

# TRIBUNE

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NOT POLEMICS

CHRONICLE

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AT THE ECAFE  
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## SINHALA AND TAMIL NEW YEAR

TRIBUNE takes this opportunity to wish all its readers a happy New Year which dawns on April 14. The overwhelming majority of the population of this country are Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus and both these communities have traditionally for countless centuries celebrated the entry of the Sun into the zodiacal sign of Aries or Mesha, as the beginning of the New Year. The Buddhists and the Hindus in Sri Lanka have used a solar-lunar calendar but other communities and groups in India which use a solar-lunar calendar celebrated the New Year at other times also marking the movement of the Sun through the Zodiac. The largest majority in North India take the solar solstice in March as the beginning of the New Year and this calendar has found semi-official approval by the Central Government in New Delhi—but India being what it is, vast and complex, allows a vast latitude in the matter of the New Year in regard to regional areas and religious customs. Strangely enough in Sri Lanka though Aryan and Dravidian influences have existed side by side the New Year was the same as the one celebrated through the Deccan and peninsular India.

THOUGH ISLAM came to this island before Christianity the Islamic New Year based on the Arabic calendar did not make a national impact but the partially secular and completely functional Julian-Gregorian calendar accepted by the powerful ruling Christian dynasties in Europe has come to stay in Sri Lanka ever since the Portuguese, Dutch and the British have ruled over this country. This so-called "christian" calendar originally devised by the non-christian Roman Emperor Julius Caesar and improved upon by the near-christian Gregory has now been generally accepted throughout the world as the universal commercial and political calendar. In the Far East the traditional lunar calendar is used whilst in the Arab and Moslem world the Islamic calendar is used but these are regional whereas European Gregorian calendar has universal validity. The fact that it is used universally makes it the most convenient calendar for the present-day world. Christians in Sri Lanka as elsewhere have an emotional attachment to January 1 as the New Year—this date has no religious significance. But emotion is often even more deep-rooted than mere religious belief and the fact the Sri Lanka government has abolished the holiday on January 1 is a source of irritation to the Christian community in this country. Many things have been done in this island prompted by the revivalist upsurge of the ruling majority which have driven different communities in Sri Lanka to nurse grievances on matters which could have been easily avoided. The Christians have a grievance about the New Year on January 1 which is celebrated not only in Christian countries but also in the godless countries of the socialist bloc and even in other countries which use lunar or solar-lunar calendars for religious, traditional, tribal and other purposes.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT is that if this country is to register any real progress it is necessary to bring all communities, racial, religious and linguistic into the mainstream of national unity. It is not enough to mouth "progressive" slogans about national unity and raise alarms about "reactionaries" dividing the country. Positive and concrete steps must be taken to bring different peoples and communities together—and this must be done in the face of the imperialist hangover keeping the different communities apart and in spite of the reactionary predilection to raise divisive and even separatist slogans for electioneering purposes. Tribune in wishing its readers a happy new year can only hope that in the gloom which stems from difficulties of the current situation the urgent need for taking realistic steps to ensure national unity will be realised by those who have the present power to do something about it.



# Tribunania

## \* FOOD — Not Polemics

April 4,

THAT POLITICAL TENSION within the country is mounting daily is a fact which even those who like to stick their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich have begun to admit. In the absence of any other alternative political party, there is no doubt that the frustrated, the disappointed and the disillusioned have begun to turn to the UNP for succour—even though the UNP does not have the charisma of a popular party. This is one significant fact which must be remembered, and though the initial reactions of most people to the UNP is negative and cautious—and it still is—it is likely that a more positive and dynamic link-up will develop unless the Government and the United Front parties are able to take the sting out of the UNP campaign by measures which will bring relief to the common people.

Pro-UF politically motivated elements are still willing to accept the argument that the attack on the Government is a "conspiracy of reactionary forces", but it is difficult to see how long they can carry the masses with them with this story. In spite of the additional half measure of rice on the ration, the situation in the country is grim. The Central Bank's annual report for 1973 which has just been released has revelations to make anybody to sit up and think hard.

In the first place the rate of growth has dropped in a significant manner. And this is only a manifestation that the *malaise* which has begun to afflict the country, is not a temporary matter and that it portends greater difficulties in the future with the rapidly growing population in the country.

The Report of the Monetary Board of the Central Bank had stressed that the increase in the Gross National Product (GNP) in 1973 was disappointing when compared to the target rates laid down

in the Five-Year Plan. The Five-Year Plan had envisaged a growth rate, on the average of 6 per cent a year, whereas the growth rate in real terms in 1973 was only 3.5 per cent. In fact, the average growth rate in the years immediately preceding the Five-Year Plan had been better than the growth rate after the plan became operative. It was also pointed out that compared to the growth rate of 3.5 per cent in 1973, there was an average growth rate of 4.3 per cent in the 10 years preceding the Five-Year Plan.

With Sri Lanka in the third year of its Five-Year Plan, it has been observed, that the level of economic achievement in the last two years has made it difficult for the country to work towards the targets set in the plan. In 1973 the Gross National Product in real terms however increased by 3.5 per cent as compared to the growth rate of 2.6 per cent in the preceding year. The Monetary Board of the Central Bank has specifically pointed out that the increase in per capital product at constant prices of 1.7 per cent in 1973 represents some improvement as against the increase of 0.6 per cent in 1972.

But this phenomenon, it has been stated, was not entirely due to a particularly better economic performance in 1973, but to an appreciable fall in the rate of population growth—from 2.0 per cent in 1972 to 1.76 per cent in 1973. Although in money terms, the Gross National Product has increased by as much as 19.6 per cent, this figure is of no significance on account of the economic situation in 1973 when "very large" price increases occurred, it has been stated.

But the real hardships were caused by the soaring prices and the Report indicated just how serious the situation had become in 1973. Today, in April 1974 the situation is much worse. It was emphasised that price increases in essential consumer goods like rice, flour, fuel, textiles, milk foods, coconuts, eggs etc., were responsible for the cost of living index reaching exorbitant levels during 1973. The report stated: "the major indicator of price changes in Sri Lanka is the Colombo Consumers' Price Index, but its usefulness as a reliable index

has been vitiated by its well-known short-comings which have been spotlighted in previous annual reports."

The annual average of the consumer prices according to the cost of living index, increased by 9.7 per cent in 1973, as compared with an increase of 6.3 per cent in 1972. The increase in 1973 was mainly in the months of January, June, August and October when the index rose by 2.3; 2.9; 1.8 and 2.7 per cent., respectively; during the rest of 1973, the index on the average rose by 0.5 per cent per month.

The report states: "The sharp price increases in 1973 were largely due to increased prices of important consumer items such as rice, wheat, flour, fuel, textiles, milk foods, condiments, coconuts and eggs. Prices of many essential imported items increased sharply due to scarcities in world markets. Inflationary tendencies the world over and the increase in freight rates continued to exert pressure on prices in 1973. The international

### ANNOUNCEMENT

Owing to the New Year and Easter Holidays there will be no issue of *Tribune* next week, that is on Saturday April 20, 1974. The next issue of *Tribune* will be on Saturday, April 27, 1974, and this number will be the last issue of the current volume No. 18.

The new series, Vol. 19, will begin with our issue on Saturday, May 4, 1974. It is interesting to recall that the first number of *Tribune* had appeared twenty years ago, on May, 1, 1954, and this paper has been in continuous publication since that date, except for two short breaks, first in 1958 and then in 1970-71.

*Tribune* is today the only independent, non-party, journal of political comment in Sri Lanka which seeks to devote as much space as possible to interpretative and analytical articles on a wide range of national as well as international matters.



energy crisis added considerable momentum in pushing up prices locally. These factors had a pervasive effect on prices of most commodities. Adverse weather conditions that prevailed in 1973, too, resulted in a fall in local production creating scarcities and thus pushing up prices.

The report further states that the coverage of the Business Turnover Tax was extended from November 1, 1973 and certain articles which had hitherto been exempted were brought within the scope of the tax.

THE CENTRAL BANK'S REPORT will provide material for comment, analysis and discussion for several months, but it gives us some consolation to find the Report echoing what *Tribune* has been saying for over a year about the Paddy Marketing Board. This is what it said: "The situation that had emerged by the end of 1973, in the market for paddy, indicated that the Paddy Marketing Board would have to restructure its operations if it wants to ensure that an increasing proportion of the paddy would be sold to it.

"Under the prevailing procurement policy there are a number of stipulations in regard to the quality of paddy the Board would purchase and some of these conditions and other requirements were not insisted upon by the trader who bought the paddy direct from the cultivator.

"The Board does not provide all the facilities which the private trader gave the farmer such as credit, advance payments and transportation. It can, however, effectively replace the trader if it can purchase the paddy at the farmer's doorstep and pay him cash on the spot, thus obviating the need for the farmer to carry the paddy to the purchasing centre and often have the paddy rejected if it does not conform to specifications.

"The services of each cultivation committee or the newly set up productivity committees could be used to induce the farmer to sell a part of his crop to the PMB. These committees have fairly reliable data on actual production in their cultivation registers and they would be in a position to assess the surplus for sale after making an allowance for the farmer's own requirements."

Whilst the conditions in the country were such that discontent was inevitable, UF strategists plugged the line that the discontent was being engineered by the UNP and other reactionary forces.

This is what *The Nation* of March, 22, under the headline LET THE MASSES DECIDE: GOVERNMENT WILL ACCEPT UNP CHALLENGE, stated: "The UNP-FP-Thondaman clique have, it seems, now decided that they must launch their final offensive against the United Front Government immediately. A resolution passed by what they call the 'Joint Opposition' calls for 'an island wide campaign based on the slogan 'Resign—Hold Elections'. The campaign will consist of several allied stunts. There will be an attempt to hold 100 meetings on a single day. UNP thugs and hired hooligans are to be sent to 'represent their grievances to Members of Parliament' on the pattern made evident last week-end in Panadura. UNP members of local bodies are to resign from them. Political Authorities are to be boycotted. Public servants are to be incited not to carry out the orders of the Government. People are to be asked not to pay bus and train fares when travelling. There is to be a token violation of the prohibition on carrying of grain.

"Government was well aware that this would be the pattern of the UNP's campaign to force a general election next year on the ground that the United Front Government was originally elected only for a five-year period. Originally UNP plans appeared to be that preparations should be made this year and the actual defiance of Government authority commenced in early 1975. It is now clear that, under J. R. Jayewardene's leadership, the UNP has decided to advance its plans. What has brought about such a sudden revision of the UNP's time-table?

