concluded a few treaties for port facilities and fisheries with some nations of the Indian Ocean. As a result it has acquired fleet port facilities at Aden, Mogadishu in Somalia, Socotra Island and Seychelles Islands. Port facilities for the Soviet fishing fleet have been established in Mauritius and Ceylon.

Britain is apprehensive that agreement for fishing fleet facilities approximate naval facilities since a good section of Soviet trawlers are intelligence gathering ships. Whitehall's anxiety over these agreements is evident from the fact that when Sir Seewoosagu Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister of Mauritius, visited London in July 1970, Britain's Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas Home raised the question of Mauritius' technical assistance agreement with the Soviet Union fisheries development concluded a little earlier. Mr. Ramgoolam allayed the British fears that there was nothing in the agreement which should worry Britain. He said that the Russian offer of assistance in establishing deep sea fishing fleet was the kind of help which many African Governments have accepted from both

East and West. But on the security side there would be Mauritian technicians on board the vessels used in training as well as actual fishermen and, that there was no foundation to the idea that USSR might establish a naval base in Mauritius. H. declared: "We are more closely associated with Britain than any other country. Mauritius wants to see this link put on a more lasting foundation."

THE MOST IMPORTANT recent strategic move of the Soviet Union in South Asia was the conclusion of a friendship treaty with India in August 1971. The Treaty had an alarming effect in Westminster. Britain was concerned whether the treaty obligations necessitated India to provide naval facilities for the Soviet Union in the Indian shores. The primary objective of Sir Alec Douglas Home's visit to New Delhi in February 1972 was to get clarification on this point. Subsequently the Government of India made it categorical that no foreign power would be given naval facilities on Indian soil.

(To be Continued)



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IS IT TRUE?

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IS IT NOT TRUE that some daily newspapers had proclaimed that Mr. Tissa Wijeratne, Sri Lanka's Ambassador in France, was shortly to take up an assignment in our Foreign Office? That it was said some significant reforms might be introduced in the structure and working of the Foreign Office? That in this flurry of newspaper speculations, some members of the Fourth Estate who pay special attention to foreign affairs, sought an opportunity to talk to Mr. Tissa Wijeratne (T.W.) on what all this was about? That a get-to-know meeting was arranged? That it transpired that T.W. was here on a short visit to familiarise himself with the working of the Foreign Office and also to know the officials who were the kingpins in the set up? That he was going back to Paris shortly to wind up his affairs as Ambassador and that he was likely—God willing—to take up duties as Additional Secretary on or about May 1? That he had been assigned the special job of helping everybody in the Foreign Office to bring the place up to date to cope with the problems of the contemporary world in a streamlined manner in keeping with the high ideals of the independent and sovereign Republic of Sri Lanka? That he was anxious to establish a permanent dialogue with the Press, especially those journalists who could be called the diplomatic correspondents, in order to make the Foreign Office a dynamic instrument of Sri Lanka's foreign policy? That when this dialogue really got going he would tell the Press what he would expect of them just as the Press should tell him and the Foreign Office what was necessary in the best interests of Sri Lanka? That

if this dialogue should really develop in the manner envisaged by T.W. it will be a good thing for everybody concerned with conducting the foreign affairs of this country? That *Tribune* will then have a great deal to say about what should be done or should not be done about foreign affairs—no doubt after checking up whether the basic facts were correct?

That there is no doubt that T.W. is one of the few persons in the Establishment today who will be able to do the job of letting in fresh air into our Foreign Office which has really no contact at present with the Press or the People? That the cocktail circuit is no substitute for grass roots contact directly or even through the Press? That T.W. is a unique phenomenon? That he grew up in the environment of diplomatic life in the High Commissions which his father had headed in several countries in the forties and the fifties? That he grew up in a polo-playing, golf-club haunting social set? That he was a dilettante who spent his youth with intellectual elite of the marxist left? That in Sri Lanka he ultimately plunged into the down-to-earth countryside politics of the SLFP? That he had started making a mark in the bar at Kegalle when he switched over to take up the Ambassador's job in Paris? That after nearly four years in Paris he is coming over to Colombo to do what is an administrative job? That it is not certain whether he will fit into this job? That it will be interesting to watch T.W. turn himself into an administrator in a bid to transform the bureaucratic red-tape in the Foreign Office into something

more dynamic? That *Tribune* is not certain whether T.W. or the vested interests in the Foreign Office will come out on top? That it will be an intriguing encounter to watch? That if the SLFP has anybody today who can do the job it is T.W.? But even with all the political backing he will get from the SLFP and the UF it is yet problematic whether T.W. can successfully exorcise the red-tape-ridden dehard ghosts now haunting our Foreign Office? That *Tribune* is pessimistic about this *Operation Fresh Air* (in the F.O.)? That sooner than later, *Tribune* expects to see Mr. Tissa Wijeratne back at the Kegalle bar? That to streamline our F.O. is a task which is not easy? That if it can be done from within through an SLFP catalyst like T.W. it will be very near a miracle? That in the normal circumstances only a fiery and bloody revolution can do a job like that?

IS IT NOT STRANGE that a communique over the SLBC should insist that the target for the acreage for paddy cultivation for 1973-74 (Maha) had been exceeded? That the commune also set out the amount of seed paddy that had been distributed (sold)? That the amount given as short term loans was also mentioned? That it was also mentioned that the extent sown had exceed targets in four areas which are not generally regarded as heavy rice producing areas? That the public await the figures for the acreage actually sown and where the paddy had matured sufficiently for harvesting? That what has been published was the area which had been earmarked for paddy cultivation? That it will be interesting to know how much of it was actually sown? That it will be equally interesting to know how much sold as seed paddy was used as seed? That the balance, it must be presumed, was used for consumption? That it will be even more interesting to know how much of the money given as loans was used for paddy cultivation? That it will be extremely difficult to ever know the truth because many of the officials able to furnish the information have vested interests in hiding the truth? That the difference between promise and performance will indicate the extent to which targets were really achieved? That the weather is now being made the excuse for all shortfalls?