"Every indication points to the conclusion that some thing has gone wrong with the strategy that was so carefully mapped out by the UNP leadership. J. R. Jayewardene is a politician in the Machiavellian tradition, it is true. His politics is not any kind of mass politics. Its essence is "strategy" i.e. plot and counterplot. The lack of active mass participation is

made up for by careful plans, surprise moves, organised gangs, make-shift alliances. It is elaborate generalship, even if it takes on a mock character when applied on the political arena. This is, in fact, its great weakness. There are so many imponderables in politics that it is rash to lay down elaborate plans well in advance. If one attempts to be too clever, one is defeated by one's own cleverness.

"For some mysterious reason, J. R. and his general staff appear



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to have anticipated that the Government would be in an impossible situation in March 1974. Whether the astrologers were the main factor in determining the time, we do not know. But knowing the UNP, this is the most probable cause. There was much staff work behind the scenes. There is reason to suspect that much effort went to delay even the arrival of food ships. There was the smoke-screen of J. R.'s Coup allegation against a so-called Naxalite group. Today however, it would appear that the 'difficulties' of the Government have failed to multiply in the way that was envisaged. Much to the contrary, even the attempt to sabotage the procurement of paddy has failed. Rice is pouring into the stores of Government both from internal procurement and across the high seas. Are J. R. Jayewardene and the UNP dismayed by this?

"Perhaps there is another reason for the decision not to wait until next year for launching the UNP-FP-Thondaman rebellion. The United Front has already revealed that the Common Programme that was drawn up before the General Elections is now being given careful scrutiny from the angle of its adaptability to the present crisis. Has this sent a freezing chill down J.R.'s spine?

"The United Front Government is very much on the alert in regard to what is happening around it. The United Front parties will not permit the discredited UNP-FP-Thondaman clique to hatch their conspiracies against the interests of the people of this country. The new evaluation of the Common Programme will provide a new and bold lead to the masses of this country on the road to the solution of their grave economic and social problems. J.R. Jayewardene knows that he cannot wait until that happens.

"If the UNP-FP-Thondaman clique prepares to launch another rebellion in April 1974, the United Front Government and political parties must immediately prepare for it. The date of the new rebellion is very interesting: almost three years to a day after the abortive insurgency of 1971. We had never a doubt about the UNP's complicity in the events of April 1971. The Left slogans of the adventure were no more than a

disguise. After all J.R. and his gangs publicly sing 'Sadukin Pelerawun,' the anthem of the LSSP, these days. Even cynicism has its own motivation!"

What *The Nation* stated was the identical attitude adopted by all sections of the UF. Whilst blaming the UNP for the protest campaign against the Government, certain SLFP Ministers were certain that the Government had done enough "for the masses" to be certain that the UNP will not be able to stage a comeback. This was forcefully set out by Minister Hector Kobbekaduwa, addressing the 437th Agricultural Service Centre at Waragoda in the Bulathsinghala electorate when he said: "The UNP will never rule this country again because the common people and the peasants are with us and they have been given the proper opportunity to get the profit out of their labour. We acquired already almost all the reputed big estates in the country to distribute to the landless people and to improve agriculture. In future we expect to take over company estates too."

Whether the mere taking over of estates and the distribution of lands vested in the Land Reform Commission will automatically ensure popular support is a question that is yet to be decided. But even UF supporters entertain doubts whether land reform by itself will save the situation.

Whilst the UF is seeking to put all the blame on the UNP for the increasing discontent in the country, the UNP alleges it is the *Janavegaya* group which was increasing the mess in the country. Like seeing a "commie" in every bush the UNP attributes to the *Jana Vegaya* the responsibility for the difficulties and hardships which have overtaken the common man.

This polemical slanging match between the ruling UF and the opposition UNP does the country no good. Each side in its endeavours to demolish the political image of the adversary only helps to draw distracting red herrings across the trial which confuse the issues.

What both the UF and the UNP fail to realise is that the

common people have become tired of polemics of slogans and of diatribes.

What they want is food, clothing and work.

April 5,

Tension in the city of Colombo began to mount with stories about the imminent arrest of UNP leader J. R. Jayewardene circulating widely throughout the metropolis. All attempts to get any confirmation of the arrest or non-arrest up to the time of writing were difficult, but the most authoritative sources stated that JR had not been arrested or even placed under house arrest. An authoritative statement is expected over the SLBC later in the evening. It is said that it will assert that the JR arrest story is yet another UNP *gundu*.

Whether JR is placed under temporary arrest, or otherwise, is not the important question. But the fact that such rumours have begun to circulate is what is important at all. The UNP is no doubt endeavouring to stage a demonstration to mark the death anniversary of Dudley Senanayake and the Government is understandably seeking to play it down. In the meantime, the resignation of Maj. Gen. Udugama the SLFP Member for Matale from the Party and the Government group, has caused a great deal of uneasiness in governmental quarters—just as it has created jubilation in the Opposition. Udugama now sits as an Independent in the Opposition and what he has said about the situation in the country is not very good for the Government. That is probably why there has been an onslaught on the Matale electorate today by the top brass of the Government to convince the electorate that the Government meant business at least on the question of Land Reform. In the meantime, wishful thinking in the forces opposed to the Government see in the Udugama affair the "beginning of the end" of the UF homogeneity. The Udugama affair is only a straw in the wind just as the rumpus at Ratnapura-Pelmadulla is another such straw which shows that many people have developed a fancy to take the law into their own hands.

To bring calm, it is not enough to make speeches and shout slogans. Food, Clothing and Work must be found.



## CHRONICLE

## March 28 – April 5

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

**THURSDAY MARCH 28:** The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, yesterday delivered the inaugural address to around 600 delegates who had assembled at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall for the 30th annual session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE): she said that our economies are very weak and could not withstand the ill-winds that blew towards us in the form of rising prices for the goods we need and any further reduction in incomes and living would be almost tantamount to subtracting from nothing: the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, was yesterday unanimously elected Chairman of the current session of the ECAFE. Following the outbreak of Typhoid in the city of Colombo, the Ministry of Health has taken action to intensify the anti-typhoid campaign within the city of Colombo. Under the terms negotiated recently by the Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, according to the *Daily News*, China has agreed to supply 30,000 tons of rice to Sri Lanka at a price which is less than £ 7 per ton than the current world market price. The local price of opium dropped from about Rs. 2000 a pound to about Rs. 500 a pound following the arrest of what the Narcotic Bureau described yesterday as "Sri Lanka's leading operator". Judge John Sirica handed over a secret Watergate Grand Jury report dealing with President Nixon to the Congressional Committee investigating the President's possible impeachment. US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, briefed the Kremlin leaders on US hopes for a Middle East peace settlement and was believed to have assured them that Washington was not working to undermine Moscow's position in the area. Egypt signed two concession agreements worth a total of 29 million dollars with American companies to search for oil and natural gas in Egypt.

**FRIDAY MARCH 29:** The United National Party—organised Lake House newspapers boycott campaign in Ratnapura, which included a procession, has been postponed—as Police have refused to grant permission for it. Mr. M. A. Connelly, New Zealand's Minister of Customs and Finance, yesterday asked ECAFE delegates to set the right framework for bold solutions—instead of wallowing in despair over the grim possibility of starvation many developing countries faced as a result of the energy crisis. At a Press briefing held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, the Secretary General of the United Nations of the World Food Conference, Mr. Sayed A. Marel, told that action will be taken this year with a view to stabilising world food prices so that countries like Sri Lanka, in particular, would not have to go from one crisis to another—in the face of the international price movements of essential food commodities: he also said that the Prime Minister's proposal for the setting up

of a World Fertilizer Fund was a very constructive proposal which clearly underlined the responsibility of oil producing developing countries towards other developing countries. Following the detection of several cases of typhoid in the Colombo Municipal area, the health authorities have launched a mass immunisation campaign. Thirteen big estates in the Matala area extending over 5,500 acres will be taken over by the Government and handed over to co-operative organisations on April 5. More than 300 people most of them fisherman were feared killed in a severe storm that swept across the southern coast of Bangladesh. Congressional leaders including President Nixon's supporters consider it almost a foregone conclusion that he will be impeached by the House of Representatives over Watergate. Dr. Henry Kissinger has told Soviet leaders that Israel was prepared to make a limited withdrawal of its troops on the Golan Heights Front with Syria on condition that it keeps control of a strategic hill.

**SATURDAY MARCH 30:** A pay rise for public and private sector employees, a five rupee rise in the GPS price for paddy and an increase of 30 cents for rationed rice were announced by the Government yesterday: a special allowance of 20 percent will be given to public servants and the special allowance hitherto paid to them since October, '73 will be withdrawn: the private sector employees will be paid an additional 10 per cent salary increase: only employees who draw less than Rs. 800 per month as salary will be entitled for this salary increase. Mr. Mervyn de Silva, Editor in Chief of the Lake House Group of newspapers, will represent Sri Lanka at an international conference on the problems posed by the rapid growth of the world's cities and population at Worcester College, Oxford. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt said in an interview broadcast in Cairo, that categorical changes in American policy towards the Arabs has prompted his confidence in US intentions in the Middle East. The Arab League Council has announced that the next Arab summit meeting will be held in Rabat next September. Italian Police working with the US Narcotics Bureau have smashed a major Mafia drug smuggling gang operating between the United States and Europe.

**SUNDAY MARCH 31:** According to the *Observer*, hard to get essential food items will be available in all co-operatives for the forthcoming Sinhala and Hindu New Year: nearly 20 million yards of textiles—on a 10 off coupons—will also be available to consumers during the New Year season: from tomorrow everybody will be entitled to draw one and a half measure of rice a week on ration. Professor D. P. Chattopadaya, one of India's leading authorities on economic affairs, who as Minister of Commerce led the Indian delegation to the ECAFE sessions has told that the Government's realistic approach to development, specially agricultural development is praiseworthy and correct. The first consignment of 10,000 tons out of the 20,000 tons of wheat flour valued at 4.9 million dollars under PL 480 agreement, is already on the way and will arrive in Sri Lanka on April 4: two large consignments of rice and flour and 5,000 tons of dates from Basrah are due in Colombo between tomorrow and Thursday. Eleven people including the MP for Ratnapura, Mr. Nanda Ellawela, and Mr. W. A. Karunasena, former Member for Palmadulla, were injured in a shooting incident at



Pelmadulla: the reason is said to be political rivalry between supporters of the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The Australian Government has gifted Sri Lanka with 20 brand new cars. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, will participate in the take over of 5,000 acres of lands under the Land Reforins Law from 13 estates in the Matale district on April 5. Aircraft of KLM—Royal Dutch Airlines—will be calling in Sri Lanka again on Tuesday after a lapse of 12 years. The leader of the Opposition Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, told a public meeting that bombs and thuggery cannot scare him, he follows a worthy cause which calls for even the sacrifice of his life to protect the people from despots who attempt to deprive the people of their cardinal rights. Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, is expected to reveal international secrets related to behaviour of some big powers, the Cairo daily "Al Ahran" reported this yesterday.

**MONDAY APRIL 1:** The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, speaking at a public meeting in Kegalle yesterday said that she was proud to announce that the entire nation, except for a few persons, had wholeheartedly responded to the Government's call for food production on a war footing. The Ceylon National Chamber of Commerce has said that even if the Government is able to maintain the same rupee allocations this year as in 1973, the industrial sector will be able to buy much less raw material: irregularities in shipping, supplies and fluctuations in the values of key currencies are given as reasons for the weak purchasing powers. The Education Ministry hopes to obtain the Science Department of the Aquinas University College temporarily to accommodate some of the 2000 who were shut out of the University due to lack of room. According to Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, and the Chairman of the current sessions of the ECAGE, and the new priority areas of activity identified for ECAGE's future work and proposals for major changes in policy and procedures to ensure effective action in these areas have received the general endorsement of ECAGE member countries. Mr. Mohamed Yeganeh, President of the Central Bank of Iran, who is leading the Iranian delegation to the ECAGE sessions yesterday assured Sri Lanka that her needs for development could be fitted in the plan announced by the Shah of Iran in his offer to the developing nations. According to the Sun, a bleak Sinhala and Tamil New Year faces the people: the reason — soaring prices of food and textiles and scarcities of traditional things. The Sun, carried a front page picture captioned "Sri Lanka's first streaker", of a man running naked along Galle Face apparently to remind the readers that it was April 1—the April Fools' Day. Dr. Henry Kissinger, U.S. Secretary of State, married his frequent companion, Miss Nancy Maginnes, on Saturday at a secret ceremony in Arlington, Virginia.

**TUESDAY APRIL 2:** The Government has approved a high priority project to develop two canals from Colombo to Puttalam and Oruwala to provide an alternative to fuel consuming road and rail transport. A multi-million rupee chemical fertiliser plant is likely to be set up in Sri Lanka with the assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany. Five member countries attending the annual sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East yesterday strongly

urged the commission to set up a new fund to help developing countries to meet their urgent balance of payment needs and long-term development requirements: in a joint resolution to the session Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal and Philippines said the new fund should provide additional financing on concessionary terms including low interest and long repayment periods to assist them to meet their needs. A strong case for revising the priorities and the strategies of the Five Year Plan is made in the latest report of the Central Bank, presented to the Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera, yesterday; it states that Sri Lanka is now in the third year of the Five Year Plan and the level of achievement in the last two years makes it difficult for the country to work towards the targets indicated in the Plan. Government has decided to take over six big synthetic industries: the constant short supply of synthetic material in the open market has made the government to make this decision. Israel and Syrian artillery tank forces duelled on the Golan Heights yesterday for the 21st day running. Ethiopian Prime Minister, Endalkachew Makonnen, promising imminent reform proposals to satisfy unrest in the country, has appealed to the armed forces, police and the people to share responsibility with the government for preserving law and order. Western Australia's three year-old Labour Government has been swept out of power in one of the most unusual election results.

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 3:** Doctors at the General Hospital, Colombo—specialists, house officers and interneers—came out on a lightning strike yesterday morning following an alleged assault on a doctor: the doctors who joined the strike are members of the two premier doctors unions in the country—Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA) and Association of Medical Specialists (AMS). According to the Sun, several Government MP's have urged the Government to allow the transport of at least three measures of rice per person before the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, this exhortation has been made during the Government Parliamentary Group meeting held yesterday. The Joint Opposition Parliamentary Group yesterday reiterated its demand that the rice transport can be relaxed to enable the transport of at least two measures per person. The United Council of Trade Unions have vehemently protested against Government's proposal to withdraw the allowances hitherto paid to employees in the public and corporation sector in order to pay an increase of 20 per cent. As much as Rs. 32 million has been earmarked by Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Construction, to be given as loans to house builders during this year. The demonetisation of currency notes in 1972 was known only to him and the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, the Minister of Finance Dr. N. M. Perera disclosed in the National State Assembly yesterday. Dr. Perera made the disclosure while refuting an allegation made by the MP for Habaraduwa, that certain "Budget Secrets" had leaked out before the Budget announcements were made. According to the Daily Mirror, the proposed civil disobedience campaign of the United National Party has already caused a rift in the Tamil United Front, as to whether they should join the UNP or not. Israel and Syria massed troops and equipment in the Golan Heights where tension reached the highest peak since the October war. The US Air Force is considering



planning nuclear-capable X-III bombers on the proposed Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean.

**THURSDAY APRIL 4:** Four hundred thousand acres have been acquired by the Land Reforms Commission under the Government's legislation to take over excess land owned by private owners, Mr. S. B. Senanayake, chairman of the Commission said yesterday. The ECAFE delegates discussing the draft Colombo Declaration were unable to reach agreement after a lengthy debate yesterday morning. The Government has decided to issue half a pound of flour at 36 cents for every ration book throughout the island for one week beginning April 8. The token strike of doctors at the Colombo General Hospital was called off yesterday at 11.15 a.m.; the person suspected of having assaulted the doctor concerned was arrested by the Police yesterday. The three member commission which probed the activities of the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, handed over its report to the Governor General yesterday. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, will preside over a public meeting at Matale tomorrow to explain to the Matale electorate the SLFP high command's view on the action of the MP for Matale, Mr. Richard Udugama, in resigning from the SLFP and remaining in Parliament as an independent. Nine positive cases of cholera, of which two were fatal, were reported yesterday. Mr. Ibrahim Shukrallah, Chief Representative for the League of Arab States in India and South East Asia, met the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, and discussed Arab - Sri Lanka relations, with particular emphasis on the oil question. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health, in one area in Colombo there are 1,500 people living in shanties without a single latrine. The President of France, Mr. George Pompidou, died yesterday. Britain's Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, said yesterday that the proposal for a "zone of peace" in the Indian Ocean was very much in the mind of his Government. Oil sources in Vienna rejected specula-

tion that crude oil prices may rise again because of weakening of the dollar against other major currencies.

**FRIDAY APRIL 5:** The plenary sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East yesterday unanimously adopted the resolution urging the setting up of a World Fertiliser Fund: the resolution which was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal Thailand and Afghanistan, was supported by delegates from China and the United States: the Commission directed its Executive Secretary Mr. J. B. P. Maramis to prepare "concrete proposals" for the establishment of the World Fertilizer Fund to assist developing countries to procure their fertilizer supplies at reasonable prices: the creation of a World Fertilizer Fund was suggested by Sri Lanka's Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, when she inaugurated the ECAFE session here last week: the Commission yesterday decided to include Chinese and Russian among its working languages: English and French are the present working languages. The Auditor General's report on accounts of the Ceylon Transport Board has revealed an accumulated loss of Rs. 132,554,483 since its inception up to September 1971. Seven senior career diplomats, including an Ambassador and a High Commissioner, had been recalled to Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs is investigating alleged attempts to bring about a rift in Sri Lanka's relations with the Republic of Maldives. According to the Sun, the fate of the 2,300 students who were qualified for entry into the University now appears to have been sealed and they will not be found places in any of the campuses. The Senate Armed Services Committee of the United States voted against giving the Government the immediate go-ahead for building a controversial military base on the British owned Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia. President Anwar Sadat has proclaimed Egypt's non-alignment with either East or West in a speech full of the new confidence generated by the October War with Israel.

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LOCAL PRESS  
REACTIONS

## To Cold War at the ECAFÉ Conference

by Observer

**IMPORTANT ISSUES** were no doubt discussed at the ECAFÉ Sessions which concluded its proceedings in Colombo recently.

Wise, learned and significant speeches were made about the problems which faced the region and the world. Big countries and small countries set out the respective attitudes and policies of their government on the burning topics of the day.

But more than all this it was the polemics and the ideological war waged by China against the Soviet Union that attracted attention.

It was China which started the ball rolling and the Russians had replied with the usual vigour. It is interesting to see how the local press reacted to this battle on the ideological front.

The *Daily News* of March 30 in a front page report under the headline **SINO-SOVIET CLASH ON A LOWER KEY?** stated as follows: (and the *Daily News* on the front page also published the reports of the full speeches made by the Chinese and the Russian delegates).

"There was a minor Sino-Soviet confrontation at the plenary sessions of the ECAFÉ Conference yesterday. The leader of the Chinese delegation, Ambassador Huang Ming-ta accused the super powers of exploiting the developing countries and made veiled references to the Soviet Union which he said 'constantly styles itself a friend of the developing countries.'"

"The Soviet Union retaliated during the past lunch session when the leader of the delegation Ambassador Rafik Nishanov accused 'a

representative of one country' of trying to distort the character of Soviet aid and thought that these attempts cover great power ambitions." Diplomatic observers who have witnessed Sino-Soviet clashes in other international forums felt that yesterday's point and counter-point were carried out on a much lower key. Some observers also felt that this might have been a gesture to Sri Lanka's policy of non-alignment.

"The Chinese delegation also staged a walk out when the leader of the delegation from the Khmer Republic (Cambodia) which it had earlier said had no right to be at the meeting, began to make his remarks. The Chinese stayed out when the South Vietnam delegation which the Chinese characterised as not representing the South Vietnamese people following with its remarks immediately after the Khmer Republic.

"Earlier in the day the Chinese delegation also walked out when the South Korean delegate addressed the plenary sessions."

The *Daily Mirror* of March 30 under the headline **VERBAL DUEL AT ECAFÉ** mixed comment and reportage to tell its readers as follows:

"There was high drama in yesterday's proceedings of the 30th session of the ECAFÉ Conference when the leader of the Chinese delegation Mr. Huang Ming-Ta lashed out at the super powers for attempting to convert a peaceful Indian Ocean into an arena of their fierce rivalry. He alleged that these two super powers were the cause of tension and turbulence in the Asian and Far Eastern regions.

"He accused imperialist countries of having practised 'plunder' under the cover of aid and said, 'One of the super powers, which constantly styles itself a friend of the developing countries, is also making use of 'aid' to gain control of major branches of the national economy of recipient countries, deprive them of their sovereign rights and makes huge profits by buying their export products on the cheap and reselling them at much higher prices.'"

"This was not all. Mr. Ming-ta took exception to participation of Cambodia, the Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Korea.

He said: "Before concluding, I wish to point out that the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia under the leadership of the Cambodian Head of State, Prince Norodom Sihanouk is the sole legal Government of the Cambodian people. The puppet Lon Nol clique is a handful of Cambodian national scum, and it is illegal for its representatives to take part in this session. There exist two administrations in South Vietnam. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam is the genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people. It is inappropriate that the representatives of the Saigon authorities should participate in this session unilaterally. It is also unreasonable and abnormal for the South Korean authorities to send their representatives to this session unilaterally. We express our regret at the above state of affairs."

"Pursuing his objection to the presence of these three delegations, the Chinese delegates kept away from the proceedings when the leaders of these delegations addressed the sessions last afternoon.

Mr. R. N. Nishanov, leader of the Soviet delegation, said that he would like to speak on "the groundless attempts made by a representative of one country to set off the Asian developing countries against their true friends from the Socialist Camp. He said that an attempt had been made to distort the character of the Soviet aid by various slanderous inventions. Mr. Nishanov said: "In fact such attempts cover the great power ambitions aimed at the establishment of domination over the developing countries."

"We consider such statements as an intention to lead the work of the current session away from a businesslike discussion of urgent problems included in the agenda", he said. Mr. Nishanov regretted that in such a "diffuse statement there was no room left for concrete positive suggestions regarding questions of importance for the participants of the sessions." Referring to Viet Nam, he said that the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam was the real representative of the South Vietnam people. Mr. Nguyen Duc Cuong, Minister



of Commerce and Industry and leader of the delegation of the Republic of Vietnam, said: "The delegate from the People's Republic of China as well as the delegate from the USSR have wrongly tried to bring into his Commission the so-called Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam."

**The Sun, also of March 30 under a cynical headline about CHEENA PATAS reported the clash in the following terms:**

"An international political row erupted in Colombo yesterday when China made an all-round attack on the Soviet Union, the United States, Cambodia (Khmer Republic), South Korea and South Vietnam on the third day of the 30th annual sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE).

"All these nations are represented by top-level delegations at the ECAFE session now being held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo.

"In an apparent reference to the Soviet Union, Ambassador Huang Ming-ta, who leads China's delegation said: "One of the super-powers, which constantly styles itself a friend of the developing countries is also making use of aid to gain control of major branches of the national economy of recipient countries deprive them of their sovereign rights and make huge profits by buying their export products on the cheap and reselling them at much higher prices."

"Attacking what he called "Imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism" especially the super powers, throughout his speech, Ambassador Huang said "imperialist countries had always practised "plunder" under the cover of aid and had sucked away the immense wealth of the developing countries by political, military, economic and other means.

"He referred to the growing super-power rivalry in the region, and blamed "imperialism, colonialism neo-colonialism and the super-powers" for the "great disorder" in the area, and the poverty of the developing countries.

"Apparently defending the present oil policy of the oil producing countries, he said "thanks to the struggle waged against imperialism

and hegemonism, especially by the Arab countries," the essential weakness of imperialism and super-powers was exposed. It was imperialism that was dependent on the Third World and the super-powers who were afraid, rather than the other way round, added the Ambassador.

"He suggested the people in the region should unite and hit back. The Chinese people, he added, firmly supported the people of the other developing countries in the region in their struggle to develop the national economy, protect their sovereign rights over national resources, establish equitable and rational international relationship and to combat imperialism and particularly superpower control, plunder and exploitation".

**The Weekend of March 31 continued the Sun style of reporting with the following headlines: IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE AT DELIBERATIONS: CHINESE CRACKERS AND VIET CROSS FIRE.**

"There was a fresh burst of cross fire between the Chinese and the South Vietnamese delegations over the ownership of Paracel and Strapley Islands at the ECAFE conference yesterday.

"The cause of this furor was a reference made in an official ECAFE document issued by the Secretariat listing Hsisha and Nansha Islands (also known as Paracel and Strapley Islands in the South China Sea as "offshore island areas of the Saigon authorities in South Vietnam."

"Reacting sharply to this pointed reference, the Chinese delegation categorically stated that "Hsisha and Nansha Islands in the South China Sea had always been an inalienable part of Chinese territory.

"The Peoples Republic of China had undisputable sovereignty over those islands and the areas around them. Way back on August 15, 1951, Foreign Minister Chou En Lai of the Peoples Republic of China, had in his statement on the US-British Draft Peace Treaty with Japan and the San Francisco Conference" pointed out that "Just like the entire Nansha Islands, Chensha Islands and Tunga Islands Hsisha Islands and Nan Wei Islands had always been Chinese territory.

"The Chinese delegation argued that their government had on many occasions reiterated this stand. It was wrong that Hsisha Islands and Nansha Islands of China had been listed as offshore islands of the Saigon authorities in South Vietnam in a document prepared by the Secretariat."

"The Chinese delegation demanded that the Secretariat should "rectify the mistake" and see to it that similar occurrences would not take place in future.

"Reacting to the Chinese statement Mr. Nguyen Duc Cuong, Minister of Commerce, and Industries of South Vietnam and the leader of the country's delegation claimed that the islands properly belonged to South Vietnam. He said they possessed historical documents to prove their claim to ownership.

"Mr. Cuong warned the Chinese not to meddle with the internal affairs of other countries. Referring to the avowed Chinese policy of non-interference in the sovereignty of other countries he said that the Chinese must practice what they preached.

"Continuing his verbal blast Mr. Cuong went on to say that he did not recognise the powers of the Peoples Republic of China representatives. They had no right to represent the Chinese people at the Sessions, he said: "The genuine representative of the Chinese people was the Government of the Republic of China, he insisted. When the Chinese delegates returned the South Vietnamese crossfire with another blast the ECAFE chairman "ordered a ceasefire."

"Ideological controversies marred the sessions earlier on Friday when the leader of the Chinese delegation made an all-round attack on the Soviet Union, United States, Cambodia (Khmer Republic), South Korea and South Vietnam.

"Later the same day the Chinese delegation walked out of the Conference Hall in protest when the South Vietnamese, South Korean and Khmer Republic delegates addressed the sessions.

"Regretting the turn of events at the Conference during the last two days the chief of the American Delegation Ambassador Clyde Ferguson said:



I regret that I feel compelled to ask for the floor on a matter which I do not consider germane to our discussions. We were much impressed by the statemanslike appeal of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Bandaranaike, that we should not let "world politics" intrude on our deliberations of these weighty topics.

"However, since much to my regret these irrelevant issues have been raised, it is necessary for me to speak in support of the Government of South Vietnam which unquestionably is the legitimate representative of the people of South Vietnam. In my government's view the so-called provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam represents a small fraction of the population of South Vietnam and lacks the attributes of a government.

In our opinion it was highly inappropriate for a certain member of the Commission to raise the issue of representation of the Khmer Republic.

We regret also that aspersions were made as to the legitimacy of credentials of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

On Friday the leader of the Soviet Delegation Ambassador Rafik Nishanov replied to the Chinese remarks against Russia by saying: "We consider such statements as intention to lead the work of the current sessions away from business-like discussion of urgent problems on the agenda."

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### RECORD

The most prolific couple in Brazil is Mr. and Mrs. Raymundo Carnauba of Ceilandia, one of the suburbs of the capital. They have had 32 children, 26 of whom survive. With sons, daughters, grandchildren and in-laws, the family consists of more than 80 persons. The fourteen youngest children— from 22 year old Maria das Gracas to six-year old Maria Aparecida—live with the parents. The father is a 53-year old furniture maker. Nine children are married. The eldest is Firmino. He is 37 and has six children.

# INANIA *Of This, That and The Other*

## BEWARE BRAZIL!!!

By INNA

Despite the furore ravaging USA regarding the film "Exorcist" and its aftermath, please beware, Brazil, we know who has possessed you! You cannot hide for too long, for you will be unmasked.

Sin, evil, the d'Evil are all the same, and everybody now knows Perroux's immortal word: *Capitalism is the greatest sin of today*. That is why the arch-enemy of truth, Satan, has set up Hq. at the Brazilian ministry of education and said: "the catholic education programme of Brazil is being used to propagate Marxist ideas". No wonder the Sao Paulo archdiocese challenged it immediately (see Messenger Ceylon's catholic weekly, 9th March '74, page 10).

Money-holders, rabid purse-string holders, whom are you trying to hoodwink this time? What can you say to the fact that 1% of your blasted rich are hugging 51 per cent of your land? Is that not from the devil? Or are you purblind? Do you accept the Pope, or did he go to school in Moscow when he wrote:

"If certain landed estates impede prosperity because they are extensive, unused or poorly used, or because they bring hardship to peoples or are detrimental to the interests of the country, the common good sometimes demands their expropriation... the available revenue is not to be used in accordance with mere whim, and that no place must be given to selfish speculation...." (Development of Peoples, Paul VI, 1967, n. 24)

What are your so-called national interests, but the lining of your oligarchies' pockets with gold-thread and gold, obtained by breaking the backs of the poor and the the worker? Who's behind all this?

Do some home-work, reader, and buy Robin Jenkin's *Exploitation*, and the cover-design will tell you who the arch-enemy is. That's where we need all the exorcism we can get from Kudagama to Georgetown.

Newsweek must have drawn a red herring on its cover, if you guess my meaning. Dialogue promoted by all men—among all men: Isn't that what is looked for? Let's talk it over, you big men of Brazil,

builders and descendants of the men who built Brasilia: we are all sinful and saintly.

Christ came for sinners especially. He said so, if my study of the Gospel book is correct. They even say he hunted out and looked after and cared for the sinner. Hated sin but loved sinners, including (according to you) the "greatest of sinners, Marxists and Communists".

OK?

So far, so good, my Monroe with the codroe brain. Then listen: why don't you accept what the Brazil church answers you: "The Church is committed to greater social justice in Brazil and in the world... dialogue promoted among—all men, even with Marxists, cannot be construed to be a surrender to the ideology of communism."

Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Brazil?

Aren't you the largest puppet-museum in the world with string-centres located rather far away? What about the largest belt of misery (Paul VI's phrase again, from *Octogesimo*) hugging your loins around the city? The favelas, the companions of the mud-huts and the taudis, the slums and shanties, the cardboard bin "homes" on whose sweat you're sliding 'upwards' but really to a gory hell?

Marxist church indeed!

Go, tell that to the marines, and say Inna told you. And Inna is prepared to go to gaol for all that.



## LAND UTILISATION

## Muthurajawela

— what is its potential ? —

by Jepharis

PERHAPS the largest expanse of flat open countryside in the Western Province, if not the whole island, or at any rate, its South-West belt known as the WET ZONE is the rectangular block known as MUTHURAJAWELA, i.e. the field of king pearl, or royal paddy field deriving its name from (මුතු) pearl, (රජ) royal, and (බිඳ) field: pearl in this instance being synonymous with paddy; whose grain, especially the finer strains, e.g. *Muttusamba*, resemble it.

This wasteland covers an area of about 20 square miles (roughly 7 miles long 3 miles wide), bordered on the West by the road running along the right bank of the Kelani-Negombo Canal (the old Dutch Canal, which keeps an almost perpendicular South-North course from the Kelani Ganga near its confluence with the sea at Crow Island, Mutwal, to the Negombo Lagoon.

This water-way is one of the remaining evidences of the spate of canal construction which was a prominent feature of the late Dutch and early British Administration, a network of communications throughout maritime Ceylon for passengers and freight, originally dug to serve the paddy, coconut, salt, cement, spice and gem trades), on the East by the Colombo-Negombo main road (the stretch between Wattala and Ja-ela of Route A4), on the North by the Negombo Lagoon, and on the South almost as far as the Hendala-Wattala road.

Incidentally, this Dutch Canal (it could be early British as it is called the Hamilton Canal) is in the news once again in connection with the Government's proposal "to develop two canals from Colombo to Puttalam and Oruwela to provide an alternative to fuel consuming road and rail transport", quoting a leading article TOP PRIORITY FOR CANAL TRANSPORT appearing in the front page of the *CDN* of 2.4.74.

The news item goes on to add: "A government source said yesterday that there was a possibility of aid for the project from the Netherlands, a country which is traditionally well known for the exploitation of waterways for transport. Water transport is cheaper than land transport anywhere in the world. This project is expected to cut down our transport costs by one-fifth. It will also generate other forms of development."

One of these might well be the Muthurajawela Reclamation & Land Development Scheme, which could very easily be served and irrigated by this canal.

From the time of the early Sinhala kings, through the reign of Parakrama Bahu the Great who enhanced its reputation as a choice granary, right up to the early British period, Muthurajawela was renowned for the quality of its grain, refined as pearl (e.g. *muttu samba pearl grain*, a highly refined strain originally imported from Burma); and even during the Dutch regime, paddy from this region was transported to the capital by paddy-boats plying along the Hamilton Canal. The name 'paddy boat' (a type of house-boat which can still be seen on this stretch of water, although in steadily diminishing numbers) is an anglicised derivation from 'paddy-boat' or 'paddle boat' as it transported paddy, and also used paddles or oars.

THE BRITISH at first grossly neglected our ancient monuments, tanks and paddy fields, until the appointment of the dedicated H. C. P. Bell as Archeological Commissioner and Conservator of Monuments towards the close of the 19th century, in 1897.

During a period of about a century from the beginning of their regime, our colonial masters were preoccupied with other priorities—such as establishing and then consolidating their rule over, first the maritime and later, after 1815, the Kandyan Provinces, coffee (later replaced entirely by tea, when attacked by *Haemalia Vastatrix* in the 1870s and 80s), rubber and coconut planting, and the building of roads and canals, and later railways.

While all this was going along, paddy lands were neglected

tanks fell into disuse, and most of the ancient irrigation works abandoned.

CEYLON who had been self-sufficient in her staple diet since soon after Prince Vijaya landed (that was even before the time of the Buddha), a period of over 2400 years; now had to import rice from countries like India, Burma, Siam (now Thailand), China and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

Muthurajawela too, that gem among paddy lands, was sacrificed at the altar of colonial neglect. It became sadly uncultivated, and by about the time of the Kandyan Rebellion (Matale, 1848) had been totally surrendered to the advances of salvinia and other pernicious weeds.

For about 125 years since the middle 19th century, Muthurajawela has been a useless swamp, somewhat saline in content, lying as it does at just about or only a few feet above sea level; and although it provides an example of one of the largest expanses of uninhabited and uncultivated wasteland extant in an age of exploding population and extensive cultivation; it has no value whatever to the country apart from the aesthetic one of providing pleasant landscape to the artistically inclined eye, and the healthsome one of supplying a naturally green lung to an urban, industrialised and overcrowded society. It is also an ornithologists' and bird-watchers' paradise.

Being situated just outside the municipal limits of the metropolis, its value as a "wide open space" in a pollution-ridden community is greatly appreciated. Like the Galle Face Promenade, Havelock Race-course, parks, golf-links, playing fields and other open spaces within the confines of the city itself; this 'lung' should not be contaminated, congested and otherwise desecrated by man-made construction like homes and public buildings, or even perhaps a campus; however acute might be the housing problems or the need for factories and centres of learning and culture.

If Muthurajawela is successfully reclaimed from the marsh which now comprises it, however, it would provide an ideal



site for a housing estate, if not for cultivation.

Is there any hope for the revival of Muthurajawela as paddy land, particularly in the context of the nation's self-avowed aim towards self-sufficiency in rice by 1975-80?

Although the Roman Catholic Parish Priest of Ja-ela, the Rev Fr. Cyril Peries, has attempted a youth settlement scheme on a small scale in these parts, with a view to reclaim the land, and try to coax and cajole its boggy soil into yielding the 'golden grain'; the prevailing consensus of specialised opinion seems to disfavour the possibility, or at least the practicability of such a proposal and inclines to the view that the magnitude of such a task would not be worth the time, effort and expenditure that would have to be involved; even though a projected reclamation, followed by the cultivation, of this tract, would certainly make no small contribution towards the alleviation of the nation's food, economic and employment problems, in that order of priority.

*If paddy is out of the question, at any rate for the present, is there any potential for utilising this land for other purposes?*

The idea of turning it over to salt production, on the lines of the salt-pans of the Hambantota and Puttalam Districts of the Dry Zone might be tried, but would be limited of success, mainly for these reasons:

- (1) The saline content, although the proximity to the sea is similar, is less than in the areas mentioned above, largely because the greater humidity in the Wet Zone accounts for a higher absorption and retention of salt in the atmosphere, and also on account of the soil being softer and less firm than in the Dry Zone.
- (2) Because of the greater humidity in the Wet Zone, the rate of evaporation would be slower than under the clear skies and bright sunlight of the Dry Zone.
- (3) As the Salt Industry thrives BEST in the Dry Zone, and has been even less successful nearer Tangalla (Wet-Dry Fringe

Zone) than Hambantota, its chances of success in the WET ZONE must be considered extremely doubtful.

*If not salt or paddy, what then?*

Is any sort of cultivation plausible? Or any alternative industry? Fishing perhaps, for whatever small varieties of fish that might be available in these parts. Some have suggested coconut growing. Maybe other readers of this journal would like to enlighten us with their views.

## SHAMBA

### Another Companion And A New Hut

By  
Anatory Bukoba

March 13,

A hectic day, and I tired for most of it! Rupees 8/- of goods was duly delivered here for sale; but our housewife has not her heart in it. I gave a gift of Rs. 1.50 worth of the stuff to the *kadday*. It went in half an hour. The stock was replenished. The *mudalali* got clever, and he wants to buy it at the source, and make a profit of ten cents instead of five. I rather scolded him; I said I could understand the manoeuvre and if I wanted to I could sell the food-stuff at thirty cents a piece—that is, the price that he was selling it. In all probability, he will sell what he buys for twenty five cents at forty cents. Of course, the *mudalalis* have to take this risk of being landed with the goods—no sale, and they have to cover themselves for this. I believe the Middle Ages, always considered the golden age in what is now modern Europe, practised some form of price control, and there might be something to be said for it. I suppose there is much to be said to stop people from *making a corner*, I think the expression is, buying up all the goods of a kind, and fixing your own price; a 'monopoly'. This is what has happened with diamonds, and also with gold through a cartel, but in the latter case, they have the sense to keep the price down, or the world would not stand for it.

Rationing of rice in Ceylon is a kind of price control, but it is much more than that. It is coupled with rather oppressive measures about the sale and movement of rice. All these measures are in the end self-defeating, as with the restriction on alcohol. The bigger and more oppressive the restrictions, the more *kasippu* flourishes. In Russia, the people are very liberal with alcohol. I wonder if it is so in China, too. In England, certainly, all of us ate more sweets when sweets were rationed than when it was not.

My new companion turned up in the morning, while I was shaving by the river. We put up a new house and slept in it last night. He enjoyed it, he says we did not buy the *cadjan* for the roof until about 5.30 p.m. Two of my English class students found themselves roped in and a deaf and dumb lad was very handy handing out the string. He had come along unasked. We finished the roof while it was just light enough to see what we were about. The walls have been left until today. My companion and I slept on the earth floor on either side of a fire which burned until this morning. We had *cadjans* for our beds. I use my pack for a pillow; he had none and did not need one should think.

Rupees 5 were in one big bang at lunch, so I had to dig into my pocket again to buy three pounds of manioc at fifty cents a pound. The two houses combined forces for meals, our housewife doing the cooking. My friend and I did the house alone, he doing most of the work; I was too tired to do anything. The new house stands directly in front of the old house, where the family is, and at a slant to it, and well back from the path. The front of the old house borders the path. I had perforce to do this writing this morning. I have a wound again on my leg.

Our housewife likes the look of the new house. Manioc, I gather, is not to be had. We were lucky to get it. I remember, now, someone asking me on the way where we had got it. Well, for the first time since I started here over a year ago, this *Shamba* has two houses. The new house is too near the other house, but from the point of view of security it serves.



## The One-Acre Farm

We have not a bit of food in the house, and our six-year old has been sent to fetch something to cook. Well we shall have to see what the future holds. One more day here, and I have to go away to choose a bull for a herd of dairy cattle. It will mean a visit upcountry.

March 14,

As I write this, my elbow is on a small ant-hill, and as I slept with my head on it last night, as I found this morning when I moved the cadjans, I do not think I shall have trouble with snakes. I write much as I think the Romans and the Hebrews ate their meals, just resting on one elbow. The walls of the house are up, all except the front wall; we ran out of cadjans. We have bought some chatty pots so as to do our own cooking, a *kalla geddi*, a *mutti*, a *nambili*, an *attili*, and a *battalanda* or *matti koppe*. These words mean water-pot, a pot for rice, and one for washing and sifting it, a pot for cooking vegetables, and lastly a cover for the cooking pots and which can also be used for squeezing out coconut milk from scrapped coconut. We bought the pot for Rs. 3. Our *kalla geddi* is not exactly small but a really large one would have cost Rs. 2.50; ours was only Rs. 1.

Our housewife insists on giving me food. Her cooking is excellent. Tonight we had sweet potato and nothing else, two pounds of it at fifty cents a pound.

The morning was spent collecting some *kurakkan* that a woman promised us, and we ate it as *ratti* for lunch, this must be the African *cassawa*, which, I think, is considered by the Europeans over there as having no food value at all.

Thanks to our walls, I am able to write this at night. Some quite large rats and mice run about the jungle here, and I hope they keep out of this house. I have just woken up, after writing the last word, to find that the moon is appearing above the trees on the horizon, with full moon as long ago as the 7th, this must mean that I have slept for quite a while, and that it must be around 2 a.m. I hope to catch the 5.30 a.m. bus, and we have no watch. I can hear lorries travelling but on the whole it is very quiet.

The baby next door has woken up, and so our housewife, too, and so I just called her to ask her opinion of the time. She thinks it is only 12 p.m. by the amount of traffic, she may will be right. I am reminded of the time I slept over a main trunk route is Genoa, and of how traffic moved along it all night, keeping me awake with the noise.

There was no *vici katha* work done today, which is a pity, as there is so much of it to be done, yet, I did not even cut sticks for a *masa* bed. On the positive side, my foot, or rather, wound has been given a rest, and that is all to the good. These wounds are caused by thorns, and on me they easily turn septic.

March 15,

That last sentence I added just now. I was so tired last night, I just did not know what to write, and I was reduced to inaction; no thoughts would come. Sleep; and I awoke, and lay on in bed. Finally I got up, and with the little water we had in a chatty pot, I washed and shaved; shaved sitting on the floor, by an inadequate oil lamp and the light of the fire. Then I did my stint of reading, after first dressing for the road, so that if it dawned suddenly, I could leave instantly. The bus was at 5/30 a.m., and I caught it.

The lad beside me in the bus had just come from India, a Sinhalese lad to the core. He had come by the Rameswaram ferry. He had many interesting things to say, all in Sinhalese; so some of what he said was lost on me. One thing he said was that it takes five hours to get through the Customs at Talaimannar. It appears that our Ceylonese, Sinhalese if you like, are everywhere, and even that it is not very difficult to get along in Sinhalese because so many others have been here and know the language. He could speak no English or not enough to get along on.

Meeting this lad was like a revelation to me; a whole new world was drawn into my orbit. Which reminds me that I think that people who run their own cars miss a lot, unless they are of those few who give lifts to strangers. Which reminds me also, that it was by travelling in buses, and even get-

ting lifts in cars, that I learnt that the present Government would win the last general election. I happened to meet the right people.

## GOBAR GAS

# Wealth from Waste

S. P. Tyagi

KHADI AND VILLAGE Industries Commission has made commendable efforts to utilise some of the waste-going materials and to turn them into wealth. Gobar gas (methane gas), handmade paper, non-edible oilseeds and sozp, carcass and leather and palmgur industries are making good use of these wastes.

*Gobar Gas (Methane gas)*—Most of the cowdung which can be converted into a rich manure is either being wasted or burnt for cooking purposes. The Commission has come out with a 'Gobar Gas' scheme for better utilisation of cowdung. If adopted on a large-scale, it would give a boost to the rural economy and change the shape of rural India. Available in sizes from 60 cubic feet to 3,000 cubic feet to suit individual farmer and the community, its cost varies from about Rs. 800 to Rs. 20,000 according to the size. The plant once constructed as per the specifications requires only nominal expenditure for its maintenance. What it requires is regular supply of cowdung. Night soil and other organic waste can also be used. The scheme offers cheap source of fuel and light, as also rich manure to enhance food production.

The Commission has so far constructed about 4,000 gobar gas plants in the country. Gujarat heads the list in the construction of gobar gas plants.

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TRIBUNE, April 13, 1974



## ENERGY CRISIS - 3

## U. S. STRATEGY

## — Arab Sophistication —

by

K. SUBRAHMANYAM

In 1973 the US President sent a special message to the Congress on the energy issue in which he outlined a series of steps which would make the United States less dependent on external sources of energy supplies. Still it could not be anticipated that the crisis was around the corner. On 16 October, 1973, the Arab States decided on a cutback in production of their oil and an embargo on supplies to the United States and Holland.

Friendly nations would be exempt from the cut and it would apply to nations classified as 'not so friendly'. Japan came under this classification till the Japanese Government issued a statement towards the end of November announcing their full support to the Arab position that Israel must vacate all occupied Arab land under the Security Council resolution 242 of 1967.

THIS OIL CUT placed the United States in a dilemma. The US Administration was aware of the fact that its European allies, except for Holland, and Japan were not willing to go along with it in its support to Israel. In fact a number of European countries placed curbs on the United States using their facilities to tranship supplies to Israel.

The US was so deeply conscious of the European reservations in regard to its Israeli policy that when it decided to place its forces in Europe including its nuclear forces on alert on October 25, it did not consult its allies. This cavalier treatment further wounded the sensibilities of the west European allies of the United States. It is quite likely that the political declaration issued in November by the nine members of the European Economic Community, calling on Israel to vacate the occupied Arab territory, was a deliberate move to inform the United States that the allies could not be taken for granted.

THE US STRATEGY in this situation was fourfold. The US Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger tried to project an image of a mediator between the Arabs and the Israelis. In this effort he was quite successful for various reasons. The Soviets, as well as the Arabs for reasons of their own, decided to allow him to play this role. Secondly, the United States, cashing in on the above image, tried to reassure its

allies and its own people that the oil embargo would be shortly lifted. Without specifically saying so, an impression was sought to be created that they had some assurances from Saudi Arabia. Thirdly, they tried to impress on their allies that if they had all accepted the US lead unreservedly the damage would have been less and that even now a common front by the industrialised nations under US leadership was in the interest of all of them.

Fourthly, they tried to intimidate the Arab States by dropping hints about the likely use of force and also to divide them by deliberately planting tendentious information in the Press about certain Arab States leaking out oil.

**It was a sophisticated strategy and in normal circumstances would have paid dividends. But on the whole, now in retrospect, it appears that the strategy did not work. President Sadaat had also formulated his strategy which was equally sophisticated. In 1972 Sadaat threw out the Soviet advisers in order to demonstrate to King Feisal of Saudi Arabia that the United States was not willing to apply pressure on Israel even if Egypt expelled the Soviet advisers. Once this was convincingly demonstrated King Feisal was compelled to use oil as a weapon in the confrontation with USA.**

Similarly, in 1973 Sadaat was willing to give Kissinger a long rope which would compel the latter to prove himself. Sadaat appeared to King Feisal and the rest of the world as an eminently reasonable man and the onus of getting an Israel withdrawal increasingly fell on Kissinger. In the process the oil weapon became even more crucial. Sadaat is now in a position to take the line that he had initiated the process of Israeli withdrawal in Sinai and furnished the triggering off excuse to resort to oil weapon and that it was now upto King Feisal to continue the pressure and get the United States to apply pressure on Israeli to withdraw from Jerusalem. If King Feisal fails at this stage to keep up pressure then he would have difficulty in countering the arguments of radical Arab States and he would lose his standing among the Arabs.

THE ISRAELIS too have taken steps to buy more time from the United States. They first made the elections an excuse and thereafter the results of the elections came in handy to seek new alibis. In the new Cabinet formation the National Religious Party is now keeping out. This party which has been a coalition partner in the Government for well over two decades is opposed to concessions on Jerusalem and the West Bank of Suez.

Therefore, the Israeli Government, which is now a minority Government, is likely to plead that they will need a new mandate on any proposals concerning Jerusalem and the West Bank. If the Arabs now relax the oil embargo then they will have no leverage left vis-a-vis the United States and Israel.

With the increase in price there is no economic compulsion on Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to step up their production. Therefore, the brunt of the responsibility to continue the Arab confrontation has now been shifted by Egypt to Saudi Arabia. It is not easy for Saudi Arabia to make any concessions at this stage and lift the embargo without any offsetting moves from the United States and Israel. Dr. Kissinger's claim that the US has got things moving on the road to peace is not particularly convincing.

On the other hand, the recent threat from President Nixon that



the continuation of the embargo may slow down the efforts to bring about peace would reveal that the US has nothing tangible to offer in the immediate future.

By repeatedly announcing that the Arabs would be lifting the embargo shortly the US Administration damaged its own credibility severely. At the same time, its threats, not particularly veiled, have served to harden the Arab attitudes and create further problems of credibility.

The threats of US Defence Secretary James Schlesinger that continued oil embargo might invite armed action was countered by the Arab States with the announcement that they had placed explosives in various installations in the oil fields and along the pipelines and if the US were to intervene militarily then the Arabs would blow up the installations. While it would no doubt be possible for the US to occupy the Arab lands militarily and repair the damaged installations and get the oil flowing again it would take time — some months if not years and the Arabs would launch an insurgency and would try to interrupt the production and flow of oil.

Even the loss of Saudi Arabian oil for a few months would mean severe economic consequences for the industrial world. There is no knowing whether such military intervention in one Arab country will not mean interruption in supply from other Arab countries as well. Secondly, an insurgency in the region may mean use of large number of US personnel. The political consequences of initiating such a military adventure, so soon after Vietnam, will have to be carefully weighed. For these reasons the US attempt at intimidation by sending a carrier task force to cruise off Arabia did not prove effective.

Against this background it was not surprising that the Washington Conference on Energy convened by the United States was not successful. The allies of the United States after noting the earlier development, could not easily accept that the United States was in a position to give a constructive lead in the matter. Though only

France opposed the US openly, Britain and Japan were following the French lead of bilateral deals for oil with the Arab States even as they professed their loyalty to a common approach.  
—Foreign News & Features

## DELHI LETTER

# Pakistan, Bangladesh And India

by K. Rengaswamy

New Delhi, March 16,

The Foreign Ministers of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan will meet in New Delhi on April 5 next in pursuance of the Delhi Agreement. The issue to be considered jointly by the three countries was specifically mentioned in the agreement and that is the future of 195 Pakistani POWs who would be ultimately left in India after the completion of the three-way repatriation now in progress. The problem primarily concerns Bangladesh and Pakistan and could have been dealt with by them earlier. But Pakistan's refusal to recognise Bangladesh stood in the way. And Bangladesh insisted that it would have no talks with Pakistan without recognition. Fortunately Pakistan has now recognised Bangladesh and in return Bangladesh also has recognised Pakistan. This mutual recognition has made it easy for a tripartite meeting to be held to discuss the future of 195 prisoners.

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT to anticipate that Bangladesh would agree to abandon the proposed trial of 195 POWs. The suggestion that Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh was conditional and involved the abandonment of the trial has been repudiated by Bangladesh. Pakistan did try to influence Bangladesh to give up the trial and agree to the return of the prisoners to Pakistan without any tripartite meeting and if this had happened Pakistan would have claimed success in creating a serious rift between India and Bangladesh. But Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stood firm and refused to make any commitment before a tripartite meeting was

held. All that he may have said to the intermediaries was that the problem could be settled satisfactorily at a tripartite meeting.

If a formal request is made by Pakistan at the tripartite meeting that Bangladesh should abandon the proposed trial and allow the prisoners to be repatriated to Pakistan, Bangladesh will doubtless agree to be magnanimous. Bhutto once stated that Pakistan itself would try the POWs if necessary. If domestic politics demand and the need to cultivate Bangladesh more grows, Bhutto may well put some of the top soldiers on trial.

There is only one other issue to be settled satisfactorily at the tripartite meeting and this relates to the Pakistanis still in Bangladesh whom Pakistan has not yet accepted. This issue also concerns primarily Pakistan and Bangladesh. While Pakistan has sent back 103,450 Bangalese to Pakistan it took back only 56,200 Pakistanis from Bangladesh. Pakistan has been dragging its feet on the subject. Now that Pakistan and Bangladesh have recognised each other the problem may well be left to be settled between them mutually. So far as India is concerned about 72,000 POWs have so far been repatriated and only about 18,000 remain to be sent home.

THERE IS no other subject for consideration at the tripartite meeting. Foreign Minister Swaran Singh said that the occasion could be availed of for the consideration of bilateral issues. India has been urging Pakistan to agree to discuss issues like the restoration of communications, trade and travel facilities between the two countries as envisaged in the Simla agreement. But Pakistan agreed to receive an Indian delegation to discuss only the question of resumption of postal and land and sea communications. Pakistan has said that other issues like overflight and travel and trade arrangements could be discussed later.

India, in its communication to Pakistan sent on February 25, has pointed out that land and sea communication would carry no meaning unless men and material are allowed to avail of such communication facilities and this in



turn would need prior agreements covering trade and travel and visa facilities. The earlier agreement in regard to visas concluded when Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan now needed revision. Pakistan has not sent any reply so far and it may yet do so before the tripartite meeting in April. As Pakistan has now recognised Bangladesh the former may well feel the need to re-establish air links with Dacca.

It is noted in New Delhi that Pakistan and Bangladesh would exchange diplomatic missions sooner than India and Pakistan would do. Pakistan has been wanting the restoration of diplomatic relations with India as a first step and there is bound to be pressure on India to do so. But India has maintained that mere diplomatic relations without some "positive and useful content" can be of no real value. Diplomatic relations did not prevent the two conflicts in 1965 and the war of 1971. India is anxious that the barrier that Pakistan erected round itself after 1965 war must be at least dented if there should be normalisation of relations and for this there must be something more than formal diplomatic relations.

It should not be difficult to work out a package arrangement if Pakistan is really keen on normalising relations. Ever since 1965 there has been no trade or travel between the two countries and even journalists and newspapers could not be exchanged. The Islamic Summit seems to have stirred the enthusiasm of Pakistan for an Arab-oriented thinking in regard to culture and foreign affairs and the desire seems to be to turn to the west rather than to the east in search of a firm mooring. There is a report that Pakistan may introduce Arabic as a compulsory second language in schools.

Bhutto proudly declared before the Summit, "in any future Middle East conflict the Arabs will find the whole weight of Pakistan behind their cause. The people of Pakistan are the soldiers of Islam and the armies of Pakistan are the armies of Islam. Whenever the need arises and whatever the occasion, Pakistan would not be found wanting." Observers at the Islamic Summit felt that Pakistan may be said to have regained

its self-confidence shattered by the 1971 war.

*Will this self confidence influence Pakistan now to adopt more fruitful and mature policies towards sub-continental affairs instead of persisting in the sterile and pernicious policy of confrontation.*

THE PAKISTAN PRESS these days seems to be working overtime to produce stories that would create misunderstanding between India and Bangladesh. Pakistan is seeking to project that India was in reality putting forth obstacles towards an improvement in relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh and that India was really nervous about Pakistan and Bangladesh coming closer together. For instance, Pakistani commentators are sharply criticising India for broadcasting a report from Dacca that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman asked Pakistan to apologise publicly for the massacre it perpetrated in Bangladesh. Pakistan Radio is angry that the All India Radio should broadcast the Sheikh's statement when Dacca radio itself refrained from doing so and therefore Pakistan Radio finds something sinister in India's action. Why a public statement of a Prime Minister should not be broadcast is not clear.

REPORTS are also circulated in Pakistan that very soon "special relations" would be established between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Reference is here made to the promises said to have been made by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Bhutto before his release from the Pakistani jail. Bhutto said at a press conference a couple of days before the Islamic Summit that the Sheikh was "not dependable" as he did not carry out his promises. Pakistani commentators suggest that if the Sheikh was anxious to attend the Islamic Summit even when he had declared his country to be secular, it must be because he did not want to be left out of the 'Islamic mainstream'.

Pakistani commentators proceed on the basis that anti-Indian sentiment prevailed among a strong section of the people in Bangladesh and that normalisation of relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh would strengthen anti-Indian elements. Bangladesh must be really independent from India's clutches, is a catching slogan. Mention is made of the friendly

references made by the Sheikh and Foreign Minister Kamal Hussain to Pakistan after their return from the Islamic Summit. Perhaps there is a feeling in Pakistan that if some 'special relations' could be established between Bangladesh and Pakistan, it would take away the shattering effect of separation and neutralise the diplomatic success India gained by 1971 war.

It is good that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is visiting Delhi before the tripartite meeting. Mrs. Gandhi's talks with the Bangladesh Prime Minister should enable her to understand the kind of relations that Bangladesh feels should develop among the countries of the sub-continent.

—Foreign News & Features

## LETTER

### Private Libraries

Sir,

I would like to stir the conscience of all those fortunate folk who have either inherited and or acquired private collections of books covering a wide range of subjects, both fact and fiction. I wish to appeal to them to throw open their libraries for the benefit of the public, particularly such people in their immediate environment who may not otherwise enjoy such facilities. I am thinking especially of those poor students, who keen though they may be on reading and widening their knowledge, by borrowing reference works on subjects they may be interested in or pursuing for examinations; do not live close enough to Public Libraries, or enjoy the means to avail themselves of such facilities.

Why allow such storehouses of literature as are often found in affluent homes to lie idle and untapped, when there would be many willing to avail themselves of these treasures? Literary rarities are often to be found, crying out for human scrutiny, on some half-forgotten, dust laden, bacteria-encrusted bookshelves in a musty corner of an old country walauwa, for ins.



rance; patronised exclusively by white-ants, cockroaches, moths, and silverfish!!!

I suggest that those book-collectors who possess private libraries and do not use them, rather than squander this wealth in merely filling empty shelves and decorating their rooms, should either: (1) donate, or sell at a concessionary rate their books to schools, universities, academies, youth clubs, public libraries, etc., or (2) organise a reading and lending library, or perhaps only a lending library, in their own homes, either free of charge or at a minimal rate, that would cater primarily to the poor students living in their neighbourhood, and also to all others interested.

This could quite easily be done by (1) a systematic classifying, indexing and docketing of books, periodicals, etc., according to subjects; (2) keeping a monitor's exercise book recording the date and by whom a book is removed, together with the date (say, after two weeks) on which it is expected to be returned, making provision for a nominal fine for those who default date of return; (3) inserting a notice in the Press informing the General Public of the venue of the library, when it is to be inaugurated, and the days and times in the week on which it would function; and (4) ensuring that at those times of those days someone would always be on hand to register removals and returns, collect fines, if necessary, and generally supervise operations and maintain order.

The modus operandi enumerated above ought to ensure the smooth functioning of a typical private library such as I have in mind. Just imagine what a boon it would be to the young people of this country if my idea is carried out on an island-wide scale! I intend, Deo Volente, to make a start in my own home, and would through the kind courtesy of your columns, like to inform others who may be similarly inclined to contact me at No. 26/2, Rosmead Place, Colombo 7, with a view to forming what could appropriately be called either 'The Private Library-Owners' Association' or 'The Colombo Book-Lovers' Club'.

I think it very important that in an age which pre-occupies itself so completely with the daily task

of earning its living, often over-reaching itself to acquire unnecessary surplus riches, and spends its leisure hours rushing madly from one sporting event or place of entertainment to another; a place should be found for genteel pursuits like Art, Handicrafts,

Music, Gardening, Fishing and BOOKS; which are seldom indulged in nowadays, being reminiscent of the more cultured and gracious ways of living of our fore-fathers. These should be actively encouraged and stimulated in our children.

— Jepharis

## INDIAN AIRLINES

### A New Chapter in Industrial Relations

— trade union in the private sector —

by D. R. Mankekar

The curtain is just ringing down on an extraordinary drama in the country's industrial relations. As the curtain dips in response to the applause of a countrywide audience, one could imagine, in the centre of the stage, the dapper figure of Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal taking the bow. Somebody had at last put his foot down and called the bluff of a truculent labour hitherto holding to ransom a vital essential service. The public is gratified, nay delighted.

Pampered and appeased all these years by a pusillanimous management, in November 1973, Indian Airlines worker's trade unions defied the management once too often, and came a cropper. In their new Chairman and Managing Director Air Chief Marshal Lal they caught a Tartar. They found, to their chagrin, that for once they could not push the Airlines management around.

THE SCENARIO actually opens in August 1973. A series of mishaps to IA planes had culminated in the shocking Boeing tragedy in which Minister Mohan Kumaramangalam was killed. These air crashes, so close to each other, had shaken up the Government into action. In the preceding three years there had been a strike every month. In 1972 alone there were 18 strikes. Discipline had been set at nought, and the management appeared to have abdicated to the trade unions.

The Government of India indentured the services of Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal, until recently Chief of the Air Staff with a brilliant record, as Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Airlines Corporation. Lal demanded and was given a mandate to clean up the Augean Stables of the Airlines and he was assured that the Government would not interfere in whatever action he decided to take to put things right in the set-up. And then things began to happen.

Following a two-month intensive study tour of IA's countrywide organisation, Lal came to the conclusion that IA should immediately turn a new leaf or go bust. He

decided that, come what may, IA should not be allowed to disintegrate and that it should turn a new leaf, even if it meant drastic action.

His study tour confirmed him in his view that the plane mishaps and declaration of inefficiency in the Indian Airlines were solely attributable to human defaults and not to mechanical deficiencies and that indiscipline among the workers and abdication of its duties by the management were at the root of the troubles of the IA organisation. Lal catalogued a series of wasteful practices and blatant defiance of regulations by workers which had resulted in not only crores of rupees of loss to IA but lowering productivity and engendering inefficiency and indiscipline and impairing the air safety of the travelling public.

THE PREVAILING SHIFT SYSTEM had led to such absurdities as perpetuation of an inadequate staff on a shift where the work-load was heavy, so that the management was compelled to draft in extra men



on overtime—and then again, it was not enough to draft in just the number of men required to handle the additional work; the trade unions insisted that the entire team of the preceding shift should be drafted on to the next shift on overtime, even though there was no work available for all those called on overtime duty. In many cases the overtime was 100 to 150 per cent of the basic wages and allowances.

The overtime bill rose to Rs. 3.6 crores in 1972-73 from Rs. 1.1 crore in 1966-67 which is about 17% of the total wage bill. During normal working hours hardly any work was done. This work was kept pending and done during overtime. Pilots and engineers who are on all-India cadres resisted transfers which led to surpluses in some areas and shortages in others. Engineers insisted on only temporary positions to outstations for a period of a maximum of 90 days at a time leading to abnormal expenditures on the payment of daily allowances throughout the year. A large number of Union officials did no normal work at all and performed only Union work at Corporation's expense.

Unions of pilots and cabin attendants insisted that the number of nightstops should be considerably more than what were strictly required under the above circumstances, with the result that the Corporation had to incur a large and needless expenditure on hotel accommodation, meal allowances, etc.

Under the agreements, flying crew can be utilised for 65 hours per month in case of jet aircraft and 80 hours in the case of turbo props. But full utilisation of flying crew in accordance with the agreements was obstructed and no pilot ever worked more than 50 hours on an average. There were instances when pilots/cabin attendants refused to operate a flight on return to the base station from an outstation even though they might have only flown for two hours on that day. Similarly, there were large numbers of pilots who only flew for approximately two hours in a day. This resulted in poor

utilisation of flying crew and avoidable expenditure.

Training of pilots on a particular type of aircraft was being given on the basis of seniority due to the insistence of the pilots. This made it necessary at times to train the senior-most pilot who happened to be in Calcutta even though the actual requirement for such a person existed at Madras. It often happened that the pilots so trained refused to accept transfer and thus the entire cost of training was wasted. Yet the pilots insisted the training must continue in order of seniority.

**The trade union leaders have yet to issue a convincing refutation to this serious catalogue of charges of wasteful work practices.**

The 1972-73 report of the Committee on Public Undertakings noted a deterioration year after year in the percentage of the number of services delayed to total number of flights—an increase from 17.8 per cent in 1967-68 to 35.6 per cent in 1971-72. The on time performance deteriorated even below the 1971-72 figure and in September 1973 the delayed services were as high as 67 per cent of the total flights.

SUBSEQUENT STUDY carried out during the lock-out period revealed that the Indian Airlines had a surplus of 6,000 hands on the staff.

Lal decided to tackle the shift system first. Under the wage agreement for 1969-73 the workers recognised the right of the management to take the final decision in regard to changes in the shift system. It provided for consultation with the union, but in the event of a disagreement, the Assistant Managing Director was to take the final decision. Following this satisfactory agreement and the workers' promise to help increase productivity and efficiency, financial benefits of about Rs. 3 crores had been granted to the workers, and the wage bill went up from Rs. 16 crores to Rs. 18 crores. But there was no improvement in productivity or efficiency.

The management then opened negotiations with the unions on the question of rationalisation of the shift arrangement, and when it was found that the negotiations

got nowhere, as provided for in the agreements, the Assistant Managing Director took the final decision, and the new proposals were announced.

THE TALKS with the Air Corporation Employee's Union, representing the general workers of Indian Airlines, ended infructuously on November 8. The next day the management decided to go ahead with the new shift pattern, and announced that the new arrangement would come into force from November 12. The ACEU retorted with a strike notice on November 10.

Go slow, mass absenteeism, refusal to report according to the roster and insistence on working according to the old shift system were the tactics resorted to by the workers. The airline services almost came to a halt. Considerations of safety being paramount in an airlines service, and the Chief Labour Commissioner's intervention by way of conciliation having also failed on November 24, 1973, the management declared a lockout.

The fat was now in the fire. The trade unions representing the various categories of the 16,000 workers, fed on appeasement hitherto by the management, were unprepared for a showdown. The management stood firm and refused to truckle to the trade unions.

THE AIR SERVICES in the country were almost completely disrupted but the management managed to maintain a skeleton service—15 to 20 per cent of the normal flights were kept up with the help of executive pilots. As the deadlock continued from week to week and the workers realised that this time the management meant business, soon the workers began to trickle back to work. On December 10, the Indian Aircraft Technician's Association (IATA) caved in and signed up on behalf of its 2500 members. The trickle soon became a stream and a river, more and more workers returned to their desks and workshops. The management relented and lifted the lock-out partially to accommodate those coming back,

But while a large number of general workers and pilots and



## Trade Union Responsibilities

engineers came back to work, their respective unions, ACEU, ICPA and AIAEA officially held out for a time. The engineers' organisation trooped back to the workshops in the second week of January, 1974. The ICPA signed the new agreement on February 22. That left the ACEU out and obdurate, even though all its members, including many office-bearers were back to work.

And thus the management of India Airlines at last wrested, as Air Chief Marshal Lal put it its charter of rights—the right of the management to manage from the trade unions. It is to be hoped that Indian Airlines Corporation will now restart on a clean slate and not lapse back to its past work practices.

WILL THE SPECTACULAR DEFEAT sustained by irresponsible "feather-bedding" trade unions in Indian Airlines, have a healthy impact on the behaviour and performance of labour in other public sector units in the country. The prospect unfortunately does not seem bright.

Three factors made IA managements' victory possible: (a) The will and personality of its Chief Executive whose entire training made him uncompromisingly intolerant to indiscipline and inefficiency; (2) IA workers' own excesses forfeited public sympathy and, on the other hand, evoked public disgust and wrath against them; and (3) the Airlines workers' strike, embracing no more than 16,000 men—and that the affluent sector of Indian labour—did not attract the "politics of vote" and thus kept political influence, including governmental, neutral and at a distance.

The death of a front-rank Cabinet Minister like Mohan Kumaramangalam in the Boeing crash tragedy, on the other hand, put up the back of every one in the Government and precipitated a universal demand for remorseless action against the causes of inefficiency and indiscipline in Indian Airlines Corporation.

Thus, given the will to act in the executive, in the Indian Airlines Corporation, the other conditions were favourable for effective action. These conditions are almost

entirely absent in other public sector units like the nationalised banks, the railways, the steel industry, the LIC, etc., where too "feather-bedding" is rampant. That is the reason why the LIC employees' strike which occurred about the same time as the IA workers' failed to produce equally spectacular results.


The supervening factor in these other public sector units is the large masses of workers involved, whose "vote power" inhibits firm action by the government against labour's excesses, inefficiency and indiscipline. (The overtime evil is not confined to IA alone. The Minister of State for Finance told the Lok Sabha the other day that the Government paid Rs. 51 crores as overtime in 1972-73)

THE CYNICISM brought to bear by the trade unions in their dealing with the management is underlined in a Union leader's response to Air Marshal Lal's plea to him during the negotiations for co-operation "in a common cause".

The union leader's reply was: "No, this bhai-bhai business is nonsense. You have been given the responsibility of looking after the Corporation. That's your business. My responsibility is to the people who elected me. I am their elected representative and I have promised to improve their terms and conditions of service, increase their wages, and make life easier for them in this Corporation. How the Corporation goes about improving its affairs is your business not mine."

It may be added here that "feather-bedding" is not the exclusive copyright of Indian trade union leaders. It is no less common among even the more evolved labour unions of the USA and Britain. But the vital differences is that trade unionists in the West, while missing no opportunity of "feather-bedding" for their clients, do not permit those tactics to impair the efficiency and productivity of labour, lest that should affect their clients' future wages and prosperity.

— F N F

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# IS IT TRUE?

## Sherlock Holmes

### Current Realities & Government Propaganda

IS IT NOT SIGNIFICANT that the Government is making a new spurt to woo public opinion and support in the country by taking a number of steps which are undoubtedly calculated to cut the ground under the campaign which has been launched by the UNP to mobilise the frustrated, the discontented, the disappointed, the unhappy and the semi-starved sections of the population into a mighty avalanche of protest against the Government? That if the UNP enjoyed a greater credibility than it does now, and if the UNP had a mass image similar to what the UF parties had in the period 1965-70, the situation in the country would have been very different? That the UF parties in opposition from 1965-70 were a totally different kettle of fish compared to the UNP in opposition from 1970? That a strong opposition party with a popular appeal would have been able to stir up public opinion against the Government today? That after making all the possible allowances for difficulties caused by international conditions, any dynamic political party can make a good case against the Government for the many acts of commission and omission? That the United Front government is lucky in that the UNP has so far adopted a negative attitude to the entire situation? That the UNP has done nothing more than negatively criticise the Government for the food shortages, high costs and other sad defaults? That if the UNP or any other Party is able to formulate a positive policy, which is realistic and concrete and which has a mass appeal, it would be able to stir up a mass upsurge such as this country has not known? That the insurgent youth and the JVP had missed a golden opportunity to change the politics of this country by getting side-tracked into nihilistic terrorism? That

there is such widespread disillusionment against all established parties that this country is on a brink of a major political upheaval?

IS IT NOT A FACT that the UF government has sensed this situation in the country and that it has aroused itself to expedite the implementation of certain measures which it thinks will restore its popularity to what it was say in May 1970? That the Government has made a tremendous song and dance about the Land Reform it has introduced and the surplus land (over and above the ceiling) which has been distributed among the landless? That some of the land vested in the Land Reform Commission has been handed over to state and co-operative organisations for utilisation? That other land has been distributed in small allotments to the landless? That in theory the land is supposed to be "bought" from the Land Reform Commission on an instalment basis? That one does not know whether the State Plantations Corporation will pay cash for the land handed over to it or whether only book accounts are maintained about the transactions?

That it would be also interesting to find out whether in the ultimate analysis any land will be distributed free to the lucky applicants who have the necessary "pull" in each electorate to obtain such parcels of land? That it would be regarded as foolish, nay, betray a reactionary obsession, if one asked the simple question whether land reform in respect of developed tea, rubber and coconut lands, which have been taken over, has already had a depressing effect on production? That the ardent spologists of the UF say that land reform was essential to destroy capitalism in Sri Lanka and also eliminate the remaining vestiges of colonialism, imperialism, neo-

colonialism and the like? That UF enthusiasts argue that it was necessary to destroy in order to create? That it was essential to cripple the privately-owned plantation sector in order to root out the vestiges of the comprador brown land-owning class created by western imperialism and British sahibry? That they seem least concerned with the fact that in the process coconut production had fallen hopelessly? That the production has already dropped so much—far more than accountable by the drought—that the price of nuts for household purposes is already about three quarters of a rupee each and very soon it will reach the rupee mark? That coconut oil has already passed the Rs. 3.50 a bottle limit and that it would soon top the Rs. 5.00 mark? That coconuts and coconut oil had been the universal protein of the common man of Sri Lanka? That cholesterol, or no cholesterol, the common people of Sri Lanka need coconuts, at a cheap domestic price? That even the Central Bank's investigators have cottoned on to the fact that the way in which Land Reform has been "pushed" has led to a fall in the production of coconuts? That whilst pundits can claim that this was necessary to further the "Revolution" in Sri Lanka, the common householder is cast into the deepest gloom and disillusionment when he finds that his *pol-sambol* has now become a costly luxury?

That it is a fact that Land Reform could have been implemented without causing this dislocation in coconut production? That repeated slogans and glory hallelujah sermons over the SLBC and state-sponsored newspapers no longer carries any conviction so far as the common people are concerned? That in the interests of the Government itself, UF leaders must realise that such propaganda has no impact and that very soon it will backfire with a vengeance? That it is only the inherent weakness of the UNP that has given the Government time to catch up with realities? That the Government cannot live for ever on borrowed time even if the UNP goes on blundering? That it is time that the Government woke up to the fact that it has to do a great deal of re-thinking about its propaganda techniques?